

Geshe Yeshe Thabkhe
TBLC Sunday Class
Aryadeva's Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way
Chapter 6, vs. 133 & 134
October 5, 2014

[Tech difficulties....]

Think class began with quote from Je Tsongkhapa's *Three Principles of the Path* (translated in Geshe Wangyal's *Door of Liberation*):

Leisure and opportunity are difficult to find.
There is no time to waste: reverse attraction to this life.
Reverse attraction to future lies: think repeatedly
Of the infallible effects of karma and the misery of this world.

Difficult to find and very rare. So we cherish it and value it greatly.

So then this idea that there is no time to waste. If you have this idea that there is no time to waste—it is really thinking about this life as being impermanent and that we are always going towards its end. Instead of thinking “my life is always going to be here” and not considering that it is going to end, you have to take advantage of it

If you are not think...if you are thinking of just this lifetime, you don't spend your time avoiding harming others and doing what you can to cultivate the 10 virtuous deeds. But on the other hand, if you see this life...that there is no time to waste, that this life is disappearing, or perishing, then what is said is that you will turn your attention towards future life and providing for your future life. When you cultivate this attitude, “there is no time to waste,” you turn your mind away from harming others....

If you have this attitude...and your mind turns towards future lives, then you will abstain from any harm in this lifetime and will cultivate virtuous actions. Of course, this depends upon your consideration that there ARE future lives. It is important to consider that to think about how things operate in this life. For instance, when you plant a seed, a plant will grow, and then it withers and goes into the ground. There is a continuity of nurturing the soil from this process of cause and effect. The same goes with our bodies... There is a continuity from our physical bodies (however we dispose of them). Then there is also continuity with the mind. There isn't the continuity that we are human, but there is a continuation of a subtle form of consciousness that has its continuity in this life and will continue. The mind is dependent upon the body, but it has that same continuity...causal chain, then it will be continuing into our future lives. It makes it that if we are going to provide for our future lives, we need to abstain from negative actions and cultivate helpful actions.

During the time of the Buddha, when the Buddha taught about former and future lives, he gave this analogy of a tree leafing out and then the leaves falling, and there beings some continuity of the decomposition of the lives. There were some sages who said....they were doubting that he had this kind of knowledge....so they said, can you tell what will happen with our future lives or what happened with our past lives. To test him, they took some pieces of wood from many different trees. Gen-la is adding that they reduced all these different pieces of wood from different trees to a lump of ash and then they put all these lumps on an elephant. The idea was there were so many, you needed an elephant to carry

them. Before they did that, they made notes about each of the clumps of ash and what it was from. They brought it before the Buddha and he was able to tell the origins of each of the lumps of ash, where it was from.

How is it that karma, whatever it might be, to cultivate virtuous states of mind—like being patient and avoiding harm, and then doing karmic actions like abstaining from killing, not stealing. How is it that those can continue? It is just like when you....in a seed there is some kind of potential, or potency that allows it to give rise to a plant. So that kind of an idea of some kind of a potency is true of the mind. These states of mind and also many of our karmic actions...they leave a deposit in the mind. Then based on that in future lives, those seeds with that potency (or potential) then ripens into various effects in the future.

So we can see that it is very important to have some kind of mindfulness of death, which makes it so that we make some good use of this opportunity to be had. But mindfulness of death then—if we start to cultivate and awareness and mindfulness of our death, in the beginning we might be afraid. There is a natural response in the beginning of being afraid of dying. But as we become more familiar with the fact that life will come to an end, what happens is we start to turn our minds towards avoiding harm and being patient and eliminating our anger and hostility. We turn our minds towards that. Then, when we do that, we also try to cooperate and live in harmony with those close to us, who we come into contact with. What happens is that you eventually get to his point where you get up in the morning and you say, “Oh! I didn’t die last night. So now I have another chance to avoid doing harm to others and to help them.” Then a little later on you say, “This is great. I am still able to do this. You will take more joy in your life. You will be delighted that you have this chance again to cultivate virtue and avoid doing harm. Eventually what happens is that you overcome your fear of death and you become fearless. You are competent at the time of death. You can go confidently that you have set the causes for a fortunate life in your next rebirth, so there is a fearlessness at the time of death.

