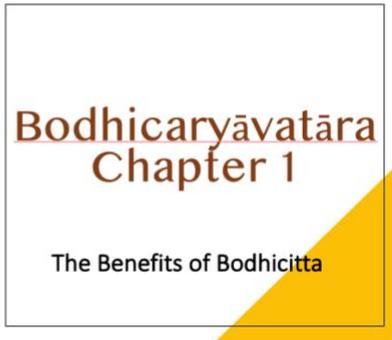


## Introduction to the Bodhisattva Vows

Bodhisattva vows serve to inspire, guide and train those on the Mahayana path but whilst many of us might have taken these vows, it is unfortunate that many are vague or clueless of the commitments involved upon receiving the bodhisattva vows. We are unaware of how they train us in our thought and conduct and what the dos and don'ts are. This subject is therefore to introduce a deeper understanding of the various commitments related to taking the vows.



As a prelude to the introduction to the Bodhisattva vows, we are going to review the first chapter of Bodhicaryavatara (The Guide to Bodhisattvas' Way of Life) which lays out the benefits of bodhicitta. The rationale is that as the bodhisattva vows are premised on bodhicitta, it is important to see the value of generating bodhicitta. This in turn will inspire one to take the Bodhisattva vows and thereby engage in the Bodhisattva practices. I think no other text offers a better explanation of the benefits of bodhicitta than Bodhicaryavatara (Tib–ChoeJuk).

Though many of you have covered this text before, if you have my type of memory that forgets easily, I think reviewing this topic will serve as a good revision. ChoeJuk is a very powerful teaching. It employs logic and observable situations to elucidate its points and are therefore easy to understand. It presents the teachings in a practical and doable manner, which leaves us no room for excuses. Normally, we blame the texts for our inability to put them into practices by complaining that this particular teaching is so hard to understand that I cannot integrate in my daily life. However, ChoeJuk is known for its applicability and practicality and hence our excuses will bear no weight.

### Importance of bodhicitta:

Why is bodhicitta so important? To answer this, I wanted to refer to a stanza that I recently came across (It's in Tibetan – no English translation). This is a beautiful quote which points out our weakness - our obsession with worldly concerns. It uses the analogy of a bird. A bird has two wings to fly and two eyes to see. Despite having wings and eyesight, some birds still fall prey to the predators. Likewise, we have obtained all the faculties and conditions (leisure and endowment) that are conducive to practicing dharma. Moreover, we have met dharma and gained wisdom to discern what is to be abandoned and what is to be cultivated. Despite the conduciveness, we tend to fritter away our life chasing after worldly pleasures. Is such a pursuit a worthwhile endeavor?

Materialistic pursuits relate only to this life. If we limit our concern only to this life, mainly ensuring our survival, we are no different from insects and animals. Tiny insects such as cockroaches also focus on caring for its needs to survive. There is nothing extraordinary about that urge. We have

bigger brains and greater intelligence. What we can accomplish is far more extensive. Hence, we should be better than cockroaches. Our greater intelligence would be better used in pursuing greater goals – long term goals that not only ensures happiness in this life but also in future lives; not only for ourselves but for others too. Aspiring towards such goals will differentiate us from insects and animals. Such pursuits are termed wholesome/worthwhile pursuits.

### **What are worthwhile pursuits?**

Spiritual or dharma pursuits entail thinking about goals beyond this life. To qualify as dharma practice, as a minimum, one's concern should be for the next life because to ensure a good rebirth, one has to engage in meritorious deeds. Such positive actions done with the next future life in mind, qualify as a dharma practice. Thus, securing a good rebirth is a worthwhile pursuit.

However, there is no certainty that one can attain good rebirth in the life after the next. As long as one remains under the influence of karma and delusion, there is no certainty that one will not fall into the lower realms. Hence achieving total freedom from delusion and karma is crucial if one wishes to escape birth in samsara. Such freedom is called Nirvana or liberation. Doing practices in order to attain liberation is another worthwhile pursuit.

When one finally attains liberation, one is free from samsaric rebirths. However, one has not attained perfection yet. There are still obscurations to be extirpated; qualities and realizations to be actualized. In that sense, upon attaining liberation, one's realizations are only partially complete and therefore one is still incapable of benefiting other sentient beings. Perfect realization and ability to help countless sentient beings is only possible when one achieves the state of Buddhahood. Pursuing Buddhahood is the best and most meaningful pursuit of all. Such pursuit will lead to the attainment of highest state of happiness.

However, there is no other way to attain this final goal of enlightenment other than cultivating bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is like the gateway to Buddhahood. One must enter through the bodhicitta door to reach the house of enlightenment. No other doors will lead to the house of enlightenment. Bodhicitta is crucial in achieving the state of enlightenment and that is why bodhicitta is so important.

In sutra, bodhicitta is likened to a diamond. A diamond, even a small chip of it, retains its name of diamond and is more valuable than any other unbroken precious stones. Likewise, bodhicitta even at a beginning stage, is regarded as superior to those cultivating wisdom realizing emptiness. A bodhisattva who is at the path of accumulation is more revered than a non-bodhisattva who is on the path of meditation. Why? Because although in terms of ranking on the path, the non-bodhisattva on the path of meditation is higher but due to bodhicitta, the bodhisattva at the beginner's stage is known as the Son of the Buddhas.

Bodhicitta is also a determining factor whether one is a Mahayana or not. The moment one generates bodhicitta, one joins the Mahayana family. Likewise, the moment one abandons bodhicitta, one ceases to be a Mahayana. Here, the degree of one's insight into emptiness is a secondary factor. For that reason, in sutras, we see that bodhicitta is referred to as father, while emptiness is referred to as mother. This is due to the caste system that existed in ancient India. A child's caste is determined by the caste of his father and not by mother. A caste of son born to a low caste father automatically becomes a low caste despite his mother's high caste status. Likewise,

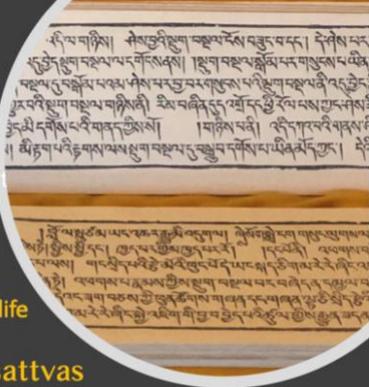
bodhicitta determines what path or yana one belongs to rather than wisdom realizing emptiness. In short, bodhicitta is the core ingredient for Buddhahood. Without it, Buddhahood is unattainable.

