

BCA Chapter 1, Verse 20, Text Section 268-273

***This presence of benefits together with four reasons
Is what the Tathaagata himself explained
In the sutra requested by Subaahu
For the benefit of those inclined toward the lesser paths.***

BCA 1-20, Text section 268

Of course the question arises: “How can someone accumulate merit while sleeping?” “Where does such inconceivable merit come from?” In order to answer these questions, Shantideva quotes from the scriptures, in particular from the Subaahuparipṛcchā-sūtra, the sūtra requested by Bodhisattva Subaahu, in which the Buddha explains the benefits and qualities of bodhicitta and gives *reasons*. The phrase *not only for the mere purpose of guiding* means that this statement regarding the immeasurable benefits of bodhicitta of application is not a statement belonging to the level of ‘provisional meaning’, such as statements the Buddha made to guide the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, but that it is a statement of the ‘definitive meaning’. ‘Provisional meaning’ refers to statements made by the Buddha in order to lead beings onto the path but which actually have another meaning, as they do not accord with the actual nature of things. The Buddha uses words like ‘I’ and ‘mine’ although ‘I’ and ‘mine’ do not exist. He speaks this way in order to communicate on the relative level.

In the Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra the Buddha explained the real qualities of bodhicitta to enable practitioners to gain certainty and true understanding of what these qualities actually are. The Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra is classified as a sūtra concerning the ‘ultimate meaning’, not a sūtra of the ‘provisional meaning’.

Most Hīnayaana sūtras deal the provisional meaning because they do not teach the actual nature of things. In the Tibetan tradition, these sūtras are considered to be meant for beginners in order to lead them onto the path. Sūtras which mainly establish the relative truth and give teachings on karma, the law of cause and effect, and the like are classified as belonging to the ‘provisional meaning’.

Sūtras which mainly establish the absolute truth, teachings on egolessness and emptiness, are classified as belonging to the 'ultimate meaning'. The purpose of the provisional meaning is to lead the minds of beginners to the ultimate meaning. The sūtras make many statements about the infinite merit of virtues, although these virtues actually do not have such infinite merit. For instance, in some places it says that if one recites the mantra 'Om Mani Peme Hung' seven times one will gain enlightenment. This kind of statement is meant to guide a beginner into dharma practice. Such statements belong to the 'provisional meaning'. This statement actually means that by reciting the mantra 'Om Mani Peme Hung' seven times, at another time in the far distant future one will gain enlightenment. Reciting this mantra seven times plants the seed for enlightenment but does not lead to enlightenment right on the spot.

Generally, bodhisattvas train in the six perfections for three countless aeons in order to manifest all the qualities of Buddha's body, speech and mind. Some of Buddha's students became discouraged and frightened by such an enormous duration of time and felt inclined toward the lesser vehicles of the śraavakas and pratyekabuddhas. The śraavakas and pratyekabuddhas aspire not to complete enlightenment but rather to the state of an arhat, a state beyond the suffering of samsara. In order to motivate such individuals, Buddha taught the Subaahu-paripṛcchā-sūtra in which he explained the unceasing merit and inexhaustible qualities of bodhicitta. Buddha gave four reasons for its being unceasing and inexhaustible: 1) the unfathomable number of sentient beings, 2) the unfathomable amount of suffering, 3) the unfathomable qualities of buddhahood, and 4) the unfathomable duration of three countless aeons. A bodhisattva's focus is not restricted to a few friends, relatives, countrymen or even only to human beings. A bodhisattva's focus extends to all infinite sentient beings, not excluding even one.

Bodhisattvas reach out to all beings within the totality of space. Bodhisattvas do not aspire only to cure a few people from diseases or to help only their followers. They aspire to relieve all infinite sentient beings of their unfathomable amount of suffering. Bodhisattvas are not interested only in improving beings' living conditions, making them comfortable temporarily and bringing them short-lived happiness. They want to establish all sentient beings on the level of complete enlightenment. They want all beings to reach perfect buddhahood, a state endowed with inconceivable qualities, devoid of all defects, a level of permanent bliss. Bodhisattvas are not active for others for limited periods of time only.

