

Eight Verses for Training the Mind

by Kadampa Geshe Langritangpa

Week 4

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Re-cap on last session

- Verse 3 working with the klesas
- Looked at what a klesa is
- A disturbing emotion or force of disintegration
- Damage our practice
- Text tells us to 'just stop them'
- But not so easy – need for vigilance – mindfulness.
- Verse 4 – treasuring ill-natured people
- Danger of being too refined – pseudo spiritual aestheticism
- Difficult people help us practice
- But some very difficult – need not to be naïve
- Don't lose mindfulness
- More than kindness – might even need to be cunning

2

Verse 5

***When someone out of envy does me wrong,
By insulting me and the like,
May I accept defeat,
And offer victory to them.***

- Lies at the heart of the 'Eight Verses' – heart of bodhisattva practice
- It was second part of verse that inspired Geshe Chakawa to seek the author/teacher of these verses
- Incredible that someone thought like this/ wrote this
- In commentaries on Atisha's teaching lot of emphasis on hardships

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A strong practice

- Learn to deal with self-cherishing and likes & dislikes
- But this verse is much stronger
- When someone insult you, you feel justified in fighting back
- But no room for retaliation
- You step out of the 'power mode' and let them have the victory
- But we so want to win the argument, make our point – usually over very small things - often a kind of knee-jerk reaction
- Sutta-Nipata Buddha says "the man of wisdom doesn't get into disputes"
- Dhammapada "better than conquering a thousand in battle is to conquer yourself"

4

Pillar of Diamond

- Bhante describes 'love' as a pillar of diamond because it can never be destroyed & always triumphant over the 'power mode'
- Cannot be conquered when in 'love mode' because never think of victory or winning - nor of losing
- Buddhist texts tell us we are very fortunate if there is someone who really wants to hurt you then you are very fortunate
- If you are a bodhisattva you will generally be liked – therefore not many enemies!
- Kadampa Geshe Chen-na-wa speaks of different kinds of meditations on patience. 3rd is on teacher and disciple

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No teacher – no patience

"If no teacher to impart instruction there can be no bodhisattva. If no teacher to explain Dharma no realisation. If no enemy that harms you there can be no practice of patience. Those that oppose you are the teachers of patience. Be happy at this opportunity and concentrate on repaying their kindness. Meditating that you are a disciple being taught patience. Do not be angry!"

- Accepting defeat is renouncing involvement in the 'power mode'
- Involves a profound letting go – so is very difficult!
- Start to see desire to win is the real defeat, real loss, real downfall
- If you were to win the argument you would feel ashamed – gone against your principles

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Begin training in small ways

- First deferring on decisions over small things
 - Can spend a lot of time arguing over small things
 - Let go and go along with others
 - Support them in their what they want - if it isn't really important
 - Probably just our ego fighting
- ENVY – can be very subtle
- The success of others (or what we think is their success) can lead to us feeling belittled and humiliated
- Comparing yourself to them and experiencing envy that wants to pull them down
- Your pride has been pricked & feel inadequate or unfulfilled – painful & hard to face
- You might feel like attacking others

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Becoming a target

- Very often if you are in a more prominent position & more active & creative you might become a target for peoples envy
- Buddhism and especially Langritangpa would say if we are on the end of envy there is never any justification for lashing out, or dismissing others
- You don't fight – you accept the defeat
- You don't even enter in the battle in the first place – so it's really a question of giving them the victory
- Instead you understand others who attack or envy you
- Very strong practice!

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Verse 6

***Even if someone whom I have helped
And in whom I have placed my hopes
Does great wrong by harming me,
May I see them as an excellent spiritual friend.***

- Even more difficult practice
- Here is a situation with someone close, possibly a friend, lover, spouse, son, daughter, a disciple, or a teacher
- Invested a lot in this relationship, a lot of hope, expectation (maybe not conscious, but there nonetheless)
- Might also be a group of people
- They let you down – you feel harmed by them
- Maybe the expectations are falsely placed
- Or maybe they do something really harmful to you – deliberately

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Whole world falls apart

- This can be how we experience life suddenly
- Something has been taken away, the ground on which you stand seems to disappear
- Particularly difficult in relationship – sexual or romantic or where you have built up a life together
- Split up & feeling of betrayal
- Langritangpa tells us such a person is an excellent spiritual friend
- This is a kind of insight teaching – this situation is telling us something
- If we don't have a spiritual practice, a deep feeling for human life, this feeling leads us to feelings of retaliation & revenge

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Deeply humiliated – an initiation

