

Shantideva's Bodhisattvacharyavatara

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While maintaining the motivation we generated during the prayers, we can engage in our meditation practice. [meditation]

We can now generate the motivation for receiving the teachings as usual:

For the sake of all mother sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the Mahayana teachings, and put them into practice well.

As mentioned previously the way the chapters unfold can be related to this verse:

May the precious bodhi mind
Not yet born arise and grow.
May that born have no decline,
But increase forever more.

The ten chapters of the text can be divided along the meaning of this verse in the following manner: Chapters 1-3 are to generate the bodhicitta which is not yet born or developed. Chapters 4-6 explain how to maintain the bodhicitta so it doesn't degenerate, and chapters 7-9 explain how to increase the bodhicitta which has already been developed. The tenth chapter is dedication.

To explain how the next three chapters (7-9) serve to further increase bodhicitta, the seventh chapter commences with enthusiasm or joyous effort, which is the means one actually applies to develop bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta has two main divisions: conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta. The way to generate conventional bodhicitta is explained in chapter eight, and then chapter nine specifically explains how to generate ultimate bodhicitta. That is the chapter on wisdom.

Once both conventional and ultimate bodhicitta have been developed, the way to secure the merit from these is presented in the tenth chapter on dedication.

CHAPTER 7 THE WAY OF TRAINING AND ENTHUSIASM

There are two parts to the chapter

- I. Explaining the text of the chapter
- II. The name of the chapter

I. EXPLAINING THE TEXT OF THE CHAPTER

This is subdivided into two:

1. Exhortation in the need to strive in enthusiasm
2. The way of striving in enthusiasm

1. EXHORTATION IN THE NEED TO STRIVE IN ENTHUSIASM

This is further divided into two:

- 1.1. Actual
- 1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

1.1. Actual

The first verse reads:

1. *Being thus patient commence with enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way. Just as there is no movement without wind, Merit will not arise without enthusiasm.*

The commentary explains the meaning:

If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others, as explained before, then one needs to commence the practice of enthusiasm. Enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections. Just as without wind there is no movement of the flame of the candle and so forth, the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm. Since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort.

The line *If one wishes to attain enlightenment quickly by being patient with austerities and harm by others*, identifies the three specific types of patience explained extensively in the sixth chapter. Firstly, how to be patient with hardships when engaging in austere practices; secondly how to be patient when others harm one, and not retaliate; and thirdly, the patience of definitely thinking of the Dharma. Having explained the three types of patience, those who wish to achieve enlightenment quickly need an aid to practise patience, and this is the practice of enthusiasm.

This chapter presents how enthusiasm is practised, and why one needs to implement it in one's practice.

The commentary continues that *enlightenment abides in those striving in this way in the actions of the perfections*. This means that for someone who seeks enlightenment, it is brought forward only for those striving in the actions of the perfections.

The analogy presented next says that *just as without wind the flame of the candle does not move*, which highlights that it is wind that makes a candle flame waver. Without wind the flame would remain still without any movement at all. The meaning of the analogy is brought out as the sentence continues with *the accumulations of merit and transcendental wisdom will not arise without enthusiasm*. Enthusiasm is like the wind. Without it one cannot possibly accumulate the necessary amount of merit and transcendental wisdom, which are the actual causes for enlightenment.

The commentary concludes the paragraph saying that *since the highest enlightenment depends on enthusiasm one should make an effort*. The resultant state of enlightenment is obtained only through the accumulation of merit and wisdom, and without applying enthusiasm there is no way one will be able to accumulate the level of merit and wisdom needed. This is the reason to apply enthusiasm.

The commentary then quotes from the *Introduction to the Middle Way* to support this view:

All qualities follow enthusiasm, the cause of
Both accumulations of merit and wisdom.

The quotation states that all qualities are obtained only through enthusiasm, which is also the cause for the accumulations of both merit and wisdom.

1.2. Identifying enthusiasm

Having explained the need for enthusiasm, the first line of the next verse identifies it:

2a What is enthusiasm? It is joy in virtue.

The commentary starts with the following:

Joy for the afflictions is laziness, thus if asked what is enthusiasm? It is the joy for virtuous objects.