They help sentient beings until all beings have been established on the level of omniscience. For three countless aeons they train in the six transcendental perfections, and when they themselves reach complete enlightenment, their Buddhaactivity becomes unceasing. Dignaaga and Dharmakiirti established the benefits of bodhicitta through the following logical equations relating to the same four points:

1. The infinite *number of beings who are the objects of focus*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it focuses on immeasurable beings”.

The objects of the bodhisattva’s focus are the immeasurable number of sentient beings without even one being excluded. The bodhisattva’s motivation is: “In order to establish the immeasurable number of sentient beings on the level of perfect enlightenment, I will practice the six transcendental perfections.” Therefore, the Indian philosophers concluded that because the bodhisattva focuses on the immeasurable number of beings, immeasurable beings are helped and benefited. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable.

2. The infinite *amount of suffering, that which is to be dispelled*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it constantly maintains the motivation to dispel all suffering”. The amount of suffering is immeasurable, and the bodhisattva constantly generates the motivation to dispel all of the suffering of all sentient beings. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable.

3. The infinite *qualities of buddhahood, those which are to be obtained*: “Bodhicitta of application is endowed with immeasurable benefits because it aspires to free all beings from suffering and to establish them on the level of buddhhood”. Buddhahood is endowed with immeasurable qualities. The bodhisattva has the aspiration that all beings should attain these immeasurable qualities. Therefore, the benefits of the bodhicitta of application are equally immeasurable. Inasmuch as buddhahood, the goal of all achievements, is endowed with immeasurable qualities, the cause for its attainment, the bodhicitta of application, must also be endowed with immeasurable merit.

4. The infinity of the *time-span*: The bodhisattva has the wish: “I will free all sentient beings from suffering and establish them forever on the level of complete enlightenment.” The bodhicitta of application is endowed with

immeasurable power because it frees all sentient beings from the suffering of infinite past lifetimes and establishes all beings permanently on the level of complete enlightenment and ultimate bliss.

The magnitude of these considerations—infinite number of beings, infinite amount of suffering, infinite qualities of the Buddha, infinite time-span—expands the mind beyond its conceptual limits. This is one way to approach the non-conceptual state.

Bodhisattvas who constantly work for the benefit of others will always enjoy the unceasing benefits of bodhicitta. Their virtue and merit increase constantly, even while they sleep or are inattentive. The benefits of bodhicitta are present right from the very beginning, immediately on taking the bodhisattva precepts. One does not have to wait for a long time for the benefits to manifest. Once bodhicitta of application has truly taken root in the minds of practitioners, they will always accumulate merit.

This statement does not imply that someone who has taken the bodhisattva precepts, but who does not do any good at all, will accumulate merit while sleeping or being inattentive. Bodhicitta really must take root in the heart. Practicing virtue for a certain period of time, then leaning back and saying, “Now I have done enough. I can take it easy and relax,” is not the bodhisattva’s way of practice. You cannot take a job, sit around all day in the office doing nothing, and still expect to get paid at the end of the month. The bodhisattva attitude implies the earnest wish to practice as much virtue as possible. In that way, the momentum of merit will always carry through. However, receiving the bodhisattva precepts and not practicing virtue at all is a major downfall for a bodhisattva and will create negative karma.

BCA 1-20, Text section 269:

The phrase *if I don the armor* means ‘if I put on the harness of courage’ and connotes ‘commitment’.

