

**The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment**  
**(Lam Rim Han Mo)**  
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As to how you are to act when you joyously persevere at eliminating what is to be eliminated, *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* states:

As a seasoned warrior approaches  
A sword-fight with an enemy,  
I shall parry the blows of the afflictions  
And strongly strike the afflictions, my enemies.

For example, when seasoned warriors – the adepts who are accustomed to the activity of fighting battles - enter into a sword fight, etc., with their enemy, they do not put value only on destroying their opponent. Rather, *they must accomplish two things – skillfully avoiding the blows of weapons directed at them and destroying their opponent. Likewise, when practitioners battle their afflictions, they must persevere as they become proficient in two things – taking defensive precautions and thus avoiding a wound to their mine, and, on the offensive, destroying the afflictions by applying their remedies.* For, otherwise, while they may use the remedy to stop the activity of one portion of the afflictions, or else they develop a great fault in their mind so that the harm of the afflictions and the creation of virtue are equal, in which case it will be hard to make further progress in the virtuous practice of applying the remedy.

To cite an example, some people may think that knowledge is most important for practicing the teaching and make knowledge alone crucial. When they then inquire into the teachings, they dispel by means of study the confusion of ignorance, but meanwhile – because they were not cautious about the other afflictions – their mind-stream is utterly ruined by the stain of wrong behavior. Other people may think that disciplining the mind is much more important than knowledge and thus emphasize meditation. Casting away caution about the enemy, confusion, they neither study nor learn the teachings, so *they become greatly confused about engaging in what is to be adopted and rejecting what is to be cast aside under the rules of the vows they have taken and are thus continually overcome by infractions.*

If in battle your sword were to fall from your hand, you would without hesitation immediately retrieve it out of fear for your life. *Likewise, when you battle the afflictions and lose the weapon of mindfulness (which does not forget the subjective and objective aspects of engaging in what is to be adopted and rejecting what is to be cast aside), you must immediately reapply mindfulness out of fear of falling into miserable realms.* *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* says:

If you drop your sword in battle,  
Out of fear, you quickly pick it up.  
Likewise, if I lose my weapon of mindfulness,  
In fear of hell, I quickly retrieve it.

The protector Nāgārjuna [in his *Friendly Letter*] also taught the great importance of mindfulness:

Oh lord, the Sugata declared mindfulness of the body  
To be the one path to follow.  
Hold fast to it and guard it.  
When mindfulness declines, all virtues perish.

Furthermore, *regarding the object to which mindfulness attends, mindfulness apprehends an object that wisdom has fully discerned; mindfulness does not distinguish its object on its own.*

*Question:* What does wisdom discern?

*Reply:* In general wisdom discerns everything to be adopted and everything to be cast aside as explained in scripture; in particular it discerns what is to be adopted and what is to be cast aside according to the vows that you have taken. Therefore, once you apply mindfulness and vigilance to these, you will complete your practice; you will not be successful by just applying mindfulness and vigilance within the narrow confines of attention to an object of meditation.

What is more, when warriors are in a battle, they strive from the beginning not to lose their sword; when by chance they do drop it they pick it up immediately. These two actions rest on a fear of being killed that is not mere words. Likewise, *those who cultivate the path are afraid to lose the mindfulness that does not forget what is to be adopted and what eliminated; even if they do lose it, they immediately reapply it.*