


Generating the Bodhimind



by His Holiness Kyabje Ling Rinpoche

Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, the senior tutor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the 97th holder of the Ganden throne and thus head of the gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. He was ordained by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, to whom his predecessor had also been tutor. This teaching was given at TUSHITA on November 14th, 1979.

The enlightened attitude, the bodhimind that has love and compassion as its basis, is the essential seed producing the attainment of buddhahood. Therefore it is a subject that should be approached with the pure thought, "May I thus gain enlightenment in order to be of greatest benefit to the world."

However, there are but very small spiritual effects in hearing teachings on the bodhimind if we lack a certain spiritual foundation. Consequently, most teachers insist that disciples cultivate various preliminary practices within themselves before approaching this higher precept. If we wish to go to university, we must first learn to read and write. While merely hearing about meditation on love, compassion and the bodhimind does leave a favorable imprint on our stream of consciousness, for the teaching to produce a definite inner transformation we trainees should first meditate extensively on the preliminaries (such as the preciousness of the human opportunity, death and its significance, the nature of karma and samsara, refuge, and the higher trainings in ethics, meditation and wisdom).

If we wish to attain the state of the full enlightenment of buddhahood as opposed to the lesser enlightenment of arhantship, our innermost practice must be cultivation of the bodhimind. Were we instead to make meditation on emptiness our innermost practice, there would be the possibility of falling into the arhant's nirvana instead of gaining buddhahood. This teaching is given in the saying, "When the father is the bodhimind and the mother is wisdom, the child joins the caste of buddhas." In intercaste marriages in ancient India, children would adopt the caste of the father, regardless of whether the mother were of higher or lower caste. Therefore the bodhimind is like the father: if one cultivates the bodhimind, one enters the caste of buddhas.

Although the bodhimind is the primary force producing buddhahood, bodhimind as the father must unite with wisdom, or meditation on emptiness, as the

mother, in order to produce a child able to accomplish buddhahood. One without the other will not bring full enlightenment. The bodhimind is the essential energy that produces buddhahood, yet throughout its stages of development it should be applied to meditation on emptiness. In the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*, where Buddha spoke most extensively on emptiness, we are constantly reminded to place our meditations on emptiness within the context of the bodhimind.

What precisely is the bodhimind? It is the mind strongly characterized by the aspiration, "For the sake of all sentient beings I must attain the state of full enlightenment." It is easy to repeat the words of this aspiration to ourselves but the bodhimind is something much deeper than this. It is a quality within the mind systematically cultivated by one of a number of methods, such as those called "Six Causes and One Effect," or "Exchanging Self(-Awareness) for (Awareness of) Others."

Merely holding in mind the thought, "I must attain enlightenment for the sake of benefitting others" without first cultivating the prerequisite causes, stages and basic foundations of this thought will not give birth to the bodhimind. For this reason the venerable Atisha (11th century) once asked, "Do you know anyone with bodhimind not born from meditation on love and compassion?"

What benefits arise through having generated the bodhimind? If we know what qualities good food has we will attempt to obtain, prepare and eat it. Similarly, when we hear of the efficacy of the bodhimind we shall seek to learn the methods and practices by which it is generated.

The immediate benefit of having given birth to the bodhimind within our mindstream is that we enter the great vehicle leading to buddhahood and gain the title of bodhisattva, a son of the buddhas. It does not matter what we look like, how we dress, how wealthy or powerful we are, whether or not we have clairvoyance or miraculous powers, or how learned we are: if we have generated the bodhimind we are bodhisattvas, and regardless of our other qualities, if we do not have the bodhimind we are not bodhisattvas. A being with the bodhimind who incarnates as an animal is respected by all the buddhas as being a bodhisattva.

The great sages of the lesser vehicle possess innumerable wondrous qualities, yet someone who has developed merely the initial stages of the bodhimind surpasses them in terms of his nature. This is likened to the baby son of a universal monarch who, although only an infant possessing no qualities of knowledge or power, is granted a higher status than any scholar or minister in the empire.

In terms of conventional benefits, all the happiness and goodness that exists is a product of bodhimind. The buddhas are born from bodhisattvas, but the bodhisattvas are born from the bodhimind. As a result of the birth of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, great waves of enlightened energy spread throughout the universe, influencing sentient beings to create positive karma. This positive karma in turn brings them much benefit and happiness. On the one hand, the mighty stream of enlightened and enlightening energy issues from the wisdom body of the buddhas, but as the buddhas are born from bodhisattvas and bodhisattvas from the bodhimind, the ultimate source of the universal reservoir of goodness and happiness is the bodhimind itself.

How can we develop the bodhimind? There are two major methods, as mention-

ed above. The first of these, the "Six Causes and One Effect," applies six causal meditations—recognizing that all sentient beings were once one's own mother; the kindness of a mother; the wish to repay such kindness; love; compassion; and the extraordinary thought of universal responsibility—to produce one result: the bodhimind. The second technique is a meditation whereby one directly changes self-cherishing into the cherishing of others.

In order to practise either of these methods of developing the bodhimind we must first develop a sense of equanimity toward all living beings. We must transcend seeing some beings as close, some as alien and some as merely unknown strangers. Until we have this equanimity toward all beings, meditation to develop bodhimind will not be effective. For example, if we wish to paint frescoes on a wall we must first remove any cracks or lumps from its surface. Similarly, we cannot draw the image of the bodhimind within ourselves until the mind's view has been made clean from the distortions of seeing others in terms of friend, enemy and stranger.

The way we impute this discrimination upon others is quite automatic, and as a result of it, when we see someone we have labelled as 'friend,' attachment arises within us and we respond with warmth. Why have we labelled him as 'friend'? Only because on some level or other he has benefitted or supported us. Alternately, whenever we encounter someone whom we have labelled as 'enemy,' aversion arises within us and we respond with coldness. The reason will be because he has once harmed or threatened us in some way. Again, when encountering a stranger we simply have no feelings toward him.

Yet if we examine this method of discrimination we quickly see that it is an unstable process. Even in this life, people once regarded as friends become enemies and enemies often become friends. And in the countless lives we have taken since beginningless time while spinning on the wheel of life there is not one sentient being who has consistently been either our friend or enemy. Our best friend of this life could easily have been our worst enemy in a previous incarnation, and *vice versa*. A friend who mistreats us quickly becomes an enemy, and an enemy who helps us soon becomes a new-found friend. Someone who last year was regarded as a friend because he had been kind to us, this year harms us and is seen as an enemy; last year's enemy this year helps us and becomes a friend. So which one is really the friend and which one the enemy? Instead of responding to them on the basis of the ephemeral benefit or harm they have brought us, we should meditate that all have alternately benefitted and harmed us in the stream of past lives, and thus abandon superficial discriminations.

A root cause of this discriminating mind is the self-cherishing attitude, the thought that considers oneself to be more important than others. As a result of self-cherishing we develop attachment to those who help us and aversion to those who give us problems. This in turn causes us to create countless negative karmas in trying to overcome the 'harmers' and support the 'helpers.' Such actions bring great suffering upon ourselves and others, both immediately and in future lives, as these karmic seeds ripen into suffering experiences.

There is a teaching that says, "All happiness in this world arises from cherishing others; every suffering arises from self-cherishing." Why is this so? From self-

cherishing comes the wish to further oneself even at others' expense. This causes all the killing, stealing, intolerance and so forth that we see around us. As well as destroying happiness in this life, these negative activities plant karmic seeds for a future rebirth in the miserable realms of existence—the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms. Self-cherishing is responsible for every conflict from a family problem to an international war, and for all the negative karma thus created.

What are the results of cherishing others? If we cherish others we shall not harm or kill them. This is conducive to our own long life. When we cherish others we are open and empathetic with them, and live in generosity. This is a karmic cause of our own future prosperity. If we cherish others, even when someone harms or makes problems for us we are able to abide in love and patience, a karmic cause of having a beautiful form in future lives. In short, every auspicious condition arises from the positive karmas generated by cherishing others. These conditions themselves bring joy and happiness, and in addition they act as the causes of and circumstances leading to nirvana and buddhahood.

How? To gain nirvana one must master the three higher trainings: moral discipline, meditation and wisdom. Of these the first is the most important because it is the basis for the development of the other two. The essence of moral discipline is abandoning any action that brings harm to others. Anyone who cherishes others more than he cherishes himself will not find this discipline difficult. His mind will be calm and peaceful, which is conducive to both meditation and wisdom.

Looking at it another way, cherishing others is the proper and noble approach to take. In this life everything that comes to us is directly or indirectly due to the kindness of others. We buy food from others in the market; the clothing we wear and the houses in which we dwell depend upon the assisting participation of others. And for attaining the ultimate goals—nirvana and buddhahood—we are completely dependent upon others: without them we would not be able to meditate upon love, compassion, trust and so forth, and thus would be unable to generate spiritual experience. Also, any meditation teaching we receive has come from the Buddha through the kindness of sentient beings. The Buddha taught only to benefit sentient beings; if there were no sentient beings he would not have taught. Therefore, in his *Bodhisattvacaryavata*, Shantideva comments that in terms of kindness, the sentient beings are equal to the buddhas. Sometimes, mistakenly, people have respect and devotion for the buddhas but dislike sentient beings. We should appreciate sentient beings as deeply as we do the buddhas themselves.

If we look at happiness and harmony we will find its cause to be universal caring. The cause of unhappiness and disharmony is the self-cherishing attitude.

At one time the Buddha was an ordinary person like ourselves. Then he gave up self-cherishing for universal caring and entered the path to buddhahood. Because we still hold the self-cherishing mind we are left behind in samsara, having benefitted neither ourselves nor others.

The *Jataka Tales (Previous Lives of Buddha)* relate that in one earlier incarnation, the Buddha had been a huge turtle who took pity on several shipwreck victims and carried them to shore on his back. Once ashore the exhausted turtle fell into a faint but as he slept he was attacked by thousands of ants. Soon the biting of the ants woke the turtle up, but when he saw that if he moved he would

kill innumerable creatures, he remained still and offered his body to the insects as food. This is the depth to which the Buddha cherished living beings. Many of Ashvagosh's *Jataka Tales* are dedicated to relating similar accounts of the Buddha's previous lives, in which the importance of cherishing others is exemplified. *The Wish-Fulfilling Tree* has 108 such stories.

Essentially, self-cherishing is the cause of every undesirable experience, and universal caring is the cause of every happiness. The experiences of the lower realms of existence, all the suffering of mankind and every interference to spiritual practice are caused by self-cherishing, and every happiness of this and future lives comes from universal caring. The subtle limitations of lesser enlightenment are also caused by self-cherishing.

We should contemplate the benefits of cherishing others and try to develop an open, loving attitude toward all living beings. This should not be an inert emotion but should be characterized by great compassion—the wish to separate others from their suffering. When we meet with a being in sorrow our reaction should be like that of a mother witnessing her only child caught in a fire or fallen into a terrible river: our main thought should be to help others. Toward those in states of suffering we should think, “May I help separate them from their suffering,” and for those in states of happiness we should think, “May I help maintain their happiness.”

This attitude should be directed equally toward all beings. Some people feel great compassion for friends or relatives in trouble but none for unpleasant people or enemies. This is not spiritual compassion, it is merely a form of attachment. True compassion does not discriminate between beings; it regards all with an equal emotion.