Another reason to pursue the cultivation of bodhicitta is that the merit of any practice that is motivated by bodhicitta is potent. For example, if four persons recite one round of Tara mantra, depending on their motivation, the amount of merit each generates would be different. Let's say the first person's motivation revolves around achieving long life, good health, success in business, good grades for his/her children etc. The second one recites the mantra to achieve good rebirth in the next life. The third person is motivated to achieve liberation from samsara. The final one does the Tara recitation to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all beings. In terms of physical practice, they all engaged in Tara mantra recitation. The number of recitation is also same – one round of mala. However, due to the different motivations, the merit will be different. The first person's practice is concerned only for this life, as such it did not even qualify as dharma practice. Many of our practices fall in this category and hence we need to be very careful. The second person's practice is driven by concerns beyond this life, it becomes a dharma practice and the cause to obtain rebirth in the higher realms. The merit is double the first one. The recitation by the third person is born out of renunciation of samsara and thereby the merit is far bigger than the second one. The fourth person's practice is motivated by bodhicitta, it becomes the Mahayana practice and becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment. The merit of this practice supersedes all the other practices. So, doing any practices out of bodhicitta commands a great accumulation of merit. This is another reason why bodhicitta is important.

We do a cost and benefit analysis in our daily life projects and issues. People in business do a thorough cost & benefit analysis before starting a new business. We apply this habit even when helping others. For instance, we might think “What is in it for me?” or “What do I get in return for helping you?”. Since we are applying the cost & benefit analysis to our everyday convention, why not apply this to our spiritual endeavors as well. When we do that, we will come to the conclusion that the practices that generate the highest profit is generating bodhicitta. As we look for quick ways to earn huge gains, bodhicitta is such a method and therefore we should try our best to do any practices motivated by bodhicitta. This way, we gain huge merits in short time.

Let me now briefly introduce you to the author of the Bodhicaryavatara, Shantideva. Shantideva is a 8<sup>th</sup> century Indian scholar from Nalanda. Born as a prince, he became monk and eventually a great bodhisattva. However, monks at Nalanda monastery failed to see Shantideva as a great practitioner. Instead, to their eyes, Shantideva was a lazy, good for nothing person and therefore nicknamed him “BhuSuKu”, an acronym for the one who only eats, sleeps and defecates. Monks at Nalanda were expected to engage in studying, recitation and meditation but Shantideva did not overtly display these. As such, monks thought Shantideva was simply being lazy. In order to humiliate him, the monks sent Shantideva to teach at a big gathering expecting that he had nothing to teach and that would ridicule him. Once seated, Shantideva asked the audience whether they preferred listening to a recitation of a sutra or his own composition. Curiosity got the better of the audience and they chose to hear Shantideva's own composition. And the result was this text – ChoeJuk. It is said that Shantideva started levitating as he began the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter and started to rise higher. When teaching the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter, the audience could only hear him but could not see him. Since then, the vast and profound ChoeJuk has been one of the core Buddhist teachings.

That teaching by Shantideva was a wakeup call for the monks who saw Shantideva as an ordinary person who was only good at eating, sleeping and defecating. As those monks learned their lessons, we too should take this as a lesson to be careful about what we say about other people. Bodhisattvas appear in many forms and they won't be brandishing "I am a bodhisattva" placard. Unless we have an omniscient mind or clairvoyance, we cannot accurately assess another person. Gyaltsap Jey likened judging others without true knowledge of the person to walking on burning ambers covered with ashes. One will not see the burning ambers because of the layer of ashes but walking on it, thinking that it's only a layer of ashes, will burn one's feet. This is what happened at the talent show called Britain's Got Talent, when Susan Boyle appeared for her singing audition. When she said she wanted to be like Elaine Page, everybody in the audience including the judges were skeptical and even scoffed at her. However, she shocked everybody with her great singing voice. This incident lends credence to the saying that we should not judge a book by its cover. Hence, we should suspend our judgment of others and thereby hold back our criticisms. I think that's the lesson we should take from Shantideva's life story.



**Title & translator's homage**

- o **Bodhisattva-carya-avatara**  
 Bodhi- (Tib-JangChub) – Enlightenment  
 Sattva – (Tib-Sempa) – Altruistic mind  
 Carya – (Tib-Choepa) – Conduct /Action  
 Avatara - (Tib-Jugpa) – Engage  
**A guide to the Bodhisattva's way of life**

**Homage to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas**  
 (Sutra basket)

Now we will dive into the text itself. The text begins with its title in Sanskrit - Bodhisattvacaryavataara. As we have discussed in previous classes on the reasons for retaining the Sanskrit name of a scriptural text, I will not repeat here. The title serves the purpose of indicating what the text is about. Let's dissect the title Bodhisattvacaryavataara. "Bodhi" refers to enlightenment. It is translated as JangChub in Tibetan. "Jang" refers to purification or eradication of the two obscurations. "Chub" refers to actualization of realizations or perfection of all the good qualities. Together it means "the one who has purified all the negativities and perfected all the qualities". Hence it refers to the Buddha. "Sattva" here refers to the altruistic mind. "Carya" refers to conduct or action. "Avatara" refers to engage. Put together, it literally means Engaging in the bodhisattva conduct or action. In other words, a guide to the bodhisattva's way of life. Title is followed by a line of homage made by the translators. In this text, the homage is made to Buddhas and bodhisattvas to show that this text belongs to the sutra basket of teachings.



## Homage & pledge

With devotion I pay homage to the  
buddhas gone to bliss,  
To their Dharma body, noble heirs and  
all worthy of respect.  
In accordance with the scriptures, I  
shall now in brief describe  
The way to adopt the discipline of all  
the buddhas' heirs.

The first stanza consists of homage and declaration. At the onset of the actual teaching, Shantideva pays homage to Three Jewels and all that is worthy of respect. It reads:

“With devotion I pay homage to the buddhas gone to bliss,  
To their Dharma body, noble heirs and all worthy of respect.”

The gone to bliss is an English translation of the Sanskrit word “Sugata” (Tib-Deywar Shegpa). “Sugata/DeWar ShegPa” has three different connotations based on three different context/perspectives. Firstly, Buddhas are called gone gracefully (ZePar ShegPa) because they are free of any flaws. Secondly, since they have eliminated the two obscurations, they don't have to return to samsara and therefore they are called gone for good (Lar MeDokPar ShegPa). Finally, they are known as gone completely (MaLuPar ShegPa) because they have perfected all the good qualities. These highlight the Buddhas' qualities of abandonment of the two obscurations and actualization of all positive qualities.

So “...buddhas gone to bliss”, refers to the Buddha Jewel. The second line that says “to their dharma body” which means the Buddhas who possess Dharmakaya refers to the second jewel - the Dharma. “Noble heir” refers the Sangha Jewel. Hence objects of homage here is the Three Jewels and any other object worthy of veneration.

Text then reads:

“In accordance with the scriptures,  
I shall now in brief describe  
The way to adopt the discipline of all the buddhas' heirs.”

This falls under the declaration or pledge. The author makes a declaration on what he is going to write. The purpose of doing so is said to help them complete their work. Great beings fulfil their pledges and making a pledge to compose a book helps them succeed in their writing. Here Shantideva says that he will teach how to engage in bodhisattavas' practices. To show that he is not making this up, Shantideva says, “in accordance with the scripture” i.e. whatever he is going to teach is purely in accordance with Buddha's teachings. One may then wonder that since all Buddha's teachings were already made available, why compose another text? To answer this question, Shantideva wrote, “I shall now in brief describe”. Here Shantideva is saying that he agrees that Buddha's teachings are available but as the teachings were voluminous and vast, it was difficult for

ordinary people to distill the relevant practices. Accordingly, his intention was to present the teachings in a concise and easy to apply manner.



