

Shantideva's
Bodhicaryâvatâra

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་པའི་སྤོད་པ་ལ་འཇུག་པ།

Group Study with Venerable Lama Sangyay Tendzin

Chapter Five: Safeguarding alertness

Session 29 - September 4, 2021

Good morning, everyone.

Let us start now with the traditional prayers.

REFUGE | MANDALA | REQUEST for TEACHINGS

Lama's Invocation | Mental Quiescence

The Fifth Chapter of the Bodhicaryâvatâra, deals with sustaining vigilance or safeguarding alertness. Last week we covered the first five of the 109 stanzas that constitute this chapter. Pursuing our study, we abord the commentary of the sixth sloka.

Chapter Five - Stanza 6:

The Speaker of Truth himself has shown
That, in this way, all fears,
As well as immeasurable sufferings,
Come from the mind.

The validity of such statement rests on the scriptures, which declare that all the countless fears and sufferings of mind and body experienced in this and all future existences, arise from minds overpowered by delusion and distraction as well as from the negative actions resulting from these.

This was said by the Buddha himself, who spoke the truth and was free of every falsehood.

The *Ratnamegha*-sutra states that:

"Power over one's mind confers power over all phenomena".

In the *Saddharma smriti upasthana*-sutra, we read:

*"The mind is our enemy, our mighty foe.
No enemy exists apart from this our mind.
Like tinder burned by flames, itself has lit,
The mind is lit and burned by mind itself".*

Chapter Five - Stanza 7:

Who intentionally created
All the weapons for the beings in the joyless realms?
Who created the burning iron ground?
Where did all the siren-maids come from?

All the infernal instruments used to torture beings, such as saws, swords, the groves of razor-sharp blades, grinders, and mortars in which beings are crushed; who created these for the purpose of such agony? It is none but the mind itself. Who was it that forged the burning iron ground, and why?

Similarly asks Shantideva, wherefrom did all these women appeared, the very ones after whom he had lusted and with whom he had committed acts of sexual misconduct in the past, calling to him from the top, and then from the foot, of the shalmali trees? They came from his mind and nowhere else.

Chapter Five - Stanza 8:

The Sage has said that all such things as that
Are what come from a mind having negative force.
Therefore, in the threefold world,
There's nothing to fear except the mind.

All such terrifying apparitions are nothing but the result of his sinful mind; they are what appears to a mind that is imbued with non-virtue. According to Lord Buddha himself, it is written in the sutra 'That distinguishes the different kinds of beings':

*"The iron pavement blazing hot,
All burning round with fiery flame,
The irons saws so sharpened fine
That cut one body hundred wise
From minds of those do they arise,
Who sin in body, speech, and mind."*

Thus, throughout the three worlds (*), no harm or fear arises except from the mind overpowered by delusion.

(*) The three worlds have two meaning: Desire, form and formless realms but also above, on and under the earth.

Therefore, if one manages to guard the mind effectively, not allowing it to stray into the power of distraction and delusion, every danger and injury in this and future lives will come to end.

Chapter Five - Stanza 9:

If the perfection of giving were
That the poverty of wandering beings was all gone.
Then how could the Guardians of old have perfected it,
Since wandering beings have hunger still now?

Generosity too derives from the mind.

For if the paramita of generosity were to consist in the actual distribution of great gifts leading to the complete elimination of poverty without a single beggar remaining, how can it have been achieved by the Buddhas of the past when still to this day there are many beggars and starving people? Nevertheless, the fact is, however, that it has been achieved by them.

What then is the perfection of generosity? This is taught in the next stanza.

Chapter Five - Stanza 10:

The perfection of giving is said to be
Through the mind that would give away to everyone
All that is mine, together with its results.
Thus, it's the mind itself.

The Akshayamati-sutra teaches:

*"What is the paramita of generosity?
It is the sincere wish to give to others whatever one has,
together with the karmic result of such an act."*

Generosity is perfected by training oneself in the attitude of open-handedness, with the genuine intention totally free of miserliness and cupidity, to give to all beings, without any expectation of recompense whether in this or future lives.

