

Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

༄༅། རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་སྐུ་སྐྱེ་མཁའ་དཔའི་རྩོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

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As usual please sit yourself comfortably in a good posture, and generate the motivation of wanting to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Then think, 'For that purpose, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We have previously completed the ninth chapter of the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* and now we go onto the tenth chapter. Of the six perfections, the tenth chapter explains the perfection of generosity, in the form of dedication. This chapter comes in two outlines:

1. An explanation of the dedication in brief
2. A more elaborate explanation

1. An explanation of the dedication in brief

*By the virtues of me writing the
Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life
May all migrators
Enter the Bodhisattva's Way of Life.*

[1]

This is quite clear. 'By the virtues of me' refers, of course, to Shantideva the author, explaining in *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* all the bodhisattva practices and their path to enlightenment.

By the virtue of me Shantideva writing **Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life** and also students listening to *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life may all migrators enter the bodhisattva's way of life*.

Shantideva dedicates all the virtues created from the composition and explanation of *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, so that all migrators may be able to enter the bodhisattva's way of life. The purpose of dedication is to save one's merits for complete enlightenment, and also to increase one's merits. By dedicating merits to a great aim, such as complete enlightenment, even small merits can be greatly increased and produce a big result. In such a way, once the merits are dedicated to complete enlightenment, they are also protected from being destroyed by anger.

In order to make a dedication, one needs to have some merits that can be dedicated, which is what differentiates a prayer from a dedication. A mere prayer is merely wishing and aspirational, and one does not necessarily have to have anything to dedicate towards that aim. But a dedication is a prayer where one actually has something to dedicate. One can say that if it is a dedication then it is necessarily a prayer, but if is a prayer it is not necessarily a dedication.

When one dedicates merits to the welfare of others and combines that with the wisdom realising the lack of inherent existence of the substance given and so forth, one can see how dedication is the perfection of generosity. By practicing dedication in such a way one places imprints on one's mind to attain both the form-body as well as the wisdom-truth body of a buddha.

The dedication of merits to the attainment of complete

enlightenment is the practice relative to conventional truth. Meditating on the emptiness of the three circles is the practice relative to ultimate truth. On the one side are the motivation, the actual action and the dedication of the merits, which is all relative to conventional truth. On the other side, there is the meditation on the emptiness of the practice of giving, the substance that is given etc., which is relative to ultimate truth. So one has both method and wisdom complete there.

2. The extensive explanation

This comes in three parts:

- 2.1. Dedication for the welfare of others
- 2.2. Dedication for the achievement of one's own potential
- 2.3. Dedication both for the purpose of others and self

2.1. Dedication for the welfare of others

This comes in two parts:

- 2.1.1. Dedicating that the unfortunate ones are relieved of their suffering
- 2.1.2. Dedicating for the completion of realisations of those who have already advanced

2.1.1. Dedicating that the unfortunate ones are relieved of their suffering

This comes in two outlines:

- 2.1.1.1. Dedicating that the beings of the three realms are free from suffering in general
- 2.1.1.2. Dedicating by relating it to the individual sufferings of the three lower realms

2.1.1.1. Dedicating that the beings of the three realms are free from suffering in general

*Those in all directions
Suffering in body and mind
May they through my merits
Attain an ocean of bliss and happiness.* [2]

In a way the verse is quite self-explanatory. *Those in all directions* refers all the beings residing in all directions, who are experiencing different mental and physical sufferings. *May they, through my merits, attain an ocean of bliss and happiness.* Compassion should also be generated in one's mind when meditating on this dedication.

*For as long as they are in cyclic existence
May they never fall from happiness;
May migrators attain the highest
Happiness for ever.* [3]

For as long they are in cyclic existence, may all sentient beings, when *migrators, never fall from happiness*, and *may they attain the highest happiness forever*.

2.1.1.2. Dedicating by relating it to the individual sufferings of the three lower realms

This outline concerns dedication to the alleviation of specific sufferings relating to the lower realms - the animal realms and so forth. We will go through the verses without mentioning the individual outlines, because there are quite a lot of them.

Even the wish for another sentient being to be relieved of a mere headache is an incredibly powerful virtuous thought. Therefore, there is no question that the thought of wishing all sentient beings to be free from all sufferings has limitless power and potential. One might ask, 'How is one's own purpose achieved by dedication?'. Well, the answer is right here. By generating this strong compassion and wishing sentient beings to be free from all their sufferings and so

forth, one accumulates a vast amount of merits because of the incredibly powerful virtue of these thoughts. By dedicating to complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, one creates the cause for enlightenment, and as the practice of method, places an imprint to achieve the form body of a buddha. By meditating on the emptiness of the three circles, one practises wisdom and places an imprint to attain the wisdom-truth body of a buddha. In such a way all the aspects of the path are present. Compassion has great purifying power. We know this from the life story of Asanga. Therefore one purifies vast amounts of non-virtuous karma by generating all this love and compassion while dedicating.

