

CHAPTER 1

IN PRAISE OF BODHICITTA

There are three explicit subsections and one implicit section on the four branches of purpose and relation.¹ The explicit sections are:

1. Homage and praise
2. The commitment to compose
3. Discarding pride

These concern lines 1ab, 1cd and the next eight lines, respectively:

1.1

To the Sugatas, the dharmakāya they have mastered, and their
sons,
And to all those worthy of prostration, I respectfully
prostrate.
To enter the vow of the Sugatas' sons,
In accord with the tradition, I will now briefly explain.

1.2

Nothing said here has not been said before,
And I have neither eloquence nor erudition,
So, I do not expect this to benefit others.
I composed it only to develop my own understanding.

1.3

**Because of developing virtue like this,
The power of my faith will increase for a little while.
But if others, similar in fortune to me,
Should see it, that is also of benefit.**

I will explain each section with respect to the following three points:
[248]

1. The purpose of the section
2. A condensed explanation of the section
3. The literal meaning of each section²



1. The purpose of each section

The purpose of homage and praise: while an author may or may not have their own individual purposes, of most importance are the following enumerated results. There are three benefits for the author himself:

1. Those which are worldly: [praise and fame in the world, which though acquired nevertheless are not intended by the author]
2. Those which are intended: [by gaining merit and preserving it from decline, one overcomes outer and inner obstacles to the completion of the composition]
3. The foremost one: [by sowing the seeds of higher rebirth and definitive goodness in the author's mind, the defilements are dispelled and suffering is cast aside]

There are five benefits for others [who receive or hear the teaching]:

1. They completely hold the causes of all goodness [where 'all goodness' is identical to the 'foremost' benefit of self, above]
2. Awareness of the greatness of the teacher
3. Understanding that the śāstra possesses excellent meaning
4. Entering into the conditions by which the author himself attained accomplishments
5. Not losing the means of entering [i.e. in accord with the second ('intended') benefit of self, through the merit generated and preserved, one will be able to complete the hearing of the śāstra]

These eight may be learned in more detail from other sources.³

The purpose of the commitment to compose: having made the promise, the composition of the śāstra is sure to be completed because holy beings do not abandon whatever promises they have made.

The purpose of discarding pride: out of the pride of thinking of oneself as learned, one might abandon the composition of the text.

2. The condensed meaning of each section

1. The condensed meaning of homage and praise comprises lines 1ab:

1. Making homage and praise to the sources of refuge—the Three Jewels is line 1a
2. Making homage and praise to others who are worthy of respect is line 1b

2. The condensed meaning of the commitment to compose:

1. Setting out the subject matter to be elaborated – line 1c
2. Abandoning personal invention - ‘In accord with tradition’ in 1d
3. Abandoning the fault of repetition - ‘I will briefly explain’ also in 1d

3. The condensed meaning of discarding pride: [249]

1. The understanding of others is not the primary goal - 2a-2c
2. The author’s own understanding is the primary goal - 2d-3b
3. In dependence upon that, there is benefit for others - 3cd

3. The literal meaning of each section

1. The literal meaning of homage and praise:

1.1

**To the Sugatas, the dharmakāya they have mastered, and their sons,
And to all those worthy of prostration, I respectfully prostrate.**

The ‘Sugatas’ means the Buddhas, who have perfected abandonment and realization. ‘Su’ signifies excellence. ‘Gata’ means going or having gone to abandonment and realization in this way, in entirety and irreversibly:⁴

- Abandonment is ‘excellent’ because it is the abandonment of the obscurations of the defilements, which are fully appropriate to abandon.
- Abandonment is ‘in entirety’ because it is the abandonment of the obscurations of cognizables, i.e. the clinging to existence, which is the cause of the defilements and, since the defilements are the result, it is abandonment of the cultivation of lower rebirths.
- Abandonment is ‘irreversible’ because, since the abandonment is final, there is knowledge of non-arising and knowledge of exhaustion.
- Realization is ‘excellent’ because it is realization of reality as it is—the direct apprehension of emptiness.
- Realization is ‘in entirety’ because it is the knowledge [of reality] as it seems.
- Realization is ‘irreversible’ because it never diminishes.

This is the jewel of the Buddha.

‘The dharmakāya they have mastered’: the jewel of the dharma is the ultimate cessation in the space free from the adventitious defilements and it is the ultimate path of realization with the wisdom without dualistic appearances [i.e. the third and fourth Noble Truths]. Possessing the dharma of realization due to mastery over their stream of existence is a ‘kāya’ [body] in the sense that it is the basis of all the good qualities of that realization. It is also the body of meaning of the dharma scriptures.

‘And their sons’ [250] refers to the bodhisattva saṅgha. They are born from the lineage of the Sugatas and are their heirs. Śrāvakas, though they are also born from that lineage, are not their heirs, i.e. not their sons. If the sons of the wheel-turning universal emperors do not possess the marks [of an emperor], they are not heirs to the lineage, i.e. are not sons, as explained in the *Sutra Requested by Kāśyapa*.

To ‘prostrate’ to them means making homage and praise to the sources of refuge of the Mahāyāna family—the Three Jewels.

‘And to all who are worthy of prostration’: the Mahāyānist not only takes refuge in these sources of refuge but also makes prostrations to

others who are worthy of prostration. This includes śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, khenpos, ācāryas and so forth who, while they are not sources of refuge, are worthy of prostration because of their eminent qualities.