It first presents the opposite, which is that *joy for afflictions is laziness*. Having defined what laziness is, it asks 'what is enthusiasm?' which, as presented, is the opposite—the *joy for virtuous objects*.

Enthusiasm is explained here in terms of its object and aspect. Its object is virtuous objects, and its aspect is joy. Hence the combination of joy focussing on virtuous objects is defined as enthusiasm or joyous effort. As joy for the afflictions is laziness, this would of course be non-virtuous. Focus on neutral objects would be a neutral state of mind, and not joyous effort.

Relating this to ourselves we would probably find we are inclined mostly toward having joy in the afflictions followed by having joy in neutral states. Of these, we might notice that joy in virtue is the weakest.

So the definition of enthusiasm also meticulously excludes what it is not. It is definitely not joy for the afflictions, and not joy for neutral objects. Thus, enthusiasm is defined purely as joy for virtuous objects.

When reflecting upon ourselves, we need to understand that if one has an inclination to readily feel joy in the afflictions, one must recognise this as a form of laziness, and non-virtuous. If we are serious about practice then we need to clearly identify the distinction between laziness and joyous effort.

The more one associates with the objects of the afflictions the more likely one is to engage in them further. This is how we create more and more negativity and get further away from developing ourselves on the Dharma path.

What one needs to strive for is developing joy in virtue. The more one applies oneself in virtue, the more one sees reason to apply oneself and actually adopt virtue. We slowly increase our virtues as we increase our engagement in virtuous objects, and apply our mind to abide in virtue. Acquainting our minds in this way enriches our Dharma practice by leaving very strong positive imprints, and virtue will gradually increase more and more.

The commentary categorises the types of enthusiasm:

It has the divisions of:

- Armour-like enthusiasm
- Enthusiasm of application
- Enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance
- Enthusiasm of non-satisfaction

Different texts have slightly different presentations of the divisions of enthusiasm. The extensive Lam Rim presents three divisions as: armour-like enthusiasm, the enthusiasm of gathering virtuous Dharma and the enthusiasm of acting for the welfare of living beings. The *Abhidharma* presents a division of five, however they all come to the same point.

Armour-like enthusiasm is described as an enthusiasm which is needed as a prerequisite to engaging in virtue. Having already contemplated the advantages and great benefits of applying virtue, this type of enthusiasm is required to make a strong commitment in one's mind not to give up on virtue no matter how long it takes, and no matter what difficulties may befall oneself. In the *Guru Puja* it says 'even if I were to remain in the fiery hells of Avici for eons, may I never give up applying bodhicitta'. So keeping the value of virtue in one's mind, and making a strong commitment not to give it up at any cost, is applying armour-like enthusiasm. Just as armour is used to protect a physical body, here the word is used as an analogy to protect the mind in being strong and firm when applying virtue.

To understand the analogy further, in the past, before going into combat, a prerequisite would be for the soldiers to put on armour to protect themselves. That is done before actually setting out to the battle in order to protect themselves from weapons (arrows, swords) in the battle. These days, we still have the equivalent of applying protective measures before engaging in combat. The analogy illustrates that prior to engaging in practices, one needs to develop a firm determination and joy in one's mind to engage in those practices and virtues. This then becomes armour-like protection for one's mind.

Enthusiasm of application refers to the time of actually engaging in the practice, and then maintaining that sense of joy in one's mind.

Next is *the enthusiasm of non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*. This particularly relates to maintaining a sense of joy while overcoming the sense of inadequacy which may think 'I'm not able to do this' or 'I'm not able to do that practice'. As a way for the mind to remain firm and protect itself from the disheartenment of feeling inadequate, a sense of joy is developed to create the enthusiasm of *non-disheartenment and non-disturbance*.

The *enthusiasm of non-satisfaction* may seem ambiguous but it refers to the enthusiasm of not being satisfied with only acquiring a few virtues. This is an important aspect of one's practice in order to further develop oneself. If one feels satisfied with just accumulating a few virtues or practices, that would obstruct one from gaining an understanding of the entire path. Developing satisfaction with just part of the path then becomes a form of laziness, which will obstruct further understanding of the entire path, particularly the higher levels of path. Therefore, enthusiasm means developing a joy that is not satisfied by merely acquiring moderate virtues, or understandings of the path, but rather to have joy in acquiring higher levels of virtues, and developing oneself toward gaining an understanding of the entire path. This will then leave very strong imprints on one's mind.

