

## ***BCA Ch.1, Verse 36, Text sections 302-306***

*I pay respect to the body of those  
In whom this sacred and precious mind has arisen  
And who link to happiness even those who have caused them harm.  
To that very source of happiness I go for refuge.*

### **BCA 1-36, Text sections 302-306**

Here, Shantideva offers respect and homage to all those who have developed the precious bodhicitta in their minds. Bodhicitta is the cause that brings happiness to all beings, the cause that frees all beings from suffering.

A Buddha is born from a bodhisattva. After three incalculable aeons as a bodhisattva, Shaakyamuni finally attained buddhahood. A bodhisattva is born from compassion. Therefore, you should first offer homage and respect to compassion. Candrakirti and Shantideva said that when you pay respect to a bodhisattva, you pay respect to bodhicitta. You are honoring the compassion of that bodhisattva.

Whoever harms a bodhisattva will eventually be freed from samsara, although he must temporarily take rebirth in hell. This refers to the saying: *"In case of a good connection you will reach buddhahood in one lifetime, and in case of a bad connection you will eventually reach the end of samsara."*

An example for a bad connection with the Buddha is the monk Sunakshatra, who served the Buddha for twenty-five years and knew the entire tripitaka by heart. He thought he was equal to the Buddha and could not see any superior quality in the Buddha. The consequences of that negative attitude toward the Buddha are said to be 500 rebirths as a preta and final rebirth in the Avicii hell. It is further predicted that Sunakshatra will be liberated at the time of 'Buddha Rocana', the last Buddha of this 'Fortunate Aeon'. This illustrates the case of someone with a bad connection to a bodhisattva or a buddha. Despite his bad connection, he will eventually be liberated from samsara.

Those who have no connection to the dharma at all but who only harm beings will stay in samsara endlessly. Anyone who has a connection to the dharma, however, will eventually reach enlightenment because the root of liberation has been implanted in their minds. It is predicted that at the end of this Fortunate Aeon in which one thousand

buddhas will appear, at the time of 'Buddha Rocana' all beings with a connection to the dharma will take rebirth in Sukhaavatii, the Buddhafield of Amitaabha.

People who have broken their Vajrayana samaayas (spiritual pledges) with their root gurus must endure rebirth in the hell realms for a long time, but this does come to an end. That is called *reaching the end of samsara*. Root gurus cannot liberate their bad students from the consequences of their broken samaayas. Even the Buddha himself cannot save beings from their karma. The buddhas, bodhisattvas and teachers are only the external conditions enabling sentient beings to develop their internal qualities and to purify their own obscurations. In the case of bad students, since the teacher has implanted the seed for liberation in their minds, even though they must take temporary rebirth in the hell realms, their samsara will come to an end, and they will eventually reach enlightenment.

You might ask, "Who is better off? Someone with absolutely no contact with the dharma, who commits negative deeds, or someone who practices under a qualified master and breaks all the precepts, commitments and samaayas?" The answer is, "The one who breaks all his samaayas will take rebirth in the hell realms but will eventually attain enlightenment due to the blessings and aspirations of the buddhas, bodhisattvas and his root guru. People who have committed negative deeds on the other hand have no chance to meet the dharma because the seed for liberation was never implanted in their minds.

For the bad student samsara will eventually come to an end; for the bad person without any connection to the dharma, there is no end to samsara." What the Buddha has said about this must be understood in the context of infinite time. The Buddha clearly perceives the infinity of time and can see the law of cause and effect directly. Ordinary beings only consider how to make it through the day, the week, a month, a year, or this life. Their view of time is extremely limited compared to the Buddha's wisdom perception. From the perspective of infinite time, it is always better to have some connection with a bodhisattva, be it a good or a bad one. Seen from a limited perspective of time, a bad connection with a bodhisattva looks very frightening.

In text section 302, Khenpo Kunpal refers to the story of the sage Kshaantivaadin, whose enemies tested his patience by slowly mutilating his body. This story illustrates that any kind of mistreatment can become a cause for increasing the virtue of a bodhisattva. The poor and miserable are the cause for the bodhisattva's practice of generosity. A negative person is the cause for the bodhisattva's practice of patience. Those in great distress and suffering are the objects of the bodhisattva's practice of compassion. Everything a bodhisattva encounters enhances the power of his practice.

