

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སློབ་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Session 55 - Saturday November 19, 2022

Chapter SIX: Showing Patience (Continued)

REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS

Lama's Invocation of the Buddhas and assembly of lineage holders.

Short practice of Mental Quiescence - Generation of Bodhicitta

Tashi Deleg! We studied last week the first of three topics on practicing respect for beings:

“The Practice of Respect for beings, considering them as the Field of Merit”

Today, we will go through the explanation of the second of these three topics:

“The Practice of Respect for beings with the wish to rejoice the Buddhas”

Stanza 119:

**Further, besides making limited beings happy,
What other repayment is there
For those who befriend them without pretension
And help them beyond any measure?**

The Buddha is the greatest companion of every being who wanders in samsara. This is true for his own enemies. It was witnessed that He had the same respect for his cousin enemy Devadatta as he had for his own son Rahula.

Such kindness is the cause of incommensurable merit that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas secure for us in this and future existences. How can we repay the incommensurable happiness that results from it?

It is by benefiting beings. There is no other way to compensate the kindness shown to us by the buddhas: we must repay their kindness make living beings happy and thus shown them respect and honour them.

Stanza 120:

**Since it would repay them to benefit those for whose sake
They sacrifice their bodies and plunge into joyless realms of unrelenting pain,
Then even if these limited beings should cause great harm,
Everything wholesome is to be done for them.**

When the need arises, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are even ready to give away their bodies and dive into the Hell of Unrelenting Pain caring for the welfare and happiness of beings. If we revere and have faith in them, we will repay their kindness by bringing benefit to beings in our turn.

For this reason, even if beings greatly hinder our wealth and happiness, we should think only well of them and accept it, just as good disciples deduce meaningfully whatever their teacher does.

Stanza 121:

**For the sake of even, in this case, my master himself,
They disregard even their own bodies.
So how can I, bewildered about this, act with pride
And not act in the nature of a servant?**

Moreover, if Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Lords who teach us and others, are ready to sacrifice their own bodies for beings' sake, how can we, hopeless and not even knowing how to discriminate between good and bad, act with such arrogance toward others? We should instead, serve them with respect.

Like loyal attendants, we should strive to bring happiness to beings.

Stanza 122:

**The Sages delight in their happiness
And enter into distress at their injury;
And so, in (my) bringing them joy, the Sages will all have become delighted,
And in bringing them harm, the Sages will have been hurt.**

The enlightened ones are pleased when beings, who they consider as their only children, are made happy. They are displeased when beings are harmed.

Consequently, to benefit beings and bring them joy, similarly pleases the Buddhas. Offending them and causing them to suffer, is also offending the Buddhas.

Stanza 123:

**Just as there could be no mental pleasure from desirable objects
For someone whose body were completely on fire,
Likewise, there's no way to delight the Greatly Compassionate Ones
When limited beings have, in fact, been harmed.**

As an example, Shantideva points at someone whose entire body is being burned by fire. Even if all the pleasures of the senses were presented to him for enjoyment at this time, such a gift would leave him totally unmoved. In fact, his distress would only be worse.

Likewise, even if we make offerings to the Three Jewels, there is no way to please the greatly compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas when we are ourselves the cause of others' pain.

People who perform the offering of meat and blood place these substances in a mandala, claiming to invoke the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and to make such sacrifices to them.

Yet, this is like killing a woman's beloved child and invite her to partake of its flesh and blood. The wisdom deities will be far from approaching.

Instead, all the powers of darkness, which crave and delight in meat and blood, will draw near and devour them. It is such that both the celebrants and benefactors of such rituals bring wreck upon themselves both in now and in the future.

Stanza 124:

**Therefore, whatever displeasure I brought to the Greatly Compassionate Ones,
By my having caused harm to limited beings,
I openly admit, today, that negative deed,
And request the Sages, please bear with that displeasure you have.**

All the mischiefs done in thoughts, words, and deeds accomplished from beginningless time until now, to beings wandering in samsara, is a source of grief to the compassionate Buddhas and their Bodhisattva offspring.

Therefore, in their presence and with bitter remorse, Shantideva confesses every one of these great sins without dissimulating or concealing any of them.

He then takes pledge never to repeat them in the future, praying that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will forgive him for whatever he has done to displease and distress them.

