

# Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*

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

Let us re-generate the bodhicitta motivation for receiving the teachings along these lines:

For the purpose of all mother sentient beings, in order to liberate them from all suffering and lead them to the ultimate state of happiness, I need to achieve enlightenment myself. So for that purpose I will engage in listening to the Mahayana teachings and put them into practice well.

As mentioned many times previously, generating such an altruistic state of mind even for a second becomes a condition for one to accumulate extensive merit.

Also, when one generates such a noble intention and altruistic state of mind as a motivation, one is bound to ensure that one engages in an appropriate virtuous activity to go with that good motivation.

## **2.2.1.2.2.2.2.4. It is unsuitable to generate afflicted pride**

As opposed to generating the positive pride mentioned earlier, *it is unsuitable to generate an afflicted pride.*

This is subdivided into three:

- Disparaging afflicted pride
- The faults of pride
- It is suitable to abandon it

### *a. Disparaging afflicted pride*

The verse reads:

56. *Any migrator that is destroyed by pride  
Is afflicted, and does not possess pride.  
Those that possess pride are not controlled by  
the enemy,  
They are controlled by the enemy of pride.*

Gyalsab Je's commentary explains:

Any migrator that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind, is controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Those possessing pride are suitable not to fall under the control of the enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind fall under the control of the enemy of the affliction of pride.

*Any migrator*, referring to any ordinary being in samsara, *that is destroyed and overcome by the pride that is a puffed up mind* is thus controlled by the afflictions and not a person possessing great pride. Here, a puffed up mind refers to the pride of those who possess only minimal knowledge but who assume they have superior knowledge to others, and are more skilled and so forth. Such beings affected by inflated pride are controlled by the afflictions. As explained in other teachings, afflicted pride destroys oneself, one's virtues, morality and so forth.

The pride of beings who possess the great pride which serves as an antidote, is actually a self-confident and

courageous state of mind. This self-confident state of mind is an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. Thus, such beings with an afflicted pride do not possess the pride of an antidote. The reason presented as to why they don't possess the great pride is *that those possessing great pride are suitable not to fall under the control of an enemy. But the migrators with a puffed up mind, or inflated pride, do fall under the control of the enemy of the afflictions.*

Those who possess the great pride have the pride which serves as an antidote. While called pride, it is actually the self-confident and courageous state of mind, whereby one resolves to combat the afflictions and not allow them to destroy oneself. Those who are affected with afflicted pride are actually controlled by the delusions, and thus their mind is under the control of the afflictions, rather than being in control of the afflictions and overcoming them. This is how it is presented here.

### *b. The faults of pride*

If one wonders 'What is the fault of being under the control of afflicted pride?' this is precisely what is being presented under this heading.

The commentary provides a way to really derive personal instructions from Shantideva's text. If we relate these passages to ourselves it will benefit our mind. But if we relate to it just as the general fault of pride that may concern others but doesn't really concern oneself, then we will not have benefited from this profound advice. While the presentation is very profound and very meaningful it will not really help one's own mind if we view it that way.

Some who confide in me say that they have a real problem with pride. They confess that they're having a problem with pride and want everything to go well and that they desire all the excellences, but this in fact brings more distress to their mind. These individuals are being very truthful in expressing these states of mind that affect them negatively.

If one does not acknowledge the afflictions in one's own mind there is no way to transform it. What one needs to understand is that the puffed up or inflated pride is where one feels one has great knowledge and understanding, when in fact it might be minimal. Along with that, one of the other elements of pride is that of looking down upon others. This is the pride we need to protect ourselves from. We need to reflect upon the faults of this pride as a way of avoiding its ill effects.

What is being presented here very clearly and succinctly are means to overcome afflictions in one's mind, such as pride. When we relate to the passages and then the instructions, we can clearly see that if one were to actually practise what is presented here, it can definitely help to subdue the mind.

We can see that if anyone were to actually put into practise the advice and instructions given here in *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the consequence would be a naturally more subdued and calmer person. Therefore we need to take it as a personal instruction to relate to the faults of pride, as well as the other disadvantages which are mentioned in other teachings.

If someone is affected by strong pride:

- it will prevent them from gaining further knowledge;
- whatever knowledge they have will be tainted;
- one will not be able to relate to others well. As one perceives oneself to have a 'superior' mind, with a tendency to look down upon others, it is hard to have good rapport with others (the obvious fault of pride).

