



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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***Diligence and Precious Human Life***  
***4th Chapter, Stanzas 12-20***

BA4\_12-20 *Diligence and Precious Human Life*

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Now we come to the second point [which is about] how I should protect the bodhichitta or bodhisattva's way of life, by reminding myself that I should not degenerate my endeavors or my diligence in working on it.

Now this starts from the second half of the 12th stanza of this chapter and it continues through the 13th and 14th.

So it says:

*From this day forth, if I now fail to strive,  
I'll fall from low to even lower states [12]*

So therefore from [now] I need to start to work, start to practice, start to train myself now - today. And if I do not do that, if I fail to do that, if I fail to work diligently or strive on it, then I would have broken my promise to the Buddhas and to all the sentient beings that I will work for their benefit. And somebody who has broken their word, they've broken their promise, then he's not a good

person, he has done a very negative deed, an evil deed. So therefore I would have to fall - I fall down from this human realm to the next lower realm and then I might go lower and lower because I have done something very negative. And so therefore it's very difficult and it will be very harmful for myself, harmful for others - so therefore I should not do it, but take it up really diligently.

The second thing said about this is in the 13<sup>th</sup> stanza:

*Striving for the benefit of all that lives,  
Unnumbered Buddhas have already lived and passed away,  
But I, by virtue of my sins, have failed  
To come within the compass of their healing works.*

So if I [think] that even if I do not train myself in the bodhisattva's way and do not train in the promises that I have made, there are a lot of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and they will come and help me - if I [think] like that - it says that will not necessarily happen. That is because so many Buddhas, unnumbered Buddhas, countless Buddhas have already lived in the worlds in samsara, and then they passed away - and the Buddhas have always strived, are always striving - always working for the benefit of all the beings without any distinction. But if I do not have the right kind of karma, the right kind of virtues, the right kind of circumstances, then I would not be able to come even near those Buddhas. And because of my own negative deeds, because of my own negative states of mind, my own sins - here it says 'sins' which are negative - I have for so long been unable to come near the Buddhas, could not see Buddhas, could not meet Buddhas, could not get near the healing works of the Buddhas - and so therefore if I break these bodhisattva vows and do not really work on them then I cannot expect the Buddhas to come and liberate me.

And then stanza number 14:

*And this will always be my lot  
If I continue to behave like this,  
And I will suffer pains and bondage,  
Wounds and laceration in the lower realms.*

So up till now I have not been able to come within the range of the healing works of the Buddhas - I could not see Buddhas, I cannot be with Buddhas - and if I don't work now when I have the chance and I have the opportunity and I know how to then it will be the same [again] in the future - I will continue to be like this, if I continue to behave like this - without doing anything positive - then I will continue to be the same way as before and I will suffer. I'll suffer the pains of bondage, pains of wounds and laceration, the lower realms of hells, and hungry ghosts and animals and things like that. So therefore I really need to think about that and really need to work – this means that this is the right opportunity. When I have this opportunity, I must seize this opportunity, and really work on it. And first we have to see whether this thing I want to do is good or not - is something beneficial or not - if there is anything really negative or harmful about it to myself and others. When I see that there is absolutely nothing harmful, there is absolutely nothing negative for me and nothing harmful to others, and it's only beneficial, beneficial for myself, beneficial for others, then I must do it - take it up. I must do it. I cannot delay it. I cannot say that I'll do it tomorrow or the next day, or when I have time, or when I retire, or things like that because then - that time might never come. You never know. So therefore, it's extremely important to act on time - right at this moment.

Then the next [stanza] is about [considering this] precious human life - and because of that trying to be more careful or heedful.

There are three things: first to contemplate how difficult it is to get this opportunity of a precious human life. Secondly to think and reflect on how difficult it is to free yourself from very negative realms. And thirdly that when we have these great circumstances and conditions - positive conditions - then we must actually diligently work, and be very careful and heedful in practicing the things that will bring more and more benefit to ourselves and others.