## A Display of humility

There is nothing here that's not been  
said before;  
And I have no skill in the art of  
composition.  
Therefore I do not expect this to be of  
much use to others,  
And write it only to acquaint it to my  
mind.

The next two stanzas state the purpose of composing this text and at the same time, is a display of Shantideva's humility. Since there are people who chase only after novelty, Shantideva says here that for those who are looking for something new, he has nothing new to offer. "There is nothing here that's not been said before" and therefore, "I do not expect this to be of much use to" to those who are after novel teachings. There are also others who are only intrigued by poetic skills. He says that since "I have no skill in the art of composition, I do not expect this to be of much use to others (those seeking poetic works)". Here, Shantideva displays humility because he was already a great scholar who had fine skills in the art of composition. It appears that he composed this entire text impromptu and in verse form. One needs compositional skills even to phrase words and ideas into verses.

I think this highlights two important points: Firstly, it advises us not to chase after esoteric or novel practices. Many of us have this tendency to show a preference for something novel and so called "higher" practices. For instance, we might prefer teachings that are considered special and rare e.g. if we are given a choice to attend a teaching on karma or on Mahamudra, many of us would choose Mahamudra over karma despite karma being a core subject of Buddhism. Without a firm foundation in karma understanding and living our lives according to that understanding, nothing beneficial can come out of our attempt at Mahamudra practices. Chasing after novel teachings may enrich one's intellectual knowledge but will not contribute towards one's progress on the spiritual path. So, the first lesson is to focus on the core teachings rather than chasing after esoteric teachings. Second lesson is to be humble. Nobody likes a person who brags about their qualities or achievements. We have a saying in Tibetan which literally translates into, "Gold underground, Rays in sky", which means that if there is gold, it will shine no matter where it is. Likewise, if we possess real qualities, they will be noticed. We do not need to brandish our qualities. Boastfulness fuels arrogance which brings undesirable ramifications. If we are bloated with conceit, we will be like a tight balloon that has little room for wisdom to get in. Lojong teachings advise us to regard ourselves as the lowest among all and hold others as supreme. Even if we cannot do that, at least we should reduce our pride through humility. This renders our mind more open and receptive to wisdom and it will also

have a positive impact on our interaction with others and thereby improve one's relationships with others.

Having said that he does not expect his teachings to be of much benefit to others, one might then raise the question of why compose? To answer this, Shantideva says "I [write it only to acquaint it to my mind](#)". He explains that it is to help himself develop familiarity with bodhicitta.

**Purpose:**



Through this, my faith will be strengthened for a while,  
And I will grow more accustomed to what is virtuous.  
Then should others, somehow equal to myself in fortune,  
Chance upon these words, they might find them beneficial.

This raises another question. If one is writing about the Bodhisattva practices, one should have already been acquainted with the practices or else one would not be able to write about it. And if one is already familiar with the practices, why the need to acquaint oneself with the practices? To dispel this confusion, Shantideva writes;

["Through this, my faith will be strengthened for a while,  
And I will grow more accustomed to what is virtuous"](#).

Shantideva responds by saying that he is familiar with the topic and thereby adequately qualified to compose this text. However, by composing this text, it helps him to strengthen his faith in the bodhisattva's practices and increase the bodhicitta he has already developed. The text goes on to explain that this composition might benefit some fortunate ones. It reads;

["Then should others, somehow equal to my fortune,  
Chance upon these words, they might find them beneficial."](#)

This concludes the statement of purposes for this composition. From here onwards begins the main body of the text. It begins with an exhortation to seize the opportunity that comes with this precious human birth to extract the essence (dharma practice).



## Verse: 4

Leisure and endowment are very hard  
to find;  
And, since they accomplish what is  
meaningful for man,  
If I do not take advantage of them now,  
How will such a perfect opportunity  
come about again?

### The Leisures

- Freedom from eight states in which there is no opportunity to practice Dharma

#### The eight unfavorable conditions:

Four non-human states	Human States
Hell being	Remote Land
Hungry ghost	Deficient faculties
Animal	Holding wrong views
Long-lived god	No Buddha has appeared

### Ten Endowments

#### Five personal endowments

1. Being born as human
2. Being born in a central land
3. Having all the faculties intact
4. Not having committed the most extreme negative actions
5. Having faith in the source

#### Five endowments that pertain to others

1. Buddha has come
2. Dharma was taught
3. The teachings survive
4. Followers exist
5. A feeling of compassion for others exist

We have previously covered in detail the 8 leisures and 10 endowments of the precious human rebirth. I will not repeat them here. Basically, the life that we have acquired now is said to be free from eight unfavorable conditions (4 non-human states & 4 human situations). For instance, if we were born as animals, we would not be able to practice dharma. In order to practice dharma, one needs to understand dharma. Animals, even the most intelligent ones, cannot understand a single word of dharma, let alone understand the concepts of emptiness and bodhicitta. So, we are fortunate to be free from such non-human states. Even one obtains a human rebirth, there is no guarantee that one can practice dharma. For instance, if one is born in a place where there is no dharma, the opportunity to meet and practice dharma would not arise. We are lucky enough to be born in a place where buddhadharma is still easily accessible. When we examine our conditions carefully, we will realize that our existence is free from all the eight unfavorable conditions and endowed with conducive conditions to practice dharma.

Here Shantideva reminds us of the importance of utilizing this precious human life because we can accomplish various meaningful achievements if we use our lives sensibly. For example, if we want to avoid falling into the lower realms, this life can facilitate our accomplishing this by ensuring our rebirth in the higher realms. Likewise, if we work toward achieving Nirvana (liberation from samsara), we can do so with this life. Furthermore, this life has the potential to attain enlightenment. In that sense, the human birth that we have right now, is very precious and has enormous potential. Lama Tsongkhapa extolled the precious human rebirth as more valuable than a wish-fulfilling gem. Better than Aladdin's Genie! A genie may fulfill worldly wishes but cannot help prevent one from falling into the pit of three lower realms. In contrast, this precious human birth has the potential to

fulfill all our wishes concerning this life, as well as the future lives AND has the potential to attain enlightenment in this very lifetime.