BCA 1-20, Text section 270:

There are four principles of reasoning: 1) the principle of reality; 2) the principle of efficacy; 3) the principle of dependency ; and 4) the principle of valid proof. These four principles of reasoning constitute a very extensive subject which

cannot be exhaustively considered at this point. Therefore, we will give only a short definition:

1. The principle of reality: This reasoning considers the reasoning of natural conditions of things. For example, the natural condition of fire is to be hot. Nobody can deny that fire is hot.
2. The principle of efficacy: This reasoning considers the causes their consequences. This reasoning is based on the fact that 'if something exists, it will lead to something else'; and 'if this exists, then that must arise'. A cause inevitably leads to a result. For example, when the sun rises, darkness is dispelled.
3. The principle of dependency: This reasoning considers dependent production, the result. A result or fruition must always rely on a cause. For example, when there is no mother, there will be no child. A child can only come about by having a mother. This reasoning is based on the fact that 'if something does not exist, it cannot lead to something else'. 'If this does not exist, that cannot arise'.
4. The principle of valid proof: This reasoning uses the three former types of reasoning to refute wrong statements. For instance, if someone states, 'Fire is cold', the first principle of reasoning refutes this since such a statement contradicts the reasoning of reality or of natural conditions. By means of 'valid proof' one checks whether or not a statement is correct. This principle of valid proof uses 'the three means of valid cognition': 1) the validity of direct perception, 2) the validity of deduction or inference and 3) the valid cognition of scriptural authority.

BCA 1-20, Text section 271:

The real working of karma, the law of cause and effect, can be seen only by a fully enlightened Buddha and is therefore called *a most hidden field of knowledge*. Regarding the law of karma, for the most part we must simply trust in the words of the Buddha. Although establishing the law of karma through reasoning is difficult, it is not impossible. However, considerable study and wisdom knowledge are required.

The benefits of bodhicitta can be established by reasoning, since the Buddha taught extensively on its benefits and qualities. Numerous jataka tales, stories of Buddha's previous lives as a bodhisattva, teach about the benefits and qualities

of bodhicitta with regard to the law of karma. Reasoning in this context refers to the irrefutable wisdom of the Buddha as preserved in the scriptures. When the Buddha relates a story from one of his former lifetimes, the logical implications of that story are considered 'reasoning' by Tibetan scholars because the Buddhist scriptures can always be subject to a three-fold analysis: 1) the analysis through the validity of direct perception, 2) the analysis through the validity of inference, and 3) the analysis through.

BCA 1-20, Text sections 272-273:

This is the Maitrakanyakaavānaana, 'the Story of Maitra's Daughter', found in *Kalpālata* written by Kshemendra 1542 The four means of valid cognition include 'the valid cognition demonstrated through examples'.

Fields of knowledge can be 'directly perceptible', 'imperceptible' or 'hidden' and 'radically inaccessible', 'radically imperceptible' or 'most hidden'. as story 92. In former times, in the city of Vaaraanasii, there lived a wealthy leader of the sea-going merchant caste named Maitra, 'Friend'. It was his profession to undertake dangerous journeys by sea in order to fetch precious gems. His wife gave birth to a son. To prevent their son from following his father's dangerous occupation, Maitra and his wife named him Kanyaka, 'Daughter'. Thus, he became known as Maitrakanyaka, 'Daughter of Maitra'. Soon after his son was born, Maitra died at sea.

Maitrakanyaka's mother did everything she could to keep her son from becoming captain of a ship but to no avail. When finally Maitrakanyaka was about to go to sea, his mother tried to physically hold him back, and he kicked her in the head. The karmic ripening for this deed was an iron wheel that came spinning down on his head, cutting into it and causing him unbearable pain. Due to the merit of his previous lifetimes, he developed compassion and thought, "In the realms of samsara many other beings are suffering like me for kicking their mothers in the head. May all their suffering ripen on me and may I alone bear it for all of them. May none of the others ever again experience such pain in any of their lifetimes." Due to the power of his compassion and this benefiting intention, the wheel flew into the air, his agony ceased, and he was reborn in the realms of the gods.

When Maitrakanyaka thought, "May all the suffering of those who experience the fruition of kicking their mothers in the head ripen on me, and may none of

them experience such suffering again,” he had developed compassion, not bodhicitta.