Chapter 6 Patience

This chapter deals with patience, which together with meditative concentration, the subject of the eighth chapter, constitute the key aspects of the training in bodhichitta. The instructions contained in these two chapters are very powerful aids to practice.

6.1.
All the good works gathered in a thousand ages,
Such as deeds of generosity,
And offerings to the Blissful Ones—
A single flash of anger shatters them.

6.2.
No evil is there similar to anger,
No austerity to be compared with patience.
Steep yourself, therefore, in patience,
In various ways, insistently.

As a destructive force there is nothing as strong as anger. An instant of anger can destroy all the *positive actions* accumulated over thousands of kalpas through the practice of generosity, making offerings to the Buddhas, keeping discipline, and so on. There is no fault as serious as anger.

Patience, on the other hand, as a discipline that neutralises and prevents us from succumbing to anger, is unrivalled. Through it, the suffering we endure from the heat of negative emotions is relieved. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we resolve to practice patience, gaining inspiration through reflecting on its advantages and on the terrible effects of anger.

Here, **the term *positive actions* refers to generosity**, making offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, **and keeping discipline**, as is explained in the *Entrance to the Middle Way*. It does not refer to the merit gained through the realization of emptiness. Anger cannot destroy this type of merit. Nor can the anger of a lower state of mind destroy the positive actions accumulated with a superior state of mind.[34] Ie, there are two types of merit that anger cannot destroy: the merit of realization of emptiness and the merit of spiritual qualities that come from meditation. Apart from these, the good effects of **all other ordinary positive actions can be destroyed by anger**. Nevertheless, **this depends on the intensity of the anger, on the magnitude of the positive action, & on the person to whom our anger is directed. In this way, a positive action can be weakened or entirely destroyed through anger.**

Positive actions are difficult to perform and therefore do not occur frequently. It is hard to have positive thoughts when one's mind is influenced by emotions and confused by adverse conditions. Negative thoughts arise by themselves, and it is difficult to make our actions truly positive when our intention and the way we carry them through are not perfectly pure. Our meagre stock of hard-won positive actions is rendered powerless in an instant of anger. The damage is immeasurably more serious than if we had lost something more easily acquired.

6.3.
Those tormented by the pain of anger,
Never know tranquility of mind—
Strangers they will be to every pleasure;
They will neither sleep nor feel secure.

When people get angry they lose all sense of happiness. Even if they are good-looking and normally peaceful, their faces turn livid and ugly. Anger upsets their physical well-being and disturbs their rest; it destroys their appetites and makes them age prematurely. Happiness, peace, and sleep evade them, and they no longer appreciate people who have helped them and deserve their trust and gratitude. Under the influence of anger, people of normally good character change completely and can no longer be counted on. They are ruined by their anger, and they ruin others, too. But **anyone who puts all his energy into destroying anger will be happy in this life and in lives to come.**

6.7.
Getting what I do not want,
And all that hinders my desire—
In discontent my anger finds its fuel.
From this it grows and beats me down.

When we think of someone who has wronged us or who is doing (or might do) something we or our friends dislike (depriving us of what we want) our minds, which were at peace just a moment before, suddenly become slightly agitated. This state of mind fuels negative thoughts. What an

[34] For example, the merit gained through the meditation of a celestial being (deva) in the realm of formlessness cannot be destroyed by anger arising in the human state.

Reflections on the status of the body and the importance played by it in the context of personal experience are developed at length in the chapter on patience. Coming at the conclusion of the section devoted to the protection of bodhichitta, patience is celebrated as the supreme austerity. It is the antidote to anger, regarded in Buddhism as the most destructive and perilous of all mental factors. **Anger, defined as the flooding of the mind with violent and aggressive feelings, leading naturally to hostility and conflict, is outlawed in Buddhism as in no other religious tradition.** Even so-called righteous anger, so often excused as having injustice and abuse as its object, is utterly condemned if this involves the overpowering of the mind in a wave of uncontrollable and destructive passion. Aside from a purely external and, as it were, artificial indignation put on for educational purposes (which has compassion as its motive and is acted out by one whose mind is under control) **anger has absolutely no place in the scheme of spiritual development**. It is totally inimical to mental training and will ruin and annihilate in an instant all progress and merit gained.

