

Verses of Kindness and Compassion

Selected from Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life by the 8th century Buddhist poet Shantideva.

May all beings everywhere
Plagued by sufferings of body and mind
Obtain an ocean of happiness and joy
By virtue of my merits.

May those feeble with cold find warmth,
And may those oppressed with heat be cooled
By the boundless waters that pour forth
From the great clouds of the Bodhisattvas' merits.

May the regions of hell become places of joy
With vast and fragrant lotus pools
Beautified with the exquisite calls
Of wild ducks, geese and swans.

May the forest of razor-sharp leaves
Become a beautiful pleasure grove,
And may the trees of knives and swords
Grow into wish-fulfilling trees.

May the rains of lava, blazing stones and weapons
From now on become a rain of flowers,
And may all battling with weapons
From now on be a playful exchange of flowers.

May the blind see forms,
May the deaf hear sounds
And just as it was with Mayadevi,
May pregnant women give birth without any pain.

May the naked find clothing,
The hungry find food;
May the thirsty find water
And delicious drinks.

May the poor find wealth,
Those weak with sorrow find joy;
May the forlorn find new hope,
Constant happiness and prosperity.

May all who are sick and ill
Quickly be freed from their illness,
And may every disease in the world
Never occur again.

May the frightened cease to be afraid
And those bound be freed;
May the powerless find power,
And may people think of benefitting one another.

May all travellers find happiness
Everywhere they go,
And without any effort may they accomplish
Whatever they set out to do.

May those who sail in ships and boats
Obtain whatever they wish for,
And having safely returned to the shore
May they joyfully reunite with their relatives.

May troubled wanderers who have lost their way
Meet with fellow travellers,
And without any fear of thieves and tigers
May their going be easy without any fatigue.

May those who find themselves in trackless, fearful wildernesses,
The children, the aged, the unprotected,
Those stupefied and the insane,
Be guarded by beneficent celestials.

May beings be freed from all states of no leisure
And be endowed with faith, wisdom and kindness;
With food obtained in a proper manner and excellent conduct,
May they be mindful throughout their lives.

May all beings be without want for wealth
Just like the treasury of space,
And without it being the source of dispute or harm
May they always enjoy it as they wish.

May those who have little splendor
Come to be endowed with majesty;
And may those whose bodies are worn with toil
Find magnificent and noble forms.

By the merits I have accumulated
May every single being
Abandon all forms of evil
And be perpetually engaged in virtue.

May no living creature ever suffer,
Commit evil or ever fall ill.
May no one be afraid or belittled,
Or their minds ever be depressed.

In all temples and monasteries
May reading and recitation flourish and remain;
May the Sangha always be in harmony
And may their purposes be accomplished.

May those desiring to practice
Find quiet and solitary places,
And through having abandoned all wandering thoughts
May they meditate with flexible minds.

May the teachings, which are the sole medicine for suffering
And the origin of every joy,
Be materially supported and honored
And abide for a very long time.

May all the pains of living creatures
Ripen solely upon myself,
And through the might of the Bodhisattva Sangha
May all beings experience happiness.

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

These verses from Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life were translated by Stephen Batchelor. They were selected and arranged by George Draffan.