

## ***BCA Chapter 1, Verse 34, Text Section 294***

***The Sage has said, "Whoever bears an evil thought  
Against such a son of the victors, a benefactor,  
Will remain in hell for as many aeons  
As the number of his evil thoughts."***

### **BCA 1-34 Text section 294**

Someone who develops a negative attitude against a bodhisattva, a great benefactor of all beings, will take rebirth in hell for as many aeons as the duration of his negative attitude. The duration of a negative attitude is measured in ultimate split seconds. One ultimate split second is the duration of one finger snap divided by sixty-four. The person will dwell in hell for as many aeons as the number of ultimate split seconds in the duration of the negative attitude. This only concerns a negative attitude toward a bodhisattva. That the consequences of physically or verbally abusing a bodhisattva are much more severe than merely bearing ill-will in one's mind against a bodhisattva is needless to mention.

Bodhisattvas are called potentially dangerous, perilous, sensitive or formidable objects because of their great value to all sentient beings. Whoever harms a bodhisattva harms all sentient beings. To harbor anger against all sentient beings and to harbor anger against a single bodhisattva is almost equal in negative consequences. Killing the pilot of a jumbo jet is equal to killing all the passengers.

Killing a mother bird causes all her chicks to die. The bodhisattva is in the same way considered to be the leader of all beings, the mother of all beings, and the benefactor of all beings. Harming a bodhisattva is equal to harming all beings and, therefore, is a cause for taking direct rebirth in hell. Paltrül Rinpoche always emphasized training in pure perception and treating all beings with great respect since we do not know who is a bodhisattva and who is not. Since we have unknowingly accumulated considerable negative karma by bearing ill-will against other people who might be bodhisattvas, confession is imperative.

Whoever harms a bodhisattva is trying to destroy a mind imbued with the intention of freeing all sentient beings from suffering and establishing them on the level of complete enlightenment. Harming such a person is the attempt to destroy the happiness of infinite sentient beings, a severe negative action which inevitably leads to rebirth in the hell realms. Though the bodhisattva who is

harmed bears not even the slightest ill will against the person who inflicts harm upon him and instead showers him with love and compassion; nevertheless, that individual has accumulated tremendous negativity and will have to experience its karmic ripening.

When we perceive negative aspects within a person, we should carefully reflect about our perception on three levels:

- 1) Externally, a person might appear to be bad and might also be subject to negative reports from other people. Based on this information, all we can justifiably say is that we have a negative feeling about that person.
- 2) Internally, we cannot know for sure whether or not that person is actually bad. If we truthfully ask ourselves what we really know about him, we have to admit that we lack higher perception and, therefore, cannot read the minds of others. We can never say for sure, "That person is not a bodhisattva." We can only guess what his true motivation might be.
- 3) Ultimately, even a being from a hell realm is in essence a primordially pure buddha.

Regardless of what a person has done or does, he is still endowed with the buddhanature and deserves to be treated with respect and pure perception. Harming others, knowing that they are endowed with bodhicitta, is a grave misdeed. Talking negatively about a bodhisattva due to jealousy and aggression is a serious transgression. Knowing that a certain bodhisattva benefits beings greatly and yet slandering him anyway due to jealousy, or harming him out of ill-will, is the worst action one can commit. Knowingly harming a bodhisattva definitely causes tremendous negative karma. Unknowingly slandering a bodhisattva, being unaware that the person is a bodhisattva, is a less grave misdeed.

Vajrayana practitioners in particular have the spiritual commitment to train in infinite pure perception, to see the entire universe and all beings as pure manifestations of the buddhanature. Negative talk, gossip, or focusing on the mistakes of others is completely opposed to pure perception. The moment you enter into established Buddhism you must guard yourself against speaking badly about others and gossiping. A bodhisattva should only point out a mistake within another person directly or indirectly when he knows with certainty that the person will accept the criticism and will be helped by it. If a bodhisattva

knows that criticism is not welcome, he must remain silent. If a bodhisattva can clearly see that a certain evildoer causes considerable harm to himself due to his negative behavior, then, motivated by great compassion, the bodhisattva may point out to that person his own shortcomings. But a bodhisattva would never talk badly about others only for the sake of conversation.

**BCA 1-34 Text section 295:**

The Praśaanta-viniścaya-praatihaarya-sūtra, according to the Peking Kangyur, Vol, 32, page 51,2,1 reads: “Manjughosh! Be forewarned, since for as long as a bodhisattva develops a mind full of anger or a mind full of contempt toward (another) bodhisattva, for that many aeons will that bodhisattva dwell with the beings of the hell realms.”

