

Key verses from Shantideva's *How to Be a Bodhisattva*

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Translator's disclaimer: I'm not an expert on Shantideva and have merely translated a few of my favorite verses over the years to the best of my ability, to make them easy to memorize. Some verses feel more or less final, others are earlier translations I need to revisit and finalize. I've relied on prior translations as a guide to the accepted meaning. These include The Way of the Bodhisattva (Padmakara Translation Group), Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva (Khenpo David Karma Choepel), and A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Stephen Batchelor). I recommend memorizing the verses you find useful and reciting them often.

Chapter 1: Benefits/Advantages of Bodhicitta

1.15

Bo-dhi-cit-ta, wake-ful mind, / is known in brief to have two kinds:
The mind as-pir-ing to wake up, / and then the mind that real-ly does.

1.16

The dif-fer-ence be-tween these two / those who are wise must clear-ly know:
Just like the wish to take a trip / is not the same as do-ing it.

1.17

The mere intention to wake up / can bring about a great result;
But merit in a ceaseless stream / needs action bodhicitta mind.

1.18

When irreversible resolve / combines with bodhicitta mind,
With the intention to set free / be-ings throughout infinity,

1.19

From that time on, a steady stream / of wholesome merit, unceasing,
Even in sleep or unaware, / vast as the sky, will flow from there.

Chapter 2: Confession

2.35

Those I hate will cease to be, / and those I love will cease to be,
And I myself will cease to be; / and so we all will cease to be.

2.36

Everything I have enjoyed / is like a memory or dream;
All things past will fade like this / never to be seen again.

Chapter 3: Commitment to Bodhicitta

3.8

As long as any being is ill, / till ev-ery sickness has been healed:
May I myself take care of them / as doctor, nurse, and med-i-cine.

3.9

In every place where famine strikes / may I turn into food and drink,
And come down as torrential rain / to ease the hunger, thirst and pain.

3.10

For beings destitute and poor / may I become a treasure trove
Of everything they need and want / appearing right in front of them.

3.11

To benefit all sentient beings, / I give my virtue of three times;
I offer, holding nothing back / my body, goods, enjoyments.

Chapter 4: Carefulness

4.1

Bo-dhi-sat-tvas who have grasped / the mean-ing of bo-dhi-cit-ta
Must strive to keep it con-stant-ly / and nev-er let their prac-tice go.

4.2

For some-thing reck-less-ly be-gun / with-out full con-sid-er-a-tion:
E-ven if prom-ised, I should stop / and give it con-sci-en-tious thought.

4.46

When harm-ful re-act-iv-i-ty / is ex-iled by my wis-dom eye
Can it re-turn to harm a-gain? / On-ly if I al-low it in.

4.47

Harm-ful e-mo-tions: where are they? / not in ob-jects or fac-ul-ties,
Nor are they some-where in between – / where do they dwell to harm be-ings?
Have no fear, they are a mir-age; / just get to know them as they are.
Since there is clear-ly noth-ing there -- / why should they make my life such hell?

4.48

Re-flect-ing thus on this ad-vice, / I'll prac-tice now with dil-i-gence.
Was any pa-tient ever cured / by dis-re-gard-ing doc-tors's words?

Chapter 5 Vigilance

5.13

Wherever could I find enough / leather to cover all the earth?
Yet I can get the same effect / just wearing leather on my feet.

5.41

In meditation I won't lose / my focus even one instant;
By asking, "What's my mind up to?" / I'll constantly examine it.

5.48

Whenever in my mind I feel / a trace of anger or craving,
I will not act! I will not speak! / but like a stick of wood remain.

5.52

When care for others is displaced / by wishing to seek my own gain,
I won't so much as speak of it, / but like a stick of wood remain.

Chapter 6 Patience

6.10

If there is a remedy, / why any anxiety?
And if the problem can't be fixed, / how does worry help with it?

Chapter 7 Diligence

7.14

This human boat can set you free / from suffering's enormous sea;
Another boat is hard to find, / so don't sleep now, fool! Use this time!

7.23

All physicians cure disease / through unpleasant remedies;
So to conquer suffering / I can bear a little pain.

Chapter 8 Meditation

8.2

In solitude of body-mind / distractions will be left behind.
So set aside all worldly things / along with mental wandering.

Chapter 9 Wisdom

9.5

Worldly beings, seeing things, / take them as reality
Rather than illusory; / those who practice disagree.

9.52 (still in progress, just one possibility among multiple meanings)

Freed from craving and from fear, / in samsara, staying here
To help deluded, suffering beings: / this result, emptiness brings.

Chapter 10 Dedication

10.55

As long as sky and space exist / and beings are still wandering,
For just as long may I remain, / dispelling all their suffering.