If such rebirths are common and easy to find, it is ok to have a loose attitude towards such an opportunity. However, the precious human rebirth is rare and hard to come by. As with all composite phenomena, things do not come about from nothing (i.e. no causes). Not only it requires causes and conditions, it requires concordant causes and conditions. This means we need to cultivate virtue in order to achieve a good human rebirth. However, our virtues are scarce and feeble, whereas our non-virtues are in frequent and powerful. This should be obvious to us. In the 24 hours of a day, we spend very little time on dharma practice/doing virtue. The dharma practices we do engage in often lack quality. Three components must be present in a practice in order to qualify as a quality practice: proper motivation, the actual practice and dedication. When we put our own practice to scrutiny, we will realize that most of our practices either lack all the three components or one or two of them. For instance, for most of us, when we recite one mala of Tara mantra, we forget to set our motivation at the beginning and even when we remember to do so, our motivation revolves around the goals of only this life (i.e. good health, success and prosperity). And then while performing the actual practice, in this case, recitation, we are distracted. At the end, we fail to dedicate our merits and even when we do, instead of dedicating it towards enlightenment for the sake of all living beings, we dedicate mainly for this life's purposes. From that perspective, our dharma practices are very feeble. On the other hand, when it comes to non-virtue, all the three components are fully present. For instance, if one decides to harm another person, firstly, the ill intention is there from the beginning and strong. One is fully focused when engaging in the actual action of harming the other. At the end, there is a strong sense of satisfaction in inflicting harm. In that way, we commit the non-virtue in a perfect way. Based on our habits, we create more causes for lower realm rebirths and is the reason for saying precious human rebirth is hard to come by.

Another reason for the precious human rebirth being rare is that it requires specific causes and we often lack such causes. Even an ordinary human rebirth requires at least observing ethical discipline such as abstaining from committing ten non-virtues, not to mention for a rebirth that is free from unfavorable conditions. From our own experience, many of us are not able to avoid even one of the ten non-virtues. Merely not committing any of the ten non-virtues is not tantamount to observing ethical discipline pertaining to those ten. To qualify as observing ethical discipline, it requires the conscious intention or determination to avoid the non-virtue. For us monks, our vows include observing the ten non-virtues and therefore, not engaging in ten equals to observing ethical discipline in relation to the ten non-virtues. However, those who have not taken such vows have to make conscious determination on daily basis to avoid the ten non-virtues. For that reason, I often suggest setting up the motivation every morning and decide from among the ten, which non virtue one is going to abstain from committing. For instance, if one feels that one can abstain from committing the three physical ones for the day (killing, stealing and sexual misconduct), one should set that determination accordingly from the morning. That's how one gains merit from observing ethical discipline. Taking all the above into consideration, we now understand the rarity of the optimum human rebirth and thereby the importance of maximizing our human life to extract its essence. With this understanding, we should arrive at four logical conclusions based on four sound reasons. Let's go through the four conclusions.

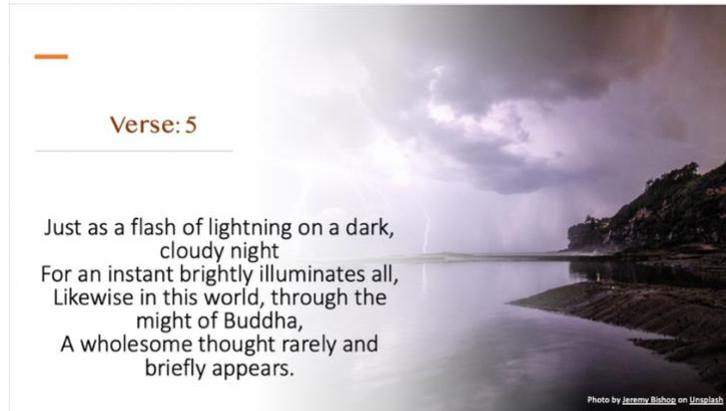
### Four resolutions to extract the essence of this life:

1. **Seeing the necessity of practicing Dharma** – We all seek happiness
2. **Recognizing the capability to accomplish the practices** – We obtained inner and external facilities
3. **Necessity to accomplish the practice in this life** – Difficult to obtain precious human rebirth in the future
4. **Necessity of accomplishing it right now** – Time of death is uncertain

1. **Necessity to practice dharma:** Firstly, one realizes the necessity of practicing dharma because one is seeking happiness and avoiding suffering. The achievement of happiness and freedom from suffering is dependent on practicing dharma (subduing the delusions/afflictions). Karma is certain in that virtuous action results into happiness and non-virtuous action results into suffering. No amount of unwholesome action will bring desirable consequences. Neither will any amount of wholesome action result in undesirable consequences. In that sense, karma is fixed. Since we aspire to be happy, dharma practice is a must. With this realization, we need to resolve to practice dharma.
2. **We have the capability to practice dharma:** Once we realize that we must practice dharma, we then wonder whether we have the capability to do so. Identifying the 8 leisure and 10 endowments, we realize that we are fully equipped as we have the perfect conditions to practice dharma. Not only we have this human rebirth, we have also met dharma and dharma teachers. So, both internal and external facilities are present for that. If we put our heart into the practice, there is nothing to hinder us from achieving the happiness we seek. This adds to the reasons to engage in dharma practice and we should thus resolve to do so.
3. **Must practice in this life:** Despite having conducive conditions, we tend to delay our practice thinking that we can do it in the next life. To counter this, one should contemplate on how difficult it will be to obtain another precious human rebirth in the future. As we discussed earlier, human rebirth is so hard to obtain. Therefore, we cannot afford to leave our dharma practice to the next life. There is no guarantee that we will be born human again and must engage in dharma practices in this very lifetime.
4. **Must begin practicing right now:** Even after realizing how critical it is to practice in this very life, we tend to procrastinate and prioritize our worldly endeavors over spiritual practices. For instance, we tend to say that “Yes, I know I need to do spiritual practices but first I need to finish my project”, or “I’ll do it when I retire”. To counter this type of procrastination, we reflect on the uncertainty of death. Death is certain but the time of death is uncertain. If we know when we are going to die, at least we can make plans. We can say, “My death is coming in three years’ time, I better start my dharma practice”. Unfortunately, the time of death is not fixed. We can die at any time. We hear stories of people who are up and about in the morning and dead by evening. This shows the uncertainty of the time of death. Death will not wait for us to finish our obligations and our dharma practice. Reflecting on this, we should come up with a resolution that we will practice dharma right away.

For the above reasons, Shantideva urges us to take advantage of this human rebirth and develop bodhicitta when he writes:

“If I do not take advantage of them now,  
How will such a perfect opportunity come about again?”



After discussing the rarity of the physical human body, Shantideva now discusses the rarity of the wholesome thought. He likens our virtuous mindset as fleeting and like the momentary illumination by a flash of lightening on a dark cloudy night. Firstly, lightning occurs occasionally and its duration very short. It lasts only momentarily. Likewise, for us ordinary beings, wholesome thoughts are very rare and arise very briefly. We are constantly overwhelmed by unwholesome thoughts. We can tell from our own experience. During the 24 hours of the day, we spend more than half of it sleeping and doing our jobs. In the remaining waking hours, how often does a thought of helping others out of compassion arise in us? Not often. When we are with people, we engage in gossip or negative speech that is influenced by afflictive emotions. When we are alone, our thoughts are imbued with the afflictions. Even when we sit down to meditate, our minds wander and meet our best buddies – attachment, hatred and ignorance. We may be thinking about ways to make more money or achieve greater success. Or we could be thinking about our enemies and how to get even with them. Most of our thoughts tend to be driven by either attachment, hatred or indifference. When we closely examine our thoughts, we will realize that unwholesome thoughts such as anger and jealousy arise effortlessly. It is near-automatic and does not require conscious effort. However, when it comes to wholesome thoughts, such as kindness, love and compassion, even with effort, we find it difficult to generate them. As such, Shantideva urges us to work toward developing a habit of having more virtuous thoughts.



