

Triratna Dharma Training Course for Mitras

Year Four

Module 6: The Bodhicaryāvatāra of Śāntideva

Week 1: General Introduction and Chapter 1 (The Benefits of the Bodhicitta)

Introduction

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* of Śāntideva is one of the most influential Buddhist texts of all time. It describes the approach of what has been called, “The Golden Age of Indian Mahayana Buddhism,” and its teachings form the basis for much of Tibetan Buddhism. The Dalai Lama says that it is his main inspiration, and that he reads it every day. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* was the first work Sangharakshita led study on after founding the FWBO, and he has always held it up as one of Triratna’s core texts. In the original mitra study course it was envisaged that all mitras would study the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in addition to Sangharakshita’s lecture series.

The Bodhisattva Path

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a guide to the Bodhisattva Path, but we shouldn’t think of this as a new path, or a higher path. The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is a restatement of basic Buddhism, in a form that particularly emphasises altruism, concern for others, and practicing for the welfare of the world. This is nothing new: if we go back to early Buddhism, the Buddha constantly emphasised that we should be practicing, “...for the welfare of the many, for the wellbeing of gods and men,” and not just to become happier and more liberated ourselves. This altruistic aspect may have got rather lost sight of for a while after the Buddha’s death, until Mahayana Buddhists felt the need to re-emphasise it. The Bodhisattva Path is introduced in different ways in several parts of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras, most notably in the Bodhisattva Ideal module.

The text

This course uses a shortened text which covers Śāntideva’s main points, clarifies the language of the more scholarly translations, and eliminates repetition. The approach has been to bring out the relevance of the text for present-day practitioners, rather than to treat it as a historical or scholarly document. The text you will be using is based mainly on three translations: Crosby and Skilton, Wallace and Wallace, and Batchelor and the approach has been to look for the meaning conveyed by all three and then to re-express this in what I hope is accessible English. Headings have been inserted in the text to clarify the structure.

Approach and timetable

The suggested approach to this study is to read the text aloud in short sections during the study session, discussing each section as it comes along. This means

that you do not have to do a lot of other reading between sessions, and it gives you an opportunity to immerse yourself in the text, reading and rereading it as part of your daily practice. You may also want to look at some of the full-length translations of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, and at some reference material – references are given later - but this is not essential. Your study leader also has access to a ‘Teachers Guide’ that gives extra information and suggests questions for discussion; they may decide to share this with you, but as it is quite long it will often be more appropriate for them not to distribute this, but to bring out the points themselves as you all read through the text.

The suggested timetable for the module is as follows (although your study leader may find it appropriate to change this):

Week 1 – General introduction, plus chapter 1.

Week 2 – Chapters 2 & 3.

Week 3 – Chapters 2 & 3, plus pūjā .

Week 4 – Chapters 4 & 5.

Week 5 – Chapter 6.

Week 6 – Chapter 7.

Week 7 – Chapter 8.

Week 8 – Chapter 9, plus dedication of merits from chapter 10.

References and further reading

Crosby, Kate, and Skilton, Andrew, translators, *The Bodhicaryāvatāra – A Guide to the Buddhist Path to Awakening* (Windhorse Publications, Birmingham, 2002):

<http://www.windhorsepublications.com/CartV2/Details.asp?ProductID=503>

Batchelor, Steven, translator, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala, 1979):

<http://tinyurl.com/dew8gz>

Wallace, Vesna, and Wallace, B. Alan, translators, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life* (Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, NY, 1997).

http://www.snowlionpub.com/html/product_1302.html

Sangharakshita, *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry* (transcribed study seminar on the Free Buddhist Audio website).

<http://tinyurl.com/dy75ml>

Cittapala, *The Supreme Mystery – An Introduction to Śāntideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Padmaloka Books, Surlingham, 1992). Available from:

<http://www.cittapala.org/>

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Meaningful to Behold – A commentary to Śāntideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* (Tharpa Publications, London, 1980):

<http://www.tharpa.com/us/book-Meaningful.to.Behold-599.html>

Chapter 1: The Benefits of the Bodhicitta

Reverently bowing to the Buddhas, to the Dharma, and to the noble sons and daughters of the Sugatas, I shall briefly explain the path of practice of the Buddha's disciples, according to the scriptures. [1]

This precious opportunity, with the leisure and other conditions needed to practice the Dharma, is extremely rare. This is what makes life meaningful – if we waste it now, when will it come again? [4]

Like a flash of lightning on a black stormy night, that gives one instant of clarity, so, by the power of the Buddha the worldly mind is sometimes lit up for a moment by skilful intentions. But the power of good is weak, while the power of darkness is strong. If it were not for the Bodhicitta, what could conquer this darkness? [5, 6]

The Buddhas have seen that the Bodhicitta is the one blessing that brings true joy and bliss. Those who want to transcend the sufferings of conditioned existence, those who want to relieve the suffering of others, and those who want to experience joy in their own hearts, should never abandon the Bodhicitta. [7, 8]

The moment the Bodhicitta arises in someone, fettered and weak in the jail of cyclic existence, he is instantly hailed as a son of the Sugatas, and honoured by gods and men. [9]

The Bodhicitta is the philosopher's stone that transmutes the base metal of this body into the gold of the Buddha Jewel. Grasp it tightly, and use it well. [10]

Like a banana tree, every other good thing bears fruit for a time, and then dies. But the Bodhicitta does not wither, and continues to bear fruit. It protects us like a great hero. Like a great fire it instantly burns up evil habits and past karma. [12-14]

There are two kinds of Bodhicitta: Bodhicitta as an aspiration, and Bodhicitta put into practice. The difference is like that between someone who wants to go travelling, and someone who actually goes. [15, 16]

Even to aspire for the Bodhicitta brings great benefits, but nothing like those that come once we begin to act on our aspiration. From the moment we definitely decide to live and practice for the benefit of all, a continuous stream of merit rains down on us, even when we are asleep or distracted. [17-19]

This state of mind, in which we care more for others than they care for themselves, is a miraculous jewel, and its arising is a wonder. It is the source of the world's joy, and the cure for the world's suffering. There is no way we can fathom the depths of its goodness. [24-26]

Look at most living beings: hoping to escape suffering, they run straight towards it; looking for happiness, in their delusion they destroy their own happiness, as though they were their own enemy. [28]

But the Bodhicitta gives real happiness, it dispels suffering, and it drives off delusion. It is the best teacher, and the best spiritual friend. [29, 30]

I bow down to those in whom this precious jewel of the mind has arisen; I go for refuge to those sources of joy, who bring happiness even to those who harm them. [36]

*Weeks 2 and 3: Chapters 2 (Confession) and 3 (Embracing the Bodhicitta),
Sevenfold Pūjā*

