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## Study Group - Bodhicharyavatara

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

22 November 2005

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In dependence on the root of great compassion generate a good motivation, the motivation of bodhicitta.

**Dedicating for sentient beings to be reborn in the pure realms and to have a long life**

*May all sentient beings have* [33]  
*A limitless life span;*  
*May they always enjoy a happy life,*  
*May the sound of death not ring.*

*May all the sentient beings* (the limitless sentient beings of all directions) *have limitless life span*, and in that life span *may* their *life* be *always happy*. May they also be free from untimely *death*, before their natural lifespan runs out.

*May all places become* [34]  
*Gardens where wish-fulfilling trees grow,*  
*Where everywhere buddhas and bodhisattvas*  
*Listen to the profound sound of Dharma.*

Then Shantideva says, by all my merits may all the impure worldly realms become a pleasure *garden* full of *wish-fulfilling trees*, filled with *buddhas and bodhisattvas* proclaiming and *listening* to the melodious *sound of Dharma*.

*May the ground everywhere be free from unevenness* [35]  
*Caused by pebbles, thorns and so forth, and*  
*Become as smooth as the palm of one's hand*  
*And the smooth nature of lapis lazuli.*

*May the ground everywhere be* without *unevenness*, without *thorns, pebbles*, stones that stand out and so forth, and be *smooth*, like *the palm of one's hand* or *lapis lazuli*.

In the pure lands there is no unevenness, and beings who live there just lightly touch the surface of the ground when they walk, rather than leaving behind an impression. So this prayer is the accumulation of merit that causes one to be reborn in the pure lands.

Initially you pray for a long life of sentient beings, but having a long life is not enough. You also need to have a happy life, and you also have to have the Dharma, because having a life without Dharma is pointless.

You pray here for everything to be like a pure land, a pleasure grove of wish-fulfilling trees, where everything is pervaded by the sound of Dharma taught by buddhas and bodhisattvas, and for sentient beings to have all of these qualities. This prayer is the accumulation that causes one to be reborn in the pure lands, which is where one wants to be reborn.

*May there where the circles of retinues are* [36]  
*Many bodhisattvas abide*  
*By adorning the ground*

*With their qualities.*

*May* bodhisattvas abide in *the places* where the buddhas turned the wheel of Dharma and *adorn them with* their wonderful *qualities*.

*May all sentient beings* [37]  
*Hear the sound of Dharma continuously*  
*From birds in the trees and from the sunlight.*  
*May they always meet buddhas and bodhisattvas.*

*May all sentient beings continuously hear the sound of Dharma* from space, *from the sunlight*, from the *trees, birds* and so forth. At present one hears more non-Dharma sounds than Dharma sounds. So here one prays that all sentient beings continuously hear the sound of Dharma, which is a good thing, because the Dharma is essential.

*May all sentient beings always meet perfectly*  
*enlightened buddhas* [38]  
*And their children the Bodhisattvas.*  
*May they make limitless offerings with infinite*  
*offering clouds*  
*To the guru of migrators.*

*The guru of migrators* sometimes refers to a teacher, but in this case it refers to Shakyamuni Buddha.

**Praying for conducive conditions not to degenerate**

*May the rain always be timely,* [39]  
*May a perfect crop ripen*  
*May the king act in accordance with the Dharma*  
*May the Dharma spread in the worldly realms.*

*May* the gods (of the white side) *always* let *the rain* fall on time, and may *the crops* also *ripen* well and plentifully, which is a very important worldly purpose.

*May the king act in accordance with the Dharma.* This is also important, as it is not enough to have a good crop and plenty of food if that is misused by the people who rule the country. It is important that the people who rule the country also act in accordance with the Dharma.

*May medicine be powerful,* [40]  
*May the recitations of secret mantra be successful,*  
*May sky dwellers, yakshas and so forth*  
*Be endowed with the mind of compassion*

May the life force and merits of worldly beings increase, and *may medicines be powerful* and effective.

*May all the recitations of secret mantras be* that are done with a good motivation, and which belong to the white side, be accomplished and fulfil the needs of all sentient beings.

*May* the space dwellers and (literally) the blood drinkers be free from harmful intent, anger, viciousness and so forth, and *be endowed with a mind of compassion*. There are different kinds of demon-like beings who harm human beings by drinking their blood and eating their flesh. There are other kinds of beings who dwell in space who also harm human beings. May all the anger, viciousness and harmful intent of those different types of non-human beings who harm to other sentient beings be pacified, and may they become *endowed with the mind of compassion* with love and compassion.