This being so, the crucial question of how to behave in a hostile environment begins to emerge. Step by step, Shāntideva focuses on the real source of the problem, the basis of anger as of every other defilement. This is the ego, the self, the sense of "I," experienced as the centre of the universe, a universe interpreted as friend or enemy in relation to how it is perceived from the egocentric viewpoint. In Buddhism, this is of course the central issue, and it is only in the light of the full teachings on emptiness that it can be satisfactorily discussed. For the moment, however, Shāntideva remains on the level of relative practice. His concern is to show how the problem of enemies (aggression and retaliation) can be dealt with in the context of everyday experience. His arguments are ingenious, his logic relentless; and by the end of the chapter, one is forced to see both that the angry response must never be allowed to develop, and that situations of conflict, endured and resolved through patience, are invaluable, in fact indispensable, as occasions for spiritual growth. **Patience, as Shāntideva describes it, implies an almost incredible degree of resilience and courage, the courage of a Mahatma Gandhi or a Martin Luther King. Far from being a sort of limp and spineless acquiescence, as Nietzsche would have us believe, Shāntideva's patience is the ultimate heroism, fearlessness perfected to the highest intensity.**

Shāntideva points out that anger, the normal reaction to hostility and adversity, achieves nothing but to increase our sufferings. It is our "sorrow-bearing enemy" (6.6). As such **it is to be eliminated**; and in a way that we have by now come to expect, Shāntideva rises to the challenge, heartening himself with cheerful words. After all, suffering, though of course unwanted, has its uses. Without it we would be like the gods, never longing for release from saṃsāra. It humbles our pride and engenders sympathy toward those who also suffer. Even virtue comes to seem attractive!

Irritation arises naturally in the mind against fellow beings perceived as unpleasant or threatening, and it seems normal to resent the aggressor. But Shāntideva asks us to be less superficial. When we suffer the physical discomforts of illness, for example, we know very well that the pain is due to bodily imbalances. We may dislike the pain, but it would be absurd to resent it angrily. In the same way, the hostile behaviour of enemies does not arise spontaneously; it too is the product of causes and conditions. Why resent those who are themselves the victims of emotional defilement? The very act of identifying an aggressor as a really existing self over against our own (instead of being aware simply of an interplay of impersonal psychophysical forces) is itself unjustified. That which strikes us as the unruly behaviour of other beings may indeed be difficult to put up with; but when we understand the reality of the situation, the inconvenience becomes easier to manage. Thus **when we are attacked, it is important to remember that our aggressors, acting on the impulse of their own defilements, are creating the causes of their own suffering. Knowing this, Shāntideva says, "What purpose does our anger serve?"** (6.38). **In any case, viewed objectively, enemies can only be of two kinds. Either they are intrinsically hostile, in which case to resent their behaviour is as absurd as to resent fire for being hot; or they are fundamentally well disposed but have momentarily succumbed to a crisis of defilement. Here, too, animosity is out of place: it is as foolish as resenting the sky when it is filled with smoke. Besides, when someone hits me with a stick, I am not angry with the stick but with the person beating me. Hence, it is illogical for me to hate my enemies. They may wield their weapons, but they themselves are in the grip of their defilements. Therefore, it is the emotion, of which they are the victim, that I should resent.**

Taking his argument a step further, Shāntideva points out that in any conflict, the victim and aggressor are both caught up in a situation of mutual dependence. In the case of a physical attack, for example, if pain occurs, it has two equally important sources corresponding to the agent and to the object of the assault. The fact that suffering happens depends as much on the degree to which the victims' minds cling to their bodies as on the wound inflicted by their aggressors.

> Their weapons and my body—
> Both are causes of my torment!
> They their weapons, I my body brandished;
> Who then is more worthy of my rage? (6.43)

Once again, **all experience is karmically conditioned. Events that seem beyond our control are in fact the fruits of former actions, which means that it is incorrect to claim that the enemy is nothing but an aggressor. "Those who harm me rise against me; it's my karma that has summoned them"** (6.47). Even more, given the consequences of the enemies' evil deeds, and also the great results of patience in the face of adversity, we arrive at the paradoxical conclusion: "Therefore I am their tormentor! Therefore **it is they who bring me benefit!"** (6.49). And with these words, Shāntideva reduces to absurdity the conventional approach to the hostility of aggressors.

