

# Shantideva's Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

**Chapter Five: Safeguarding alertness**

**Session 33 - October 2, 2021**

Good morning, everyone.

Let us start now with the traditional prayers.

**REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS**

**Lama's Invocation | Mental Quiescence**

This is the 33rd session of our Bodhicaryâvatâra group study.

In the various topics included in the Chapter Five dealing with vigilance, the subject we are in the process of learning is that of the absolute necessity of practicing mindfulness.

- Stanza 29 introduced this theme.

- Stanzas 30-34 have given us a detailed explanation of training the mind through mindfulness and vigilant introspection.

- Stanza 35 invited us to cultivate the discipline based on the absence of negativity.

- Stanzas 36 to 54 develop this theme of disciplinary training by the purification of the actions of the body, the speech, and the mind.

We continue our study as we approach stanza 41.

**Chapter Five - Stanza 41:**

**Never letting go, for even an instant,  
The duty of my absorbed concentration,  
I shall check one by one, like that, each moment of mind,  
To see, "What's my mind engaging in?"**

Shantideva advises those who attempt to master deep concentration must, to succeed, have their minds focused solely on that goal. Moreover, even for a single moment, they must refrain from any type of distraction whatsoever.

If they find their mind wandering slightly into distraction, they must immediately look to see what it is doing instead of concentrating. And coming back to their point of focus, they must set themselves undistractedly in meditative equipoise.

**Chapter Five - Stanza 42:**

**But if I'm unable, when involved in a frightening situation,  
An offering feast, or the like, I'll let it do what's appropriate.  
Thus, it's been taught that at times of giving,  
One may stay with equanimity toward ethical discipline.**

In dangerous situations, however, when one's life is threatened for instance by wild animals, or else in times of celebration, when offerings are made to the Three Jewels, or again on the occasions when one is involved in activities the purpose of which is to bring great benefit to others—on all such occasions, when it is impossible to remain one-pointedly in meditation, one is allowed to act in the manner that seems best, provided one does so without distraction and in a spirit of mindfulness and vigilant self-examination.

For although it is taught that discipline is superior to generosity, it is nevertheless true that in times when offerings on a vast scale are being made, one may relax the lesser precepts of one's discipline—for example, the rule against making expansive gestures with one's hand or the offering of alcohol. It is written in the *Akshayamati-sutra* that in times when generosity is being practiced, certain minor aspects of discipline may be relaxed and even suspended. These must nevertheless remain “minor aspects of discipline”!

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 43:**

**Having considered and begun to do something,  
I won't think about anything other than this.  
Then, with my intentions directed at that,  
I shall accomplish that very thing first.**

Whatever we may have planned or actually begun—for example, the study or practice of the *Bodhicaryâvatâra*—we should decide that, from having begun it until the task is complete, we will not allow ourselves to think of other projects, such as all the various things that are to be recited, all the different things that we might do or study, all the places that we might visit, and so on.

When we start something—for example, the study of the present text—we should keep our minds fixed concentratedly upon it and should be determined from the beginning and for as long as necessary to strive until it is completed.

On the other hand, when we manage to achieve something, we should not rest on our laurels: When one thing is properly done, we should start on something else.

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 44:**

**Everything, this way, will get accomplished well.  
Otherwise, neither will come about.  
Also, like this, the derivative disturbing factor,  
Non-alertness will never increase.**

If we act in this way, a whole succession of tasks will be brought to term. By contrast, if we fail to follow such a plan of action—if after beginning one thing, we stray to something else—neither task will be accomplished.

As the proverb says, “Always leave one foot upon the ground; you'll fall if you lift both.” If, however, we proceed in stages as described and properly complete the earlier task before launching into the next, this will prevent the fault of inattention, the lack of introspection, which is one of the twenty lesser defilements, from growing.

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 45:**

**When various kinds of senseless talk  
And numerous varieties of wondrous entertainment  
Are happening all around,  
I shall rid myself of attraction to them.**

To comfort people such as the sick or the aged, it may be necessary to entertain them by chatting and indulging in various kinds of light conversation or to attend performances such as those that beggars put on to gain their sustenance: amusing routines with trained pets, playing music, dancing, or prestidigitation.

One does this kind of thing just to make others happy. For one's own part, one should cast aside all interest and taste for them. For it is inappropriate to take pleasure in such chatter or to be fascinated by such spectacles.

Nevertheless, when lamas and important persons attend the entertainments given by beggars and so on, they should remunerate and congratulate them.