The actual discussion of the virtues of bodhicitta begins from here onwards. Since our virtue is perpetually feeble and non-virtue is extremely strong, we need to overcome the non-virtues. Without purification, our negative karma will catch up with us. Karma once created will bear fruit no matter how long it takes. An ordinary seed can become useless as it rots or dries up after a long period of being dormant. However, karma will produce its results when met with right conditions, regardless of time. The consequences of negative karma can be dreadful as they are magnified and thus, we need to exhaust such karma. There are various ways to purify negative karma. However, the most effective antidote to negative karma is through the generation of the Fully Awakening Mind of bodhicitta. In sutra, an analogy of a cat and rat is used to illustrate this point. Just as a mere glance from a cat can overwhelm a rat, a generation of bodhicitta too will overcome delusion and negative karma. It is said that the generation of bodhicitta can prevent even a person who has committed heavy negative karma, from falling into the lower realms. So, this stanza highlights the purification power of bodhicitta and urges us to work toward cultivating this great mindset.

### Verse: 7

All the Buddhas who have  
contemplated for many aeons  
Have seen it to be beneficial;  
For by it the limitless masses of beings  
Will quickly attain the supreme state  
of bliss.



This stanza extolls Bodhicitta for its ability to produce sublime happiness. The buddhas who are committed to helping sentient beings have contemplated for aeons on the best way to achieve sublime happiness and found that bodhicitta is the method. Lasting happiness is achieved when one eradicates the root of suffering without even a trace of its stains and that is when one becomes a Buddha. At that stage, not only has one eradicated all sufferings and their causes but also perfected all good qualities. One becomes perfect in every way – infallible in every way. The only way to achieve this is through the cultivation of bodhicitta alongside wisdom realizing emptiness. The past buddhas have utilized this method that has yielded the result of enlightenment. Hence, they say bodhicitta is the one that leads countless sentient beings to the supreme state of bliss.

### Verse: 8

Those who wish to destroy the many sorrows  
of (their) conditioned existence,  
Those who wish (all beings) to experience a  
multitude of joys,  
And those who wish to experience much  
happiness,  
Should never forsake the Awakening Mind.

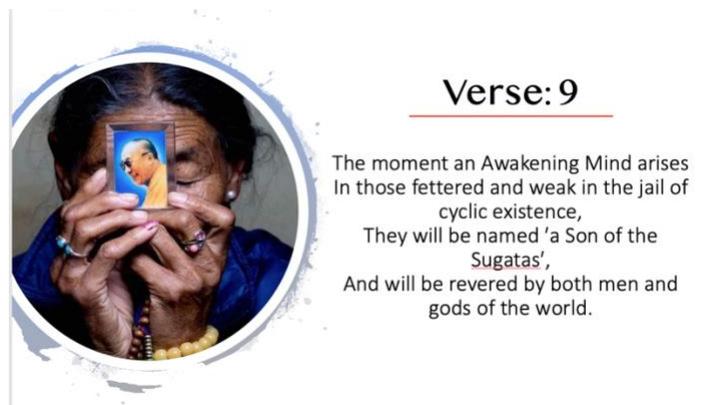


This stanza points out how bodhicitta fulfills our many wishes. Being born in samsara, we constantly suffer from varying types and degrees of suffering. There is no way of generating genuine

compassion for all sentient beings without thoroughly understanding the types of sufferings they are undergoing (the three types of suffering – the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive suffering). This understanding begins with our gaining insight into our own suffering nature and this insight leads us to developing renunciation of samsara. It is the mental state that recognizes samsara as an ocean of suffering and thereby aspire to be free of it and achieve nirvana. With renunciation, each of our actions will be aimed at achieving emancipation from the suffering existence and constantly creating causes and condition to attain liberation. Seeing that all other sentient beings suffer as we do, we strive to liberate them from such suffering and lead them to ultimate happiness. This is the basis of bodhicitta. In that sense, the verse shows how bodhicitta fulfills the wishes of all beings.

Bodhicitta is also a source of myriad of joys and happiness. Of course, it leads to the supreme happiness – the state of enlightenment. Even in samsara, when we have bodhicitta, our sources of happiness increase exponentially. Normally, we have only a handful of reasons to be happy. For instance, we feel happy when good things happen to ourselves and those close to us. We rarely rejoice when good things happen to those who are not in our inner circle. For instance, a colleague's promotion may not engender happiness and joy but may instead incite envy and jealousy. However, once we develop bodhicitta, our sources of happiness become infinite because bodhicitta is about wishing others to be happy. Thus, when we see others' accomplishments or good things happening to them, we feel joy. Since sentient beings are infinite, our sources of happiness are also infinite.

This has also direct implications in our relationships. Relationships fail for many reasons, but the self-cherishing/selfish attitude often lies at the core of failed relationships. Bodhicitta is an attitude of cherishing others and prioritizing others' happiness. As such, when we cultivate bodhicitta, our principal concern is shifted to the other person. We prioritize others' welfare over our own and thereby there is no room for selfish attitude to arise. This will then help us interpret other persons and situations more positively, thereby minimizing friction and improving our relationship with others. That is why bodhicitta is like a wish-fulfilling jewel that invariably grants all our wishes.



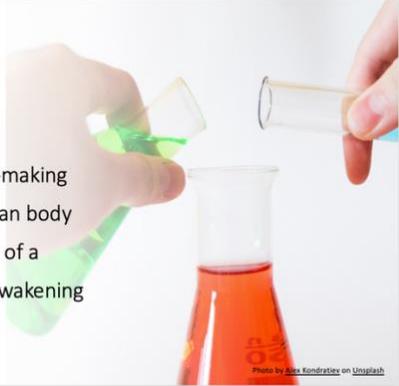
Bodhicitta is not only a source of all happiness, it also carries a special standing. When one successfully develops genuine bodhicitta, one is accorded with a special name and reverence amongst beings and gods of this world. Similar to an ordinary person winning an election and becoming a leader of a country. Before the election, nobody even knows the candidate, let alone showing him respect. The moment this person is declared the leader of a country, respect and privileges are automatically accorded. Likewise, the moment an ordinary person who is trapped in the jail of samsara and undergoing torture is able to generate real bodhicitta, that person will be

accorded the name “the Son of Buddhas” and is respected by humans and gods of the world. Shakyamuni Buddha whom we prostrate to, was once an ordinary being like us. Shakyamuni Buddha developed bodhicitta and completed the path of bodhisattvas and became an object of reverence. We did not follow his path and as a result we are still struggling in samsara. This stanza not only extols the virtue of bodhicitta, it also highlights the potential we each possess. The line that says “..those fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence” emphasizes that such benefits are not limited to bodhisattvas who are on higher paths such as the path of seeing and meditation but to those ordinary beings who are still struck in the ocean of samsaric suffering. Thus, it urges us to work toward developing this altruistic attitude of bodhicitta.