If we overcome pride it naturally brings about the opposite: it makes one much more at ease; allows one to gain more knowledge; one's knowledge and wisdom will increase; one will be naturally modest and humble, and so will be able to relate to others in a genuine way. All of these positive results will come about.

Thus we need to really relate to these teachings as a way to subdue our own mind. We do have faith in the Dharma, and we want to transform our mind, so if we have this approach then it's just a matter of actually putting it into practise. If we leave these instructions here as 'Yeah OK, something quite profound has been mentioned here' but don't actually relate it to changing one's own state of mind, then the actual positive effect will never come about. So this is how we need to relate to the teachings.

All of the faults presented here are clearly the faults that come from befriending afflicted pride. We need to be aware of that.

The verse reads:

57. *Being filled up with the affliction of pride  
One will be led by pride to the lower realms,  
It destroys the joys of being human;  
A slave eating others' leftovers*

58ab. *Dumb, ugly and weak  
One will be derided by all.*

The commentary reads:

The following faults will occur if one is filled with afflicted pride:

- One will be led by pride to the lower realms;
- Even if one is reborn a human, it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness;
- One will live as a beggar without food;
- One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their others' leftovers;
- One will be mentally stupid; ugly and weak; and
- Even though one is not directly harming others, one will always be derided by all others verbally and physically.

Therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind.

The commentary explains that *the following faults will occur if one is filled with the afflicted pride*. This is the specific pride of the inflated or puffed up mind, where the effect is that one would be *led by pride to the lower realms*. What is being explained is that if one harbours pride and does not apply antidotes to overcome it, but rather fosters it in one's mind, then the consequence in future lives is that *one will be led by pride to the lower realms*, which is the ripening result of pride.

With respect to *Even if one is reborn a human*, one should note that this doesn't mean that pride is a cause to be reborn human, as that cause can only be virtuous karma one created in the past. What is being explained is that even if one were to be reborn as a human due to past virtues, the ill effects of being proud in previous lives would still be carried forth. Faults would occur whereby *it destroys the joys of being human, such as mental happiness*. So here the joys of being human refers to both good Dharma conditions as well as good material conditions. The joy of being human would also refer to having good relationships with others, and enjoying festivities and enjoying being honoured by others etc. So the joys of the natural good human conditions will be destroyed, and not be experienced.

The commentary explains that a further fault is that *one will live as a beggar without food*, which is something we obviously see. While having a human rebirth, there are many who have to live as beggars deprived of adequate food, clothing and shelter.

*One will be a slave controlled by others and have to eat their leftovers*, is, again, something which is quite prevalent. We can definitely see many in this situation.

*One will be mentally stupid*, indicates that even if born as a human with a usual human intelligence, some are born without the ability to utilise their human intelligence.

Even physically, *one will be ugly and weak* means that one's appearance may not be good and one's body is weak.

Furthermore, *even though one is not directly harming others*, which means even though one is not intentionally going out of one's way to hurt others, *one will be derided by all others verbally and physically*, ridiculed and so forth; so all these are the faults of holding on to pride.

As the commentary concludes, *therefore one should abandon the pride of the puffed up mind*. The instruction here is that by contemplating the ill effects of pride, one needs to resolve to abandon it. It is at this point that we need to take the instruction personally: 'this advice is referring to me, to my own mind'. So if one really were to pay attention to all of these ill effects, and clearly did not wish to experience them, then one would naturally strive to reduce creating their causes, which is holding on to pride.

What we can also reflect upon, is how those of us present here are free from these ill effects right now, and enjoy good conditions, which are the positive results one has created in the past. When we refer to each of these ill effects we can all safely assume that we are free from them, and that we are definitely enjoying the festivities of humans—materially and spiritually. In the Dharma we have the conditions to experience both the joy of being a human and utilising all these appropriate conditions. And we have a certain level of mental happiness and joy. It is quite clear that none of us has to live as a beggar without food. We are definitely not slaves controlled by others, having to eat their leftovers. Rather than having to eat others' leftovers we have an abundance of food, and might even find that we are wasting food. One definitely has a sound mind and our appearance is quite acceptable. Of course, if one did not practise contentment then one would want to look better and better. This is something we can all relate to.

When one contemplates how we possess the opposite of these faults and ill-effects right now, it encourages one to further engage in accumulating virtues. One can strongly rejoice in the good conditions one has now, which is definitely a result of having practised virtue previously. Then one resolves to put every effort into further engaging in the practice of accumulating virtues and overcoming negativities and afflictions such as pride.

