



How to Live the
Compassionate Life:
*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland* by Lama Atisha

Shantideva Center

Session 5 - June 17, 2025



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland* – Verse 17a

ALTERNATE TRANSLATION
BY ALEX BERZIN:

[There,] let me always be stable
with my Buddha-figure (*yidam*).

On Verse 17a

To stabilize our personal deity, or *yidam*, means that we should always confirm the motivation for our actions and bear in mind the goal of complete union with the fully awakened state our *yidam* symbolizes.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, pp.124-125



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 17bcd*

On Verse 17bcd

We should follow the example of Geshe Benkungyäl who, when he found himself getting lazy, would say to himself, “If you do not watch out, I am going to tell everyone exactly what you are doing and expose you in a disgraceful way.” We should follow our inner teacher and correct our own faults. This inner discipline and regret at mistakes is the essence of the practice.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.125



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 18*

On Verse 18

*Be the master of yourself
And have an ever-smiling countenance.
Rid yourself of scowling, wrathful frowns,
And be a true and honest friend to all.*

- Verse 5.71, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* by Shantideva
Translated by Padmakara Translation Group

On Verse 18

A smile wins a hundred hearts; a frown not even one.

- From *Like a Yeti Catching Marmots: A Little Treasury of Tibetan Proverbs*
by Pema Tsewang, Shastri, p.55



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 19*

On Verse 19

Envy, or jealousy, is another major hindrance to happiness. If we are jealous of others, we shall always be in a state of emotional instability. Should others succeed in their work, the resentment we feel from our envy will never affect them; it only causes unnecessary misery in us. The opponent for envious thoughts is rejoicing in the accomplishments of others.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.126



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 20*

On Verse 20

We try to please others, to make them happy and to not contradict them. That's what **contention** means – to contradict somebody and to argue with them. Tsongkhapa said it very nicely: “If you agree with the other person – that ends the argument.” We just agree. “I agree with you. I'm not going to argue with you.” Then it's finished.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 20

*When, out of envy, others mistreat me
With insults, abuse and the like,
I shall accept defeat
And offer the victory to others.*

Verse 5, *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation*,
translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

On Verse 20

There are certain limits, though. If a person is going to do something destructive, we have to set limits. If somebody says, "Let's go out and shoot kangaroos," we set a limit. We say, "No." We don't agree to that. However, if they say, "The sky is green," and we say, "No, it's blue," there's no point going on arguing. Who cares?

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 20

This is relevant especially when there is a political or religious argument and the other person absolutely will not listen to anything we say. What's the point? Then it becomes idle chatter to just go on and on. So, we just say, "OK. Let's talk about something else." Then it's finished.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 21*

On Verse 21

What do we do when people come to us just to exploit us – people who just want to get something from us and who, when they no longer find us useful, go away? First of all, if we're practicing as bodhisattvas, we are happy if they come to us. We are happy if we can help them. If they go away – that's their loss. That's their loss. And it's sad that they are no longer open to our help.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 21

Now, in regard to exploitation – we give what's appropriate. We don't over-give, which could be harmful to them and to us. We don't let them be a complete drain on us. We set limits.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 21

As Ringu Tulku said very nicely, so many people might ask us for things, but there are only so many requests that we can fulfill – we can't multiply ourselves into a million forms at the same time yet; we're not yet Buddhas. Nonetheless, we at least try to give them something, a little something, so that we're not totally rejecting them.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 21

When it comes to telling someone we can't do something, I am reminded of a lovely line from Miss Manners. Miss Manners is an American newspaper's etiquette queen of whom one asks questions about etiquette. Miss Manners, "Miss Good Manners" says that in such situations, we just say, "I'm so sorry." We don't give excuses.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin

On Verse 21

We don't give reasons why we can't help. We just say, "Oh, I'm so sorry. I won't be able to do that." We don't explain. If we were to explain, they'd give us an argument about it, and then we'd have to get defensive. We just say, "I'm so sorry." Great guru, Miss Manners.

From Oral Commentary by Alex Berzin



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 22ab*

On Verse 22ab

Giving advice or offering guidance, or even teaching, should not be motivated by ulterior motives. It should not be driven by the desire to gain followers or any other personal gain. Your intention should be rooted in compassion and the genuine wish to aid others. Your aim should be to alleviate their ignorance regarding the Dharma and impart wisdom to them.

