

Shantideva's  
**Bodhicaryâvatâra**

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སྤྱོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin  
Session 15– May 1, 2021  
Chapter Two (Stanzas 59 to 65 + Q&A Session One)

Good morning,

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

Pursuing the confession of one's negative actions, we ended last week with the sloka 59 questioning how we. Can be sitting still instead of seeing the urgency to do so.

Chapter Two - Stanza 59:

Who can give me a state of no fear?  
How can I be freed with certainty from this?  
If I shall doubtlessly vanish,  
How can I sit with my mind at ease?

What guarantee can anyone give that we will not die today, and that death is nothing to be afraid of? There is no one who can give us such assurance, not even a Buddha. As it is said in the *Bhadrakaratri-sutra*:

*What man is sure he will not die tomorrow?  
This very day you should prepare yourself.  
The great hordes of the Lord of Death  
Are they not your faithful friends?*

It is essential to overcome our bad habits, our recurrent clinging to the objects of the senses. We are like pieces of paper that, once rolled up, always tend to curl up again.

Chapter Two - Stanza 60:

What is there left of my past experiences,  
And because of my clinging  
To whatever extra I have beyond that,  
I've been acting contrary to my mentors' advice.

In the past, there was not a single object of the senses that we have not experienced. But nothing now remains of the ephemeral pleasure arising from the contact of consciousness with its object. The experience of happiness has no enduring essence.

What is there that, different from what has gone before, does not disintegrate? Nothing! Yet here we are, clinging to, and craving for, the objects of the five senses—on account of which we do not keep ourselves from evil and the sufferings that follow.

Ignoring every difficulty and fatigue, transgressing the words of our root gurus and of the Teacher of the triple world, the Lord Buddha, and his Bodhisattva children. We must not allow this to happen!

Chapter Two - Stanza 61:

Having abandoned this lifetime  
And likewise, my relatives and friends,  
If alone I must wander in an uncertain direction,  
What use with all of my friends and foes?

When we die, we will have to go alone. And this does not just mean that we will be without servants. When we leave our lives behind, we leave our parents, our children, our parents and friends, our pleasures and possessions. All that we have will be abandoned and left behind.

Through the force of the red karmic hurricane, we will be forced away to strange destinations we know not where, from the Peak of Existence down to the Hell of Unrelenting Pain. At such a time, we have no freedom of choice and we are beyond the help of friends or the attacks of enemies. Why then make so much of all our friends and foes?

Chapter Two - Stanza 62:

"From destructive actions comes nothing but suffering.  
How can I be liberated definitely from that?"  
It's proper for me to think, day and night,  
Constantly only about that.

What *will* harm us at that moment is our own evil: the ten non-virtues that we have committed through attachment and hatred toward friends and enemies.

So, our only concern should be how can we make sure to rid ourselves of this, which alone is the cause of sorrow? This should be our daytime obsession and something that keeps us awake at night! It is thus that we should strive to confess our evil actions.

It is because of our non-virtuous actions that the qualities of study, reflection, and meditation on the teachings fail to appear in us. It is therefore vital to make an effort to cleanse our sins away.

Chapter Two - Stanza 63:

Out of naivety or simply not knowing,  
Whatever I've done that fits into being  
Either naturally disgraceful  
Or a negative act proscribed by you Buddhas,

Although there are all sorts of faults to be confessed and purified, everything may be summarized in two categories: actions that are evil by their nature and actions that are transgressions against established precepts.

An action that is naturally evil is one that is negative regardless of who commits it. On the other hand, a transgression against the precepts or rules of ethical conduct is a violation by someone who is bound by such a rule.

Since therefore he has certainly acted in this way, Shantideva says that he is ready to confess all the evil, all the ten negative actions, that he has committed not knowing what was to be done and what was not to be done: evil actions that are said to be unspeakable and actions that are wrong because they are transgressions of the precepts.

### Chapter Two - Stanza 64:

I openly admit all of them  
Directly before the eyes of you Guardians,  
Prostrating over and again, with palms pressed together  
And a mind dreading suffering.

Whatever evil he has done, he will declare it in the presence of the protectors, the compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with hands joined and with tearful eyes,

Respectfully he will bow down repeatedly, confessing all his faults and downfalls, without concealing anything. In the Tibetan text, the expression “*yang dang yang*” translated here as “*over and again*” is an expression indicating the depth of the remorse that one must feel.