So the first one - to think about how difficult it is to get a precious human life - it starts from stanza number 15:

*The appearance of the Buddhas in the world,  
True faith and the attainment of a human form,  
An aptitude for good: all these are rare.*

*When will they come to me again?*

So to have Buddhas coming and having their teachings still remaining - and there are still those instructions not forgotten or not lost - that is very rare. There's something precious. And even if those things are there, to have for myself a certain kind of interest - having interest and faith in that - is very difficult. And when I am having that then [as well] to have a precious human form where I can understand what is good, what is not good, and the freedom to practice that - freedom to work for the benefit of myself and others physically, intellectually and emotionally - and also to have the aptitude of 'for good' - an aptitude to do something good for myself and others - all these are very rare, not easy to get. If we look in all the life forms then we will understand how rare this is. So therefore if I lose this chance, or this opportunity, now, as a human being, then I cannot say, I cannot be sure when these kinds of opportunities will come to me again. So therefore it is very important to take this opportunity.

*Today, indeed, I'm hale and well,  
I have enough to eat and I am not in danger.  
But this life is fleeting, unreliable,  
My body is like something briefly lent. [16]*

But if I say that, 'Okay, yeah - it is important to do something positive - to train myself on the path, but I'll do it later on - at the moment, I have to do my other things,' If I [tend to] think like that, then I must also understand, I must think, reflect like this - that today, I am healthy, I am powerful, I am strong, I am well, and I have enough to eat, and I have no particular danger for life and for all these things. But who knows? Life is fleeting. If I am not sick that doesn't mean I won't die soon. If I am young that doesn't guarantee that I will not die soon. So therefore life is unreliable. There are lots of healthy people who have died. There's lots of young people who have died. So therefore for my body there is no certainty - there is no assurance. My body is like something that I have borrowed for a short while. Nobody can say when it will be taken back. So therefore:

*And yet the way I act is such  
That I shall not regain a human life!*

*And losing this, my precious human form,  
My evils will be many, virtues, none. [17]*

So I have this uncertainty. I know that this life is uncertain but still I don't do [solely] positive things. I don't train or act in such a way that I will be doing lots of virtuous things and improving my positive deeds - but I do all kind of useless things, negative things and unnecessary things. So that it looks like if I die in this situation I may not be able to get this kind of precious human life again. And losing this, my precious human form, my evils will be many, virtues, none. And if I lose this human form and if I don't get it back then there will be lots of negative things. And there is nothing really positive.

*Here is now my chance for wholesome deeds,  
But if I fail to practice virtue  
What will be my lot, what shall I do,  
Bewildered by the sorrows of the lower realms? [18]*

*Never, there, performing any virtue,  
Only ever piling up my sins,  
And for a hundred million ages,  
I'll not even hear of happy destinies. [19]*

*This is why Lord Buddha has declared  
That like a turtle that perchance can place  
Its head within a yoke adrift upon the mighty sea  
This human birth is difficult to find! [20]*

So therefore I don't think I need to explain these [stanzas] very much because we already went through these kind of understandings or talked about these kind of things before - how difficult to get a human life, how many positive things - how many right circumstances have to come together

- to have this kind of life with all these powers and right conditions.

The Buddha said that it is the same as if there was a turtle, a blind turtle, at the bottom of the sea and it comes to the surface of the sea only once in a hundred years. And there is a yoke, a wooden kind of yoke, which is floating on the sea - and the sea is so wave [ridden that] it's carried away to all four corners of the world. And then when the turtle comes up to the surface the yoke comes [around] the neck of the turtle at the same [instant]. How difficult that chance would be! The Buddha said that to get the precious human life that we have now would be of similar difficulty, or similar percentage of chances. So if that is the case then we must really know it and appreciate this opportunity and we must take advantage of this opportunity.

So this is just to say - I don't think it is exactly like this - but to say how difficult it is to have all these positive conditions that we have now. So therefore in this state we must decide to really do something that's worthwhile, that's useful, that's beneficial. We cannot just waste our life doing nothing, or doing something bad, or just feeling bad and sad and complaining and things like that. But really take up something really positive and train ourselves on the bodhisattva's way of life. Really work towards our own liberation and the liberation of others - helping ourselves and helping others. So I think we will stop here at stanza number 20 - we went through stanzas 12 to 20. Thank you.

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