Chapter 2: Confession

Worship, offerings, and prostrations

In order to embrace the precious Bodhicitta, the jewel of the mind, I make offerings to the Buddhas, to the sublime Dharma, and to the sons and daughters of the Buddha, who are oceans of excellence. [1]

Conjuring them up in my mind, I offer all the flowers in the world, all the fruits, and all the fragrant herbs. I offer the clear refreshing waters, the crystal mountains, the tranquil forests, and the wild places. I offer vines bright with flowers, I offer trees heavy with fruit, I offer lakes adorned with lotuses, and the haunting cry of the wild geese. [2-6]

I offer myself completely to the Buddhas and their sons. Take possession of me, sublime beings – I reverently devote myself to your service. [8]

When you possess me, I am freed from fear. When you possess me, I work for the benefit of all. When you possess me, I am freed from my unskilful karma, and in the future I commit no more. [9]

In my mind's eye I invite the sages to a fragrant bathing chamber, with jewelled pillars and mosaic floors of clear crystal. While music plays I invite them to bathe in flower-scented water. I dry them with soft cloths, and anoint their bodies, which shine like heated gold. I dress them in richly coloured robes, and adorn them with bright jewels and ornaments. [10-14]

I garland them with flowers, envelop them in heady clouds of incense, and offer them many kinds of food and drink. I offer jewelled lamps on golden lotuses, and strew drifts of flowers on the perfumed floor. [16, 17]

To those whose very essence is maitrī, I offer cloudlike palaces in the sky, to which thrilling music, poems, and songs of worship drift upwards, while flowers rain down incessantly on all shrines and images, and on all the jewels of the true Dharma. [18, 20, 21, 23]

With as many bodies as there are atoms in the universe, I prostrate to the Buddhas of the past, present and future, to the Dharma, and to the sublime Sangha. I bow to all shrines and sacred places, to all teachers, and to all worthy practitioners. [24, 25]

Confession and Going for Refuge

Standing with folded hands before the Buddhas in the ten directions, before the Bodhisattvas of great compassion, I acknowledge the harm I have caused, in this

life and past ages: the harm to myself, the harm to the Three Jewels, and the harm to other beings. [27-31]

How can I escape the results of my karma? O Guides of the World, please grasp me quickly, so that death does not come before it is wiped out. [33]

Here and now I go for refuge to the Buddhas who protect the universe. Wholeheartedly I go for refuge to the Dharma they have realised, and to the community of Bodhisattvas. [48, 49]

I offer myself to Samantabhadra, I give myself to Mañjuḥṣa, I cry out to the compassionate Avalokiteśvara, asking him to protect me. I bow down to Vajrapāṇi – at the sight of him the messengers of death scatter in all directions! [51-53]

I have ignored your advice, O great guides, but now, seeing my danger, I go for refuge, and ask for your protection. Someone afraid of an ordinary illness will take their doctor's advice. But I have ignored the advice of the all-knowing doctor, about the worst of diseases. Is there no end to my stupidity? [54-57]

If I am careful on an ordinary cliff, how much more care should I take at the top of a precipice that drops for huge distances, through great tracts of time? Yet I take my pleasure, while my end gets nearer and nearer. Do I think I will escape death, when nobody else does? Instead I should keep in mind that unskilfulness always leads to suffering, and that I need to liberate myself from the effects of my karma. [58-60, 63]

Standing with folded hands before the Guides of the World, fearful of the suffering I have stored up for myself, I confess all the unskilfulness I have piled up in my delusion. Prostrating again and again, I ask the leaders to accept my confession. What is not good, O Protectors, I must not do again. [64-66]

Chapter 3: Embracing the Bodhicitta

Rejoicing in merit

I rejoice with gladness in the good done by all beings, which frees them from the lower states. I rejoice in the release of beings from the sufferings of cyclic existence. I rejoice in the nature of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and in the teachings of the wise. I rejoice with a heart of gladness in all expressions of the Bodhicitta, the mind that wishes all beings to be happy, and works for the benefit of all. [1-3]

Asking for teaching

With hands folded in reverence I beg the Buddhas in all directions to shine the light of the Dharma, to light up the world for we who wander, bewildered by darkness. With hands folded in reverence I ask the Conquerors who wish to pass into Nirvana, to please stay here for endless ages, and not to leave this world in darkness. [4, 5]

Transference of merit and self-surrender

May the merit I have gained by these actions relieve the suffering of all beings. With no sense of loss I give my body to all beings, I give them all my pleasures, and all my merit from the past, present, and future. [6, 10]

Enlightenment is giving away everything, and Enlightenment is my heart's goal. So let me give everything away to sentient beings! [11]

I give this body to beings to do with as they please. May I never cause them harm, and may even their anger towards me benefit them. Those who criticise me, those who are unjust to me, those who harm me, those who mock me - may they all share in Enlightenment. [12-16]

May I be the doctor and the nurse for all beings, until the world is cured. May I be food for the hungry, and wealth for the poor. May I be a protector for the unprotected, a guide for the lost, and a boat to the other shore. May I be a lamp for those who need light, and a bed for those who need rest. May I be a servant to all beings. [7-9, 17, 18]

Just like the earth, water, fire, and air, that are useful in many ways to the beings throughout infinite space, so may I too support the life of all beings, until we are all liberated. [20, 21]

Commitment and celebration

Just as the Buddhas before me took up the Bodhicitta, just as they trained in the Six Perfections, so now I too, for the welfare of the world, embrace the Bodhicitta. So now I too will train in the Bodhisattva's Path. [22, 23]

Today my life has born fruit. Today I have been born in the family of the Buddha. Today I have become one of the Buddha's sons. Everything I do from now on should be worthy of this noble family. [25, 26]

Just like a blind man, who by chance finds a jewel in a heap of rubbish, so by some chance this precious attitude has arisen in me. [27]

This is the elixir of life, that puts an end to death. This is the priceless treasure, that ends all poverty on Earth. This is the supreme medicine, that cures the world's disease. This is the bridge to freedom, that leads from unhappy states. [28-30]

This is the moon of the mind, whose light banishes our darkness. This is the brilliant sun, that burns off the mist of delusion. This is the essential butter from churning the milk of the Dharma. [30, 31]

For the whole caravan of humanity travelling the roads of existence in search of happiness, this will give them joy. [32]

Today in the presence of the Buddhas I invite the world to be my guest at a great feast of delight. May humans, gods, and all beings rejoice! [33]

A Bodhicaryāvatāra Pūjā (for use with chapters 2 and 3)

Offerings

In order to adopt the Bodhisattva Spirit
The sacred Bodhicitta
The jewel of the mind
I make offerings to the Buddhas
I make offerings to the Dharma
And to the Sons of the Buddha [and/or daughters]
Who are oceans of excellence

Conjuring them up in my mind
I offer all the flowers in the world
I offer all the fruits
I offer all the fragrant plants

I offer the clear refreshing waters
The crystal mountains
The tranquil forests
And the wild places

I offer vines bright with flowers
I offer trees heavy with fruit
I offer lakes adorned with lotuses
And the haunting cry of the wild geese.