Similarly, love is the desire to maintain the happiness of all beings impartially, regardless of whether we like them or not. Spiritual love is of two main types: that merely possessing equanimity and that possessing the active wish to maintain others' happiness. When we meditate repeatedly on how all beings have in previous lives been mother, father and friend to us, we soon come to have equanimity toward them all. Eventually this develops into an overwhelming wish to see all beings possess happiness and the causes of happiness. This is great, indiscriminating love.

By meditating properly on love and compassion we produce what are called the eight great benefits. These condense into two: producing happiness in this and future lives for both ourselves and others, and developing along the path to full and perfect buddhahood. It produces rebirth as a man or god, and fertilizes the seeds of enlightenment.

In brief, we should have the wish to help others maintain their happiness and separate from suffering regardless of whether they have acted as friend or enemy to us. Moreover, we should develop a personal sense of responsibility for their happiness. This is called “the special thought” or “the higher thought” and is marked by a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of others. It is like taking the responsibility of going to the market to get someone exactly what he needs, instead of just sitting reflecting on how nice it would be if he had what he wanted. We take upon ourselves the responsibility of actually fulfilling others' requirements.

Then we should ask ourselves, "Do I have the ability to benefit all others?" Obviously we do not. Who has such ability? Only an enlightened being, a buddha. Why? Because only those who have attained buddhahood are fully developed and fully separated from limitations: those still in samsara cannot place others in nirvana. Even sravaka arhants or tenth level bodhisattvas are unable to benefit others fully, for they themselves still have limitations, but a buddha spontaneously and automatically benefits all beings with every breath he takes. His state is metaphorically likened to the drum of Brahma, which automatically resounds teachings to the world. Or it is like a cloud, that spontaneously takes cooling shade and life-giving water wherever it goes. To fulfill others' needs we should seek to place them in the total peace and maturity of buddhahood, and to be able to do this we ourselves must first gain buddhahood. The state of buddhahood is an evolutionary product of the bodhimind. The bodhimind is born from the special thought of universal responsibility—the thought to benefit others by oneself. To drink water we must have both the desire to drink and a container for the water. The wish to benefit others by placing them in buddhahood is like the desire to drink, and the wish to attain enlightenment oneself in order to benefit them in this way is like the container. When both are present, we benefit ourselves and others.

If we hear of the meditations that generate the bodhimind and attempt to practise them without first refining our minds with the preliminary meditations, it is very unlikely that we shall make much inner progress. For example, meditating on compassion without first gaining some experience of the meditations on the four noble truths, or at least on the truth of suffering, would lead to a merely superficial understanding. How can we experience mature compassion, the aspiration to free all beings from suffering, when we do not know the deeper meanings and levels of suffering that permeate the human psyche? How can we relate to others' suffering when we do not even know the subtle levels of frustration and tension pervading our own being? The nature of suffering must be known in order to know the workings of our own mind; only then shall we be in a position to empathize with the hearts and minds of others. We must have compassion for ourselves before we can have it for others.

Through meditation on suffering a certain amount of renunciation or spiritual stability will be generated. This stability should be guarded and cultivated by the various methods taught on the initial and intermediate stages of training, which are the two main steps in approaching the meditations on the bodhimind. As we progress in our meditations on the suffering nature of being and on the causes of this suffering, we begin to search for the path leading to transcendence of imperfection. We meditate upon the precious nature and unique opportunities of human existence, which makes us appreciate our situation. Then we meditate upon impermanence and death, which helps us transcend grasping at petty aspects of life and directs our minds to search for spiritual knowledge. Because spiritual knowledge is not gained from books or without a cause, its cause must be cultivated, which means training properly under a fully qualified spiritual master and generating the practices as instructed.

Merely hearing about the bodhimind is very beneficial because it provides a seed for the development of the enlightened spirit. However, to cultivate this seed

to fruition requires careful practice. We must progress through the actual inner experiences of the above-mentioned meditations, and for this we require close contact with a meditation teacher able to supervise and guide our evolution. In order for his presence to be of maximum benefit we should learn the correct attitudes and actions for cultivating an effective guru-disciple relationship. Then step-by-step the seeds of the bodhimind he plants within us can grow to full maturity and unfold the lotus of enlightenment within us.

This is but a brief description of the bodhisattva spirit and the methods of developing it. If it inspires some interest within anyone I shall be most happy. The basis of the bodhimind—love and compassion—is a force that brings every benefit to both yourself and others, and if this can be transformed into the bodhimind itself, your every action will become a cause of omniscient buddhahood. Even if you could practise to the point of even slightly weakening the self-cherishing attitude I would be very grateful. Without first generating the bodhimind, buddhahood is completely out of the question. Once the growth of the bodhimind has started, perfect enlightenment is only a matter of time. We should try to meditate regularly on death and impermanence and thus become a spiritual practitioner of initial scope. Then we should develop the meditations on the unsatisfactory nature of samsara and the three higher trainings, which make us practitioners of medium scope. Finally, we should give birth to love, compassion, universal responsibility and the bodhimind, thus entering the path of the practitioner of great scope, the mahayana, which has full buddhahood as its goal. Relying on the guidance of a master, we should cultivate the seeds of the bodhimind in connection with the wisdom of emptiness and for the sake of all that lives quickly actualize buddhahood. This may not be an easy task, but it has ultimate perfection as its fruit.

The most important step in spiritual growth is the first: we must begin by making a decision to avoid evil and cultivate goodness within our stream of being. On the basis of this fundamental discipline every spiritual quality becomes possible, even the eventual perfection of buddhahood. Each of us has the potential to do this, each of us can become a perfect being. All we have to do is direct our energies at learning and then enthusiastically practising the teachings. As the bodhimind is the very essence of all the Buddha's teachings we should make every effort to realize it.

Edited from an oral translation by Lama Gelek Rinpoche.



14 Giving Rise to Bodhicitta

In order to direct ourselves along the spiritual path, we need a goal to work toward, as an arrow needs a target. Through bodhicitta, the next gate to practice in the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, we continue to aim at the target of enlightenment for the benefit of others every moment we practice. This is the best of all possible goals.

Bodhicitta is foundational to all we do, like the root of a medicinal tree whose branches, leaves, and flowers all produce life-enhancing medicine. The quality and purity of our practice depend on its permeating every method we use. With it, everything is assured. Without it, nothing will work.

This is why from the very first time we listen to the teachings we are told to establish the liberation of all beings as the purpose of our practice. We render ourselves fit vessels for spiritual teachings and practice by changing our motivation from one of self-interest to one of altruism.

Bodhicitta has three components: generating compassion for the suffering of all beings; aspiring to attain enlightenment in order to achieve the capacity to benefit all beings, called *wishing bodhicitta*; and actively engaging in the path of liberation in order to accomplish that goal, called *engaging bodhicitta*.

The Tibetan term for the Sanskrit *bodhicitta* is *jang chub sem*. *Jang* means the removal of obscurations, *chub* the revealing of all perfect qualities within, and *sem* mind. Through the

practice of bodhicitta mind, we purify obscurations and enhance our intrinsic positive qualities, revealing enlightened mind.

Mind's obscurations can be compared to the clay covering a crystal that has long been in the ground. If we pick up the encrusted crystal, it looks like a clay ball. Yet its essential qualities are in no way reduced; they are only obscured. If we wash away the clay, the crystal comes clear, its qualities apparent. In the same way, by purifying and removing the mind's obscurations, we reveal our true, crystalline nature.

We always look outside for this essence, though it lies within. It's like searching everywhere for a lost horse, following countless hoofprints through the forest, only to discover, finally, that the horse has been in our basement all along.

Compassion, the first aspect of bodhicitta, is also inherent within us. Although we naturally have good heart, it is usually rather limited. Through practice, we can expose and activate our own perfect, limitless compassion.

Jang chub sem is thus both a method and the fruit of practice. Due to the momentum of bodhicitta, the force and power of this intention to liberate beings, the sunlike essence of mind becomes completely revealed and benefit to others arises spontaneously and effortlessly, like the sun's reflection in every vessel and body of water.

We begin the practice of *jang*, the removal of mind's obscurations, by reducing our self-importance and redirecting our attention to others. Our habit of focusing on ourselves has been reinforced for countless lifetimes, which is why we're trapped in samsara. Buddhas have eliminated selfish and ordinary thoughts, developed selfless motivation, and thus achieved enlightenment.

The development of this kind of motivation rests on

four cornerstones called the *four immeasurable qualities*. The first is equanimity, an attitude of equality toward all beings. If we can live free of prejudice or bias, without making a division in our minds between friends and enemies, then we have grasped the essence of existence and planted the seeds of our own and others' happiness and freedom.

Now our love and compassion extend only to certain people in certain kinds of situations, to our family, friends, and loved ones, but not to someone we perceive as an enemy. We may not wish unpleasant or dangerous people ill fortune, yet might have trouble not rejoicing if something bad happens to them. Our compassion for a sick child may derive simply from attachment to her. Through the practice of equanimity, we develop a noble attitude of compassion for all beings without distinction, from the depths of our heart. Unless we have this kind of purity of heart, our practice will remain superficial—we won't truly understand the purpose of dharma.

We develop equanimity, first, by realizing that all beings, equally, want happiness. Nobody wants to suffer. Second, we contemplate the fact that all beings, at one time or another through countless lifetimes, have been our own mother. The Buddha Shakyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas, who removed the clay from the crystalline nature of their minds and became omniscient, taught that there is not a single being who has not been our parent, something we, too, could perceive if we so purified our mindstreams. Each being—no matter how antagonistic to us now—has been as kind and crucial to us as our parents in this lifetime. A person who now plays a seemingly insignificant or even a threatening role in our personal drama was once loving and helpful.

To develop an appreciation for this kindness, we need to recognize the enormous generosity of our parents. First and

foremost, they gave us the gift of a human body. When, upon death in our last incarnation, our mind was plunged into the bardo, the frightening and chaotic intermediate state between death and rebirth, we were blown about helplessly, like a feather in the wind, without any stable frame of reference or support, experiencing terrifying sights and sounds. We finally found safety in our mother's womb at the moment of conception. From then on, our mother carried us in her body for nine or ten months, putting up with discomfort and perhaps illness to give us our human birth.

When we were helpless in our cradle, our mother provided care and protection so that we could grow strong and healthy. Had she not nurtured us, or asked another to do so, we would surely have died.

She saved our young life again and again, protecting us from falling, from eating things that would make us sick, from coming too close to fire, water, traffic. She fed and clothed us, washed us, and kept our home clean. Think how much we would have to spend now for someone to clean our house or to cook for us. These days, when someone gives us a cup of tea or some trifle and doesn't ask for payment, we think that person is tremendously kind. But such kindness pales in comparison with the generosity of our mothers.

Our ability to speak, to conduct ourselves in society, to get along with people are all gifts from our parents. Rather than be satisfied with our own cleverness, we should remember that there was a time when we didn't know how to say a single word, didn't know how to wipe, feed, clothe, or clean ourselves. Word by word our mothers and fathers taught us to speak. They helped us learn to walk, to eat, to dress. They were our first teachers.

In this and countless previous lifetimes, beings have shown us kindness in all these worldly ways. They have

also been essential to our spiritual development in that their liberation is the purpose of our practice, the foundation of our altruistic motivation, without which we could not attain enlightenment. Considering such things, we begin to experience a profound sense of gratitude and an awareness of the debt we owe.