Pursuing the argument yet further, **Shāntideva shows how enemies are not merely the objects of tolerance; they are to be cherished as indispensable helpers on the Bodhisattva path. Our enemies do for us what no friend or loved one can. By awakening us to the reality of our own ego-clinging, our enemies provide opportunities for patience, purification, the exhaustion of evil karma.** And so the inevitable conclusion:

> They, like Buddha's very blessing,
> Bar my way, determined as I am
> To plunge myself headlong in sorrow:
> How can I be angry with them? (6.101)

awful person! we think, and our dislike turns into hatred. It is this first stage, this unsettled feeling that kindles our hatred, that we should try to get rid of. That is why Shāntideva says:

6.8.
Therefore I will utterly destroy
The sustenance of this my [real, internal] enemy,
My foe who has no other purpose
But to hurt and injure me.

We should try to use any means to get rid of this initial feeling of uneasiness.

6.9.
So **come what may, I'll not upset**
My cheerful happiness of mind.
Dejection never brings me what I want;
My virtue will be warped and marred by it.

6.10.
If there's a remedy when trouble strikes;
What reason is there for dejection?
And if there is no help for it,
What use is there in being glum?

We must make an effort to remain in a relaxed state of mind. Because unless we get rid of this unsettled feeling, it will feed our hatred, causing it to grow and eventually destroy us.

Anger is worse than any ordinary enemy. Of course, ordinary enemies harm us: that is why we call them enemies. But the wrong they do us is intended to help themselves or their friends, not just to make us unhappy. However, **the inner enemy, anger, has no other function than to destroy our positive actions and make us suffer.** That is why Shāntideva says, "My foe who has no other purpose but to hurt and injure me." **From the moment it appears, it exists for the sole purpose of harming us. So we should confront it with all the means we have. Let us maintain a peaceful state of mind and avoid getting upset.**

What irritates us in the first place is that our wishes are not fulfilled. But remaining upset does nothing to help fulfil those wishes. So we neither fulfil our wishes nor regain our cheerfulness! This disconcerted state, from which anger can grow, is most dangerous. We should try never to let our happy frame of mind be disturbed. Whether we are suffering at present or have suffered in the past, there is no reason to be unhappy. **If we can remedy it, why be unhappy? And if we cannot, what use is there in being depressed about it? That just adds more unhappiness and does no good at all.**

This initial disconcerted state, which gives rise to anger, is caused by things we do not want. For example, we do not want our friends or ourselves to suffer or be insulted, criticised, or treated with disdain. When we cannot avoid these things, we become sad. On the other hand, we feel satisfaction when it is our enemies who suffer such things, and we are not pleased when things go well for them.

6.12.
The cause of happiness is rare,
And many are the seeds of suffering!
But if I have no pain, I'll never long for freedom;
Therefore, O my mind, be steadfast!

In general we have to make a great deal of effort to obtain happiness, while suffering comes naturally. The very fact of having a body inevitably involves suffering. Sufferings are numerous and their causes abundant. A wise person can achieve happiness by transforming the causes of unhappiness into favourable conditions. We can use suffering as a means to progress. As Shāntideva says, "If I have no pain, I'll never long for freedom."

It is only natural that we dislike suffering. But if we can develop the willpower to bear difficulties, then we will grow more and more tolerant. As it is said in the text:

6.14.
There's nothing that does not grow light
Through habit and familiarity.
Putting up with little cares
I'll train myself to bear with great adversity!

6.16.
Heat and cold, the wind and rain,
Sickness, prison, beatings—
I'll not fret about such things.
To do so only aggravates my trouble.

If we are very forbearing, then something we would normally consider very painful will not appear so bad after all. But without patient endurance, even the smallest thing becomes unbearable. A lot depends on our attitude.

6.17
There are some whose bravery increases,
At the sight of their own blood,
While some lose all their strength and faint
When it's another's blood they see!

Similarly, **if we can develop patient endurance, we will be able to bear even great difficulties when they come our way.**

To be forbearing means that even when confronted with great suffering or harm we do not let it disturb our minds. Of course, it is difficult to regard sufferings as desirable and to transform them into favourable conditions. We have to be patient as we wage a determined war on negative emotions such as hatred, the worst of enemies. It is natural to expect injuries when doing battle with an ordinary enemy, so fighting the essential enemy, hatred, will not be without difficulty. But **if we ignore all such ordeals and conquer negative emotions, then we can truly be called heroes.** On the other hand, succumbing to anger and killing an ordinary enemy is no braver than stabbing someone who is dead already. There is nothing extraordinary about that.

6.21.
Suffering also has its worth.
Through sorrow, pride is driven out
And pity felt for those who wander in samsāra;
Evil is avoided; goodness seems delightful.

Our suffering also has a positive side. For one thing, we lose our sense of self-importance. We learn to appreciate the suffering of others, and our compassion grows. And we become more careful not to accumulate the causes of suffering.