Conjuring these things up in my mind
I offer them to the sages
And to their sons [and/or daughters]
Who are oceans of excellence.

Salutations

As many atoms as there are
In the thousand million worlds
With so many bodies I bow down
To all the Buddhas of the Three Eras
To the true Dharma
And to the noble Sangha.

I pay homage to all the shrines
And places in which the Bodhisattvas have been
I make profound obeisance to the teachers

And those to whom respectful salutation is due.

I bow down to all those
Who express the Bodhicitta
I go for refuge to those
Who are fountains of joy.

Going for Refuge

This very day
I go for my refuge
To the Buddhas who protect the universe
To the Dharma they have realised
And to the community of Bodhisattvas.

I offer myself completely
To the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas
Take possession of me
I am your servant.

When you possess me
I am freed from my delusions
When you possess me
I am freed from my wrongdoings
When you possess me
I am freed from fear.

Please possess me
Most noble beings
In admiration and devotion
I give myself to you.

Refuges and Precepts

Confession

Standing with folded hands
Before the leaders of the world,
Before the Buddhas in the ten directions
Before the Bodhisattvas of great compassion,
I acknowledge the harm I have caused
In this life and past ages,
The harm to others,
The harm to myself,
And the harm to the three jewels.

Standing with folded hands
Before the guides of the world
I make this aspiration-
Such acts in the future
I will not do.

I have ignored your advice
Oh great beings.
How can I escape
The results of my karma?

I give myself to Mañjuḥṣa,
I offer myself to Avalokiteśvara,
I bow down to Vajrapāṇi:
At the sight of him
The messengers of death
Run in all directions.

I offer myself to you
O great beings,
Please grasp me quickly,
Before death hunts me down.

Rejoicing in Merit

I rejoice with delight
In the good done by all beings,
Which frees them from the lower states.
I rejoice in the release of beings
From the sufferings of saṃsāra.
I rejoice in the nature of the Bodhisattvas,
And in the teachings of the wise.

I rejoice with a heart of gladness
In all expressions of the Bodhicitta,
The mind that wishes all beings to be happy,
And works for the benefit of all.

Entreaty and Supplication

With hands folded in reverence
I beg the Buddhas in all directions
To shine the light of the Dharma,
To light up this world
For we who wander
Bewildered by darkness.

With hands folded in reverence
I beg the Great Beings
Who wish to pass into Nirvana
To please stay here for endless ages,
So that life in this world does not grow dark

Transference of Merit and Self-Surrender

With no sense of loss
I give myself to all beings,
I give my merits
For the benefit of all.

May I be the doctor,
May I be the nurse,
For all beings,
Until the world is cured.

For those in poverty
May I be wealth,
For those in pain
May I be balm.

May I be a light
For those who are lost,
May I be a harbour
For those that need shelter.

Like the earth and the water,
Like the fire and the air,
May I be a servant
To beings on Earth
Until the world is whole.

Just as the Buddhas before me
Took up the Bodhicitta,
Just as they trained
In the six perfections,
So now I too,
For the welfare of the world,
Set my mind on enlightenment,
So now I too,
For the welfare of the world,
Will train in the Bodhisattva's path.

Today my life has born fruit,
Today I have been born
In the family of the Buddha,
Today I have become

One of Buddha's sons.

[or clan]

Just like a blind man
Who finds by chance
A jewel in a dung heap,
So by some chance
This precious attitude
Has arisen in me.

This is the elixir of life
That puts an end to death.
This is the priceless treasure
That ends all poverty on earth.

This is the supreme medicine
That cures the world's disease.
This is the bridge to freedom
That leads from unhappy states.

This is the essential butter
From churning the milk of the Dharma.

For the whole caravan of humanity
Travelling the roads of existence
In search of happiness,
This will give them joy.

Today in the presence of the Buddhas
I invite the world to be my guest
At a great feast of delight.
May humans, gods, and all beings rejoice.

Week 4, Chapters 4 and 5: Maintaining Mindfulness – Apramāda (Chapter 4) and Samprajanya (Chapter 5)

Chapter 4: Apramāda, or Ethical Vigilance

From promise to practice

After embracing the Bodhicitta in this way, a Son of the Jinas should strive hard to put his resolve into practice. In the case of some decisions, which are rash or not properly thought out, it might be right to have second thoughts. But why should I back out of a commitment that has been thought through and approved by the great wisdom of the Buddhas and their sons – and even by me, for what that’s worth! [1-3]

If going back on even a small generous impulse has bad karmic effects, what would be the effect of backing out of a promise made to the whole world? So I must act firmly on my commitment. Unless I make the effort now, I shall fall to lower and lower states. [5, 6, 8, 12]

This precious opportunity

When will an opportunity like this come again: the arising of a Buddha, faith, a human life, the freedom to practice, adequate health, enough food to live, and no major problems? If I can’t practice now, what will I do when I am stunned by the sufferings of the lower states? In those states it is hard to act skilfully, which is why the Buddha said that being born a human is as unlikely as a turtle in the vast ocean accidentally putting its head through a single floating yoke as it surfaces. After getting such a fleeting opportunity, nothing could be more stupid than not to practice. [15, 16, 18-20, 23]

The power of the kleśas

But though I have somehow found this unimaginably lucky state, I am somehow led back towards those same old lower states of being. I seem to have no will about this, as though I were under a spell. What is going on here? What is driving me? What is it that lives inside me? [26, 27]

Enemies like greed and hate don’t have bodies to attack me, they aren’t brave or intelligent. How do they make me their slave? But still they strike me down from inside my own mind. Why don’t I boil with rage at this? Patience about this is completely out of place! [28, 29]

Human enemies can’t send me to hell. But my mighty enemies the kleśas can send me there in an instant. Human enemies become friends if we treat them kindly. But when we are kind to the kleśas they just cause us even more suffering. [30, 33]

Warrior-like determination

So I won't rest until these enemies are struck down in front of my eyes. Look at worldly warriors: they are passionate to kill their enemies, they don't count the pain from blows, arrows and spears, they won't give up until they win, and they proudly show off their wounds and scars. Why then, when I'm fighting for the Great Cause, when I'm trying to kill my real enemies, the real cause of all suffering – why do I shy away from a little pain? [36-38]