So in cultivating equanimity, we acknowledge that all beings have been our mother at some time. Then we develop an appreciation for the kindness they have shown us and a wish to repay them. In this way we develop a higher motivation, that of benefiting all beings, not only on a temporary basis, but with the most perfect form of repayment possible: attaining enlightenment so that we might help others to do the same.

A Western student once asked a lama, "I have a problem with thinking of beings as once having been my mother. My mother was never good to me. We had a bad relationship. So every time I sit down to meditate on bodhicitta, I think of my mother and get upset and angry. Can I just forget thinking about my mother for now?"

The lama told this man that the idea was to develop compassion for everybody, including one's mother, but that it didn't matter what order one did it in. He said that in Tibet and India people regard the mother as the kindest, most wonderful person imaginable. When a beginner needs an easy entrance into practice, the teacher uses those feelings for the mother as a basis for developing warmth and compassion for others.

The lama added, "If you find that a better approach for you is to develop compassion for all other beings first, and then for your mother, that's all right. The point is ultimately to have compassion for everybody, including your mother."

Finally, we recognize the equality of all beings in that

the intrinsic nature of each one, from the smallest insect to the greatest realization holder, is primordial purity.

Having come to understand this equality—in that all want to be happy, all suffer, all have shown us the kindness of parents, and all have buddha nature—we generate compassion for every one of them by recognizing their tragedy: that although they want only to be happy, out of ignorance they create conditions that perpetuate their suffering.

Compassion itself, the aspiration that suffering cease, is the second immeasurable quality. A powerful antidote to self-importance and self-interest, compassion helps us in the short term by releasing our relentless focusing on ourselves and our problems. And it is beneficial in the long run because even one or two minutes of heart-felt compassion purify enormous amounts of karma.

How do we generate compassion? We begin by contemplating the difficulties of others, and then we put ourselves in their shoes. We start with the suffering in the human realm, because it might at first be difficult to contemplate the anguish of beings in other realms.

We contemplate the distress of one or two people we know, and slowly, with practice, expand our focus to include more and more, until the suffering of everyone has true meaning for us. We recall the pain of these people so vividly that we can practically see it before our eyes.

Imagine, for example, someone close to you dying, perhaps in a hospital, surrounded by family and friends. When their suffering becomes very real to you, put yourself in their place. Your cherished family and friends are crying, pleading with you not to die. The doctor has told you that you have only a few minutes to live. Breathing is becoming difficult and you're terrified. You don't know what awaits you. Everything familiar, even your own body, will be left behind. Not a penny of the money you've accumulated will

go with you, not a single friend or family member will follow, no matter how dear they might be to you and you to them.

Or instead of contemplating the misery of a person you know, you might imagine someone living in a drought-ridden country where families, even entire villages, are dying of starvation. Put yourself in that person's place. Picture yourself among the few beloved family members who haven't already died, who are lingering on the brink of death. You know that you, too, will soon die; there is simply nothing left to eat. You feel too weak to help your surviving relatives, and they are too weak to help you. You are all powerless in the face of death.

You might imagine someone dying in war and then put yourself in that person's place. Your best friend has been killed, is lying next to you, and you yourself are wounded, bleeding to death, and can't move. Everyone around you is dying or too busy to notice you. You feel completely alone and terrified.

Or you might contemplate the plight of an elderly person. Envision a time when your own children, whom you've carefully raised for so many years, won't help or even listen to you. Perhaps they're looking forward to your death. You can no longer care for yourself, nor do your children care for you. Perhaps you're alone in a nursing home where your children visit only once or twice a year. Your friends don't respect you any longer; they won't listen to you anymore. You would like to move, act, talk as you did when you were younger, but you lack the capacity to do so.

As you examine each of these situations, tremendous fear will arise. At that point, ask yourself, "If I feel this much fear simply from contemplating such suffering, how must those who actually experience it feel?"

Then think about the fact that many people throughout

the world are hurting others. They're creating negative karma that will eventually bring them harm, and they don't even realize it. They think they're doing the right thing, but they're only destroying themselves.

As you contemplate in this way, compassion and the aspiration to help both those currently suffering and those planting seeds of future suffering will arise strongly in your heart. Acknowledge your own relative good fortune and then make the commitment to do everything you can to benefit. You have heard the teachings of the dharma; you have some methods for purifying the causes and conditions of suffering. But these beings, all of whom have shown you the kindness of a mother, have nothing. How tragic.

In Mahayana Buddhism, great compassion, equal compassion, for all beings—friends and enemies—is crucial. With this strong foundation, even if you don't try to attain enlightenment, it will lie in the palm of your hand. If, however, you don't develop compassion but are motivated only by the selfish desire to escape suffering yourself, you will not achieve the ultimate goal.

Compassion is enhanced by the third immeasurable quality: a love that reaches equally to all. Love is the sincere desire that each being experience both the cause and fruit of temporary and ultimate happiness. We establish a commitment to make every effort, physical, verbal, and mental, to bring this about.

When we strive toward the happiness of others, we must do so pure-heartedly. If there is some self-purpose in our efforts, failure will cause us regret, and this regret will nullify the virtue of our actions.

To help us develop the capacity for a pure and selfless love for all beings there is a method called *longlen meditation*. We begin by generating compassion as we contemplate the painful condition of others. Then, as we inhale,

we imagine we are breathing in the suffering and negative karma of all the realms of experience in the form of black light. As we exhale, we visualize all of our love, happiness, and good fortune radiating out to others as white light.

At first, you might feel reluctant to practice this meditation, fearing that it will harm you in some way. But if you have the selfless intention to help others, your doubts will vanish and the practice will increase your positive qualities. Only your fear itself can harm you, for it acts as a magnet for negativity.

After practicing this meditation strongly with pure heart, you will begin to see yourself as a vehicle for others' happiness. Not only will your love and compassion increase, but you will find yourself thinking fewer negative thoughts and committing fewer harmful actions; your self-clinging will begin to loosen, and your karma will be purified. Ideally, we develop the loving capacity of bodhicitta mind to such an extent that we would fearlessly, without hesitation or regret, give or do anything necessary to help another.

In many of his lifetimes on the bodhisattva path, the Buddha Shakyamuni gave up his body for the sake of others. In one lifetime, he was the middle of three sons of a king. While lost in the forest with his two brothers, he came upon a starving tigress and her five cubs. The tigress could no longer move and had no milk to feed her litter. The prince thought, "How many times in my past lives have I tried to save myself? I've thought only of my own safety, and died again and again without benefiting anyone. My body is impermanent; it won't last long anyway. If it can be of use to this tigress and her cubs, so be it."

He sent his brothers off to search for fruit and lay down next to the tigress. She was too weak, however, to feed on him. Having no knife, the prince broke a shoot of bamboo, slit his wrist with it, and let the blood drip into her mouth.

Then he cut off pieces of his flesh and fed them to her. As the tigress slowly gained strength, he lost more and more of his own. But he had no regret; he dedicated his life not only to the mother and her cubs, but to all other beings, and then he died.

At that moment, the boy's mother had a dream of three suns in the sky, the middle sun eclipsed. She awoke knowing that something had happened to her middle son, and witnessed extraordinary phenomena—the earth shook, flowers rained down, and music and songs of praise resounded.

The prince's hair and bones were placed in a *stupa*, a monument to the nature of mind, at a sacred site known as Namo Buddha in Nepal. Many people still derive great benefit, purifying vast amounts of karma, by circumambulating that *stupa*.

The last of the four immeasurable qualities is rejoicing: delighting in the happiness of others. We rejoice in others' worldly blessings—their health, wealth, wonderful relationships—and in their spiritual good fortune. We don't allow jealousy to overtake us, nor wonder, "Why do they get this or that, and not me?" Instead, we make the wish that their happiness will be long-lived, and we do everything we can to make that happen.

By rejoicing in others' virtue, we create as much as they have. In the same way, if we relish someone's misfortune, we create as much nonvirtue as the perpetrator of their misfortune.

During the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni, two boys were begging for food outside a king's palace. The king had invited the Buddha and his retinue to lunch, and a very wonderful meal had been prepared. One boy began to beg for food before the Buddha was offered any. Nobody gave him anything to eat and he became very angry. He thought,

"If I were a king, I'd chop off the head of the Buddha, and of this king, and of everyone who is helping him."

The other boy waited until the Buddha and his retinue had been served. Then he begged for leftovers and was given as much as he could eat. He thought to himself, "What a wonderful king. What great merit he has created by inviting the Buddha to lunch and by his generosity to those of us who are poor. If I were a king, whatever I had I would offer to the Buddha, as well as to the poor."

After lunch, the boys separated. The good-hearted boy wandered across the border into a nearby kingdom. He lay down to sleep, sheltered from the heat by the shade of a tree. Unbeknownst to him, the king of this region had died and his ministers were searching for someone with the qualities and merit to be the new king. The people in the village where the boy slept noticed that throughout the day, although the sun changed position in the sky, the shade never shifted from where the boy slept. Thinking this extraordinary, they reported it to the ministers.

When the ministers received this news, they ordered that the good-hearted boy be included among the candidates for the throne who were to appear at a large gathering of all the king's subjects. The new king would be chosen by a very special elephant. On the appointed day, the elephant approached the poor, bedraggled boy—who stood at the very back of the group of candidates—anoined his head with special water from a vase, lifted him up with his trunk, and placed him on the throne.

Meanwhile, the angry boy slept in the king's garden. A nearby chariot lost control and careened over his body, cutting his neck and killing him.

At first, practicing the four immeasurable qualities requires effort. One by one, we release the knots that bind

us—the mind's poisons and delusions. Equanimity reduces pride, rejoicing reduces jealousy, compassion reduces desire, and love reduces anger and aversion. As anger wanes, mirror-like wisdom dawns; as desire wanes, discriminating wisdom dawns; and so forth. As our practice matures and wisdom is revealed, the four immeasurable qualities arise naturally, effortlessly, just as rays of light and warmth radiate from the sun.

Although many think they can recognize wisdom directly, it's not so easy. Until the knots begin to release, awareness will not be evident. It is through the four doors of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity that we can enter the mandala of the absolute nature of mind.

11 *Mind of Enlightenment*

The mind of enlightenment is the generation of an altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.²² It means that you have decided to strive for Buddhahood because you understand that only as a Buddha will you be able to care for and help all other sentient beings to escape the sufferings of cyclic existence and become Buddhas themselves. This practice has three elements: training in the attitudes of the four immeasurables, generating an altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment and the precepts for so doing.

In the great books, the order of the four immeasurables is usually given as love, compassion, joy and equanimity. Here, however, the four are explained from the point of view of practice so that equanimity comes first. Why begin with this rather than love? It is a quintessential instruction passed down from the many previous lamas of this lineage that without the even-mindedness of equanimity it is impossible to generate love and compassion.

Before we can correctly identify equanimity, we must recognize that we do not have it for people around us. We are biased by love for our friends and hatred for our enemies, whereas one who has equanimity values both equally without generating desire or hatred for either. Looking inside our own minds, it is easy to see that we are deeply attached to some people and very hostile to others.

Yet, if we think about it, we will find that there is no reason to harbour such extreme feelings.

