

In the next four stanzas, Shantideva addresses the most powerful Bodhisattvas residing on the 10th bhumi. He does so in a great state of fright at the thought of death and thinking of samsara and the lower realms that are awaiting him in his next existence.

We too must have this attitude. It is said that if, when making such an invocation, we are not genuinely afraid, we are in fact pretending and speaking falsely to the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, who are consequently saddened.

In a state of great distress, Shantideva calls first the noble Samantabhadra, and offers him his body and all his possessions.

In the same way, Shantideva offers his own body freely and without constraint to Manjughosha, foremost of all the Buddhas.

Chapter Two - Stanza 50:

**To you as well, Guardian Avalokiteshvara,
Who are undeceiving in acting with compassion,
I cry out for help in a wail of torment:
“Pray, give safe direction to me who has (such) a negative karmic force!”**

Shantideva now calls Chenrezig who manifested loving kindness for the benefit of countless beings without the slightest trace of dualistic clinging. Therefore, the qualities inspired by his compassion harmoniously show in his outer conduct : at all times he watches over beings. which is why he is called Avalokiteshvara.

With confident and irreversible faith, Shantideva cries out to him, in terror at the approach of death and the bardo. In an agony of sorrow and in deep distress, he confesses the karma accumulated through his evil deeds of body, speech, and mind. Mind is essential here:

Evil karmas arise from thoughts. Thoughts manifest because of clinging to “I” and “mine”, to self and other. Ego clinging is nothing but ignorance. It is because of this that at all times, whether we are listening, reflecting or practicing the sacred Dharma, our minds do not stay focused but run after negative thoughts of attachment and aversion.

Shantideva acknowledges his wrongdoing and implores Avalokiteshvara to protect him from his evil karma.

Chapter Two - Stanza 51:

**From Akashagarbha, Kshitigarbha,
And all you Guardians with great compassion,
I seek safe direction and, from my heart,
Cry out for help.**

Likewise, since we have taken vows but fail to keep them, we should rely on Akashagarbha, paying him homage, making offerings, and so on. This is important as Lord Buddha himself stated that to beginners on the Bodhisattva path who commit downfalls, the noble Akashagarbha is like their walking staff.

Likewise, we should invoke Kshitigarbha, the loving and caring protector of those who are destitute and in decline, such as beginners in the monastic life, whose conduct is infected with defilement and is as yet but a mere semblance of monastic discipline.

And we should call upon Maitreya and Sarvanivaranavishkambhin and all the other powerful Bodhisattvas on the tenth ground of realization, who reside in the buddha fields of the ten directions and whose prayers and compassion are extremely vast. In all such beings, we should take refuge, calling upon them by name and imploring their protection from the depths of our hearts.

Chapter Two - Stanza 52:

**I take safe direction from you, the One with a Vajra:
Upon your sight, all malevolent beings,
Such as the messengers of the Lord of Death,
Flee in panic to the four quarters (of the world).**

To Vajrapani also, the glorious Lord of Secrets, at the sight of whom the messengers and henchmen of the Lord of Death flee in panic in the four directions—to him, whose mere appearance drives away all terror, we should go for refuge with faith and devotion.

It is said that all the Buddhas of the three times, from the moment they first generate Bodhichitta until they achieve perfect enlightenment, turn the wheel of the Dharma, and pass into their parinirvana—are guarded by the glorious Vajrapani, who brandishes a blazing vajra in his hand and crushes the heads of all who try to attack them, whether in thought, word, or deed.

He is the spontaneous embodiment of the vajra-mind of all the Buddhas and has been empowered as the sovereign of the inconceivable secret of the enlightened body, speech, and mind.

For practitioners of the Mantrayana, it is essential to rely upon a yidam deity. It can be one of the Bodhisattva lords of the three lineages, or any other yidam deity to whom we feel personally drawn. One deity is sufficient and is yet necessary.

We must request the empowerment of our yidam deity and practice the appropriate visualization and mantra recitation, without ever forgetting it. We must be able to recall it whenever frightening situations arise, even at night and in our dreams. It is said that if we do so, we will have the vision of the yidam deity coming to welcome us at the moment of our deaths.

Chapter Two - Stanza 53:

**Previously, I've transgressed your advice,
But seeing now these horribly frightening things,
I take safe direction from you, and by this,
May I purge myself quickly of these fearful things.**

Shantideva confesses that he has transgressed the words of the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas, that he has failed to act virtuously and did not turn away from evil. Now that he can see the terrors of death, the bardo, and the lower realms that are in store for him, he takes refuge in the great and compassionate protectors.

Just as when you fall down, you press on the ground in order to pick yourself up. With that free-of-doubt, non-fabricated trust, he prays that he might be freed from his fear and suffering.

