



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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Proving the Benefits by Reasoning
1st Chapter, Stanza 21-26

BA15: Proving the Benefits by Reasoning. Chapter 1, Stanza 21-26
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Photo: Jet Mort

So now we come to the twenty-first stanza of the first chapter of *Bodhicharyavatara*.

I'm sorry that I was not in station and had no access to the internet for a while because I had to go to Varanasi and Siliguri for the conferences and things like that, so I'm sorry for the break.

We come to the twenty-first stanza. Now here we start with, separately, the different values or the importance of generating the aspiration bodhichitta and the action bodhichitta. First we start with the aspiration bodhichitta and this is through reasoning. It says:

*“If with kindly generosity
One merely has the wish to soothe
The aching heads of other beings,
Such merit knows no bounds”.*

Now this is very, very important because sometimes, in the Buddhist world, people think that if they make offerings to the Buddha that is the most powerful blessing, the most powerful result, the most powerful, positive thing, for the Buddha dharma and sangha and things like that, so they make all sorts of things. But, what Buddha really said is different. I mean, it's understood all the time. Everybody who actually does have some understanding of Buddhism understands this. But many people who do not have access to the teachings of the Buddha have not this information.

Buddha said again and again very clearly that of course, to make an offering—to an arhat, to the sangha, to the Buddha—is very powerful, is a very positive thing to do. It brings lots of positive merit, positive karma and things like that. But he said that there is actually nothing to compare with the intention to help people in distress, in need.

He said [it] in this way: if you make an offering to Buddha that is really very, very powerful and very positive – even a little bit. He gives the story of Ashoka. He predicted the great King Ashoka of India. He said that Ashoka, the king Ashoka, the great ruler and one of the best emperors of the world, because many years before, many lives before when Buddha Sakyamuni was there, he [the future Ashoka] was a very small child. When the Buddha came he became very inspired by the Buddha. He just took a handful of sand from the street and then offered it into his begging bowl. So when he did that the Buddha accepted it very graciously and then he said, “Now this is very precious because this is offered with good intention by this child. So therefore, this should be made into a kind of stupa. So that he, after a few lifetimes, will become a great emperor and then he will make one-million stupas all over the world.”

And like that, even to make an offering to the Buddha with good intention, with pure mind, even a handful of sand brings that great kind of positive [result].

Then he said that even if you offer great things, so many precious things, then how powerful that

would be. And then he that even if you made the greatest offering possible offered the whole universe to a Buddha, how great that would be. And the people said, “Of course, that would be great.” He said that if you make that to all Buddhas there may be thousand and thousands and millions of Buddhas all over the universe and therefore if you make the best offering of all the best things in the whole world or universe to all the Buddhas for all the time, how much great benefit, how positive that would be.

Then everybody said, “That’s unimaginable, that’s too great. That you can’t imagine.”

Then Buddha said, “Compared to that, if you just wish that somebody, a sentient being, is suffering from a headache and with genuine compassion, a genuine kindness, you really wish that this this simple, samsaric person be freed from the headache, really you genuinely wish that, aspire for that,” he said, “what do you think in comparison to make that offering to the Buddhas, which will be better?” He said, “There is no comparison. To wish a person, a samsaric person, to be freed from a headache with genuine kindness and compassion, is a hundred thousand million times more powerful, has a more positive result and is a more positive deed, than to make the offering to all the Buddhas, all the time with the best [offerings].” So therefore, this much is the power of compassion according to Buddha.

So therefore, if that, that you wish one person to be free from suffering—just a headache—is so powerful, then we can imagine how much [more] powerful it would be if we wish **all** the sentient beings to be free from **all** their suffering for **all** the time. And if that becomes a real aspiration and a real wish how powerful that would be. This is from the point of view of the teachings of the Buddha himself.

And then [Shantideva] says:

*“No need to speak, then, of the wish
To drive away the endless pain
Of each and every living being,
Bringing them unbounded excellence.”*

[Stanza 22]

So this says the same thing: if that much for just wishing to be freed from a headache on one person, then, if you wish **all** the beings to be free from **all** kinds of suffering and pain and problems – not just that they, as aspiration of bodhichitta doesn't wish that people be freed from suffering only, but the aspiration of bodhichitta is to bring them the most unbounded excellence, the best thing, to happen to them. So therefore, it is something extremely great, extremely rare, and extremely extraordinary.

