

# Shantideva's Bodhicaryâvatâra

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Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Session 41 - Saturday April 2, 2022

**Chapter SIX: Showing Patience**

Good morning, everyone.

We have the good fortune to be able to continue our group study on the Bodhicaryâvatâra. I am most grateful for this. Let us start with the traditional prayers.

**REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS**

**Lama's Invocation | Mental Quiescence**

Today, we are starting to study the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter of this eminent composition by Lord Shantideva that is the Bodhicaryâvatâra. This chapter is a most elaborate exposé of the subject, presented over 134 slokas. The topic deals with patience in a way of eliminating anger, the antithesis to Bodhichitta.

**Stanza 1:**

**Whatever generosity,  
Offerings to the Blissfully Gone (Buddhas) and the like,  
And positive deeds I've amassed over thousands of eons  
One (moment of) hatred will devastate them all.**

Vasubhandu, in the Abhidharmakosha, defines a kalpa as the interval of time embracing the four periods in the life of a universal system:

*Its formation, its duration, its destruction and, the period of voidness following its destruction.*

150 cycles of these four stages last 20 intermediate kalpas.

A great kalpa lasts the lapse of time comprised of eighty intermediate kalpas together.

The sutras assert that the merit of all virtuous deeds accumulated during a thousand great kalpas, such as the practice of generosity toward beings, taking of refuge in the Three Jewels and presenting offerings to them, keeping of discipline, and so forth—all that merit, is devastated by a single instant of fierce anger.

Commentaries(\*) explain that when ordinary beings succumb to anger, they destroy merit accumulated in a hundred kalpas, but that when Bodhisattvas succumb to anger, they destroy the merit of a thousand kalpas.

Scriptural sources on this topic contain much more detailed explanations specific to the kind of causal virtues, the merit of which, is being destroyed. However, I believe that this much of explanation is sufficient and to the point in providing us with a clear understanding that anger must be absolutely avoided.

Patience is the direct antithesis of anger; nevertheless, it has been said that when the merit gathered through the practice of generosity and discipline is supported by the three supreme methods (\*\*), it is then protected from destruction by adverse conditions.

(\*) Manjushrivikridita-sutra. However, the Prajnaparamita middle length sutra refers to the time it takes to accomplish the action.

(\*\*) The three supreme methods for any practice or action are:

1. To prepare the ground by cultivating Bodhichitta;
2. To perform the practice in a concentrated manner, unimpaired by grasping at the object, subject, and action as truly existing entities (Khor-sum Tongpa, the emptiness of the three circles); and,
3. To conclude the practice by dedicating the resulting merit to enlightenment for the sake of others.

**Stanza 2:**

**As no negative force resembles anger,  
And no trial resembles patience,  
I shall therefore meditate on patience,  
With effort and in various ways.**

Anger, like no other negative action, destroys virtue and causes birth in the hell realms. Contrarywise, no other virtue or “austerity” can equal patience, which is the reverse of anger.

As the Buddha said:

*“Patience is sublime asceticism, patience is supreme; It is the supreme transcendence of all sorrow”.*

Therefore, it is to be genuinely cultivated. We must strive to give birth to patience within ourselves in every possible way, such as explained in greater details later in this chapter.

**Stanza 3:**

**When the thorn of anger lodges in my heart,  
My mind doesn't feel any peace,  
Doesn't gain any joy or pleasure,  
Doesn't fall asleep and becomes unstable.**

When our mind is irritated by conflicting emotions triggered by enemies or non-familiar situations, we find ourselves tormented by the pain of anger. This counteracts greatly our mind training and annihilates the bliss of concentration, a state of perfect mental happiness.

It will be impossible in such case to achieve concentration of mind and we will know neither mental joy nor physical well-being, even at night. Consequently, we will feel completely insecure and will lose all stability in body and mind.

**Stanza 4:**

**Even those on whom he lavishes wealth and honour  
And those who've become dependent on him  
Get provoked to the point of murdering  
A lord who's possessed with anger.**

Rulers who are possessed by hatred may well provide their servants and ministers, the subordinates who depend on them, with gracious gifts of wealth (gold and silver) and whatever they long for such as positions that bring them the esteem of others.

Nevertheless, even these ministers, let alone other people, will forget the favours done to them and will turn against their lords, attacking and even murdering them.

**Stanza 5:**

**Friends and relations get disgusted with him,  
And though he might gather others with gifts, he isn't regarded with trust and respect.  
In brief, there's no way at all in which  
A raging person is in a happy situation.**

To be angry brings grief to one's family and friends through harsh language and fierce behaviour.

They will dislike and avoid closeness if not turn away completely. Surrounding oneself, with a circle of collaborators by unsparingly bestowing money and property on them, will not suffice to retain them at one's service.

