

***BCA Ch. 1, Verse 3, Text Sections 187-199***

***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.***

**BCA 1-3, Text section 187:**

Again one might object, "Since you have written this text for your own benefit, you should be content just to know it for yourself. You seem to have written this treatise for no reason."

**BCA 1-3, Text sections 188-189:**

Anticipating these doubts, Shantideva sets forth his reasons for composing this text. He hopes the composition will increase both his faith and cultivation of virtue and inspire others as well. *Virtue* or 'that which is wholesome' is defined here as the motivation of bodhicitta and the conduct of the six transcendental perfections. Khenpo Kunpal notes three types of faith: 1) the faith of amazement, 2) the faith of inspiration, and 3) the faith of conviction.

- 1) The *faith of amazement* consists of being amazed by the qualities of the three jewels. This faith means to be delighted about the qualities of the three jewels.
- 2) The *faith of inspiration* is a faith inspired to pursue the qualities that can be attained. It is the wish to pursue and to acquire their qualities.
- 3) The *faith of conviction* is a faith that is confident and convinced about the law of cause and effect. This faith means to have gained confidence and certainty in the qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This faith is also called 'the faith of knowing the reasons'.

In another listing, four kinds of faith are mentioned: 1) the faith of amazement, 2) the faith of inspiration, 3) the faith of certainty, and 4) irreversible faith. Irreversible faith only comes about through the practice of meditation.

The term *to cultivate* can also be translated as 'to meditate', or 'to contemplate'. In Khenpo Kunpal's commentary, it means 'to familiarize oneself with' or 'to grow accustomed to'.

To cultivate suggests meanings such as becoming 'accustomed to', 'familiar with', or 'acquainted with' the continuous maintenance of concentration, having the mind repeatedly focus on virtuous thoughts. This term is used in phrases like 'cultivating faith' or 'cultivating compassion'.

Since 'to cultivate', 'to meditate', and 'to become familiar with' have the same basic meaning, Tibetan translators use 'path of meditation', 'path of cultivation', or 'path of habituation' to translate the Sanskrit term 'bhavanamarga'.

You might ask why you should familiarize or accustom your mind to virtuous thoughts. The answer is that our minds have not been masters of themselves since time without beginning. Rather, they are always dwelling in a state of dependency. Our minds are constantly chasing after afflictions, which lead to the development of all sorts of defects and mistakes. 'Cultivation' or 'meditation' means bringing such a mind under your own power of mastery and directing it toward whatever virtuous thoughts you wish.

Writing a treatise such as the Bodhisattva-caryavatara, or expounding the text to others, leads to an increase in the three kinds of faith because you are then focusing your attention on the buddhadharma, which is virtuous. On the other hand, if you place your attention on something negative, your unwholesome tendencies, such as aggression, will increase.

A mere intellectual understanding of the words of this treatise will not bring forth genuine bodhicitta and thus will not lead to a decrease in afflictions. Superficial study is not enough. Without intensive study, whatever a student learns will be easily forgotten. Topics like the preciousness of human existence and the benefits of bodhicitta must be repeatedly and constantly kept in mind until heartfelt conviction arises. Only through constant familiarization with the Dharma will faith and virtue increase. When familiarization is perfected, the true meaning of bodhicitta will clearly manifest.

Mingle your mind with this treatise. Faith and devotion are mental acts, while respect refers more to body and speech. Faith and devotion purify your mind. Faith in itself is a pure thought. A mind infused with faith and devotion is a pure mind. Faith, devotion and a virtuous mindset are the roots of all healing powers.

A virtuous mind is the source of all happiness. Virtue refers to positive action in body, speech and mind. If you live your life according to the Buddhist teachings on virtue, you will always feel bliss in your mind and physical body. Virtue is also the key to social harmony. What follows are the most basic instructions on virtue and how to develop a virtuous mind.

Study the scriptures of the Buddha, rely on a spiritual friend, and associate yourself with noble friends. Do not inflict any harm on others, and practice the ten virtuous actions.

Avoid engaging in any of the ten non-virtuous actions: taking life, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, speaking lies, sowing discord, harsh words, worthless chatter, covetousness, wishing harm to others, and wrong views.

Avoiding taking life means not to kill any sentient being. Avoiding taking what is not given means not to steal. Avoiding sexual misconduct means not to take a partner who is in a relationship with someone else. Avoiding speaking lies means not to twist people's minds through untruthful statements.