Everyone has at least some unselfish tendencies, however limited. To develop these until the wish to help others becomes limitless is what is called bodhichitta. The main obstructions to this development are the desire to harm others, resentment, and anger. To counteract these, it is therefore essential to meditate on patience. The more deeply we practice, the less chance there will be for anger to arise. Patience is the best way to avoid anger.

Now let us talk about love. In my opinion, all beings want to be loved. This is natural and spontaneous. Even animals like people who are kind to them. When someone looks at you with a loving expression, it makes you happy, does it not? Love is a quality that is esteemed throughout humanity, in all religions. All religions, including Buddhism, describe their founders above all in terms of their capacity to love. Those that talk about a creator refer to the creator's mercy. And the main quality of those who give spiritual refuge is love.

When we talk about a Pure Land filled with the presence of love, people feel like going there.[35] But were we to describe a Pure Land as a land of warfare and strife, people would no longer feel any desire to be reborn in such a place. **People naturally value love, and they dislike harmful feelings and actions such as resentment, anger, fighting, stealing, coveting others' possessions, and wishing to harm others.** So **if love is something that all human beings prize, it is certainly something that we can develop if we make the effort.**

Many people think that to be patient in bearing loss is a sign of weakness. I think this is a mistake. It is anger that is a sign of weakness, whereas patience is a sign of strength. For example, a person arguing a point based on sound reasoning remains confident and may even smile while proving his case. On the other hand, if his reasons are unsound and he is about to lose face, he gets angry, loses control, and starts talking nonsense. **People rarely get angry if they are confident in what they are doing. Anger comes more easily in moments of confusion.**

6.22.
I am not angry with my bile and other humours—
Fertile source of suffering and pain!
So why should living beings give offence,
They likewise are impelled by circumstance?

Suffering may result from both animate and inanimate causes. **We may curse inanimate things like the weather, but it is with animate beings that we most often get angry. If we analyse these animate**

[35] A Pure Land is a world manifested by a Buddha or Bodhisattva in accord with the merit of sentient beings. Beings reborn in a Pure Land are able to progress swiftly on the path to Buddhahood.

causes that make us unhappy, we find that they are themselves influenced by other conditions. They are not making us angry simply because they want to. Because they are influenced by other conditions, they are in fact powerless. So there is no need to get angry with them.

6.24.
Never thinking, "Now I will be angry,"
People are impulsively caught up in anger.
Irritation, likewise, comes
Though never plans to be experienced!

6.25.
All defilements of whatever kind,
The whole variety of evil deeds
Are brought about by circumstances:
None is independent, none autonomous.

6.26.
Conditions, once assembled, have no thought
That they will now give rise to some result.
Nor does that which is engendered
Think that it has been produced.

At this point in the text Shāntideva refutes the arguments of the Sāṃkhyas, one of the non-Buddhist traditions of ancient India.

6.27.
The primal substance, as they say,
And that which has been called the self,
Do not arise designedly,
And do not think, "I will become."

6.28.
For that which is not born does not exist,
So what could want to come to be?
And permanently drawn toward its object,
It can never cease from being so.

According to Buddhism, there is no such thing as something arising without a cause. Everything is conditioned by something else. The same applies to negative actions.

According to the Sāṃkhyas, there are twenty-five objects of knowledge, of which the principal one, the primal substance (Skt., *prakriti*), is considered to be absolute truth: absolute, eternal, all-pervading, and independent. All phenomena are caused by this primal substance. The Sāṃkhyas also postulated the existence of a Self, or conscious principle (*purusha*), that is also eternal and independent and that experiences the manifestations of the primal substance.

Buddhism refutes the possibility of something independent that does not depend on a cause. Everything is interdependent. No phenomenon arises autonomously, suddenly deciding, so to speak, that it will manifest. If the primal substance were the cause of everything it gives rise to, then it would have to be produced itself. But as it is not itself created, how can it create anything?

Buddhism teaches that everything arises from causes and conditions and that therefore there is no such thing as an uncaused cause. If there were such a thing, then everything could be said to arise from nothing! Alternatively, the primal substance would have to be constantly giving rise to (causing) something. But as we can see, phenomena sometimes manifest and at other times do not. This is because the causes and conditions on which they depend sometimes come together and at other times do not.

If the cause were independent and able to create constantly, then of course its results would also have to be constant. Since the results are not constant, we can argue that their cause also is not constant: it is impermanent. If there is such a thing as an independent creator, which in consequence is alone and all-pervading, all its manifestations or results should be permanent. Belief in such a creator is simply not logical.