In the next stanza, Shantideva teaches how to protect the precepts from degeneration.

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 46:**

**If, for no reason, I start digging up the earth,  
Picking at the grass, or doodling in the dirt,  
I shall immediately stop, out of dread,  
By recalling the advice of the Blissfully Gone Buddhas.**

Unless there is some important reason for their actions, Bodhisattvas, lamas, and tulkus must avoid doing anything that might cause others to waver in their faith.

Therefore, when they feel the urge to grub in the soil with their fingers or with sticks, or when they want to pull up grass or trace patterns or draw pictures on the ground simply because they cannot keep their hands from fidgeting, they should remember that the Tathagata has laid down rules specifically to discourage such behaviour.

And alarmed by the fact that transgression of such precepts will lead to the lower realms, they should immediately restrain themselves.

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 47:**

**Whenever I might wish to move my body  
Or might wish to speak,  
First, I'll examine my mind, and then act with firmness,  
Yoked to what's ethically correct.**

When the desire arises for physical movement, whether to travel far or near, or when one even wishes to move one's arms or any other part of one's body, or when one wishes to speak and indulge in conversation with others, one must first examine one's mind and ask oneself whether one's motives for doing so are good or bad.

For Bodhisattvas, those with stable minds, must act correctly and with due reason. In other words, they must reject negative action and engage in good works.

If the twenty-seven sources of mistaken conduct—even the most subtle ones—are truly absent from the mind, the faults and downfalls related to the Individual Liberation, Bodhisattva, and Secret Mantra vows will not occur.

It is therefore important to try to find out what exactly these “sources” are and commit them to memory and then to train in correct conduct. These will be explained in the stanzas 48 to 54.

#### **Chapter Five - Stanza 48:**

**When I notice that my mind would compromise with attachment,  
Or would oppose this with anger,  
I shall not make a move; I shall not speak a word.  
I shall remain like a block of wood.**

Shantideva will now present one-by-one these twenty-seven sources of mistaken conduct. Moreover, he will advise us how to behave when meeting with such situations.

1. The first of this series is delight and attachment for what we like (our friends and possessions).
2. The second is aversion and repugnance toward enemies and other unpleasant objects from which our minds draw back.

When such urges and longings arise in the mind, we should do nothing with such a motivation: we should not walk, move around, speak, or allow the mind to pursue such objects. Instead, we should remain unmoving like logs of wood. We should not allow our body, speech, and mind, to run after what attracts or repels us.

### **Chapter Five - Stanza 49:**

**If my mind is overexcited and sarcastic,  
Or has arrogance and conceit,  
Has the intention to ridicule,  
Or is greedy, hypocritical, and deceitful,**

The enumeration of the sources of mistaken conduct continues with

3. Frantic behaviour of thought, word, and deed, where we do not realize what we are doing, especially when our minds are in the grip of attachment, giving rise to uncontrolled and compulsive behaviour.
4. The will to make fun of others or to play tricks on them.
5. Being arrogant with the seven kinds of pride:
  - 1) The pride of ego-clinging
  - 2) Simple pride of thinking that we are special
  - 3) The pride of thinking that we are better or greater than others
  - 4) The “pride of pride”
  - 5) The pride of thinking that we are only slightly inferior to someone obviously exceptional
  - 6) Perverted pride, when we are proud of something reprehensible and,
  - 7) Blatant arrogance which consists of deluded self-confidence. Delusion leads to wrongdoing. Maintaining self-confidence in such situation is only pretence and total denial of one’s inner perception dictated by our true nature.
6. Being infatuated with ourselves, self-satisfied because of our families or our physical appearance, our youth, our learning, or our wealth.
7. Feeling the urge to expose the hidden faults of others whether directly or indirectly.
8. Feeling the repeated urge to irritate people, which is explained as wishing to revive old conflicts that have been reconciled in the past or never being content with the alms donated, always wanting, and asking for more.
9. Having the wish to deceive and cheat others.

In any of such situations, we must not allow our body, speech, or mind to follow such occurrences. Instead, we should remain like logs of wood.

We will stop here for today. I am inviting you to make the effort to memorize these first 18 sources of misconduct. This will be very helpful and allow us to impede them so that none can influence our behaviour to the point of seriously damaging our Bodhicitta.

Next week, as we study the stanzas 52 to 57, we will complete the remaining points in these 27 bad influencers before engaging the study of nine factors that are productive of virtue.

I invite you to rest a few moments before dedicating the merit of this session for the benefit of all.

