

Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་པའི་སྤོང་བ་ལ་འདུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Chapter TWO (Followed)

Session 11 – April 3, 2021

Good morning,

As we recite the traditional prayers, I invite you to rest your mind in its primordial clarity, a state stripped of grasping yet, endowed with unconditional faith in Buddha Dharma. This is essential to obtain all its benefits.

REFUGE – MANDALA - REQUEST for Teachings
Lama's invocation – Calm abiding

Pursuing our study of the Bodhicaryâvatâra, we ended our previous session at the Stanza 13 of Chapter Two. To put things back into context this chapter addresses the confession of negativity. This is preceded by an extensive section on making offerings. This section is divided in three parts comprised of seven categories. So far, we went through the first four of these:

1. The Material Offerings: made of three types:
 - 1.1. Offering one's possession (Sloka 1)
 - 1.2. Offering of things unowned (Slokas 2 to 7)
 - 1.3. Offering of one's body (Slokas 8 & 9)
2. The Offering of things produced by the mind equally composed of three types of offerings of which we studied the first:
 - 2.1. The offering of a ceremonial bath (Slokas 10 to 13)

Today we will pursue with three more types of offerings, namely:

- 2.2. The offering of pleasant substances (Slokas 14 to 19)
 - 2.3. The offerings made through the power of aspiration (Slokas 20 to 22)
3. The Offering of melodious praise (Sloka 23)

So, pursuing our study of the text, now come the offerings of pleasant substances:

Chapter Two - Stanza 14:

With the best colognes, whose fragrant vapours
Rise to all the myriad worlds, I anoint the bodies
Of all you Kings of the Sages, who shine with light,
Like sluiced, refined, and polished gold.

"myriad worlds" is explained by Vasubhandu in the *Abhidharmakosha* as follows manner:
The universe consisting of four continents, of sun and moon, of Mount Meru and the heavens of the gods, of both, the *karmadhātu*, the realm of desire, and the *rupadhātu*, the realm of pure form.
All this increased a thousand times defines the chiliocosm.
Again, multiplied a thousand times is a dichiliocosm described as an intermediary universe.
And this increased once more a thousand times is a trichiliocosm.

With vessels made of precious jewels, of conch or mother-of-pearl, filled with the cool-scented water of white santal and other exquisite perfumes that penetrate even the boundless reaches of a billion worlds, the offering goddesses anoint the bodies of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

The forms of the latter shine like pure gold sixteen times refined (its brilliance intensified by various agents and burnished with a cloth of silk). Being lustrous in themselves, they radiate their light upon all that surrounds them.

It is thus that Shantideva says that he too will anoint them, so that not the slightest blemish appears. *Reflecting in the same way, we should form the wish that all beings, ourselves and others, acquire the golden skin, a mark of Buddhahood.*

Chapter Two - Stanza 15:

To you, the Kings of the Sages, foremost objects for offerings,
I present lovely flowers, such as mandarava, lotus, and water lily,
With sweet fragrance, each of them (loose) and also
Delicately strung together and exquisite in garlands.

Before the Buddhas, Lords of Sages, who are the supreme recipients of offering, we present ravishing blossoms of perfect shape and colour: the celestial mandarava, the lotus and utpala of the divine and human realms, together with all the radiant perfumed flowers that can be found in the realms of gods, nagas, and human beings, as well as in the pure lands. Flowers come showering down and go blowing in the wind as offerings to all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Tossed into the sky, they take the form of palaces, canopies, banners and parasols, victory banners and mandalas—and all this is offered to the nirmanakaya Buddhas appearing in monastic guise.

To the sambhogakaya Buddhas garlands are offered made of five kinds of flowers, worked and expertly twisted together as though by skilled garland makers, together with other adornments.

As we make such offerings, we too should wish that all beings, oneself and others, flourish with the blossoms of the seven elements that lead to enlightenment.

The seven elements leading to enlightenment are mindfulness, perfect discernment, diligence, joy, flexibility, concentration, and evenness.

Chapter Two - Stanza 16:

I offer you, as well, masses of clouds from the burning of
The choicest incense, stealing the mind, whose fragrant aroma pervades.
I offer you also a celestial feast
With a wide array of dishes, delicacies, and nectars to drink.

Billowing clouds of the choicest incense are offered to the Buddhas and their Bodhisattva-children—serpent-heart sandalwood, black akarū and the like, natural or manufactured, filling the whole of space in all directions, the merest scent of which ravishes the mind.

These clouds of burning incense, which take the shape of seed-syllables or the seven attributes of royalty, are borne on the wind in the ten directions and all is respectfully offered as a pleasing oblation to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Here the wish is made that this perfume might dispel the distress of beings and fill them with joy and that the minds of all beings, we and others, be permeated with the fragrance of ethical discipline so pleasing to the enlightened ones.

In addition, the best food is also offered: rice of a hundred savours and other dishes, drafts of nectar, the three white and the three sweet substances, and every delicacy contrived of perfect-tasting, aromatic ingredients. This food is absolutely regal, prepared in water that is fresh and unsullied.