In this way, when one makes strong resolve in one's mind, one can begin to utilise whatever activity one engages in as the means to accumulate virtue. Even drinking a cup of tea can become a means to accumulate virtue. In the case of my normal everyday activities, even when it comes to drinking just one cup of tea, I don't just gulp it down mindlessly. Rather, I spend significant time just rejoicing in the fact that I have the opportunity to have this cup of tea, and the great fortune or the great conditions I have. 'Having this cup of tea has come about through many good conditions from the past. May I use it as a way to further nourish my body so I

can continuously engage in the practice of Dharma, as the means to benefit many sentient beings’.

By using this motivation, even for showering or having a meal, again and again, it becomes possible to use normal activities as a way to accumulate virtue. Of course this might not have come easily in my youth, but at this stage I can confidently say that I definitely have the means to use my normal activities as a way to further create some merit and virtue. This is really something worthwhile to consider.

It is because I consider you all as my Dharma friends, and because we have an intimate relationship, that I share some of my daily practice with you. It is not about boasting, but rather to remind you of simple ways to create virtue. If one thinks about these points again and again, then, through familiarity one can definitely reach a point where one makes one’s life more meaningful and uses daily activities as a way to accumulate more virtues and merit. This is something which is definitely possible, so it would be good to reflect upon these points.

Previous lamas have instructed that we need to familiarise ourselves with bodhicitta to the point that whatever activity we engage in, we do it with a bodhicitta attitude: sitting with bodhicitta; standing with bodhicitta; walking with bodhicitta; sleeping with bodhicitta and so forth. Constantly remember this as you engage in any activity. That is the best way to lead one’s daily life.

At best, try to cultivate bodhicitta, but if we have not reached that point yet, then even in simple tasks, always try to bring to mind ‘May this become a benefit for other beings’. As I just mentioned, if, before drinking a cup of tea, one can remember to offer it, this is a way for you to try to remember how you can make your daily activities more meaningful. Some new students here might have not heard it, but I’ve mentioned it many times how you first offer the tea with a mantra (the simplest way to offer and bless the tea is by reciting the mantra OM AH HUNG three times), and then before consuming it, generate the thought ‘May I be nourished with this tea so that I can benefit all sentient beings’.

In sharing this with you, I have no other intention or ulterior motive than to benefit you in your everyday life. If you pay attention to the instructions, then you can get some benefit.

I mentioned a year or so ago that when preparing to listen to His Holiness teach *Vast as the Heavens, Deep as the Sea: Verses in Praise of Bodhicitta* by Khunu Lama Rinpoche, I read the text, and it really moved my mind. It gives so much practical advice about ways of making your every-day activities meaningful, as a way to create great amounts of merit. It was inspiring just to read that text. It is available in English, so you have access to it—many of you might already have it. When reading it one naturally becomes very inspired, which is the power of the author Khunu Lama Rinpoche himself. There is no doubt he was a great, great practitioner, particularly in cultivating bodhicitta. This is why his words have such moving power, and such great effect on our minds.

As we familiarise ourselves with these practices, it starts to become part of our daily routine to think in this way, then we can enjoy what we do in a meaningful way. If we try to enjoy ourselves by engaging in activities with a worldly mind that is influenced by the delusions, then, rather than bringing more happiness, it only becomes the means to further fuel the afflictions and destroy one’s happiness. When one’s mind is affected by the delusions it does not

help to bring success or external good conditions, it only creates the cause to destroy one’s own happiness from within. When the delusions are fuelled, the ultimate result is no true satisfaction, and no true contentment within oneself.

These are the points we need to reflect upon and understand: we need to minimise that which destroys our happiness, and cultivate and develop that which brings about a genuine sense of contentment and satisfaction.

Even when one has an opportunity to relax physically, one needs to understand that if one harbours afflictions and delusions in one’s mind, one is still disturbed internally. So be cautious and conscientious. (This is something that will be presented in the text further on; I’m just giving a prelude to how we need to refer to the profound advice given in this text).

*c. It is suitable to abandon it*

The verse reads:

*58cd. If even the ascetics<sup>1</sup> filled with pride  
Belong to the proud,  
Then what is there to say about the inferiors?*

The commentary reads:

If even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud, then what is there to say about the inferiors that are objects of compassion? Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud.

The commentary clearly presents that, *if even the ascetics who overcome difficulties with a mind filled with and controlled by afflicted pride belong to the very proud*, meaning that if those who put in great effort are afflicted by pride, then they too are in the class of those who are proud. If that is the case then for those who are *inferiors who are objects of compassion*, there’s no need to mention that they have been affected by pride from the very beginning, and are classified as proud.