Since beginningless time we have been reborn in many different ways; an enemy today could easily have been our father, mother, son, daughter or closest friend in a previous life. For example, the clairvoyant Arya, Katyana, when on his begging rounds came upon a young mother with an infant son on her lap. She was eating a piece of fish which a dog was trying to take from her, and she threw a stone at it. Through his clairvoyance the Arya knew that the fish had been her father in its former life and the dog her mother. She did not know her parents had been so reborn and felt no sympathy or affection for them. Moreover, the child she was cuddling had been a great enemy who had murdered her in her previous life.

This illustrates the changes wrought by rebirth in cyclic existence. There is no definiteness in our relationships with others because friends and enemies are constantly changing. Thus we should neutralize desire and hatred and free ourselves from bias, but this does not mean to enhance the indifference we have for people we do not know. That type of neutrality is not equanimity, but the result of not paying attention to certain people because they do not interest us. It is an equanimity of ignorance and desertion, not of the four immeasurables that leads to compassion.

In order to develop equanimity, visualize two persons, one liked and the other disliked, and meditate to discover whether you can equalize your feelings towards them. Another method is to imagine an enemy in front of you, your father on your right and mother on your left, and try to become even-minded about them. When you are able to equalize your feeling for these persons, practise it towards more and more people until you can consider all sentient beings without desiring or hating them on the basis of whether they are your friends or enemies. Because this equanimity encompasses all beings everywhere, it is immeasurable. In order to develop it, you must begin with

specific individuals, not a generality.

Feeling uniformly about others is not sufficient; it is necessary to develop strong and equal love for each one of them. Just as a mother loves her child – caring for it, nourishing it, helping it develop – so should we have a love that seeks benefit for all sentient beings. Just as parents are willing to endure great suffering in bringing up their child, so must we be willing to make a great effort for the sake of these beings who are as limitless as space itself. Shantideva says that every sentient being should be seen with eyes of love.²³ If anyone asks us a question, we should answer in accordance with our knowledge, without impatience or anger and with as much love and joy as possible.

If you succeed in generating immeasurable equanimity, it will be easy to develop a sustaining love for all sentient beings. In cultivating love, you should reflect day and night, 'How can I possibly develop immeasurable love and friendship for all individuals?' To do so, picture the person you care for most and sense the sustaining love that you have for him. Then imagine someone else and show the same sense of sustaining love to her. One by one increase the number of those who are objects of your sustaining love until you can include all beings in all world systems. They want happiness but do not know how to cause it. They do not want suffering but do not know how to relieve themselves of it. What they wish for and what they do are at cross-purposes.

When the cultivation of immeasurable love grows strong, you will develop a spontaneous wish that these beings be free from suffering and its causes. Thus this love becomes a cause of great compassion, the third of the four immeasurables. To generate such compassion, think of the sufferings that others undergo. Imagine an animal or a human who is about to be killed, going to the butcher or the hangman, and pretend it is you. Consider how much suffering the knowledge of your own imminent death would cause, what feelings you would have just before

being struck by the knife or having the rope put round your neck.

At other times consider that the one who suffers so dreadfully is your mother or father, and generate a sense of compassion and mercy by reflecting on that fact. If it were a member of your own family who was about to be killed, you would be deeply involved in trying to help him. No matter how little time remained before their death, you would use it to scheme how they might be spared.

Meditate on the suffering of others until you are ready to cry. First take individual cases and finally include all sentient beings everywhere because each and every one of them has been your mother and father in a former life and has suffered accordingly. The compassion you generate is a sense of not being able to bear their distress without doing something to relieve it.

Having developed compassion for the sufferings of sentient beings, generate joy for their happiness and good fortune now and in the future. Take as your object someone who is very wealthy or especially happy. Joy is the antithesis of jealousy; it is an inner delight at the good fortune of others.

When you have developed joy over one person, think how nice it would be if two or three more could be equally fortunate. Extend this sense of not being jealous and of rejoicing to more and more people until it includes everyone throughout space.

Once you have developed equanimity, love, compassion and joy, these will cause the mind of enlightenment to arise. This altruistic mind can be brought about in three ways. A person who realizes that before he can establish others in Buddhahood, he must attain it himself is said to have the mind of enlightenment of a king. One who is motivated by the thought that all other sentient beings will attain Buddhahood along with him has the mind of enlightenment of a boatman, because when the latter takes people across a river they all reach the opposite shore together. The third

type of motivation is like that of a shepherd, who watches over his flock, keeps them out of danger, chases away their enemies and follows behind to make sure they all arrive home. Anyone so motivated will make sure that all beings attain Buddhahood before he does so himself. (Of these three motivations, the weakest is that of a king, that of a boatman is next and that of a shepherd is unparalleled.)

The mind of enlightenment is of two types, conventional and ultimate, the former being divided into the aspirational and the practical. For example, if you want to visit another country, this is an aspiration or wish to do so but not the actual going; similarly, if you have the desire to bring about the welfare of all sentient beings throughout space, you have an aspirational mind of enlightenment. (Once you have generated this aspiration so that it is spontaneous and begin to practise giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom for the sake of sentient beings, then you have a practical mind of enlightenment. This is like actually going to another country.)

The meditational technique here is to imagine a wish-fulfilling tree and the field of assembly in front of you as when taking refuge. Consider the very special beings in that field as witnesses of your intention. Make the promise to concentrate on achieving the highest enlightenment for the sake of others from this point on. Do this with the intense hope that whatever portion of the mind of enlightenment has not arisen in any other sentient being will be generated and that whatever has arisen will greatly increase. Recite:

Hoh

I am generating an altruistic mind of enlightenment
Within the four immeasurables so that living beings
Who wander up and down the chain of cyclic existence
Because of false images like those cast by the moon in water,
May rest in the sphere of self-knowledge and clear light.

Hoh is an exclamation of amazement. To an ultimate consciousness, all the various external appearances are like

the reflection of the moon in water. Just as the reflection appears to be, but is not, a moon, so what appears so vividly real to our conventional consciousness does not truly exist. All phenomena known by our senses – forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects – are false in that they seem to exist inherently but do not.

The false appearance of objects draws us into error. The force of the attachment of our eye to forms, our ear to sounds, our nose to smells, our tongue to tastes, and our body to feelings draws us back into cyclic existence.

Our lives are like links in a chain, and we wander from one to the other. We are like flies trapped in a jar, circling up and down but remaining in the same situation. We are wanderers, straying through cyclic existences, being born as gods and humans through virtuous actions and as animals, hungry ghosts, or hell-beings through non-virtuous ones. Although we have been wandering in this way from time without beginning, we still have not finished; there seems to be no end. But now that we have met with a profound teaching, we are able to identify ourselves, our own nature, and so can rest in the sphere of self-knowledge and clear light.

It is not sufficient to aspire to this state for yourself alone. You should generate the four immeasurables with the intention that all beings throughout space may rest in this sphere of self-knowledge and clear light.

You should recite the stanza at least six times daily, and practitioners often seek to do so a hundred thousand times. Obstructions in our thoughts and perceptions prevent development; to overcome these obstacles we should fully manifest the altruistic attitude, promising to attain Buddhahood for the sake of others in front of the assembly and asking its members to clear away all obstructions.

At the end of each session, concentrate with great faith on the field of assembly. All present are pleased with your good effort and virtue and bestow blessings in the form of light. You dissolve into that light which then returns to the

assembly; they, like a rainbow melting in the sky, dissolve into the central figure, Padmasambhava, and he into his heart, which then melts into space. Consider your mind to be one with the minds of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and stay within meditative equipoise on emptiness as long as you can, without any thoughts or conceptions.

When it is time to leave the session, consider everything that you can see as the illusory creations of a magician. Dedicate the benefit to the welfare of all sentient beings, wishing again that those who have not yet generated a mind of enlightenment might develop it and that those who have already done so may increase it. Using your imagination, reflect on how to dedicate the meritorious power of your session to each and every sentient being throughout space.

With respect to the precepts for developing an altruistic mind of enlightenment, all sentient beings in this great ocean of cyclic existence want happiness but do not know how to cause it; therefore what they want and what they do are at cross-purposes. The goal of this meditation is to generate compassion and love for all these beings.

Take yourself as an example. You seek many kinds of happiness and try to avoid as much suffering as possible. (Once you recognize these feelings in yourself, apply this understanding to others. For instance, if you are pricked by a thorn and cannot bear the pain you will say, 'Ouch.' Understand that other beings feel just the same; they do not want suffering any more than you do.)

You will then realize that whatever you want is desired by others and that when you struggle to be happy, they do so as well. In this sense you are equal. The more you understand this the more strongly will you think about equality.

When after long meditation you have realized that you and others are equals, the next step is to cherish them more than yourself. Visualize before you someone in great distress. Because virtue creates happiness and its opposite creates suffering, imagine that as you exhale, the power of

all your virtues goes out with your breath and enters the distressed being in front of you. Similarly, as you inhale, take all his suffering into yourself, thereby relieving him of it. When you become used to this practice, extend it to others, gradually including more and more, and eventually you will be able to meditate that you are relieving the sufferings of all beings everywhere.

Breathing out your own happiness and breathing in others' suffering is the greatest of all Mahayana paths. Buddha himself generated this altruistic mind of enlightenment through love and compassion while in one of the hot hells. He and another hell-being named Kamarupa were pulling a burning chariot and it occurred to him that instead of the two of them suffering under its heat and weight, it would be better if he bore it alone. He took the flaming harness of the other man and told the guardian, 'I will pull it for both of us.'

The guardian shouted angrily, 'One cannot do it alone, both must pull,' and struck Buddha on the head with a pole.

As he was being hit, Buddha wished, 'May I be able to take on myself the suffering of all the beings in hells.' According to sutra, this was the first time that Buddha generated the altruistic mind of enlightenment. Due to its force he was immediately released from the hell.

In another life Buddha was the son of a man named Dal, whose other male children had died at birth, and because of this bad luck the man called Buddha 'Daughter'. Dal was a merchant who gathered jewels in the ocean, and when Buddha was still a child, his ship sank and he drowned. When the boy grew older, he asked his mother what his father did, so that as was customary he could do the same. His mother was afraid that if she told him, he too would die at sea, so she said, 'Your father dealt in barley.'

Buddha began to trade in barley and soon made a profit, which he brought home to his mother. The other dealers were angry that he had encroached into their field and told

him, 'You are not one of us; that was not your father's trade.'

He went to his mother again and asked, 'They say my father did not deal in barley. What did he do?'

'He was an incense trader.' So Buddha began buying and selling incense and soon made four times as much profit as he had done in barley.

The dealers became angry and said, 'You cannot sell incense. That was not your father's business.' Again he inquired about what his father had done, and this time his mother told him he had been a clothier.

Buddha made twice as much money selling cloth as he had done with incense and it was not long before the other clothiers approached him. 'It was not your father's trade to sell cloth; he collected jewels from the ocean. That is your work.'

He went home and informed his mother that he would go to sea to look for jewels as his father had done. She told him then what had become of his father and begged him not to go, but he would not obey her. As he was setting out the next morning, she pleaded with him to stay. He became angry and kicked her in the head. With that, he left and went to sea. Before long his ship broke up in a storm, but he managed to hold onto a plank and drifted ashore on the far side of the ocean.