In brief, an offering is made of all the food and drink that one could possibly desire. The Buddhas' begging bowls are filled with it and likewise all the jewelled dishes, plates, and other vessels that are presented.

Thinking like this we wish that all beings, ourselves and others, acquire the supreme food of samadhi.

Chapter Two – Stanza 17:

I offer you lamps of precious metals as well,
Arranged in rows on lotuses of gold.
On swept ground, sprinkled with scented water,
I scatter beautiful flower petals

A mental offering is made of the light of precious lamps of lapis lazuli, set within a host of beautiful, well-positioned lotuses all contrived of the purest gold, illuminating the whole world by day and by night. Each will be offered one by one, every lamp visualized as being as large as the three-thousandfold universe, its wick as high as Mount Meru, its molten butter as vast as the sea, its five-hued light filling the whole of space.

One wishes that, thanks to this offering, the ignorance of all beings of the nature of phenomena) be dissipated and that the supreme light of omniscient wisdom be gained.

Upon an even jewelled pavement, which has a chequered design, soft and yielding to the step and impregnated with sweet perfume to the thickness of an ox's hide, a carpet of ravishingly beautiful flowers is scattered, lying flat and even on the ground.

As we make such a grand offering, we wish that all beings, ourselves and others, generate Bodhichitta with an intent as immovable as the earth itself.

Chapter Two – Stanza 18:

And offer to you, with a nature of compassion,
Immeasurable palaces, enchanting with arias of praise,
Draped with dangling ornaments of pearls and gems, beautiful and sparkling, Beyond
fathom, becoming an adornment of space.

Our ability to offer as humans are most limited by our dualistic grasping. It is most helpful to rely to the teachings of the commentary by Khenpo Kunpel revealed to him by Patrul Rinpoche.

Palaces are offered that are incalculable in size, spaciousness, and design. They are made of jewels and constructed on five hundred different levels. Moreover, inside and on their outside terraces, offering goddesses sing melodious praises and play upon the lute and other instruments.

These residences are adorned with loops and pendant strings of rosy pearls and other precious gems, which hang from the mouths of ornamental lions and sea creatures set upon the pillars both inside and outside the building.

All these pendant ornaments are ravishingly beautiful; they sparkle with a myriad light and are adorned with tassels, tiny bells and mirrors, with which the extremities of the strings of pearls are likewise decorated. The mirrors reflect, and the tinkling bells describe the lives and deeds of the Bodhisattvas.

From the sandalwood spouts located at the corners of the roof, there flows a stream of scented water that collects in pools where various waterbirds play and sweetly sing. In some of the palace halls, garments are laid out; in others, refreshments of food and drink.

There are thrones and seats to sit on during the day, divans to sleep upon at night. They are piled high with many-colored cushions and pillows of heavenly fabrics.

Both by day and by night, jewelled lamps shed their radiance, shining in all directions, their light extending to the infinite reaches of space. They are thus the very ornaments of the sky. All this is offered to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas.

Thinking in this way, we wish that together with all other beings, we might reach enlightenment.

Chapter Two – Stanza 19:

Eternally, I offer to you Kings of the Sages
Stunning jewelled parasols with golden handles,
Their rims adorned with exquisite types of decoration,
With an elegant shape, erect and gorgeous to behold.

Offerings are made of parasols contrived of celestial silks and precious gems, golden shafts and exquisite jewelled fringes, unending knots, loops, and pendants. These are beautifully formed and delightful to behold. They are carried around by offering goddesses, wise horses, and elephants.

All these are constantly offered to all the Buddhas and their Bodhisattva children.

When the offering is complete, we wish that all beings, ourselves and others, be protected from the heat and vexation of samsara and the lower realms and that we all come beneath the cooling shade of the Three Jewels and the protection they bestow.

We must consider that this grand manifold offering visualized by the mind pervades the three-thousandfold universe, even though such thoughts exceed the minds' imagination.

Shantideva himself was a yogi whose spiritual practice and way of life were of extreme simplicity. As such, he did not teach extensively about actual material offerings. Offerings imagined by the mind, on the other hand, are the best way to complete the great accumulation of merit without difficulty. Such is the offering of a Bodhisattva skilled in means.

We should therefore refrain from thinking that such offerings are unimportant and instead meditate upon them repeatedly. It is not necessary, however, to concentrate upon them uninterruptedly as we do on a yidam deity.

If we hold the offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas before our minds for brief moments, it is not necessary to work hard and exhaust ourselves in order to gather a great stock of merit. Thus, the accumulations will be complete, defilements will be purified, and Bodhicitta will arise in our minds. We will understand the teachings and remember them, and every other excellent quality will arise.

It is important therefore to visualize all such offerings repeatedly, for this is of the greatest benefit and is easy to do. It is said that if we make such offerings, they are vaster and purer than any other offering deriving from wrong livelihood and negative actions, or from offerings made with pride and ostentation.

Next, Shantideva describes the Offerings made through the power of aspiration:

Chapter Two – Stanza 20:

And, in addition to this, may clouds bursting with the music
Of a symphony of offering (instruments)
And beautiful celestial musicians each take their place,
Alleviating the suffering of limited beings.

