

Session 1:

Bodhichitta and Bodhisattvas

Hosted by Land of Joy

Feb. – March 2024

Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra

Guide to a
Bodhisattva's Way
of Life

by Master Shantideva
with Ven. Yönten



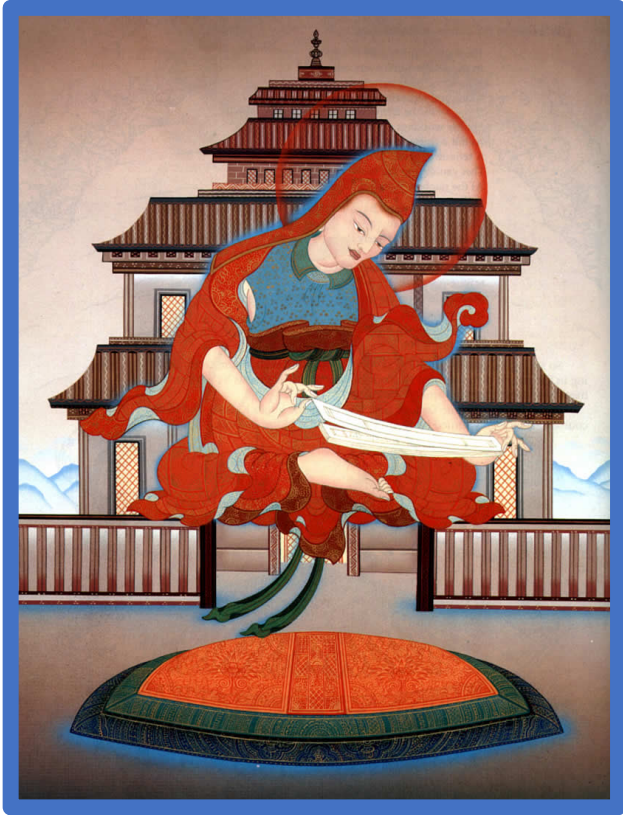
Although the purpose of all the Buddha's teachings is to train the mind, there arose in Tibet a special set of teachings called "mind training" or "thought training" (T. blo sbyong).

It was developed by the Kadampa geshe, disciples of Atiśa and Dromtonpa, beginning around the twelfth century, but has its textual roots in Nāgārjuna's Precious Garland and Śāntideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattvas' Deeds, as well as in the Ākāśagarbha Sūtra, Vimalakīrti Sūtra, and Akṣayamati Sūtra, among others.

IN PRAISE OF
GREAT COMPASSION

The Dalai Lama and Thubten Chodron

THE LIBRARY OF WISDOM AND COMPASSION : VOLUME 5



Verse 4.

The leisures and endowments are very hard to find.

Since they accomplish the purposes of beings,

If I do not accomplish benefit upon this,

How will I acquire this in the future?

The Eight Leisures/Freedoms and Ten Endowments/Opportunities: description of a “perfect” human rebirth

The Eight Freedoms: There are four conditions for humans that make life nearly impossible to practice dharma and four nonhuman states which have either too much suffering or too much pleasure to have the mental space to engage with practices.

A Perfect Human Rebirth is free from:

1. Hell Being
(dominated by pain, fear & hatred)
2. Hungry Ghost *(dominated by addiction)*
3. Animal *(dominated by ignorance)*
4. Celestial Being *(lost in pleasure)*
5. Human in an “border” region
6. Human where a buddha hasn’t descended
7. Human with physical and/or mental obstacles
8. Human with strongly held wrong views

The ten opportunities are framed in terms of what one has rather than what one is free from. There are five related to our own conditions, and five that are external conditions.

1. Human in a “central place”
(safe and free enough to pursue practice)
2. Human where there is the fourfold Sangha
3. Human with mental & physical independence
4. Human with “reversible karma”
5. Human with conviction in “dharma”
(ethical, altruistic teachings)
6. A Buddha has descended
7. A Buddha has taught
8. The teachings remain
9. There continues to be sincere practitioners
10. There is “caring for others”
(benefactors and community)

...It [lo-jong / mind training/ thought transformation] was developed by the Kadampa geshe, disciples of Atiśa and Dromtonpa, beginning around the 11th century, but has its textual roots in Nāgārjuna's *Precious Garland* and Śāntideva's *Engaging in the Deeds...*

Lama, Dalai; Chodron, Thubten. *In Praise of Great Compassion* (The Library of Wisdom and Compassion Book 5) (p. 312). Wisdom Publications



← Śāntideva (685 – 763 C.E.)

