

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་རྫོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Session 61 - Saturday January 14, 2023

Chapter SEVEN: Joyful Perseverance - The Support of the Practice

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! Last Saturday, we entered the study of the Chapter SEVEN on the practice of Joyful Effort.

Refreshing our memory, here is a synopsis of the topics presented so far:

- A brief explanation of the need for diligence (Stanza 1)
- A detailed explanation: The practice of diligence (Stanza 2)
 - Identifying Diligence
 - Renouncing its opposing factors
- Removing the conditions inimical to diligence (Stanza 3)
 - Identifying laziness and its causes.
- An explanation of how to rid oneself of the three kinds of laziness (Stanzas 4 to 31)
 - Antidote to idleness (Stanza 4 to 14)

We pursue the study of this last point, which we left at stanza 7, reminding us to gather an abundant amount of positive force while we can, knowing that death will come all too soon.

Stanza 8:

**With this still not done, this just having been started,
This still left half-done,
And the lord of death having come suddenly,
And the thought arising, "Oh no, I'm destroyed!"**

As we consider all our life's activities, some we have only given some thoughts and have not yet put them into action; some we made plan and are undertaking; while some we have abandoned and left only half-completed.

But the merciless Lord of Death will arrive suddenly without warning. Only then unfortunately, will we know that death is definite, realising having failed to thrive in the practice of good deeds and in dropping wickedness.

Although we could have done so, we did the opposite instead. Committing many evils and doing not much good. Full of regret, we will moan and cry at the only thought: "Alas! the Lord of Death is ready for me!"

With a mind as heavy as Mount Meru, we will leave this body and move towards death.

Stanza 9:

**And seeing relatives,
Their faces with red eyes swollen from the force of grief,
Flowing with tears, having lost all hope,
As they faced of the messengers of Yama,**

When death arrives, our friends, our dear ones, and all that we possessed and could never part with, none of it can go with us. Leave everything behind, we will have to set out all alone on the path to the next life.

We will have to watch our parents, our children, and our friends, who will have lost hope of our ever recovering. Their sorrow will be so strong that they will have red swollen eyes, and tears will flow heavily on their cheeks.

Then also, we will have to probe the dreadful and ugly faces of the messengers of the Lord of Death. Sometimes memories of our past life will occur to us, and brief glimpses of our parents and relatives. Some other times visions of the next life will appear, but so will the servants of the Lord of Death too.

Stanza 10:

**Tormented by the memory of negative acts,
Hearing the screams from the joyless realms,
Body befouled with excrement caused by fear
Having become delirious, what will you do?**

We will be distressed by the recollection of our former sins. Our chests will bear the scratch marks of our nails. Screams of lamentation and the pandemonium of hell will break upon our ears.

The wild and noisy disorder of demonic presence leading to confusion will be manifest: we will hear voices shouting "Kill! Kill! ...Cut! Cut!" and in absolute terror, we will defecate involuntarily. We will be confused in all we do, say, and think. We will fail to recognize others and even ourselves.

What will we do when such time comes? We will be so helpless, unable to do anything at all. Therefore, it is now, when we have the freedom to do so, that we should make great efforts to accomplish virtuous deeds.

Stanza 11:

**If, like a live fish flopping, about to be cooked,
You'd have such terror in this lifetime.
Is there needed to mention the unbearable tortures
Of the joyless realms, when having created so much negative force?**

Moreover, if we are so agonisingly terrified while we are still alive, like living fish twisting on hot sand, what need is there to mention the feeling of horror and intolerable pain of the next life in the hells, created by our evil deeds from time without beginning?

As it is written in the *Suhrillekha*:

*"If seeing pictures, carved, or painted, of infernal realms.
If thinking, hearing, reading of them frightens you;
What need is there to speak of when you'll feel
Their pain unbearable in fully ripened fruit?"*

Stanza 12:

**How can you sit back at ease like this,
Doing karmic deeds for rebirth in the hot hells?
Where your tender-skin
Will burn in melted iron!** (*) This stanza was modified to accord with the French translation published by Padmakara.

Longchen Rabjam Drimed Ödzer(*) used to say:

*"There are only two certainties in life: We are all going to die and, we don't know when!
Yet we all live as if it will never happen as certainly not now!"*

(*) Longchen Rabjam Drimé Özer known as 'Longchenpa' lived from 1308 to 1364. He was a Tibetan scholar-yogi of the Nyingma school. Although most of the time traveling or in retreat, he was the abbot of Samye monastery, renowned for his extensive works (270 volumes) comprising the Longchen Nyin-thig which stand as mainstream in the Dzogchen teachings.

How can we lie back, so lazily and in careless ease, when we have perpetrated the evil deeds that have created the Hell of Great Heat where our bodies, tender and sensitive as a baby's flesh, will be burned beyond all endurance in boiling molten bronze?

Stanza 13:

Dreamer of results without any effort!

Weakling! Waster of plenitude!

Seized by death and having the airs of an immortal god!

Oh dear! With these miserable ways, you're destroying yourself!

There is no need to speak here of the kind of diligence that leaves time neither for relaxation during the day nor even for sleep at night. We have no diligence at all, whether in study (even for the space of a year or a month) or in the Kyed-Rim and Dzog-Rim phases of practice in retreat.

How can we possibly hope for great results: for the qualities of erudition and accomplishment in this life or for rebirth in a pure field in the next?

As the saying goes, "*Less tolerant than new and tender flesh, angrier than an evil ghost.*" Because we are so sensitive and short tempered, unable to tolerate even the slightest discomfort, we will come to many harms both in this life and in our lives to come.

Whatever is born in the samsaric state must die; yet, just like the gods intoxicated by their pleasures, we do not give death a single thought. Delighting in distraction, we indulge in non-virtue.

Alas! How we will lament when we are beaten down by the dreadful agonies of death, in this and future existences. How pathetic we are! The only sensible thing is to remember that we must die, and thus, strive diligently in positive action.

Stanza 14:

Seated in the boat of a human rebirth,

Cross over the mighty river of suffering!

With this boat being so hard to catch again,

Idiot, it's not time for going to sleep!

Now that we are in possession of this human body endowed with eight freedoms and ten qualities, such precious vessel so hard to find, we must strive in virtue, freeing ourselves from the dreads of the great river of suffering in the three worlds of samsara.

If we do not persevere diligently now, it will be unbelievably difficult to find such an excellent vessel again. "*What fool am I then?*", thinks Shantideva to himself, *still confused about what to be done and what to be avoided: the time at hand is not for sleep; it is for diligently cultivating positive deeds and avoid negativities!*"

This concludes the explanation of how to rid oneself of the first kind of laziness: The Antidote to Idleness. During the next session, scheduled on January 28, we will study the second point: Cultivating an antidote to the kind of laziness that consists in an inclination to commit unwholesome actions.

Before that, I wish to express heartfelt new year greetings to the Chinese people in general, and to our Chinese brothers and sisters in Malaysia as well as to their acquaintances. Please convey everyone my wishes for good health, happiness, and prosperity.

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