2. The literal meaning of the commitment to compose:

1. Setting out the subject matter to be elaborated
2. Abandoning personal invention
3. Abandoning the fault of repetition

1. Setting out the subject matter to be elaborated

To enter the vow of the Sugatas' sons,

This has four aspects:

1. The individuals who undertake the vow: the Sugatas' sons are bodhisattvas in whose minds the vow exists.
2. The essence of the vow: the continuity of the intention to train. This is not a physical characteristic.⁵
3. Its aspects: The nature of the vow itself—the moral conduct of the vow [i.e. abandoning nonvirtues]; the nature of diligence in the vow—the moral conduct of gathering virtuous dharmas; the moral conduct of benefitting sentient beings
4. The meaning of the term 'vow': like a dam across a river stops the water from flowing the wrong way, a vow functions similarly [251] in regard to the methods of practice.

2. Abandoning personal invention

In accord with the tradition, ...

Is this an original explanation of the bodhisattva vow by the author's own invention? No, it is in accord with the tradition since it does not contradict the scriptural tradition.

3. Abandoning the fault of repetition

Objection: ‘The explanation of the meaning here has already been taught elsewhere. Therefore, since this is repetition, it is pointless.’

... I will now briefly explain.

It would not be possible to give here a detailed explanation of the entire scriptural tradition. This presentation is just a condensed summary of the meaning of the scriptural tradition, so there is no fault of repetition.

3. The literal meaning of discarding pride:

1. The understanding of others is not the primary goal
2. The author’s own understanding is the primary goal
3. Yet, in dependence upon that, there is benefit for others

1. The understanding of others is not the primary goal

1.2

**Nothing said here has not been said before,
And I have neither eloquence nor erudition.
So I do not expect this to benefit others.**

Objection: ‘The composition of this śāstra is not of benefit for the understanding of others because, since it has not fully purified you, it cannot ripen others. It is not of benefit for your own understanding either, because your understanding is already complete, so you have no need of it.’

Response: it is not expected to benefit others. In which case, is the benefit of others neglected? No, because there is no possibility of it benefitting others. Why not? Because, regarding the meaning, nothing said here has not been said before, i.e. it will not create any understanding that was previously lacking and because, regarding the words, they are neither eloquent nor erudite, i.e. they will not create any understanding in the manner of beautiful poetics, such as the *Condensed Succession of Lives* by Virācārya [Aśvaghōṣa].

Therefore, there is no possibility of it benefitting others, so there is nothing to be done. [252] In that case, what is the purpose of composing it?

2. The author's own understanding is the primary goal

I composed it only to develop my own understanding.

1.3

**Because of developing virtue like this,
The power of my faith will increase for a little while.**

Why compose this? Because it will increase the power of faith. What circumstances bring that about? A virtuous act such as composing this śāstra will bring it about, as well as other similar virtues, such as hearing it. How long will that last? A little while. What causes it? The development of virtue, i.e. the habituation of one's mind to virtue. In that case, is the benefit of others disregarded? Will the bodhisattva conduct be impaired? When their benefit is not possible, there is no work to be done for the benefit of others, but when it is possible to do something, the benefit of others should not be disregarded.

3. Yet, in dependence upon that, there is benefit for others

**But if others, similar in fortune to me,
Should see it, that is also of benefit.**

There is benefit for others similar in fortune to the author and, implicitly, for those who are less fortunate. Although, according to the author, the explanation is poor, it is based upon the words of holy beings. 'Also' means in addition to the benefit for the author.

4. The implicit section: the four branches of purpose and relation

1. The purpose of presenting the four branches
2. The condensed meaning
3. The literal meaning

1. The purpose of the composition

The presentation of the four branches of purpose and relation has three functions: it counteracts doubts that there will be benefit to others, it counteracts the misunderstandings of others and it adorns the main text.

2. The condensed meaning

The four branches of purpose and relation⁶ are:

1. The explanandum is 'the entrance to the vow of the Sugatas' sons' [v1c].
2. The immediate purpose is that by 'explaining' [v1d] this, the reader's understanding develops.
3. The metapurpose is indicated in the subject of the homage and praise, i.e. the objects of praise are the state to be attained. [253].
4. The relation: the explanans and the immediate purpose are connected as the depended upon and the dependent dharma.

To elaborate on these:

1. By showing the explanandum, the immediate purpose becomes possible.
 2. By showing the immediate purpose, one understands the possibility of accomplishing it.
 3. By showing the metapurpose, the immediate purpose is established as a desideratum.
 4. By showing the relation, the relation between achieving the immediate purpose by means of the explanans is established.
3. The literal meaning: this has already been explained in the previous section.

If one wishes for an explanation of the meaning of each chapter according to the tradition of the śāstra, it is as follows.



Concerning parts 2 - 5:

- Part 2 is the primary basis—the individual person.
- Part 3 is the generation of bodhicitta—the productive cause.
- Part 4 is the practice of the conduct—the cooperating condition, which follows this.
- Part 5 is the subsequent attainment of the result—the direct accomplishment of unsurpassed enlightenment. It is only the path of the Mahāyāna family which is said to possess this result.

Part 2, the primary basis—the individual person: the bodily basis is the attainment of all abundances of freedoms and endowment and the mental basis is the attainment of the merit and intelligence for the expanded potential of the Mahāyāna. This is explained in chapter 1, verses 4-5. On the attainment of the freedoms and endowments of the

basis and the expanded potential of the Mahāyāna, one generates bodhicitta, the productive cause. Then, with the awareness of the benefits, enthusiasm is generated in one's mind and, subsequently, one proceeds to the main practice. The first step is taught in chapter 1, which creates enthusiasm through an awareness of the benefits, and the second step follows this.

