



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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***Additional Instructions &
Conclusion
5th Chapter, Stanzas 97-109***



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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So, now we are in the *Vigilant Introspection*, stanza number 97. This is the fourth point from the general thing, some other instructions on the practice.

The actions of the Bodhisattva

Are unbounded, so the Teachings say.

Of these, until the goal is won,

Embrace the practices that purify your mind. [5:97]

There are lots of instructions given about the practice of Bodhisattvas. There are lots of practices, unbounded, different kinds of practices, and we try to practice as according to our stage, our capacity, and step-by-step.

The first and most important thing is to focus our practice on purifying our mind. *"Embrace the practices that purify your mind"* it says here, as it is taught in this text, the Bodhicharyavatara, and in other teachings, like sutras and many other commentaries written by many great masters of India and Tibet.

*Reciting thrice by day and thrice by night,
"The Sutra in Three Sections,"
Relying on the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas,
Purify the rest of your transgressions. [5:98]*

When we have taken the Bodhisattva vows, and we start to practice them, then of course, we should try not to transgress the vows or make any downfalls. But, since we are samsaric beings and we are not perfect, there are bound to be also certain downfalls and certain major or minor mistakes that we will make. So therefore we need to purify them. And the sooner we purify them, the better it is.

In order to purify them, then, we should recite the *"The Sutra in Three Sections"*. *Phung po gsum pa'i mdo*, or sometimes we call it *tung shak*, in Tibetan. These three sections, according to the commentary of Khenpo Kunpal here, are 1) confession, or purification – purification is, I think, better. 2) Rejoicing. Whatever negative deed I have done in this life, in the past lives, in the future lives, I purify them. And then, whatever good things or positive things that I have done, or anybody has done, I rejoice in them. And then, whatever positive things that results – the karma that comes out of that, 3) I dedicate to all the sentient beings. So this is the *phung po gsum pa*, the three sections.

Also in this sutra there are lots of prostrations or homage to many Buddhas. Relying on the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and with their help, with their blessings, then purify all your transgressions. So this is the way to purify ourselves. And whether we can see or we can

remember that some negative thing is done, or not, we should try to use this "*Sutra in Three Sections*" and purify again and again. Not just purify, but accumulate by rejoicing and by dedication.

*Wherever and whenever and whatever you are doing,
For your sake or the sake of others,
Implement with diligence
The teachings given for that situation. [5:99]*

So, where you are, in whatever time, whenever, and whatever you are doing with your great motivation, positive motivation, bodhisattva's motivation, and with your bodhisattva's kind of skillful ways of using those situations, you can make it into a practice. And as it is taught, in the Bodhicharyavatara here, and in many other places, whatever you are doing, either directly or indirectly, make it a practice for the benefit of others and yourself. Whether doing something directly, like helping somebody or giving something to somebody; or indirectly, doing some practice on yourself, working on your own improvement or purification, and then dedicating it; implement with diligence and with discipline. You should try to use it in whatever situation you are. Whether you are travelling, or whether you are walking, sitting, or standing; talking with people, or on your own, sleeping, try to use these practices on yourself.

*There is indeed no field of knowledge
That the Buddhas' offspring shouldn't learn.
For those who are well-versed in all these ways,
There is no action destitute of merit. [5:100]*

"*There is indeed no field of knowledge that the Buddhas' offspring shouldn't learn.*" There is nothing that bodhisattvas would not study or learn. Any field of knowledge, any field of skills, anything that is useful to learn, they will learn.

"*For those who are well-versed in all these ways, there is no action destitute of merit,*" because the Bodhisattva is eager to learn everything, and to use those skills and those knowledges in order to help the people, and transform the world, and transform the lives of other people, for immediate

benefit as well as long term benefits. So, with the compassionate attitude and compassionate motivation, there is no action that bodhisattvas do which doesn't become a merit or positive and virtuous action. Because, with that motivation of a bodhisattva, even a very negative action you do, as we have learned before, can become a positive action. And then, why not just ordinary actions, or neutral actions, cannot become positive actions? So therefore, every action of a bodhisattva, as long as there is this right motivation and right perspective, can become a positive action, and we should work on that.

Directly, then, or indirectly,

Do nothing that is not for others' sake.

And solely for their welfare dedicate

Your every action to the gaining of enlightenment. [5:101]

So, directly as we discussed: trying to help people, help yourself, or doing something that directly helps. Or indirectly. At this moment [that is, you are] not directly doing something, but indirectly, by doing something, learning something, studying, or practicing by yourself. You don't do anything that is not helping others, helping anybody, helping yourself and others. So everything you do, because it is meant to help, to transform, it is for the sake of others. So you should dedicate them for the welfare of others. Not just help. Even a little bit, maybe anything that you do that helps somebody little bit, that also, the merit, the positive deed, the positive karma that comes out of that, you should dedicate, so that it will contribute. It will become a cause for the final or complete lasting peace and happiness (that is enlightenment), for all the beings. So even a little thing you do, positive thing, of course it has its own positive effect. But that is not enough. The positive karma that comes out of it you also dedicate, so that it can become a cause or contribution towards the lasting, or complete, enlightenment, or complete happiness, and eradication of suffering.