**Verse: 10**

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It is like the supreme gold-making  
elixir,  
For it transforms the unclean body  
we have taken  
Into the priceless jewel of a  
Buddha-Form  
Therefore firmly seize this Awakening  
Mind.



In this stanza, Shantideva uses an analogy of elixir to illustrate the benefits of bodhicitta. It is said that there is a elixir or potion that can transform ordinary metal into gold. Gold is one of the expensive and valuable objects in this world. In the era of Coronavirus, the market for other commodities plunged but gold price has rocketed. So, for many, it would be wonderful to be able to lay their hands on such a potion. However, if one were to acquire this elixir and produce a ton of gold, it will not avert death, it cannot help beyond this life (even in this life, one’s family members may be quarrelling over possession of this gold). However, cultivating bodhicitta can transform our ordinary flawed body into a priceless buddha body that can fulfill both our short-term and long-term goals. As such, Shantideva exhorts us to firmly seize this awakening mind by taking the bodhisattva vows and abiding in them.



## Verse: 11

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Since the limitless mind of the Sole  
Guide of the World  
Has upon thorough investigation seen  
its preciousness,  
All beings wishing to be free from  
worldly abodes  
Should firmly take hold of this precious  
Awakening Mind.

This discusses the preciousness and rarity of bodhicitta through an analogy of a precious jewel. In ancient times, people embarked on a sea journey in search of treasure on the Land of Jewels. The goal was to return with the treasures with the hope of dispelling poverty. They entrusted their welfare in the hands of their ship's captain who was known to be an expert in navigation and experienced in sailing to this particular place. Upon arriving at this place, the captain was skilled in finding the most valuable jewels. If the sailors listened to their captain's advice, they would collect and bring back with them the most valuable jewels. Similarly, we sentient beings are also stricken by the poverty of happiness and are constantly drowning in the ocean of suffering. If we are serious about wanting to eliminate the poverty of happiness, we need to find a jewel that can eliminate the poverty of happiness. Likewise, we need an experienced guide who has already made that successful journey to finding that jewel. There is no other more experienced guide than the past Buddhas who have successfully found the priceless jewel of bodhicitta, that alleviates all suffering and serves as a panacea for all our suffering. These perfect guides advise us to seize the jewel of bodhicitta which is very precious and rare. This advice did not come from guesswork. Through putting their infinite wisdom into investigation and experimentation, they discovered that bodhicitta is the supreme jewel that can solve sentient beings' poverty of happiness. Hence, Shantideva recommends that we should firmly take hold of this precious awakening mind.

### Verse: 12

All other virtues are like the plantain  
tree;  
For after bearing fruit they simply  
perish.  
But the perennial tree of the Awakening  
Mind  
Unceasingly bears fruit and thereby  
flourishes without end.



Our main goal is to achieve Buddhahood but without an enormous accumulation of both wisdom and merits, Buddhahood will remain elusive to us. As such, we need to first find ways to accumulate the merits and then methods to effectively preserve them. In the absence of any one of the two, we would fail in gathering enough merit to result in Buddhahood. This is similar to the way we try to save money. First, we need a steady income and then find a means to prevent the depletion of that income. Otherwise, we would not be able to build up our bank balance. One way to achieve this is for example, by getting a good earning job and investing that money which can generate good monthly income. This way, we can keep snowballing our existing money. In terms of increasing our merits, Shantideva suggests an effective method involving bodhicitta. He uses an analogy of two different trees: a plantain (banana) tree and a perennial tree. ChuShing (Tib) translated as plantain tree is known to bear fruit only once and then it perishes. However, JonShing (Tib) translated as perennial tree is believed to bear fruits again and again for a long time. A plantain tree is likened to merits that are not motivated by bodhicitta. The merit will yield a onetime result and then get extinguished. However, the merits that are propelled by bodhicitta just like the perennial tree, produces results over and over. Shantideva says “[unceasingly bears fruit and thereby flourishes](#)”

without end.” Since we are hungry for merits to achieve enlightenment, generating bodhicitta is the most effective way to gather merits. This is one more reason to cultivate bodhicitta.

### Verse: 13

Like entrusting myself to a brave man when  
greatly afraid  
By entrusting myself to this (Awakening  
Mind) I shall be swiftly liberated  
Even if I have committed extremely  
unbearable evils.  
Why then do the conscientious not devote  
themselves to this?

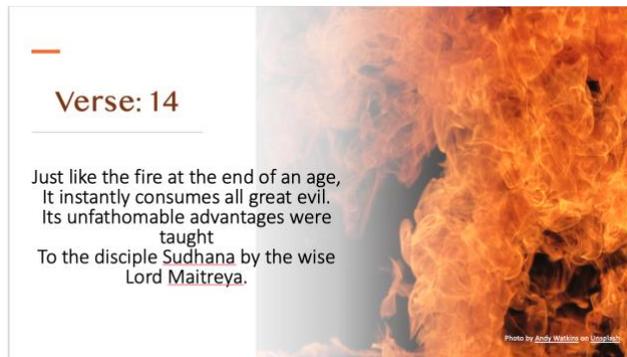


This stanza extolls bodhicitta for its power to protect us from experiencing the results of heavy negative karma. Shantideva employs the analogy of a bodyguard. Having a trusted bodyguard can protect a person from dangers such as assassination attempts. A better example is that of a convicted serial killer, who when being transferred from one place to another is often accompanied by the police. One reason is to prevent the culprit from escaping but another reason is to protect him from being attacked by the angry public. Although the felon has committed heavy crimes and deserves punishment, as long as the guards are around, he/she is protected. Similarly, Bodhicitta can protect anyone who has committed even the heaviest negative karma such as inflicting harms to the Three Jewels or committed the five heinous karmas (killing one’s mother or father, killing an arhat, drawing blood from a Buddha, and causing schism in the Sangha of bikshus). The ramifications of these negative deeds are grave. Committing such karma will result in birth in the hell realms in the very next life. Other karmas’ results may not be immediate. That is why these five acts or heinous karmas are called “TsamMey” which literally means “without any interval”. It is sometimes translated as “acts of direct fruition or automatic transgressions”. Despite their gravity, through the generation of bodhicitta, one can escape the dire consequences of such misdeeds. The text reads;

“By entrusting myself to this (Awakening Mind), I shall be swiftly liberated  
Even if I have committed extremely unbearable evils.”

Seeing bodhicitta’s ability to liberate us from the consequences of heavy negative karma, we should devote ourselves to developing this mindset.

The way bodhicitta protects a person from the negative consequences of heavy negative karma is through destroying negative karma, thereby leaving no chance to experience the result. It is like eliminating the seed of a plant so that there will be no sprouts. This is illustrated with an analogy of a conflagration - the fire at the end of age of universe.



