

Bodhicaryavatara

བླ་མ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་མཉམ་པ་ལྷན་དུ་བཤེས་པའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་ལྟར་།།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Session 9 - February 27, 2021

Chapter TWO

Good morning,

Let us appreciate the fact that we are once again in the auspicious and meritorious situation of listening and studying the precious Dharma.

First let us start with the traditional prayers

REFUGE

MANDALA

REQUEST for Teachings

Lama's invocation

I invite you to generate a positive mind adorned with faith to the Buddha Dharma. This is essential to get its benefits.

MEDITATION

Of the four parts that articulate the Bodhicaryavatara, we are currently studying the first part: ***The Generation of Bodhichitta Where It Has Not Previously Been Generated.***

This first part is composed of three chapters:

- **Chapter ONE: The Benefits of Bodhichitta**
- **Chapter TWO: Openly Admitting Previous Negative Acts**
- **Chapter THREE: Gaining Hold of a Bodhichitta Aim**

Having completed the study of the 36 stanzas making up the first chapter, let us now proceed with the second chapter consisting of 65 stanzas.

Chapter TWO: Openly Admitting Previous Negative Acts.

The precious bodhichitta, as described in the first chapter, is endowed with such extraordinary qualities, that it does not arise in the absence of causes and conditions:

The causes, said Nagarjuna, manifest with the fulfilment of the accumulation of merit. The best way of accumulating merit is to make offerings.

The conditions, according to Asanga, is that bodhichitta arises in a pure and limpid mind. The laying out of perfect offerings has the effect of rendering one's mind pure and limpid. It implies a proper vessel and therefore laying aside all wrong doings and ill behaviour.

The following story exemplifies this: one day, Tibetans asked Lord Atisha to grant the Bodhisattva vow. Accordingly, he instructed them to prepare offerings, which they did. However, finding the offerings insufficient, Atisha refused to give the vow.

Again, the Tibetans prepared offerings yet Atisha refused again. Finally, when they had laid out offerings on a far grander scale, Atisha declared them just sufficient and accepted to proceed.

Offerings are extremely important and specially in the current times characterized by so much self-cherishing.

One should know that according to the teachings, all one's possessions should be divided into three. One part should be set aside for one's subsistence and the other two should be used as offerings to the Three Jewels.

In this way, it is important to evaluate for oneself how much one is ready to offer to the Three Jewels without any hesitation or self-conceit (miserliness or vanity). Are we really practicing generosity? This is a question that we need to ask ourselves and adapt honestly our way of practicing generosity from the answer that comes to our mind.

Chapter 2: Stanza 1

**To gain hold of that precious mind,
I offer sincerely to you, the Thusly Gone (Buddhas),
To the stainless Rare Gem of the hallowed Dharma,
And to you, the offspring of the Buddhas, with oceans of good qualities:**

Pursuing our discussion on the topic of gaining merit through making offerings, we must consider that these offerings should be made in accordance with the “**three purities.**”

1. The first purity is about adopting a **pure motivation**. This explains the first line of the sloka: one makes the offerings to gain hold of precious bodhichitta in the mind.
2. The second purity is about the purity of the **field(s) of offering**.
 - a. The offerings are made to the Bhagavan Buddhas, those “Thusly Gone,” that is, those who have proceeded in “Thusness” i.e., in accordance with ultimate reality.
 - b. Likewise, offerings are made to the stainless, supremely rare Jewel of the sacred Dharma, which is the Truth of the Path, delivering us from attachment, and the Truth of Cessation or the state of freedom.
 - c. Finally, one makes offerings to the Bodhisattvas who possess boundless, ocean-like qualities. Talking of qualities, Bodhisattvas of the first bhumi possess twelve groups of qualities, each group consisting of a hundred qualities. On the second bhumi, they possess twelve groups of a thousand qualities. And so on.
3. The third purity is about the **offering substances** themselves. An excellent offering is one of proper provenance, immaculate quality, well-prepared and presented.

- a. Good provenance means that the offerings have not been procured through wrong livelihood or evil actions.
- b. Immaculate quality implies that
 - they are clean,
 - they are offered without pride or ostentation, and
 - they are not spoiled by niggardliness and reluctance.

Please note the following:

- If we offer the best of what you have, that means the best of all that you hold most dear and rare, the offering itself acts as an antidote to avarice.
- If, on the other hand, you make offerings of things that are a little mouldy, withered flower, damaged goods and so on, your merit will diminish and therefore it should be avoided.
 - c. Finally, the offerings should be well-arranged. As said earlier, this will render one's mind pure and limpid or lucid as well.
 - The seven offering bowls should be clean and properly filled.
 - They must be set out evenly and in an orderly fashion.
 - If they are insufficiently filled with water or grains, this will lead to poverty.
 - If they overflow, our discipline will go astray.
 - If the offered water is spilled, tumours will result, and so on.
 - The preparation and arrangement of offerings should be free of all such faults.

Moreover, when making offerings, you may consider offering of things unowned, i.e., the offering of all the wonderful riches and commodities that we see or hear about and that exist in the entire universe. It is enough simply to offer them mentally, by recalling them or bringing their names and appearances to mind. So, this is described in the next five stanzas:

Chapter 2: Stanza 2

**Whatever flowers and fruits there are
And whatever manners of medicine there are,
Whatever jewels there are in this world
And whatever pure pleasing waters there are,**

Shantideva points us that like him, we can make all kinds of marvellous offerings such as :

- Flowers such as white lotuses, Mandarava flowers, and blue utpalas—that grow in the streams and meadows of the pure buddhafi elds or in the heavens of the gods, the lands of the nagas, and the human realms.