- *Solid Like a Mountain* by Lama Gyuremey, pp.199-200

On Verse 22ab

Alright, so with such thoughts in mind, now you should provide instructions or guided advice. Whenever you have the ability or opportunity, do so with compassion and a genuine desire to help. It doesn't matter whether the person has offered you something or not. Whether you are seeking praise or fame. These concerns should not play a role.

- *Solid Like a Mountain* by Lama Gyuremey, p.200

On Verse 22ab

Your sole concern should be the well-being of that individual.
How can you help them? How can you impart wisdom to them?
How can you eliminate their ignorance?

- *Solid Like a Mountain* by Lama Gyuremey, p.200



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 22cdef*

On Verse 22cdef

As an awakening warrior we should intensively follow the practices of the ten transcendent perfections. The first six are the commonly known ones of [1] generosity, [2] ethical discipline, [3] patience, [4] enthusiastic effort, [5] meditative stability [or concentration], and [6] intelligent awareness [or wisdom].

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, pp.128-129

On Verse 22cdef

The four additional ones are [7] strength [or power], [8] prayers of aspiration for the path, [9] skillful means [or method], and [10] primordial awareness [or exalted wisdom].

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.129

On Verse 22cdef

The aforementioned list is for those who are following practices of the great vehicle, the Mahayana. For those who do not engage actively in this path, there is another set of ten general practices explained by Maitreya, the coming buddha.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.129

On Verse 22cdef

They are known as the ten practices of one day: [1] copying and writing out scriptures, [2] making offerings to the Three Supreme Jewels, [3] giving generously to the poor and sick, [4] listening to discourses on Dharma, [5] reading scriptures to oneself and others, [6] taking to heart the essence of the teachings through meditation, [7] explaining the meaning of the Dharma, ...

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.129

On Verse 22cdef

... [8] reciting the *Heart Sutra* or any of Buddha's sutras, [9] contemplating the meaning of the texts, and [10] meditating single-pointedly on the meaning of the teachings.

Thus we should perform the ten transcendent perfections or the ten daily practices, thereby pointing all our actions in a skillful direction.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.129



The Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland – Verse 26de

ALTERNATE TRANSLATION
BY JAMES B. APPLE:

Examine your speech while
among the multitude,

Examine your mind while in
solitude.

On Verse 26de

When with others, we should be mindful not to harm them by careless remarks. One of the Kadam masters said,

We make personal judgments and accusations as if they were all true. I wish there were locks on my mouth and on everyone else's as well.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.136

On Verse 26de

When alone we should examine our thoughts. Without the attainment of single-pointed concentration our mind is like a restless child, but even before we attain single-pointedness we should always try to bring our mind back to a state of stable concentration.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, pp.136-137

On Verse 26de

The story is often told of a merchant who, during his meditation, would think about his business so that he could formulate how to instruct his employees. Whenever he rose from his meditation, however, he would forget what he had devised and want soon to return to his contemplation.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137

On Verse 26de

Making plans during meditation can easily become so habitual that we achieve a certain sense of enjoyment from time spent “meditating.” We must avoid such gross mental wandering.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
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*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 23cde*

On Verse 23cde

The seven limb practice:

1. Prostrating
2. Offering
3. Confessing
4. Rejoicing
5. Supplicating to Remain
6. Requesting to Teach
7. Dedicating



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 24ab*



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Verse 24cd*



*The Bodhisattva's Jewel
Garland – Conclusion*

Final Advice

The teachings outlined in this text are not solely for Dharma practitioners but can help anyone who simply wishes to lead a good life. Whether or not we accept such doctrines as past and future lives, if we act as if they did exist there will be only benefit for ourselves and others. We should be friendly towards others yet at the same time as stubborn as an ox when it comes to maintaining the purity of our practices.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137

Final Advice

There is a Tibetan proverb, “Wrap the rope from your nose around your head.” Animals who are led by a rope through their nose are forced to follow where others lead them. However, if this rope is wrapped around their own head, they remain docile and friendly, free to roam where they wish.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137

Final Advice

In a similar manner, if we wrap the rope of ethical discipline around our own head, it is unnecessary to follow some outer imposition of morality. If our discipline comes from within us, we need no external authorities as guides.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137

Final Advice

Dharma practice should not be done as mere ritual, out of obligation or because it is popular. We should not follow Buddhism because it has a growing reputation or has become a “trend,” but because we realize its benefits. No matter what practices we do, if they help our mind, they are worthwhile. This in turn helps all others.

- *Advice from a Spiritual Friend* by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, p.137