In Abhidharma, it is said that the world will eventually be destroyed by fire. It describes about how at the end of the world, seven suns will appear and engulf the earth and turning it into ashes. Perhaps the seven suns are a metaphor for global warming! We can see even now the dangers posed by global warming. Every year, there are extensive forest fires that destroy hundreds of habitats. The text is making the point that when that “doomsday” arrives, the world we know will be completely destroyed by an inferno so powerful that it swallows everything except the realm beyond the 4<sup>th</sup> state of concentration (the final state of form realm). Likewise, bodhicitta is so powerful that like the fire at the end of an age, bodhicitta can also burn all the negative karmas so that one does not have to experience its suffering consequences. While verse 13 discusses how bodhicitta overwhelms negative karma, verse 14 highlights its power to destroy even the seed of negative karma. The beneficial effect of bodhicitta is profound and vast.

The story of Asanga helps us understand the power of bodhicitta. Asanga undertook a 12 year retreat in an effort to propitiate and meet Maitreya but was unsuccessful. At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> year, when Asanga finally came out of the retreat, saw a pitiful dog that was infested with maggots. Driven by compassion, Asanga decided to help the maggot-ridden dog but realized that simply removing the maggots would kill them. The only solution was to use his own tongue to lift them out of the dog and transfer them on to piece of flesh that he had cut from his body. As he knelt down to do so, the maggot-ridden dog disappeared and, in its place, stood Maitreya. When Asanga asked why Maitreya did not appear for the last 12 years, Maitreya explained that he had been there all along. However, because of the obscuration caused by Asanga’s past negative karma, he could not see Maitreya. That single act of genuine compassion purified all the negative karmic hindrances to seeing Maitreya. If generating an instant of compassion can purify so much grave negative karma, we could easily extrapolate that to see the extensive positive impact of bodhicitta on our own and others’ lives.

The reason for bodhicitta’s ability to do this is because when one develops genuine bodhicitta, one creates immeasurable positive karma or merit. This is because bodhicitta is unique many ways:

(1) **It focuses on infinite number of beings:** Bodhicitta is not about benefiting a small number of people. It is concerned about helping all sentient beings and therefore its focus is on infinite number of beings. As such it is unique for its focus or object.

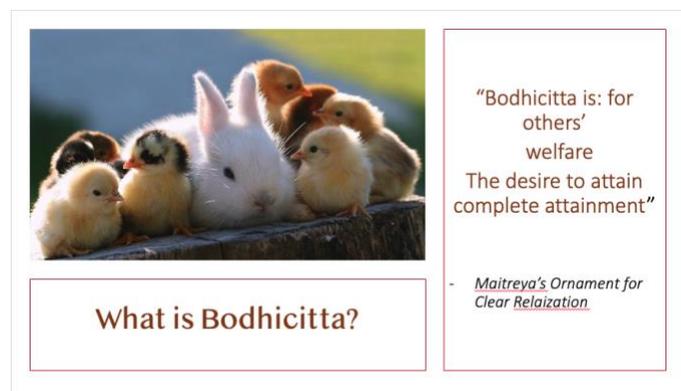
(2) **It aims to alleviate an infinite number of sufferings:** The very purpose of generating bodhicitta is to liberate sentient beings from their sufferings. The goal is not limited to a certain degree of suffering. It is aimed at alleviating all forms of suffering, whether it be gross or subtle. In fact, bodhicitta aims to eradicate even the causes of suffering. Since the suffering of sentient beings

are infinite and bodhicitta aims to eliminate all, it is unique in terms of its goal in freeing sentient beings from their suffering.

(3) **It aims to render infinite happiness:** Bodhicitta is not only concerned about alleviating the sufferings of sentient beings, it is also committed to providing limitless happiness to all sentient beings. The ultimate goal is to lead them to the state of sublime, permanent, infinite happiness. Therefore, bodhicitta is unique in relation to providing infinite happiness and joy.

(4) **It aims for infinite duration:** The freedom from suffering and happiness that bodhicitta aspires to provide is not a temporary one. It aims to create lasting joy and happiness for sentient beings and therefore the duration is infinite.

On account of the above unique features, engaging in bodhicitta garners immeasurable merits and thereby becomes a powerful antidote to negative actions. In turn, it eradicates negative karma and prevent it from fruition. This and many other unfathomable benefits of bodhicitta are taught in detail by Maitreya to his disciple Sudhana. In the Sutra of the Arrayed Trees, the virtue of bodhicitta is extolled over 200 analogies. To list a few, bodhicitta is likened to a seed that bears the fruit of enlightenment; a field that flourishes virtue; a jewel vase that fulfills all wishes; a short spear that defeats the enemy of afflictive emotions and so on.



From the above, we have gained some understanding on the benefits of bodhicitta. Now we focus on the definition of bodhicitta. What is bodhicitta? In Maitreya's the Ornament of Clear Light Realization, Bodhicitta is defined as:

“Bodhicitta is: for others’ welfare  
The desire to attain complete attainment”.

Let's unpack the definition. The main goal is to help sentient beings. “Others’ welfare” consists of temporary and ultimate goals. The temporary goal is to enable sentient beings to cultivate the path that leads to the freedom from samsara and its result - nirvana. The ultimate goal is to bring them to full Buddhahood. The intention is to fulfill these two goals. However, at the moment, one does not have the capacity to liberate even one sentient being, let alone liberating all sentient beings. Only when one becomes Buddha, would one have such ability. So, motivated solely by the wish to liberate others, one aspires to achieve enlightenment. Such aspiration is called bodhicitta. One's desire for one's own enlightenment is a secondary goal. It is simply the means to achieve the primary goal, which is benefitting others. In Lamrim Chenmo, Lama Tsongkhapa likens this to a person looking for a cup in order to quench his/her thirst. Quenching one's thirst is the primary goal but searching

for the cup is a means to hold the liquid that will quench the thirst. In simple words, bodhicitta is an attitude that aspires to achieve enlightenment in order to help other sentient beings.



The first stanza lists the 2 types of bodhicitta and the second stanza lays out the distinction between the two. There are two types of bodhicitta: aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta.

Upon contemplating the virtues of bodhicitta, we get inspired to develop bodhicitta. Employing one of the two methods of developing bodhicitta, there will come a time where bodhicitta will arise spontaneously (effortlessly). The initial stage of generating the wish to cultivate bodhicitta in order to attain enlightenment to free sentient beings from suffering is called aspiring bodhicitta. At this stage, one has not committed to engaging in the practices of the six perfections. Neither has one taken the bodhisattva vows. Although such aspiration is noble and virtuous, it is a mere aspiration and that is not enough. This will not get one far into fulfilling the goals of achieving enlightenment and liberating others. In order to progress, one needs to commit to engaging in the bodhisattva practices that will lead to Buddhahood and for this purpose, one takes the bodhisattva vows. This type of bodhicitta is called engaging bodhicitta.