Part 3, the productive cause—generation of bodhicitta: this comprises the preliminaries, main part and conclusion: [254]

3.1. Preliminaries: To become a suitable vessel for bodhicitta through the diminishment of karmic obscurations, the seven branches of accumulating merit are taught:

1. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through eliminating the karmic obscuration of greed, one makes offerings to the Three Jewels.
2. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through eliminating the karmic obscurations of relying on faulty sources of refuge, one takes refuge in the Three Jewels.
3. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through eliminating the karmic obscurations of nonvirtuous actions of body, speech and mind, one confesses faults. Of these three, since confession is the principal one, the overall chapter is called 'Confession of faults' [chapter 2].
4. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through eliminating the karmic obscurations of envy of others' virtues and creating obstacles for them, one rejoices with the highest happiness in the others' creation of merit.
5. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through abandoning the obscurations of the teachings not remaining and the teacher not being present, which come from the karmic obscurations of abandoning the dharma, one requests the turning of the wheel of dharma and also
6. One supplicates [the Buddhas] not to pass into nirvāṇa.
7. To become a suitable vessel in one's stream of being through eliminating the karmic obscurations of lacking the possibility of a vast and inexhaustible result due to inferior dedications, one dedicates the roots of virtue.

3.2. *The main part*: Having established the perfectly purified basis, one generates the bodhicitta of aspiration, wishing to actually realize the suchness of all dharmas and to benefit beings through attaining the kāya of complete omniscience. After the preliminary of the threefold-aspiration mind,⁷ one then grasps the hook of the vow. [255]

3.3. *The conclusion*: This comprises generating joy in oneself and others. These three sections comprise chapters 2 and 3.

Part 4, the cooperating condition—subsequently accomplishing the training: the general cause of accomplishing the training is ‘Concern’ [chapter 4]. The specific trainings are the six perfections. Among these, giving does not have a separate chapter solely on its practice but is taught throughout the text. Moral conduct is taught in the chapter on ‘Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension’, [chapter 5] because that is the cause of moral conduct not declining. ‘Patience’ and the rest of the six perfections are directly taught in the next four eponymous chapters.

According to others, the subsequent training is explained according to [Śāntideva’s] *Śikṣā-samuccaya*. In that text, the general cause comprises both concern and clear comprehension:

Learning, moral discipline, giving, patience and so forth—
As many virtuous qualities as can be named—
Concern is the root of them all.
Thus the Sugata has taught it as the attainment of a treasure.⁸

And:

The practitioner of perfect abandonment
Will never be separate from concern,
Nor from mindfulness and clear comprehension,
Nor moral discipline, all through the mind.⁹

According to this opinion, there are three kinds of specific trainings:

1. Establishing the antidotes and abandoning remaining obstacles
2. Reliance on the accompanying training

3. Seeing the nature of the antidotes: the path of unified calm
abiding and insight meditation

The first of these is the 'Patience' chapter which establishes the antidote to impatience with suffering, difficulties and profound dharma. [256] It puts an end to them, i.e. it eliminates them. The second is 'Effort' and the third comprises both 'Meditation' and 'Wisdom'.

These [general and specific trainings] collectively comprise the cooperating condition, which directly establishes the final point.

Part 5, The subsequent results of the practice: this comprises the chapter on 'Dedication', which begins [v10.1]:

By whatever virtue there is
In my undertaking
To enter the bodhisattva conduct...

Therefore, the conduct brings about the results.

PART II

THE PRIMARY BASIS

THE INDIVIDUAL PERSON

IN PRAISE OF BODHICITTA (2)

There are two subsections:

1. The bodily basis: the difficulty of acquiring the freedoms and endowments
2. The mental basis: meritorious intelligence

1. The bodily basis: the difficulty of acquiring the freedoms and endowments

1.4

It is extremely difficult to acquire the freedoms and endowments

Which make this human birth meaningful.

If I fail to benefit from it now,

How will I get a chance like this again?

There are three sections:

1. Their nature
2. Difficult to acquire
3. The extent of the benefits it brings

1. Their nature

Freedom is abandoning the eight non-freedoms: hell-being, hungry ghost, animal, barbarian, long-lived god, wrong views, being devoid of Buddhas, having impaired senses—four human and four non-human states.

Endowment comprises the five endowments of oneself—attaining a human body, unimpaired senses, not having committed any of the inexpressible deeds, being born in a central country and having faith in the remaining [teachings]—and the five endowments from others—the Buddha has appeared, he has taught the dharma, the teachings remain, there are still those who practise and they have compassion for others.

Regarding the freedoms, according to some, the eight non-freedoms are not the opposites of the eight freedoms but their absences. If that were the case, such things as sky-lotuses would also have the freedoms. The freedoms are not absences but the presence of their opposites. It is generally not the case [that the freedoms are mere absences], for then such things as vases would possess the opposite of the non-freedoms, [257] but only sentient beings can have this.

Some say:

- ‘The opposite of the four non-human states [freedom] is not distinct from the attaining of a human body [first endowment]
- The opposite of impaired senses [freedom] is having unimpaired senses [second endowment]
- The opposite of holding wrong views [freedom] is engaging in uncorrupted actions [third endowment]
- The opposite of being born in the borderlands [freedom] is being born in a central land [fourth endowment]
- The opposite of being devoid of Buddhas [freedom] is having faith in the remaining teachings [fifth endowment]

Therefore, the freedoms are not distinct from the endowments of oneself.’