As regards the permanent and unchanging Self, if it were indeed immutable, all its perceptions would likewise have to be constant, and there would be no time when it was not experiencing them. Ordinary logic tells us that this is not true. Sometimes we perceive things, sometimes we do not. But perceptions would have to be permanent if the Self were an unchanging entity.

According to the *Sūtra of Interdependence*, everything arises from a cause. But such a cause cannot be a creator who at some time or other brings the universe into being. This cause is by definition impermanent, and so must itself have a cause. Finally, a result must be of the same nature as the cause that produces it. If, however, we were to believe in a permanent cause, it would be quite contradictory to believe at the same time in liberation."

The Sāṃkhyas believed that the primal substance manifests samsara and that the Self, which is supposed to be a permanent entity, experiences the happiness and suffering in samsara. Through meditation upon the instructions of a spiritual teacher, the Self realises that all phenomena are manifestations of the primal substance. With this realization, all the primal substance's manifestations dissolve, leaving the Self alone. This state is what the Sāṃkhyas considered to be liberation. All this is quite contradictory. If we believe that the cause of samsāra, the primal substance, is permanent, how can we explain liberation?

6.31.
All things, then, depend on other things,
And these likewise depend; they are not independent.
Knowing this, we will not be annoyed
At things that are like magical appearances.

This is why we say that all beings are influenced by other things, meaning their own emotions, and are thus not independent. The process of cause leading to result is due to the coming together of conditions. Nothing is independent. If we understand this, then the happiness and suffering we normally perceive as real and solid will be seen as something insubstantial, like magical illusions. In light of this, we should try not to be angry with anyone.

Some people might ask, If everything is an illusion, what is the use of getting rid of illusory suffering with an antidote that is itself illusory? The answer is that illusory suffering is the result of causes and conditions that are also illusory. Even though pain is illusory, we still suffer from it, and we certainly do not want it. The same is true of happiness. It is an illusion, but it is still something we want. Thus, illusory antidotes are used to get rid of illusory sufferings, just like a magician uses one magical illusion to counteract another. This is, in fact, an important point, which is explained in greater detail in the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicharyāvatāra*.

6.33.
Thus, when enemies or friends
Are seen to act improperly,
Remain serene and call to mind
That everything arises from conditions.

Let us consider that everything, whether friendly or hostile, is an illusory display, and try not to react with either attachment or anger.

6.34.
If things could be according to their wish,
No suffering would ever come
To anyone of all embodied beings,
For none of them wants pain of any kind.

6.38.
Although we almost never feel compassion
For those who, through defilement,
Bring about their own perdition,
What purpose does our anger serve?

If we all had a choice between happiness and suffering, no one would choose suffering, and there would be no suffering in this world. But because everything is interdependent and subject to other causes, both happiness and suffering exist. People suffer without wanting to. And when the mind is not controlled, when we are influenced by hatred, we even harm ourselves. If we can harm ourselves with such hatred, we can certainly harm others.

6.39.
If those who are like wanton children
Are by nature prone to injure others,
There's no reason for our rage;
It's like resenting fire for being hot.

6.40.
And if their faults are fleeting and contingent,
If living beings are by nature mild,
It's likewise senseless to resent them—
As well be angry at the sky when it is full of smoke!

We must be compassionate and never angry toward those who harm themselves. And when others harm us, we should check whether it is in their nature to do harm or simply something temporary. If it is their nature, then it is no use getting angry with them. If it is just a temporary thing,

then it is not their nature that is bad, and they are simply harming us because of temporary influences. So again, it is no use getting angry with them.

If someone uses a weapon to injure us, the actual thing that hurts us is the weapon. What hurts us indirectly is the person's anger. So if we must be angry, we should be angry with the weapon or with the anger that is the reason for the weapon's being used. Take away the person's weapon and anger, and there is no one left to be angry with.

Another condition of the harming process is one's own body, which is the physical basis for suffering.

> 6.43.
> Their weapons and my body—
> Both are causes of my torment!
> They their weapons, I my body brandished;
> Who then is more worthy of my rage?

As everything is due to several causes, being angry with only one of those causes does not make sense.

> 6.47.
> Those who harm me rise against me—
> It's my karma that has summoned them.
> And if through this these beings go to hell,
> Is it not I who bring their ruin?