2. THE WAY OF STRIVING IN ENTHUSIASM

By following the sequence of the outline you can see that the first heading explains the need to develop enthusiasm, the next identifies it, and this part explains the way to actually practise enthusiasm.

It is subdivided into two:

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

2.2. Increasing the antidote, the power of enthusiasm

2.1. Abandoning the conditions that obstruct enthusiasm

This explains that without having an understanding of what obstructs enthusiasm, and abandoning it, one cannot possibly develop enthusiasm.

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

2.1.1. Identifying the obstructing conditions

It is good to take notice of how the commentary presents the material sequentially and logically, which is also a means to remove doubts that may arise about why enthusiasm is explained following patience. Having identified enthusiasm, one needs to abandon what obstructs it, and then actually develop enthusiasm. The commentary presents this in a sequential manner.

The next three lines of the verse read:

*2bcd. I shall explain its antithesis:
Laziness, grasping at the negative,
And discouragement putting oneself down.*

Gyaltsab Je's commentary continues:

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm. There is:

- The laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant.
- The laziness that grasps at the negative activities.
- The laziness that puts oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this', after having become discouraged from practising virtue.

I shall explain the antithesis of enthusiasm shows that the antithesis or opposite of enthusiasm is laziness, which is presented as three types.

The first is *the laziness that grasps at the pleasure of lazing around, where body and mind are non-pliant*. This refers to the feeling of ease we feel when we're not engaging in practice, when we feel like just laying back and being relaxed and comfortable. At this time when our mind is not engaged in practice we think it is relaxing, but just laying around and grasping at pleasure is the first form of laziness.

The next is *the laziness that grasps at the negative activities*. This is the laziness that actually consumes most of our time. Examples are activities where we try to protect what is favourable to oneself, try to overcome what is not favourable. This is why we try to acquire as many favourable conditions as possible for oneself (such as friends etc.), and try to overcome those opposing us, such as enemies and anything which obstructs our pleasures.

According to the worldly view, if you are really busy, completely involved in working just for the sake of wealth, then this would not be considered laziness. It would likely be considered as working very hard. But according to the Dharma it would be a form of laziness because one is engaged in activities that not inclined toward virtue.

The third type of laziness is putting *oneself down, thinking 'I cannot do this' after having become discouraged*, where one

feels despondent purely because one feels something is difficult. Having this sort of thought is the laziness of feeling despondent, which is putting oneself down.

2.1.2. The way of abandoning them

Next is the way of abandoning the three forms of laziness which is sub-divided into three:

2.1.2.1. Abandoning the laziness that has a taste for lazing around

2.1.2.2. Abandoning the laziness that grasps at negative actions

2.1.2.3. Abandoning the laziness of discouragement

Having already studied the mind and mental factors, it is good to note that laziness is one of the twenty-one secondary mental afflictions.

2.1.2.1. ABANDONING THE LAZINESS THAT HAS A TASTE FOR LAZING AROUND

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

In presenting how to abandon the laziness that has a taste for lazing around, the outline starts with *abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause*. This means that in order to overcome laziness one must first identify its cause. Then, like any other cause and effect sequence, overcoming the cause allows you to stop the consequence or effect. Having identified the cause of laziness, it becomes more likely that one will be able to overcome it.

2.1.2.1.1. Abandoning laziness upon investigating its cause

The verse is preceded by the statement:

If asked what the causes for laziness are:

The text then presents the verse:

3. *Experiencing the taste of lazing around
And through craving based on sleep
One does not tire of the sufferings of cyclic
existence
And generates an affinity for laziness.*

Gyaltsab's commentary expands upon the meaning:

If one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it. This, and the craving based on sleep generates laziness, which causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence and to not become disheartened with its sufferings. Through this in turn one develops an affinity for laziness.

Therefore strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!