*Since they are controlled by the enemy, it is unsuitable to be proud* refers to afflicted pride, not the great pride that is an antidote to afflicted pride. Thus it is unsuitable to harbour such afflicted pride.

#### **2.2.1.2.2.2.2.5. The benefits of the pride that is the antidote**

Having earlier explained the faults of afflicted pride the text now explains the benefits of the pride that is an antidote—that which is also given the name pride but which is suitable to be developed.

The verse reads:

*59. Those who hold pride to conquer the enemy of pride,  
They possess pride. The victorious heroes themselves  
Definitely destroy the rampage of the enemy of pride  
And complete the result of a conqueror, as migrators wish.*

The commentary explains by posing a question and an answer:

If asked: Who is someone with pride?

Answer: Since those that hold the pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the

afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force, they are called proud.

They are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy. If asked why. That is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine. That is why they are called victorious against the enemy.

As the commentary explains, *since those that hold a pride that is the antidote, in order to conquer the enemy of the afflictions possess a strong counter-positive force which is a strong antidote, they are then called proud.* What is called pride here is actually a strong antidote for overcoming afflicted pride, and refers to the true sense of pride.

The commentary continues, *they are also the very heroes who are victorious over the enemy where 'They' refer to those who cultivate the pride which serves as an antidote for overcoming afflicted pride. They are referred to here as victorious, very brave, like heroes who overcome the enemy.*

*If asked why, that is because upon having definitely destroyed from the root the rampage of the enemy of pride, they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror, including the enlightened activities, in accordance with the wishes of migrators, and also those that are divine (divine referring to the worldly gods). As clearly explained here, when the pride which serves as a great powerful antidote to overcome the afflicted pride is cultivated, that then becomes the only means to destroy the enemy of the afflictions. Therefore, that is why they are called the victorious against the enemy.*

In reflecting on the meaning that *they complete the temporary and ultimate result of a conqueror*, one needs to be able to relate to earlier explanations of what the temporary and ultimate results are. *Temporary* refers to the good conditions in the higher rebirths, such as a human or in one of the divine god realms. *Ultimate* refers to liberation and ultimately the enlightenment of the conqueror.

In examining, *including the enlightened activities*, it is good to note the difference between the qualities of the conquerors (or buddhas) and their enlightened activities. Qualities refer to the ability of an enlightened being to effortlessly and spontaneously benefit all sentient beings, whereas enlightened activities refers to actually applying that ability and engaging in benefitting sentient beings with the effects to be experienced by sentient beings. In relation to (and included within) the enlightened activities, the commentary also says, *in accordance with the wishes of migrators*, which means that when the ability to benefit sentient beings effortlessly and spontaneously is established in that enlightened mind, it is then imparted in accordance to the wishes of sentient beings to benefit them in infinite ways. The actual benefit sentient beings receive is due to enlightened activities.

Referring back to the *temporary and ultimate results of the conqueror*, one needs to understand that having good temporary benefits, such as a precious human rebirth, becomes the very basis for one to accomplish the ultimate aims of achieving enlightenment. Without relying on the high status of a precious human rebirth or other conditions in higher rebirths, even as a temporary goal, we cannot possibly achieve the ultimate goals. Therefore temporary results are the direct causes for the qualities of enlightenment and the enlightened activities.

I've mentioned this previously but it is good to reflect upon these meanings which helps to enhance the overview of the path to enlightenment.

### **2.2.1.2.2.2.3. Pride against the afflictions**

Here, the specifics about the great pride which serves as an antidote are presented.

Take note as to why the term pride is used. Normal pride has a sense of 'I can do it', 'I have the means', 'I'm better...' etc. This sort of puffed up feeling is an afflicted pride. But it is a similar state of mind to feeling confident, 'I will not succumb to the delusions or the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. So the sense of one having the ability to do something is still there, but in a positive way to combat the afflictions. It is because there is the similarity in the state of mind that feels 'I can do it', that the term 'pride' is used.

To consolidate this understanding: with an afflicted (normal) pride a worldly person feels 'I'm better than the other. I'm more skilled, I have more knowledge etc. so I'm not going to be undermined by that person, I'm not going to allow them to bully me, I'm not going to allow them to ridicule me because I'm better than them. I'm going to control them rather than allow them to control me'. This afflicted pride is based on feeling that one's (minimal) knowledge has made one superior to the other, and so one resolves not to allow the other to control them.

