



Shantideva's Bodhichitta Prayer



Master Shantideva's (ཞི་བ་ལྷ།, SHI WA LHA) masterpiece, *Engaging in the Deeds of a Bodhisattva* (ལྷོ་འཇུག།, JYÖ JUK, Sanskrit *bodhicharyaavatara*), ends with the tenth chapter that has dedication as its theme. The 55th verse in this chapter is very famous. His Holiness Dalai Lama is fond of reciting this verse daily. It has the main concept behind the Mahayana (great vehicle) Buddhism. This book describes the so-called six perfections that a bodhisattva is engaged in. These are practiced, or perfected, to become a fully enlightened, to get to a state where someone really could help all sentient beings.

1: །ཇི་སྲིད་ནམ་མཁའ་གནས་པ་དང་།

JI SI NAM KA NE PA DANG

2: །འགྲོ་བ་ཇི་སྲིད་གནས་གྱུར་པ།

DRO WA JI SI NE GYUR PA

3: །དེ་སྲིད་བདག་ནི་གནས་གྱུར་ནས།

DE SI DAK NI NE GYUR NE

4: །འགྲོ་བའི་སྐྱུག་བསྐྱེལ་སེལ་བར་ཤོག།

DRO WAY DUK-NGEL SEL WAR SHOK

As long as space remains
 As long as sentient beings remain
 Until then, may I too remain
 And dispel the miseries of the world.

First Line

ཇི་སྲིད་ JI SI means *as long as*. སྲིད་པ་ is a common word meaning *existence*. For example it's used in the word སྲིད་པ་འཁོར་ལོ་ SI PA KORLO, *wheel of existence*, or as it's mostly translated today, *wheel of life*. བཀའ་མཁའ་འཇུག་ NAM KA is *space*; this is used to describe vast amounts of sentient beings, places, the scope of a mind, non-conceptuality, and so forth.

གནས་པ་ NE PA means *to dwell, to abide*. It comes from the word གནས་ NE, *place, abide, realm*. This word is used in many cases to describe a resting place, something where some is situated in, is present at, and so forth. དང་ DANG means *and*, here it connects the first line with the second line.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the first line.

Second Line

འགྲོ་བ་ DRO WA is *sentient being*. This word comes from འགྲོ་ DRO, *to walk, to migrate*. Those in cyclic existence walk, or migrate from one existence realm to the next. ཇི་སྲིད་ JI SI again means *as long as*.

གནས་ NE again means *place, abode*. ལྷུང་པ་ GYUR PA means *to become, constitute*. In this case we are talking about sentient beings that dwell or migrate in cyclic existence. ལྷུང་ GYUR is a very common word, *has become, became*. For example, this is a very common ending in sentences, ལྷུང་ཅིག་ GYUR CIG, *may it become!* Another example is ལྷུང་པས་ན་ GYUR PE NA, *this being so*.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the second line.

Third Line

དེ་སྲིད་ DE SI is *until then*. བདག་ DAK is *me*, Sanskrit *atman*. You could see this word used in many variations, such as བདག་མེད་ DAK ME, *selflessness (lack of a self-existing self)*, Sanskrit *anatman*. བདག་འཇིག་ DAK DZIN is *grasping to a self*. བདག་མེད་མ་ DAK ME MA was the name of Marpa's wife, in Sanskrit *nairathmya* (the goddess of non-ego).

འོ་ NI is a so called emphatic particle. This particle is used to emphasize the phrase or sentence. Usually it's used to clearly indicate that the particular topic or subject of the sentence is marked. In verses it's also used as a filler word. In this case the emphasis is on the words before.

གནས NE again means *the place, abode*, and གུར GYUR is *to abide*. However, the next word will change this. རྗེས NE is usually the *from particle*, but in this case it's used to indicate from becoming, by being something, so the closest translation is *by*. You could also translate གུར་རྗེས GYUR NE *having become*.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the third line.

Fourth Line

འགྲོ་བ DRO WA is *sentient being*, and there's a genitive particle in this word, so it says འགྲོ་བའི DRO WAY. The genitive (of) is linked to the next word in the verse.

སྤུག་བསྐྱེད DUK-NGEL is *suffering*. There are many descriptions of suffering, the three sufferings of cyclic existence (སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་གསུམ, DUK-NGEL SUM), the eight sufferings (སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་བརྒྱད, DUK-NGEL GYE), the six sufferings of the human realm (སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་དྲུག DUK-NGEL DRUK), and so forth.

སེལ་བ SEL WA is *to clear away, to dispel*. This is another common word you will see a lot, especially in cases of removing, clearing. This word should not be confused with གསལ་བ SEL WA, this word has the connotation of *brilliant, luminous, clarity*, for example one of the attributes a mind has. In this case, the job is to remove or dispel all the miseries of all sentient beings. སེལ་བ ends as སེལ་བར, the ར RA is a particle, a subordination particle that describes relationships in the sentence, in this case purpose of an action, between this word and the next one.

ཤོག SHOK means *may!* It's a very usual way to end prayers with a sincere wish that this should happen.

Exercise: Do a rough translation of the fourth line.

This was a short explanation of Master Shantideva's prayer to become and be a bodhisattva and stay and remove all the suffering from all the possible sentient beings until everyone is enlightened.

