

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra
བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།
Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin
Session 43 - Saturday May 21, 2022
Chapter SIX: Showing Patience (Continued)

REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS
Lama's Invocation | Mental Quiescence

Good morning, everyone.

Today, we resume the study of the 6th chapter of the Bodhicaryâvatâra, an elaborate exposé on “Showing Patience”.

- In Sloka 1 to 10 slokas, Shantideva started the subject by stressing the need to eliminate anger, the antithesis to Bodhichitta.
- in Sloka 11, we engaged the study of “Cultivating Patience”, by first identifying twenty-four objects to which patience is to be applied.
- In Slokas 12 to 21, Shantideva explained the cultivation of patience addressing what brings us suffering.
- In Slokas 22 to 33, He addresses the current topic of our study:

“The Patience that consists in certainty with regard to the ultimate reality of things”.

Last week, we went through the Slokas 22 & 24. We pursue now with Sloka 25:

Stanza 25:

**All mistakes that there are
And the various sorts of negative behaviour
All arise from the force of conditions:
There aren't any under their own power.**

Anger and all the other conflicting emotions, and the whole series of unwholesome actions motivated by them—killing, stealing, and so on—are also brought about by circumstances.

When such circumstances are lacking, these afflictions are powerless to act intentionally on their own. Consequently, that we should not react to our enemies with hatred and anger but should generate compassion instead.

Stanza 26:

**A collection of conditions
Doesn't have the intention, “I shall create”.
And what it did create, didn't have the intention,
“I'm to be created.”**

When no visible object is present, the experience of seeing in the part of the eye consciousness does not occur. The same is similarly true with each of the sense consciousnesses. In the absence of seeing, hearing and the like, there is no engaging in positive or negative deeds.

Therefore, although anger arises based on the coincidence of an object, the sense power, and the sense consciousness, the gathering of these three conditions does not itself intend to produce anger in each person's mind.

And the resulting anger is not an entity that regards itself as produced by such conditions. In all of this, there is no trace of an independent, autonomous agent.

Stanza 27:

What some call “primal matter”

And what they imagine to be “the self”.

They don’t think with some purpose, “I shall come into being to cause some harm,”

And then come about.

In his commentary Künzang Palden states that the *Samkhyas*, *Nyayikas*, and other non-Buddhists consider that some contributory factors exist independently. For they believe that *purusha*, *prakriti*, and so on, are autonomous entities and that they originate phenomena such as the aggressive attitude of an enemy.

Both Samkhya, a school of Hindu philosophy that considers reason as the proper source of knowledge, (unlike the Nyaya school's logic or unlike the Mīmāṃsā school's tradition), and the Yoga philosophy state that there are two ultimate realities whose interaction accounts for all experiences and universe, namely Purusha (spirit) and Prakriti (matter). The universe is envisioned as a combination of perceivable material reality and non-perceivable, non-material laws and principles of nature. Material reality, or *Prakriti*, is everything that has changed, can change and is subject to cause and effect. Universal principle, or *Purusha*, is that which is unchanging and is uncaused.

This however is not true. What they consider to be prakriti, and what they conceive of and label as purusha do not arise out of some pre-existent state aiming to harm, or interact in anyway with others.

They do not arise with such a premeditated intention for the simple reason that they are themselves as unborn as a barren woman’s son. For if *purusha* and *prakriti* (which are held to be permanent and independent entities) can “come into being,” they are in fact impermanent and dependent upon extraneous causes and conditions.

Stanza 28:

(In fact,) as they haven’t arisen, they do not exist,

So what would have then had the wish to arise?

And, since (a static sentient self) would be something that was permanently occupied with an object, It would never come to cease (being so).

If, on the other hand, they are unborn (if they do not come into being), purusha and prakriti have no existence. This being so, there is nothing that could come into existence or that could wish to come into existence as an aggressor or something else.

It may be argued that the conscious self or purusha, asserted by the Samkhyas, enjoys the objects presented to it by prakriti. But if purusha knows and apprehends an object such as sound, it must perceive or “stray toward” the object permanently and exclusively. Purusha can never stop perceiving this one thing, because [according to the Samkhyas] it is permanent as a perceiver.

Stanza 29:

But if the self were static (and non-sentient, like Nyaya asserts),

It would obviously be without actions, like the sky;

So even if it met with other conditions,

What activity could something unchangeable have?

As for the refutation of the belief of the Naiyayikas that the self is permanent and unconscious, Shantideva argues that such a self cannot function as a malevolent mind. Indeed, since this permanent self is, on account of its permanence, like space, it is certainly devoid of causal efficiency or action.