Look even at lowly folk like fishermen and ploughmen: just for the sake of their livelihood they put up with all sorts of discomfort, like the sun's heat and the freezing cold. Why then can't I show some endurance, when it is for the sake of the whole universe? [40]

I have promised to free the universe from the kleśas, but I haven't yet freed myself. When I made my commitment to the Bodhicitta I was intoxicated, I wasn't taking my limitations into account. But now I can't turn back from destroying the kleśas. [41, 42]

I'm going to be bloody-minded about this, and wage a grudge war of vengeance! The only negative emotion I'm going to spare is the desire to murder the kleśas! [43]

I don't care if my guts spill out. I don't care if my head falls off. But I'm never going to grovel to my arch-enemies, the kleśas! [44]

If we defeat a human enemy, they can take refuge in another country and regroup. But where can the kleśas go, if I rout them out of my mind? The kleśas are weaklings, to be cowed by the glare of wisdom. They are just based on illusion. So, heart, free yourself from fear, and devote yourself to striving for wisdom. [45-47]

Chapter 5: Guarding *Samprajanya*, or Continuity of Purpose

The importance of mindfulness

It is just not possible to practice the Dharma without keeping a careful guard on the mind, which wanders so easily. The wandering mind is like an untamed elephant in rut, and it causes more havoc. Unless we watch it carefully it will plunge us into hell. But if, like an elephant, we tether the mind with the ropes of mindfulness, then we will be safe and happy. [1, 2, 3]

When we tame our mind we tame all threats and problems, because all suffering and fear comes from the mind. This is the Buddha's teaching. We can't cover the whole world in leather, but if we put leather on the soles of our feet it has the same effect. [4-6, 13]

Just as a wounded man in the middle of a rough crowd guards his wound with great care, we need to guard our mind in bad company. The determined

practitioner who keeps this attitude can never be broken, even in the worst company - even among wanton young women! [20, 21]

If we don't keep our mindfulness, what will happen to all our other vows and precepts? Just as a sick man isn't fit for any work, so a distracted mind can't do anything useful. It is like a leaky jug: nothing that is heard, reflected upon, or developed in meditation stays in it. [16, 17, 24, 25]

Many people know the Dharma, have faith, and try hard, but come unstuck because of lack of mindfulness. That band of thieves, the kleśas, search for a way through our defences. When they have found one, they rob us of the opportunity for a good life. So always keep the guard of mindfulness at the door of your mind. [26, 27, 29]

Strategies for maintaining mindfulness

Mindfulness comes easily to those who are lucky enough to live with their teacher and practice under their guidance, if they have great respect for his good opinion. [30]

Those who are not so lucky should remember that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas see everything that happens everywhere. Everything is laid out in front of them, and before them we stand. Meditating on this, we should keep mindfulness of the presence of the Buddhas at all times, maintaining a sense of shame, respect, and awe. [31, 32]

We should also read and recite the scriptures over and over again. Constantly reminding ourselves of the teachings helps us to guard the mind, and to remember to put the teachings into practice. [103-7]

'Negative' mindfulness – controlling sensory input and our reactions

To start with, we should develop a non-reactive state of mind by acting as if we had no senses at all – just like a block of wood. [34]

When out and about we shouldn't look around distractedly. We should stay mindful of our purpose, aware of our body, and should constantly observe our mind. Before moving or speaking we should examine our mind, and then act appropriately and with self-possession. [38, 39, 41, 47]

When the mind experiences attraction or aversion, we should neither act nor speak, but remain like a block of wood. When the mind is inflated or critical, full of arrogance, intoxicated, evasive, dishonest, when it looks down on or blames others, we should remain like a block of wood. [48-50]

The reactive mind is greedy for possessions, respect, fame, and status, or just wants the attention of an audience. It longs to hold forth, it cares nothing for the good of others, it is always seeking its own advantage, and longing for an opportunity to preach its opinions. It is intolerant, idle, cowardly, disrespectful,

foul-mouthed, and biased in its own favour. So we should remain like a block of wood. [51, 52, 53]

'Positive' mindfulness

Having mastered our lower nature in this way, we should give up frowning and always have a smiling face, being the first to greet and talk to others, a friend to the universe. We should speak kindly and look straight at people's faces, as if drinking them in with our eyes. [71, 80]

Our mind should serve our will and other beings, unshakeable as a great mountain, knowing the world to be like a magical display, full of serene confidence, calm, eager to help others, unwearied by the conflicting desires of the spiritually immature, knowing that they are like this because they are possessed by the kleśas. [55-58]

Using all situations as practice

Whatever situation we are in we should make it a part of our training. Every activity is a spiritual practice for the person who acts like this. [99,100]

Conclusion

In brief, mindfulness means observing the body and the mind at every moment. We need to actually put this into practice, and not just talk about it. When we are sick, what use is it just to read a medical textbook? [108,109]

Week 5, Chapter 6: The Practice of Kṣānti

The benefits of kṣānti, and the harmfulness of its opposite

Ill will and resentment destroy all the benefits of spiritual practice. Ill will is the most destructive state, and kṣānti is the best ascetic practice. So we should develop kṣānti in every way we can, and with all the effort we can muster. [1, 2]

When the thorn of ill-will is stuck in our heart, our mind can't find peace, we can't enjoy anything, and we sleep badly. If we are twisted by ill-will, even those who depend on us will want to bring us down. Even our friends won't want to know us. We can be as generous as we like, but no-one will like us. To be blunt, there is just no way that an angry and resentful person can be happy. But the man who defeats anger will be happy, both in this life and the next. [3-6]

Freeing ourselves from dependence on outer events

We feed ill-will by allowing ourselves to become unhappy when events do not go according to our likes and dislikes. So I shall starve this con-man rather than feeding him as my guest, knowing that his only purpose is to harm me. [7, 8]

Whatever happens to us, even if we fall into adversity, we should not allow this to disturb our happy state of mind. When we allow ourselves to be made unhappy by events, nothing is enjoyable, and we fall into unskilful states. Why be unhappy if we can do something about it? And what's the use of being unhappy about something we can't do anything about? [9, 10]

Learning to endure pain and discomfort

With practice anything becomes easy. So, by learning to tolerate slight discomforts, even great pain becomes bearable. So we should practice seeing the discomfort caused by bugs, fleas and mosquitoes, hunger and thirst, or itches and rashes as nothing to bother about. Then we will be able to graduate to the suffering caused by cold and heat, rain and wind, travelling, illness, and eventually even imprisonment and beatings. If we don't learn to tolerate these things, our mental distress will just make us suffer even more. [14-16]

In battle some people are spurred on by the sight of their own blood, while others faint even if they see someone else's. The difference is entirely in the mental attitude – do we have a courageous or cowardly approach? [17, 18]

