

Friday evening, 19 November 2004

Generate a good motivation thinking to listen to these teachings for the purpose of benefiting all sentient beings. We need to develop the mind of enlightenment, to do this we first need to generate compassion and love toward all sentient beings. We are the very same as all other sentient beings in having the same idea or wish to have happiness and to have good things, and in not wanting suffering or problems. In this, we are all equal. We need to try to develop this attitude, the mind of enlightenment, in our mind.

Here we are examining the *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*. First I will give the oral transmission as I stopped here in the past.

Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Tibetan text page 154) says:

They dwell for as long as they wish
In empty houses, at the foot of trees and in caves,
Having abandoned the pain of clinging to and guarding [possessions],
They abide independent, free of care, (87)

They enjoy and are happy living in empty houses without belongings. Mentally they are satisfied, have little desire, and are very quiet; this brings much happiness. If one lives in an empty house, there is nothing to take care of, no worries. Also if one lives under the branches of a tree or in a cave in the mountain, it is also said that this is very nice. One can stay there as long as one wishes, being happy. There is no need to take care of anything as one does not own anything. One is separated from attachment to desirable objects – forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tangible objects. On the other hand, we are attached to the qualities of the pleasant sense objects of the desire realm. If we are attached to these things, we need to collect them; to have a nice house with a nice kitchen and so forth. In this way we want more and more, and therefore have more and more clinging and attachment, and need more and more. Due to present day technological developments there are many machines that we want to buy; in this way our attachment grows. We can clearly understand this.

When there are the objects of our ear consciousness, pleasant sounds such as nice music, we want to listen to them more and more. When there are unpleasant sounds that are loud or rough even though we do not want to hear them, we cannot avoid them. We understand this; this is our experience. We can check this. Like this, we are all the same. The same is true of pleasant odors such as a nice perfume, we want to smell them. On the other hand, we do not want to smell unpleasant odors. We also want food that tastes delicious, we do not want to eat food that we do not like, in fact we lose our appetite when we see or smell it. If the food is good we eat a lot of it. The same is true of drinks, there are many different ones. Also we like clothing that is soft and smooth and nice in color, we wish to have it. In this way, we are attached to the five desirable objects of the senses. Then we need more and more money and we need to work more and more as without working we will not get money. It does not fall from the sky! Then one is more busy, more rushed, and more tired, and thinks, “Oh, today I worked a lot, I don’t want to do anything other than sleep.” But then one goes out for a drink, to see a movie, a play, and so forth. Or one goes dancing at a discotheque until five in the morning! Then, tired, one drives home but has an accident and dies. This happens, mostly to young people. However, some old people also do these things.

In short, we need to free ourselves, to live independently without needing to take care of anyone. One should stay alone without having much relationship with others, talking to them. This is what the yogis say. However, if we are not yogis we do not need to do this. However, we should try to have less distractions and to spend time alone. Shantideva was a monk but also a yogi, he was able to stay alone. We should try to stay alone, not needing to take care of anyone. This is necessary to develop single-pointed concentration. This is the reason for doing this. This chapter of the book is about concentration.

Having achieved calm abiding, the mind is very stable. Then one can meet others, talk with them, and try to help them. We need to try to develop happiness inside ourselves, to develop quietness within us. Try to keep one’s mind relaxed without thinking of much.

Living as they choose, desireless,
Having no ties with anyone –
Even the powerful have difficulty finding

A life as happy and content as this.

(88)

We should try to live like this, to have little desire. We need to reduce our desire and be more satisfied and content wherever we stay. This is not easy, it is difficult. We should try to stay alone. If we cannot stay alone at the moment, we should try to have less desire and be more content. This we can do. We need to put effort into this, try to have a mind that is relaxed.

Having in such ways as these
Thought about the excellences of solitude,
I should completely pacify distorted conceptions
And meditate on the awakening mind.

(89)

We need to try to understand the good qualities of staying alone in a solitary place. We have many desires and many conceptions, we need to try to pacify them or eliminate them. We have many conceptions thinking, "I want this. I want that." We think, "Today I will do this. Tomorrow I will do that. Until I am a hundred years old I will do this and that." We constantly plan what we will do in the future. If we take a husband and wife as an example, they may think "I have one child, maybe we need another one. Maybe we need three." However, even though they want another child, sometimes it does not come. Then in some poor countries, to poor families many children come. Some people have fourteen, thirteen, twelve, and so forth children, but some died so only ten or so remain. Some Muslim men have five or six wives, each of which can have many children; for example, Bin Laden who is often shown on television. His father had 52 children, of which Bin Laden was the seventeenth. In Varanasi I knew some Muslim families that had many children, all of which were engaged in business. We also see in documentaries on such countries as Africa that very poor families can have many children.

