
Verse 5: Take Loss and Defeat Upon Myself

*Whenever someone out of envy
Does me wrong by attacking or belittling me,
I will take defeat upon myself,
And give the victory to others.*

Whenever other people, out of jealousy or other afflictive emotions, mistreat me with abuse or slander, or even if they mistreat my lama, my relatives, or my friends, may I take upon myself the sufferings, losses, and defeats, and offer to others the happiness, benefits, and victories.

a. The proper attitude to other's attack

In order to acquire the last two line of this verse, Geshe Chekawa had been following Sharawa for six years. He practiced these instructions throughout his life, and eventually completely eradicated the clinging to the “I” and to the “mine”. Many of us received the entire transmission of the *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* without any difficulty, so we should truly cherish it!

This verse may seem quite easy to understand in its literal sense; however, its real intended meaning is very profound and vast. If practitioners can continue to practice it earnestly and diligently, they will definitely eliminate all clinging to the self, and achieve an extremely high spiritual status of the path.

It is common that other people, out of impure motives such as jealousy, attachment, anger, ignorance, or carelessness, may revile and slander us or those related to us, such as our vajra lama, vajra peers, parents, relatives, and friends, in unjust ways. In fact, there are two types of personal attacks. One is the actual personal attack, and the other is the non-factual or unjust personal attack. For example, I have kept my vowed discipline pure and clean, but other people say that I haven't; or I did not steal anything, but someone accuses me of theft; or I am not a tirthika, but someone says I am. All these are non-factual or unjust personal attacks, which means that the attack is based on something that does not accord with the facts. And a factual personal attack means that what has been said does correspond to the facts, although the nature of the verbal attack is, in itself, a misdeed.

Usually, for common people, a factual personal attack is something that can be endured to some extent, but a non-factual or unjust personal attack is just too much of a torture to be endured. Ordinary people usually take those who slander them to be their biggest enemy; however, for Mahayana practitioners, slander and revilement are like the wish-fulfilling gem, a precious treasure that bestows merits, and an opportunity to swiftly attain Buddhahood. Geshe Potowa used to say that: “When people slander you, that is the greatest kindness to you.” We must examine our mind to see whether it can give rise to such beliefs. On the spiritual path to Buddhahood, practitioners of the Great Vehicle would even give away their own wife and children, their own body, to all sentient beings; so slander and being reviled are no big deal,

are they?

In the past, there was a great master who was imprisoned for six years, due to other people's jealousy, but he said: "This is my own karma", and he faced this situation with peace. Another example that we are all familiar with is Milarepa. In his last years, when a Geshe offered poisoned yogurt to him out of jealousy, Milarepa, who viewed everything as dreams and illusions, calmly drank the yogurt. These are the precious qualities that a Mahayana practitioner ought to have, and a vivid illustration of how afflictive emotions can be brought onto the path.

b. Make efforts on putting the teaching into practice

It is a pity that most practitioners today have an excessively strong sense of self-attachment, and have almost reached a point where they will not yield even an inch to others. Isn't this the complete opposite from genuine Dharma practice? What's more, although some people have spent long years of practice in retreat, they still fly into a rage whenever they encounter even minor adverse conditions. If they continue with this kind of behavior, it would not have been of much benefit, even had they meditated in mountain caves throughout their whole life. Sakya Pandita, in his *Treasure of Good Advice*, said that:

*Even in the forest, malicious people deteriorate,
Even in the city, noble people remain serene;
One sees that forest animals are wild and ferocious,
But the best horses are well-disciplined in town.*

As followers of Buddha, we must have a refined personality, and it is only when we make this the basis of our practice, that we can have some achievements.

There is a Tibetan saying which addresses the fact that in peaceful times, when we can enjoy the sunshine with a full stomach, and everything is going well, all seem to be good practitioners who have no mental afflictions, but as soon as difficulties arise, when food and clothing are scarce or when there is thunder and rain, our practice is gone. This is a picture that we often see among practitioners.