He had arrived at a very beautiful place called Joy City. Four very good-looking girls took him into their home and fed him extremely well. He was told to eat what he liked and sleep where he chose. Yet after a while, predispositions established by his previous actions forced him to leave. The four girls begged him to stay with them, but he would not listen. They warned him, 'If you must leave us, at least do not go south, or you will have trouble.' He wondered what they could be referring to and headed south.

He soon arrived at an even more marvellous place called Joyous City. There eight girls took care of him and he enjoyed every sort of pleasure imaginable. However it was

not long before he told the girls that he was leaving, and no matter how they pleaded, they could not change his mind. Before he left, they told him, 'Whatever you do, do not go south, or you will be in trouble.'

Again he headed south, and came to a still more beautiful city, called Raro. Sixteen girls waited on him and supplied him with every comfort, but before long he left them and continued south despite their many warnings. He sailed on for a long time, occasionally interrupting his travels to stay with an ever-increasing number of beautiful girls, each group more wonderful than the last, satisfying his every wish and never failing to warn him against travelling south.

Eventually he arrived at a nine-storyed iron house inhabited by horrible red-eyed beings who carried iron whips. He asked one of them, 'What is in this house?' but got no answer. He became very curious about what the house might contain and went inside. It was full of many red-eyed monsters, and seeing them he felt that this must be why he had so often been warned not to go south. He saw on one person's head a revolving wheel that was carving up his brain and churning it into pudding. He approached and asked, 'What did you do to deserve such suffering?'

'I kicked my mother in the head and so have been reborn here. My suffering is very great. What made a fortunate person like you come here?'

The jewel-gatherer's son reflected, 'I too have kicked my mother in the head; this must be an irreversible action the consequences of which I will have to bear.' He began to be afraid and the wheel rose up off the other man's head, moved to his own and started to churn up his brain. At that moment he prayed, 'May this suffering equal that of all other beings who have hit their mothers in the head, and may my undergoing it cause all theirs to disappear.' As soon as he generated this aspiration induced by love and compassion, a voice resounded from the sky, 'He who was bound is freed,' and the wheel rose off his head.

The benefit that comes in meditation from continuously

cultivating the altruistic aspiration to highest enlightenment is vast. Therefore, the Ga-dam-ba Ge-shays took it as the very essence and centre of their practice.

The Ga-dam-ba scholar, Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa (*dGe-bshes 'Chad-kha-ba*) was a master of the Buddhist treatises and highly skilled in the use of words. While visiting another Ge-shay²⁴ he noticed a small book, opened it and read, 'Take all fault upon yourself. Attribute everything of value to others.' He thought this was a marvellous doctrine and asked where he could find a teacher of this practice. His host answered, 'There is a Ga-dam-ba Ge-shay named Lang-tang-ba (*gLang-thang-pa*) who has a text called *Eight Lines on Training the Mind* which teaches it. Through it one can train in this altruistic attitude.'

Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa felt he must find this teacher who could give him the quintessential instructions on this practice, so when he heard that Lang-tang-ba was in Lhasa, in central Tibet, he set out from his own eastern province to find him. On arrival in Lhasa, he learned that the Ge-shay had died, so he asked who had taken over his old monastery. Hearing that two Ge-shays were disputing about the succession, Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa thought, 'If they are fighting over who should be in charge, then they cannot have the quintessential instructions on training in the altruistic attitude.'

However they actually were not quarrelling like ordinary people.

'You must take charge,' the first one said, 'you are more qualified than I.'

'No I will not,' said the second, 'for you are far more able.'

However Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa did not know this and so he felt that they probably did not have the instruction he was seeking. Thus he went on to another teacher, Sha-ra-ba, who was giving a series of lectures to seven thousand monks. Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa joined the group, but heard nothing about taking all fault upon oneself and attributing

everything of value to others. After many days he began to think that this teacher did not have what he sought, but when he met the lama circumambulating a temple, he begged him to sit down so that they might talk for a few minutes. 'What do you want to ask?' said the teacher. 'I have already explained everything I know.'

'Please hear my question,' Ge-shay Chay-ka-wa pleaded. 'What is the importance of the doctrine of taking fault on oneself and attributing what is worthwhile to others?'

'No matter what doctrine you assume, you will not be able to attain Buddhahood unless you have done this practice,' the lama answered.

'Do you have the teaching?'

'Yes. It is my chief practice.'

'Please give it to me.'

'Not until you have studied with me for a long time.'

'I will stay as long as necessary,' said the Ge-shay. He began a thorough study of the eight verses and although they are very short, it took him six years to receive the full teaching. He then went into retreat and cultivated the ability to cherish others instead of himself.

Whenever you cherish others in this way, you do not ever think to gain profit for yourself, but take whatever is worthwhile and give it to others. Practise the thought, 'May all the suffering due to ripen in the continuums of other sentient beings take place in my own instead, and may all my own virtues and the happiness arising from them bear fruit not in my continuum but in theirs.' For beginners like ourselves such an attitude is extremely difficult, but if cultivated in meditation, it can grow to full fruition.

Jam-bay-nel-jor-ba (*Byams-pa'i-nal-'byor-pa*), whose name means 'Yogi of Love', was lecturing in the open when a man nearby threw a rock at a dog. The yogi called out as if in pain and sank down on his cushion. The people in the audience felt he was making a false display of sympathy for the dog. He said, 'Since you do not believe me, look here,' and he showed them a swelling on his back. The great lama

had been able to take on himself the pain that the dog would have suffered.

The Hinayana master Dharmarakshita developed great compassion and generated the altruistic aspiration of a Bodhisattva. Coming upon a very sick man one day, he asked the doctor, 'What medicine does he need?'

'The flesh of a living man. Nothing else will cure him,' said the doctor.

In order to help, Dharmarakshita cut flesh from his thigh, but found it was extremely painful because as a follower of Hinayana tenets, he knew nothing about emptiness.

He sent the flesh to the patient and later learned that the man had recovered. 'Then I am satisfied,' said Dharmarakshita. 'I am glad I was able to relieve his suffering.'

His friends wondered at this. 'How can you be glad?' they asked. 'Surely you regret cutting off so much flesh.'

But Dharmarakshita replied, 'I do not, although the pain is still so great that I cannot sleep.'

Shortly after, he slept a little near dawn during which he dreamed that a shining white being appeared to him and praised him for having done this marvellous thing to help another person. The being rubbed a little saliva on the wound which Dharmarakshita, when he awoke, found had been completely healed. Avalokiteshvara had appeared to him in the dream and given a blessed empowerment which cured his leg.

Through his great altruism Dharmarakshita had cleared away his karmic obstructions, and it is said that he spontaneously came to know the teachings of the Mahayana although he had never studied them. In the same way he was able to recite the six books of Nagarjuna which establish emptiness as the final mode of being of all phenomena.

Our own Buddha was once born as King Lotus, who ruled during the time of a great plague. The king consulted his doctors and asked how the plague might be ended. They told him, 'There is a fish called rohita whose flesh we need as

medicine, but we do not know what it is like. The plague has affected our minds, and we have grown stupid.'

Early in the morning on an auspicious date the king put on a new robe, went to his palace roof, and made many offerings and prayers to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. With pure Mahayana vows he thought, 'May I take rebirth as this rohita fish,' and jumped off the roof.

He was immediately reborn in a nearby river as a rohita, but because nobody knew he was there, no one came to use him. He swam to the surface and called out in a human voice, 'I am a rohita fish. Please take my flesh.' His voice was heard and people came.

They cut off his flesh first from one and then from the other side, during which the first grew back so that all the people in the area were able to receive a portion. They ate it all and this stopped the plague. The remains as if by magic then said, 'I was King L'otus and took rebirth as this fish in order to help you overcome the plague. Please help me now by being as virtuous as you can.'

The people felt, 'Our good king took rebirth like this to help us. Of course, we will help him in return and practise virtue as much as we can.' Through their subsequent activities the whole country became prosperous and happy.

At another time Buddha was reborn as a turtle. A ship carrying five hundred traders was about to sink when a great turtle appeared and said, 'Please climb on my back and I will save you.' He carried all the five hundred safely to shore, but was so tired that he fell asleep on the beach. When he awoke, he found that eighty thousand bugs were eating him. 'If I return to the water now, all these bugs will die. I am only one person and if my flesh can sustain so many other living beings, then I will stay in this dry place and die.'

Later when Buddha appeared as Shakyamuni, these bugs were reborn as the eighty thousand gods who first came to listen to his teaching. In the chronicles of his previous lives, there are stories of five hundred impure and five hundred

pure births; during the former he gave his body many times for the sake of other sentient beings.

After generating an aspirational mind of enlightenment, the next step is to develop a practical one. This entails practising the six perfections: giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom.

In general, there are three types of giving: of things, of relief from fear, and of the doctrine. The latter is when a teacher lectures or gives practices to his students. The gift of things is to make presents of money, clothing, food and so on. Relief from fear is given by removing its cause, as in the case of helping bugs out of puddles.

Gift, giver and recipient are the three spheres or factors of giving. It is especially good to give to people who have been ill for a long time, who have come from far away or to your own teacher. The gift should be your own property, not something stolen from another. The best one is an item that you hold to be extremely important and about which you feel miserly. It should be given without any sense of attachment and for the sole purpose of helping others.

Giving is said to be pure when its three spheres are sealed with the stamp of emptiness. If you can understand the giver, gift and recipient as not existing in their own right, you have achieved the perfection of giving. If you are not able to seal or qualify each of these three in this way, then your gift, though virtuous and helpful to yourself and others, is not an example of the *perfection* of giving.

It is said that although followers of Hinayana give generously, it is not called a perfection, for they do not qualify the three factors as not existing in their own right. But do Hinayanists practise the six perfections at all? Although they practise giving, ethics, patience, effort, concentration and wisdom, there is not a single word in their scriptures about these six as perfections. The difference between the giving of a Hinayanist and a genuine Mahayanist is as great as that between sky and earth. For a Mahayanist, the three aspects of giving are thoroughly

qualified by emptiness. If you consider these three spheres of agent, object and action with respect to all six perfections and reflect on their dependent-arising, you will develop a little understanding of what it means to engage in these practices knowing that the three factors of each do not exist in their own right.

The Hinayana practice of ethics mainly consists of keeping the 253 vows of a monk. A Mahayanist strives to maintain the vows of a Bodhisattva as well as those of a monk. The former are all concerned with helping other sentient beings and thus are superior to Hinayana ethics. Whereas the motivation of the Hinayana practice of ethics is to escape from cyclic existence, that of a Bodhisattva is concern for the welfare of other sentient beings.

Similarly the way of cultivating patience, the third perfection, is very different in the two vehicles. A Hinayanist does this because he knows that he himself will benefit greatly whereas a Bodhisattva's patience is induced by compassion. He feels that if he responds angrily to one who is angry with him, it will only bring more trouble to the latter, whose anger will grow. Also, because the field to which a Bodhisattva pays attention – all sentient beings – is so vast, his practice has more force.

With respect to wisdom, a Hinayanist seeks to understand only the emptiness of persons, not that of all other phenomena. Thus he does not strive as hard to cultivate the mental factor of special insight as does a Bodhisattva. Instead he mainly develops a factor of meditative stabilization. A Bodhisattva, however, strives to ascertain the emptiness both of persons and of all phenomena in the world systems.

