



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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The Greatness of Those Who Have Bodhichitta
1st Chapter, Stanzas 31-36

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So good day again. Now we come to stanza number 31, of the first chapter of Bodhicharyavatara, and now we talk about the people or the persons, who have that bodhichitta - who have generated that bodhichitta - which means the bodhisattvas. So it starts with:

*"If someone who returns a favor
Is deserving of some praise,
Why need we speak of Bodhisattvas,
Those who do good even unsolicited."*

It's saying that, generally speaking, if you do something good to somebody and that person is returning that good deed or that favor, if that person is good enough or has that personality that he can return some good things or some good actions, he is usually everywhere in the world seen as a good person. At least, 'I did something good, and he also returned that good', so he is seen as a good person.

If that person is seen as a good person, then what to [say] about a bodhisattva who, whether we do good things to them or nothing to them or even if we don't know them or even if we do bad things to them they always want to do good things to you. So how much good, how much positive, how much great that person would be - a bodhisattva.

And then next stanza says:

*"People praise as virtuous donors
Those who with contempt support
A few with plain and ordinary food:
A moment's gift that feeds for only half a day."*

You know, if somebody was giving food freely, not to everybody, but to a few people or quite a few people, hundreds of people - and they give them food, but not with so much respect you know [but] with a little bit of contempt - you know like not the best kind of food - if they feed - you know if we have lots of people who are feeding poor people, destitute people, sick people and they are really good, they are considered very good people, they are considered to be doing a great job - great benefit for the people. And they **are** doing a great job and so we are very respectful to them, we like them, we praise them - but, what they are doing - it's not saying that doing that is a bad thing - but if somebody gives you food, however much food you have or you give for one - as much as you can eat - the benefit of that food remains for half day. [At noon] you eat your big lunch, [but] by the evening, you get hungry again. So it's only half a day that you help by giving food. But that is regarded as very good, that's regarded as very nice - and it is very nice.

So if it is like that then [stanza] 33:

*"What need is there to speak of those
Who long bestow on countless multitudes
The peerless joy of blissful Buddhahood,
The ultimate fulfillment of their hopes?"*

It's not saying that giving food or drink or clothes is not a good thing. It's a very good thing. But if you compare that - that's a very good thing - but if you compare that to what a bodhisattva wants and wishes and tries to do - a bodhisattva not only wants to give food, it's not that they don't give food, they give. A bodhisattva should give food also and they would give food and medicine and education and whatever, but on top of that, they also long to bestow, to give to all the beings, the countless multitudes - to every being - the peerless joys, the unlimited happiness or the joy of total, lasting - what we call lasting peace and happiness - the peerless joy of Buddhahood - the ultimate fulfillment of their hopes.

And the bodhisattva wants or wishes that each and every being, wherever they are, whoever they are, whether you know them or not, whether they've harmed you, helped you or did nothing - to all of them the bodhisattva wishes that every hope, every wish of them, be totally fulfilled. So that if that kind of a person is there or if somebody has that motivation and commitment, then it comes to the next stanza [34]:

*"All those who harbor evil in their minds
Against such lords of generosity, the Buddha's heirs,
Will stay in hell, the mighty Sage has said,
For ages equal to the moments of their malice."*

So therefore, because it is so positive - this person, that bodhisattva is - Buddha said that it is very bad, it's very bad to have negative contacts, relationship with these bodhisattvas. If you do, if you harm, if you're angry at or if you say bad things, if you do bad things, if you harm a bodhisattva, it's very bad because they are so generous, they are so good, they want so much to help people. And then if you are harming them, you are in a way obstructing them to help other beings. You are obstructing them to do good things for other people. So therefore Buddha said, many times, that

if you harm bodhisattvas, you say bad things, you kind of think bad things about bodhisattvas or you're kind of angry at the bodhisattvas, then it's very bad - it's like very negative result, very negative karma - but at the same time. So therefore the bodhisattva is very strong - very sensitive for both good and bad actions.

"But joyous and devoted thoughts

Will yield abundant fruits in greater strength.

Even in great trouble, Bodhisattvas

Never bring forth wrong; their virtues naturally increase."

The first two stanzas mean that if you make a positive connection with the bodhisattvas, then it's extremely powerful - joyous and joyful thoughts, devoted thoughts, well meaning kind of devotion or respect. Or you say good things about them, think nicely or [think] helping thoughts to them, this yields much more positive deeds than doing harmful things. So this is usually said that it's very good to make a good connection with a bodhisattva. It's not good to make a bad connection with a bodhisattva because that's very harmful, that's very harmful to them, not them but that's very harmful to the beings because he or she is trying to help and that's very bad to you, because you are not on the side of good. But this is also very important to understand, that even if you have a connection - this is not here at the moment, but it is said like this - I have to tell this - even if you make a very negative connection with a bodhisattva it's not good for now, but they say that in the end it's also very good. So if you make a good connection then it is very good for you and very good for everybody. If you make a bad connection it's not good for you now, but at the end it will also be good.