The wrongs other people do to us are the direct result of our past actions. These actions have in fact caused our adversaries to harm us. From this point of view, it is we who are harming our opponents, for in the future they will suffer because of the harmful act we ourselves have instigated.

When others harm us, it gives us the chance to practice patience and thus to purify numerous negative actions and to accumulate much merit. Since it is our enemies who give us this great opportunity, in reality they are helping us. But because they are committing negative actions and we are the cause of these, we are actually harming them. So if there is anyone to get angry with, it should be ourselves. We should never be angry with our enemies, regardless of their attitude, since they are indeed useful to us.

One might therefore wonder whether, by thus causing our enemies to accumulate negative actions, we accumulate negative actions ourselves and whether our enemies, in so helping us to practice patience, have accumulated positive actions. This is not the case. Although we have been the cause for their negative actions, by our practicing patience, we actually accumulate merit and will not take rebirth in the lower realms. It is we who have been patient, and that does not help our enemies. On the other hand, if we cannot remain patient when we are harmed, then the harm done by our enemies will be of no help to anyone. Moreover, by losing patience and getting angry, we transgress our vow to follow the discipline of a Bodhisattva.

> 6.52.
> Because the mind is bodiless
> It cannot be destroyed by anyone.
> Because of mind's attachment to the body,
> This body is oppressed by pain.

As the mind is not a material thing, no one can harm it. When others say unpleasant things to us, they do not hurt us physically. If we really think about this, there is nothing that is hard to bear. We might think that if we show tolerance when people say nasty things to us, it will be thought that what they are saying is true and the resulting damage to our reputation will hamper our success in life. But there is nothing wrong with that. However much fame and praise we get, we can only enjoy it for this life. On the other hand, if we get angry with others, thinking they are damaging our reputation and success in this life, the negative actions we thus accumulate will follow us in our future lives.

> 6.62.
> And if, when people slander us,
> We claim our anger is because they injure others,
> How is it we do not resent
> Their slander when it's aimed at someone else?

When people say unpleasant things about us, if it is the nasty things in themselves that make us angry, then we should get angry also when nasty things are said about others. For the case is the same as far as these unpleasant things are concerned. But when unpleasant things are said about other people, what usually happens is that we attribute the criticism to causes that do not concern us and we remain indifferent. Why do we not apply the same argument when we ourselves are the object of criticism? **When**

someone influenced by negative emotions says nasty things about us, why do we allow ourselves to get angry? It is, after all, negative emotions, not people, that are responsible for the attack. And again, if we are not angry when other people are criticised, it follows that we should also tolerate people insulting the Buddha, breaking statues, burning down monasteries, slandering great teachers, and so on.

6.64.
Even those who vilify and undermine
The Sacred Doctrine, images, and stupas
Are not proper objects of our anger.
Buddhas are themselves untouched thereby.

6.74.
For sake of gaining all that I desired,
A thousand times I underwent
The tortures of the realms of hell—
Achieving nothing for myself and others.

6.75.
The present aches are nothing to compare with those,
And yet great benefits will come from them.
These troubles that dispel the pain of wanderers—
It's only right that I rejoice in them.

If, for example, a person condemned to death were to have his life spared in exchange for having his hands cut off, he would feel very relieved. Similarly, **when we have the chance to purify a great suffering by enduring a slight injury, we should accept it. If, unable to bear insults, we get angry, we are only creating worse suffering for the future. Difficult though it may be, we should try instead to broaden our perspective and not retaliate.**

We have been and are still going through endless suffering without deriving any benefit whatsoever from it. **Now that we have promised to be goodhearted, we should try not to get angry when others insult us. Being patient might not be easy. It requires considerable concentration. But the result we achieve by enduring these difficulties will be sublime.** That is something to be happy about!

6.79.
When praise is heaped upon your qualities,
You're keen that others should be pleased thereby.
But when the compliment is paid to others,
You feel no inclination to rejoice as well.

When people we do not like are praised, we normally become jealous. This is a mistake. When good things are said of others, we should try to join in. Then we too may get a little happiness. **So why not rejoice? If we can rejoice and feel a sense of satisfaction when those we dislike are praised, the happiness we have is truly positive and approved by the Buddhas. When we practice like this, even our enemies come to appreciate us.** This is one of the best ways of gaining others' respect.

6.80.
You who want the happiness of beings
Have wished to be enlightened for their sake.
So why should others irk you when
They find some pleasure for themselves?