The difference between aspiring and engaging bodhicitta can be explained in another way: Let's say there is a person who has heard a lot about Tibet and wishes to visit someday. A year later, this person actually embarks on the journey. The aspiration to visit Tibet is present in the both cases. The difference is in the action taken. In the first case, it was a mere wish or desire that lacked action. In the second case, not only the aspiration was present, but the action too is present. So aspiring bodhicitta is like the first case, where only a wish is present. Engaging bodhicitta is like the second case where the aspiration is accompanied by action. The actual distinction lies in the bodhisattva vows. While bodhicitta that is complemented by bodhisattva vows is engaging bodhicitta; bodhicitta that is not complemented by bodhisattva vows is aspiring bodhicitta. So, it depends on whether the person who has generated bodhicitta has taken the bodhisattva vows or not. This distinction is clearly stated in Lamrim Chenmo. However, it is not be confused with the simple act of taking bodhisattva vows. Many of us has taken bodhisattva vows during tantric empowerments. In order to qualify as engaging bodhicitta, one needs to be a bodhisattva, a person who has actually developed bodhicitta. Just because we recite refuge and bodhicitta prayers, we should not think that we have generated actual bodhicitta. Ours is a contrived bodhicitta, one that is based on our being motivated to practice bodhicitta but is not as yet the fully developed form of actual bodhicitta, which is the spontaneous/effortless bodhicitta that flows without interruption. The moment that contrived progresses to a spontaneous bodhicitta, we can then say "I have generated bodhicitta" or "bodhicitta has arisen in me".

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## Verse: 17

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Although great fruits occur in cyclic  
existence  
From the mind that aspires to  
awaken,  
An uninterrupted flow of merit  
does not ensue  
As it does with the venturing mind.



Having set out the two types of bodhicitta and their distinguishing features, Shantideva now turns to discuss the virtues of aspiring and engaging bodhicitta respectively. First, he hails the benefit of aspiring bodhicitta. Aspiring bodhicitta is the seed of enlightenment. With the appropriate effort on its cultivation, it will eventually bear the fruit of enlightenment. Upon developing aspiring bodhicitta, one then progresses to taking Bodhisattva vows, thereby transforming the aspiring bodhicitta into engaging bodhicitta. This involves undertaking the practices of the six perfections which will eventually lead to Buddhahood.

Until we attain enlightenment, we remain in samsara, so possessing bodhicitta provides many benefits. In sutras, aspiring bodhicitta is likened to a piece of diamond. No matter how small it is or even a broken piece of it, a diamond will always retain its name/value and is superior to any size of gold. Similarly, any practice that is motivated by aspiring bodhicitta is more beneficial than other practices not motivated by bodhicitta. For instance, one round of mala of Mani recitation with the bodhicitta mindset is more efficacious than a hundred thousand rounds without the bodhicitta mindset. That's how big a difference bodhicitta can make in terms of acquiring merits. The more merits one accumulates, the more happiness one will reap. In the sutra, it says that "Merit results happiness and dispels suffering, one's wishes will be fulfilled when one has merits". So, with bodhicitta, the chances of being happy and having wishes getting fulfilled increases exponentially.

Even at the ordinary, daily-life level, bodhicitta is precious. It helps enrich our relationships. We live in society and relationships play an integral role. One major culprit that hinders good relationships is our me-first, selfish attitude. However, when cultivating bodhicitta, selfishness has no place because bodhicitta is concerned about the others' welfare, about prioritizing others' wellbeing without expecting returns. One is willing to sacrifice one's own happiness for the sake of others' happiness. Starting from small deeds like offering your seat to someone, to a vast deed like saving a life, once we are immersed in bodhicitta, there is no room for conflict and friction. In that way, bodhicitta helps promote good relationships. As mentioned earlier, with bodhicitta, one's source of happiness becomes infinite. As such, while in samsara, bodhicitta bears bountiful fruits ("Although great fruits occurs in cyclic existence"). Shantideva then makes a comparison between the merits of aspiring and those of engaging bodhicitta. Although the generation of aspiring bodhicitta is very meritorious, it is not as great as that of engaging bodhicitta. With aspiring bodhicitta, it produces merits only during its actual presence. However, with engaging bodhicitta, its merit is not contingent on its actual presence. The moment one possesses engaging bodhicitta, an uninterrupted flow of merit ensues. The following text elaborates on this.

### Verse: 18 & 19

From the moment one takes up  
This irreversible attitude—  
The mind that aspires to liberate entirely  
The infinite realms of beings,

From that time hence,  
Even while asleep or distracted  
A force of merit equal to the sky  
Will perpetually ensue.

The first stanza describes engaging bodhicitta as an irreversible attitude that aspires to liberate the entire sentient beings who dwell in the three realms. As described in Lama Choepa text, this kind of attitude is committed to putting up with any hardship in order to help sentient beings:

Even if I must remain for an ocean of eons in the fiery hell of Avici  
For the sake of even just one sentient being,  
I seek your blessings to complete the perfection of joyous effort,  
That out of compassion untiringly strives for supreme enlightenment.

Bodhisattvas are so committed that they are willing to remain in hell realms for eons just to help one sentient being. The duration of hardship does not matter, as long as there are sentient beings to help, they will strive to help. When engaging bodhicitta arises in a person, one's courage and capacity to face challenges knows no bounds. Nothing can erode one's determination. For that reason, Shantideva uses the term "irreversible attitude". The moment one generates that kind of attitude, the flow of merits ensues. Whether one is sleeping, walking or sitting, the merit continues to flow. Even when one is distracted and not consciously engaging in any virtue, the force of merit will still ensue. In that sense, engaging bodhicitta is like an elixir that transforms every action into a virtuous one. How wonderful it would be to possess such an ability as our activities would become virtues and a single moment of our life would not go wasted. All the 24 hours of each day would be a merit-filled day. This is not a fantasy. This is possible when we develop engaging bodhicitta and therefore there is good reason for us to work toward cultivating this mindset.

### Verse: 20



This was explained by the Buddha,  
Together with supporting reasons,  
In a teaching given at Subāhu's request,  
For the sake of those inclined to lesser paths.

Here onwards, Shantideva provides reasons for the benefits of bodhicitta. A common way to establish a point is through either citing a sutra or providing a logical reason. In this case, Shantideva first starts establishing the point by spiritual authority which is quoting Buddha's word. In Tibetan, we call it "LungLa Tenpa or LungGe DrupJhey". It is so and so because Buddha said so. It is not possible to propound every statement with logical reasoning. For instance, it is difficult to establish through logical reasoning why a peacock's feather is perceived as beautiful and has so many colors. Only the Buddha can tell the specific causes of peacock's feather. In such circumstances, a quote of Buddha is employed. That is one way to establish a point. Here, Shantideva is not saying that the benefits of bodhicitta cannot be established through logical reasoning. It is more about making a statement that the benefits are not of his own creation. These benefits are taught by Buddha himself and there are also logical reasons to support such benefits. Accordingly, Shantideva says, "This was explained by the buddha...In a teaching given at Subahu's request." In the Sutra, Buddha explained the benefits of bodhicitta using multiple examples which we discussed earlier. Buddha taught this at the request of Subahu in order to help many disciples who were on the verge of departing from Mahayana path. Those disciples, upon hearing that Mahayana path takes eons, felt discouraged and sought an easier path such as Theravadan path. As Buddha saw they had the potential and propensity for the Mahayana path, he skillfully taught the merits of bodhicitta to inspire them and help them continue in the Mahayana path to enlightenment. That is the meaning of "[For the sake of those inclined to lesser paths](#)".