DEVOTION AND COMPASSION

*The play of overwhelming compassion being
unobstructed,
In the moment of love the empty essence
nakedly dawns.
May we constantly practice, day and night,
This supreme path of unity, devoid of errors.*

Lord Karmapa Rangjung Dorje

The most perfect circumstance for realizing the correct view of emptiness is upwardly to generate devotion to all the enlightened ones and downwardly to cultivate compassion for all sentient beings. This is mentioned in *The Aspiration of Mahamudra* by the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje. This incredibly profound song of realization expounds teachings on the ground, path, and fruition, as well as all the key points for Mahamudra, Dzogchen, and Madhyamika. One of the lines is: 'In the moment of love the empty essence nakedly dawns.' 'Love' here is to be understood as both devotion and compassion. In the moment of devotion we bring to mind the eminence of our master and lineage gurus, doing this sincerely, not just superficially. One thinks of their great qualities with such genuine admiration and

Repeating the Words of the Buddha

devotion that the hairs of one's body stand on end and one's eyes are filled with tears. This heart-felt appreciation should be genuine, because it is only through the kindness of the guru that the mind essence can possibly be understood. From this gratitude, strong devotion is felt, stripping our minds bare. That very moment, we unmistakably and unerringly recognize the natural face of rigpa.

It is the same way when thinking with compassion of all sentient beings. Although they possess self-existing wisdom they are unaware of it, remaining completely deluded life after life. Chasing after samsara's illusory experiences, they undergo tremendous suffering. It is not like we, as Buddhist practitioners, have an enlightened essence of rigpa and they don't. Everybody is totally equal; yet, not knowing their own nature, sentient beings suffer incessantly. Thinking in this way, one is overcome with great pity and compassion. At that instant of true compassion, as in the moment of true devotion, the empty essence dawns nakedly.

In the Kagyü and Nyingma traditions it is said that devotion is the universal panacea, the medicine that can cure all sicknesses. If one just focuses on devotion one does not need to spend years studying debate, philosophy, grammar, art and so forth. In the past, thousands of practitioners attained accomplishment through the path of devotion combined with the paths of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. To ignore compassion, devotion, and renunciation is like a bird trying to fly without wings: it's not possible. One should remember the famous statement: 'Devotion is the head of meditation, revision is the foot of meditation and nondistractedness is the heart of meditation.' To take a similar example, consider a person: if we call the view of emptiness the heart, devotion the head, and compassion the feet, how can he travel anywhere using only the heart of emptiness? How can he walk without legs?

Repeating the Words of the Buddha

Devotion and compassion are not mentioned here simply because we ought to feel them. There is a direct reason for cultivating them. The teachings mention that compassion and devotion should be unfabricated, but this doesn't happen automatically in the beginning. We need to cultivate them, to use some effort to produce these feelings. In other words, in the beginning, we must rely on conceptual thought to make it possible to have compassion and devotion.

Think of it this way: we wouldn't know any Dharma teachings or how to attain liberation if it weren't for the buddhas, their teachings, and their perfect followers. The buddhas are not like oneself; they have great qualities. Bringing this to mind naturally and unavoidably generates devotion. Similarly, to generate compassion, think of how it is a fact that all sentient beings have been our own parents. In that sense they are closely related to us. If we really think of how other beings suffer, what they go through, we cannot help but feel compassion. When we think of their suffering there is a real reason for pity.

Having slowly cultivated devotion and compassion, we can use them as an aid to genuinely recognize rigpa. Gradually, the sequence is reversed. The natural quality of recognizing the naked state of rigpa is an unfabricated devotion and compassion that doesn't need to be mustered.

Devotion and compassion are enhancements to the practice of emptiness, of the view. Once all misdeeds and obscurations are purified through conditioned virtue, the unconditioned virtue increases. At first devotion and compassion are necessary to create. They are important stepping stones to recognizing rigpa. Unfabricated and natural devotion and compassion are the expression of rigpa, but not for a beginner. In the context of Dzogchen, it is said that compassion and devotion naturally occur, without any effort. But frankly speaking, for a beginner it doesn't happen like that. At first we have to cultivate devotion and compassion, to put some effort

Repeating the Words of the Buddha

into developing them. Later on, as we become more stable in awareness, they become effortless and unfabricated. It is this way in Mahamudra, Dzogchen, and Madhyamika.

The main practice of devotion is taking refuge and the main practice of compassion is to generate bodhichitta. If we investigate, we will not find a single Vajrayana practice without those two, taking refuge and generating bodhichitta. Look at it this way: once we have a heavy investment in taking refuge and generating bodhichitta, we have the capital to be able to do the business of the higher practices and gain the profit of the development stage, the completion stage, and the three great practices—Mahamudra, Dzogchen, and Madhyamika. Without the capital, we won't be able to do any business at all. Devotion and compassion are the basic capital for Buddhist practice.

Unless we connect with the two types of precious bodhichitta, we will not approach enlightenment even in the slightest; this is certain. The two types of bodhichitta are relative bodhichitta, compassion, and ultimate bodhichitta, the insight into emptiness. Without these two, there is absolutely no way to take even one step closer towards buddhahood. Any Dharma practice devoid of these two kinds of bodhichitta will not bring the practitioner even one step towards enlightenment—I will swear to that.

If we want to quickly awaken to buddhahood, it is essential to unite means and knowledge. Whatever conceptual practice we do should ideally be combined with the recognition of mind essence. Devotion and compassion are the heart of conceptual Dharma practice.

The great masters of the Kagyü lineage state that it is delusion to count on any method for recognizing mind essence other than purifying obscurations, gathering the accumulations, and relying on the blessings of a realized master. This means that no matter how smart or strong we are, if we don't follow a master and instead

Repeating the Words of the Buddha

stubbornly push ourselves through years of meditation training without developing compassion and devotion, purifying obscurations, and gathering the accumulations, we will remain deluded.

The essence of both devotion and compassion is actually the same: it is a kind of love. Whether that feeling is directed towards enlightened pure beings or ordinary impure beings, whether it is devotion or compassion, the essence remains the same: the mind is laid bare of thoughts at the moment the empty essence dawns nakedly, and can be directly perceived. In the Kagyü lineage, devotion is always said to be the main quality to focus on, and so the Kagyü lineage is called the lineage of devotion. But compassion or devotion are the same in facilitating the realization of mind essence.

To reiterate, our training in devotion, compassion, purifying the obscurations, and gathering the accumulations should be combined with recognizing our mind essence. Otherwise, to reach enlightenment using means without knowledge takes a tremendously long time — three aeons, according to the Sutra path. The Vajrayana path is much more swift.

Generating the Bodhisattva Spirit

HIS HOLINESS:

As the exalted master Arya Nagarjuna said, "For those seeking full omniscience, the bodhimind is the wish-fulfilling gem. It should be as stable as Mount Meru, should warm the ten directions with compassion, and should be united with the wisdom which does not grasp at duality."

The first quality we need to generate in order to enter the Mahayana is the bodhimind. And as the bodhimind is a higher form of love and compassion, we must generate these qualities as a prerequisite. Once we have generated the bodhimind, our meditations upon the ultimate level of truth shall contribute to our attainment of omniscient Buddhahood rather than the lesser attainment of an Arhant's nirvana. This latter is achieved by practicing the three higher trainings without the sublimating influence of the bodhimind. Knowing that we are of little benefit to sentient beings for as long as we remain under the powers of delusion, we enter into meditation upon emptiness not solely in order to remove our own causes of suffering for our own sakes, but also in order to attain enlightenment in order to be of greatest benefit to others. Therefore Nagarjuna made the prayer, "Whoever does not have the bodhimind, may they generate it. And whoever has it, may they increase it."

We have been born as human beings and have the ability to attain tremendously exalted states of spiritual being. It has probably been many lifetimes since we have had such an auspicious conjunction of conditions favorable to progress along the path to higher being, liberation, and enlightenment. Even if we cannot get involved in intensive practice of meditation, at least we should try to accumulate a few

positive karmic instincts for further development along the Great Way by occasionally reading the scriptures and trying to incorporate teachings into our daily activities.

At the moment the world's spiritual traditions have greatly degenerated. It is very important in such times that the practitioners themselves make especially strong efforts to gain realization. To permit the lineages of transmission to disappear is to allow the world to plunge into darkness. The great Vasubhandu wrote, "Buddha, who is like the eye of the world, is no longer to be seen. His great successors, who had realized the most profound teachings, also have passed away. Who equals them?" It might be asked, who is there today to equal the master Vasubhandu? Who practices as well as did Mi-la-re-pa? Such people are rare. We should remember that everything but Dharma is useless at death, and instead of wasting our lives on meaningless activities, we should blend our mindstreams with the teachings and with practice. Doing so benefits us as individuals and benefits the world by strengthening its spiritual basis.

Each of us has to be able to feel the pride that we ourselves can reach perfection, we ourselves can attain enlightenment. When even one person indulges in spiritual practice, it gives encouragement to the guardian spirits of the land, and to the celestial deities who have sworn to uphold goodness. These forces then have the ability to release waves of beneficial effects upon mankind. Thus our practice has many direct and indirect benefits. On the other hand, when the people just disgrace and deride the masters and live in ways contradicting natural law, the white protective forces lose their potency and the sinister forces of darkness revive and cause great havoc. Each of us has to do our best on a personal level. There is a saying, "The ways of men and gods should be in harmony." If we practice the teachings and live the ways of Dharma, all the natural forces of goodness will be behind us. When we look at mankind we can see how few are engaged in serious spiritual training, and if we look at those in training we can see how few are training effectively. We ourselves as humans have a body and mind capable of

elevating our spiritual status from its present stage into the most exalted of the supreme. Why miss the opportunity? Once death takes it away, it will probably not come again for thousands or even millions of lifetimes.

THE THIRD DALAI LAMA:

Although by means of the higher trainings in ethical discipline, concentration, and wisdom, one can attain nirvana, or liberation from cyclic existence, this attainment in itself is not sufficient. Of course, for he who has gained nirvana there is never again the need to wander in samsara, yet because only a part of one's faults have been overcome [obscurations to omniscience have not] and only a fraction of perfection has been attained [omnipotence and omniscience have not], one has not really fulfilled oneself from one's own point of view. Also, because one is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, one has not fulfilled oneself from others' point of view. So there is a need to look to the goal of complete Buddhahood, which is ultimate fulfillment from both one's own and others' point of view. Moreover, one should not think to gain Buddhahood merely for one's own benefit. One should want it purely in order to be able to more efficiently and deeply benefit all sentient beings. Just as you have fallen into the ocean of samsaric misery, so have all others; and they, like you, know only frustration and misery. There is not one of them who previously has not been your father and mother again and again, and who has not shown you unimaginable kindness. It is only justice that if you are to gain liberation and omniscience they too should be freed from anguish. It is primarily to benefit them that you yourself must reach the state of peerless, non-abiding nirvana, and for this you must generate the supreme bodhimind, the enlightened attitude.