Chapter 3

8: May I be the doctor and the
medicine
And may I be the nurse
For all sick beings in the world
Until everyone is healed.

10: May I become an inexhaustible
treasure
For those who are poor and destitute;
May I turn into all things they could need
And may these be placed close beside
them.

9: May a rain of food and drink descend
To clear away the pain of thirst and hunger
And during the aeon of famine
May I myself change into food and drink.

11: Without any sense of loss
I shall give up my body and enjoyments
As well as all my virtues of the three

All Mahayana Mind Training
(*lo-jong*) is practiced with the purpose of
developing and enhancing **Bodhichitta**

Relative/Conventional Bodhichitta:

a.k.a. the awakening mind
(*byang chub kyi sems, bodhicitta*).

An altruistic intention to attain
buddhahood for the benefit of all beings.

The awakening mind is characterized by an
objective,
the full awakening of buddhahood, and a ***purpose***, the
fulfillment of others' welfare.



Relative/Conventional Bodhichitta:

The main Mahayana motivation
with two aspirations:

- to become enlightened
- for the benefit of all sentient beings

These aspirations become a main mind/primary
consciousness through merit, study, deep conviction,
repetition and meditations...



A Mahayanist's goal
is to become a
complete buddha

Ultimate/Absolute Bodhichitta

The main Mahayana motivation with two aspirations:

- to become enlightened
- for the benefit of all sentient beings:

➤ in the mind of someone

who has realized

emptiness directly/perceptually, an ārya.

Emptiness

refers to the absence of inherent existence.

This is a characteristic all phenomena have.

This is a philosophical view that may sound like nihilism but is not.

ārya (P. ariya). Someone who has directly and nonconceptually realized the emptiness of inherent existence; someone who is on the path of seeing, meditation, or no-more-learning.

All Mahayana Mind Training
(*lo-jong*) is practiced with the purpose of
preventing and eliminating
self-grasping and self-cherishing



“[Was then] taken up by all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the mind-training texts center on the development of the two bodhicittas — conventional bodhicitta, which is the altruistic intention, and ultimate bodhicitta, the wisdom realizing emptiness.

They especially emphasize cultivating bodhicitta by means of equalizing and exchanging self and others, and most are written in a pithy, straightforward style that aims directly at the self-centered attitude and self-grasping, the two principal enemies of bodhisattvas.”

IN PRAISE OF GREAT COMPASSION

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THE LIBRARY OF WISDOM AND COMPASSION : VOLUME 5

Lama, Dalai; Chodron, Thubten. In Praise of Great Compassion (The Library of Wisdom and Compassion Book 5) (p. 312). Wisdom Publications. Kindle Edition.



“The mind-training teachings eviscerate these hindrances and call out their ridiculous “logic” that leads to misery, replacing it with more realistic perspectives.

The advice the mind-training texts give us is the opposite of what the self-centered attitude and self-grasping demand, and their recommended actions are the opposite of what our afflictive mind wants to do at that moment.

Of course, that is what makes them so effective at quelling afflictions and protecting us from negativity.”

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The Twin Demons: Self-Cherishing and Self-Grasping

self-cherishing (*rang gces 'dzin*).

The deeply ingrained thought that cherishes the welfare of your own self and makes you oblivious to others' well-being. This is one of the “twin demons” (*'gong po gnyis*) that lie within our heart and serve as the source of all misfortune and downfall (the other twin demon being grasping at selfhood).

self-grasping (*bdag 'dzin, ātmagr̥ha*).

Instinctively believing in the intrinsic existence of your own self as well of the external world. Self here means a substantial, truly existing identity. The wisdom that realizes emptiness eliminates this self-grasping.

These two thoughts—self-cherishing and self-grasping—are the primary focus of combat in the mind training [*lojong*] practice.

Tong-len indicator verse

The Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life
by Shantideva

Chapter 10, Verse 2

“However many sick people there are
Suffering in body and mind in all directions,
Due to my merit may they obtain
An ocean of happiness and joy.”