Avoiding sowing discord means not to drive people apart through vicious talk. Instead, bring people together through harmonious and friendly ways of talking. Avoiding speaking harsh words means not to speak in an unkind way to others. Always use soft and gentle language. Avoiding worthless chatter means to not waste your time talking nonsense.

Avoiding covetousness means taming the desire to obtain and possess everything you see. Learn to be content with whatever material goods you have. Avoiding wishing harm to others is a most important point. You should always wish good things for other people. Wish everyone well, even people who have caused you harm. Finally, avoid wrong views. Do not hold the wrong view that everything will come to an end with your death.

Trust in karma, the law of cause and effect. Know that all your thoughts and emotions, words and actions have consequences. Understand that good actions lead to good results and bad actions to bad results. Know that your mind will take rebirth repeatedly until you achieve enlightenment. The correct universal view means to believe in karma and to avoid the ten negative actions.

Tulku Urgyen taught that practitioners should tame their harmful intentions by applying the sutra teaching on 'training in goodness in four ways':

- Although accused, do not respond with accusation.
- Although attacked, do not respond with aggression.
- Although beaten, do not strike back.
- Although exposed, do not respond by exposing others.

You might be falsely blamed for something terrible. You might be accused of something bad you did not do or say. A yogin does not respond to accusation by saying, "I didn't do it." He does not retaliate by accusing others. When anger or aggression comes at him, he never answers with aggression. However harsh the words may be, however bold the aggressor, the yogin does not become upset. Even if physically attacked and beaten, a yogin will never hit back; he will sit where he is, taking the beating silently. As long as the yogin is on the path, he is not free from defects. So, when someone exposes his faults, he does not become upset or defensive. He might say, "What you observe is true. I am at fault."

If you apply these points, you will have no enemies; you will not be a target for aggression. Whatever bad things might be said or done to you will cause no harm. As you do not respond to negativity, people will tire of trying to pick fights with you. Train yourself and try to accomplish this much patience. If you stick to these points, you may be called a practitioner. Give the gain to others and keep the loss. Allow others to be right, even if it makes you wrong. This is how Tulku Urgyen advised his students.

Living according to these principles will make your entire being content and happy. It does not matter whether you are rich or poor, famous or unknown. The very basis of a happy life is to live according to the discipline of avoiding negative actions. It does not matter whether or not you are a Buddhist. This is the very basis for happiness.

Students of Buddhism need to know one very important point. If you want to acquire knowledge and wisdom, you must first become a proper vessel, capable of holding and absorbing this kind of knowledge. The vessel is discipline. The minimum discipline required is the discipline of avoiding the ten negative actions. Such a vessel of discipline will be able to hold knowledge and wisdom, leading to samadhi.

Discipline means making a commitment or pledge. You must pledge to live by the ten virtuous actions. Only then are you practicing discipline. The thought, "I will live by the ten virtuous actions and avoid the ten non-virtuous actions even at the cost of my life" generates inconceivable merit. Remind yourself of this pledge a few times every day. Your Dharma study will then be successful. What you actually aspire to is a complete transformation of your entire being.

**BCA 1-3, Text section 190:**

*To live straightforward* in the conduct of the bodhisattvas means 'to live honestly'.

**BCA 1-3, Text sections 191-192:**

Some people who are overly timid may think, "I cannot do this. It's all too difficult for me. I simply don't have the confidence necessary to practice like that." Such a timid attitude will prevent you from practicing the Dharma, and, therefore, virtuous qualities will never arise. An overly timid mind is a real obstacle for practicing the Dharma.

Dharma students must develop an uplifted and joyous state of mind, a mind that is enthusiastic and inspired. When two countries are on the brink of war, the generals like to fire up their soldiers with speeches, music and marches. Through that the soldiers develop courage. That is what is meant by 'uplifting one's mind'.

The Pitaputra-samagamana-sutra recounts the story of how the Buddha established his father, King Suddhodana, in the Dharma. Khenpo Choga recounted this story in the following way: Because Suddhodana was a king and also the Buddha's father; he was a very proud person. He thought, "Gautama is my son. I will not prostrate to him." As he was so swollen with pride, he could never receive teachings from the Buddha.

One day, while the Buddha was teaching at a certain place, King Suddhodana went to see what was going on. As he approached, he saw the 'four great guardian kings' protecting the area. The four great guardian kings told King Suddhodana, "Today, the Buddha will teach the Dharma to the 'thirty-three gods' as well as to us four great guardian kings. Human beings are not allowed to join the teachings."