The commentary says *if one views lazing around without engaging in virtue to be happiness, one develops a taste for this pleasure and grasps at it*. Viewing just lazing around e.g. kicking back on a comfortable couch, as pleasure, one gets a taste of this as pleasure and becomes attached to it. This then becomes a cause for actual laziness, because of the grasping at that pleasure of lazing around.

The next line in the verse says *and the craving based on sleep generates laziness* which is one of the main forms of laziness. If one has a very comfortable bed and looks forward to that bed thinking, 'hmm, I have a comfortable

bed and I'm really looking forward to sleeping in it', then that becomes a cause for one to engage in excessive sleeping. If one indulges in this thought over and over, then that form of indulgence—the pleasure and attachment to the comfortable bed, and not having to do anything, but just go to sleep—becomes another cause for being lazy.

The commentary states this *causes one to be not the least afraid of cyclic existence, and to not become disheartened with its sufferings*. Not being afraid of cyclic existence because of one's attachment to it, not being afraid to enjoy its pleasures, not tiring of the suffering, and not even doubting oneself about the sufferings, are amongst the worst causes of laziness. This presentation states that everything that binds us to cyclic existence is considered a form of laziness. Therefore afflictions such as anger, attachment etc. can also be forms of laziness because they bind us to cyclic existence.

The commentary explains *through this in turn*, i.e. through the cause of the three types of laziness *one develops an affinity for laziness*. The commentary then concludes that one should *strive in abandoning laziness upon having identified its causes!*

2.1.2.1.2. The way of abandoning

This is divided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

2.1.2.1.2.2. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the sufferings of the next life

2.1.2.1.2.1. Abandoning laziness by contemplating the disadvantages of this life

This is divided into three:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable

2.1.2.1.2.1.3. If one does not strive in virtue, one shall be overwhelmed by suffering

2.1.2.1.2.1.1. Explaining with example how death quickly destroys one

This is subdivided into two:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with an example

The following verses explain the ways of abandoning laziness. One of the most supreme ways of abandoning laziness is to recollect death and impermanence. As explained in the teachings, when we don't recollect the fragility of our lives, death and impermanence, this causes us not to even think about practising the Dharma. Even if we did, if one does not recall death and impermanence periodically and strongly in one's mind, one will not actually practise it well.

These faults of either not thinking about practicing Dharma at all, or thinking about it but not actually practising it, or not practising it well, all come as a result of the fault of not recollecting death and impermanence periodically.

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.1. One sees directly how one is destroyed by death

The way to abandon laziness is presented as recollecting death and impermanence. The heading says *one sees directly how one is destroyed by death*, which implies that there is no way one could laze around and not engage in virtue and practise Dharma if one recognised how death quickly destroys one. Therefore it is presented under this heading.

The verse which relates to this reads:

4. *Having fallen into the trap of the afflictions
One is snared by the trap of birth
And finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death.
How can you still not know this?*

The commentary explains:

Similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness and so forth. Being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death. As many beings have already gone and still many will go, how can you still not know this? Strive in virtue!

The illustration used here is a trap *laid* down by hunters to capture and kill an animal, so *similar to animals that cannot escape death because they are ensnared in a trap, one has fallen into the trap laid by the hunter that is the affliction of laziness*.

With this analogy of a hunter setting down a trap for an animal, once the animal is caught in the trap it cannot be spared from death. Death is imminent once the animal has fallen into the trap. Applying the analogy, oneself is like the animal being held in a trap, and the hunter is like the afflictions of laziness, attachment, jealousy etc. As such, one is caught in the trap and cannot escape the consequence of death.

As further explained *being thus controlled one is snared by the trap of birth that connects one with the next life, and hence one finds oneself in the mouth of the lord of death*. Being controlled by the afflictions is what connects this life to the next one, and so one is not spared from the mouth of the lord of death. This refers to the actual death itself. So that which connects one from this life to the next is having to experience death.

Using the analogy of the animal trapped in a cage, the hunter will not spare the animal. Likewise with the afflictions in one's mind, one will not be spared as these are the connecting factors between this life and the next life. Furthermore, *as many beings have already gone and still many will go* into the mouth of the lord of death, *how can you still not know this?* This implies that when we look back we can recall so many who have already died and many about to face death. So with this so obvious to oneself, how can one then sit idly and not engage in virtue. The clear message is that one needs to strive in virtue.