So it leads to the next stanza, stanza 23:

*“Could our father or our mother
Ever have so generous a wish?
Do the very gods, the rishis, even Brahma
Harbor such benevolence as this?”*

You know, the father and mother usually wish the best for their children. It is usually said, “There’s only one person in the world who wishes you to become better than themselves: and they are your parents.” Nobody wants somebody else to become better than themselves; but parents wish their children to become better than themselves. So that much good wish the parents have for the child. But even parents, do they really feel that they wish their children to be free from all the sufferings and all the pain or for all the time in every future, and then they [can] have their lasting peace and happiness all the time? Do they know how to wish that way? They will think that, “Oh, if he has a good job or a good partner or become wealthy it would become very good.” They can wish those things, or she doesn’t know how to wish this much. If you look into the prayers, into the texts written by the great masters, wishes of others all over the world, you don’t find this kind of wish that I wish all the beings to be freed from all the sufferings and that they become completely happy, the most excellent well-being all the time. These kinds of things you can’t find. You read any kind of books, you read even novels, even dreams and even wishing prayers, how many you see that are wishing in this way. So it is something that people cannot even dream.

So therefore, it continues:

*“For in the past they never,
Even in their dreams,
Wished something like this even for themselves.
How could they do so for another’s sake?”*

Because people do not even know how to wish or how to dream for themselves. You look into the dreams of the people, expressed in autobiographies or stories or things like that, and then you might [think] whether anybody might have wished in that way, whether anybody had dreamed that I would like to bring all the beings to be totally free from suffering and bring them their lasting peace and happiness for all the time, each and every being without excluding anybody. Has anybody expressed in this way? It is not even found very frequently where people could even dream like this.

Therefore, the bodhichitta is something extremely special, extremely rare, extremely beneficial, benevolent and unlimited. It is very powerful because once one can have these wishes, a strong dream, a strong wish, and then we start to find out how to work on that. In order to start working on something we need to first be able to imagine, able to dream, able to wish, able to aspire.

Therefore, this aspiration is the beginning, is the first step, the most important. It’s not to say that aspiration is enough. It’s not enough, but if aspiration is strong then the action automatically follows.

Even at this moment if we have nothing else, we do not have much action, we cannot somehow know how to perform actions, but if we just have a little bit of intention, aspiration, even **that** is very important, very good and very positive.

This is important to understand because everything has to start with the first step. Nobody can start from the end or from the middle. Therefore, the beginning is most important because that is where the seed is sown. For instance, if you want to grow a tree or a flower, firstly, sowing the seed is important, sowing the seed is simple. The seed is small. But without sowing that seed nothing can happen. Therefore, to have this aspiration is extremely important. You cannot look down on just having a good heart or just having a good intention even if you cannot do much more

than having an aspiration, even just a momentary aspiration, because you have now a momentary aspiration and then maybe it's gone but then at least you had this momentary aspiration and then it will come back again and then maybe it becomes more and more frequent, it becomes a little bit stronger and then it grows and grows and then it grows into action. Aspiration is not something to be looked down. It is the most important thing, the most marvellous thing. The most marvellous thing is that it is possible for people to have this kind of compassion—limitless compassion—because that's the root, that's the root cause of all positive things. If people can have that bodhichitta aspiration, compassion, or kindness, then that can grow into buddhahood, that can grow into the transforming of yourself because when you are full of compassion then wisdom will naturally arise and then that can start to transform the whole universe also, in the long run. Therefore, it's the most important and very, very positive thing.

Maybe I'll just go to the next two stanzas because it comes to the same thing, it's not something different. Twenty-five:

*"This aim to bring the benefit of beings,
A benefit that others wish not even for themselves,
This noble, jewellike state of mind
Arises truly wondrous, never seen before."*

It's so special and so wonderful.

*"This pain-dispelling draft,
This cause of joy for those who wander through the world,
This precious attitude, this jewel of mind—
How shall we calculate its merit?"*

[Stanza 26]

Therefore, this is like the bodhichitta, the aspiration is like a pain-dispelling draft, a draft that whoever is touched by that draft, all the pains are gone. It's something like that. Once bodhichitta is arisen in you then you become transformed, and then when you become transformed naturally it kind of influences other people and you work for the benefit of other people and other people

also [have] influence. Therefore, this is the only thing that really, eventually helps to bring lasting peace and happiness to yourself and to other beings. It's like a pain-dispelling draft. The precious attitude is like the jewel of mind, the best of mind, the best attitude or thinking.

Therefore, how can we calculate how much positiveness is there in attitude, how can we calculate? It's beyond calculation, the merit or the positive deed, the virtue that it brings, the positive result it brings is beyond calculation so therefore it is so important and so precious, and we need to know this and we need to appreciate this. We need to appreciate even if a little bit of aspiration of bodhichitta arises in us.

So this was the twenty-sixth verse; but this all comes to the same thing and we have been discussing this before also and therefore it's nothing that one doesn't understand.

Thank you very much.

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