

**Shantideva's**  
**Bodhicaryâvatâra**

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སློབ་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།  
Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

**Session 63 - Saturday February 4, 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 week, we left our study of the Chapter Seven of the Bodhicaryâvatâra at stanza 25, in the explanation of how to cultivate the antidote to the third type of laziness i.e., self-deprecation and defeatism.

**Stanza 26:**

**When the insight arises that my very own body  
Is like a vegetable and the like,  
Then, as for giving away such things as my flesh,  
What hardship would there be in that?**

When the habit of giving has been acquired and we released all attachment, we will be able to see our body as not much different than a plant. At this point, we will experience no difficulty in giving away our flesh and blood.

Once the inherent quality of all phenomena is realised, gold and dust are valued the same, just like space and the palm of the hand, too.

Once we realise that the hedonistic treatment of having our right hand anointed with scented oil and the excruciating pain of the left being cut with an axe, are perceived as equal through the understanding of the dream-like quality of all phenomena, we will be free from all fear.

As it is said in the Sutralankara:

*“For those who know that all is like a mirage,  
That birth is like the entrance to a garden paradise  
In times of plenty and in times of scarcity,  
No fear of pain is there, no dread of the afflictions”.*

**Stanza 27:**

**After all, from purging negative karmic force, there'll be no more suffering,  
And from becoming mentally proficient, there won't be any more mental distress.  
But similarly, from distorted conceptions, the mind gets hurt,  
And from negative force, the body.**

Although we could give away our heads and members, should we not still be anxious and scared since, for the benefit of beings, we vowed to remain living and dying for a very long time in samsara, which is not different from a pit of fire or a cage of venomous snakes.

But the answer to this is that, although Bodhisattvas remain intentionally in samsara, they are not stained by its defects, just as a lotus is not defiled by the mud in which it grows.

Bodhisattvas abandon every negativity, and therefore they no longer have the experience of physical pain. They have understood that the nature of all knowable phenomena is the absence of self, and therefore their minds are completely free of grief.

It is indeed because ordinary beings entertain wrong concepts, that their minds are tormented (imputing a self to what is without a self). Because they act negatively, (killing, stealing, and so on), they suffer physical pain.

**Stanza 28:**

**Through positive force, though, the body has joy,  
And with mental proficiency, the mind becomes joyful.  
So even remaining in recurring samsara for the sake of others,  
What could depress a compassionate one?**

Unlikely, wherever Bodhisattvas find themselves, they are exempt from physical pain and mental distress. Since they accumulate merit by practicing generosity and the other paramitas, they have a sense of physical well-being; and since they realize the absence of self, their minds are in bliss.

Therefore, although they remain in the three worlds of samsara for the sake of beings, they are not stained in the slightest degree by its defects and sorrows. What indeed could dismay the Bodhisattvas, the compassionate offspring of the Buddha? Nothing can make them disheartened.

**Stanza 29:**

**Because the strength of his Bodhichitta aim  
Is depleting his negative forces from the past  
And gathering oceans of positive force,  
He's explained as surpassing the Shravakas listeners.**

By the power of their Bodhichitta, the former sins of the Bodhisattvas (i.e., the causes of their sufferings) are totally consumed and purified, as was shown in stanzas 13 and 14 of Chapter One (\*).

Moreover, it is said in stanza 19 of the same chapter (\*), that their practice of the paramitas increases at every instant, thereby perfecting their merit, which is as vast as an ocean and is the cause of their constant happiness.

Therefore, it is said that they surpass the Shravakas in their merit and in their antidotes to negativity.

(\*) See transcript of Session 4 given on December 19, 2020

**Stanza 30:**

**So, mounting the horse of the Bodhichitta aim,  
Which dispels all depression and exhaustion,  
And journeying from joy to joy,  
Who, with a sensible mind, would ever become discouraged?**

For these reasons, how could possibly those who desire good for themselves and can differentiate flaws from virtues feel unhappy and adopt a loser attitude while they are riding the excellent horse of Bodhichitta?

One must know that Bodhichitta discards all mental sorrow and exhaustion of body. It confers the ability to progress on a joyful path towards a perfect goal that denies both extremes of samsara and nirvana.

**Stanza 31:**

**Thus, the supporting forces for fulfilling the aims of limited beings  
Are strong intention, steadfastness, delight, and letting go.  
Strong intention is developed from the dread of suffering  
And by reflecting on its benefits.**

Even so, we may still consider ourselves unfit to the task of accomplishing the welfare of all beings.

However, just as the son of a chakravartin, who turns the wheel of power, can establish others in virtue by relying on his four armies, in the same way, the Buddha, who turns the wheel of Dharma, has given to his offspring, the Bodhisattvas, four forces enabling them to succeed.

These four forces are aspiration, steadfastness, joyfulness, and relinquishment (the ability to let go or desist). The latter three grow from the first, namely, aspiration, which is their root.

Aspiration is based on the fear of suffering the result of negative action. It must be cultivated through reflecting on the benefits of liberation and the advantages of aspiring to these benefits.

This completes the explanation of ***“how to remove the conditions inimical to diligence”***.

In the following stanzas, Shantideva tackle the subject of **“Implementing the favourable conditions for diligence.”** As done usually when introducing a new topic, the next stanza provides a brief presentation.

**Stanza 32:**

**Uprooting opposing factors like that,  
I shall strive then to further my zestful vigour  
With the forces of strong intention, having pride, delight, and letting go,  
Also readily accepting and taking control.**

The previous stanza listed the four forces enabling one Bodhisattva to thrive in diligence.

More precisely, this is done by developing successively:

1. The aspiration which is the development of a keen interest in the Dharma,
2. The self-confidence or steadfastness whereby one does not go back on what one has begun,
3. The joyfulness whereby one takes pleasure in what one is doing, and,
4. The relinquishment when necessary, letting be, knowing that we will be able to discard the three kinds of laziness and enhance our diligence.

These four forces must in turn be supplemented by two types of application: first, a sincere commitment to the principle of adopting and rejecting and, second, a sustained control of body and mind.

Further, Shantideva will explain in detail over the next 14 stanzas (Stanzas 33 to 46) how to invoke these four corrective forces by becoming familiar with the force of aspiration.

This completes today’s session. We will continue with stanza 33 next session Saturday.

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

