

Bodhicharyāvatāra

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འདྲེན་པ།

by Venerable Lama Gelong Sangyay Tendzin

Session 5

January 2, 2020

We take Refuge, develop Bodhicitta, present unlimited Mandala Offering. And request the teachings with a noble state of mind.

Lama invokes the Buddha and lineage's blessings inviting the guests for the teaching.
Good morning everyone,

First, let me wish you happy 2021. Let us value the present moment pursuing our study of the precious Dharma. We are currently engaged in the study of the Chapter One of the Bodhicharyāvatāra, which is comprised of 36 stanzas.

As mentioned yesterday by His Holiness Karmapa, on the fifth day teaching the Four Dharmas of Gampopa, such precious teachings, and the Bodhicharyāvatāra certainly is one of them, need to be reflected upon for us to experience their truth and tremendous value. Only thinking about in them is this way will transform us and benefit us and others.

During last session, we went through Stanzas 13 to 20: after having briefly analysed the depth of Bodhicitta, its distinct categories, Shantideva engaged in proving the benefits of bodhicitta by relying on scriptures. He thus introduced us to [The Sutra of Subahu's Request](#), which I again recommend you to read wouldn't you have yet done so.

In the next stanzas, Shantideva will prove the benefits of Bodhicitta by reasoning. He does so in two steps, first demonstrating the benefits of the Bodhicitta of Intention or Aspiration with the next six stanzas then pursuing with establishing by reasoning the benefits of Bodhicitta in Action.

The understanding of the Law of Karma Cause and Effect is an extremely hidden object of knowledge as it requires the penetrating insight and the unobstructed vision of an omniscient Buddha. The karmic principle cannot be demonstrated by reasoning.

Consequently, we can only distinguish between what is to be done and what is not to be done by trusting in the pure teaching of the Conqueror. Nevertheless, since the Buddha repeatedly praised the immense benefits of bodhichitta, these benefits may be logically deduced and are thus established. The text therefore makes as if to supply a reasoned demonstration.

Kenpo KunPel in his commentary narrates the following example about the complexity of the Karmic principle:

“Once upon a time, when the son of Vallabha the householder -the son who was called ‘Daughter’ - was setting off on a sea voyage in search of jewels, his mother wept and caught hold of the hem of his clothes. “*Your tears,*” he cried, “*will bring me bad luck on the journey.*” And with that, he kicked his mother in the head.

During his voyage, ‘Daughter’ was shipwrecked, but holding fast to a spar, he was washed ashore on an island. He came to a town called Sukha and gradually moved on to other places, until finally he had to undergo the unbearable pain produced by an iron wheel spinning on his head.

But then he thought to himself, “*May the pain of other beings who are suffering for having kicked their mothers in the head ripen upon me. May they not experience it.*” At that very moment, his torture ceased, and such was his bliss that he rose in the air up to the height of seven palm trees. After his death, he was born among the gods.

Remember the example of the life of Sister Palmo in the NyungNay teachings. There also, as a thief in the forest, encountering a yogi and receiving the practice and initiation of Chenrezig, brought results as her being born as a princess. But then the mischievous actions as a thief resulted in this karma being spoiled by suffering leprosy.

It is difficult to predict the result of the Law of Karma Cause and Effect through reasoning. Why is it so? It is because so many factors play a role in producing karma. Both in the experience of body, speech and mind of every individuals involved but also in the numerous factors such as intent, effort, achievement and rejoicing. It also is that a situation can be the result of several actions of the past coming together simultaneously.

In conclusion, this example shows the benefit of engendering the Bodhicitta in aspiration. Folling stanzas will demonstrate this by way of reasoning.

Stanza 21:

**If having a thought to be of help,
Even thinking, “May I relieve limited beings
Merely of headaches,”
Comes to have fathomless positive force,**

If one engenders the compassionate wish to soothe, with medicines for example, the aching heads of just a few people, this altruistic wish—even if it is ineffective—is productive of unbounded merit. This comes as the causal argument to bring the next stanza statement.