According to this opinion, freedom is the negative aspect while endowment is the same thing from the positive aspect. Therefore, they

are only distinct in the sense that abandoning the obscurations of the cognizables and realization of reality are also opposite aspects [of a single thing]. However, in *The Biography of Brahmin Jayosmayatana*,¹ the 'difficulty of acquiring the opposite of the eight non-freedoms' and the 'difficulty of acquiring the abundant freedoms' are taught separately, so this opinion does not accord with that text.

2. Difficult to acquire

It is said to be 'extremely difficult' because it is even more difficult for a turtle to put his neck through the centre of a wooden yoke afloat on an ocean.

3. The extent of the benefits it brings

Whilst it may be difficult to acquire, since it is only of slight benefit, why acquire it? A 'human birth' is 'meaningful' because it is the basis for attaining higher rebirths and definitive goodness.

The last two lines of verse 4 indicate that if, having attained it, one did not take hold of the roots of its benefit, then its goodness would subsequently reoccur only very rarely.

2. The mental basis: meritorious intelligence

1.5

**Just as lightning flashes for an instant
Through the dark, black clouds of the night,
Likewise, only rarely, merit and intelligence arise
Fleeting in the world through the power of the Buddhas.**

There are five common thoughts:

1. The cause of entering the white dharma in general—the faith of conviction
2. The cause of entering this teaching²—the faith of clarity
3. The cause of entering the arising of certainty [258]—the faith of longing
4. The causes of swiftly entering—reflection on the difficulty of acquiring the freedoms and endowments

5. Reflection that the freedom which has been obtained will not last long

There are two uncommon thoughts:

1. The kindness of wishing to benefit sentient beings
2. Faith which becomes certain about the means

The common and uncommon attitudes are the proper basis for the generation of bodhicitta and the subsequent practice of the conduct by someone who is of the awakened Mahāyāna family.

If one wonders how the difficulty of acquiring human birth is being exemplified here, the example is: 'night' means being without the appearance of the sun, 'dark and black' means being without the appearance of the moon, 'clouds' means having little chance of any appearances and 'just as lightning flashes for an instant' means appearing nevertheless, despite those factors. Also, 'through the power of the Buddhas' is the condition of the attitudes, 'merit and intelligence' is the nature, 'only rarely' means arising only very occasionally and 'arise fleetingly' means not remaining for very long.

PART III

THE PRODUCTIVE CAUSE

THE GENERATION OF BODHICITTA

IN PRAISE OF BODHICITTA (3)

The generation of bodhicitta has two main subsections:

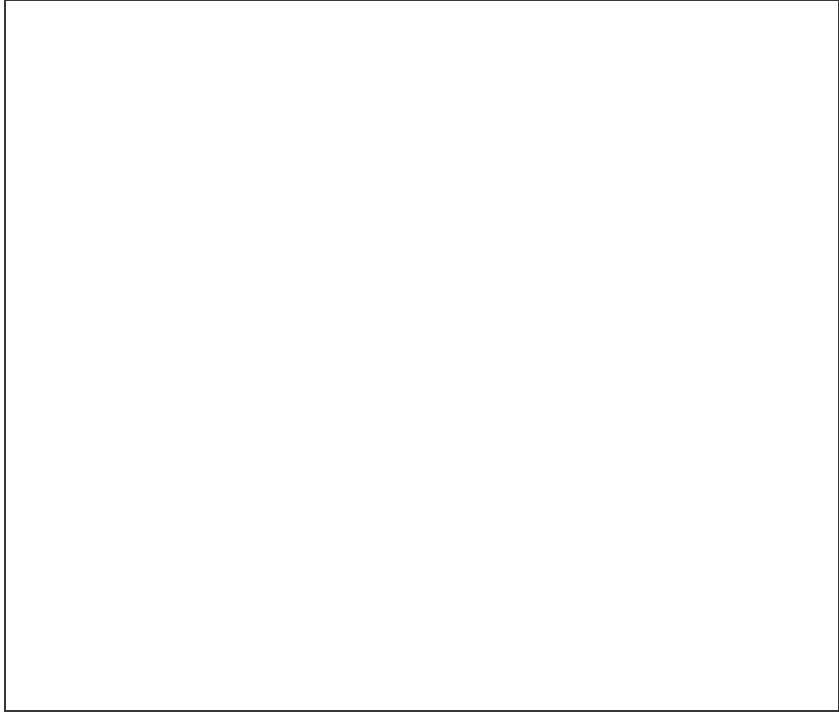
1. Praising the benefits of bodhicitta [chapter 1, v6-36]
2. The ritual of taking hold¹ of bodhicitta [chapters 2-3]

1. Praising the benefits of bodhicitta

1. Ordinary benefits
2. Extraordinary benefits
3. The reasons for the benefits
4. Summarizing the benefits of self
5. Summarizing the benefits of others

1. Ordinary benefits

1. Invisible benefits
2. Visible benefits
3. Praising the benefits by analogy



1. Invisible benefits

1. It overcomes all nonvirtue
2. It benefits oneself
3. It has the power to benefit others
4. It fulfils individual worldly wishes [259]

1. It overcomes all nonvirtue

1. The nature of nonvirtue
2. How bodhicitta overcomes nonvirtue

1. The nature of nonvirtue

1.6

**In this way, virtue is constantly weak and feeble,
And the extremely great power of nonvirtue is unbearable.**

The first line indicates the weakness of the power of the antidote. ‘The extremely great power of nonvirtue’ indicates the great power of that which is to be abandoned. ‘Unbearable’ indicates the result of this—suffering. One’s nonvirtues are not dominated by virtues; rather, one’s virtues are dominated by nonvirtues.