In fact it is good that we have to suffer some pain and discomfort. Suffering reduces our arrogance and intoxication, it helps us develop compassion for others, it promotes a fear of unskilful acts, and it makes us long for the Buddha. [21]

Learning to tolerate other people: people are driven by conditions

We don't get angry at an attack of indigestion or nausea, even though it causes suffering. So why do we get angry at sentient beings? Their unskilfulness is just as much the product of conditions. Nothing arises independently. Everything is dependent on other things, and these other things are dependent on other things again. So why should we get angry at phenomena that are not autonomous, but exist like the things we see in a magical illusion? [22, 25, 31]

If someone hits me with a stick, I don't blame the stick. But the person is wielded by ill-will, just as the stick is wielded by the person. [41]

So, if we see a friend or an enemy behaving badly, we should remember that their behaviour is caused by conditions, and not allow it to disturb our happy state of mind. [35]

It is just as deluded to get angry at someone who acts unskilfully as it is for them to do the unskilful act in the first place. Understanding this, we should do our best to act in a way that causes everyone to develop maitrī towards each other. [66, 67, 69]

Learning to tolerate other people: people are deluded – as we are!

People cause themselves all sorts of sufferings, refusing to eat because of anger, or because of their obsessions, for example with women they can't have. They are

driven to commit suicide, or to harm themselves by taking poisonous intoxicants, by eating unhealthy food, and by doing all sorts of unskilful things. Driven by the kleśas in this way, they harm even their own dear selves, so how can you expect them not to harm others as well? They are like madmen, driven insane by the kleśas. The only sensible response is compassion, not anger. [35-38]

In fact this harmful madness masks their real nature. In essence, beings are good. To get angry at them is ridiculous. And we should remember that we too behave in the same way that they do – we too cause pain to other living beings. [40, 42]

Causes of resentment: concern for gain and loss

If we feel resentful about harm to our prosperity or possessions, we should remember that our money and goods will last for just this one life, whereas the results of our karma will affect us for many lifetimes. Even if we get rich and have many pleasures for many years, when we die we will be left empty-handed and naked, like someone who has been robbed. What is the point of living for something that comes to nothing in the end, especially if this means a life of ugly deeds and ugly mental states? [55, 59]

Causes of resentment: concern for praise and blame

Criticism, harsh words, and humiliation do not cause us any physical pain. So why do we get so angry about them? We feel delighted when anyone praises us, and pained when anybody criticises us, which is simply the absurd behaviour of a child. In fact praise just makes us feel more comfortable with ourselves as we are, and destroys any urgency about our will to progress. Those who criticise us are in fact doing us a favour. [53, 97-99]

Causes of resentment: concern for status and fame

Respect, fame and status don't give us merit or a long life, they don't make us healthy or immune to disease, and they don't bring any physical pleasure. Yet people deprive themselves of real benefits just for the sake of a big name and reputation, even driving themselves to an early death. [90, 92]

When our reputation or status is attacked, our mind howls like a child whose sandcastle has been knocked down. But the chains of reputation and status have no place on someone who is looking for liberation. Why should we resent those who free us from this bondage? [93,100]

When our qualities are praised we want everyone to be pleased, but when someone else's talents are praised we are jealous. We are supposed to have aroused the Bodhicitta, wanting happiness for every living being, yet we burn inside on seeing someone honoured! How can we be resentful at someone else's happiness? We should be wishing all people as much of every sort of happiness as is possible for them! [79, 80, 81, 83]

Righteous indignation

We are not even justified in feeling anger or resentment towards those who damage rūpas and shrines, or who criticise the Dharma. After all, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas hardly get angry about such actions! Nor should we get angry when someone hinders our altruistic actions. There is no spiritual practice equal to kṣānti. [64,102]

When people harm our teachers, our relatives, or those dear to us, we should see that this has come about because of conditions, and rein in our anger. In fact we should treasure someone who gives us the opportunity to practice patience, because they help us along the path to Awakening. [65]

The devotional perspective

How can I be resentful or arrogant towards those beings who my masters, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, place above themselves - at whose happiness they are joyful, and at whose sufferings they grieve? To satisfy sentient beings is to satisfy the Lords of the Sages, and to offend them is to offend the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. [121,122]

Right now, to worship the Tathāgatas, with my entire being I offer myself as a servant to the world. Let streams of beings put their foot on my head. Those whose very nature is compassion see this whole world as identical with themselves, so in fact they appear in the form of these good people! These very people around me are the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas! How can I be resentful towards them? [125.126]

This attitude, and this alone, is the worship of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. This alone is the fulfilment of my goal. This alone cures the suffering of the world. Let this alone be my practice. [127]

Conclusion

Never mind about serving other beings as the way to Buddhahood! Don't you see that it is also the way to good fortune, fame, and happiness right here and now? Serenity, health, joy, and long life, along with the happiness and riches of a king – the person who practices kṣānti gets all these even while they are still in Saṃsāra. [133,134]

Week 6, Chapter 7: The Practice of Vīrya

Why is vīrya important and what is it?

As well as cultivating kṣānti we should cultivate vīrya, because Awakening requires that too. We can't gain merit without vīrya, any more than a boat can sail without wind. [1]

So what is vīrya? It is making an energetic effort to cultivate what is skilful. What are its enemies? Laziness, attachment to what is unskilful, discouragement, and low self-esteem. [2]

The enemies of vīrya: laziness and attachment to the unskilful

Laziness arises from idleness, indulgence in sensual pleasures, sleeping too much, lounging around, wanting to lean on others, and from apathy about the sufferings of saṃsāra. [3]

When death is sizing us up at every turn, why do we distract ourselves with food, sleep and sex? [6]

Hey you, expecting results without effort! So delicate! So sensitive! Caught in the clutches of death, and acting as though you were going to live forever! Why are you creating so much future suffering for yourself? Why are you destroying yourself? Now that you have managed to get onto the ferry of human life, cross over the mighty river of suffering. You idiot! Don't go to sleep! You'll have to wait a long time to catch this ferry again. [13, 14]

The enemies of vīrya: discouragement and low self-esteem

We should be freeing ourselves from despair by practicing the Dharma, not being defeatist, thinking, "How could I possibly become Awakened?" The Buddha, the Truth-speaker, has said that even those who in past lives were gnats, mosquitoes, wasps and worms, have reached Awakening by making the effort. So why shouldn't I, a human being who can tell the difference between the skilful and the unskilful? [17-19]

But we may still be held back by fearful thoughts, like, "I'll have to make sacrifices, like giving up a hand or a foot, or something. I'll suffer for aeons, and what will I get for it? Still no Awakening!" [21]