Everything serves to remove obstacles and enhances practice. In this way, bodhisattvas can perfect their skills only by facing the world.

For example, if an evil being physically harms a bodhisattva, that being will definitely take rebirth in the lower realms and experience the ripening of his negative karma. However, as the bodhisattva himself harbors no ill will but instead includes the evil person in his aspiration prayers, the evil person will eventually embark on the path to enlightenment due to the power of the bodhisattva's aspiration. Having understood the special qualities of the buddhas and the bodhisattvas, one should actually begin to practice taking refuge, developing bodhicitta, offering confession and so forth. Mere theoretical knowledge does not help to reach enlightenment.

**BCA 1-36, Text section 307:**

Most people in Tibet have an affinity toward Mahaayaana. They aspire to reach enlightenment; they aspire to become buddhas. In addition, at the time of Khenpo Kunpal, most Tibetans had received empowerments and thus had taken the refuge and bodhisattva precepts. Anyone who has developed bodhicitta has become an object of respect and worthy of offerings from all beings and gods. Such people will eventually become buddhas in the future. Therefore, Khenpo Kunpal says one should treat all people with respect, confess the slander and disrespect one previously committed, and promise to abstain from similar negativities in the future. Everyone should be treated with pure perception and as an object of refuge. In the sūtra context, training in pure perception means thinking that all sentient beings are bodhisattvas and, therefore, treating them with respect and kindness.

As it is said:

Whenever I detect flaws in others  
May I look at my own mistakes.  
May I recognize my own mistakes and  
Practice pure perception.

If you perceive flaws and mistakes in someone, check carefully where your own negative thought and judgement about that person are coming from. A pure mind cannot see flaws in others. A Buddha would never judge any being to be evil. A Buddha will perceive beings as being caught up in their own bad dreams. He perceives the beings as well as their negative dreams, and he perceives them both as non-existing illusions. At the same time, he continues to perceive beings themselves as pure.

The perception of a Buddha and the knowledge of a Buddha differ. Although a Buddha has no impure perception, he recognizes beings' impure perceptions. While knowing all perceptions of others, he himself is free from all impure perception. Thus, the purity of one's perception depends on the purity of one's own mind. A pure mind has pure perception. For example, it is said that pretas perceive water as consisting of pus and blood, gods perceive water as nectar, while human beings perceive water as water. Our impure perceptions of the world are a magical display of our ignorance. Based on this ignorance, various reactions such as likes and dislikes manifest. We are like people with an eye disease that causes them to perceive a white conch to be yellow. We should not try to change the conch but rather find the cure for the affliction. The cure is to train our minds in bodhicitta and pure perception. The basis for pure perception is the fact that all beings actually are primordially pure, primordially buddhas.

**BCA 1-36, Text section 308:**

In these degenerate times, however, even bodhisattvas accumulate misdeeds easily because of thinking badly about others. It is easy to think, "That person is really bad," thus accumulating a misdeed. It is better to practice pure perception and ignore the defects of others. We should be like the Indian Brahmins who consider the moon to be a god. They do not worship the full moon but only the moon on the third day, the day when it begins to wax. These Brahmins consider the third day as the day of the moon god's birth. By prostrating to the moon of the third day they acknowledge the preciousness of the moon god's birthday.

Just as a crown prince is honored because he will become king, by honoring a bodhisattva we honor someone who will eventually become a buddha. The bodhisattva's practice of bodhicitta is the cause for his becoming a buddha. A bodhisattva is a Buddha in the making. Beginning bodhisattvas are like baby buddhas. Just as one nurtures children with kindness, one should support bodhisattvas, as they are on their way to becoming buddhas. Honoring a bodhisattva is like honoring a prince, an heir to the throne. Eventually, the prince will take hold of the kingdom. Even Buddha Shakyamuni honors and prostrates to bodhicitta because bodhicitta is the teacher of all the buddhas. In this manner even a fully enlightened Buddha like Buddha Shakyamuni always honors his teacher.