In brief, an angry person is like a vicious snake, completely deprived of happiness and well-being. It is therefore essential to rid oneself of such anger.

**Stanza 6:**

**Hence the enemy, rage,  
Creates sufferings such as those and the like,  
While whoever clamps down and destroys his rage  
Will be happy in this (life) and others.**

Those who hate will have their every virtue ruined by their own anger. They will be brought down to hell because of it, as explained previously. Their anger will bring them sorrow in this and future lives.

By contrast, those who take control of their minds, training themselves in patience, will achieve the opposite. They will annihilate anger, their enemy, and attain great happiness in both, now and lives to come.

**Stanza 7:**

**Finding its fuel in the foul state of mind  
That arises from its bringing about things I don't want  
And its preventing what I wish,  
Anger, once enflamed, destroys me.**

Everything that produces uncomfortable and unwanted situations (such as the loss of possessions) to both, us, and our entourage, and all that is preventing us to get what we want in terms of wealth and well-being—all these bring about a state of mental annoyance, which fuels anger and hatred.

For just as food makes the body grow, unhappiness of mind gives rise to anger and resentment, the very core of what devastates every kind of mental goodness. It is therefore essential to overcome such states of unhappiness, for they fuel our anger.

**Stanza 8:**

**Therefore, I shall totally eradicate  
The fuel of that enemy,  
For this enemy hasn't a mission  
Other than injuring me.**

Just as it is possible to sap the strength of enemies by intercepting their food supply, in the same way we should annihilate our unhappiness of mind, which is the food of anger, our enemy.

This enemy has no other aim than to injure us in many ways, through the destruction of our roots of virtue.

**Stanza 9:**

**No matter what happens,  
I shall never let it disturb my good mood.  
For if I've fallen into a foul mood, what I want will not come about,  
And my constructive behaviour will fall apart.**

And so, whenever harm or misfortune ensue in the way of involving us in unwanted situations, or whatever hindrances to desired situations, we must resolve again and again never to allow them to disturb our mind's cheerful disposition. This itself is the remedy for depression.

Although it is said that if we simply put up with misfortune, the result will be that everyone, good and bad, will look down on us. The fact is that if our mind gets distressed, allowing us to be depressed by the injuries we receive, it will have us fail to accomplish our aims, and the virtue of our minds will be weakened and destroyed.

**Stanza 10:**

**If it can be remedied,  
Why get into a foul mood over something?  
And if it can't be remedied,  
What help is it to get into a foul mood over it?**

To be sure, if something can be done to change the situation when injuries are done to us, what reason is there for depression and resentment? Let's apply that remedy!

Likewise, if nothing can be done to mend the situation, the broken cup for instance, what good does it do to be unhappy about it? Indeed, not only will this be of no help, but it will aggravate the situation further on account of the suffering produced by the conflict arising in ourselves and in others as well.

Having thus identified anger as the major hindrance to reach our aim, and the need of cultivating patience, the next stanza is about identifying the object of patience.

**Stanza 11:**

**For myself and my friends,  
Suffering, contempt, verbal abuse,  
And disgrace aren't things that I'd wish for;**

## **But for my enemies, it's the reverse.**

It is said that there are twenty-four objects to which patience is to be applied:

- twelve things that we do not want and,
- twelve things that hinder our desires.

There are four things that we do not want either for ourselves or for those who are close to us (our parents, our teacher, our tradition, and so on). These are:

- (1) suffering,
- (2) the disadvantages that come from such things as contemptuous discrimination,
- (3) direct verbal aggression such as being called a thief, and
- (4) the destruction of good reputation through the spreading of malicious rumours.

Applied both to ourselves and to our loved ones, this comes all together to eight unwanted things.

In addition, there are four things (the opposite of the four mentioned previously) that we do not wish our enemies to have. We don't like them to be happy or to be praised or to have any kind of material success or good reputation. Consequently, there are all together twelve things that we do not want.

The twelve things that prevent us from getting what we want, consist of obstacles to our happiness and so forth (the reverse of the things previously named), occurring four by four in the experience of ourselves and those who are on our side (therefore eight), together with obstacles to suffering and so forth in the experience of those whom we dislike.

Thus, there are twelve of them and these, taken with the previous twelve, make twenty-four objects in relation to which patience is to be exercised.

When considered from the point of view of past, present, and future situations, these twenty-four items constitute all together seventy-two causes of anger. It is said that we should cultivate patience in their regard; we should be able to accept what we do not want, and even consider the fact of wanting as itself a defect.

Kunzang Palden in his commentary distinguishes two ways to cultivate patience, respectively regarding what we do not want and regarding what brings us suffering.

In the next ten stanzas, Shantideva will expound in detail the patience of accepting suffering.

This will be the subject for next class starting with Stanza 12.

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