To overcome this kind of difficulty, we need to cultivate and maintain a pure vision in our mind, view all phenomena as dreams and illusions, and view all sentient beings as having Buddha nature. "Now, overwhelmed by their heavy negative karma, they try to hurt me, but indeed, they have no choice, just as patients fall ill even if they do not want to. Therefore, I must treat them with great compassion." When we open our mind in this way, it will be relatively easy for us to tolerate harm from others. Once this stage has been achieved, we can further contemplate that all manifest phenomena can be turned onto the path. This understanding will increase our merit in practice and in spiritual realization, and thus, we will generate a grateful mind towards all sentient beings.

People often say: "Take small losses for the sake of big gains", and that: "Failure is the mother of success". From the viewpoint of secular people, we can learn lessons from failure and loss, so that we can have better gains and successes in the future. From the perspective of Buddha-dharma, in order to attain Buddhahood, we should offer all peacefulness and happiness to others, so as to achieve the ultimate enlightenment. In the *Song of Victory*, His Holiness

Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said: “In order to benefit yourselves in the long term, the pith instruction is to benefit others in the short term.” Therefore, we should, without the least hesitation, take upon ourselves all the faults, losses, and sufferings of others, and dedicate to others all our merits, victories, peace, and happiness.

In our everyday life, if we often notice other people’s faults, over the passage of time, we could end up feeling that no one on this earth is truly kind-hearted. On the other hand, if we make a point to look at other people from the positive side, and continually reflect on their benevolence towards us, we will gradually become accustomed to this good habit, and gratitude towards others will arise within us.

Just like that a person with the illness of jaundice sees white snow mountain as yellow, which is obviously white in the perception of a healthy person, every phenomenon is a projection of our own mind. Having understood this true reality, we should put it into our practice. In the Dhomang Monastery, there is a Khenpo named Lekshey. In his eyes, everyone is good. He never looks at other people’s faults. Even though he recognizes that faults exist, he says: “It is not right to talk about other people’s faults. Maybe these are the skillful methods used by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to help sentient beings, and have extraordinary secret intentions.” So he never argues with other people.

As the saying goes: “Man struggles upwards, water flows downwards.” The upper place, on the spiritual path of Dharma practice, is the aforementioned conduct of great spiritual masters, who take upon themselves all the suffering, loss, and defeat, and offer to others all the peace and happiness, benefit and victory. We should not be like a Bodhisattva at the beginning, and then like an ordinary person in the middle, and a demon at the end, being overwhelmed with an ever growing ego-fixation, and falling into the miserable realms.

c. The importance of integrating Dharma teaching into our minds

If our spiritual practices are not compatible with how we behave as human beings, even though we may look like excellent practitioners who have been in retreat in the mountains for ages, we may still find ourselves inept at getting along with others when we leave our seclusion. We may even find our own practices useless at critical times, such as when we encounter difficulties and we cannot overcome them. If this is the case, on the one hand, it could destroy other people’s faith or confidence towards the Buddha-dharma, and on the other hand, we ourselves might be frustrated by repeated setbacks in our spiritual practice, and lose our enthusiasm on the path.

Actually, in adverse circumstances, it is even more important to bear in mind these pith instructions given in this text, and whenever mental afflictions arise, immediately subdue them using the pith instructions, like a warrior on the battlefield, who swiftly draws out his weapon on meeting an enemy, and destroys him without delay. But if we know only a little of the instructions, and only carry out a few practices in a superficial way, or even if we have paid no attention to the instructions and merely recite heart mantras, speculate on bindus every day, and then think of ourselves as Buddhists, then such behaviors will not bring genuine benefits to our own continuum.

The Kadampa masters, in the past, put extraordinarily high value on the last two lines of

this verse. If we copy them down on a piece of paper, and stick it in some noticeable place in our home to remind ourselves from time to time, for sure that will be of great help to our practice. From the biographies of Kadampa masters, we can see how virtuous their minds were and how pure their behaviors were. If we read more of their biographies, our faith in Dharma practice would increase, and we would be filled with diligence and enthusiastic perseverance, so that we would carry ourselves whole-heartedly onto the path of mind training.