

## **Translation of Ch. 1 of the Bodhisattvacaryavatara by Andreas Kretschmar**

[0] In the Indian language: *Bodhisatva-caryāvatāra*705

In the Tibetan language: byang-chub-sems-dpa'i-spyod-pa-la-'jug-pa (*Entering the Conduct of the Bodhisattvas*)

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

[1] To the sugatas, who are endowed with the dharmakāya, together with their sons, and  
To all who are worthy of veneration, I respectfully pay homage. That done,  
In accordance with the scriptures, I will briefly explain  
Entering into the precepts of the sons of the sugatas.

[2] I can say nothing here that has not already been said before,  
And I possess no skill in prosody.  
Hence, I would not even imagine that this might benefit others;  
I wrote it only to cultivate (bodhicitta) within my own mind.

[3] Through these (compositions) may the power of my faith  
Increase for awhile so that I may cultivate virtue.  
Still, if by chance others equal in fortune to myself view these,  
Some benefit might ensue.

[4] These freedoms and advantages are extremely difficult to obtain.  
Since I have gained (the opportunity) to accomplish that which is meaningful for a  
person,  
If I do not practice what is beneficial in this (lifetime),  
How will a perfect opportunity like this come about later?

[5] Just as a flash of lightning amidst cloudbanks in the pitch black darkness of night  
Reveals, for an instant, brightly illuminated (shapes),  
In the same way, occasionally, through the might of the Buddha,  
A meritorious thought arises briefly in (the minds of) worldly people.

[6] Hence, virtue is feeble while at all times  
The great power of negativity is utterly unbearable.  
Except for perfect bodhicitta  
What other virtues could overcome (this negativity)?

[7] The mighty munis, who have contemplated for many aeons,  
Have seen that this (bodhicitta) is beneficial  
Because it causes unfathomable masses of beings  
To attain supreme bliss easily.

[8] Those who wish to overcome the hundreds of sufferings of existence,  
Those who wish to remove the unhappiness of beings,

And those who wish them to enjoy multitudinous (forms of) bliss  
Should never forsake bodhicitta.

[9] Once this bodhicitta has taken birth, in that (very) instant,  
(Even) those who were captured in the prison of saṃsāra  
Will be called ‘sons of the sugatas’  
And will be revered by (all) the world, including gods and men.

[10] (Bodhicitta) is just like the supreme kind of alchemical elixir,  
For it transforms this impure body we have taken  
Into the priceless jewel of the Victor’s body.  
Therefore, very firmly seize (this elixir) called bodhicitta!

[11] Since the immeasurable mind of the Sole Guide of Beings  
(Saw) its great value when he thoroughly examined it,  
(All) those who wish to be free from the realms of beings  
Should firmly take hold of this precious bodhicitta in an excellent manner.

[12] All other virtues are like plantain trees;  
After coming to fruition they (simply) cease to be.  
But the tree of bodhicitta constantly  
Gives fruit and increases unceasingly.

[13] Although I have committed the most unbearable negative deeds,  
By entrusting myself to (bodhicitta), I shall be instantaneously liberated,  
Just as (one will be liberated from) great fear by entrusting oneself to a hero.  
Why do the ignorant not devote themselves to this?

[14] Just like the fire at the end of an aeon, this (bodhicitta)  
Definitely consumes in one instant (even) great negative deeds.  
The wise Maitreyaṅātha taught  
Its unfathomable benefits to Sudhana.

[15] In brief, this bodhicitta  
Should be understood to have two aspects:  
The mind that aspires to enlightenment,  
And (the mind) that enters into (the conduct of) enlightenment.

[16] Just as one understands the distinction between  
Aspiring to go and (actually) going,  
In the same way the wise ones should understand  
The distinction between these two in their progressive order.

[17] From the bodhicitta of aspiration,  
Great fruits arise while still circling (in saṃsāra),  
And yet, it does not have the unceasing stream of merit  
As does the bodhicitta of application.

[18] From the point of time  
When one has genuinely adopted this bodhicitta,  
In order to free infinite realms of beings

With a resolve from which one does not turn away,

[19] From that moment on,  
Even while asleep or inattentive,  
An uninterrupted and multifarious force of merit  
Arises, equal to the sky.

[20] This (presence of benefits) together with (four) reasons  
Is what the Tathāgata himself explained  
In (the sūtra) requested by Subāhu  
For the benefit of those inclined toward the lesser (paths).

[21] If a person with a helpful intention  
Thinks, “I shall merely relieve  
The headaches of (a few) beings,”  
(And this thought) is (already) endowed with boundless merit,

[22] Then it is needless to mention that  
Wishing to dispel the boundless misery of every single being,  
And wishing for each of them  
To accomplish boundless qualities (also carries boundless merit).

[23] Do even fathers and mothers  
Have such a benefiting intention?  
Do the gods and sages  
Or even Brahma have it?

[24] If those beings have never before  
Even dreamed of such an intention  
(To attain buddhahood) for their own sake,  
How could it ever arise for the sake of others?

[25] (The fact) that this most (exalted) jewel of the mind,  
This intention to benefit (all) beings,  
Which does not arise in others even for their own sake,  
Has (now) taken birth (in my mind) is an unprecedented wonder.

[26] It is the source of happiness for all beings.  
It is the panacea for all the suffering of beings.  
The totality of merit of this precious intention—  
How can it be fathomed?

[27] If a mere benefiting intention  
Surpasses presenting offerings to the buddhas,  
Then how much more so does striving for the sake of  
The happiness of all beings without excluding any?

[28] Although (beings) wish to avoid misery,  
They actually run toward misery itself.  
Although they want to be happy, out of ignorance  
They destroy their own happiness as they would an enemy.

[29] (Bodhicitta) satisfies with all (the varieties of) happiness  
And cuts (free) from all suffering  
Those who are deprived of happiness  
And those endowed with many sorrows.

[30] It clears away even ignorance.  
Where is there a comparable virtue?  
Where is there ever such a friend?  
Where is there merit similar to this (bodhicitta)?

[31] If even a person who returns a favor  
Is worthy of being praised to some extent,  
Then what need to mention bodhisattvas  
Who do good without being asked?

[32] (If) someone who donates food continuously to a few people  
And someone who only gives food once,  
And even someone who satiates them for half a day in a condescending manner  
Is honored by people, saying, “He performs virtue!” (then)

[33] What need to mention those who always bestow such (a great gift),  
The peerless bliss of the sugatas,  
For a long period upon boundless multitudes of beings,  
(Thus) fulfilling all their wishes?

[34] The Sage has said, “Whoever bears an evil thought  
Against such a son of the victors, a benefactor,  
Will remain in hell for as many aeons  
As the number of his evil thoughts.”

[35] But whoever (looks at a bodhisattva) with a devoted mind,  
The fruits of this will multiply far more than these (evil thoughts).  
Even in greatest adversity, the sons of the victors  
Never generate negativity; instead, their virtues naturally increase.

[36] I pay respect to the body of those  
In whom this sacred and precious mind has arisen  
And who link to happiness even those who have caused them harm.  
To that very source of happiness I go for refuge.

The first chapter from the *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra* entitled, “Explaining the benefits of bodhicitta.”