But the modest suffering caused by following the Path is like having a tooth out to get rid of toothache. We might have to put up with some slight suffering to put an end to suffering. [22, 23]

Sometimes a doctor has to give a cure that hurts. But it is not like that with the best doctor of all. For those with the greatest illness, he prescribes the sweet medicine of the Bodhisattva training. [24]

Our path of generosity starts in ways that don't hurt at all – at first we just give away small things, like vegetables. Later, gradually, we might reach the point where we can happily give away our own flesh. [25]

With Insight this becomes easy. And we don't suffer from giving up evil, or become mentally ill by becoming wise. In fact skilful actions give us physical pleasure, and wisdom delights the mind. What can possibly weary the compassionate being who stays in Saṃsāra for the good of others? Wiping out his past unskilfulness, gathering oceans of merit, proceeding from happiness to happiness, why would any intelligent person feel discouraged after boarding the vehicle of the Bodhicitta, which dispels all weariness and sadness? [26-30]

What promotes vīrya? The 'Four Powers'

The powers of skilful desire, of self-confidence, of joy, and of letting go, all serve the needs of living beings. So, meditating on the benefits of following the path, we should summon up enthusiastic desire for what is wholesome. [31]

1. Skilful Desire ('Dharmachanda')

Because in the past I lacked dharmachanda – enthusiastic desire for the good - I find myself in saṃsāra now. Śākyamuni has sung that dharma-chanda is the root of all virtue, and the root of dharmachanda is reflecting on the results of karma. [39, 40]

Suffering, depression, fear and obstacles beset those who act unskilfully. But the heart of the man who does good brims over with joy, and he is welcomed wherever he goes. The man who does evil also craves appreciation, but wherever he goes his vices destroy his happiness. [41, 42]

The skilful man will dwell in the heart of an expansive, fragrant, cool Lotus, his vitality and splendour nourished by the sweet voice of the Buddha. His beautiful body, born with the other Bodhisattvas in the presence of the Sugata will unfold amid the light of the Sage. [44]

The unskilful man will scream in agony as his skin is torn away by the Lord of Death. His body is immersed in molten copper, chunks of his flesh are hacked away by blazing swords, and again and again he falls onto the red-hot pavement of iron. [45]

So meditate on this carefully, nurturing Dharma-chanda, and cultivating it with reverence. Then one should develop skilful pride and self-confidence. [46]

2. Self-confidence and skilful pride

Before taking on any task, practice, or responsibility, we should first think carefully about the implications, then either commit firmly to it, or not take it on. Not starting is better than turning back. Otherwise the habit of giving up is

established, and continues even into the next life, causing much suffering and failure. [47, 48]

A crow acts like an eagle when attacking a dead snake. If our mind is weak, even small difficulties bring it down. Defeatism makes us passive, and then it is easy for difficulties to overwhelm us. But if we are vigorous and energetic, even catastrophes can't bring us down. [52, 53]

So we should firm up our minds, and make it difficult for difficulties to beat us. As long as difficulties beat us, our wish to beat Samsāra is a joke. We must be the ones who conquer problems and defilements, not letting anything conquer us. This skilful pride should be embedded in our heart, because we are sons and daughters of the Buddha, the lion-like conqueror. [54, 55]

Those who are conquered by arrogance have no real pride at all. A person who has skilful pride is never enslaved, but arrogant folk are enslaved by their enemy, unskilful pride. [56]

Those who, though mocked and tortured by the arrogant, remain upright, sustained by skilful pride, they are the heroes, they win a victory over unskilful pride, and give away the fruits of victory to all beings. [58.59]

Surrounded and mocked by the defilements, we should be a thousand times more hotly proud, like a lion in a herd of deer. [60]

3. Joy

We should be completely focussed on the task in hand, intoxicated by it, thirsting for it, like someone making love, or trying to win a game. Ordinary folk can't get enough of sensual pleasures, which are like honey on a razor's edge. How can we get enough of honeyed acts of merit, which bring such a sweet result? So, as soon as we finish one task, we should plunge into the next, like an elephant, scorched by the midday sun, plunging into a pool. [62-65]

4. Letting go, or rest

When our energy begins to flag, we should put our task aside, in order to re-engage with it later. When the job is completely finished, we should leave it and look eagerly for the next, and then the next. [66]

Conclusion: vigorous mindfulness

We should always be on the lookout for attacks from the kleśas, and attack them back fiercely, as if we were in a duel with a well-trained enemy. If ever we drop our sword, we must pick it up again quickly. [67, 68]

Someone who has undertaken the Bodhisattva Vow should be like someone carrying a jar of oil, watched by a swordsman who will kill him if he spills a drop. If we feel ourselves getting lazy or lethargic, we should act at once to restore our alertness, as we would jump up if a snake slid into our lap. [70, 71]

As cotton is blown about by the wind, we should be blown along by our enthusiastic desire to practice the Dharma. In this way, our spiritual power will grow strong. [75]

Week 7, Chapter 8: The Practice of Meditation

Why practice meditation?

While practicing vīrya we should stabilise our mind in meditation, since if our mind is distracted we are constantly at the mercy of the kleśas. [1]

Conditions needed for success in meditation

We can be free from distraction if we practice external and internal viveka, keeping our body in solitude and our mind in detachment. [2]

Our attachments and our desire for possessions, are what stop us experiencing viveka. So anyone with any sense will renounce these things by reflecting like this: “I know that śamatha leads to insight, and that insight destroys all mental suffering, so the first thing I need to do is to seek the conditions for śamatha, which are solitude and detachment.” [3, 4]

Hindrances to viveka: attachment to people

(a) Attachment to loved ones

Does it make any sense for me, an impermanent being, to be attached to other impermanent people, knowing I may not see them again for thousands of lifetimes? When a loved one is away, we feel sad and can't concentrate in meditation. When they are with us this doesn't make us happy. Because of attachment to a transient loved one, our life swiftly passes in vain, and we lose our opportunity to practise the enduring Dharma. [5, 6, 8]

(b) Attachment to worldly company

If we act in the same way as foolish worldly people we will go to a bad re-becoming, and if we are different from them they hate us. One moment they are friends, the next they are enemies. They get angry when they are given good advice, and they get angry when we don't take their bad advice. There is no pleasing foolish worldly people. [9-11]

They are jealous of their superiors, competitive with their peers, and arrogant towards their inferiors. Praise makes them puffed up, and criticism makes them angry. They are always complaining, trying to make themselves look good, or trying to get their own way. A worldly fool can't be a friend to anyone, because he is only happy when he is getting what he wants for himself. [12, 13, 24]

Contact with worldly people is harmful, so we should be happy to spend time alone, with an untroubled mind. We should be pleasant and helpful to worldly folk, kind but detached, and not get too involved with them. [14, 15]