There are forty-four verses in this outline. We are not going to read them all at once - they will come in instalments [laughter].

*May all beings existing
In the all the hell realms found
In the transitory worlds
Become happy and attain bliss through happiness.* [4]

May all beings that exist in all the hell realms that are found in all the transitory worlds be alleviated from their sufferings of heat and cold, and attain happiness and bliss through happiness.

*May those burdened by cold become warm. [5]
May water from
The great clouds of bodhisattvas,
Refresh the limitless beings burdened by heat.*

May those suffering the cold in the eight cold hells become warm and happy sentient beings. May the water from the great clouds of the two accumulations of the bodhisattvas alleviate the suffering of heat of the limitless beings burdened by heat.

*May also the forest of blade leaves, [6ab]
Become a beautiful pleasure tent.*

This relates to the sufferings of the neighbouring hells. After having prayed for relief from the hot and cold hells, one then prays for the alleviation of the sufferings of the neighbouring hells. *May the forests where all the leaves are sword and knife-like blades become a beautiful pleasure tent.*

This refers to a neighbouring hell where beings experience being cut and stabbed, because of having to go through a forest where all the trees have double-edged blades. Sometimes when you go into the bush, there are some types of big leaves that are quite sharp on both sides. If one goes through them without protection one could be quite badly cut. This neighbouring hell is similar. One dedicates that may these become a pleasure tent for those in this hell.

*May the trees of knife fruits [6cd]
Become wish-fulfilling trees.*

*May they be beautified by the melodious sounds of [7ab]
Wild ducks, red ducks and geese.*

This refers to a similar type of hell where one is walking through a forest and hears the screams and voices of those who were near and dear to oneself coming from the top of the trees. So one climbs up the tree but as one climbs up, the leaves and the fruits of the tree are knives that are turned downward. As one climbs up through them one is cut by them. Then, when one has reached the top, one's near and dear ones cannot be found. But there are many wild birds that will pick at one's head. [laughter] This contemplation is

very good because it instils the fear of non-virtue.

In ancient times there were wish-fulfilling trees, and if one prayed to these then one's worldly wishes would be fulfilled. So here one prays that these trees of knife fruits become wish-fulfilling trees. As to the knives and birds that are picking at one's head in this terrifying place, one prays, *May they be beautified by melodious sounds of*, and then the verse lists all kinds of birds that could be melodious such as *wild ducks*, a specific kind of *red wild duck and geese* and so forth.

After having gone through all the suffering of climbing up the tree and being cut in the process, and having one's head being pecked and one's brains being picked at by the birds, one hears the voices from the root foot of the tree and one starts to climb down and this time, the knives all point upwards [laughter]. So one goes through the same process again.

*May through lakes with greatly scented lotus flowers [7cd]
The realms of hell become happy places.*

*May the heaps of burning coals become heaps of [8]
jewels;*

*May the burning ground become like a crystal
ground.*

*May the grinding mountains become the crystal
palace*

*Of offerings; May it become the abode of the Ones
Gone to Bliss.*

In another hell one experiences being ground up between these *mountains*. *May they become like a crystal palace of offerings and may it all become the abode of the Ones Gone to Bliss.*

*May the rain of burning coals, embers and weapons [9ab]
Become forthwith a rain of flowers.*

In China, it happens from time to time that it rains stones. Similarly, in these kinds of hells all kinds of hurtful things rain down. *May all of that become a rain of flowers*. For example even the human realm there are hail storms where the hail is the size of tennis balls. In the animal realm there are many experiences like that.

*May those cutting each other with knives, [9cd]
Forthwith throw flowers for fun.*

This relates to a particular type of hell rebirth where one is constantly engaged in knife fights to the death with an opponent. Then after both have died and fallen to the ground, a voice comes from the sky saying, 'rise up again' and one has to go through the whole cycle again and again. This verse asks that instead of fighting *each other with knives*, may these beings *throw flowers* at each other *for fun*.

*May all these beings [10]
Through the power of my virtue,
Obtain the divine body of a god*

And then enjoy themselves with goddesses.

This relates to the suffering where beings are boiled in hot water and so forth, until the flesh falls from the bones, which then turn white.

May the beings that are being boiled in hot water until all flesh falls from their bones obtain, through the force of my virtue, a divine body of a god and then enjoy themselves with goddesses.

Edited Version

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