The phrase *be forewarned* literally means ‘to don the armor (of courage)’ or ‘to put on the harness (of courage)’. It connotes ‘being certain’, ‘understanding clearly’, or ‘preparing oneself’. Since harboring a negative mindset toward a bodhisattva affects the happiness of all sentient beings, it creates boundless negative karma. This is the natural working of karma and not a punishment invented by Buddhist masters. Regardless of whether or not the bodhisattva is someone within the Buddhist hierarchy or someone living the life of an ordinary person, harboring ill-will toward a true bodhisattva harms all sentient beings. We cannot know who is a true bodhisattva and who is not. As Shantideva’s fellow monks did not recognize him to be a great bodhisattva, they were planning to expel him from the monastic community.

You should know the distinction between a ‘Buddhist practitioner’ and a ‘follower of the Buddhist system’. If you identify yourself with your spiritual community, your school and your philosophical system, you have already become a follower of organized religion. Next, you feel easily obligated to take a stance and defend ‘your school’ against all ‘other schools’. Without intending it, you have become involved in dharma politics. The ‘Buddhist practitioner’, on the other hand, simply strives to study and practice with his masters and stays away from group or dharma politics. He walks the path of truth. What he does and what he says accord with one another. He does not need to sweet-talk other people to achieve something, nor does he feel the need to put other people down.

He practices the dharma and minds his own business.

A follower of a religious system, however, feels the need to join a group and to take up biased positions. He identifies with hierarchical structures and rules as well as with cultural or ethnic groups. He will try to advance within the group hierarchy for his personal benefit. He does not say what he really thinks. He will praise and slander wherever he sees it benefiting himself. There is not much of a difference between a member of a political or cultural party and a member of an institutionalized religion. All these systems are based on politics.

A beginner should from the very start train in pure perception, guarding himself against being drawn into negative views and gossip about other schools, systems, teachers, or practitioners. A beginner should understand that all beings are endowed with the buddhanature and are thus worthy of pure perception. Even if beings appear and act in a totally ordinary manner, in essence they are primordially pure buddhas. Consider all sentient beings to be future buddhas. If a beginner does not have the capacity to hold this view in his daily life, he should at least be honest with himself and think, "I don't know who is or who is not endowed with the precious bodhicitta. Therefore, I had better treat all people as if they were bodhisattvas."

Know that for ordinary beings like ourselves it is impossible to know the minds of others. We have no way to know whether or not someone else is a true practitioner. Tibet was full of examples of hidden practitioners who attained the rainbow body at the moment of death. Not even close family members realized that they had a true practitioner among them.

You should also realize that if you perceive mistakes in another person, this is often fifty percent your own mistaken perception and fifty percent the other person's mistake. People always naturally tend to see the mistakes in others but really must search for their good qualities. A practitioner searches only for the good qualities in other persons. He ignores and never tries to disclose other people's faults. Know that since we ourselves lack good qualities, we have only a very limited capacity to see the qualities in others.

From the very beginning, clearly distinguish between the precious dharma and the person involved with dharma. Only a perfectly enlightened Buddhatruly represents the dharma. All other students, teachers, lamas and masters are still on the path toward enlightenment.

A practitioner should first aspire to overcome the most dangerous mistakes in his own mind such as aggression, jealousy, pride and the like. Later he should learn

how to deal with the more subtle mind poisons. Finally, he should overcome even positive fixations such as fixation on the Buddha.

It is of utmost importance to follow this sequence. The two most dangerous mind poisons are aggression and jealousy. Aggression is the direct path to the hell realms. The most dangerous aspect of jealousy is malevolence or ill will, the intention to destroy the happiness of others. If these two kinds of mind poisons are diminished, one's mind will be happy and content. Never try to destroy a virtuous thought or intent in another person's mind. Never try to take revenge, regardless of how much harm others have inflicted upon you. Revenge is nothing other than ill will. A practitioner must look into his own mind and see if these dangerous tendencies have diminished or not.

If one's mind is governed by aggression and ill will, and if one, even after many years of practice, has not overcome these great defects, one is not a practitioner, regardless of how much one meditates or studies. The dharma has not penetrated one's being. The nature of the buddhadharma is positive thinking. The temporary purpose of the buddhadharma is to achieve a transformation of one's character. The ultimate purpose is the attainment of enlightenment. A practitioner is someone who harbors good intentions and thoughts. A beginning practitioner seeks to defeat his negative tendencies through positive thoughts.

As it is said:

The sign of true learning is a tamed and peaceful mind.  
The sign of true practice is having few afflictions.

Most people who lack merit will not have the fortune to meet the dharma at all. Unless one has made aspirations in former lifetimes, it is almost impossible to come into contact with the three jewels. Only persons endowed with merit will have the good fortune to meet the right teacher early on. Some students are not benefited even when meeting genuine Buddhist masters but rather seek connections with teachers of lesser quality. This is the student's personal karma and the power of his personal aspirations. One meets only the teacher with whom one has a karmic connection.