

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 16, Text sections 250-262

***Just as one understands the distinction between
Aspiring to go and actually going,
In the same way the wise ones should understand
The distinction between these two in their progressive order.***

BCA 1-16, Text section 250

Text sections 250-262 discuss the various distinctions of bodhicitta. Bodhicitta can be differentiated in many ways: by the six transcendental perfections, by the *twenty-two similes*, by the different stages of qualities, or by the *eighty unceasing factors*.

In Asanga's Abhisamayaalamkaara, Maitreya explains twenty-two similes for bodhicitta: 1) earth, 2) gold, 3) moon, 4) fire, 5) treasure, 6) jewel mine, 7) ocean, 8) diamond, 9) mountain, 10) medicine, 11) spiritual friend, 12) wish-fulfilling jewel, 13) sun, 14) song, 15) king, 16) storehouse, 17) highway, 18) conveyance, 19) spring, 20) melodious sound, 21) river and 22) cloud

These twenty-two similes stand for the following qualities accompanying bodhicitta at different *stages* of development: 1) earth and earnest desire; 2) gold and intention; 3) moon and superior determination; 4) fire and application; 5) treasure and generosity; 6) jewel mine and discipline; 7) ocean and patience; 8) diamond and diligence; 9) mountain and meditation; 10) medicine and wisdom-knowledge; 11) spiritual friend and skillful means; 12) wish-fulfilling jewel and aspiration; 13) sun and strength; 14) song and wisdom; 15) king and clairvoyance; 16) storehouse and the two accumulations; 17) highway and the factors conducive to enlightenment; 18) conveyance and *śamathā* and *vipaśyanā*; 19) spring and perfect recall and charisma; 20) melodious sound and feast of dharma; 21) river and sole path; 22) cloud and dharmakaaya.

The eighty unceasing factors are: 1) development of bodhicitta, 2) motivation, 3) application, 4) superior determination, 5-10) the six transcendental perfections, 11-14) the four immeasurables, 14-19) the five supernatural perceptions, 20-23) the four means of attraction, 23-27) the types of correct discrimination, 28-31) the

four reliances, 32-33) the two accumulations, 34-70) the thirty-seven factors conducive for enlightenment, 71-72) *śamathā* and *vipaśyanā*, 73-74) perfect recall and brilliance, 75-78) the four summaries of dharma, 79) one single path to be traversed, and 80) skill in means.

The six transcendental perfections are 1) generosity, 2) discipline, 3) patience, 4) diligence, 5) concentration, and 6) knowledge.

The four immeasurables are 1) immeasurable loving kindness, 2) immeasurable compassion, 3) immeasurable sympathetic joy, and 4) immeasurable equanimity.

The five supernatural perceptions are 1) the supernatural perception of the divine eye, 2) the supernatural perception of the divine ear, 3) the supernatural perception of knowing the minds of others, 4) the supernatural perception of recollecting former rebirths, and 5) the supernatural perception of miracles.

The four means of attraction are 1) generosity, 2) speaking in a pleasant manner, 3) purposeful activity and 4) consistency (between words and actions).¹⁵²⁸ The types of correct discrimination are 1) the correct discrimination of meaning, 2) the correct discrimination of the teaching, 3) the correct discrimination of definitive words, and 4) the correct discrimination of eloquent courage.

The four reliances are 1) rely not on the words, but on the meaning, 2) rely not on consciousness but on wisdom, 3) rely not on the expedient meaning but on the definitive meaning and 4) rely not on the person, but on the teaching.

The two accumulations are the accumulation of merit and the accumulation of wisdom.

The thirty-seven factors conducive for enlightenment are: (1-4) the four applications of mindfulness, (5-8) the four right endeavors, (9-12) the four legs of miracles, (13-17) the five pure faculties, (18-22) the five pure powers, (23-29) the seven factors of enlightenment, and (30-37) the noble eightfold path.