To meditate the awakening mind means to develop the mind of enlightenment, bodhichitta. "Bodhi" means enlightenment or buddhahood, and "chitta" means mind. Thus, bodhichitta is the wish to attain buddhahood. How is the mind of enlightenment developed? There are two different ways. One is called "six causes and one effect" in which one sees all sentient beings as having been one's mother, recognizes their kindness, determines to repay the kindness, develops great love and then great compassion, and generates the extraordinary thought. These six are the causes, as a result of which one develops the mind of enlightenment. We have often talked about this.

The other method is that of exchanging oneself and others. First one has to equalize oneself and others, seeing that we are equal. Just as we wish happiness, all sentient beings are the same in wishing happiness. Likewise, just as we do not want suffering, all sentient beings also do not want suffering. Thinking in this way, we try to equalize ourselves. Initially we need to put effort into equalizing the feeling regarding oneself and others. Then one needs to exchange oneself with others, thinking that oneself is not important whereas others are important. Contrarily, we presently think that we are important and that others are not so important. We need to change this attitude. We also think that our own family is important, and that others are not. We also think our relatives are important, others are not. We try to give up this attitude, thinking that our families and relatives are very few whereas other sentient beings are very many. They are the majority and are therefore more important. Thinking in this way we should give up the self-cherishing mind and cherish other sentient beings. Like this, we will develop good heart, the wish to take care of others. We need this, it is important. We need to subdue our mind, which is presently not subdued. Our mind is overcome by mental afflictions, and we ourselves are overcome by our mind. We are not able to do what we want as our mind controls us. Therefore, we need to try to do something about this. The main meditation for this is bodhichitta or good heart or love, the wish that all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness. We need to try to develop this attitude. We also need to wish all sentient beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. Our mind divides people into three: friends and relatives who we try to take care of, those who make us happy; enemies who, when we see them to be happy and doing well, we experience pain and when they suffer we rejoice in their problems; and strangers who we ignore. For them we respectively develop attachment, hatred, and ignorance. We think this is good, but it is not good. It is bad, very bad. We need to abandon these three mental poisons. On the other hand, we need to develop the mind of enlightenment that cherishes others, wishes to take care of others and make them happy.

Saturday morning, 20 November 2004

Develop the motivation to listen to these teachings in order to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. We need to put effort into generating the conventional mind of enlightenment.

First of all I should make an effort
To meditate upon the equality between self and others:
I should protect all beings as I do myself
Because we are all equal in [wanting] pleasure and [not wanting] pain. (90)

There are two ways of generating the mind of enlightenment, the one emphasized here is that of exchanging oneself with others. We need to meditate that oneself and others are equal or the same as is mentioned in the root text. We all want happiness and pleasure, no one wants suffering or pain. All of us are the same in this. Even very small birds and animals, although their minds are not very clear, still want happiness and pleasure and do not want suffering or pain. We human beings are intelligent, we know how to eliminate suffering and pain therefore we need to try to eliminate them, thinking "How do pain and suffering arise?" We need to understand where they come from. We need to check this. Perhaps some people think that suffering is something that others give us, however this is not true. Suffering and pain, mental unhappiness, are produced within us by the mental afflictions. Therefore, we need to eliminate the negative emotions of anger, attachment, ignorance, pride, jealousy, miserliness, and so forth. Mainly we need to eliminate the self-cherishing mind. This is the main problem-maker that abides within our own mind. The self-cherishing attitude creates many problems for us. How can this self-cherishing be eliminated? The main antidote is the attitude that cherishes others. Therefore, we need to exchange the self-cherishing in our mind, to give it up, and to emphasize the cherishing of others. This means that we need to develop this within our mind. For this purpose we need to first equalize ourselves with others. We have the same desires, we are not different. All of us wish pleasure or happiness and do not want suffering or pain.

Presently we try to protect ourselves and to take care of ourselves, however we need to do the same for all sentient beings. This is important to try. If we try, slowly slowly we will be able to develop this attitude within our mind. If we do not put effort into this it will be difficult to develop the pure mind wishing to benefit other sentient beings. Therefore, we need to try.

How can we equalize and exchange ourselves with others? First this is explained in brief explanation, then extensively, and then there is the conclusion. This is the way in which it is explained here.

