

Bodhicaryāvatāra: An Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life

by Śāntideva

Chapter II — Confession of Negativity

1. In order that I might adopt this precious jewel of mind,
I now make the most excellent of offerings to the buddhas,
To the sacred Dharma—that most rare and flawless jewel—
And to the buddhas' heirs, whose qualities are limitless.
2. I offer every variety of fruit and flower,
And every kind of healing medicine,
Each and every jewel this world affords,
And all its pure and freshest waters,
3. Every mountain filled with precious gems,
And forest groves, isolated and inspiring,
Trees of paradise garlanded with blossom,
And trees whose branches are laden with fine fruit,
4. Perfumed fragrances from the gods and other realms,
Incense, trees that grant wishes and produce magic gems,
Spontaneous harvests grown without the tiller's care,
And every thing of beauty worthy to be offered,
5. Lakes and ponds adorned with lotus flowers,
Where the pleasant calls of geese are heard,
Every thing and place of beauty unclaimed by any owner,
Extending to the boundless limits of space itself.
6. I picture them all in my mind, and to the supreme buddhas
And their bodhisattva heirs, I make a perfect gift of them.
Think of me with love, O sublime and compassionate lords,
And accept all these offerings which I now present.
7. Lacking stores of merit, I am destitute
And have nothing more to offer.
O protectors, who consider only others' benefit,
In your great power, accept this for my sake.

8. To the buddhas and their bodhisattva heirs,
I offer my body now and in all my lives to come.
Supreme courageous ones, accept me totally,
For with devotion I will be your servant.
9. If you accept me and take me fully in your care,
I will not fear saṃsāra as I offer other beings help.
The harmful acts I did before are entirely in the past,
And from now on, I vow to do no further deeds of harm.
10. To a bath house filled with soothing scents,
With brightly sparkling floors of crystal,
And fine pillars all shimmering with gems,
Where hang gleaming canopies of pearls,
11. I invite the buddhas and their bodhisattva heirs.
I request you: Come to bathe yourselves in scented water,
Poured from overflowing jugs made of exquisite jewels,
All the while accompanied by melody and song.
12. Then let me dry you in cloths beyond compare,
Immaculate and anointed well with perfumed scent,
And dress you finely in the most excellent of garments,
Lightly scented and dyed in vivid colours.
13. I offer clothing made of the finest gentle fabrics,
And hundreds of the most beautiful adornments,
To grace the bodies of noble Samantabhadra,
Mañjughoṣa, Lokeśvara and the rest.
14. With the most sublime of fragrant perfumes,
That gently permeates throughout a billion worlds,
I will anoint the bodies of all the buddhas,
Gleaming brightly, like pure and burnished gold.
15. To the mighty sages, perfect recipients of my offering,
I will present red lotus and heavenly *mandāra*,
Blue *utpala* flower and other scented blossoms,
Beautifully arranged in brightly coloured garlands.
16. I also offer billowing clouds of incense,
Whose sweet aroma captivates the mind,
And a rich feast of plentiful food and drink,
Fit to grace the tables of the gods.

17. I offer row upon row of precious lamps,
All perfectly contrived as golden lotuses,
And I scatter the petals of attractive flowers
Upon level, incense-sprinkled ground.
18. I offer divine palaces resonant with songs of praise,
Gleaming with precious pearls and pendant gems,
The most beautiful of structures in the whole of space—
All this I offer to those whose nature is compassion.
19. Jewel-encrusted parasols with handles made of gold,
Whose fringes are all embellished in ornate designs,
Turned upright, well proportioned and pleasing to the eye.
Now and forever, I offer this to all the buddhas.
20. May a multitude of other offerings,
Accompanied by music sweet to hear,
Be made in great successive clouds,
To soothe the pains of living beings.
21. May rains of precious gems and flowers
Shower down in never-ending streams,
Upon all the jewels of noble Dharma,
And sacred monuments and images.
22. Just as Mañjuḡṣa and the rest
Made offerings to all the buddhas,
Likewise I too will offer to those thus gone
And all their bodhisattva heirs.
23. With vast oceans of melodious praise,
I honour these oceans of good qualities.
May clouds of sweet and gentle praise
Ascend unceasingly before them.
24. Multiplying my body as many times as there are atoms
In the universe, I prostrate and bow before
The buddhas of the past, present and future,
The Dharma and the supreme assembly.
25. To all supports of bodhicitta
And all stūpas, I bow down,
And to preceptors and teachers,
And those who practise discipline.

