

Bodhicharyāvatāra

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་བའི་སྣོད་བ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།།

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Session 3

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REFUGE - BODHICITTA - MANDALA - REQUEST for Teachings

MEDITATION

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|| TSE-CHIG MÖ-DANG GÜ-PAY DÜD-DO DRAL-MED THUG-JEY KYONG-WAR-DZÖD ||

Good morning everyone, let us appreciate the present moment and the fact that we can pursue our study of the precious Dharma, currently the Bodhicaryāvatāra from Shantideva.

In the previous session, we completed the Stanza 4 of the first Chapter-, Shantideva was reminding us of the qualities of the precious human body as a basis for the generation of Bodhicitta.

In the next stanza, we will be then reminded of the qualities of the mind that serve as a basis for engendering Bodhicitta.

Stanza 5

***Just as a flash of lightening on a dark, cloudy night,
For an instant, brightly illuminates all.
So, in this world, through the might of the Buddhas,
A positive attitude rarely and briefly appears.***

L1. - L2. Shantideva uses the example of the deep sunless night at new moon, with a sky covered by thick clouds hiding the stars, when suddenly, everything is at once illuminated by a flash of lightning.

Our present situation is like this type of night, as the sun of primordial wisdom does not shine. Ignorant of what to do and what to avoid, beings are in a state of profound darkness. On top of this, the sky above our heads is covered with clouds. The terms “cloudy night”: refer to the diverse types of obscuration brought about by our indulgence towards the mind poisons. These clouds impeach us to manifest the luminosity of our mind.

L3. - L4. Nevertheless, in such circumstances the desire or willingness to do something good and positive arise by the simultaneous occurrence of the Buddhas’ aspirations and the merit of beings accumulated in the past. In this way, virtuous thoughts arise occasionally in the minds of ordinary, worldly beings.

Regarding these occurrences, Patrul Rinpoche states that they are fleeting impulses and they do not happen often (perhaps once in a hundred times, or twice in a thousand). They are extremely rare.

Stanza 6

***Thus, constructive behaviour is constantly weak,
While negative forces are extremely strong, and most unbearable.
Except for a full bodhichitta aim,
Can anything else constructive outshine it?***

As was just said, virtuous thoughts of wishing to accomplish something good are ephemeral and weak, like the flickering of lightning. On the other hand, evil or non-virtuous thoughts are like the thick darkness of the night.

They are so strong that they can throw us into the lower realms. In this way, they are said to be unbearable. They are also most difficult to reverse. Except for the precious mind of perfect bodhichitta, which shines brilliantly like the sun, what other ordinary virtue can overcome them? There is none.

Stanza 7

**The Kings of the Sages, having thoroughly reflected for many eons,
Have seen this very mind to be of best help,
For by it, limitless masses of beings
Will quickly and easily attain Supreme Bliss.**

The reason for saying this is that for many ages—three countless aeons and more—the powerful Sages, the perfect Buddhas, deeply reflected one-pointedly on one thing alone: the means to bring numberless beings to immediate benefit and ultimate bliss.

And they came to find something that purifies evil committed in the past, that severs the continuum of evil to come, that overwhelms the defiled emotions of the mind, that nurtures and increases the tiny roots of virtue, and that brings the final achievement of great enlightenment.

And seeing its benefit, they have taught it to disciples who might be trained. It is bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment—the one factor that throughout the three times and for countless multitudes of beings secures easily and without effort an immediate benefit in the present moment and ultimately the supreme happiness of unsurpassed buddhahood.

Stanza 8

**Those who wish to destroy the hundreds of sufferings of compulsive existence,
Those who wish to dispel the sorrow of limited beings,
And those who wish to enjoy the hundreds of states of much happiness,
Will never give up the bodhichitta aim.**

Consequently, for those who wish and strive to halt the many ills of their own existence (the sufferings of birth, sickness, aging, and death), and for those who wish to clear away the sorrows of other beings in this and future lives—in short, for those who wish that, both now and ultimately, the myriad kinds of bliss be enjoyed by everyone, themselves and others—bodhichitta is the method to adopt.

It must be seized by the mind and never relinquished.