The four applications of mindfulness are 1) application of mindfulness to the body, 2) application of mindfulness to sensation, 3) application of mindfulness to mind, and 4) application of mindfulness to phenomena.

The four right endeavors are 1) not to give rise to non-virtuous qualities that have not arisen, 2) to abandon those that have arisen, 3) to give rise to the virtuous

qualities that have not arisen, and 4) not to degenerate those that have arisen.

The four legs of miracles are 1) the miracle-leg of intention , 2) the miracle-leg of diligence, 3) the miracle-leg of attention, and 4) the miracle-leg of discernment.

The five pure faculties are 1) trust / faith, 2) diligence, 3) mindfulness/recollection, 4) concentration, and 5) wisdom-knowledge / discriminating knowledge.

The five pure powers are identical with the five pure faculties as mentioned above: 1) the power of trust / faith, 2) power of diligence, 3) power of mindfulness / recollection, 4) power of concentration.

The seven factors of enlightenment are 1) the enlightened factor of correct mindfulness, 2) the enlightened factor of correct investigation of phenomena, 3) the enlightened factor of correct diligence, 4) the enlightened factor of correct joy, 5) the enlightened factor of correct pliancy, 6) the enlightened factor of correct concentration, and 7) the enlightened factor of correct equanimity.

The noble eightfold path are 1) correct view, 2) correct thought, 3) correct speech, 4) correct action, 5) correct livelihood, 6) correct effort, 7) correct mindfulness / recollection and 8) correct concentration.

The four summaries of dharma are 1) all composite things are impermanent, 2) all composite and defiling states are suffering, 3) all phenomena are empty and devoid a self-entity and 4) nirvana is peace.

All these multifarious distinctions of bodhicitta can be condensed into two: the bodhicitta of aspiration and the bodhicitta of application.

A śraavaka arhat who has entered into cessation remains in this state for many aeons until being awakened from it by light rays emitted by the Buddha. This is called 'the empowerment of great light'. The Buddha then teaches the arhats that they have not reached enlightenment and encourages them to enter into the Mahaayaana path. They progressively embark upon the paths of accumulation and of application; having once reached the path of seeing, they will realize absolute bodhicitta. Thus, according to the Mahaayaana tradition, even a śraavaka arhat must begin over again on the paths of accumulation and of application .

No ordinary beings, śraavakas, or pratyekabuddhas have realized absolute bodhicitta. This is realized only from the first bodhisattva level onward and is the special quality of a 'noble being'. Anyone who has realized absolute bodhicitta is a noble being. Absolute bodhicitta is achieved through the power of subtle dharmataa, the nature of reality, while relative bodhicitta comes about through the power of *tangible indicators*.

BCA 1-16, Text section 251:

Relative bodhicitta has two aspects: bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. Both are ways of thinking. Many people are confused about this. Both types of bodhicitta are motivation and are not action or conduct. First, you form the motivation, and only then can you enter with that motivation into whatever conduct you wish.

Bodhicitta of aspiration is said to be like the wish to go to Lhasa while bodhicitta of application is like setting out on the road to Lhasa. Bodhicitta of aspiration is the thought: "I will liberate all sentient beings from suffering and establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment."

Bodhicitta of application is the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of perfect enlightenment, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom." These two aspects of bodhicitta are both motivation.

The actual engaging in the six transcendental perfections is called 'application' or 'practice'. Motivation and application are two different things. Bodhicitta is motivation alone. Actually carrying out the conduct of the bodhisattvas, such as the six transcendental perfections and so forth, is application. All activities of the bodhisattvas are embraced by bodhicitta, but bodhicitta by itself does not involve action.

The term 'bodhicitta' means literally 'mind of awakening' or 'thought of awakening'. The term is not 'action of awakening' or 'conduct of awakening'. While maintaining the motivation of bodhicitta, you can enact the conduct of the bodhisattva.