- In such situations we can feel an utter fool, totally out of balance, out of harmony with life, with things
 - We want to restore the parity in the situation –even things up to feel okay
 - There can be a desire to hurt them back, “an eye for an eye” – think if can fight ‘like’ with ‘like’ things will be fine
- You can feel a strong sense of self-betrayal when there are deep positive feelings for another; with genuine love, common shared experience, or spiritual commitment
 - You are cut off from your own values and when cut off from your deep from the values you hold in high regard this is the worst betrayal of all (James Hillman)
- So here there is a great opportunity need to see the destroying of expectations, hopes, etc. as teaching or even an initiation

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An entry into a new way of being

- Not the other persons fault that they treated us badly
- They are not evil
- Difficult to think like this when been hurt
- Human nature, whole business if survival, is to retaliate, to hold onto our own – deep desire for self protection
- Many people suffer terribly in their lives – from childhood to old age, at home, at school, at work, with parents, teachers and friends – so difficult to really take on this practice
- But also a tendency to see our pain or lack of fulfilment in terms of how people have hurt us
- Maybe even more difficult to practice today with a tendency towards some kind of victim-mentality

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Sangha is a ritual space

- But the true Buddhist practitioner, someone on the bodhisattva path has to see things differently
- Atala once said he thought that people didn't sufficiently realise that when they enter the Sangha they are entering a ritual space where all events are endowed with completely different significance & where the ordinary ways of looking at the world do not apply
 - E.g. story of Marpa and Milarepa – we can imagine how Milarepa felt each time Marpa refused to give him the teaching he wanted
 - Terrible moment, feel sick in your stomach, feel hope is destroyed
- If we could see such situations as an initiation then we would make great progress
- What is being shown is that we cannot make life, or others, conform to our wishes, hopes, our expectations

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Life will define you – “Life is King”

*Hour after hour.
Day after day.
We try to grasp the ungraspable.
Pinpoint the unpredictable.
Flowers wither when touched
Ice suddenly cracks beneath our feet.
Vainly, we try to track bird-flight through the sky.
Trace dumb fish through deep water
Try to anticipate the earned smile, the soft reward
Even tried to grasp our own lives.
But life slip through our fingers like snow.
Life cannot belong to us.
We belong to life.
Life is King*

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43 Year Ago

- Bhante had experience of bitter disappointments
- Disappointment after his bhikkhu ordination – senior monk who ordained him was virtually married with children
 - He felt deeply betrayed
- Also when expelled from Hampstead Vihara after he came to trust and relied on certain people
 - It was like going into the desert after he was expelled & before he founded the Order and FWBO
- He discovered that in this wilderness all assumptions had been destroyed
- He quotes James Hillman that betrayal is an entry into a new kind of consciousness
- He discovered that the desert/wilderness was a wonderful place, where everything became clear.

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The Scapegoat

- Obviously doesn't mean we should cast people into the wilderness for their own sakes – not for us to do
- We should try to be reliable & a true friend
- But we should try to see this sort of situation as a teaching
- See that it arises because of our craving – trishna – for life to be a certain way – bhavana trishna
- By-the way Bhante said the image of the scapegoat became very important for him – taking on blame as it were. He was very taken with Holman Hunt's painting - the 'Scapegoat' – cast out into the desert but in the distance, are fantastic colours

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Holman Hunt – 'The Scapegoat'



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Forgiveness

- In connection with this kind of situation can also think about forgiveness
- Forgiveness is an incredibly profound spiritual act
- You have been harmed but you renounce any sense of moral advantage, the moral high ground, any sense of injustice
- You think over what has happened and see this is the way of things – they rise and pass away
- Look at the other person's life, circumstances, drives, etc. – you understand why they are like they are
- This is a profound letting go – not just of the other person but a forgiveness of the way things are
- This is an insight from John Middleton Murray in his work on Keats and Shakespeare - it is forgiveness of life!
- Life not something you can mould and form - Life is King

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Never give up

- Verses 4, 5 & 6 bring out the profound challenge & poignancy of the bodhisattva path
- Dedicating your life to transcending self & other, you will develop strong, even profound connections with others
- You will love others, they will love you; You'll show them your heart & really open up to them, communicate deeply, feel exposed
- But then sometimes they will let you down
- You will be clumsy, make mistakes, etc. & you will be blamed, criticised - people will give up on you
- But you never give up on other people!

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The bodhisattva

- You learn from your mistakes, apologise, confess & learn about your self-cherishing, your naiveté, but never give up
- Not on others, not on the spiritual path, nor the bodhisattva path
- To give up on the bodhisattva path once you have embarked on it would be the greatest betrayal of all!
- So in a bodhisattva there is great tenderness, and also great strength

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