Stanza 22:

**What need to mention the wish to relieve
Each and every limited being of fathomless miseries,
And the wish to help each of them
To actualize fathomless good qualities.**

Shantideva concludes by demonstrating the boundless merit of the Bodhisattvas:

They wish to remove the endless misery, in this and future lives, of all beings, who are as numerous as the sky, bringing them immeasurable goodness both in the relative level of this life as well as on the ultimate level.

Stanza 23:

**Who has such an altruistic mind as this?
Do even fathers? Do even mothers?
Do even gods and sages?
Does even Brahma have it?**

Nobody has good and altruistic attitudes equal to those of the Bodhisattvas, who want all beings to attain buddhahood. Even one’s father and mother do not have it (and parents are well known in the world for the kindness they show to their children, wishing them long lives free from sickness, full of strength, wealth, and influence).

One could argue that this is only because of their ignorance. But even the gods, who possess the five kinds of preternatural knowledge, and even the rishis or sages, who know the eighteen great sciences, are without this attitude.

Again, it might be thought that their lack of bodhicitta is due to a lack of kindness. But even Brahma himself, endowed as he is with love, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, wishing happiness

and freedom from suffering for all his subjects, is without bodhichitta i.e., the wish that they should attain buddhahood.

Stanza 24:

**If those limited beings, even in their dreams,
Have never dreamt of such a mind
Even for their own sakes,
How would it have arisen for the sakes of others?**

Our fathers, our mothers, Brahma, or anyone else have never even dreamt of having the wish to accomplish enlightenment—even for themselves. It is unreasonable to think that they could truly wish it for others.

Stanza 25:

**This extraordinary jewel of the mind,
A mind for the sake of limited beings, which in others
Doesn't arise for even their own sakes,
Crystallizes as something of unprecedented wonder.**

This bodhichitta, turned as it is toward the good of all beings, which the gods and other beings do not conceive of even in their own regard let alone that of others, is the jewel of the mind. Of all thoughts it is the most precious, for it is the highest and most noble of all mental states.

This truly wondrous attitude, never experienced before, now arises in the mind, thanks to hearing the teachings of the Mahayana and through the power of one's spiritual teacher. It is as astonishing as if the wish-fulfilling tree of the celestial realm had sprouted in the human world.

Stanza 26:

**How can the positive force of a jewel-like mind,
Which is the cause of happiness for all wandering beings
And the elixir for the sufferings of limited beings,
Be something whose measure can be taken?**

For all beings, bodhichitta is the cause of every happiness, whether in the immediate or the ultimate term. It is the great panacea, the healing draft that thoroughly dispels the sufferings and ills of every being.

How can the merit or benefits of this precious, jewel-like attitude of bodhichitta be gauged or measured? For the limits of the sky, the number of beings, the number of their sorrows, and the number of the Buddhas' qualities are all equally immeasurable.

As said in the **Viradatta grihapati paripriccha-sutra:**

*“If the merit of the enlightened mind
Were to take material form,
The whole of space would be replete with it
And even then there would be more besides.”*

With the stanza 27, Shantideva proves with reasoning the benefits of bodhichitta in action. It is said in the **Samadhiraja-sutra:**

“The constant, daily worship of the supreme ones

*With countless gifts of all that may be found
Within all buddha fields a hundred million strong—
All this is nothing when contrasted with a loving mind!”*

Stanza 27:

**If merely a thought to be of help is especially more noble
Than making offerings to the Buddhas,
What need to mention striving for the sake of the happiness
Of all limited beings without exception?**

If just the altruistic wish, the desire to bring happiness to others is far more noble than the offering of the seven precious attributes of royalty and other gifts to the Buddhas, is there any need to mention the superiority of the actual practice of the six paramitas, generosity and so on, performed with the intention of bringing all beings, as infinite as space, to the true happiness of buddhahood?

