

## BCA Ch. 1 Stanza 2, Text Sections 182-186

*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.*

### BCA 1-2, Text section 182:

The author of a treatise must cast away his pride because if one writes out of a prideful motivation, such a book will bring no benefit to sentient beings. Shantideva, although highly realized and learned, casts away pride by stating that in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara he teaches nothing that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas did not teach before. He also states that he is not learned in prosody and poetry.

Again Khenpo Kunpal quotes the Indian scholar *Vibhuticandra's* metrical prologue to his commentary on the Bodhicaryavatara:

In the (history of) the Victor's doctrine  
Many great beings and persons have appeared,  
But I have found none  
Whose experience and realization compare with Shantideva's.

Thus, Vibhuticandra states that many *great masters* and *great persons* appeared in the history of Indian Buddhism, but none could compare with Shantideva in meditation experience and realization. Shantideva was indeed a very great master, but he, nonetheless, assumes a position of humility, casting away his pride at the beginning of composing this treatise. While he states that he has no skills in poetry, in fact, the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is an outstanding poetic masterpiece.

### BCA 1-2, Text section 183:

*Prosody* is one of the five lesser sciences. These are: poetics, synonymics, prosody, drama and astrology. The most famous treatise on prosody, the Chandoratnakara, was written by the Indian master Shantipa.

The Indian master of poetry *Ksemendra* composed the famous *Kalpalata*, containing one hundred and eight stories on Buddha's previous lives written in a lovely poetical style.

The Indian master *Shura*, a disciple of *Aryadeva*, composed a text on Buddha's previous life stories called *Jatakamala* in 34 Sections.

**BCA 1-2, Text sections 184-185:**

Since *Shantideva* states he has neither skill in meaning nor in words, one might object, "If you possess so little skill, why did you compose this treatise?" Anticipating this objection, *Shantideva* says he only wrote the *Bodhisattva-caryavata* to cultivate the motivation of *bodhicitta* and the application of the six transcendental perfections. Teaching the Dharma to others benefits not only the listeners but also one's own mind. In addition, debating the Dharma and composing a treatise is extremely beneficial for one's own mind as well as for the minds of others.

Scholars actually have three occupations: to teach, to debate with other scholars, and to write treatises and commentaries. Of these, writing is considered the most important. The Indian master *Candragomin* wrote:

Therefore, among the three activities of scholars,  
Teaching and debating may be uncertain (in nature),  
However, there can be no delusion (permitted) in composition.

Teaching and debating about the Dharma might still allow for uncertainties, since even scholars are sometimes mistaken or deluded. However, when teaching or debating, they have the opportunity to correct their mistakes. When composing a treatise or commentary on the other hand, there is no room for uncertainty or delusion regarding the meaning. The author either produces an accurate or an inaccurate commentary; he either understands or he does not. Moreover, writing treatises and compositions is considered a far greater contribution to furthering the spread of the Dharma than is teaching or debating.

**BCA 1-2, Text section 186:**

One may then wonder, "Why cast away pride?" A treatise written out of arrogance and pride will not benefit beings at all. *Candrakirti* is said to have felt proud about a treatise he wrote on grammar; because of his pride in his writing

skills, this particular treatise benefited only a few people. Therefore, even if one is very learned and knowledgeable, one should always assume a humble position and thus cast away pride. Shantideva's humility sets an example for future scholars.