Although there are many different parts and aspects such as the hands;
As a body that is to be protected they are one.
Likewise, all the different sentient beings in their pleasure and their pain
Have a wish to be happy that is the same as mine. (91)

Just as we protect ourselves we need to protect all sentient beings because we are the same in wishing to be happy and not wanting to be unhappy.

The body is composed of many different parts, arms, legs, head, the trunk, the inner organs such as the heart, liver, stomach, kidneys, many different things, but all of them are parts of the body. Since all of these are included in the body, we need to protect them just as we protect our entire body. Also although sentient beings are different, and even within human beings there are human beings of different shapes, colors, ideas, we are all beings. Therefore, we need to protect all sentient beings and to try to make them happy because all sentient beings are similar in their desires. We are all similar in wanting to eliminate our suffering and wanting to obtain happiness. There is no difference. Therefore, just as we think to protect ourselves we need to think to protect others and to try to help them.

The suffering that I experience
Does not cause any harm to others.
But that suffering [is mine] because of my conceiving
Of [myself as] "I"; thereby it becomes unbearable. (92)

Likewise, the misery of others

Does not befall me. Nevertheless, by conceiving of
[Others as] “I” their suffering becomes mine;
Therefore it too should be hard to bear. (93)

Hence, I should dispel the misery of others
Because it is suffering, just like my own,
And I should benefit others
Because they are sentient beings, just like myself. (94)

We might think, “The suffering of others does not cause me suffering. Likewise, also my suffering is only mine, it cannot cause problems for others. Therefore, I do not need to eliminate others sufferings as it does not harm me.” This kind of attitude can arise within us. Sometimes we have big suffering or are mentally depressed, which can harm others. This is because when we are agitated it makes the people around us unhappy. The Tibetan nomads say “If one sees the face of someone who is crying, one also wants to cry. If one sees the face of someone who is laughing and happy, one also wants to laugh.” In this way, our suffering can also harm others, whereas others’ happiness can make us more happy.

Whatever suffering others have although it may not harm one, one should think “This suffering is also my suffering.” Oneself clings to oneself, due to which one is unable to bear one’s suffering. We think of an “I” that is self-sufficient and substantially established, this is difficult to eliminate. Therefore, we try to generate in our mind the thought “My suffering is suffering, similarly all other sentient beings suffer like me.” Thinking in this way, we should think that we need to eliminate not only our own suffering but also others’ suffering. We need to eliminate others’ suffering because they are suffering and we need to eliminate all suffering. In this way we will generate more compassion and altruism toward all sentient beings. We also need to think that we must benefit all sentient beings because they are beings who are similar to us. Just as one thinks to benefit oneself, one also needs to benefit others. Like this try to develop the understanding of how other sentient beings suffering just like oneself and determine to eliminate their suffering, and just as oneself wants to be happy so do others and determine to help and benefit them. We need to try to do this.

When both myself and others
Are similar in that we wish to be happy,
What is so special about me?
Why do I strive for my happiness alone? (95)

We need to understand that we are all the same: everyone wishes happiness, everyone wants pleasure, everyone wants desirable objects. Why do I only take care of myself and think only of my own happiness? This is not right. We should try to benefit and help other sentient beings to be happy. To do this we need to take care of others just as we take care of ourselves. To do this there are things that we need to practice or adopt, and things that we need to discard or abandon. We need to give up that which is negative and brings suffering, so too do others need to give them up. We also need to develop virtuous energy and to practice an inner path, likewise other sentient beings need to do the same. Therefore, we need to try to do whatever we can to help other sentient beings to generate a good motivation or good heart and to practice virtuous actions and give up non-virtuous actions. In this way we can help other human beings. We need to try this. For example, within our family each of the members wishes for happiness and does not want to experience pain. Therefore, we need to try to make each other happy, to live in harmony. It also happens that one person in the family always yells and shouts and uses harsh words, or even beats and possibly kills another family member. Why is this? It is due to negative emotions that make him or her act in this way, mainly it happens due to anger. However, it can also be caused by jealousy. These two afflictions are very bad, they are very harmful among family members, a community, the nation, and the world. Others are proud, thinking “I am powerful. I can do whatever I want.” This kind of attitude creates suffering for many other human beings. It is more easy to make others suffer, as bad actions come more easily to us. We do not need to put much effort into them! Why is this? Because we have familiarized with them for many many lifetimes. Perhaps some people do not accept past or future lives but think that there is only this one life, thinking in this way is more easy as one can then do whatever one wants as in the end one will die and finish. However, I think that it is not like this. For example, although in Christianity there is no talk of the next life, Christians say that if one creates heavy negative actions when one dies one will leave this body and go down to hell and stay there suffering forever. On the other hand, if someone acts well and keeps the commandments one will go up to