When you lose the motivation of bodhicitta, then your action is no longer bodhisattva conduct. Without the motivation of bodhicitta, your action is no longer the cause for attaining perfect enlightenment. Your meritorious actions

might still concord with ordinary merit or even with the virtue that concords with liberation, but, nevertheless, your striving will not lead to complete enlightenment.

To commit to the fruition, to enlightenment, is the bodhicitta of aspiration. The thought, “I will liberate all sentient beings from suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha,” is bodhicitta of aspiration.

To commit to the cause, that which brings about enlightenment, is the bodhicitta of application. Actually entering into the conduct of any of the six perfections with the thought, “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation and wisdom, any of the six perfections,” is bodhicitta of application. For example, if you resolve, “In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and establish them on the level of the omniscient Buddha, I will study this text,” this is the bodhicitta of application. The bodhicitta of application requires the intention to actually do something, to engage in any of the six transcendental actions and so forth, with a very specific and particular motivation.

BCA 1-16, Text section 252:

The collection of canonical commentaries, the Tangyur, includes many different interpretations and opinions about the distinction between bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. The Buddhist masters of India and of Tibet did not all hold the same opinion.

For instance, *Master Jnanapaada* states that the development of bodhicitta by ordinary people is bodhicitta of aspiration and that the development of bodhicitta by noble people, those who have reached the first bodhisattva level and beyond, is bodhicitta of application. Master Jnanapaada probably considered that the bodhicitta developed by ordinary people was not really effective and that an individual can truly help other beings only after reaching the first bodhisattva level of realization.

BCA 1-16, Text section 253:

Indian scholars such as *Abhaya*, *Jnanakiirti* and others taught that the development of bodhicitta by those who have reached the path of accumulation is bodhicitta of aspiration and that bodhicitta of application applies to those who have reached the path of application and more. These teachings derive from the practical experience of these masters and are not mere philosophical hairsplitting.

BCA 1-16, Text section 254:

The Indian masters Shaantipa, Ratnakara, Saagaramegha, and others stated that without having received the bodhisattva precepts in a ceremony from a qualified master, the mindset of wishing to attain enlightenment is bodhicitta of aspiration. Once the bodhisattva precepts are received, the same mindset is bodhicitta of application. Thus, they made the distinction between bodhicitta of aspiration and of application mainly based on the absence or presence of the precepts.

BCA 1-16, Text section 255:

Prajnaakaramati taught that simply holding bodhicitta in one's mind without actually engaging with one's body and speech in the bodhisattva conduct is bodhicitta of aspiration; actually engaging in the bodhisattva conduct with body and speech is bodhicitta of application. Many Western Buddhists seem to hold this view.

BCA 1-16, Text section 257:

Lord Atiśa and *Longchenpa* both held the same opinion about how to distinguish between the two types of bodhicitta. Committing to or focusing on the fruition, the level of buddhahood, is bodhicitta of aspiration, and committing to or focusing on the cause, the path, is bodhicitta of application. We, as students of the Old School, follow this interpretation of Atiśa and Longchenpa. For details on the 22 *similes* and the *supporting factors* see text section 250.

BCA 1-16, Text sections 258-260:

Bodhicitta has two aspects, compassion and wisdom-knowledge. With compassion you focus on the benefit of others by committing yourself, "I will free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace."

'Suffering of peace' refers to the static and finite peace state of the śraavakas. A śraavakaarhat is free from ego-clinging, subject fixation, and has attained

the peace of nirvana, but he still retains subtle fixations on phenomena, object fixations, which cause subtle fear and suffering. Bodhisattvas also have this subtle fixation. Therefore, the Mahaayaana practitioner aspires to free all beings from even the most subtle fixations.

With wisdom-knowledge you focus on perfect enlightenment by committing yourself, "I will establish them on the level of complete and perfect enlightenment."

BCA 1-16, Text section 261-262:

Generally, the thought or wish to establish all sentient beings in the fruition, the level of buddhahood, is called bodhicitta of aspiration. Committing to the practice of the six perfections in order to establish all sentient beings on the level of buddhahood, the fruition, is called bodhicitta of application. These two kinds of bodhicitta are identical with the bodhisattva precepts and also with the three disciplines of the bodhisattvas.