26. Until I realize the essence of enlightenment,
I take refuge in the buddhas.
And likewise in the Dharma,
And the assembly of bodhisattvas.
27. To the perfect buddhas and bodhisattvas,
Who reside in every direction of space,
And who embody great compassion,
I press my palms together and pray:
28. In this and all my other countless lifetimes
Spent wandering in beginningless saṃsāra,
In my ignorance I have committed wrongs
And encouraged others to do the same.
29. Overwhelmed by ignorant delusion,
I celebrated the harm that was done.
But now I see it all was done in error,
And before the buddhas, sincerely I confess.
30. Whatever I have done against the Three Jewels,
My parents, my teachers or anyone else,
Through the force of my afflictions,
With my body, speech or mind,
31. All the misdeeds that I, the wicked one, have done,
Faults that cling to me from my many mistakes,
And all the unbearable crimes I have committed,
I openly declare to you, the guides of all the world.
32. Before my negativity has been purified,
My life may well come to an end,
So I pray now: grant me your protection,
Swiftly, to ensure that I am freed!
33. The Lord of Death is fickle, unworthy of our trust,
Whether life's tasks are done or not, he will not wait.
For the sick and for the healthy alike,
This fleeting life is not something on which we can rely.
34. When we go, we must leave everything behind,
But I have failed to understand this, and so
For the sake of friends and enemies alike,
I engaged in all manner of harmful deeds.

35. My enemies will become no more,
And my friends will cease to be,
I myself will pass from this existence,
And everything in turn will disappear.
36. Like experiences in a dream,
Everything I make use of and enjoy,
Will later turn to faded memory,
And having passed will not be seen again.
37. In this lifetime, which lasts but for a while,
Some friends and enemies are now gone.
But not the harmful acts I did for them—
Those unbearable effects are still to come.
38. Never thinking that I too
Might quickly pass away,
In my delusion, lust and hatred,
I have done so much to harm.
39. Never halting, day or night,
My life is always slipping by.
Having gone, life can not be extended,
So how could the likes of me not die?
40. While I lie there in my final bed,
Friends and family may be by my side,
But I alone will be the one
To feel the severing of all ties to life.
41. When I am seized by the emissaries of Death,
What help will be my family or my friends?
At that time it is merit alone that can protect me,
But upon that, alas, I have failed to depend.
42. O protectors! I was heedless,
Unaware of horrors such as this,
And all for this transient existence,
Amassed so many harmful deeds.
43. When led towards the place of torture,
Where his body will soon be ripped apart,
A man is transfigured by his terror;
His mouth turns dry, his pained eyes dart.

44. If that is so, then how desperate will I be,
When stricken down and gravely ill with fear,
I am seized by the messengers of Death,
And their gruesome, terrifying forms appear?
45. Is there anyone who can really save me
From the horrors of this appalling fate?
Staring in terror with my eyes opened wide,
I'll search all around to find a refuge place.
46. When nowhere do I see such a place of safety,
My heart will sink; depressed, I'll give up hope.
For if there is no haven to which I might retreat,
What options am I left with? What is there to do?
47. Thus, from this day onwards I take refuge
In the buddhas, the guardians of the world,
Who labour to protect and benefit us all,
And whose great strength can banish every fear.
48. Likewise, I genuinely take refuge
In the Dharma they have realized,
Which eliminates saṃsāra's terror,
And also in the hosts of bodhisattvas.
49. Utterly terrified and gripped with fear,
I give myself to Samantabhadra;
And to Mañjuḥṣa too,
I offer this body in service.
50. To the protector Avalokiteśvara,
Whose compassion is in all his actions,
I cry out in the depths of desperation,
"Grant me your protection, evil as I am!"
51. To the noble bodhisattvas
Ākāśagarbha and Kṣitigarbha,
And all the lords of great compassion,
From my heart, I call for your protection.
52. And I take refuge in Vajrapāṇi,
Before whom Death's messengers
And all who threaten us will flee
In terror, dispersed in all directions.

53. In the past I ignored your words,
But now I have seen this horror,
And so I take you as my refuge:
Swiftly banish all my fears, I pray!
54. For if, alarmed by common ailments,
I must follow the doctor's sage advice,
How much more so when perpetually
Afflicted by desire and other faults.
55. If one of these alone brings ruin
To all who dwell within the world,
And no other cure to heal them
Is found anywhere at all,
56. Then the intention not to follow
The advice of the omniscient physician,
Whose words banish ills of every kind,
Is utter madness, worthy of contempt.
57. If I need to take special care when poised
Above a common drop of some small height,
Then how much more so to avoid the one
Of deep duration that falls a thousand miles?
58. It makes no sense to relax and think:
"Today, at least, I shall not die,"
For it is certain that a time will come
When my life will cease to be.
59. Who can offer me reassurance?
How can I be sure I need not fear?
If there is no doubt that I will die,
Then how can I remain at ease?
60. Of my experiences from the past,
What's left for me? What now remains?
Yet by clinging to them obsessively,
I have disobeyed my teacher's words.
61. Just as I must eventually forsake this life,
So too must I take leave of relatives and friends.
When I must go alone on death's uncertain journey,
What concern to me are all these enemies and allies?

62. How can I free myself from non-virtue,
The source from which sufferings arise?
At all times of the day and night,
This should be my one concern.
63. Whatever wrongs I have committed,
In my ignorance and blindness—
Whether actions plainly negative
Or deeds proscribed by vows,
64. Before the buddhas, I join my palms together,
And, terrified by the awful sufferings to come,
Prostrate myself upon the ground over and again,
Confessing all my harmful deeds, each and every one.
65. I call upon you, the guides of all the world,
To accept me, and the harms that I have done.
And these actions, since they are unwholesome,
I promise, from now on, I shall never do again.

| Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2007.

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