HIS HOLINESS:

As practitioners of initial and medium scope we turned the mind away from the causes of lower evolution and towards the direction of individual liberation from samsara and its miseries; but is this enough? The answer is to the negative. Those who dwell in nirvana have severed the obscuring influence of the delusions and thus abide in freedom from samsaric existence, but they have not severed the obscurations to omniscience. Consequently, although they are able to remain absorbed in meditation upon the ultimate truth and thus to remain free from suffering, they

are not able to simultaneously perceive the infinite diversity of the universe. As a result, their ability to benefit the world is limited. Moreover, in that they still have subtle obscurations, even their own purposes have not been utterly fulfilled. Therefore, we should elevate our goal to that of omniscient Buddhahood, the cause of which is the cultivation of the bodhimind.

How did we generate the aspiration to transcend the lower states of being and attain nirvana, or liberation from all samsaric misery? Firstly, by contemplating the sufferings of the lower realms and the causes of evolving into these states; and secondly by contemplating the sufferings that pervade all samsaric existence, together with the causes of liberation. However, we did this principally in reference to our own stream of being. In order to generate the Mahayana mind, however, one changes the gravitational basis of the meditations and, instead of contemplating the ways in which we ourselves do and can suffer, we consider the plight of the world of sentient beings who live around us. We meditate upon the same sufferings of the lower and higher realms of samsara as previously, but here we refer them not to ourselves but to others—our mother, father, family, friends, etc.—until eventually we include all living beings.

All beings suffer in the same way as we do, and some are even more deeply immersed in sorrow. Yet all of these beings wish to experience only happiness and to avoid all suffering, frustration, and pain. They wish lasting happiness but do not know how to cultivate its causes, and they wish to avoid misery but automatically collect only causes of further misery. As Shantideva said, "Although seeking happiness, they destroy their own causes of happiness as they would an enemy. And although seeking to avoid misery, they treat its causes as they would a close friend."

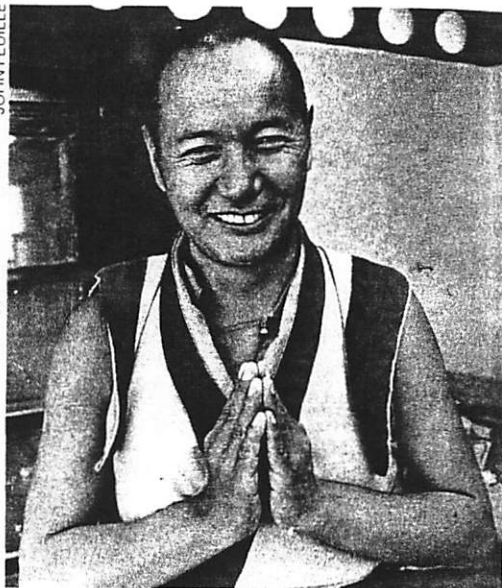
Were the countless sentient beings unrelated to us, or were they not to mind their sufferings, perhaps there would be no need for us to bother with their welfare. In reality, however, all are related to us and not one of them wishes to suffer. Over the billions of lifetimes that we have experienced

since beginningless time, we have known all the living beings again and again. Sometimes they have been parents to us, sometimes friends or mates, sometimes enemies. Without exception, each of them has been even a mother to us again and again, performing all the kindnesses of a mother. How can we be indifferent to them? Wishing them to have only happiness and its causes and to be free of suffering and its causes, we ourselves should generate a sense of responsibility for their well-being. Finally, as only an omniscient Enlightened One is effectively able to benefit beings in deep, lasting, and ultimate ways, we must quickly attain enlightenment. This is the wishing bodhimind, the inner basis of Mahayana practice.

BRIAN BERESFORD



JOHN FEUILLE



Bodhicitta: the perfection of dharma

The last group teachings Lama Yeshe gave were at the end of the 1983 Kopan meditation course on December 9th and 10th. They covered refuge, the five lay precepts and bodhicitta. Here, we extract from the teaching on bodhicitta.



The best Dharma practice, the most perfect, most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

I think it is absolutely essential for us to have loving kindness towards others. There is no doubt about this. Loving kindness is the essence of bodhicitta, the attitude of the bodhisattva. It is the most comfortable path, the most comfortable meditation. There can be no philosophical, scientific or psychological disagreement with this. With bodhicitta, there's no East-West conflict. This path is the most comfortable, most perfect, one hundred percent uncomplicated one, free of any danger of leading people to extremes. Without bodhicitta, nothing works. And most of all, your meditation doesn't work, and realizations don't come.

Why is bodhicitta necessary for success in meditation? Because of selfish grasping. If

you have a good meditation but don't have bodhicitta, you will grasp at any little experience of bliss: 'Me, me; I want more, I want more.' Then the good experience disappears completely. Grasping is the greatest distraction to experiencing single-pointed intensive awareness in meditation. And with it, we are always dedicated to our own happiness: 'Me, me I'm miserable, I want to be happy. Therefore I'll meditate.' It doesn't work that way. For some reason good meditation and its results – peacefulness, satisfaction and bliss – just don't come.

Also, without bodhicitta it is very difficult to collect merits. You create them and immediately destroy them; by afternoon, the morning's merits have gone. It's like cleaning a room and an hour later making it dirty again. You make your mind clean, then right away you mess it up – not a very profitable business. If you want to succeed in the business of collecting merits, you must have bodhicitta. With bodhicitta you become so precious – like gold, like diamonds; you become the most perfect object

in the world, beyond compare with any material things.

From the Western, materialistic point of view, we'd think it was great if a rich person said, 'I want to make charity. I'm going to offer \$100 to everybody in the entire world.' Even if that person gave with great sincerity, his or her merit would be nothing compared with just the *thought*, 'I wish to actualize bodhicitta for the sake of sentient beings, and I'll practise the six paramitas as much as I can.' That's why I always say, actualization of bodhicitta is the most perfect path you can take.

Remember the story of the Kadampa geshe who saw a man circumambulating a stupa? He said, 'What are you doing?' and the man answered, 'Circumambulating.' So the geshe said, 'Wouldn't it be better if you practised dharma?' Next time the geshe saw the man he was prostrating, and when he again asked what he was doing, the man replied, 'One hundred thousand prostrations. 'Wouldn't it be better if you practised dharma?' asked the geshe. Anyway, the story goes on, but the point is that just doing religious-looking actions like circumambulation and prostration isn't necessarily practising dharma. What we have to do is transform our attachment and self-cherishing, and if we haven't changed our mind in this way, none of the other practices work; doing them is just a joke. Even if you try to practise tantric meditations, unless



JACIE KEELEY



CAROL VITZ



you've changed within, you won't succeed. dharma means a complete change of attitude – that's what really brings you inner happiness, that is the true Dharma, not the words you say. Bodhicitta is not the culture of ego, not the culture of attachment, not the culture of samsara. It is an unbelievable transformation, the most comfortable path, the most substantial path – definite, not wishy-washy. Sometimes your meditation is not solid; you just space out. Bodhicitta meditation means you really want to change your mind and actions and transform your whole life.

We are all involved in human relationships with each other. Why do we sometimes say, 'I love you,' and sometimes, 'I hate you?' Where does this up-and-down mind come from? From the self-cherishing thought – a complete lack of bodhicitta. What we are saying is, 'I hate you because I'm not getting any satisfaction from you. You hurt me; you don't give me pleasure.' That's the whole thing: I – my ego, my attachment – am not getting satisfaction from you, therefore I hate you. What a joke! All the difficulties in inter-personal relationships come from not having bodhicitta, from not having changed our minds.

So, you see, just meditating is not enough. If that Kadampa geshe saw you sitting in meditation he'd say, 'What are you doing? Wouldn't it be better if you practised dharma?' Circumambulating isn't dharma,



PETER KEDGE

With bodhicitta you become so precious – like gold, like diamonds. You become the most perfect object in the world, beyond compare with any material things.

prostrating isn't dharma, meditating isn't dharma. My goodness, what *is* dharma, then? This is what happened to the man in the story. He couldn't think of anything else to do. Well, the best dharma practice, the most perfect, most substantial, is without doubt the practice of bodhicitta.

You can prove scientifically that bodhicitta is the best practice to do. Our self-cherishing thought is the root of all human problems. It makes our lives difficult and miserable. The solution to self-cherishing,

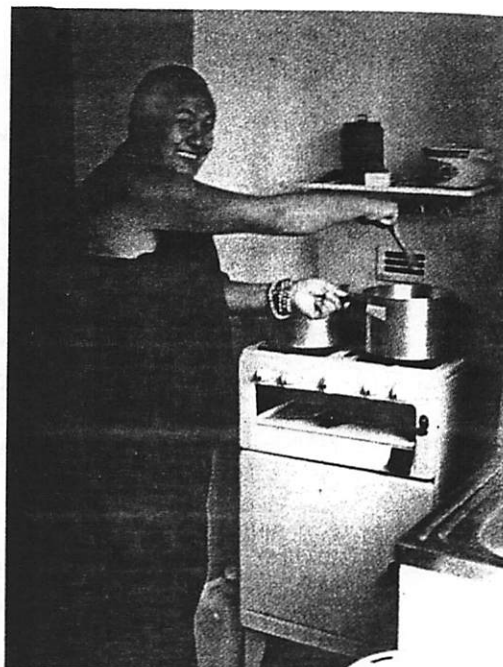


DHARMAWATI

Buddha gave up self-attachment and attained all the sublime realizations, but look at us – we are obsessed with 'me, me, me' and have realized nothing but unending misery.

its antidote, is the mind that is its complete opposite – bodhicitta. The self-cherishing mind is worried about only me, me – the self-existent I. Bodhicitta substitutes others for self.

It creates space in your mind. Then even if your dearest friend forgets to give you a Christmas present, you don't mind. "Ah, well. This year she didn't give me my chocolate. It doesn't matter." Anyway, your human relationships are not for chocolate, not for sensory pleasures. Something much



TOWARD POSEY



deeper can come from our being together, working together.

If you want to be really, really happy, it isn't enough just to space out in meditation. Many people who have spent years alone in meditation have finished up the worse for it. Coming back into society, they have freaked out. They haven't been able to take contact with other people again, because the peaceful environment they created was an 'artificial' condition, still a relative phenomenon without solidity. With bodhicitta, no matter where you go, you will never freak out. The more you are involved with people the more pleasure you get. People become the resource of your pleasure. You are living for people. Even though some still try to take advantage of you, you understand: 'Well, in the past I took advantage of them many times too.' So it doesn't bother you.

Thus bodhicitta is the most perfect way to practise dharma, especially in our twentieth-century Western society. It is very, very worthwhile. With the foundation of bodhicitta you will definitely grow.

If you take a proper look deep into your

heart you will see that one of the main causes of your dissatisfaction is the fact that you are not helping others as best you can. When you realize this you'll be able to say to yourself 'I must develop myself so that I can help others satisfactorily. By improving myself I can definitely help.' Thus you have more strength and energy to meditate, to keep pure morality and do other good things. You have energy, 'Because I want to help others.' That is why Lama Tsong Khapa said that bodhicitta is the foundation of all enlightened realizations.

Also, bodhicitta energy is alchemical. It transforms all your ordinary actions of body, speech and mind – your entire life – into positivity and benefit for others, like iron transmuted into gold. I think this is definitely true. You can see, it's not difficult. For example look at other people's faces. Some people, no matter what problems and suffering they are enduring, when they go out they always try to appear happy and show a positive aspect to others. Have you noticed this or not? But other people always go about miserable, and angry. What do you think about that? I honestly think

that it indicates a fundamental difference in the way these two kinds of people think. Human beings are actually very simple. Some are a disaster within and it shows on their faces and makes those whom they meet feel sick. Others, even though they are suffering intensely, always put on a brave face because they are considerate of the way others feel.