In regard to the power of the remedy, the main point is the development of the appropriate qualities. This means to generate in your mind an antidote that will purify its negativity. Meditating repeatedly on karma cause & effect and on our impermanence is helpful. If not sufficient, we need to counteract by cultivating a state of mind by which, negativity is purified.

If we fail to apply it out of laziness and distraction, we should meditate upon karma and impermanence. This will encourage us to apply the antidote as soon as possible.

When this understanding has been fully developed and implemented, any virtuous action, performed in conjunction with the three supreme methods (*), will act as a purification for negativity.

- (*) - The intent to do virtuous action to break with our negative behaviour.
- While acting virtuously, to maintain an attitude of regret of one's misdeeds.
- The third is to dedicate the accumulated merit to the purification of non-virtue.

When accompanied by these three methods of preparation, the action itself, and conclusion, every virtuous action serves as a confession and thus constitutes an antidote. If we do not practice in this way, we may well spend our entire lives in solitary meditation, but unless we confess and purify even our smallest faults, using the practice as an antidote, we will have to experience their karmic results.

However great may be our positive deeds, if we fail to focus on them with the intention that they act as a remedial force to our negativities, the latter will not be overcome thereby. Mindful of our negative emotions, the cause of lower rebirth, we should strive in their antidote, which is confession.

Chapter Two - Stanza 54:

**If even when scared by a common illness,
I have to act in accord with a doctor's advice,
What need to mention when perpetually afflicted
By diseases, like desire, that produce hundreds of injuries.**

Shantideva then explains us why confession is necessary.

If we are frightened by an ordinary illness, caused by unbalance of the elements ("nyepas"), we must rely on medicine prescribed by a doctor and we must put up with whatever treatment is needed to heal.

This being so, it goes without saying that, constantly afflicted from beginningless time by the diseases of the five conflicting emotions, we must follow the instructions of the Buddha, the supreme doctor. We must reject what is to be avoided and implement what is to be accomplished.

Chapter Two - Stanza 55:

**If just one of these can bring all the people
Living in this Southern Continent to ruin,
And if no other medicine to cure them
Is to be found in any direction,**

Considering that one of these negative emotions, such as craving, or one single person whose mind is infected with it, can affect all beings in the world, projecting them into the pains of the lower realms and although we were to search in all directions, there is no remedy to be found other than the sacred Dharma, that might heal the disease of the defilements...

This stanza consists in the first part of an argument leading to the next stanza giving its consequence.

Chapter Two - Stanza 56:

**Then the urge not to act in accord with the advice
Of the Omniscient Physicians concerning that,
Which can remove every painful disease,
Is something to be rebuked as extremely naive.**

The Buddha being the best of physicians who has power to heal such disease, to neglect to follow the holy teaching set forth by Him, having false ideas about it, should be admonished as extremely naïve: we would act as ignorant idiots on our side and appear as very foolish in the eyes of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas -as well as the protecting deities- who will turn from us in dislike.

As said by Nagarjuna:

*“More foolish than a man who takes foul vomit with a jewelled and golden spoon,
Are those who, having gained human birth, defile themselves with evil deeds.”*

Chapter Two - Stanza 57:

**If I need to be careful
At a small and ordinary cliff,
What need to mention at the cliff over which, I can fall
For thousands of leagues for a long duration in the joyless realms.**

Thinking of the abyss of the lower realms, the result of evil action, Shantideva stresses once more the necessity of confession and purification:

When at the top of a flight of steps or on a small and ordinary cliff, we need to pick our way with special care by fear that we might injure our heads or other limbs. It goes without saying that for fear of falling into the lower realms twenty thousand leagues below the earth -to the Reviving Hell and similar destinations and there to remain in dreadful pain for an intermediate kalpa or more-, we must act with the greatest care.

Chapter Two - Stanza 58:

**It's incorrect for me to sit at ease,
Thinking, “I won't die just today,”
For without a doubt that time will come
When I shall be no more.**

We are therefore advised to make immediate effort in virtuous living. This is the remedy. It is quite inappropriate to remain in a state of carefree nonchalance, telling ourselves that today at least we shall not die. For there is no doubt that the moment when we shall cease to be, is unpredictable!

As written by Nagarjuna in the Suhrillekha, his friendly letter to the King Sadvaha:

*“Life flickers in the flurries of a thousand ills, more fragile than the bubbles on a stream.
In sleep, each breath it departs and is again drawn in.
How wondrous that we wake up living still!”*

With seven more slokas to complete our study of the second chapter of the Bodhicaryāvatāra . Please do prepare some questions you might have and send them to me by email.

We will end here today. Let us take a few minutes to experience some quietness before dedicating our session to the benefit of all.