heaven where one will be happy forever. If one has not been either very good or very bad one will remain in a state of limbo, waiting for a messenger to come and decide where one will go. If we check all religions deeply we will see that they having some points that are similar. In any case our negative minds and thoughts of killing, stealing, and so forth will bring the experience of suffering. This we can see. About sixty years ago there was Hitler; someone said that maybe he was a manifestation of buddha! Ha ha! He killed many people thinking to become the ruler of the world, but in the end he died. His entire family died. Someone told me that perhaps Hitler had escaped to Tibet where he had become a monk in a hermitage, I don't know but someone said this to me. However, in the end these kind of actions bring suffering. In Italy there was Mussolini, he too lost his life. Therefore, these people experienced suffering. This happens to many politicians. First they kill many people by misusing their power and then in the end they go to jail. This happens, it means that as a result of bad actions one will experience suffering in this or future lives. Therefore, we need to be careful, to try not to commit non-virtuous actions. Instead we need to develop our inner qualities, an inner path, inner happiness. Our qualities are like a wish-fulfilling jewel, for example, our knowledge can benefit ourselves and others. If one has not studied, does not have knowledge or good qualities one will be miserable and cannot benefit others. Perhaps one can accumulate some money, but in the end this only brings suffering, the worry that one will lose it or that it will be taken away by others. Thinking that one pays too many taxes, one may try to cheat the government, to put the money in a bank in another country, to hide it, and so forth. However, one day one will die and the money will not have benefited neither oneself or one's family. I know an Indian from Kushalnagar, which is near Sera Monastery, who kept the money of many families and monks and gave them interest on it but at one point he told everyone that it was better to take back their money as if he were to die they would not get their money back as his wife and other family members did not know anything about it. Money in the bank perhaps benefits the bank, but it does not benefit the country, the region, or one's family. Some people care so much for their wealth that they do not take care of their body but work day and night, not even stopping to eat. In the meantime they create many negative actions.

Some people think "I need to protect myself because my suffering harms me. I do not need to protect others from suffering because their suffering does not harm me." Thinking in this way, it would follow that one would not need to worry about the suffering in the next life in the hell realm as it is not harming one now. Also in order to avoid future financial problems one tries to make money, however this is not harming one now. Even when we are very young, we think about how to avoid the experience of suffering when we are older. However, there should be no need to do this, since the suffering of old age is not harming us now. This future suffering is not harming us now. Perhaps one will not even get old, one might die before that. One might die even tonight, perhaps in a motorcycle accident. This happens to many people. Some, wishing to be happy, go traveling as tourists, but instead they lose their life. We try to find happiness but due to conditions arising we may become unhappy, lose our life, or have an accident due to which the body is left paralyzed. This happens. We do not know what will happen to us in the future. If we knew what would happen tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or even this evening, that some problem would come, we could avoid it by not going there or not doing something. However, we do not know what will happen in the future. Perhaps someone with clairvoyance knows, but we do not. Therefore, since we wish to be happy and to enjoy ourselves for the rest of our life, we need to develop an inner path, inner qualities; to develop the path to enlightenment. Even if one suffers physically one will be mentally happy, whereas if one does not do this even a small physical suffering will make one mentally unhappiness. In this way there will be two sufferings. We need to avoid this. In any case, we need to develop good heart, the mind cherishing others, the mind of enlightenment. This is important.

Saturday afternoon, 20 November 2004

Generate a good motivation for listening to these teachings – the wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. We need to try to develop our good qualities. To do this, we need to have inner strength. This is important. When one experiences suffering, dedicate it that the sufferings of all sentient beings ripen upon oneself that they may be free from such suffering. We should try to do this. We need to be more strong. Whatever problem we have we should try to solve it ourselves.

And when both myself and others

Are similar in that we do not wish to suffer,
What is so special about me?
Why do I protect myself and not others? (96)

One should try to think that oneself and others are the same in not wanting suffering. Therefore, what is the difference between oneself and others? There is no such difference. Why does one not protect others' happiness and instead tries to protect or obtain only one's own happiness? This is not right, it would be better to try to protect both one's own and others' happiness. Just as we protect our own happiness and take care of ourselves, so too should we protect others' happiness and take care of them. At times there occur interferences or thoughts that we need to eliminate.