There is one Kadampa Geshe—stories of early great practitioners of Buddhism in Tibet of the Kadampa tradition—Shangzongpa. He said that if you cultivate a mindfulness of death in the morning, then you won’t come under...there is no way you can come under the influence of just being preoccupied with just the activities of this life. You won’t ONLY...Gen-la wants to add that...you won’t ONLY be preoccupied with the purposes of this life. Then, if you also, in mid-day, if you cultivate this mindfulness of death, you won’t be preoccupied with thinking only about the purposes of this life. Then, at the end of the day also, there is no way that you would come under the influence of thinking about the purposes of this life only. What he is saying is that you have to continually cultivate this mindfulness of death.

There is a story that illustrates the attitude if you think, “Oh, what’s wrong with spending your life only interested in the concerns of this life, working hard for them.” There is a story of a man named Mindrel Chodrak—his last name means something like “dharma fame.” You maybe give that name to a great practitioner of the dharma, but he wasn’t that way. He was very successful in the things of this life—he had great energy and was famous for what he achieved in this lifetime. At one point, he was so successful. But then he got seriously ill with a very high fever—the characteristic of the illness was to have a very high fever—and he went out in the sun, which of course would make one sicker. So all these people who admired his intelligence, etc. were saying, “What are you doing? This is no way to care for yourself when you have such a high fever already.” And he said, “Everyone is always thinking of me as so intelligent. Until today I didn’t understand: there is actually no one more foolish than me in the world. I never turned my attention toward any practice of the dharma.” So he had become famous with the name Chodrak—dharma fame—when people become famous they would be proud of their names, but he thought, “I feel I should give up

this name of Dharmakirti/Chodrak.” This is the kind of thing that will happen to you if you are only focused on this lifetime.

So then, if we think about leisure and opportunity, and that there is no time to waste, we won't have all this involvement in our present lifetime and will turn toward what we need to do to provide for our future lives. We will avoid doing harm to others and cultivate any kind of virtuous karmic actions towards others. Then, once we do that, the verse goes on to say:

Reverse attraction to future lies: think repeatedly
Of the infallible effects of karma and the misery of this world.

Here what happens is you are thinking about even if you are reborn into a fortunate life in your next lifetime—as a human or deity—you still have to undergo suffering. So you turn your mind toward being free of that kind of suffering, which is called the determination to be free.

Contemplating this, when you do not for an instant
Wish the pleasures of samsara,
And day and night remain intent on liberation,
You have then produced renunciation.

Here it is talking about getting rid of your attachment, your craving for the pleasures of being in cyclic existence. It is really about being single-mindedly attached to the pleasures of this life, and day and night are intent on liberation. If you have that you have produced this desire to be free of suffering. So then if we think, “In order to do that and in order to develop the altruistic spirit of enlightenment, then think in order to learn about and practice that—to motivate yourself, you say, “I am going to listen to Aryadeva’s stanzas today.”

So we are on verse 8 here of this chapter, the sixth chapter, vs. 133:

**133. Desire arises from causes and
Also arises through circumstance.
Desire arising through circumstance
Is easy to deal with; not the other**

So here, this is talking about that there are certain causes and conditions for—we call it “attachment” because “desire” has some problems—so if you have an understanding for what the causes of bringing about attachment are, then you can reduce it. In this verse, when it says “Desire arises from causes and also arises through circumstance” there are two different usages for the words causes and “circumstances.” Previously, over lifetimes, you have become so accustomed to attachment through repeatedly being attached. Then this form of attachment causes latent predispositions—so that you are predisposed toward being attached. Then, the other one is talking about conditions that are immediate conditions of this life. Of these two, it is said that the one where you are giving rise to attachment through previous latent predispositions—is very difficult to get rid of. But the immediate circumstances, that is easier to get rid of.

There is a difference between the two here that can be illustrated with the idea of... There is a kind of attachment which is circumstantial—some pleasure of the senses, whether it is of sight, smell, hearing—it comes immediately. That kind is said to not be so difficult; whereas the deeper sense of attachment comes about and is said to be—it is like having oil in cloth. It is very difficult to separate from it due to these previous...the habit has become so ingrained; it is very difficult to control when you have that kind of attachment for the object. So, it is giving that oil in cloth analogy.

It is important to consider that it is possible to eliminate this kind of attachment, even this deep kind. When we are attached to something, we see it as attractive or appealing, and therefore we are attached to it. But at that time, we really think the object somehow possesses this attractiveness, but that is not the case. If the object really possessed that view, then that object –we are just talking about one object of attachment. For some people it is also seen as unattractive, unpleasant. And others could care less and they don't produce an any attachment or hostility. What this indicates is that in fact it is not the object itself, it's the way we think about it. So then the possibility of changing the way we think about it presents the ability of reducing how attached we are to it. It is dependent upon our minds, the way we are thinking about it.