If we cannot appreciate and rejoice in the happiness someone else might have in praising other people, in the end we will be unable to tolerate even the slightest joy in anyone else. If that is the case, we might just as well give up anything that helps others and never even make gifts, refusing to accept anything that might please them. If we enjoy being praised, it is wrong for us to be irritated when someone else is praising others and deriving pleasure from doing so.

6.83.
If even this you do not want for beings,
How could you want Buddhahood for them?
And how can anyone have bodhichitta
Who is angry when another prospers?

As we have taken the vow to attain omniscience for the sake of all beings, when these same beings have a little happiness on their own account, it makes sense to rejoice rather than to be irritated. We have made ourselves responsible for dispelling all suffering and accomplishing all happiness, so when others are happy, our responsibility actually becomes lighter. But if we cannot bear others being happy, how can we pretend to be seeking Buddhahood?

When things are not going well for someone we dislike, what is the point in rejoicing? It does not make his present suffering any worse, and even if it did, how sad it would be that we should wish such a thing.

6.90.
Veneration, praise, and fame
Serve not to increase merit or my span of life,
Bestowing neither health nor strength
And nothing for the body's ease.

Simply being praised is of no substantial help at all: it does not increase people's good fortune, nor does it make them live any longer. If temporary pleasure is all you want, you might as well take drugs. Yet many people invest much money and even deceive their friends so as to win status. This is quite stupid. Their status and fame do not really help much in this life and do nothing for future lives. There is no point in being happy if we are famous or unhappy because people speak ill of us.

6.93.
Children can't help crying when
Their sand castles come crumbling down.
My mind is so like them
When praise and reputation start to fail.

6.94.
Short-lived sound, devoid of intellect,
Can never in itself intend to praise me.
I say that it's the joy that others take in me,
It's this that is the cause of my delight.

6.95.
But what is it to me if others take delight
In someone else, or even in myself?
Their pleasure's theirs and theirs alone.
No part of it is felt by me.

Nice words of praise are devoid of mind: they have no wish to say good things about us. The good intentions other people have of praising us are their good intentions, not ours! If we are happy because others have pleasant things to say about us, then we should also be happy when they say the same about our enemies. We should treat everyone equally.

6.98.
Praise and compliments distract me,
Sapping my revulsion with samsara.
I start to envy others their good qualities
And thus all excellence is ruined.

Praise, if you think about it, is actually a distraction. For example, in the beginning one may be a simple, humble monk, content with little. Later on, people may say flattering things like, "He's a lama," and one begins to feel a bit more proud and to become self-conscious about how one looks and behaves. Then **the eight worldly preoccupations[36] become stronger, do they not? Praise is a distraction and destroys renunciation.**

Again, at first when we have little, we do not have much reason for a sense of competition with others. But later, when the "humble monk starts to grow some hair," **he becomes conceited, and as he becomes more influential, he vies with others for important positions. We feel jealous of anyone who has good qualities, and this in the end destroys whatever good qualities we ourselves have. Being praised is not really a good thing, and it can be the source of negative actions.**

6.99:
Those who stay close by me, then,
To damage my good name and cut me down to size—
Are surely there protecting me
From falling into realms of grief.

As our real goal is enlightenment, we should not be angry with our enemies, who in fact dispel all the obstacles to our attaining enlightenment.

6.101.
They, like Buddha's very blessing,

[36] Eight Worldly Concerns: Gain & loss; Pleasure & pain; Praise & blame; Fame & disgrace. See Buddhism Glossary Advanced.

Bar my way, determined as I am
To plunge myself headlong in sorrow:
How can I be angry with them?

6.102.
I should not be irritated, saying,
“They are obstacles to my good deeds.”
For is not patience the supreme austerity,
And should I not abide by this?

It is no use excusing ourselves, saying that our enemies are preventing us from practicing and that that is why we get angry. **If we truly wish to progress, there is no practice more important than patience. We cannot pretend to be practitioners if we have no patience.**

If we cannot bear the harm our enemies do to us and instead get angry, we are ourselves the obstacle to achieving an immensely positive action. **Nothing can exist without a cause, and there can be no practice of patience without there being people who wrong us. How, then, can we call such people obstacles to our practice of patience, which is fundamental to the Mahāyāna path? We can hardly call a beggar an obstacle to generosity.**

There are many reasons for charity; the world is full of people in need. On the other hand, those who make us angry and test our patience are relatively few, especially if we avoid harming others. So when we encounter these rare enemies, we should appreciate them.

6.107.
So, like a treasure found at home,
That I have gained without fatigue,
My enemies are helpers in my Bodhisattva work
And therefore they should be a joy to me.