But why should I protect them
If their suffering does not cause me any harm?
Then why protect myself against future suffering
If it causes me no harm now? (97)

One may think, "When sentient beings experience suffering, since this suffering does not harm me, why should I protect them?"

Thinking about how to avoid suffering in our old age, we dedicate ourselves to collecting wealth in our youth. Why do we do this as right now these sufferings are not harming us? We think of different methods to relieve our future suffering, such as in the morning we think to relieve the suffering of the afternoon, in the afternoon we think to avoid the suffering of that night, and at night we think to avoid the suffering of the next morning. However, this is not correct because in the morning the sufferings of the afternoon are still in the future and therefore are not harming us now. Similarly, thinking in this life to eliminate the suffering of future lives is not correct because the suffering of future lives are not harming us now. Therefore, there is no need to protect ourselves from them. However, we need to eliminate the causes of the suffering in future lives so that we will not experience them. Is this necessary? We should think about this. In any case, the suffering of the future does not harm us now. But we need to think that since we will experience suffering in the future we need to protect ourselves by creating the causes to not suffer in the future. In this sense all sentient beings are the same. Oneself and others are not different. Therefore we need to take care of ourselves as well as others. Just as we need to eliminate the causes that will bring us suffering, so too do we need to help others eliminate the causes of their suffering.

We need to think what is more important. Future lives are many, whereas this life is just one. Therefore, we also need to protect our future lives. Similarly, others are many, whereas oneself is just one. For this reason, we need to take more care of others than of ourselves. Since the cause of suffering is the collection of non-virtuous actions, we need to avoid creating non-virtue. However, if we do create non-virtue we must immediately purify it. We need to think more about this.

It is a mistaken conception to think
That I shall experience [the suffering of my next life],
For it is another person who dies
And another that will be reborn. (98)

We need to think about what this means! It appears to be a debate. In this life we do not experience the sufferings of our future lives, thinking this is a wrong conception. A person who is dying now, and the person of the next life are completely different. Because I will suffer in the next life, I should eliminate the causes of this suffering in this life. It is the same for others, therefore I should also eliminate their suffering.

We can think "Because we are two different beings, we do not need to eliminate the suffering of the other person. Why is this? Because we are different and therefore it is not necessary." For example, if a husband is suffering cold, it is not the duty of his wife to eliminate his suffering and vice versa. However, this type of work is suitable and right. For example, a father takes care of his daughter and a daughter takes care of her father; this is right. However, the father and his daughter are different beings. One is a male and one is a female; they are not one. However, they need to take care of each other. Like this, we need to take the responsibility to take care of all sentient beings. So we need to develop the thought cherishing others and to give up the thought cherishing ourselves. To do this, we need to think that self-cherishing is the source of many shortcomings, problems, and difficulties. If we check, we will find that all of these come from the self-

cherishing or selfish attitude. Cherishing others, on the other hand, has many qualities and benefits, and brings many good results. We see someone like Buddha Shakyamuni who in a past life generated the thought cherishing others and attained buddhahood, whereas we still continue to wander in cyclic existence and to experience suffering due to cherishing ourselves. We can check the different countries in which there were holy beings, why did some people become holy beings and others not? Because they developed good heart thinking to take care of other sentient beings. In this way they became holy beings. If they had not done this and had only continued to cherish themselves they would never have become holy beings. There are those who are intelligent, who understand the world, and those who become politicians but do not become saints. Maybe if someone was a good politician, his or her name will be remembered. Others who obtained very high positions in politics later come under the control of others. This is how cyclic existence continually changes. Holy beings or saints are those who practiced the main points of their various religions whereby they became holy. Thinking about this, we will see that we need to think more about others than we do about ourselves.

Surely whenever there is suffering
[The sufferer] must protect himself from it –
But the suffering of the foot is not that of the hand,
Why then does it protect it? (99)

The feet and the hands are different, yet they are both included in the body. Therefore, if the feet, for example, suffer, the hand can protect it or relieve the suffering of the feet. For example, if there were a thorn in the foot, it can be taken out with the hand. Is this not right? The suffering of the foot is not the suffering of the hand. But it is the hand that relieves it. However, if the hand suffers, what can the feet do? We can ask Shantideva what can be done. Perhaps the feet can walk to the doctor! In this way the feet can help relieve the suffering of the hand, and the hand can help relieve the suffering of the feet. This is an example with respect to the thought “Because others’ suffering is not mine, I do not need to do anything about it.” Just as the hand relieves the suffering of the foot, so too do we need to relieve others’ suffering. These are all reasons as to why we need to take care of other sentient beings. Next someone answers this question.