Hindrances to viveka: desire for wealth and possessions

We might think, “I am rich and respected, and people like me.” But this won’t do us any good when death arrives. Many have become wealthy and famous, but where have they gone with their wealth and fame? [20]

Wealth is a misfortune, because of the trouble it takes to earn it, the anxiety of protecting it, and the misery of losing it. Those whose minds are attached to wealth are always distracted, and they have no opportunity for liberation from saṃsāra. [79]

Hindrances to viveka: Desire for sensory pleasures – especially sex

Whenever the mind is deluded about the source of happiness and looks for it in sensory pleasures, what we get is suffering. So a wise person does not desire sensory pleasure. Desire for pleasure creates fear and anxiety, but the sensations we crave pass in an instant and are gone. [18, 19]

She you schemed to meet up with over and over again, willing to be unskilful, to make a fool of yourself, and to waste your wealth, she who you embrace with the utmost pleasure, her body is just a bundle of bones, tied together by sinews, and plastered with flesh like a statue plastered with clay. Why don’t you cuddle up to some bones instead? [43, 52]

That face you longed so much to see when it was bashfully lowered or covered by a veil, why don’t you want to see it when its real nature is unveiled by the vultures? But of course it’s not surprising that you refuse to see the truth about her body, when you won’t even face the truth about your own. In fact the only point of this body is the pure lotus that grows out of the muck to blossom in the cloudless sun. [44, 45, 56, 57]

Deluded by sensory desires, people sell themselves into slavery, spending their whole lives working for others, collapsing each evening exhausted by a hard day’s work. They get much pain and little enjoyment, like a beast that gets to chew a bit of grass while pulling a wagon, and the enjoyment they do get is the sort even an animal can get easily. They spend their youth and prime earning money – and then what can an old man do with the pleasures of the flesh? In this way they waste this precious opportunity. They could gain Buddhahood with just a fraction of the effort. [72, 75, 80, 81, 83]

The fruits of viveka: śamatha meditation

So we should recoil from sensual desires, and cultivate delight in detachment and solitude. We should join the fortunate ones who pace slowly over pleasant flat rock surfaces, spacious as palaces, under the cool rays of the moon, caressed by gentle forest breezes, meditating for the wellbeing of others. Passing the time as they please, sleeping in an empty house, at the foot of a tree, or in a cave, free from the exhaustion of looking after a household, free of care, not tied down by

anything, they taste a joy and contentment that is hard to find, even for a king.
[85-87]

The fruits of viveka: Insight into non-selfhood

When we have calmed our distracted minds by detachment from worldly desires and the experience of solitude, we should then meditate to develop the Bodhicitta. First we should meditate intently on the equality of self and others, thinking, “We are all the same, we all feel the same suffering and happiness, so I should look after others as I look after myself. Just as I love and cherish my body, which is divided into many limbs, so I should love and cherish this whole world, which is divided into many beings.” [89-91]

“I should dispel the suffering of others, because it is suffering like my own suffering. I should help others because they are living beings, as I am a living being. When we all want happiness, and all fear suffering, what is so special about me, that I only look after myself?” [94-96]

“This stream of mental moments I call my mind, these ever-changing elements I call my body, are not some separate thing that exists in its own right. So who is this separate person, that someone’s suffering belongs to? Suffering is just suffering, it has no owner. I should relieve it, just because it is suffering.” [101,102]

Those who have developed their mind in this way, who feel this joy in releasing others, they are the ones who are truly fulfilled. What is the point in some cold liberation, just for oneself alone? [107, 108]

Whoever longs to quickly save themselves and others should practise this supreme mystery: exchanging self and other. All the suffering in the world comes from obsession with ourselves. All the joy in the world comes from wanting others to be happy. Why say more? The fool looks out for his own benefit. The sage acts for the benefit of all. Just look at the difference between them! [120,129,130]

So, to cure my own suffering, as well as the suffering of others, I devote myself to others, and will see them as myself. From now onwards the welfare of all beings is my concern. These limbs and this body belong to all beings. It would be wrong to use them just for myself. [136-138]

Practical Insight: exchanging self and other

Having devoted ourselves to others in this way, we should meditate on putting ourselves in others’ shoes. For example, we might imagine that we are someone who we think is inferior to us, seeing ourselves through their eyes, and experiencing the envy and pride they might experience. [139,140]

“He is respected; I’m not. He is wealthy; I’m not. He gets the praise, I get the criticism. He is happy. I suffer. I do the chores while he takes his ease. He, it seems, is an important person. I, it seems, am inferior. Maybe I have got some

failings, but I didn't make myself the way I am. If he's so spiritual, he should be trying to help me to develop – I'm up for that, even if it is painful. Instead, see how he looks down his nose at me! He has no compassion for someone threatened with a bad rebirth. He cares more about competing with others like himself, trying to get even more wealth and honour.” We should also extend this exercise of putting ourselves in others' shoes to people who are seen as our equals and our superiors. [141-154]

In this way we should practice exchanging ourselves with others, seeing ourselves through their eyes, involving ourselves in their suffering, feeling the pain we cause them through our unskillfulness. Pull yourself off your pedestal. Point to yourself and say: “Look at him! When does he actually do anything for others? He's a complete fraud!” [160,161,165]

Conclusion

So enough of worldly concerns! I shall follow the sages, concentrating my mind in meditation, tearing down the obscuring veil!

***Week 8, Chapter 9: The Pāramitā of Wisdom, Dedication of Merits
(Chapter 10)***

The fundamental importance of wisdom

The Buddha taught this whole system of practice to help us develop wisdom. Wisdom is the only ultimate and permanent cure for suffering. [1]

Conventional and ultimate truth

There are two kinds of truth, conventional and ultimate. Ultimate reality is beyond the scope of the intellect. The concepts of the intellect belong to the realm of conventional truth. [2]

In the light of this we can see that there are two types of people: the spiritually developed, who have some direct insight into ultimate reality, and the spiritually undeveloped, whose opinions are entirely based on conventional truth. The opinions and worldview of the spiritually undeveloped are superseded by those of the spiritually developed. [3]

Even the views of the spiritually developed are superseded by the vision of those at a higher level. The only way that those at a higher spiritual level can communicate their vision of reality to someone at a lower level is by the use of analogies. [4]

Ordinary people imagine that the things they see around them have innate intrinsic existence, rather than seeing them as illusions. This is the fundamental difference between ordinary folk and the spiritually developed. [5]

Even the objects of direct perception, such as visible forms, are only held to exist as entities in their own right by popular consensus, and not by any valid means of knowing. In fact this popular consensus is wrong, like the popular consensus that sees many undesirable things as desirable. [6]