The three disciplines of the bodhisattvas are: (1) The discipline of refraining from negative conduct, (2) the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas and (3) the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings.

(1) The discipline of refraining from negative conduct: A bodhisattva avoids all ten non-virtuous actions like poison and keeps the basic training of at least one of the seven precepts of individual liberation, which are the precepts of (1) a fully ordained monk; (2) a fully ordained nun; (3) a monk; (4) a nun; (5) a male lay practitioner; (6) a female lay practitioner and (7) a probationary nun.

(2) The discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas: While maintaining discipline of gathering merit by practicing any type of virtue, a bodhisattva studies and contemplates the sublime teachings and practices the teachings that lead to enlightenment, such as the six transcendental perfections.

(3) The discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings: This is how a bodhisattva benefits sentient beings by appropriately meeting their expectations and needs.

Why are the two types of bodhicitta identical with the three disciplines? (1) The first discipline is refraining from negative conduct. The essence of this discipline is giving up harming others, including the basis for such harm, and accomplishing

the benefits for others, including the basis for such benefit. These two aspects are also present in the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application. Bodhicitta of application and the discipline of refraining from negative conduct are identical when you make the following commitment: "I will free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace and establish them on the level of complete and perfect buddhahood. For this purpose I will give up the ten non-virtuous actions."

(2) The second discipline is the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas. The bodhicitta of application and this second discipline are identical, being the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will practice generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditation or wisdom, any of the six perfections."

(3) The third discipline is the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings and again is identical with the bodhicitta of application.

Bodhicitta and the discipline of fulfilling the benefit of sentient beings are identical when you make the following commitment: "In order to free all mother-like sentient beings, equal to the reaches of space, from all suffering of existence and peace and establish them on the level of complete and perfect buddhahood, I will tirelessly work to fulfill the benefit of beings."

Discipline refers mainly to disciplining your mind. The *precepts* are also nothing other than the mental resolve to safeguard one's body, speech and mind from non-virtuous actions. Precepts and bodhicitta are identical in the commitment: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of the omniscient buddhahood, I will safeguard my conduct of body, speech and mind from non-virtuous actions." The term *precept* simply means making the resolution: "I will abstain from the ten non-virtuous actions."

Even after taking the precepts to abstain from the ten non-virtuous actions, we still unintentionally slip into them from time to time. Without meaning to hurt others, due to our habitual patterns we still say words that are painful and cause harm. What is crucial then is to repeatedly re-evoke the intention to abstain from harming others. If one intentionally commits any of the ten non-virtuous actions, however, this is in total contradiction of bodhicitta.

In this manner the two types of bodhicitta, that of aspiration and that of application, are the very precepts of the bodhisattvas. With body, speech and mind, one inflicts not the slightest harm on other beings but benefits other beings with body, speech and mind as much as one is able.

Bodhicitta as such is endowed with different aspects, as in the example of the precious wish-fulfilling jewel. This jewel can cure small pox, grant all wishes and needs, and dispel darkness. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel eradicates infectious diseases, bodhicitta dispels all negativity. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel grants all wishes, bodhicitta gives rise to all virtuous qualities. Just as the wish-fulfilling jewel dispels darkness, bodhicitta naturally enacts benefit for others.

Bodhicitta thus includes the three disciplines. As the wish-fulfilling jewel eradicates infectious diseases, bodhicitta is the discipline that safeguards against negative conduct. As the wish-fulfilling jewel grants all wishes, bodhicitta is the discipline of practicing virtuous dharmas. As the wish-fulfilling jewel dispels darkness, bodhicitta is the discipline that benefits sentient beings. Furthermore, the six perfections are included in the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application.