A bodhisattva does not harbour this kind of pride towards other sentient beings. In contrast, they use a similar state of mind to develop a sentiment that combats the afflictions resolving, 'I'm not going to be controlled by the afflictions', 'I'm not going to be undermined and influenced by the afflictions', 'I will combat and overcome the afflictions'. When this sentiment is developed, along with self-confidence, that is what is referred to as the pride which is an antidote. Because of the similarity in the resolve that one makes, or the sentiment that one develops within one's mind, the term 'pride' is used.

This is subdivided into three:

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.2. One should not fall under their control at all

2.2.1.2.2.2.3.3. One should generate the special thought to generate a stable antidote

#### **2.2.1.2.2.2.3.1. One should generate the force of the antidote against the afflictions**

What we need to understand from this and the following verse and explanation, is the extent to which the afflictions are strong in one's mind, and that one needs to try and develop an even stronger antidote. Rather than giving in and succumbing to the afflictions when they are strong, and saying, 'I can't manage, this is overwhelming me', rather than being submissive to the afflictions, one should develop an even stronger antidote in one's mind as a way of combating the afflictions so that they don't overpower oneself. This is the point being presented here.

It is explained in the verse which reads:

60. *When in the midst of affliction's types,  
I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways,  
And not let myself be touched by the host of  
afflictions,  
Like the lion and the foxes and such.*

The commentary explains:

When abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote. For example, like the foxes that do not touch the lion, one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions.

When the commentary mentions, *when abiding in the midst of the various types of afflictions such as anger*, most of us can reflect on our own situation where we are abiding in the midst of various afflictions. As we are afflicted by anger, pride, desire, jealousy etc. it is really no wonder that we get so easily influenced, because if it is not one affliction, it's another one. We're constantly surrounded by the various types of afflictions that we foster in our mind.

*When one is abiding amidst various types of afflictions such as anger and so forth*, what one needs to resolve is that *I shall stand up to them in a thousand ways through the power of the antidote*. The mightier the antidote, the weaker the afflictions will become. If one does not apply powerful antidotes, then it is more likely that one will succumb to the afflictions because then they will overpower oneself. The example presented here is *like the foxes that do not touch the lion*. (The Tibetan word *wa* is translated as fox, but a fox smaller than a *wa*, which is a larger animal with more fur; maybe wolf is a closer example.)

A wolf is powerful amongst other animals, but when compared to a lion it is much weaker, so it would never approach a lion because the lion is more powerful. Applying this analogy to understand the verse, the antidote needs to be like the lion, whereas the afflictions are like the weaker fox and start to shy away when confronted by a lion. This is how we need to resolve to combat the afflictions in our mind.

In relating the advice, *one should act not to be touched by the host of afflictions*, to ourselves as a personal instruction, we must try as much as possible to apply it and put it into practise. We all have experience of anger and the shortcomings of anger; if we foster anger and allow it to prevail, then it only becomes mightier and stronger in our mind. When an affliction like anger arises, at best we need to apply an antidote immediately to completely conquer the anger. But if that is not possible right away then the next best is not to allow the anger to intensify, at least not to completely follow anger and be completely submissive to it. The next best thing is to at least prevent oneself from engaging in the actions of anger. As with any other afflictions, it is said that at beginners' level if one is unable to apply the antidote, unable to reduce the intensity in one's mind, then the next best thing is to remove yourself from the situation completely; try not to come into contact with the objects that cause you anger, desire and so forth.

As mentioned in *The Thirty Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

Giving up inhospitable places, mental afflictions gradually decrease.

With no distractions, virtuous activities naturally increase.

When the mind becomes clear, conviction in the Dharma is born.

Therefore, seeking solitude is the practice of a Bodhisattva.

As indicated in this verse, when you remove yourself from the conditions of the afflictions, then the afflictions will start to gradually subside. Thus, avoiding contact with disturbing objects is also a method. That is, if you are not able to apply the antidotes right away, then it is best to remove yourself to

a place where you are not likely to interact with objects of afflictions. At an initial stage this can help one's mind not to be affected too much.

This passage relates to the benefits of remaining in solitude. It is saying that by removing oneself from conditions of afflictions, and staying in solitude, is the practice of a bodhisattva.

When one removes oneself from immediate conditions where afflictions arise, and whilst in solitude, apply the practices of accumulating virtue, then the conditions become conducive for one's mind to be in a more virtuous state. As one increases the practice of accumulating virtue, the afflictions will naturally start to reduce. It is in this context that the benefits of going into solitude are explained.

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

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