

## ***BCA Ch. 1, Verse 14, Text sections 233-239***

***Just like the fire at the end of an aeon, this bodhicitta  
Definitely consumes in one instant even great negative deeds.  
The wise Maitreyanaatha taught  
Its unfathomable benefits to Sudhana.***

### **BCA 1-14, Text section 233:**

As in this example of the fire at the end of an aeon, all the unintentional negativities, which are even more than the intentional negativities that we can remember, will be purified in one moment by bodhicitta's great power. If one practices the meditation of relative bodhicitta, these unintentional negativities will gradually decrease. If one can practice absolute bodhicitta, all unintentional negativity will be totally eradicated. Therefore, one should definitely meditate on bodhicitta.

Meditating on bodhicitta is much more powerful than simply meditating on compassion. The power of bodhicitta exceeds the power of compassion hundreds of thousands of times. Ordinary beings and sravakas do have compassion, but genuine bodhicitta is found only in a few exceptional people. Everybody who has true bodhicitta is endowed with compassion, but not every person who has compassion is endowed with bodhicitta.

Compassion is the wish to free beings from suffering. A mother has compassion and love for her children, but she lacks bodhicitta. Bodhicitta has two aspects, 'compassion' and 'knowledge'. With compassion the bodhisattva focuses on benefiting others by making the commitment: "I will free all beings from their suffering." With knowledge the bodhisattva focuses on perfect enlightenment by making the commitment: "I will establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment." Thus, compassion and loving kindness by themselves are not called bodhicitta, although they are the basis for bodhicitta.

The qualities of bodhicitta are as inconceivable as the qualities of the Buddha. Whoever has bodhicitta can attain Buddhahood, while whoever lacks bodhicitta can never reach Buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the unfailing seed that leads to the accomplishment of Buddhahood. In order to gain trust and faith in bodhicitta, however, one must have accumulated considerable merit in this and former lifetimes. First, one needs some understanding of the Buddha's inconceivable qualities to gain trust in the Buddha. Then one needs the wish to accomplish Buddhahood. Even having the wish to attain Buddhahood, however, one must have the merit to develop bodhicitta in order to truly embark on the path to enlightenment.

**BCA 1-14, Text sections 234-239:**

*References to other textbook* means 'to encourage to look somewhere else'. Since the benefits and qualities of bodhicitta are inconceivable, they cannot all be explained exhaustively here in the Bodhisattva-caryavatara. Therefore, Santideva recommends reading the Gandha-vyuha-sutra for further details which recount the story of Sudhana.

Sudhana was a student of Manjusri and received from him a *directive* to study the conduct of a bodhisattva with the monk Meghasri. Beginning with Meghasri, he studied with one hundred and ten teachers, each of whom taught him one quality of bodhicitta, a single aspect of the bodhisattva conduct. Finally, he met Lord Maitreya, who told him to examine his palace. Sudhana saw one aspect of the conduct of a bodhisattva displayed in each palace window. For instance, he saw the act of sacrificing one's head and the benefits of performing that act. In this way, through two hundred and thirty examples, the Gandha-vyuha-sutra teaches all the benefits of bodhicitta.