Generally, the six perfections require that you actually do something. These perfections, however, are also included in the attitude of bodhicitta, which is the motivation. The characteristic of generosity, for instance, is to have a generous mind. It is the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will donate rice to this beggar."

In the same way, discipline is a mind bent on renunciation; patience is a mind unruffled by upset; diligence is a mind that enjoys virtue; meditation is a mind that does not stray from its focus; and wisdom is the mind's capacity to distinguish all phenomena, to understand all distinctions clearly. In this fashion the bodhicitta of aspiration and of application includes all six perfections.

Bodhicitta of aspiration and of application is the basis of all paths. Endowed with bodhicitta, one can achieve buddhahood. Without bodhicitta, there is no chance to attain buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the unfailing seed for achieving buddhahood. It is compassion as it focuses on all sentient beings. It is wisdom as it focuses on buddhahood.

As explained above, bodhicitta of application requires the intention to actually do something, to engage in certain conduct with a particular motivation.

Bodhicitta of application is the thought: "In order to liberate all sentient beings from their suffering, its causes and results, and to establish them on the level of omniscient buddhahood, I will make this donation." Even if you cannot actually complete the act of generosity, it is still sufficient. The most important factor is having the sincere motivation and mindset to do so.

Bodhicitta differs from conduct. Bodhicitta mainly depends on motivation. Mind is the primary factor; conduct is secondary. Conduct always refers to an act of body or speech. Mind is that which puts body and speech into action. Even if the actual conduct is not engaged in, as long as your mind has made a decision, bodhicitta of application is already in place. When you act on this intention, you are carrying out the actual conduct of a bodhisattva. If your mind has the true motivation of bodhicitta, even if your physical and verbal conduct seem non-virtuous from a traditional point of view, you are still accumulating virtue. If your mind is not imbued with the motivation of bodhicitta, even if your physical and verbal conduct are virtuous, your virtuous conduct does not lead to the attainment of enlightenment.

Arousing bodhicitta is entirely a mental event. So far we have been discussing relative bodhicitta, but it is important to note that the difference between relative and absolute bodhicitta is marked by the absence or presence of the 'three factors'. If these three factors are present, bodhicitta is relative; if the three factors are absent, it is absolute bodhicitta. The three factors are fixations: holding on to subject, to object and to the action. For example, holding on to oneself as a donor, the subject, someone who donates a gift; holding on to a recipient, the object, someone who receives the gift; and holding on to the act of giving, the action. Absolute bodhicitta is free from these three fixations. The bodhisattva performs generous actions without holding on to these three fixations. The actions of a bodhisattva who is truly beyond these fixations are called 'transcendental perfections'.

If you want to become a bodhisattva, you should receive the bodhisattva commitments from a qualified preceptor during a proper ceremony. In that ceremony you request the Buddha, the bodhisattvas and the vajra master to consider you with kindness. You visualize the Buddha and bodhisattvas in the sky in front of you, and you repeat the words of the bodhisattva precepts after the preceptor three times. Following the third repetition, the preceptor snaps his fingers; at that moment you should imagine that the precepts have taken birth in

your mind. By receiving the precepts in this way you take upon yourself the commitment to keep the three disciplines of a bodhisattva. The main point is to never forsake sentient beings. Always maintain the wish that you want to free all sentient beings from suffering and that you want to establish them on the level of perfect buddhahood. Through our habitual patterns, our mind is not greatly concerned with the welfare of others most of the time. This is normal for a beginner and does not mean that you have lost your bodhisattva commitment.

Only if you consciously make up your mind not to help others, particularly when you have an opportunity to benefit them, have you truly lost the bodhisattva precepts. Having occasional negative thoughts about others or sometimes speaking in an improper manner about others comes from the force of your former bad habits and will definitely impair your bodhisattva precepts. This level of negativity will not destroy the precepts. However, you should re-take your bodhisattva precepts on a daily basis. The tremendous positive momentum of bodhicitta will gradually change the negative patterns of your mind and increase your positive tendencies.