Red Mandarava Flower



Blue Utpala

- All the fruits and grains that exist: the bilwa fruit, the mango fruit, barley, rice, wheat, and so on.
- As for medicines, amongst other things such as medicinal substances made out of stones, herbs, and roots, we can offer Benzoar, the best and most potent of medicines, together with the six excellent substances.
These are : nutmeg, bamboo manna (*), saffron, cloves, cardamom, and castor oil
- The precious jewels to be found in world : the precious wish-fulfilling gem, which satisfies every need and desire, lapis lazuli, sapphire, ruby, emerald and so forth.
- We can offer water endowed with these eight fine qualities, such as:
 - The waters of the Lake Manasarovar, together with
 - The great rivers that spill from it in the four directions
 - The Ganges to the east, traversing India and reaching Bangladesh.
 - The Indus to the south gave its name to India ; it goes into the Arabian See
 - The Oxus (AmuDarya) to the west, flows at the border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan,
 - The Tarim to the north, is an endorheic river in Xinjiang, China.

Lord Atisha spoke of the excellence of the water of Tibet, saying that the offering of it alone was enough to accumulate merit.

- The waters of the seven seas of enjoyment i.e., the waters of the seven lakes around Mount Meru, which are delighted by the nagas.

(*) a form of herbal silica obtained from female bamboo trees, 'Vanshlochan' secretes from nodes of bamboo trees. It is collected from the female bamboo tree's nodes for therapeutic uses, as used in Ayurvedic Medicine.

Chapter 2: Stanza 3

**Mountains of precious minerals and likewise
Forests and secluded delightful places,
Trees adorned and bedecked with blossoms,
And trees whose branches are laden with all sorts of excellent fruit;**

- Offer Mount Meru, the king of mountains, composed of four precious substances (diamond, lapis lazuli, ruby, emerald)
- Offer the seven ranges of golden mountains and all the other peaks.
- Offer all forest glades, pleasant solitudes encircled by groves of sandal trees, sweet and lonely places that are as clean as a mandala of turquoise and adorned with every kind of flower, places that are unfrequented by day and silent by night.
- Offer trees garlanded with different-colored blossoms, beautiful like jewelled ornaments.
- Offer all kinds of fruit trees and vines with branches bending under the weight of their many delicious fruits and grapes perfect in colour, fragrance, and taste.

Chapter 2: Stanza 4

**And from the realms of divine beings and others, fragrances,
Incense, wish-granting trees, jewel shrubs,
An assortment of wild-growing crops,
And ornamentals as well, fit to be offered,**

- Following Shantideva’s example, we can offer the scent of sandalwood and all the sweet-smelling trees to be found in the human world, as well as in the realms of the gods and the nagas.
- We can offer the natural incense of aloe, as well as perfumes contrived with human skill, and likewise every wish-granting tree, such as the celestial parijata, which satisfies every desire. This tree has a night flowering coral jasmine flower, which is very fragrant. The tree leaves have multiple medicinal properties such as curing fevers, arthritis etc.
- We can offer the precious trees of Sukhavati, composed as they are of gold and other of the seven precious minerals.
- We can also offer the many harvests of crops like salu rice, which grow without the land being ploughed or the seed being sown, and everything else that is worthy to be offered but cannot be individually named.

Chapter 2: Stanza 5

**Lakes and pools adorned with lotus
And with swans possessing a bewitching cry,
Everything that’s without an owner
To the far reaches of the infinite sphere of space**

- Again, Shantideva teaches us that we can offer lakes. Patrul Rinpoche used to advise to offer the four famous lakes of Tibet:
 1. སའུ་མ་མཚོ། - Lake Manasarovar considered as the most sacred lake by Tibetans, at the foot of Mt Kailash.



2. གའ་མ་མཚོ། - Lake Tengri Nor, also called Lake Namtsho, a salt lake at 4,718 m (15,479 ft) with a surface of 1,900 km². This salt lake is the largest lake in the Tibet Autonomous Region.



3. ཡར་འབྲུག་ཡུ་ཤོ་མཚོ། - Lake Yardrok Yutsho Lake is known for having the most beautiful water in the world.



4. སུ་ཁོ་ནོ་རྒྱལ་མཚོ། - Lake Koko Nor, the largest lake on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, which is larger than twice the Lake Namtsho. (between 4,200 and 6,000 km² depending on the season)



- We can offer immaculate turquoise lakes adorned with lotuses of five colours.
- We can offer the many lesser stretches of water embellished with lilies and resonant with the sweet and plaintive cries of waterbirds, swans and geese, with exquisite plumage of assorted colours: white as conch, yellow as gold, red as coral, and blue as turquoise.
- We can offer the brilliant light of the sun and moon rising in the east, the sweet fragrance of incense coming from the sandal groves in the south, the divine white butter offerings of the snowy mountains in the west, the blue cascading water, sparkling and pure in the north.
- And everything else, whatever there is.

These offerings, the flowers and all the rest, have four features in common:

- First, they are infinite in quantity, extending to the very limits of space.
- Second, they are untainted by negativity, for they are owned by no one, like the wealth and possessions of the people of Uttarakuru (*).

(*) In the northern cosmic continent of Uttarakuru, people are naturally endowed with ethical discipline. They are without craving since all that they could possibly wish for manifests spontaneously.

- The next two features are referred to and explained in the next stanza:

This will be it for today; let us now experience some quietness and dedicate our session to the benefit of all.