Stanza 9

**The moment miserable beings bound in the prison
Of uncontrollably recurring samsara develop a bodhichitta aim,
They're called spiritual offspring of the Blissfully Gone
And become figures to be honoured by the gods of this world, as well as by men.**

L1. - L2. Whether men or women, young or old, or whether possessing a high or low position in society, whoever bound by the chains of karma and defilement, were till then languishingly stuck in the prison of samsara; if the jewel of bodhichitta arises in their minds, **L3. - L4.** They instantly undergo a change of identity: From this time on, they are crowned with the name “Child of the Sugatas.” They are called Bodhisattvas, heroes and heroines of enlightenment. Their status changes: they become objects of reverence and offering for the entire world, both gods and human beings. They are moreover said to be worthy of reverence even by the Buddhas themselves, for the latter have bodhichitta as their master.

From now on, Shantideva will show the benefits of Bodhicitta by means of a series of examples.

The first example is the example of alchemy, showing that bodhichitta leads to the attainment of buddhahood:

Stanza 10

**Like the supreme creation of a gold-making elixir,
This unclean body, having been taken, will be transformed**

**Into the priceless gem of a Triumphant One's body.
So, firmly gain hold of what's known as bodhichitta.**

Here, bodhichitta is described using an example taken from alchemy, the point of comparison being the transformation of something bad into something good. By means of the supreme elixir of the alchemists (the gold-producing mercury), a single ounce of iron may be transmuted into a thousand ounces of pure gold.

In the same way, if, with bodhichitta, one lays hold of this lowly human body composed of numerous impure substances, and if, instead of rejecting it as the Shravakas do, one adopts it throughout the course of many lifetimes to secure the welfare of others, this human body will itself become the body of the Buddha.

It becomes something endowed with unimaginable qualities of excellence: a priceless wish-fulfilling jewel that protects from all the drawbacks of samsara and nirvana and grants the supreme perfection of the twofold aim.

Since it can affect such an extraordinary transformation, the extraordinary elixir of bodhichitta is something to be tightly grasped, never to be relinquished. Shantideva exhorts us therefore to pledge ourselves to take hold of it.

The next example is comparing Bodhichitta to a Jewel, showing bodhichitta's great worth:

Stanza 11

**Since the immeasurable mind of the sole Navigator for wandering beings
Has (seen) its precious worth upon examining fully;
Please, anyone wishing to be parted from the plights of wandering beings:
Gain hold, truly firmly, of (this) gem, bodhichitta.**

The image adopted here is that of merchants journeying to an island somewhere in the ocean. They rely on a captain, in other words, a skilful leader, and hold in high esteem the jewels that he has appraised.

In the same way, those who wish to make the voyage to the isle of liberation and omniscience first rely on the only guide, the peerless Buddha. With his boundless knowledge of omniscience, he has examined well, without error or confusion and for aeons of time, all the sublime teachings.

And he has seen that, since bodhichitta is that by which buddhahood itself is obtained, it is supremely beneficial and more precious than any other teaching. For this reason, he has taught it to those who might be trained. Therefore, those who wish to dispel all the sufferings implicit in the condition of beings wandering in the six realms must take to heart this precious mind of enlightenment. And they must do this properly according to the three stages of preparation, actual commitment, and conclusion. They must hold to it tightly and constantly with mindfulness, vigilant introspection, and carefulness, without ever letting it go.

The third example is the example of the miraculous fruit-bearing tree, showing that bodhichitta's root of virtue is inexhaustible and constantly increases

Stanza 12

Everything else that's constructive resembles the plantain tree:

Having given birth to its fruit, it's depleted.

But the tree of bodhichitta forever bears fruit

And, never depleted, it grows ever more.

All other virtues of whatever kind that are not nourished by bodhichitta are like the plantain tree, which bears fruit only once. When the fruit ripens, the tree gives nothing more and dies from its roots.

Likewise, virtuous action tending to happiness gives its result in the form of high rebirth in samsara, but then it dwindles and is exhausted. Furthermore, the virtue of the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas ripens as the exhaustion of all the aggregates, which disappear without leaving any remainder.

By contrast, virtue that is infused with bodhichitta is like a perfect, miraculous fruit-bearing tree, the fruits of which never vanish but become ever more plentiful. Even after giving its fully ripened effect in the form of abundant but temporary happiness in the divine and human states, it is still not exhausted. Its (karmic) effects, similar to the cause continue to grow and increase without end, until a vast result is finally produced: the mass of merit that constitutes the body of a Buddha.

Let us now rest for a little while and dedicate this session to the benefit of all. May all manifest their true essence of a Buddha.

Tashi Deleg!