Bodhicitta is the most perfect way to practise dharma, especially in our twentieth century Western society. It is very, very worthwhile. With the foundation of bodhicitta you will definitely grow.

I believe this is very important. What's the use of putting out a miserable vibration? Just because you feel miserable, why make others unhappy too? It doesn't help. You should try to control your emotions, speak evenly and so forth. Sometimes when people are suffering they close off from others, but you can still feel their miserable vibration. This doesn't help – others with even momentary happiness forget about leading them to enlightenment. To help the people around you, you have to maintain a happy, peaceful vibration. This is very practical, very worthwhile. Sometimes we talk too much about enlightenment and things like that. We have a long way to go to such realizations. Forget about enlightenment, I don't care about buddhahood – just be practical. If you can't help others, at least don't give them any harm, stay neutral.

Anyway, what I'm supposed to be telling you here is that bodhicitta is like atomic energy to transform your mind. This is absolutely, scientifically true, and not something

EDWARD POSEY



RICARDO DE ARATANHA



that you have to believe with blind religious faith. Everybody nowadays is afraid of nuclear war, but if we all had bodhicitta, wouldn't we all be completely secure? Of course we would. With bodhicitta you control all desire to defeat or kill others. And, as Lama Je Tzong Khapa said, when you have bodhicitta all the good things in life are magnetically attracted to you and pour

In a way, bodhicitta is like a *huge* selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise.

down upon you like rain. At present all we attract is misfortune because all we have is the self-cherishing thought. But with bodhicitta we'll attract good friends, good food, good everything.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said recently, if you're going to be selfish, do it on a grand scale; wide selfishness is better than narrow! What did His Holiness mean? He was saying that, in a way, bodhicitta is like a *huge* selfish attitude because when you dedicate yourself to others with loving kindness you get a lot more pleasure than you would otherwise. With our present, usual selfish attitude we experience very little pleasure, and what we have is easily lost. With 'great selfishness' you help others and you help yourself; with small it's always 'me, me, me' and it is easy to lose everything.

Remember, Atisha had over 150 teachers? He respected them all, but when he heard the name of one - Lama Dharmarakshita - he would come out in goose-bumps. He explained this by saying, 'I received

many teachings from many, many great gurus, but for me, Lama Dharmarakshita, who gave me the bodhicitta ordination and teachings on the method and wisdom of bodhicitta and the six paramitas, was the most helpful for my life'. This is very true. Sometimes techniques of deity meditation are extremely difficult, but bodhicitta meditation is so simple, so incredibly profound and *real*. That's why Atisha would shake when he heard the name of his main teacher of bodhicitta.

The main point, then, is that when you contact Buddhадharma you should conquer the mad elephant of your self-cherishing mind. If the dharma you hear helps you diminish your self-cherishing even a little, it has been worthwhile. But if the teachings you have taken have had no effect on your selfishness, then from the Mahayana point of view, even if you can talk intellectually on the entire *lam-rim*, they have not been must use at all.

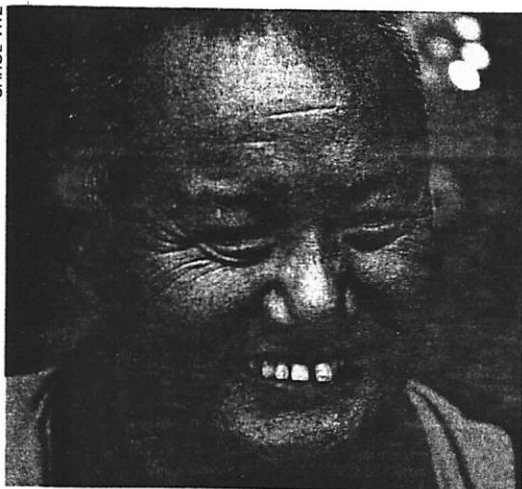
Do you recall the story of Shantideva and how people used to put him down? They used to call him *Du-she-sum-pa*, which means one who knows how to do only three

things: eating, sleeping and excreting. This was a very bad thing to call someone, especially a monk. But that's all that people could see him doing. However, he had bodhicitta, so whatever he did, even ordinary things, was of greatest benefit to others. Lying down, peacefully, he would meditate with great concern for the welfare of all living beings, and many times, out of compassion, he would cry for them. Westerners need that kind of practice. Fundamentally we are lazy. Well, maybe not lazy, but when we finish work we are tired and don't have much energy left. So, when you come home from work, lie down comfortably and meditate on bodhicitta. This is most worthwhile. Much better than rushing in speedily, throwing down a coffee and dropping onto your meditation cushion to try to meditate. It doesn't work that way; your nervous system needs time and space. You can't be rushing through traffic one minute and sitting quietly meditating the next. Everything takes time and space. It is much better to have a quiet, blissful cup of coffee. And don't pressure yourself either; that too is very bad. Don't punish yourself when you

CAROL VITZ



CAROL VITZ



VIN SMITH



UELI MINDER



JELLY MINDER

We are dealing with the mind,
not rocks and concrete; it is
something organic.

are too tired to meditate: 'I should be meditating; I am very bad.' You destroy yourself like this. Be wise. Treat yourself, your mind, sympathetically, with loving kindness. If you are gentle with yourself you will become gentle with others so don't push. Pushing doesn't work for me, that's why I tell others not to force themselves. We are dealing with the mind, not rocks and concrete; it is something organic.

The Western environment offers lots of suffering conditions that act as causes for our actualizing bodhicitta, so life there can be very worthwhile. For example, it is much better to subdue an adversary with bodhicitta than with a knife or gun. When attacked, you can practise loving kindness. We could also do this in the monasteries of Tibet, where there were often horrible monks. Don't think that Tibet was full of only holy people – we had unbelievably wild monks there that nobody in authority could

subdue! If you would try to control them wrathfully they would get only more aggressive. But arya bodhisattva monks, people who had completely given themselves up for others, would treat them with loving kindness, and the wild monks would calm down completely. They would feel, 'This man loves me; he has great compassion. He has given up everything for others and has nothing to lose.' In that way aggressive people would be subdued, without authority but with bodhicitta. There are many stories about this kind of thing, but I'm not going to tell them now. Perhaps you think they're funny, but it's true – you can conquer your enemies, both internal and external, with loving kindness and bodhicitta. It is most worthwhile and there's no contradiction – bodhicitta is the totally comfortable path to liberation and enlightenment.

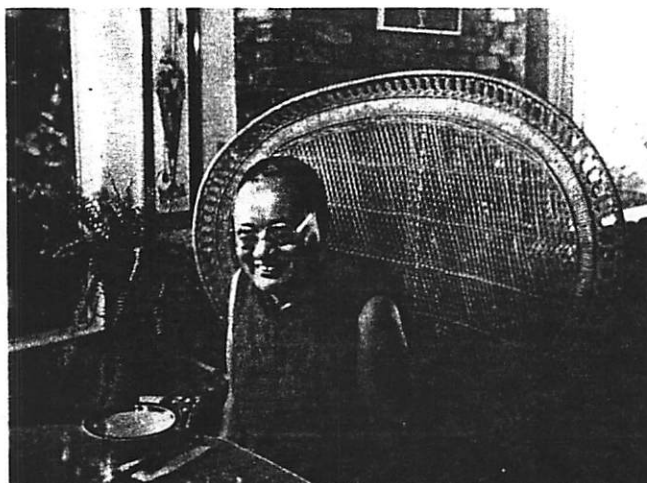
In his text *Lama Chöpa*, the Panchen Lama says, 'Self-cherishing is the cause of all misery and dissatisfaction, and holding all mother sentient beings dearer than oneself is the foundation of all realizations and knowledge. Therefore bless me to change self-cherishing into concern for all others.'

Be wise. Treat yourself, your
mind, sympathetically, with
loving kindness. If you are gentle
with yourself you will become
gentle with others.

This is not some deep philosophical theory but a very simple statement. You know from your own life's experiences without needing a Tibetan text's explanations that your self-cherishing thought is the cause of all your confusion and frustration. This evolution of suffering is found not only in Tibetan culture but in yours as well.

And the Panchen Lama goes on to say that we should look at what the Buddha did. He gave up his self-attachment and attained all the sublime realizations. But look at us – we are obsessed with 'me, me, me' and have realized nothing but unending misery. This is very clear isn't it? Therefore you should know clearly how this works. Get rid of the false concept of self-cherishing and you'll be free of all misery and dissatisfaction. Concern yourself for the welfare of all others and wish for them to attain the highest realizations such as bodhicitta and you'll find all happiness and satisfaction.

You people are young, intelligent and not satisfied with what you have in your own countries. That's why you are seeking further afield. And now you have found that most worthwhile of all things, bodhicitta.



You'll never get tired of meditation on bodhicitta. It is so deep, a universal meditation. You'll never get tired of bodhicitta.

But it is not an easy thing. Easy things bore you quickly. It is quite difficult, but there's no way you'll get bored practising it. People need to be most intelligent to actualize bodhicitta, some, though, have no room for it. 'Forget about yourself and have a little concern for others?' they'll ask. 'That's not my culture.' It is very difficult to change holding yourself dear into holding others dear instead – the most difficult task you can undertake. But it is the most worthwhile and brings the greatest satisfaction.

After practising some meditations, such as impermanence and death, for a month you'll say, 'I'm tired of that meditation.' But you'll never get tired of meditating on bodhicitta. It is so deep; a universal meditation. You'll never get tired of bodhicitta.

You have heard of many deities that you can meditate on, many deities to be initiated into – Chenrezig and the rest. What are they all for? I'll tell you – for gaining bodhicitta. As a matter of fact, all tantric meditations are for the development of strong bodhicitta. That is the purpose of your consciousness manifesting as a being with 1000 arms – so that you can lend a hand to a thousand

suffering beings. If you don't like to manifest yourself this way you can relate the meditation to your own culture and see yourself as Jesus. Avalokiteshvara and Jesus are the same: completely selfless and completely devoted to serving others.

All tantric meditations are for the development of strong bodhicitta. That is the purpose of your consciousness manifesting as a being with a thousand arms – so that you can lend a hand to a thousand suffering beings.

Remember what happened the first time that Avalokiteshvara took the bodhisattva ordination? He vowed to guide all universal living beings to enlightenment from behind, like a shepherd. 'I do not want to realize enlightenment until first I have led all mother sentient beings there first. That will be my satisfaction.' He worked for years

You can conquer your enemies, both internal and external, with loving kindness and bodhicitta.

and years, leading thousands of beings to enlightenment, but when he checked to see what was happening he found there were still countless more. So again he worked for years and years and again when he checked there were still so many left, and this cycle was repeated until finally he was fed up and thought to himself, 'For aeons and aeons I have struggled to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment but there are still so many left. I think it is impossible to fulfil my vow.' And because of the intensity of his emotion his head split into eleven pieces. Then Amitabha Buddha came and offered to help, and blessed him to be successful.

So I'm sure some of you people can be like Chenrezig. The main thing is to have strong motivation. Even if it comes strongly only once, it is extremely powerful. It is very rare to have this kind of thought. A mere flash is so worthwhile; to have it for a minute for a day...