When we have been patient toward enemies, we should dedicate the fruit of this practice to them, because they are the causes of it. They have been very kind to us. We might ask, Why should they deserve this dedication when they had no intention of making us practice patience? But do objects need to have an intention before they are worthy of our respect? The Dharma itself, which points out the cessation of suffering and is the cause of happiness, has no intention of helping us, yet it is surely worthy of respect.

We might think, then, that our enemies are undeserving because they actively wish to harm us. But if everyone were as kind and well-intentioned as a doctor, how could we ever practice patience? And when a doctor, intending to cure us, hurts us by amputating a limb, cutting us open, or pricking us with needles, we do not think of him as an enemy and get angry with him. Thus, we cannot practice patience toward him. But enemies are those who intend to harm us, and it is for this reason that we are able to practice patience toward them.

6.111.
Thanks to those whose minds are full of malice
I engender patience in myself.
They therefore are the causes of my patience,
Fit for veneration, like the Dharma.

6.112.
And so the mighty Sage has spoken of the field of beings
As well as of the field of Conquerors.
Many who brought happiness to beings,
Have passed beyond, attaining to perfection.

There are two fields through which we can accumulate merit: beings and Buddhas. It is with the aid of beings, wretched though they are, that we can accumulate positive actions, develop bodhichitta, practice the six perfections, and attain the qualities of nirvana.

Without beings we cannot have compassion, and without compassion we cannot achieve supreme enlightenment but will rather fall into the extreme of nirvāṇa. So the attainment of supreme enlightenment and the understanding we gain on the path are dependent on beings just as much as on the Buddhas. It is a mistake to separate them, saying the Buddhas are superior and beings are inferior. As they are both equally necessary for our attainment of enlightenment, why do we not respect beings as much as we do Buddhas?

6.114.
Not in the qualities of their minds
But in the fruits they give are they alike.
In beings, too, such excellence resides,

And t**herefore beings and Buddhas are the same.**

Of course, they are not equal in their qualities. But in the sense that beings have the potential to assist in our accumulating merit and gaining enlightenment, we can say that they are equal.

6.119:
The Buddhas are my true, unfailing friends.
Boundless are the benefits they bring to me.
How else may I repay their goodness
But by making living beings happy?

6.122.
Buddhas are made happy by the joy of beings.
They sorrow, they lament when beings suffer.
By bringing joy to beings, then, I please the Buddhas also;
By wounding them, I wound the Buddhas too.

If we really take refuge in the Buddhas, then we should respect their wishes. After all, in ordinary life it is normal to adapt in some way to one's friends and respect their wishes. The ability to do so is considered a good quality. It is truly sad if, on the one hand, we say that we take refuge with heartfelt devotion in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, but on the other hand, in our actions, we contemptuously ignore what displeases them. We are prepared to conform to the standards of ordinary people but not to those of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. How miserable! If, for example, a Christian truly loves God, then he should practice love for all his fellow human beings. Otherwise, he is failing to follow his religion: his words and deeds are in contradiction.

6.127
This very thing is pleasing to the Buddhas' hearts
And perfectly secures the welfare of myself.
This will drive away the sorrows of the world,
And therefore it will be my constant work.

The ambassadors of a king or president, for example, have to be respected, however unimpressive they may look, because they represent a whole country. Similarly, **all beings, wretched as they may be, are under the protection of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. So by directly harming beings, we indirectly pain the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.** This is something we should be very careful about.

If we can please beings, it goes without saying that this will contribute toward our attaining omniscience. Even in this life, we will be happy and relaxed, well thought of, and have many friends. In future lives we will be good-looking, strong, and healthy, and we will be reborn in the higher realms, with the eight qualities that are the result of positive actions. Under such favourable conditions we will eventually attain enlightenment. So helping others is fundamental on the path to Buddhahood.

This very important chapter on patience is the foundation for the eighth chapter, which shows how we can benefit others through understanding the qualities of altruism and the disadvantages of egotism.

In general it is the very notion of enemies that is the main obstacle to bodhichitta. If we can transform an enemy into someone for whom we feel respect and gratitude, then our practice will naturally progress, like water following a channel cut in the earth.

To be patient means not to get angry with those who harm us and instead to have compassion for them. That is not to say that we should let them do what they like. We Tibetans, for example, have undergone great difficulties at the hands of others. But if we get angry with them, we can only be the losers. This is why we are practicing patience. But we are not going to let injustice and oppression go unnoticed.