2. How bodhicitta overcomes nonvirtue

**What virtue, if not perfect bodhicitta,
Could possibly overcome it?**

There is no virtue other than bodhicitta that possesses the power conducive to liberation which overcomes such nonvirtue.

2. It benefits oneself

1.7

**The mighty sages, who have known it for many aeons,
Have seen that only bodhicitta has this power.**

Since they have meditated on it throughout innumerable aeons, the Buddhas, who perceive what is beneficial and what is not beneficial, acknowledge that bodhicitta is of the supreme benefit.

3. It has the power to benefit others

**With bodhicitta, limitless multitudes
Will easily attain the supreme bliss.**

When this intention arises in their mind, limitless sentient beings will easily attain the supreme bliss of great enlightenment. Why is this accomplishment so easy, when one must practise with difficulty for three inconceivable aeons? Because bodhisattvas give rise to a mind which takes joy in undertaking difficulties for the benefit of others, because their suffering is accompanied by the result, and because, compared to the limitless sufferings of saṃsāra, the difficulties are very slight.

4. It fulfils individual worldly wishes

1.8

**Those wishing to end the many sufferings of conditioned
existence,
Those wishing the dispel the unhappiness of beings,
And those wishing for many happinesses,
Should never abandon this bodhicitta.**

The first line refers to the happiness of the śrāvakas, the second to bodhisattvas and the third to the happinesses of the higher realms. [260]

Since the happiness of the śrāvakas and happiness within conditioned existence may arise without the generation of bodhicitta, if they do arise with it, is it not illogical to say they are results of bodhicitta? They are not contrary to it and although they are not part of its nature, results will occur even while generating bodhicitta as mere by-products. Since these are temporarily connected with it, they are presented as the results of bodhicitta. So even those who wish to train in the śrāvaka bhūmis should practise the training of the perfection of wisdom.

2. Visible benefits

1.9

**The very instant bodhicitta arises
In someone tormented in the prison of saṃsāra,
They will be called an 'heir of the Sugatas',
And be praised by gods and men.**

When bodhicitta arises, a new name is received: one is called an 'heir of the Sugatas', meaning that one is worthy of the praises of worldly gods and men. Who receives this? All beings who are tormented in the prison of saṃsāra. When do they receive it? The very instant that they generate bodhicitta.

3. Praising the benefits by analogy

1. It transforms the inferior into the supreme, like the elixir of an alchemist
2. It is difficult to find but extremely powerful, like a wish fulfilling jewel

3. Its fruits know no exhaustion, like the inconceivable tree
 4. It overcomes the inexpiable evil deeds, like a warrior
 5. It consumes the inevitable results of nonvirtuous actions, like
the fire at the end of time
 6. Other specific examples
1. It transforms the inferior into the supreme, like the elixir of an alchemist

1.10

**Like a supreme alchemical elixir,
Having imbibed it, the impure body is transformed
Into the priceless jewel of the kāya of a conqueror.
So, firmly take hold of what is called 'bodhicitta'.**

The impure body is transformed. Into what? Into the priceless jewel of the kāya of a conqueror. What transforms it? The 'taking hold', i.e. taking hold of the generation of bodhicitta. How is that exemplified? [261] It is like the transformation of base metals into gold by an alchemical elixir. Alternatively, 'take hold' may refer to [the transformation of] the body itself.

2. It is difficult to find but extremely powerful, like a wish fulfilling jewel

1.11

**If the only guides of beings have, with unfettered minds,
Seen its value in consummate examination,
Those of us who want to be free from wandering
Should firmly grasp the precious bodhicitta.**

Who grasps firmly this precious bodhicitta? Those who wish to be free from the saṃsāric state of wandering. Why do they grasp it? Because its value has been seen in consummate examination. Whose examination? The 'guides of beings', i.e. the Sugatas, who have examined it with their enlightened minds.

3. Its fruits know no exhaustion, like the inconceivable tree

1.12

**All other virtues are, like a plantain tree,
Exhausted after they produce their fruit,
But the perennial tree of bodhicitta
Grows with an inexhaustible supply.**

Virtues which are not based upon the generation of bodhicitta, once ripened, are exhausted but those which are based upon the generation of bodhicitta, once ripened, will grow in conformity with their cause and their exhaustion will be unknown.

4. It overcomes the inexpiable evil deeds,² like a warrior

1.13

**Like facing great terrors accompanied by a warrior,
Even those who have committed the extremely evil acts
Will instantly be freed by relying on it.
Why then would conscientious people not rely on this?**

One will be freed from the intense suffering that results from the extremely evil inexpiable acts after just a moment of experiencing it. Although the acts are not purified, temporarily the resultant ripening of the sufferings does not occur, until finally they are discarded. For whom? For whomever relies upon bodhicitta. In what way? Like passing great terrors guarded by a warrior, until the final destination is reached, temporarily one will not be harmed.

5. It consumes the inevitable results of nonvirtuous actions, like the fire at the end of time

1.14

**Like the fire at the end of time, great evils
Are totally consumed by it.**

Bodhicitta consumes the great inexpiable evil deeds and they are gone forever. How long does it take? An instant. What is it like? It is like the fire at the end of time, i.e. the world-destroying fire at the end of the aeon.

