

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སློབ་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།
Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin
Session 68 - Saturday March 11, 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

After the explanation of the four forces that need to be summoned to implement positive conditions enhancing diligence, Lord Shantideva emphasizes two applications that need to be addressed when practicing these forces:

- The application of earnest practice and,
- The application of controlling body, speech, and mind.

The application of earnest practice is presented in stanzas 68 to 74. Of these we studied last week the three first; we continue with stanza 71:

Stanza 71:

**Like a terrified person, carrying a jar filled with mustard oil,
With someone keeping in front, poking with a sword,
Threatening to kill him if he spills a drop,
Someone with taming behavior needs likewise to hold on tight.**

Let us conduct ourselves therefore like a man carrying a jar full of oil, threatened with death by a swordsman, if he spills a single drop of it! Such a person will be petrified and will for sure walk with the greatest watchfulness.

In the same way, those who entered the door of the Dharma and keep the vows must hold themselves as in great fear of the hells and be reluctant of the three worlds of samsara.

They should bind themselves in body, speech, and mind with mindfulness (*), vigilant introspection (**), and careful examination (***), without ever falling into the power of the afflictions. Here, it has been said that one should, in addition, consider the story of Katyayana.

(*) དྲན་པ། - 'drän pa' - mindfulness holds the mind in place so that the mind knows what the mind is doing.

(**) ཤེས་འཇིགས། - 'shey-zhin', vigilant introspection is the act keeping watch over the situation of directly observing the states and processes of one's own mind, so that the mindfulness is operative.

(***) ཟབ་སློབ། - 'zab-jong' - is careful or profound examination, by examining one's own thoughts & feelings.

Stanza 72:

**Therefore, just as I'd swiftly stand up
At the slithering of a snake into my lap,
Likewise, at the slithering in of sleepiness or lethargy,
I shall swiftly repulse it.**

Even minor faults can produce great harm. Therefore, just as a beautiful woman with her hair on fire will race to put it out or a nervous man will jump frantically with fright on finding a snake coiled in his lap, if we sink into lethargy and sleepiness in the evening or early morning, we should get up from our seats at once and shake them off. It is said that it is of great importance to make firm promises and to be determined about this.

For example, when the great translator Rinchen Zangpo (*) was in a strict seven-year retreat, he challenged the dakinis and the dharmapalas to take away his life by snatching his heart, would he fail on the outer, inner, and secret levels of his pledge i.e.,

- If a single defiled emotion were to arise in his mind,
- If a single selfish thought were to arise and,
- If a single dualistic thought were to appear.

(*) Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958-1055) was a prolific translator during the early part of the Later Spread of Buddhism in Tibet. Born in the region of Ngari, he was ordained at the age of thirteen. He undertook several trips to Kashmir to study Buddhism and Indian languages. He enjoyed the patronage of the king Lha Yeshé Ö, who brought Atisha to Tibet. At the age of 85, he met Atisha and studied with him.

Stanza 73:

**Scolding myself on each occasion of a lapse,
I shall contemplate at length,
“How can I act so that never again,
Will this happen to me?”**

Amid such efforts, would we abandon our pledge, we must admonish and scold ourselves in all possible ways. We must lengthily reflect that, by whatever means necessary, such faults may never occur again. We should attempt to amend them.

Stanza 74:

**With this as a motive, “How can I make it a habit,
To be mindful, given those situations?”
I’ll aspire for the company of spiritual teachers,
Or the appropriate action that they give me to do.**

At all times, over the months and years, and in any situation, we should ask ourselves how we can acquire and develop stable mindfulness, whereby we never forget to focus our mind on virtue.

Thinking only of the causes or methods of cultivating it, we should strive in appropriate actions that help us increase mindfulness and introspection within ourselves: meeting with spiritual masters, doing retreat, going on pilgrimages, and all such conducive practices.

According to Sherab Jungnay (*), the strength of earnest practice means the sincere implementation of the instructions received from our master.

(*) Sherab Jungnay Lodrö aka Prajñākaramati, (950-1030) was one of the six gate keepers of Vikramashila.

Learned in all sciences, he had direct visions of Manjushri. Invoking him when debating with non-Buddhists, enabled him to give the appropriate answers and win all debates. Prajñākaramati is renowned for writing the main Indian commentary on the Bodhicaryāvatāra.

Stanza 75:

**Then, the way to have force for all events,
Before doing some action, is
That I’ll rally and invigorate myself,
Recalling the chapter on taking care.**

By every means then, before engaging any of our virtuous deeds and to be able to complete them, we must reflect on the precepts to be applied. We should keep in mind the previous teachings showing how we are to rely on carefulness. Then, with willingness, we must engage our assignment promptly and with pleasure.

Stanza 76:

**Just as the wind, coming and going,
Takes control of a cotton ball,
So shall I take control of myself, with zestful vigor,
And gain, in this way, spiritual success.**

This is necessary because, just as flags flow freely moved by the power of the wind, likewise our body, speech, and mind are inevitably influenced when we take pleasure in virtue. In this way, every good action undertaken with enthusiasm, will be effortlessly accomplished.

This concludes the presentation of Chapter SEVEN: Joyful Perseverance - The Support of the Practice.

In this chapter, we have studied the following topics:

- **The need for Diligence**
 - A brief explanation of the need for diligence (Stanza 1)
 - A detailed explanation
- **Identifying Diligence and its opposing factors** (Stanza 2)
- **Removing the conditions inimical to diligence:** Identifying laziness and its causes. (Stanza 3)
 - How to rid oneself of the three kinds of laziness: (Stanzas 4 to 31)
- ✓ Cultivating an antidote to the kind of laziness that is a yearning for idleness (Stanzas 4–14)
- ✓ Cultivating an antidote to the kind of laziness that is an inclination to unwholesome actions (Stanzas 15–16)
- ✓ Cultivating an antidote to the kind of laziness consisting in self-depreciation and defeatism (Stanzas 17–31)
- **Implementing the favourable conditions for diligence**
 - A brief explanation (verse 32)
 - A detailed explanation: Summoning the four remedial forces.
 - The force of aspiration (verses 33–46)
 - The force of steadfastness
 - A general explanation (verses 47–49)
 - A detailed explanation of specific points:
- ✓ Cultivating a feeling of self-confidence regarding the task (verses 50–51)
- ✓ Cultivating a feeling of self-confidence regarding one's abilities (verses 52–59)
- ✓ Cultivating a sense of self-confidence regarding the afflictive emotions (verses 60–62)
 - The force of joy (verses 63–66)
 - The force of relinquishment (verse 67)
- **Perfecting two applications**
 - The application of earnest practice (verses 68–74)
 - The application of controlling body, speech, and mind (verses 75–76)

Next session will be dedicated to questions and answers. It will be the last session for the time being as I will be traveling to India and Malaysia from March 25 until May 17.

Upon my return from Asia, TNG-Centre® will host a 17-day retreat of eight sets of NyungNay.

This will be followed TNG-Sangha participation to the Kagyud Monlam presided in Paris by Ven. Gyaltön Rinpoche from June 30 to July 2.

From July 12 to 21, TNG-Centre® will host a retreat on the Sadhana of White Tara composed by the 8th Tai Situ Rinpoche.

Then we will be blessed welcoming Ven. Gyaltön for a short visit to TNG-Centre® from August 4 to 7, 2023.

Our Group study of the Bodhicaryâvatâra will then resume on Saturday August 12 with the next subject: **Chapter Eight: Far-Reaching Mental Stability:** an extensive presentation of the Paramita of Concentration presented in 187 Slokas.

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