“Although this may not be justified,
It is done because of grasping at a self” –
But surely whatever is not justified for myself or others
Should at all costs be rejected. (100)

Even though there is no reason to eliminate our suffering, from now until we die we take care of ourselves. Why? Because due to familiarity with the conception of a self, we think “I” and “mine,” thinking “My success,” “My future life,” and so forth. We are very familiar with the conception of a self due to which we think, “These people are my friends. These people are my enemies. These people are strangers.” Due to this we try to protect and take care of “my friends.” Thinking that other are “my enemies,” we think to harm them and to give them suffering. Toward others we think “They do not matter” and we ignore them. However, someone who today is a stranger could tomorrow become a friend and then eventually a very dear friend. Or someone who today is a stranger could tomorrow become an enemy. Also someone who today is a dear friend from whom one does not want to be separate for even an hour, later on after something happens due to which there is fighting, can transform into an enemy. In addition, someone who one does not like, whom one does not even want to see, due to some condition can transform into a friend. Things change like this. Therefore, we need to give up partisan feelings for those who are close who make us happy, those who are far and make us unhappy, and those who are neither for whom we are neutral. These feelings only bring suffering to ourselves, they make our mind unhappy. If things are going bad, we become unable to sleep. Even if we try to eat, we cannot, we have not appetite. Due to the mental suffering, we also experience physical suffering. If we check who made this suffering, we will find that it is not others, only ourselves. Our self-cherishing mind created this suffering.

We should reject or abandon the causes of suffering. The main cause is self-cherishing. It is also ignorance. Another cause is other types of negative minds. We suffer due to our mental attitudes. We need to put effort into rejecting these causes of our suffering. In other words, we need to abandon them. To do this, we need to identify them. We know the wheel of cyclic existence very well, the twelve links of dependent-arising. One link is joined to another, but the root is ignorance. What kind of ignorance is this? It is the conception of a

self, the thought “I” and “mine.” Due to this we create many negativities. It is also said to be the view of the transitory collection. Observing five aggregates, we think “my body,” “my feelings,” “my discriminations,” “my mind.” On the basis of the five aggregates, we impute “I.” The transitory collection is this body, we impute “I” on it and grasp it to be an independent, self-existent self. We think that the self exists inherently or from its own side. We grasp it to exist in this way and then adhere to that. Due to this we create actions that deposit an imprint on the consciousness. These imprints remain on the consciousness, for example, like collecting money and putting it in the bank due to which we receive a receipt that shows that the money will not go to waste. Likewise, when we create an action, virtuous or non-virtuous, it leaves an imprint on the consciousness. When we put money in the bank we get interest on it, similarly when we put imprints on our consciousness they increase. For example, if we deposit a negative imprint on our consciousness if we do not purify it, it will grow in strength and become more powerful. The same happens to virtuous actions that are not destroyed by anger or wrong views, that is, they will grow in strength. Thinking in this way, we need to try to understand the main cause of our own and others’ suffering. The root cause is ignorance, the first of the twelve links of dependent-arising. Therefore, we need to try to eliminate or abandon this ignorance.

Another cause of not being able to achieve enlightenment is the inability to cherish and take care of others. The main cause of this is self-cherishing. Due to familiarity with cherishing ourselves, we will not be able to develop the mind cherishing others, the mind of enlightenment, and the attainment of buddhahood. Therefore, we need to try now to develop this, to be strong.

We need to meditate to equalize ourselves with other sentient beings, but what is the special interference to this. We need to examine this.

Such things as a continuum and an aggregation
Are false in the same way as a rosary and an army,
There is no [real] owner of suffering,
Therefore who has control over it?

(101)

A rosary is composed of a string on which are strung many beads; due to this it is called “rosary.” Likewise a group of men and woman is called “an aggregation” or “assembly.” A group of soldiers, whether male or female, is called “army” or “troop.” An army is not necessarily either male or female, it can be composed of both men and women. I have heard that in battle, women are stronger. There is a group of bandits in India that is led by a woman.