If we apply this explanation in relation to the presentation of the Lam Rim, it says that death is certain, and it is just the time of death that is uncertain. Also at

the time of death, nothing but the Dharma will help, specifically having engaged in virtue or the Dharma practice.

What is being presented here as a personal instruction is that in the past you have seen many die already, and you may see some actually facing death. And having seen this, isn't it an obvious conclusion that one has to experience this fate as well? Therefore don't engage only in frivolous worldly activities which will not benefit you at the time of death. Rather, take time to apply yourself in virtue which will be your sole saviour and protector at the time of death.

An example of what has just been presented follows:

2.1.2.1.2.1.1.2. Explaining this with example

The verse reads:

5. *He is killing our kind gradually,
Do you not see it?
Those relying on sleep
Are like the butcher and the buffalo.*

The commentary explains this:

Do you not see directly that the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind? Even while you see it, yet you develop craving based on sleep. This is unsuitable, for example, like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely.

The commentary elaborates with *do you not see directly the lord of death is killing the old, young and middle-aged of your kind?* 'Your kind' relates to one's peers, those you associate with, e.g. in a monastery it would be the other monks; in a lay community others within the community; within a family your family members etc. Amongst those you associate with regularly, there will be the old, the young and the middle-aged; all will have to experience death.

A rhetorical question is asked, *Do you not see it?* This implies that even when you do see it *you still develop* the various types of cravings based on sleep. That is what you do, and *this is unsuitable*.

The example presented earlier in the verse says, *for example, it is like the buffalo that is seeing directly that the butcher is killing sequentially the other buffalos, and yet he is unworried and abides leisurely*. In the east, when animals are butchered, the other animals are nearby. So a buffalo may well see the other buffalos being butchered, but it seems to be undaunted by that and continues to eat grass and drink water, until it is time for their turn to come.

This example illustrates that if one sees others of one's kind being taken by the lord of death—regardless of being old, young or middle aged—and one just sits around idly, and does not develop any initiative to engage in Dharma and accumulate virtues, then this is like a buffalo who is about to be slaughtered, but is lazing around as if it was unaware of what was happening.

On a personal level what we need to understand from this explanation is that we will all know someone who has passed away, and we might even have seen occasions where people have passed away. So when one sees or hears about death, this needs to become an impetus to remind us that one also has the same fate. There is no

exception, one will also have to face that consequence of having to experience death. So, before that time comes, now is the time to prepare by accumulating virtues and engaging in Dharma practices.

If seeing others who face death does not stir up any kind of feeling in you, and remind you of your own fragility of life and impending death, then it would have not served much purpose. Seeing others face the fate of experiencing death should become impetus to remind one of one's own impending death, and serve as a way to encourage oneself to practise Dharma. This is precisely presented under the next heading.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2. *Since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable*

This relates to the point mentioned earlier that when one sees how those older than oneself have died, but think that death only relates to those who are older than oneself, then one may still feel quite relaxed and think one still has more time.

The fact is that even those of the same age or younger than oneself have also perished. This is an indication that there's no certainty about when death will approach. The examples we see need to become the impetus for one to reflect on the uncertainty of one's own death, and the fragility of one's own life.

This heading is subdivided into four:

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.1. One should not be lazy as one is under the control of the lord of death (which is the same point)

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.2. Strive in virtue since you will die soon

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.3. The time of death is the wrong time to abandon laziness.

What is implied here is that the time to abandon laziness is now, not at the time of death. The actual time death occurs is the wrong time because it won't have served the purpose of abandoning laziness at the right time. Rather one should abandon laziness now.

2.1.2.1.2.1.2.4. One should not be lazy since one can die suddenly, without finishing one's work

We have now just gone over the subheadings under *since one is under the control of death, acting leisurely is unsuitable*, so we can continue with the explanations in our next teaching session.

Extracts from *Entrance for the Child of the Conquerors* used with the kind permission of Ven. Fedor Stracke

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