Never, at the cost of life or limb,

Forsake your virtuous friend, your teacher,

Learned in the doctrine of the Mahayana,

Supreme in Bodhisattva discipline. [5:102]

You need to learn how to work on yourself, how to practice the bodhisattva's way of life, and to get inspiration from that. So if you find a great teacher, a good teacher, an authentic teacher, what we call a *dge ba'i bshes gnyen* or *kalyanamitra* – the virtuous friend, then you should regard that virtuous friend as very important for yourself. Very dear. You should not leave, or you should not let go, you should not separate from that teacher, especially if that teacher is learned in the doctrine of the Mahayana (Mahayana is the path with seven greatnesses), if this bodhisattva or this person is actually genuinely practicing the bodhisattva's path, then we should regard that person very, very important and with great respect. We should not allow ourselves to be separated from that master, whatever comes.

Learn how to attend upon your guru

As described in Shri Sambhava's life.

This and other teachings of the Buddha

You should understand by reading in the sutras. [5:103]

So, [to learn] how to attend your guru, or how to receive teachings from your teacher, you should read this sutra of Shri Sambhava. There are many sutras, of course, but this sutra is about Shri Sambhava, a boy, and a girl called [Shrimati] and their lives and their search for a teacher, and how they met a hundred and ten different masters. How they sacrificed all their comforts. And how, with so much effort, they tried to learn from these teachers. These kinds of stories one should read and get inspiration from them.

Also, one should read the sutras of the Buddha because they are the main source. If you read the sutras, especially after studying the Bodhicharyavatara, you will understand them more clearly and you will be more inspired. So try to read them.

Indeed within these sutras all the practices are found;

Therefore read and study them.

"The Sutra of the Essence of the Sky"

Is the text that should be studied first. [5:104]

So if you study those sutras, Mahayana sutras of the Buddha, you will find all the instructions are

on the bodhisattva's way of life. Especially *"The Sutra of the Essence of the Sky"*, *nam mkha'i snyingpo'i mdo*, is the sutra that defines all the things that you should do and not do. It clearly defines the downfalls and transgressions. You will learn from it what the ideal things are that you have to do and don't do. It is also sometimes good to know that.

*All that must be practiced constantly
Is clearly and extensively explained
Within the "Digest of All Disciplines,"
So this is something you should read repeatedly. [5:105]*

There is another book by Shantideva called *bslab btus*, *"Digest of All Disciplines,"* which also explains lots of things: how to practice the way of Bodhisattva, how not to exceed, how to do things in a limited way, how to go step-by-step. And all those things. So you should study them. It is not just reading once, but to read it again and again, and study them repeatedly.

*From time to time, for sake of brevity,
Consult the "Digest of the Sutras."
And those two works peruse with diligence
That noble Nagarjuna has composed. [5:106]*

"From time to time, for sake of brevity, consult the 'Digest of the Sutras.'" This is another book by Shantideva called the *"Digest of the Sutras."* It is a collection of sayings from the sutras. This also one should study and read again and again.

"And those two works peruse with diligence that noble Nagarjuna has composed." There are also two other books, composed by Nagarjuna, with the same name, *"Digest of all Disciplines"* and *"Digest of all Sutras."* So these also one should read. This is what is suggested by Shantideva.

*Whatever in these works is not proscribed
Be sure to undertake and implement.
And what you find enjoined there, perfectly fulfill,
And so protect the minds of worldly beings. [5:107]*

"Not proscribed." If these books do not reject, or do not proscribe, or do not ask you not to do things, then it means you can do it. *"Not proscribed"* – means that what is not instructed against – you should do it. And *"what you find enjoined"* – what these books proscribe you, or tell you, or recommend you to do – then you should do it, and especially, protect the mind.

"Protect the minds of worldly beings" means that you should not do anything that would totally upset and shock the worldly people, the general society. If the society thinks that this is something one should not do at all, and have a very strong feeling against it, even if that is not necessarily, completely a negative deed, if you do it, then it will upset this community or society around you, and it will have a bad effect. So one should not do that as well. This is, I think, important.

Now to conclude, these are the last 2 stanzas of the conclusion of this chapter, 108 and 109:

Examining again and yet again

The state and actions of your body and your mind —

This alone defines in brief

The maintenance of watchful introspection. [5:108]

So what *"watchful introspection"* or *"vigilant introspection"* really means is that you just again and again are aware of what is going on, what you are doing with your body, with your speech, and with your mind. In brief, that is it. And if you find you are doing something, with your body, speech or mind that is not correct, that is not good, that is not useful, that is negative, then stop doing it. And if you know, if you understand, if you feel that what you are doing with your body, speech and mind is something useful, something beneficial, something positive, then rejoice and continue to do that. And that is it.

Then the last stanza, 109:

But all this must be acted out in truth,

For what is to be gained by mouthing syllables?

What invalid was ever helped

By merely reading in the doctor's treatises? [5:109]

What we have learned here is all about how to act, how to react. It is not enough that we know that. It is not enough that we remember these things. We need to use it in our daily life – not only during meditation, but any time. There is no place that we should not use these understandings and instructions and actions. It is not that we should do this only in a solitary place, but not in the city; not at home but in a monastery. It is not like that. All the time we should try to use this in our life, because that will really transform us. It will be good for me and good for others. That is the whole point. So we should act.

The example here is that if you are sick, then you go to the doctor. If the doctor gives you medicine, or recommendation, and you read the recommendation a hundred times, that wouldn't help you. You have to actually get the medicine, and actually take the medicine. Only if you take the medicine and do as the doctor tells you to do, then only that medicine or that the doctor's instructions will have effect on you. So the most important thing is to act. Not just to understand.

This is the last sentence in *Vigilant Introspect*, the Chapter Five of Bodhicharyavatara. So finally we have completed the chapter five which is quite long. Thank you very much.

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