In short, we need to protect ourselves from our negative emotions. Our main enemy is our negative emotions, it is not other people. In this life a man or woman who is our enemy can take our life but he or she cannot put us in the hell realm, animal realm, or hungry ghost realm. This is not possible. Only our negative emotions have the power to throw us into the lower realms. Now we are free of these states, therefore we need to take care of and protect ourselves so that we will not fall into these realms. This responsibility is one’s own. We should try to do this from a Dharma point of view, perhaps not from a political point of view. However, politicians also need to show a good heart wishing to take care of others, to make others happy, and to eliminate their sufferings, to eliminate their poverty and to make them rich. Politicians say this, these are nice words. If they can do it or not is another thing, perhaps they are just cheating us with nice words. But this is necessary because if politicians only say bad words others will not like them. Our external world is also like this. Therefore, we need to try to be generous to others, to talk to them in a nice way, to practice good morality. In addition, we need to act in accordance with what we say. If we say one thing and do another, this would not be right. Whatever we say, we should do. Then people will believe in us. This is necessary to perform the bodhisattva activities. Bodhisattvas have four ways of gathering disciples, similarly politicians act to bring others into their party.

First we need to check our own mind, and to check how we create verbal and physical actions. We need to watch our mouth and how we move our body. We need to check this, to control our actions of body and speech. In this way, we should try to become better and better. In this way we can transform our actions of body, speech, and mind, our behavior. To do this, we need to examine ourselves. This is important.

Sunday morning, 21 November 2004

Develop a good motivation wishing to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings and with this motivation listen to the teachings.

Being no [inherent] owner of suffering,
There can be no distinction at all between [that of myself and others].
Thus I shall dispel it because it hurts:
Why am I so certain [that I shouldn't eliminate the suffering of others]? (102)

There does not exist an inherently existent owner of suffering but conventionally there does exist an owner of suffering, that is, one who has suffering. Therefore it is necessary to eliminate suffering, one's own as well as others'. There is no difference between these two: one's own suffering and others' suffering. If before one there is someone who is suffering, mentally oneself also suffers, one's mind becomes unhappy. One's own suffering and others' suffering are suffering, they are dependent upon one another. Therefore, we need to put effort into eliminating both one's own and others' suffering.

The following must be clearly understood. There are two types of suffering: physical and mental suffering. Physical suffering consists of pain or sickness. The nature of our body is itself suffering, pervasive compounding suffering. If we are not suffering from pain or illness and our body is healthy, we can still experience mental suffering. Perhaps one suffers due to problems with one's boyfriend, girlfriend, family, parents, neighbors, and so forth. One thinks that they disturb one's mind. Therefore, we need to try to develop a mind that is relaxed, quiet, and content. At times the body is sick, it may need to be operated on or even a limb amputated, but in spite of this some people's mind remain calm.

But [since neither the suffering nor the sufferer truly exist,]
Why should I turn away the misery of all? –
This is no ground for argument,
For if I prevent my own [sufferings], surely I should prevent [the sufferings] of all.
If not, since I am just like [other] sentient beings,
[I should not prevent my own suffering either]. (103)

The sufferings of others are sufferings. It is therefore right for us to try to eliminate it. Dividing suffering into "my suffering" and "their suffering" is not right. Someone may think, "Why do we need to eliminate others' suffering since their suffering does not harm me?" Suffering is not desired by oneself or by others, therefore we need to try to eliminate all suffering, one's own and others. We take much care of ourselves, cherish ourselves, and cling to ourselves; this is a source of much suffering and we divide others into categories. It only brings more suffering for oneself. Therefore, we need to develop more and more the mind taking care of and cherishing others sentient beings. We need to think "I want to eliminate the suffering of others because they are the same as myself but there are more of them. Between many beings and myself, the majority are more important." Neither self or other exists inherently, however conventionally self and other exists, I and you exist. They are all dependent. Therefore, if we wish to attain higher realizations we need to think that others are more important than oneself. This is because others are numberless, whereas we are just one. Therefore, we need to try to develop the thought to take care of and cherish others.

Likewise, suffering does not exist inherently but conventionally it does exist, for example, many types of sickness exist. Why is this? We should check. It seems that technology is improving things, yet still there are more and more illnesses. This is because of the use of chemical substances, while they may benefit one part of the body they harm another part. For example, to improve one's nose a piece of flesh from one's thigh can be used, perhaps the nose looks better but the thigh has been harmed. This is just an example. People do these kinds of things nowadays. Something that seems to help, actually can bring much harm in the world.

We need to think about suffering. Why? Because when we understand suffering, we will want to eliminate it. Then we will look for the cause of suffering, one will do analysis, examining the cause. In the end having found the cause, one can apply a method to eliminate suffering. Therefore, there is a beneficial result from thinking about suffering. Buddha Shakyamuni first taught the four noble truths, the first of which is true sufferings. The first attribute of true sufferings is impermanence. That they are impermanent means that they arise from causes and conditions. The second attribute of true sufferings is that they are suffering or misery.