Lack of self-nature in beings

Just as the trunk of a banana tree is shown to be empty of real existence when it is broken down into its separate parts, in the same way we see that the ‘I’ is not a real entity when we hunt for it by analysis. [74]

(a) The body

The teeth, hair or nails are not ‘I’, nor are the bones, blood, mucus, pus or lymph. Marrow is not ‘I’, not are the sweat, fat, entrails, excrement or urine. The flesh is not ‘I’, nor the sinews, nor any of the changing elements that make up the body. Even these constituents can be analysed down to atoms, then these atoms too can be broken down, until we are just left with empty space. [57-59, 86]

The body is not in its parts, nor does it exist separately from its parts. Who, analysing the body like this, would take delight in a form that is like a dream? [86, 87]

(b) The mind

The sense fields are not 'I', nor is the ego consciousness. Sense impressions are dependent on the objects that cause them, and the ego consciousness depends on sense impressions. [59-62]

The past mind and the future mind can't be 'I', because they don't exist. But if the present mind is 'I', then the so-called 'self' vanishes as soon as the present moment of consciousness has passed. In fact the sense of a continuous 'self' is an illusion caused by memory – what happened earlier in time is remembered by what arose later, but this does not mean that the earlier and later 'selves' are the same. [73,100]

The mind is not located in the sense faculties, nor in the objects it perceives, nor in between them. It is not found inside the body, nor outside it, nor anywhere else. The mind is nothing. Therefore sentient beings are by nature liberated. [102,103]

Objections to lack of self-nature in beings

Some people might argue that if a sentient being is like an illusion, lacking self-nature, then the idea of rebirth does not make sense. But an illusion lasts for as long as the concurrence of conditions that keep it in existence. Just because the continuum of mental states that we call a person lasts a long time, this does not mean that this person has an independent, inherent existence. [9, 10]

Again, some people argue that if there is no self then the law of karma is invalidated, because the doer of an action and the experiencer of the result are not the same 'self'. But the one who provides the cause and the one who experiences the results are linked by a continuity of consciousness – there is no need to assume some permanent, independently existing 'self' for karma to operate. [70-72]

Śūnyatā

The existence of any phenomenon depends on a complex set of causes. Nothing exists separately from its causes, and the constantly changing phenomena of the conditioned world have no continuous identity – the past cause and the future effect are not the same 'thing', any more than rice and dung are the same thing! [135,141,142]

How can there be real existence in something that is just a temporary artificial construct, like a reflection, which is only seen in dependence on other things, and has no existence of its own? What fools take to be real is in fact an illusion. All the states of conditioned existence are like dreams, having as much reality as the trunk of a banana tree, and the beings who are born and die here are the same. [144,150]

The benefits of a vision of śūnyatā

The concept of śūnyatā frees us from bondage to conditioned phenomena, and then we are liberated even from śūnyatā by realising that this itself does not really exist. When the mind grasps at no objects, neither as truly existing entities nor as non-entities, then it becomes tranquil. Without śūnyatā the mind is fettered and becomes trapped in cycles of continual re-arising. [32, 34, 48]

We are able to remain in saṃsāra for the benefit of suffering beings by freeing ourselves from the two extremes of attachment and fear. This is the fruit of realising śūnyatā. Śūnyatā is the antidote to wrong views, and the antidote to the kleśas. As long as there is an 'I', fear is all around us. But when we see that there is no 'I', who is there to be afraid? In view of this, there can be no real objection to the vision of śūnyatā. We should meditate on it without doubts or fears. [52-54, 56]

Yet my fellow humans do not see that everything is empty and open like space. Mesmerised by conditioned phenomena, one minute they are angry and the next they are celebrating. They are tormented by grief, worry and despair. Constantly seeking their own happiness, they behave in unskilful ways, harming each other, and causing suffering to themselves and others. [154,155]

Longing for the Unconditioned – for self and others

Reality could not be like this. Here, strength is meagre, and life is short. Here, because of concerns for livelihood and health, we pass our time in hunger, fatigue, and endless troubles. Here, life passes quickly and pointlessly, solitude is hard to find, and distraction is unavoidable. Here, there are many false paths, and doubt is hard to overcome. [157-161]

Oh the miserable condition of beings who stay in this ocean of suffering, but do not even see their own wretched state! Like someone who dowses himself with water over and over again, in order to enter a fire over and over again, they think they are happy, when really they are suffering. [163,164]

How soon will I be able to give some relief to these beings? How soon will I be able to teach śūnyatā and the accumulation of merit, both by means of conventional truth and ultimate truth, to these beings whose views are based on illusions? [166,167]

Chapter 10: Dedication

By the virtue I have gained through turning my mind to the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, may all people set foot on the path to Awakening.

Through my merit may all beings who are suffering, in body or mind, all find happiness.

May the fearful find courage, may the anxious be calmed, and may those in sorrow find joy. May the sick be well, and the weak be strong. May all beings have a tender mind towards each other.

May Gods protect the young and the old, the intoxicated, the foolish, and all those in danger.

May the rains come at the proper time, and the crops flourish. May the people prosper, and may the rulers be virtuous.

May the monasteries be well appointed, humming with mantras and study. May the Sangha stay united, and succeed in its purpose. May practitioners find solitude for meditation, and take pleasure in their precepts. May their minds be undistracted, and may they experience the bliss of the dhyānas.

May the ethics of the Sangha be unbroken. May those who are unskilful see the need to change. May they delight in ending their evil actions, and may they achieve a good rebirth.

May the Sangha be learned and cultured, and may they receive support and donations.

May the Buddhas dispensation long endure, this only cure for the illness of the world, this jewel mine of happiness and success, and may it be supported and honoured.

Through my connection with Mañjuḥṣa, in all my lives may I enter the Sangha, may I find the conditions for meditation, and may I be taught and advised by Mañjuḥṣa himself.

May I emulate Mañjuśrī, who works for the welfare of all beings. As long as space abides and as long as the world abides, so long may I abide, destroying the sufferings of the world.

By the merit I have gained, may all beings desist from evil deeds, and all act skilfully. May they always be possessed by the Bodhicitta, treading the path to awakening. May they be adopted by the Buddha's, may they find the Sangha, and may they be immune to Mara's tricks.

May all beings have infinite life. May every place become a place of delight, made of jewels and light, with gardens of magical trees, teeming with Buddhas. May the

enthraling sound of the Dharma be sung by the birds in the air, by every tree, by every ray of light, and by the blue dome of the sky. May the world be a great mandala of Bodhisattvas, each illuminating the world with their own radiant colour.

May the universe attain Buddhahood in a single, divine body.

I bow down to Mañjuḥṣa, the supreme spiritual friend, through whose inspiration my mind turns to the good and becomes strong.