King Suddhodana thought, "I, the king, pay respect to the 'the thirty-three gods'. Now the gods are receiving teachings from my son, the Buddha." He began to

see how very arrogant his attitude had been. Humbled in this way, he finally was able to prostrate to the Buddha, and so the Buddha established him in the Dharma.

**BCA 1-3, Text section 193:**

*The four prerequisites* of declaring respect, pledging to compose, casting away pride, and generating joy are not only needed for composing treatises but are also required for whatever task one may undertake, be it teaching, studying, meditating, building a temple and so forth.

Before you set out on any undertaking, you should first offer prostrations and supplicate the Buddhas and lineage masters in order to receive their blessings. This will remove all obstacles for your project and is especially important when practicing meditation. Without supplicating the masters, you will not receive their blessings, and your meditation will not lead to realization. This is a crucial point. Without heartfelt devotion, the blessings of the lineage will not descend, and realization will not dawn without the blessings of the lineage.

The second step for any undertaking is to give rise to the firm resolve to see your project through to completion. Such resolve is also indispensable for meditation. At the beginning of each session one should generate the resolution to be non-distracted for the entire session.

Next, you must overcome pride and arrogance without overcompensating by becoming timid. As long as you consider yourself superior to others, you cannot appreciate other people's qualities, and, therefore, you cannot learn from them.

Meditators who think their practice is really fantastic have already fallen under the influence of Mara. A practitioner should have confidence in his practice but without a trace of arrogance and haughtiness. True confidence leads to the assurance of charisma.

A practitioner needs to respect him or herself. Someone who rejoices in his own qualities and in the work he does will naturally develop respect toward himself. A practitioner who has respect toward his own innate goodness and in the goodness of his Dharma practice will naturally gain the respect of others.

It is a sign of a genuine practitioner to be peaceful, tame, and relaxed. Such a practitioner is in accord with the true nature of his mind. Being proud and

arrogant means not being in accord with one's true nature. A genuine practitioner is humble as he has nothing to defend. Being humble does not mean to be meek or fearful. Being meek and frightened is based on fear. To trust and rejoice in one's own qualities and innate goodness is called confidence or certainty. This should never be confused with pride or arrogance.

A practitioner should always rejoice in his Buddha nature, the fact that he is primordially endowed with all the infinite qualities of the Buddha. This is called to 'generate joy in one's basis', in one's Buddha nature. When practicing the path of Dharma, the practitioner should generate joy in his own Dharma practice. He should practice with a joyous mind, knowing that he is doing the right thing. That is called to 'generate joy in the path'.

These four prerequisites of 1) declaring respect, 2) pledging to compose, 3) casting away pride, and 4) generating joy can be applied to any project or work but should be practiced particularly when studying, contemplating and meditating.

**BCA 1-3, Text section 194:**

*The four interrelated aspects such as the purpose and so forth are also called 'the fourfold interrelated purposes'. When these four interrelated aspects are present, one will enter into the study of a treatise, since the treatise promises to be meaningful.*

The aspects are: 1) the topic, 2) the purpose, 3) the ultimate purpose, and 4) the relation between them. The first stanza of the first chapter demonstrates these four aspects:

To the Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya,  
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.

1) The third line in the first stanza in Tibetan indicates the topic of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara: "Entering into the precepts of the sons of the Sugatas". This line belongs to the section known as 'pledging to compose' the text, the second of the four prerequisites. By stating the topic of the treatise, the author tells the reader what the text is about.

2) The overall purpose of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is laid out in the following line from the first stanza: "In accordance with the scriptures, I will briefly explain ...." This line also belongs to the section on 'pledging to compose' the text.

The Bodhisattva-caryavatara is a treatise which gathers what has been dispersed as well as being a treatise for the practice of meditation. Therefore, it will be meaningful and beneficial to anyone who reads it. This is the Bodhisattva-caryavatara's real purpose, to condense all the teachings of the Buddha into one single treatise.

3) The ultimate purpose of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara is spelled out by this line from the first stanza: "The Sugatas, who are endowed with the Dharmakaya, together with their sons..." The ultimate purpose is to achieve the level of the Sugata, 'the one gone to bliss', who is endowed with the Dharmakaya. This line belongs to the section called 'declaration of respect', the first of the four prerequisites. Through the practice of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara one will be able to achieve the level of the Sugatas, endowed with the Dharmakaya. This ultimate purpose reveals the goal to which the Bodhisattva-caryavatara leads.

