

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Session 49 - Saturday August 13, 2022

Chapter SIX: Showing Patience (Continued)

REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS

Lama's Invocation

Short practice of Mental Quiescence

Tashi Deleg! Welcome to each one of you as we join together again to pursue our group study of the Bodhicaryâvatâra.

Resuming our study of the Chapter 6 teaching the higher practice of Patience, we are in the topic of
“Cultivating patience toward those who ill-treat our loved ones”.

We will today complete the study of this topic by commenting its last six stanzas, starting Stanza 70.

Stanza 70:

**For example, when fire in a burning house
Is moving to another home,
It's fitting to remove and throw out
Whatever it's in that would cause it to spread, such as straw and the like.**

How can we pacify resentment, or how can we act in a way that anger and hatred do not arise? Shantideva takes the example of a building that is on fire when the flames are about to spread to the neighbourhood.

The wise method to extinguish the fire in this case, is to first stop its spreading by hurling away anything inflammable that might assist the speedy propagation of the fire such as straw and other inflammable belongings that, although useful, are of lesser importance.

Stanza 71:

**Likewise, when the fire of anger is spreading,
Due to my mind being attached to something,
I shall throw it out at that instant,
For fear of my positive force being burned.**

Similarly, when aggressors aim at our friends or close relatives, to whom we are attached, first the flames of dislike, animosity, and hatred spring up between them and their assailants. Fearing that the conflagration of hatred might spread also to our minds and the merit of a thousand kalpas be consumed, it is said that we must at once cast away whatever we are attached to: friends, close associates, and so on. The meaning here, it is said, is that we must at once cast away our attachment.

Stanza 72:

**Why would a man about to be put to death
Be unfortunate if, by having his hand chopped off, he were spared?
So why would I be unfortunate if, through human sufferings,
I were spared joyless realms?**

It might be thought that if we do not help our friends when they are assailed, people will gossip maliciously about us, and we will become disreputable in their eyes.

In answer to this, Shantideva cites the example of an extremely guilty person who, when being led away to execution, is set free after having only his hand amputated. He is surely better-off.

In the same way, it is surely better to endure merely human injuries like scorn, rather than suffer the pains of hell that will be the result of retaliating.

Stanza 73:

**If I'm unable to bear
Even this minor suffering of the present,
Then why don't I ward off the rage
That would be the cause of hellish pain?**

If we can't tolerate the present pains inflicted by our enemies on ourselves and our friends or relatives, how much more intolerable will be the pains of hell?

This being so, why do we not remove the anger in the minds of ourselves and of our friends that is the cause of future sorrows in the unbearable torments of hell? We should certainly get rid of it.

Stanza 74:

**On account of my impassioned rage, I've experienced burning and the like
For thousands of times in the joyless realms;
But through it, I haven't brought benefit to myself
Or benefit for others.**

We may well think that the sufferings of the human state that are inflicted by enemies are unwanted and therefore intolerable in the sense that we did not call for it.

However, right until now, for the sake of desire for the objects of our attachments, we have experienced the fierce, unbearable pain of being burned by fire and cut by swords in the realms of hell.

Moreover, we made this experience repeatedly numberless times while nothing was achieved either for us or for others from all these experiences. The suffering that we endured was completely pointless!

Stanza 75:

**But since great benefits will be brought about
In this, which is not even a fraction of that damage,
Only delight is appropriate here
In the suffering dispelling (all) damage to wandering beings.**

The hardship of resilience, cultivating the patience of accepting the burdens inflicted by our aggressors and of taking them lightly is nothing compared with the agonies we experienced in the hells.

Moreover, great benefits will come from the hardships of such patience, both for us and for others. Such practice of patience dispels the harm inflicted on beings in the lower realms; and suffering, once accepted, is like a broom that sweeps away our negativities and incites goodness.

Thus, we should not shy away from it but instead should embrace it joyfully.

This stanza completes the teaching on "Cultivating patience towards those who ill-treat our loved ones".

Before moving to the next topic, I see it mindful to recall what we have been studying so far on the higher practice of Patience:

- After stressing the importance and absolute necessity to remove anger (verses 1-10),
- Shantideva briefly described the objects of patience (verse 11)
- He then is teaching extensively the various circumstances or situations calling for the cultivation of Patience. This part of the chapter expounds 11 points of which we completed the first seven as follows:
 1. Cultivating patience about what we do not want
 2. Cultivating patience about what brings us suffering
 3. The patience of accepting suffering (verses 12–21)
 4. Patience that consists in certainty with regard to the ultimate reality of things (verses 22–33)
 5. The patience of making light of what causes harm (verses 34–51)
 6. Cultivating patience toward those who treat us with contempt (verses 52–63)
 7. Cultivating patience toward those who ill-treat our loved ones (verses 64–75)

The next topic which is the 8th topic out of 11 points developed by Shantideva in Cultivating Patience, is:
“Cultivating patience when people do good to our enemies”.

This topic will take us through the stanzas 76 to 86.

We will stop here for today.

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