In addition, we should imagine that innumerable other magnificent offerings arise in the presence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and remain uninterruptedly: the music of all sorts of wind and percussion instruments, such as cymbals endowed with eight qualities and so on, or the sweet music of the lute like that of Druma-kinnara which made even Mahakashyapa helplessly dancing. (Mahakashyapa was one of the foremost disciples of Buddha Sakyamuni renowned for his gravity).

And there are other entrancing sounds like the strumming of the tamboura of Prabha (king of gandharvas) and clouds of music, of dance, and of tuneful songs of praise—music the mere hearing of which can soothe the troubles of beings and inspire them with happiness.

“Cloud” here has the connotation of something vast. We therefore make the wish that unbounded clouds of sweet melody, spreading to the ten directions, be constantly present before the Buddhas and their Bodhisattva children.

Chapter Two – Stanza 21:

May they shower, without interruption,
A rain of jewels, flowers, and so forth
On all you Rare Supreme Gems of the hallowed Dharma,
And on your stupa monuments and Buddha images.

We then imagine that a shower of jewels and flowers and every precious thing falls unceasingly upon the Jewel of the sacred Dharma of transmission and realization, including all the volumes of the scriptures. It is said in fact that when the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas teach the Dharma, there falls a rain of flowers—a phenomenon called the “miracle occurring when the Dharma appears.”

Therefore, let a rain of flowers fall whenever the teachings of transmission are given and received! Moreover, just as it is said that when the Buddha, the Blessed One, achieved perfect enlightenment, the gods of the Heaven of the Pure (first abode of the rupakaya) caused a rain of flowers to fall, so too, whenever the Dharma of realization arises in the mind, may there fall a rain of flowers. Let it also fall upon all the supports of offering, such as stupas, the representations of the dharmakaya.

There are eight kinds of stupa, corresponding to the eight great deeds of the Tathagata:

1. When Prince Gautama was born, King Shuddhodana ordered the Stupa of Heaped Lotuses to be built in Kapila.
2. At the time of the Buddha's enlightenment, the Stupa of Subjugation of Demons, otherwise known as the Stupa of Enlightenment, was constructed by Bimbisara and others.
3. When the Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma, his first five disciples built the Stupa of Many Auspicious Doors at Varanasi.
4. When the Buddha subdued the six non-Buddhist teachers, the Licchavis built the Stupa of Miracles in Jeta Grove.
5. When, after instructing his mother in the Heaven of the Thirty-three, the Buddha returned to the human realm at a place called Shankashya, the local people erected the Stupa of the Descent from the Heavens.
6. When the Buddha repaired a schism in the sangha, the Stupa of Reconciliation was constructed in Venu Grove.
7. When the Buddha blessed the composite of his bodily form (in order to extend his lifespan), the Stupa of Victory was built by the Malla people in Vaishali.
8. The Parinirvana Stupa was erected, also by the Malla people, in Kushinagar.

We wish that a rain of gems, flowers, perfumes, various garments, ornaments, grains, and medicines fall in an unceasing stream of offering upon all these representations. If our ethical discipline is pure,

we will certainly accomplish all our aspirations. And even if this does not happen, we will be benefited.

Samantabhadra's "Clouds of offerings."

The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra emanated from his heart hundreds of thousands of millions of many-colored lights, equal in number to the grains of dust in unnumbered buddhafi elds. At the end of each ray, he again visualized a form of himself and from the heart of each emanation, the same number of light rays were projected with another emanation of himself appearing at the end of each until they became unimaginably countless, with each emanation making an inconceivable array of offerings to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions.

Chapter Two – Stanza 22:

Just as Manjushri and others
Have made offerings to you, the Triumphant,
So do I, too, make offerings to you, my Thusly Gone Guardians,
And to your spiritual offspring.

And just as Manjughosha, Samantabhadra, and the other Bodhisattvas on the 10th Bhumi made offerings in infinite clouds of emanated gifts to the Buddhas of the ten directions, in the same way, we should aspire to make offerings to the Tathagatas our Protectors and to their Bodhisattva children.

Moreover, since cultivation of bodhicitta, meditation on compassion, remembering the words, and understanding the meaning, of the Dharma are themselves unsurpassable offerings, we should persevere in them.

Ending this extensive teaching on presenting offerings, comes the offering of melodious praise.

Chapter Two – Stanza 23:

I offer praises to you Oceans of Good Qualities,
With melodious eulogies and a sea of tongues.
May clouds of harmonies of melodious
Eulogies to you, amass with certainty all around.

To those who are endowed with excellent qualities as abundant as the ocean, designates the Buddhas, whose bodies are adorned with the major and minor marks of enlightenment, whose speech is as melodious as the voice of Brahma, and whose minds are omniscient wisdom—to them and to their Bodhisattva offspring, Shantideva offer tuneful praises and prays that clouds of tuneful eulogy rise up constantly and without fail before the Victorious ones and their Bodhisattva children.

This will be enough for today; let us now take a few minutes to experience some quietness before dedicating our session to the benefit of all.

