

**Translation of Ch. 4 of the Bodhisattvacaryavatara
by Andreas Kretschmar**

Śāntideva's Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra

Chapter Four

The Teaching on Heedfulness

[1] A son of the Victor, who thus
Has firmly adoped bodhicitta must never waver,
But (should think), “I will always exert myself
To never stray from (the bodhicitta) precepts.”

[2] Although one has made a decision,
It is appropriate to reconsider whether or not to carry through
Whatever was begun rashly and Whatever was not well considered.

[3] What has been examined with the great wisdom
Of the buddhas and their sons
And has even been examined and re-examined by myself—
How could I discard it?

[4] If, having made such a promise,
I do not put it into action,
I have deceived all sentient beings.
What destiny will I have?

[5] If it has been taught (in the scriptures)
That one who intends in his thoughts
'I will give', even if it is only a small thing, but then does not give it,
Will become a preta; then

[6] If I deceived all beings,
By having summoned them from the bottom of my heart
To the unsurpassable bliss, How should I go to a happy state?

[7] That people who have given up bodhicitta
Still lead (others) to liberation
Is the inconceivable working of karma,
Known by the Omniscient One alone.

[8] This, for the bodhisattvas
Is, among the downfalls, the heaviest,
If such (a downfall) should ever happen,
It will weaken the welfare of all sentient beings.

[9] Should someone for even a single moment
Obstruct or hinder the merit of this (bodhisattva),
Because he has weakened the welfare of (all) sentient beings,
There will be no end to his (rebirth in) miserable states.

[10] If I corrupt myself in case I destroy
Even the happiness of a single sentient being, Then it is needless to mention (what will
result from) Destroying the happiness of creatures pervading all reaches of space.

[11] Those who thus (give rise to) powerful downfalls and
Powerful bodhicitta
Revolve within saṃsāra
And are hindered for a long time from attaining the (bodhisattva) levels.

[12] Therefore just as I have pledged
I shall practice respectfully.
From now on, if I make no effort,
I shall descend from lower to lower (states).

[13] Although countless buddhas, who worked for the benefit
Of all sentient beings, have passed on,
Yet, because of my own mistakes,
I did not come into the domain of their healing care.

[14] If I still act in the same manner,
I shall likewise (sink) again and again (from lower to lower states). In miserable states I
will experience disease, bondage, Being cut, being cleaved and the like.

[15] The arising of a tathāgata,
Faith, the attainment of a human body
And the chance to cultivate virtue: if they are that rare, When will they again be obtained?

[16] Although (I have) a day like this, (which is) free from disease,
Endowed with food and unafflicted,
Life is momentary and deceptive;
The body is like something loaned for but a moment.

[17] With such behavior as mine,
I shall not again even obtain a human body.
If one does not obtain a human body

There will be no virtue but only negativity.

[18] If, at a time when (I have obtained the freedoms and advantages), I do not practice virtue,

Although I have the chance to perform virtue,
When completely bewildered by the suffering of the lower realms,
What (virtue) shall I then do?

[19] If I continuously amass negative deeds
Having not practiced even (the slightest) virtue;
For a hundred million aeons
I shall not even hear the mere words ‘fortunate states’.

[20] Therefore, the Bhagavān has declared
That the human (body) is extremely difficult to obtain,
(Even more than) a turtle is likely to poke its neck
Through the hole of a yoke drifting upon the vast ocean.

[21] If even through the negativity created in one instant
One will dwell in the avīci (hell) for an aeon,
Then because of the negative deeds I have accumulated within saṃsāra from time
without beginning, What need is there to mention that I will not go to happy states?

[22] But having already experienced so much (suffering),
That (being) will still not be liberated;
For while such (suffering) was being experienced,
Other misdeeds were extensively produced.

[23] Having obtained such freedoms,
If I do not accustom myself to virtue,
There is no greater deception than this
And no greater stupidity.

[24] If I, having realized this,
Yet still, due to stupidity, continue shying away (from practice),
When the time of death comes Tremendous suffering will arise.

[25] When my body is burning for a long time
In the unbearable fires of hell,
Inevitably my mind will be agonized
By the blazing fire of unbearable remorse.

[26] Having obtained through coincidence something like this (body)
Which is difficult to obtain, a ground to benefit,
If I lead (myself) once more into the hells
While I am endowed with knowledge,

[27] Then am I like someone (who) has been stupefied by a mantra,
Have I been reduced in this (situation) to someone without a mind?
Even if I do not understand why I am stupefied,
Who is within me?