4) The relation between these: The latter aspects cannot exist without the former. First, you state the topic of the text; next, you state its purpose. Finally, you indicate where it is leading, the ultimate purpose. Lacking a topic, whatever you produce will not be meaningful to read. Without something meaningful to study and learn, you cannot reach the ultimate fruition, the Dharmakaya. The interdependent relation of the three previous aspects is only implied in the root text. It is not explicitly stated as the relationship is obvious.

In this way, the latter aspects are dependent on the former. If you do not understand the conduct of the bodhisattvas, you cannot understand the vast teachings of the Buddha, and without the Buddha's teachings you cannot reach enlightenment.

### **BCA 1-3, Text section 195:**

These four aspects enable the reader to approach the treatise with trust and, moreover, with an *inquisitiveness that searches for meaning*.

One can approach a treatise fearing that it might be insignificant or with an inquisitiveness into its possible significance. The first is fear concerning its insignificance, when one thinks, "This treatise probably lacks a topic, a purpose,



an ultimate purpose and a relation between these." The latter is the inquisitiveness concerning its significance, when one thinks, "This treatise probably has a topic, a purpose, an ultimate purpose and a relation between these."

In other words, you could think, "I wonder if reading this text might really be meaningful and beneficial for me. Maybe I will find some answers to my personal questions in this text." You should have an open and critical frame of mind, one searching for meaning. Inquisitiveness that searches for meaning cuts through doubts leads to a state free from any doubts. The Buddha always invited everyone to scrutinize his teachings. Only through addressing one's problems and analyzing them will one gain insight. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara teaches the methods for doing exactly that.

In this way, the four aspects prevent people from entertaining wrong ideas, such as thinking, "The Bodhisattva-caryavatara might be just a useless treatise, like some treatise on the dentistry of crows." And finally, these four aspects enhance the beauty of the text.

An intelligent person will immediately know if a treatise is endowed with these four aspects. If a treatise should lack them, the reader will recognize it as useless and not even bother to continue reading.

### **BCA 1-3, Text sections 196-197:**

This aspiration summarizes the entire Bodhisattva-caryavatara. The Bodhisattva-caryavatara has ten chapters in 913 stanzas.

The ten chapters are structured according to four main classifications:

Three chapters that give rise to the precious bodhicitta in those in whom it has not yet arisen (chap. 1, 2, 3):

1. Chapter one, explaining the benefits of bodhicitta (36 stanzas)
2. Chapter two, confessing negativities (65 stanzas)
3. Chapter three, thorough adoption of bodhicitta (33.5 stanzas)

Three chapters that prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) where it has arisen (chap. 4, 5, 6):

4. Chapter four, heedfulness (48 stanzas)
5. Chapter five, introspection (109 stanzas)
6. Chapter six, patience (134 stanzas)

Three chapters that not only prevent the decrease (of the precious bodhicitta) but cause it to ever increase more and more (chap. 7, 8, 9):

7. Chapter seven, diligence (76 stanzas)

8. Chapter eight, meditation (187 stanzas)

9. Chapter nine, transcendental knowledge (167 stanzas)

A single chapter concerning the dedication of the results that have thus been developed for the benefit of others (chap. 10):

10. Chapter ten, Dedication (57.5 stanzas).

Following this format of structuring the whole Bodhisattva-caryavatara, the first three chapters deal with arousing bodhicitta. The second three chapters deal with how to sustain bodhicitta and prevent it from being lost or diminished. The third three chapters deal with methods for increasing bodhicitta. The tenth chapter deals with the subject of dedication. You dedicate the benefits of bodhicitta which you have aroused, sustained and increased through the teachings of the previous nine chapters.

Looking carefully at Khenpo Kunpal's table of contents you will find all the major sections and sub-sections of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. If you apply these various headings to the root text, you will have already gained a great deal of insight into the meaning and interpretation of the text.

The first chapter of the Bodhisattva-caryavatara explains the *benefits* or qualities of bodhicitta. The word *benefits* suggest 'helpful qualities'. This chapter is a wonderful advertisement for bodhicitta, just as these days television commercials advertise the qualities of a product. If people do not hear about the qualities and benefits of bodhicitta, they will never aspire to generate it in their minds.

As soon as one understands bodhicitta's inconceivable qualities, however, one will certainly think, "I need these teachings on how to develop bodhicitta." Generally, treatises list the qualities of the topic under discussion at the end of the text. Shantideva is here more intelligent, keen as he is to advertise the qualities of bodhicitta right at the text's beginning. If someone is sick and hears about appropriate medicine which will cure him, he will certainly follow his physician's advice and take the medicine at once.