6. Other specific examples

**Its benefits are limitless,
As Lord Maitreya explained to Sudhana.**

Where are the limitless benefits of bodhicitta explained? In the *Āryabuddhavaṃśa Sūtra*. By whom are they explained? By Lord Maitreya. [262] To whom are they explained? They are explained to Sudhana, as follows. The merchant's son Sudhana, having generated bodhicitta before the Bhagavān Mañjuśrī and having received instructions from many spiritual teachers, finally sought out the Jina Maitreya in the 'Palace of Vairocana Adorned with Ornaments' on the shores of a great lake. Maitreya received him, saying,

'Look! You are a being of pure intent.
Sudhana, a son born into wealth,
You have approached me. Wise one,
Have you travelled well? You who have compassion and
love...'³

And so on. Following this praise, Sudhana, the merchant's son, requested, 'I have generated bodhicitta but I pray you teach me how to train with diligence.'

Maitreya responded, 'Son of noble family, bodhicitta is like the seed of all the Buddha's teachings. Since it makes virtuous dharmas grow in all beings, it is like a field. Since it is the support of the entire world, it is like the earth. Since one is protected by all the bodhisattvas, it is like a father. Since it delivers from all poverty, it is like Vaiśravaṇa. Since it perfectly establishes all benefits, it is like a wish fulfilling gem. Since it defeats the enemy defilements, it is like a lance. Since it envelops the undisciplined mind, it is like clothing. Since it severs the head of the defilements, it is like a sword. [263] Since it protects from all hostility, it is like a weapon. Since it captures those in the river of saṃsāra, it is like a fishing hook. Since it scatters the layer of dust of the defilements, it is like the mandala of wind. Since it collects all the conduct and aspirations of the bodhisattvas, it is like synopsis. Since it is worshipped by the worlds of humans, demigods and gods, it is like a stupa. Son of noble family, bodhicitta possesses these qualities, as well as a myriad of other qualities.'

2. The extraordinary benefits of bodhicitta

1. Divisions
2. Characteristics
3. Benefits of aspiration
4. Benefits of application

1. Divisions

1.15

**When summarized, bodhicitta
Should be known as having two types:
Bodhicitta of aspiration
And bodhicitta of application.**

The first two lines enumerate the divisions as two and the latter two name each one.

2. Characteristics

1.16

**Like understanding the difference
Between wishing to go and going,
So the wise should understand the difference
Between these two, respectively.**

Some say that aspiration, as the wish to go, is generating the mind which arises from symbols [or words] because one merely takes motivation as one's object in order to have realization of the path. Application, as the actual going, is generating the mind of the attainment of the ultimate dharmata because one takes actual enlightenment as one's object by directly entering the uncorrupted path of seeing the truth. However, this is not the opinion of the Ācārya [Śāntideva] because he explains in the *Śikṣā-samuccaya* that ordinary individuals also train in application [bodhicitta] and hence the dharmata is attained only by receiving teachings on the practices of application bodhicitta.⁴ [264]

According to Ācārya Jetāri, aspiration is the pursuit of enlightenment for the benefit of beings and application is the protection of that intention from decline.⁵ However, this is not the opinion of the Ācārya

because protection from decline does not fit the example of going somewhere.

According to some others, aspiration is as before [i.e. pursuit of enlightenment] but application is the training itself. However, this was not the intention of the Ācārya because in the liturgy, generating application bodhicitta is separate to undertaking the training.⁶ It would also contradict the scriptures, which refer to three bases:

- The fortunate basis—the [bodhisattva or Mahāyāna] family
- The basis for practising the conduct—generating bodhicitta
- The basis for the swift attainment of perfect buddhahood—the bodhisattva training⁷

That is, the teaching on the second basis—generating bodhicitta—is distinct from the teaching on the third basis—the training. The source for the explanation of aspiration and application given by the Ācārya is the *Avataṃsaka Sutra*, where it says,

It is rare for a person to have the aspiration for enlightenment.
It is even rarer to pursue the conduct.⁸

Thus, pursuit of the result is the generation of aspiration bodhicitta, while pursuit of the means to achieve that result is application bodhicitta. Therefore, it is also called ‘generating the mind endowed with conduct’ because the conduct is motivated by the promise to practise it.

3. Benefits of aspiration

1.17

**For those wandering in saṃsāra,
Great results arise from aspiration bodhicitta,
But a ceaseless stream of merits does not arise
As it does for application bodhicitta.**

With aspiration, since it is not the same as having diligence in actual practice, although one may have abundant happiness even while remaining within saṃsāra, if one’s circumstances lack the actual cause

which will fulfil that intention, one will not enter a continuous stream of merit because one does not have the intention and seriousness of being committed to the conduct. [265] But if one has the cause which fulfils the gathering of virtue, then merit is present even when one's intention and seriousness are interrupted, such as when asleep or when distracted.