Stanza 28:

**Although having the mind that wishes to shun suffering,
They rush headlong into suffering itself.
Although wishing for happiness, yet out of naivety,
They destroy their own happiness as if it were a foe.**

Although beings want for now and in the future, to free themselves from unwanted sorrows such as shortness of life, manifold illness, poverty, and so forth), their wishes and their actions are at cross-purposes.

They kill, they steal, and they zealously indulge in the rest of the ten negative actions. By doing this, they hurry toward their miseries in this and future lives, like moths fluttering directly into a flame. Although they yearn for longevity and health and all other joys, they are ignorant of how to achieve them.

For they have no understanding of what is to be avoided and what is to be accomplished. Not only do they fail to perform the ten positive deeds, but they commit various negativities, thereby destroying their happiness as though they regarded it as their very enemy.

Stanza 29:

**For those who are destitute of happiness
And who have many sufferings,
It satisfies them with all happiness,
Cuts off all suffering,**

Consequently, when those who are endowed with great love bring temporary and ultimate bliss to beings who are destitute of happiness and its causes, when with great compassion they cut away the pain and sorrow of all who are weighed down with misery and its causes, and when with wisdom they teach them what ought to be done and what ought not to be done,

Stanza 30:

**And eliminates even their naivety.
Where is there anything comparably constructive as that?
Where is there even such a friend as that?
Where is there even such a force as positive as that?**

thereby remedying their ignorance of the karmic principle of cause and effect, what other virtue could be matched in strength with theirs? What other friends could bring beings so much good, placing them in a state of happiness, dispelling their sorrows, and teaching them what to do and what not to do? What merit is there comparable to bodhichitta?

In these verses Shantideva has been setting forth the benefits of bodhichitta.

Why is it important for us to know about them? It is because if we have the thought that, no matter what, we must give rise to bodhichitta both in ourselves and others, we will develop a yearning for whatever will engender it wherever it has been previously absent and we will intensify it where it has arisen, without ever letting it decline. Whenever we would feel down, reminding ourselves of these benefits, will support us to pursue and not give up!

When we have such an interest and longing, so great that none can prevent it—like hungry and thirsty people craving food and water—this is truly the result of understanding the benefits of bodhichitta.

On the other hand, it has been said that simply to have an intellectual knowledge of all this and to explain it to others is of no help whatsoever. We must train our minds in bodhichitta repeatedly.

In this way of seeing the benefits of Bodhicitta through ways of reasoning, is now completed. The next topic will be that of establishing the greatness of a person who possesses it.

I invite you to rest for a little while before we dedicate this session to the benefit of all.

May all beings manifest swiftly their true essence of a Buddha.

Dedication prayer | Prière de dédicace

བསོད་ནམས་འདི་ཡིས་ཐམས་ཅད་གཟིགས་པ་ཉིད།། ཐོབ་ནས་ཉེས་པའི་དག་རྣམས་པམ་བྱས་ཏེ།།

SÖD-NAM DI-YI THAM-CHÄD ZIG-PA-NYID || THOB-NAY NYEY-PA'I DRA-NAM PHAM-JAY-TE||
From the merit of this, may the state of seeing all, provide me the power to subdue all harmful wrong doings
Du mérite de ceci, que l'état de tout pouvoir voir, me donne l'aptitude de subjuguier toutes les mauvaises actions nuisibles

སྐྱེ་ག་ན་འཚེའི་བ་སྐྱོང་འཇུག་པ་ཡི།། སྲིད་པའི་མཚོ་ལས་འགོ་བ་སྐྱོལ་བར་ཤོག །

KYE-GA-NA-CHI'I BA-LONG THRUG-PA-YI || SRID-PA'I TSHO-LAY DRO-WA DROL-WAR-SHOG ||
And the turmoil that agitates it: birth, old age, illness and death. May thus the beings of the ocean of existences be freed.

Et des turbulences qui l'agitent : la naissance, la vieillesse, la maladie et la mort. Puissent ainsi les êtres de l'océan des existences être tous libérés !