The Naiyayikas argue that although the self is permanent, when it meets with impermanent circumstantial conditions, such as manas (mind), 156 which are extraneous to it, it becomes causally effective. But this is untenable. Even if it encounters other factors, like the mind, the permanent self is by nature immutable and does not change. Therefore, Shantideva asks, what causal efficiency could these conditions produce that was not previously there? Indeed, none at all.

Stanza 30:

**If even at the time of the action, it (remains) as before,
What could have been done by it from the action?
And if there were something called “This is its action”,
Which is the one that made them connected?**

Therefore, even if the mind and other circumstantial conditions were to assist it, if the self cannot change from what it was previously, what property could these conditions or mind elicit from it that was not already present? None at all. Indeed, if they *did* succeed in doing so, this would disprove the self’s permanence.

Thus, even though the Naiyayikas claim that such conditions are auxiliaries to the self, what connection can there possibly be between these two in terms of assistant and assisted? For whatever is permanent cannot be assisted by circumstantial conditions.

Stanza 31:

**Thus, everything’s under the power of others,
And the powers they’re under aren’t under their (own) power.
Having understood this, I shall not become angry
With any phenomenon – they’re like magic emanations.**

Consequently, all agents of harm are without autonomy. They arise through the power of circumstantial conditions. And these same conditions arise successively owing to the influence of still earlier conditions and are thus themselves without autonomy.

For example, the enemy declares himself through the power of his hatred. His hatred arises owing to certain conditions, and these conditions arise through the power of still earlier karmic circumstances. And so on ad infinitum. There is an endless regression of foregoing causes. A wholly autonomous entity is thus impossible. Everything arises in dependence on something else and is therefore empty.

When we understand this, we will also understand that every agent of harm, being devoid of real existence, is like a mirage, a dream image, or a magical apparition. The object of anger and the agent of anger are both unreal—interdependence means emptiness—and therefore we should not allow ourselves to become angry.

Stanza 32:

**And if I said, then, “Warding off (anger) would indeed be unfitting,
For who (or what) can ward off what?”
I’d assert that it’s not unfitting,
Since, by depending on that, the continuity of suffering can be cut.**

Given that all things are like magical apparitions, without true existence, it could be argued that it does not make sense to oppose anger with patience. After all, what anger is there to be opposed by what antidote or person—for there is no doer and nothing done? On the ultimate level, this is quite true.

But if we confine ourselves to the conventional level, the relative truth, it is based on the cultivation of patience that the continuum of infernal suffering and so forth (which is the consequence of hatred) is severed. There is nothing inappropriate in this; on the contrary, it is indeed highly reasonable.

Stanza 33:

**Thus, when seeing an enemy or even a friend
Acting improperly, I'll remain relaxed,
Having reflected that it's arising
From some such condition as this.**

Since all things are “other-powered,” that is, dependently arising, when we come across someone, enemy or friend, doing something untoward or harmful, we should call to mind that this has arisen from conditions; it is not a freestanding, autonomously existing event. And following the explanation given above, we should remain calm and not respond with anger, as is described in the tale of the Shravaka Purna when he went begging for alms.

This Sloka concludes the presentation of the topic “The Patience that consists in certainty with regard to the ultimate reality of things”.

In Slokas 34 to 51, Shantideva exposes a new topic, that of “**The patience of making light of what causes harm**”.

Stanza 34:

**If all embodied beings had things
Turn out as they liked,
Then, since no one wishes ever to suffer,
It would never come about that anyone suffered.**

If beings had the freedom to be as they wanted without depending on conditions, it would follow that no one would suffer even slightly. For no one wants to suffer or to be unhappy even to the smallest extent. Everyone wants happiness.

Stanza 35:

**People hurt themselves
With such things as thorns, because of not caring,
And, in a fury, because of desiring to obtain women and the like,
With such acts as refusing food,**

But this is not how things turn out. It is through inadvertence that beings helplessly injure themselves, tearing themselves on thorns and briars. Others, ardent in pursuit of wives, riches, and possessions, starve themselves of food and drink and inflict great suffering and discomfort upon themselves.

Stanza 36:

**There are some who destroy themselves
By hanging themselves, jumping off cliffs,
Eating poison and unhealthy foods,
And through negative acts bringing worse rebirth states.**

People even destroy themselves, some by hanging themselves, others by leaping off cliffs, others by eating bad food or swallowing deadly poison. Still others, by their evil conduct—killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and so on—bring ruin upon themselves in this and future lives.

Stanza 37:

**When people kill even their beloved selves
From coming under the power of disturbing emotions,
How can it be that they wouldn't cause injury
To the bodies of others?**

As has been explained, if while they are helplessly under the power of hatred, attachment, and the other afflictions, beings destroy themselves—their own selves whom they cherish so much—how can those who are in the power of the defilements be expected not to harm the bodies of others? It is certain that they will!

We will stop her for today. Let us practice mental quiescence for a short while, before dedicating the merit of this session for the benefit of all.