4. Benefits of application

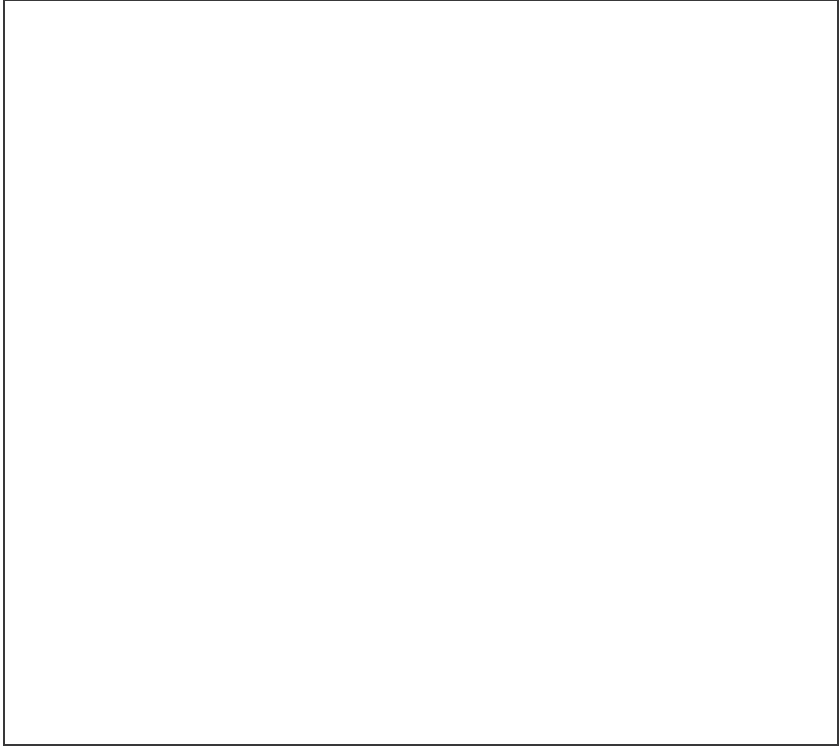
1.18

**For whoever embraces
This incontrovertible intent to liberate
Limitless realms of beings,
By the perfect adoption of that intent,**

1.19

**From the moment of embracing it, even when asleep
Or distracted, a force of merit
As vast as space
Arises in an uninterrupted stream.**

The one who adopts this intent, from the moment it is embraced, creates a force of merit equal to the sky. What does it mean to 'adopt' the intent? It means that the intent is 'irreversible', i.e. one does not allow the commitment to practise the path to diminish. What is the purpose of not allowing the commitment to practise the path to diminish? It is to completely liberate the limitless realms of sentient beings. Therefore, through adopting the generation of the mind which thinks, 'I will not allow the conduct which will liberate sentient beings to diminish', merit increases. Does it increase only intermittently? No, it is constant, without interruption. When does the cause to fulfil the intent occur? Although the cause is not present when one is sleeping or distracted, it nevertheless arises by the power of adopting the commitment. For example, this is like the continuity of merit that arises for someone who adopts renunciation, even when sleeping or distracted. Regarding this distraction, however, if someone is generating bodhicitta but, out of distraction from training, decides to stop practising, it is not logical that merit still increases.



3. The reasons for the benefits

1. Scripture
2. Reasoning

1. Scripture

1.20

The Tathāgata himself taught

These benefits along with their reasons

In the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*

For the sake of those inclined to lesser paths.

These benefits were taught by the Tathāgata himself. [266] In what sutra? In the *Sutra Requested by Subahu*. For what purpose? For the sake of benefitting sentient beings inclined towards lesser paths, i.e. they were taught for the benefit of the uncertain Mahāyāna family. Are they

merely described? No, their reasons are also explained, i.e. the benefits are demonstrated with the reasons for them, as explained in the next section.

2. Reasoning

1. The reasons for the benefits of aspiration
2. The reasons for the benefits of application

1. The reasons for the benefits of aspiration

1. The vastness of its intent
2. Its rarity
3. The greatness of its goodness

1. The vastness of its intent

1.21

**Even if one wishes to dispel merely
The head pains of beings,
The possession of that beneficial intention
Is endowed with boundless merit.**

1.22

**What can one say then of the wish to dispel
The endless unhappiness of each sentient being,
Wishing to establish every single one of them
In limitless qualities?**

The sea-captain Maitra named his son ‘Daughter’ [to protect him from following his father into a dangerous occupation]. The father died shortly after and when Daughter came of age, he asked his mother about his father’s profession. She replied that he was an incense merchant. So Daughter purchased incense to the value of two hundred silver coins and then returned to attend to his mother. He said, ‘I am going to become a merchant in the town by selling incense.’ He traded incense in the town and then similarly in the city, until he was selling to the whole region. In this way, in the town he accumulated four hundred silver coins, then in the city six hundred,

until across the whole region he had made eight hundred silver coins.

He returned each time to attend to his mother. She finally told him that his father was a sea-merchant. Having heard this, he immediately prepared to go to sea. When his mother objected to this, he kicked her in the head and departed. He travelled to the cities called 'Lands above the ocean shores' and spent a year each in four cities called 'Intoxicating', 'Ever-intoxicating', 'Delighting' and 'Guru of Brahmā', in which he consorted blissfully with two hundred, four hundred, six hundred and then eight hundred goddesses respectively. He returned to attend to his mother, [267] and lived out his days.

He departed to the cities of the ephemeral hells and passed through the hell-cities called Intoxicating, Ever-intoxicating, Delighting and Guru of Brahmā, whereupon a voice in the sky spoke, saying, 'Your arrival here is by the power of your actions [karma].' He saw a group of hell-beings with their heads being drilled by wheels and he immediately made the wish, 'May the pains of their heads be dispelled and may they ripen in me!' Whereupon, his was the only head being drilled but, through his kindness, he was then freed from that suffering. Thus, he said, 'This occurred through the full ripening of the harm I did to my mother.'

If even the intention to dispel pains in the head has such benefit, what can one say of the wish to dispel the endless suffering of all the limitless sentient beings and to establish every one of them in limitless happiness?

2. Its rarity

1. There is nobody else who has such a benevolent intent
2. Not even for themselves
3. Establishing the greatness of the benefit of generating this mind

1. There is nobody else who has such a benevolent intent

1.23

Do even our father or mothers

Ever have such a benevolent wish?