[28] These enemies such as hatred and craving
Are not (beings) who have legs, arms and the like;
Though they are neither courageous nor wise,
How is it that these (enemies) have caused me (to become) like a slave?

[29] Tolerating these (enemies), not becoming angry at them,
At those who, while residing within my mind,
Please themselves and cause me harm,
Is patience toward an improper object, an object that has been criticized (by the Victor).

[30] Even if all the gods and asuras
Should rise up as enemies against me,
Even these (gods and asuras) would not be able to lead and place me
In the fires of the avīci (hell realm).

[31] These enemies, the powerful afflictions,
Can cast me in one moment into (the fires of hell),
Which (burn) whatever they encounter, even Mt. Sumeru,
Not leaving even ashes behind.

[32] Among all (my) other enemies none has been capable
(Of harming me) for such a long time
As these enemies, these afflictions of mine,
Have (harmed me) for so long, (since time) without beginning or end.

[33] If I serve and wait upon (ordinary enemies) in accord (with their wishes),
They will (at) all (times) further my welfare and happiness.
But if I wait upon afflictions,
They will once again cause harm and suffering.

[34] Thus, since this long-term and incessant enemy,
The sole cause that greatly enlarges the mass of harm,
Is definitely residing in my heart,
How can I be joyful without fear within saṃsāra?

[35] If these (afflictions who function) as guardians of the prison of saṃsāra
And manifest as lethal executioners in the hell realm and so forth, Dwell in my mind, and
if I remain within the snare of attachment, How will I ever have happiness?

[36] Thus, for as long as I have not actually and with certainty defeated this enemy,
For that long I shall never give up exerting myself in this (antidote for afflictions).
At times, those inflated with pride, who are enraged
About a minor harm-doer, do not sleep until their (enemy) is defeated.

[37] When lined up on the battlefield with those afflicted ones—
Who are subject to suffering since they will naturally die—
Vigorously desiring to defeat them, ignoring the suffering of being hit by weapons
(such as) arrows and spears,
If I do not turn back to flee until I have accomplished my goal,

[38] Then, there is no need to mention that I will not be discouraged or shy away,
Regardless of whatever is causing me hundreds (of forms) of suffering,
Because (from) today I will strive to defeat these actual and natural enemies,
Who are the perpetual cause of all miseries.

[39] When even scars inflicted by enemies (in a) meaningless (fight)
Are worn, like ornaments, upon the body
Why should suffering be (seen as) something that causes harm to me,
One who genuinely strives to accomplish the great purpose?

[40] When fishermen, outcastes, farmers, and so forth,
Thinking merely of their own livelihood,
Endure adversities such as cold and heat;
Why can someone like me not endure (hardships)
for the sake of the happiness of beings?

[41] When I promised to liberate (all) beings
In the ten directions, (pervading) the reaches of space
From their afflictions,
Though I myself was not free (at all) from (my own) afflictions,

[42] Without knowing the scope of my capacity,
When I spoke like that, was it not crazy?
That being so, still I will never turn back
From defeating (all) afflictions.

[43] I will cling to this (antidote for afflictions) and,
Holding a grudge (against afflictions), I will set up a battle!
Since afflictions of this type
Are what will destroy afflictions, they are (temporarily) not to be (abandoned).

[44] Though I might be burned, killed
Or have my head cut off, it is (all) acceptable,
But I will never bow down
To the enemy of afflictions.

[45] Although I expelled ordinary enemies from my country,
They settled down in another country and made it their own.
Recovering their strength they will return (to my country).
But the way this enemy of affliction (operates) differs from these (ordinary enemies).

[46] Wretched afflictions! Once they are overcome by the eye of wisdom
And are dispelled from my mind, where will they go?
Where will they dwell and then return to harm me?
I, weak in mind, lacked diligence.

[47] If these afflictions do not dwell within the objects, the sense organs or the
accumulations (of consciousness), between (objects and sense organs), Nor elsewhere,
then where have they existed and how do they cause harm to all beings?

These (afflictions) are just like an illusion. Therefore I should dispel the fear within my
heart and rely on diligence in order to understand (that they lack any self-nature).
Why should I let them harm me in the hell (realms) and the like, meaninglessly?

[48] Having thus considered (the teachings on heedfulness), I will exert myself
In order to accomplish the trainings, just as they have been taught. Without following the
instructions of a physician, How could his medicine heal a patient in need of a cure?

From the *Bodhisattva-caryāvatāra*, the fourth chapter, entitled: “The teaching on
heedfulness.”