Longue vie aux Maîtres et aux enseignements

སྲིད་ཞིའི་དབུ་ལ་འགྲོ་མ་ལུས་འབྲུང་བའི་གཞི།། ཐུབ་པའི་བསྟན་པ་ཡུན་རིང་གནས་པ་དང་།།

SRID-ZHI'I PAL-JOR MA-LÜ JUNG-WA'I ZHI || THUB-PA'I TÄN-PA YÜN-RING NAY-PA-DANG ||
Basis from which, all the riches of samsara and nirvana originates, may the doctrine of the Muni remain for a very long time!

Tréfonds dont sont issues toutes richesses du samsara et du nirvana, puisse la doctrine du Muni demeurer très longtemps !

དེ་འཛིན་གྲེད་པའི་སྐྱེས་བུ་དམ་པ་རྣམས་།། དབུ་ལ་འགྲོ་བྱིས་བརྒྱན་ཡུན་རིང་ཞབས་བརྟན་ཤོག །

DE DZIN JED-PA'I KYES-BU DAM-PA NAM || PAL-JOR GYI-GYÄN YUN-RING ZHAB-TÄN-SHOG ||
May the holy men who hold them enjoy a lasting existence, adorned with these riches!
Puissent les Saints hommes qui en sont détenteurs, jouir d'une existence durable, parés de ces richesses !

17 Karmapa Long life prayer | Prière de Longue vie

རྒྱལ་ཀུན་སྣང་ཇིའི་རང་གཟུགས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་བུ།། རྒྱལ་ཀུན་སྣང་ལས་གཅིག་བསྐྱེས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་བུ།།

GYAL-KÜN NYING-JE'I RANG-ZUG KARMAPA || GYAL-KÜN THRIN-LAY CHIG-DÜ KARMAPA ||
Karmapa, you embody the compassion of all Overcomers. Karmapa, you are manifesting the awakened activities of all the Victorious Ones.

Karmapa, vous incarnez la compassion de tous les Vainqueurs. Karmapa, vous manifestez les activités éveillées de tous les Vainqueurs.

རྒྱལ་ཀུན་གཞུང་འཛོལ་དབང་བསྐྱེས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་བུ།། ཨོ་རྒྱུན་འགྲོ་འདུལ་སྣང་ལས་ཞབས་བསྐྱེས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་བུ།།

GYAL-KÜN DUNG-TSHOB WANG-KUR KARMAPA || O-rGYÄN DRO-DUL THRIN-LAY ZHAB-KUR KARMAPA ||

Karmapa, you impart the power inherited from all Overcomers. Orgyèn Drodül Thrinley Karmapa, I pray that your life will be long.

Karmapa, vous transmettez le pouvoir hérité de tous les Vainqueurs. Orgyèn Drodül Thrinley Karmapa, je prie pour que votre vie soit longue.

ཚོས་རྩ་ཚེན་པོའི་སྒྲ་ཡིས་ནི།། ལྷག་བསྐྱེས་སེམས་ཅན་ཐར་བཞིན་ཤོག །

CHÖ-NGA CHEN-PO'I DRA-YI-NI || DUG-NGAL SEM-CHÄN THAR-GYID-SHOG |

By the beating of the great drum of teaching, May you free sentient beings from their torments.

Par le battement du grand tambour de l'enseignement, Puissiez-vous libérer les êtres de leur tourment.

བསྐྱེས་པ་གྲེ་བ་བསམ་ཡས་སུ།། ཚོས་སྟོན་མཛད་ཅིང་བཞུགས་གྲུར་ཅིག །

DUL-WA JE-WA SAM-YAY-SU || CHÖ-TÖN DZÄD-CHING ZHUG-GYUR-CHIG ||

For endless millions of kalpas, May you abide by revealing the teaching.

Et durant d'infinis millions de kalpas, Puissiez-vous demeurez en révélant l'enseignement.

Tashi Deleg! Happy New Year!