**Do even the gods, the rishis,
Or even Brahmā harbour such benevolence?**

One's parents, who naturally have a strong bond of love with their children, one's personal guardian deities,⁹ rishis who always speak the truth and even Brahmā who has trained his mind in the [four] immeasurables certainly wish for our happiness in this life but they do not have the intention to achieve enlightenment for our benefit.

2. Not even for themselves

1.24

**Those beings never before,
Even in their dreams,
Had an intention like this, even for their own sake.
How could it arise then for the sake of others?**

3. Establishing the greatness of the benefit of generating this mind

1.25

**The intention to benefit others did not arise
For sentient beings even for their own sake.
The arising of this highest treasure of the mind
Is an unprecedented wonder.**

'Unprecedented' here means it is extraordinary or uncommon.

3. The greatness of its goodness

1.26

**It is the cause of joy in all wandering beings.
It is the elixir remedying the suffering of sentient beings.
How can the merit of this treasure of mind
Even begin to be measured or quantified?**

It generates both joy in the mind and happiness in the body.

2. The reasons for the benefits of application [268]

1. The actual practice is undertaken

2. The many individuals affected
 3. It does not depend on getting anything back
 4. Establishing vastness
 5. Explaining how it is particularly powerful
1. The actual practice is undertaken

1.27

**If the mere intention to help others
Is better than making offerings to the Buddhas,
What can one say about the endeavour
To bring happiness and benefit to all beings without
exception?**

This verse describes the intention to help others as superior even to the worship of the Buddhas. As it says in the *Sutra Requested by Candrapradipa*,

If one filled a myriad of worlds
With limitless kinds of offerings
And offered this every day for all time,
It would not even approach the mind of loving kindness.¹⁰

It also says in the *Sutra Requested by Vīradatta*,

To the Buddhas, the one who has
The intention of bodhicitta
Is superior to the one who makes offerings
Of overflowing treasures to the Sugatas.¹¹

2. The many individuals affected

1.28

**Though they long to be free from suffering,
They hurriedly chase after suffering itself.
Though they long for happiness, in their ignorance,
They destroy it as though their own happiness were their
enemy.**

1.29

**Whoever is destitute of happiness
And burdened with many sufferings
Will be filled with every happiness
And cut off from all their suffering,**

1.30

**And their ignorance, too, will be dispelled.
What virtue could equal that?
What friend can compare to it?
What merit is remotely comparable to it?**

There are three kinds of beings referenced here:

1. Those possessing the cause—ignorance
2. Those experiencing result—destitution of happiness
3. Those tormented by suffering

1. Although they long to be free from suffering, in their ignorance they hurriedly chase after suffering itself and, although they long for happiness, in their ignorance they destroy their own happiness as if it were their enemy. Thus, they possess the cause: ignorance. The benefit for such beings is that ‘their ignorance too will be dispelled.’ The additional benefit of that is they now accumulate merit. No other kind of merit is known which is remotely like this.

2. The particular benefit for whomever is destitute of happiness is that they are ‘filled with every happiness.’ The praise is, ‘What [virtue] could equal to that?’ [269]

3. The benefit for those burdened with many sufferings is they are ‘cut off from all suffering.’ The praise is, ‘What friend is even alike to it?’

3. It does not depend on getting anything back

1.31

**If one who repays a helpful deed
Is worthy of some praise,
What can one say of the bodhisattva
Whose excellent deeds are unsolicited?**

4. Establishing vastness

1.32

**Worldly people respect someone who briefly
Gives a little food, contemptuously,
To a few beings, satisfying them only for half a day,
Saying, ‘That was a virtuous deed.’**

1.33

**What can one say then of someone who
Always gives the unsurpassed happiness
Of the Sugatas to countless sentient beings throughout time,
The ultimate perfection of their wishes?**

Even the giving of food is praised with the words, ‘That was a virtuous deed.’ If one wonders why the bodhisattva is superior, it is because the former has an inferior number of beings: a few; inferior time: one moment; inferior substance: mere food; inferior conduct: with contempt; and inferior benefit: satisfying for half a day, while the bodhisattva is superior in always practising vast giving for great fields of countless sentient beings; for a superior time: throughout time; with a superior substance: the unsurpassed bliss of the Sugatas; and a superior benefit: the ultimate perfection of their wishes.

5. Explaining how it is particularly powerful

1.34

**If one should develop a malevolent intention
Towards such beneficent sons of the conquerors,
The Sage has taught they will remain in the hells
For as many aeons as malevolent thoughts developed.**

For even a momentary malevolent intent, one can remain in the hells for an entire aeon. In the sutra of the *Display of Completely Definitive Pacification*, it says,

For however long they develop a mind of hatred and a mind of contempt for bodhisattvas, for as many aeons beings will remain in the hell realms.¹²

Having explained bodhicitta as a particularly powerful field of nonvirtue, next it is explained as a particularly powerful field of merit:

1.35

**Nevertheless, if one's attitude is good,
The results will be even greater.**

4. Summarizing the benefits of self

**The sons of the conquerors, with great seriousness,
Never perform nonvirtue and their virtues continuously
increase.**

With great dedication, they never perform nonvirtue [270] even at the cost of their lives. Rather, their virtues continuously increase.

5. Summarizing the benefits of others

1.36

**I bow down before
Those in whom this sacred jewel of mind is born
And I take refuge in those sources of happiness
Who bring happiness even to those who harm them.**

Bringing happiness even to those who harm them means, out of compassion, they bestow happiness on those who do them harm. It does not mean the happiness arises as a result of the harms committed, for that would contradict the earlier assertion in verse 34.