Such training implies the gift to everyone, high or low, rich, or poor, one's every possession: i.e., one's body and belongings, along with the merit of such a gift.

The term paramita implies that the act of giving is performed in a manner free from the assumption of the real existence of the subject, the object of action, as well as of the action itself.

Therefore, generosity does not depend on the objective value of the gift. It depends on a generosity of attitude unrestricted by any kind of attachment that would prevent one from making a gift of one's external possessions or of one's inner qualities and merit. It follows that generosity is in the mind.

Chapter Five - Stanza 11:

Fish and the like, where could anyone take them all,
So that they won't be killed (ever again)?

The perfection of ethical discipline, it's explained,
Is from gaining the mind to give up such acts.

Ethical discipline likewise comes from the mind, as can be seen in relation to the act of killing. It is impossible to find a place to put living beings (such as fish and other animals) where they will be protected from being killed.

But regardless of whether other beings put them to death, if we are determined to refrain from doing so, thinking that we will not kill even at the cost of our lives, this is said to be the perfection of ethical discipline.

The sutras define ethical discipline as the decision to refrain from harming others.

In the same way, the vow of chastity cannot be observed simply by doing away with objects of lust. Ethical discipline subsists in the attitude of restraint, i.e., in ridding oneself of desire for no matter what.

If this attitude is absent, mere abstention from untoward activities does not constitute discipline. Therefore, once again, discipline comes from the mind.

Chapter Five - Stanza 12:

Cruel beings are (everywhere) just as is space:
It can't possibly come that I'll have destroyed them (all).
But if I've destroyed this mind of anger alone,
It's the same as my having destroyed all those foes.

Patience also arises from the mind.

Dangerous and unruly beings are everywhere like space itself, and wherever you go, you will never find anywhere that is outside space. In other words, there is nowhere that is free of beings liable to inflict harm on others.

It is impossible to get rid of such harm-doers. It is impossible to do away with the objects of our anger. But even though there are always enemies who will injure us, if through the practice of patience, we are able to subdue our own mind (as we are angrily keen on revenge), it will be as if we had succeeded in overcoming all such foes.

Chapter Five - Stanza 13:

Where could I possibly find the leather
To cover with leather the whole surface of the earth?
But with leather just on the soles of my shoes,
It's the same as having covered the entire earth's surface.

Shantideva illustrates this with the idea of covering the entire earth with leather, with sheets of soft skin, to protect us from thorns and cutting asperities. Where could such quantities of leather be found? Obviously nowhere.

On the other hand, if we simply cover our feet, by putting on shoes with leather soles, it would be as if the whole earth had been covered with it and our purpose would be achieved.

Chapter Five - Stanza 14:

Likewise, although it's impossible for me
To ward off external events.
If I would ward off my mind,
What need to ward off anything else?

In the same way, although it is impossible to avert or do away with every external source of harm. It only demonstrates our attachment to the egocentric criteria by which, we define happiness.

All we need to do is remove our inner attitude of anger. What need is there to get rid of outer irritants?

Chapter Five - Stanza 15.

The result of feeble mental application,
Even when accompanied by speech and physical (acts),
Is not like the result of developing an intense mind alone,
Which would be Brahma states and beyond.

Diligence too is established on the mind.

If we generate a clear, unequivocal attitude of kindness or compassion, like the loving thoughts of a mother for her only child, this state will fructify as rebirth in the Brahma-world, which is a heaven of the form realm, and in all the exalted states of bliss associated with such a state.

It is said in the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra*, that the great compassion felt by a mother for her dying child and the vivid intention of love felt for each other by a mother and her daughter when they'd be both carried away by a river, resulted after death in their being born in the Brahma-world.

Thus, no matter what good deeds of body and speech we may diligently perform, this will not automatically result in rebirth in the Brahma-world, because physical and verbal actions are weak in the results that they give.

It is the *mind* that is the basis for this paramita to manifest. This text defines diligence as a state of mental joy, though there are numerous ways in which diligence might be discussed.

We will stop here for today. I invite you to abide in mental peace before we dedicate the merit of this session for the benefit of all.