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*May sentient beings not experience the slightest suffering* [41abc]  
*And be free from dangers and criticism and*  
*May they not experience the slightest mental unhappiness.*

*May no sentient being experience any physical suffering.* When one offers this prayer then it should be pervaded by love and compassion.

May no sentient being experience any fear, or be bullied, or harmed by others, because if one is mentally anxious and fearful or otherwise mentally unhappy then physical wellness alone is not sufficient for a happy life experience. You can see Shantideva's thoroughness here; he has put a lot of thought into his dedication. The dedication chapter is complete: it prays for sentient beings in the hell realms, in the hungry ghost realm, in the animal realm, then for human beings and so forth.

#### **Dedications for the ordained community in general and for different types of ordained practitioners**

*May the monasteries abide and expand and prosper* [41d]

*Through reading and reciting;* [42abc]  
*May the Sangha always be harmonious and*  
*May the Sangha always accomplish their purpose.*

*May the monasteries prosper, abide and increase through the writing, reading and reciting Dharma by the ordained practitioners who live there.*

May ordained practitioners who live in the monasteries always have pure morality, free from any kind of unbroken morality and always interact *harmoniously*

May the studying and propagating of the scriptural and realised Dharma of the ordained community be successful, and may the three types of activities - study, debate, practice of meditative concentration - and the different types of karma yoga in the monastery be successful and be *accomplished*.

*May the bhikkhus who aspire towards the trainings* [42d]

*Attain isolation and,* [43abc]  
*Upon having abandoned all distraction,*  
*Attain a mind of pliant meditation.*

*May the bhikkhus<sup>1</sup> who aspire to practise the trainings attain a state of isolation free from physical distraction.* Then, *having abandoned* mental wandering, may their mind become pliable, and may they meditate on virtue. This refers to the practice of single-pointed concentration where the single-pointed mind becomes pliable and virtuous.

*May the bhikkshunis<sup>2</sup> always be successful and* [43d]

*May they abandon harm or strife.* [44a]

*May bhikkshunis always* have all the necessary conditions for Dharma practice, and may they abandon criticism and *harm*. This refers to the situation where, on being able to keep pure morality, the practitioner starts to think of themselves as being superior, and begins to criticise others, or even tries to harm them in some way.

May that not come about because the progress of the practitioner is harmed when their mind is distracted by such harmful attitudes.

#### **Praying for the practice of morality to be successful**

Initially there was a dedication for the ordained community in general, then one for monks, and one the nuns. Now the dedication is for the practice of morality in general to be successful.

*Similarly may all those who are ordained* [44bc]  
*Never degenerate their morality.*

The literal meaning of the Tibetan word for being *ordained* describes those who have definitely left the householder's life, meaning that having left, one does not fall back into that lifestyle. It does not refer to a state of not having a home or a place to live.

The literal translation of the actual words is somebody who has *definitely left behind*. But the meaning here is that the ordained practitioner does not fall back into the state of a householder. For example, Geshe-la says that in his case he left home to go to the monastery and never returned, so this literally applies in his case. *May all of those ordained practitioners never degenerate their samayas.*

*If they have committed a breach of their morality* [44d]

*May they always immediately purify their negativity,* [45abc]

*On having attained a higher rebirth*  
*May their ethics never degenerate.*

May they never degenerate their *morality*, and when their mind has become burdened, or when there is *a breach of morality in their mind*, or some unethical thought has arisen, *may they always completely purify their negativity*.

When unethical thoughts have arisen in the mind may the ordained practitioners always exhaust their negativity, and engage in purification (which is like an exhaustion of the negativity), to purify the negative karma.

*Upon having attained a happy rebirth* through the practice of morality may their practice of morality and discipline in that future happy rebirth *never degenerate*.

*May the sages always be praised* [45d]

*And always receive enough alms,* [46abc]  
*May their continuum always be pure and*  
*May they always be renowned in all directions.*

*May those of pure morality and pure learning be praised* by all. May they also *receive* offerings. *May their continuum* not be affected by that reverence and respect. *May they be humble without pride and without any other afflictions and be renowned in all the directions.*

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks*  
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*Edited Version*

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<sup>1</sup> Fully ordained monks

<sup>2</sup> Fully ordained female practitioners