There is the story of when Buddha became enlightened and when he gave his first teachings in Sarnath to the five of his first students. Then Kaundinya, one of them, saw the truth [so] that he became an arhat. So when He was asked why is it like this, that of all the people He gave his first teaching to these five persons and of all the five people this Kaundinya was the first to really understand His teachings and get benefits out of it and become clearly arhat - enlightened. Why is it? He said it is because of a karmic connection, not a good one but a bad one. He said that when he was a rishi who was meditating on patience, that time he met a king who was a hunter. And out of jealousy, this king cut his limbs, cut his limbs into pieces and he was killed, he died. And

every moment he cut off one limb he said, 'Are you still patient? Are you meditating on patience?' And he said, 'Yes, yes, I have no negative feeling towards you'. And when he was dying he said: 'You have done a very bad deed that you killed me for no reason. But I have no anger against you. I have no hatred against you. I pray that when I finally become enlightened and a Buddha, at that time may I - I make this promise, I make this prayer, commitment, dedication that at that time you will be the first person I will deliver, I will liberate. At that time I will cut all your ignorance, and negative emotions and negative karma, as you cut my limbs now. And you will be the first one to get liberated from samsara.'

So because of that, it is said that this Kaundinya became the first arhat. In between he had to go through lots of negative realms and lots of sufferings for centuries, and aeons after aeon, but finally it was good. So it is said like this, that to make a good connection with a bodhisattva is always good. Good for now and good for the long term, good for the future. But if you make a negative connection with the bodhisattva also, it's bad for you now and the near future, but eventually that will also be good. So therefore any kind of connection with a bodhisattva is regarded as very good - but this is not for that - this is that we need to appreciate and really understand the value of being - having the bodhichitta, being a bodhisattva. Bodhisattvas are something very rare, something valuable, always thinking good and trying to do good. So therefore, when I understand that, then I would naturally want to generate that bodhichitta and want to become a bodhisattva and try to tread that path. So this is important.

So let us think deeply what we want to do, which direction we want to go. Should we go in a direction where we would like to work, try, train, find out how to help myself, how to help other beings? How to help all sentient beings and not rest till that happens? Or do we want to do something that's harmful to me and harmful to others? So therefore the first thing is that I want to do something good for me - that's also important. I want to help myself. If I don't help myself, who will help me? But then, it's not enough that I do something good for me and I help myself. I need to help others also who are like me and then not just some other people, but everybody because everybody is like me. So therefore, if I can help people, then I would feel that I've done something good. I've done something valuable. My life is temporary. My life is not going to be permanent. So when I leave, when I die, what have I done in this life? So if I've amassed lots of wealth, if I've a big bank balance, I've done something - enjoying my life, doing things that's not good for others, if I

have got a very high post or if I became a little bit popular or famous or whatever, I've some power now - would it help then? If I've done something that's really useful to others, lots of people, that will go on helping, that I made myself wise enough and trained myself in such a way that I will be able to look after my own problems whenever, whatever problems come, now or in the future or at death. And then that I can keep on helping others, then I think that I would have done something really great. So therefore my incentive to become a bodhisattva and generate bodhichitta would also become strong. And also if others have a little bit of bodhichitta or a great deal of bodhichitta also I would honor them more, I would respect them more, I would value them more. So this is important; not just intellectual but really thinking.

So now this is the last stanza of this chapter - chapter 1 and stanza number 36. It says:

*"To them in whom this precious jewel of mind
Is born - to them I bow!"*

So I bow down, I prostrate, I really give my complete respect to people who have this jewellike, this precious, compassionate mind or the intention and commitment to do positive things for people - what we call bodhichitta.

*"I go for refuge to those springs of happiness
Who bring their very enemies to perfect bliss."*

I go [for] refuge to the bodhisattvas or bodhichitta because bodhichitta is like the spring - the beginning, the beginning of - in the spring or the little fountain coming from the mountains is the beginning of the great rivers. So in the same way bodhichitta or generation of this attitude is the beginning of all good things that one can do. So therefore, even a little bit of bodhichitta, a little bit of compassion cannot be regarded as something small. It's very big, because it's going to become a big river - it's going to help lots of people, it's going to bring great joy and great benefit to all people. So therefore, this great bodhisattva or bodhichitta not only brings good things for yourself, not only brings peace and happiness and benefit to your friends and to people whom you like. But it brings good, it brings happiness, it brings lasting kind of benefit, even to your enemies, even to those who are being harmed by others, those who harm you, even to them this

bodhichitta and that bodhisattva brings only good things. So the bodhichitta is something that brings good things now, good things in the long run, good things to yourself, good things to others, good things to friends, good things to enemies also. So the only thing that it generates is something very good in the long run. So therefore, if there is one thing that I really bow down to, if it's one principle that I really value and appreciate, it is the bodhichitta.

So we need to read this again and again. We need to contemplate on [the stanzas]. We need to not just think from the book, but from our life point of view, not from the Buddhist point of view alone, but from the way a common person really thinks and reasons and things like that. What is good for me? What is good for others? And with that, not taken as a religion, not taken as a kind of a command, not taken as a way of seeing from a Buddhist point of view - that's not useful - that's not good. I have to try to see from my own point of view, from a general kind of ordinary person's point of view and then think [it] over, and then decide what is the best way.

So with this we have completed the first chapter of Bodhicharyavatara. So thank you very, very much and see you again for the next chapter, second chapter.

Thank you very much.

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