Stanza 125:

**From now on, for the sake of delighting the Thusly Gone (Buddhas),
I shall act, with definite restraint, as a servant to the world.**

**Let mobs of people kick me in the head with their feet or even beat me to death,
I shall not venture (anything back). Let the Guardians of the World take delight!**

Showing us the way, Shantideva pledges solemnly that from this day forward, to rejoice the hearts of the Buddhas and their children, he will overcome every kind of malevolence that he might feel toward beings, as well as all his pride. He commits to be the servant of the entire world.

Therefore, whether people kick the highest part of him, namely his head, with their lowest member, namely their feet; whether they cut or slay him, he says that he will not retaliate even when able to do so.

He is resolved to accept everything with reverence. And so, he proclaims, “Let the great and compassionate guardians of the three worlds rejoice!”

Stanza 126:

**There’s no doubt that Those with a Compassion Self-Nature
Have taken all wandering beings to be the same as themselves.**

**The very nature they’ve seen as the essential nature of limited beings
Is those Guardians’ self-nature, so why don’t I show them the same respect?**

There is no doubt that the Lords of great compassion consider all wandering beings without exception as their very selves. It is just as when the Buddha took to himself the swan that had been shot down by Devadatta. It is taught that when the Buddha first engendered the attitude of Bodhichitta, he considered all beings in general as his fathers and mothers.

More specifically, he looked upon all those older than himself as his parents, all those who were his age as his brothers and sisters, and all those who were younger than him as his sons and daughters. It was thus that he took them all to himself.

When traversing the paths of accumulation and joining, he regarded them as himself through the process of equalizing and exchanging self and other (“Tonglen”).

When reaching the path of seeing and realized ultimate reality in which self and other are the same, he claimed all beings for himself in a manner devoid of all forms of duality.

And when, having discarded the two veils and their associated habitual tendencies, he achieved Buddhahood as the dharmadhatu and primordial wisdom mingled like water with water into a single taste (“Ro-Nyom), there was not the slightest trace of dualistic phenomena, —Buddha and buddhafield were apprehended as a single whole.

The enlightened body, speech, and mind of the Buddha embraces the whole of space, wherever it extends. As it is written in the sutras:

*However far the sphere of space extends,
Thus far is the extent of living beings.
Wherever space pervades,
The enlightened body likewise spreads.
Wherever the enlightened body lies,
Is present also the enlightened speech.
Wherever the enlightened speech pervades
Enlightened mind is present too.*

As the text declares, sentient-beings dwell wherever space pervades, and they are all embraced by the enlightened body, speech, and mind. Therefore, from the very beginning, beings are never separated from the enlightened mind.

Knowing this, those great beings who have attained enlightenment take beings as themselves. For there is not the slightest difference between what is called “Buddha” and what is called “beings” in that all are endowed with the Buddha-nature. Since they are pervaded by the satyagraha, they are indeed the Buddhas of the future.

As the sutra says,

*“All beings are permeated by the sugatagarbha,”
Pure and limpid, luminous,
Untroubled, uncompounded,
The nature of the Buddhas, gone in bliss,
Is present from the outset and is thus defined.*

Supporting such passages with reasoned argument, Lord Maitreya said in the Uttaratantra-shastra:

*Because the perfect Buddha’s kaya all-pervades,
And suchness is undifferentiated,
Because they all possess the Buddha’s lineage,
All beings, always, have the Buddha-nature.*

Since it is demonstrated both by scripture and by reasoning that beings are indeed Buddhas, how is it possible for us not to treat them with respect?

As much as we reverence the Buddhas we must also reverence beings. For there is no such thing as Buddhahood if beings are abandoned.

Stanza 127:

**Just this, is what brings pleasure to the Thusly Gone Buddhas;
Just this, is what perfectly accomplishes my own aims as well;
Just this, is what dispels the world’s suffering too;
Therefore, let it be just this, that I always shall do.**

It is said that to accomplish the happiness of beings is the best way to rejoice the hearts of the Buddhas. And it is also taught that to benefit beings is itself the highest way of accomplishing one’s own benefit and happiness.

Moreover, when beings are happy, they can act correctly. This therefore is the supreme way of removing the sorrows of the world. Making beings happy must therefore be something that we should do diligently, all the time.

That's enough for today.

Next Saturday, session 56 will address the third and final theme on the practice of respect for beings:

"The Practice of Respect for beings thinking of the consequences of good and evil done to them".

This will complete our study of Chapter 6 of the Bodhicaryâvatâra on the Practice of Showing Forbearance.

I invite you to communicate to me now the questions that your study will not have elucidated. We will devote two sessions to this on December 3 and 10 respectively.

Let us practice mental stillness for a moment, before dedicating the merit of this study for the benefit of all.