There are many types of suffering. What is the cause of suffering? Having examined this, one will find that the cause is actions and then having examined more one will find that the final cause is afflictions. Thus, the main cause is the mental afflictions. Checking more, one will find that the cause is ignorance. Therefore, we need to eliminate ignorance. To do this we need to meditate selflessness. In this way sufferings can be eliminated. The result is true cessations. How are sufferings ceased? By means of meditating true paths.

But since this compassion will bring me much misery,
Why should I exert myself to develop it?
Should I contemplate the suffering of living creatures,
How could the misery of compassion be more? (104)

Someone thinks, “If one generates compassion more suffering will arise in one’s mind.” This person thinks that by thinking about suffering one will suffer more. The Tibetan *snying rje* is *karuna* in Sanskrit. When *karuna* is directly translated it means “that which ceases happiness” (de gog). Therefore, it would seem that if one generates compassion, one will suffer more. A mother, for example, has such love and compassion for her child, that when her child suffers she too suffers greatly. Therefore, this person thinks “Why is it important to generate compassion since when compassion is generated oneself suffers even more? If compassion brings suffering, it is not necessary to generate it. It would be better not to think about others’ suffering.” When a bodhisattva develops more compassion this does not bring suffering but only brings more mental happiness and eliminates mental unhappiness. This is because the stronger their compassion, the stronger their affectionate love. When one generates love, one’s mind becomes happier. In this way, if one has really strong compassion, mentally one is more happy. Because suffering does not exist inherently, it can be eliminated. The causes and conditions for suffering can be eliminated or abandoned.

If by one person’s suffering
The suffering of many would be destroyed,
Surely kindhearted people would accept it
For the sake of themselves and others? (105)

Thus the Bodhisattva Supushachandra,
Although aware of the harm the king would cause him,
Accepted his own suffering
In order to eradicate the miseries of many. (106)

By oneself bearing a little suffering can many sufferings be eliminated? If by oneself bearing a small suffering, the suffering of many beings in cyclic existence could be eliminated this would be very important. Bodhisattvas generate great compassion thinking about others suffering; the more they think about this suffering the more compassion they generate. This is correct. This kind of great compassion is suitable to be generated for oneself and for other sentient beings.

Supushachandra means Beautiful Flower Moon. Even knowing that the king wanted to torture or kill him, this bodhisattva did not eliminate his suffering but accepted it. Why? Because he knew that by giving up his life, he could prevent the suffering of many others. One of his followers told him that he should not do this but instead should escape, however Supushachandra did not follow this advice as he was aware that by sacrificing his life he would benefit many other sentient beings. He did this, due to which the king was happy. Such stories are written in the sutras such as the *King of Meditative Stabilizations Sutra*. Bodhisattvas accept sufferings thinking that in a previous life they created non-virtues that have now brought the result of suffering and therefore should be accepted. Whenever we experience problems or difficulties we too need to accept them as being one’s own karma, the result of one’s own actions. We should not think that they are caused by others and therefore criticize them saying “He did this. She did that.” If, for example, someone harms me now, it means that in a previous life I harmed him or her. This way of thinking is good, it means that one accepts karma. Bodhisattvas do like this, for example, Supushachandra accepted the sentence of the king that he had to give up his life.

The *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* published together with Gyeltsab Je’s commentary by Ganden Jangtse Monastery.

We need to try to develop bodhichitta by exchanging ourselves with others. We need to develop the motivations of love and compassion by doing the meditation of taking-and-giving in conjunction with the inhalation and exhalation of the breath. When one breathes in, one takes upon oneself all the suffering of other sentient beings and when one breathes out one imagines giving them one's excellent qualities, virtues, body, precious human rebirth, and so forth whereby they receive all good conditions and become happy. In this way, one takes the sufferings of other sentient beings upon oneself motivated by compassion, the attitude wishing all sentient beings to be free from suffering and the causes of suffering, actions and afflictions. Think that from the right nostrils of other sentient beings comes black smoke in the nature of their actions, afflictions, suffering, and difficulties. One inhales the black smoke, it descends to one's heart where there is a black heap of dust that is the nature of the self-cherishing mind, whereby it is destroyed and disappears. Then motivated by love, the wish that all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness, one gives them one's precious human rebirth, one's wealth, virtuous actions, and so forth in the form of white light. This light goes out one's right nostril and enters the left nostrils of other sentient beings, whereby they receive everything good. In this way do the taking and giving meditation.

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