So if you have one person with one object, even though that person might be very ...the object of attachment can be either a person or a thing. So then, the object here can be very attractive and one can be very attached to it. But they can dissipate and one can no longer have attachment for it. That can happen for one person. Also this happens with anger. You can have it strongly, but then later on not feel so angry about it. What this indicates is that these come about and they are mental. As they are dependent upon the mind, at least we can reduce them and eventually abandon these forms of attachment and hostility.

If we take a look at the commentary here. It says (p. 155):

Never give desire (attachment) a chance to arise!

Attachment must always be counteracted.

It arises in two ways: some forms of desire arise from a cause of a similar type created by repeated familiarity in the past.

Cause means that there is a continuity of being habituated to this attachment and become more and more familiar with it, so it is based on a strong sense of habituation. But other times, it arises adventitiously.

Some arise adventitiously through the circumstance provided by the proximity of an object.

Adventitiously means it just happens because you are near the object. So it is easier to get rid of.

Of these two, desire caused by circumstance is easier to counteract: one can get rid of it by getting rid of the object.

Once you separate, you get rid of it. The other is not like that.

The other is not like that, since a strong antidote is needed to get rid of it.

There is an example here.

The kind that arises through circumstance is like the following: a bird cannot fly without one of its wings. The kind that is difficult to discard is like a pigeon's instinctive desire.

We are talking here about a deep-seated, a strong attachment. A pigeon is known for this—through have a strong attachment through repeated familiarity.

So, if we think about it, when we are talking about meditation or “cultivation”—it means becoming familiar or habituated with something. With hostility, for instance....it is really like meditation. In analytical meditation you think over reasons and come up with conclusions and that reinforces what you are learning in meditation. And when someone doesit increases the strength of your anger. The anger gets more and more powerful depending on how you are contemplating. If you keep on cultivating...coming up with reasons and thinking about it, you will increase your attachment. The same thing goes for virtuous states of mind. If you are able to cultivate patience and are able to counteract your anger...and you are constantly becoming familiar with what happens is you increase that feeling of patience—the two are opposite, so when you increase patience, the anger and hostility will decrease. So some kind of potency is set in the mind. For instance, if you are cultivating love and care for others and do that a lot in this lifetime, it will come to you in your next lifetime. It will come instinctually. So we have to cultivate these. We are cultivating these virtuous states of mind so we can enjoy those and use them again in our next lifetime.

If you think about it, if you cultivate these attitudes in this lifetime, then mostly it is going to be helpful to this lifetime. So there will be some effects in your future lifetime. That will come down in the future. But like we were talking about earlier, if you are cultivating a mindfulness of death, if you think about your family....what is the sense of cultivating harmful attitudes towards them, when you think about how, in this lifetime, how am I going to spend my life? If I am going to have a good rebirth in my next lifetime...you can think about your next lifetime, and then you realize what is the sense of bringing harm to these beings in this life time because you realize they are just like me. He wants happiness and doesn't want suffering. Then, when you see their feelings are just like your own, then you understand, “Just as I want happiness and do not want suffering, this being also wants happiness and doesn't want suffering.” It is going to affect how you are in this lifetime and how you interact with others.

Even with smaller things. For instance, with a bug. If you understand, just like I want happiness and don't want suffering, this little bug.... then if you avoid harming a bug it is a little bit easier. Also maybe we think of it also in terms of fish. The idea is, instead of catching them—if you are thinking the fish is a being who, just like you, wants happiness and doesn't want suffering, then you think, “Why should I put a hook in their mouth and yank them around in the water. Why should I bring this trouble to a being that is just the same as me?” In avoiding harm and cultivating help for others it is only going to help in your relationships in this lifetime. If you are avoiding harming bugs and fish, and so forth, it becomes easier to avoid others...through this feeling of habituation you get through your attitude of wanting to avoid harming others.

The next verse is:

Anger (Hostility) is a fault more grave than desire (attachment), and therefore one should strive to get rid of it.

[We use “hostility” for anger.] This means you want to harm the person, that is what the idea is. You want to return harm for harm. That is why we say, “hostility.” Hostility is a fault because it always gets involved in returning harm. Attachment doesn't necessarily go that way. It can go that out of attachment you will seek to harm, but with hostility this is certain.