**BCA 1-36, Text section 309:**

Though one might perceive a flaw in a bodhisattva, a flaw is just something compounded, something that will eventually cease to exist due to the power of the

bodhisattva's meditation. Bodhisattvas are not perfect at the beginning. Only the Buddha is utterly perfect. Therefore, the most important advice concerning pure perception is not to dwell on other peoples' mistakes.

Bodhicitta is like a wish-fulfilling jewel. In the case of a beginning bodhisattva, this jewel is still covered with dirt. Nobody would ever consider a dirt-encrusted, wishfulfilling jewel as something bad, but it does need cleaning. While the beginning bodhisattva proceeds on the way to enlightenment, his obscurations and defilements will gradually be cleared away, and all the inherent qualities of the buddhanature will become manifest.

The aim of every bodhisattva is to attain enlightenment as quickly as possible. The more a bodhisattva progresses along the five paths and the ten levels, the more will he be able to help sentient beings. The transcendental perfection of diligence means to strive for complete enlightenment with all of one's capacity.

The Buddha is endowed with the most powerful capability to help others. He can benefit countless beings in infinite world systems. His sphere of influence includes all the Buddhafiels of the three kayas. Bodhisattvas cannot benefit beings to take rebirth in the dharmakaaya Buddhafiels nor in the sambhogakaaya Buddhafiels. They are able to establish beings only in nirmaanaakaaya Buddhafiels.

The nirvana of a perfectly enlightened Buddhadoes not end his activities for sentient beings. However, when an arhat enters into nirvana, he cannot continue to help beings since arhats do not make extensive aspirations to liberate sentient beings. Mainly concerned with their own liberation, they fail to create the auspicious connection to help others.

When an arhat enters into nirvana, he abides in the peaceful and happy state of wisdom. He might remain in this state for ten aeons, or even a hundred aeons, until his merit is finished and he is awakened by light beams emitted from the Buddha. In the arhat's own perception the duration of one hundred aeons does not seem to be long, since the arhat has no sense of time in this state. A bodhisattva would never aim for his own personal liberation, the limited enlightenment of an arhat.

The Bodhisattva-caryaavataara teaches the perfect way of the bodhisattva. Read this text and its commentary over and over again. Each time you will reach a new level of understanding. The Bodhisattva-caryaavataara is a textbook as well as an instruction manual. This book is a commentary on the intent of all of the Buddha's immaculate teachings. It requires intense study mingled with practice. The teachings of this book

must be applied to your mind. Even if the words of the text are easy to read, bringing the meaning of the text into one's mind and keeping it there is not at all easy.

Theoretical understanding of the Bodhisattva-caryaavataara will not change your character. Only if you devote yourself to its practice will realization eventually dawn in your mind. You must study the text and contemplate its meaning. You must practice its methods for gathering the accumulation of merit. You must implement the practice of the six transcendental perfections in your daily life. As the main point, you need to realize the wisdom of egolessness, to recognize your own buddhanature. This realization is utterly dependent on gathering the accumulations, purifying the obscurations, and receiving the blessing of your root guru.

As it is said:

As far as the ultimate, the co-emergent wisdom, is concerned,  
Know that it is foolish to rely upon methods other than  
Practices for gathering the accumulations and purifying obscurations  
As well as the blessing of the glorious root guru.

Mind is primordially endowed with wisdom. Mind and wisdom are co-emergent or co-existent. They cannot be separated. They exist at the same time, without former or latter. Buddhahood is only attained if the co-emergent wisdom is realized.

Seen from the ultimate level, ignorance has no root and no basis. To allow this non-existent ignorance to be cleared away and to let coemergent wisdom manifest, we must gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom, purify the two obscurations, afflictive and cognitive, and receive the blessings of the guru.  
If you rely on other methods to realize co-emergent wisdom, you are foolish.

Once the obscurations are purified, realization will dawn naturally. The blessing of the master only descends through the student's faith. Faith is the very root of blessing. Faith and devotion are the essence of guru yoga.

### **BCA 1-36, Text section 310:**

The conduct of the bodhisattvas refers to the six transcendental perfections, the four means of attraction, the three trainings and so forth.

**END BCA CH 1 COMMENTARY**