### Chapter Two - Stanza 65:

Spiritual Leaders, in (light of my) taking my negative acts  
As having been misdeeds, I beseech you:  
Since this was not wholesome,  
I shall never do them again.

Shantideva concludes therefore by praying to the guides and guardians of the world, imploring them to accept him as he is, a sinful man. It has been said that we should acknowledge and declare our faults as though the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were questioning us about them.

To engage in evil action produces effects that are difficult to bear. For holy beings, such unwholesome conduct is an object of derision. Therefore, from now on, we must promise never to repeat such actions even at the cost of our lives.

When pronouncing such a resolution, we should consider that rays of many-colored light stream from the bodies of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and cleanse and purify our every fault and downfall

This concludes the present study of Chapter 2 of the Bodhicaryâvatâra.  
Let us take a few minutes before engaging in the Q&A Session.

## Chapter 2: Q&A Session One

Question:

In relation to offerings: How can we know if our offerings have been accepted?

Answer:

First, you have to understand what you mean by “knowing”. It is not about obtaining a mental confirmation corresponding to an expectation but rather a feeling of the outcome of an action. Against all expectations, the offerings must be made with pure motivation and must be clearly present in mind. Once visualized in this way, you humbly pray that they will be accepted. Buddhas do not play tricks on us, they are very compassionate. The rest is a matter of trust. Confidence in the Refuge and confidence in yourself. This comes automatically as the result of a well accomplished action.

Question:

Could Lama kindly explain more on the subject of the four maras?

Answer:

Generally speaking, maras are negative forces that prevent us from achieving our aspirations. They are of four types:

1. སྤང་པོའི་བདུད། - the mara of the aggregates symbolizes our clinging to forms, perceptions, and mental states as 'real'. The mara of the aggregates prevents one from accomplishing virtue, since if one possesses the aggregates (created by karma and destructive emotions), one falls inevitably under the sway of sickness, aging and decay; the conditions preventing one from accomplishing virtue.
2. རྩོན་མོངས་ཀྱི་བདུད། - the mara of the destructive emotions symbolises our addiction to habitual patterns of negative emotion. The mara of the destructive emotions prevents one from accomplishing virtue, since one is under the power of destructive emotions such as desire and anger. The mara of the destructive emotions are the root and subsidiary destructive emotions. These are explained in the teaching on the 51 mental events. It will however need more time to go through these here and now.
3. འཆི་བདག་གི་བདུད། - the mara of the Lord of Death symbolises both death itself, which deprives us from our precious human birth, and symbolises also our fear of change, impermanence, and death. The mara of the Lord of Death causes one to be powerless regarding the ceasing of the life-force faculty.
4. ལྷའི་སྤུའི་བདུད། - the mara of the sons of the gods symbolises our craving for pleasure, convenience, and 'peace'. The mara of the sons of the gods prevents one from accomplishing virtue through the jealousy of the desire realm's sons of the gods. In the development of Samadhi, this mara controls the emanations of others. In the subtle it is, for example, a distraction that makes it impossible to overcome one of the first three maras.

Question:

Can Lama give more precision on the 3 Supreme Methods (stanza 53)

Answer:

Let us first remember that Shantideva teaches here on the power of the remedy in the context of confessing our negative acts. He points out that if we apply the 3 supreme methods, any virtuous act whatever it is can serve to purify us.

1. We must engender the intention to practice virtue to break with our negative behaviour.
2. "Combining action with intention, while we focus on acting righteously, we must keep in mind the attitude of regret for our negative actions. It includes the actions of body, speech and mind.
3. Finally, we must dedicate the accumulated merit to the purification of these negative acts.

Accompanied by these three methods of preparation, the action itself and the conclusion, all virtuous action serves as purification and constitutes a powerful antidote to erroneous acts.

Question:

May Lama explain why there are goddesses during the offerings? What are they symbolizing?

Answer:

They symbolize emptiness. Feminine intrinsic quality is wisdom. So... empty giving. They symbolize emptiness. The offerings are manifestations of clarity, inseparable from emptiness. Emptiness-clarity. Just as their dances express compassion. Unceasing Emptiness-Clarity-Compassion.

Question:

May Lama explain what are cognitional emotions? I feel confused when I heard that they are still present on the different Bhumis.

Answer:

Accessing gnosis or cognition is different from ordinary knowledge. It is the result of penetrating insight through the development of wisdom. Each of the levels access a different level of wisdom and cognitive awareness.