If we read the first two lines:

**134. Anger is lasting and certainly
Makes one do grave non-virtue.**

So the idea is that once one gives rise to hostile feelings, you are constantly thinking about it and what happens is you develop resentment. Then, based on resentment, you have a stronger feeling of wanting to retaliate or inflict some harm, so when the opportunity arises you get involved in disagreements and struggling with the objects of your anger, and it can lead to serious [problems].

**Thus constant awareness of their distinctions
Will bring to an end disturbing emotions**

You have to develop a constant awareness of this.

[We started this class with technical difficulties, so we go a little longer.]

So when we look at hostility, then, first of all, it is very harmful to ourselves because it disturbs our minds and we don't have any peace. Then it is harmful to others, because we bring that harm. It's an intention to harm back, so we bring that harm to others. It is one thing if we are retaliating and it is over right away, but often you get angry and try to retaliate over time and it involves thinking about it. Having thought about it so strongly, you can do something very harmful to that person. At the same time, it is destroying virtuous states of mind and virtuous karma you have accumulating because it is the opposite of these—thinking to help others. It destroys these virtues and only causes harm. But unfortunately, we don't recognize the harm. So it is important to contemplate the faults of hostility right from the beginning.

It's similar to what it says earlier in Aryadeva's *400 Stanzas*, where it says you see attachment as a friend, because it provides you with what you need. But we don't see that through the attachment in the future it will lead us to future problems. We just see it in the short term. It is similar with hostility. We see it as a protector, but if you think about its faults, it is actually our enemy. All of the afflictions are our enemy, but especially anger. We have this term *arhat*—destroyer of the enemy—and what they are particularly destroying is their hostility and hatred.

So then, it is good to think over what are the disadvantages of getting hostile or hateful. The obvious ones, it ruins your peace of mind—it is disruptive to your own sense of happiness. But it also certainly harms and disturbs others when you are hostile, out of hostility to others and then people don't want to have anything to do with you. They think, there's that person who is hostile and mean and they avoid you. Then there are future effects in future lives. It is through hostility, then, that what happens is: you have an unappealing appearance of form. You become unattractive so that people look at you and feel you are like a scorpion. The benefit of being patient, on the other hand, is that people like to see you and you have a pleasing form. If you are hostile, in the future, the family has a lot of discord, as an effect. You will have a lot of—not being able to get along, disharmony in your family, etc. These are all the disadvantages of being hostile.

It is said to be like an ornament. If you have patience, it is like wearing jewelry: people like to see you. If you have hostility and hatred, in that case then even if you wear a lot of jewelry and try to look good, people still won't like to look at you. I also remember that Gen-la quoted from Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*: "There is no harmful action like hostility/hatred." So it's a very strong sense that this is a very harmful state of mind.

Then we will finish with the commentary on this one verse:

Since anger, which is made to last and held fast by resentment, certainly burns one's own and others' mindstreams and causes others harm, it is totally non-virtuous. It makes one do serious misdeeds such as the five heinous crimes. Through constant awareness of their different faults, disadvantages, causes and the means to eliminate them, disturbing emotions will be brought to an end. Thus, once their specific antidotes are known, one must get rid of them.

Resentment just has this meaning of holding it firm. In the Tibetan the word is like that. Through thinking about the harm you received and feel more and more angry about it...it "certainly burns one's own and others' mindstreams" means it destroys virtue and happiness that you and others would have, and it can bring much harm. An extreme example is that it can make one do the 5 heinous crimes: killing one's mother or father, killing an arhat, drawing blood from a buddha, and causing a schism in the spiritual community. It is through hostility that those come about. So you need to understand those faults or disadvantages.

So you have to know what counteracts them.

It is like the following analogy: Dharmaruci was born ninety-one times as an animal because of anger, but became a Foe Destroyer within the Teacher's spiritual tradition.

Seeing the Buddha Dipamkara place his feet on the Bodhisattva Sumati's hair while making a prediction to him, Dharmaruci was incensed and performed a verbal misdeed by saying, 'He's like an animal standing on the hair with both feet.' He was born as an animal ninety-one times because of this action. AS a fish he wrecked a boat and heard the Supramundane Victor Sakyamuni's name. He thought, "Why should I just continue comfortably in an animal's rebirth?" and destroyed his body. he took rebirth as a human being and became ordained in the Buddha Sakyamuni's spiritual tradition. Through aversion to cyclic existence while walking outside his door, he actualized the sate of a Foe Destroyer.

So the idea is that if you depend upon the countermeasures to the afflictions then you can overcome these afflictions.

Dedication.