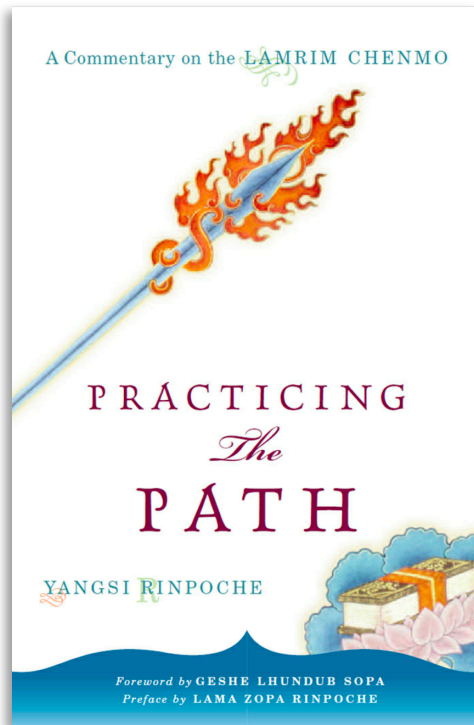
Thoughts for the day...

Equalizing and exchanging self and others does not require seeing ourselves as having been the recipient of kindness in a privileged relationship with sentient beings in the past. Rather we connect with them on a more fundamental level — each of us wants happiness and not suffering. Thus this method enables us to see the kindness of enemies without first transforming their appearance into someone pleasing, such as a relative.

The reasoning used by equalizing and exchanging self and others also brings in an understanding of the ultimate truth, emptiness. What we designate “I” and cherish and what we call “other” and neglect is not based on some inherent nature that I and others have. I and others are dependent on each other; they are also seen as mere designations, which loosens our grasping at self.

For these reasons, equalizing and exchanging self and others is seen as a more profound method that is directed toward disciples with sharp faculties. [These two methods can be combined]. (For a guided meditation on the combined method: <https://youtu.be/q4SxvDUOVFs>)

Cherishing Others



“In order to cherish others from the depths of your heart, you must have the wish to benefit them. It doesn’t mean that whatever you do has to bear fruit.

At this point, whether the intended result arises or not is secondary, as long you have the sincere wish to help others. In this world, all of the great beings—from Buddha to Manjushri to

Maitreya to Nagarjuna, from all of the great Indian masters to the great Tsongkhapa himself—have achieved their greatness on the basis of renouncing self and cherishing others.

All of their accomplishments have been based on this mentality.”

- Yangsi Rinpoche

Let's start at the beginning and gradually transform the mind that anxiously clings to I and mine into a relaxed, joyful mind that cherishes others more than self.

The method to do this consists of the following steps:

- (1) equalizing self and others,
- (2) becoming convinced of the disadvantages of self-centeredness,
- (3) understanding the great benefits of cherishing others,
- (4) exchanging self and others,
- (5) taking others' duḥkha with compassion and giving them our happiness with love,
- (6) bodhicitta.

(1) equalizing self and others

The equanimity meditation overcomes the emotional reactions of attachment and animosity with respect to friends and enemies. It steers us toward unbiased openness for these two groups of people.

The meditation on equalizing self and others overcomes something deeper: our tendency to consider ourselves more valuable and important than other sentient beings.

This meditation brings a deep conviction that we and others are fundamentally equal in wanting happiness and freedom from suffering.

Whereas equanimity levels the playing ground of friends, enemies, and strangers, equalizing self and others levels it between us and others.

(1) equalizing self and others

“This meditation brings a deep conviction that we and others are fundamentally equal in wanting happiness and freedom from suffering.”

- Also in having buddha nature/potential – we all have a mind that lacks inherent existence and can transform out of suffering and harmful actions and into complete and stable happiness and care for others (as well as enlightened ability to be of benefit according to their karma).
- All of us also have innate ignorance that projects an appearance of inherent existence where there is none.

“Whereas equanimity levels the playing ground ...”

- Recognize that the labels “friends,” “enemies,” and “strangers,” come from our side, based on our individual experiences and how we label those interactions, as well as karma created in the past.

(1) equalizing self and others

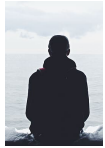
To equalize self and others, on your left imagine your usual self, and on your right visualize all other sentient beings.

Both have the reasonable wishes to be safe and free from suffering.

Then be the judge and determine whose well-being is more important.

On one side is one sentient being, on the other side are all sentient beings minus one.

1) equalizing self and others: looking at proportions....



Think of what would be the logical ratio of care between the two...

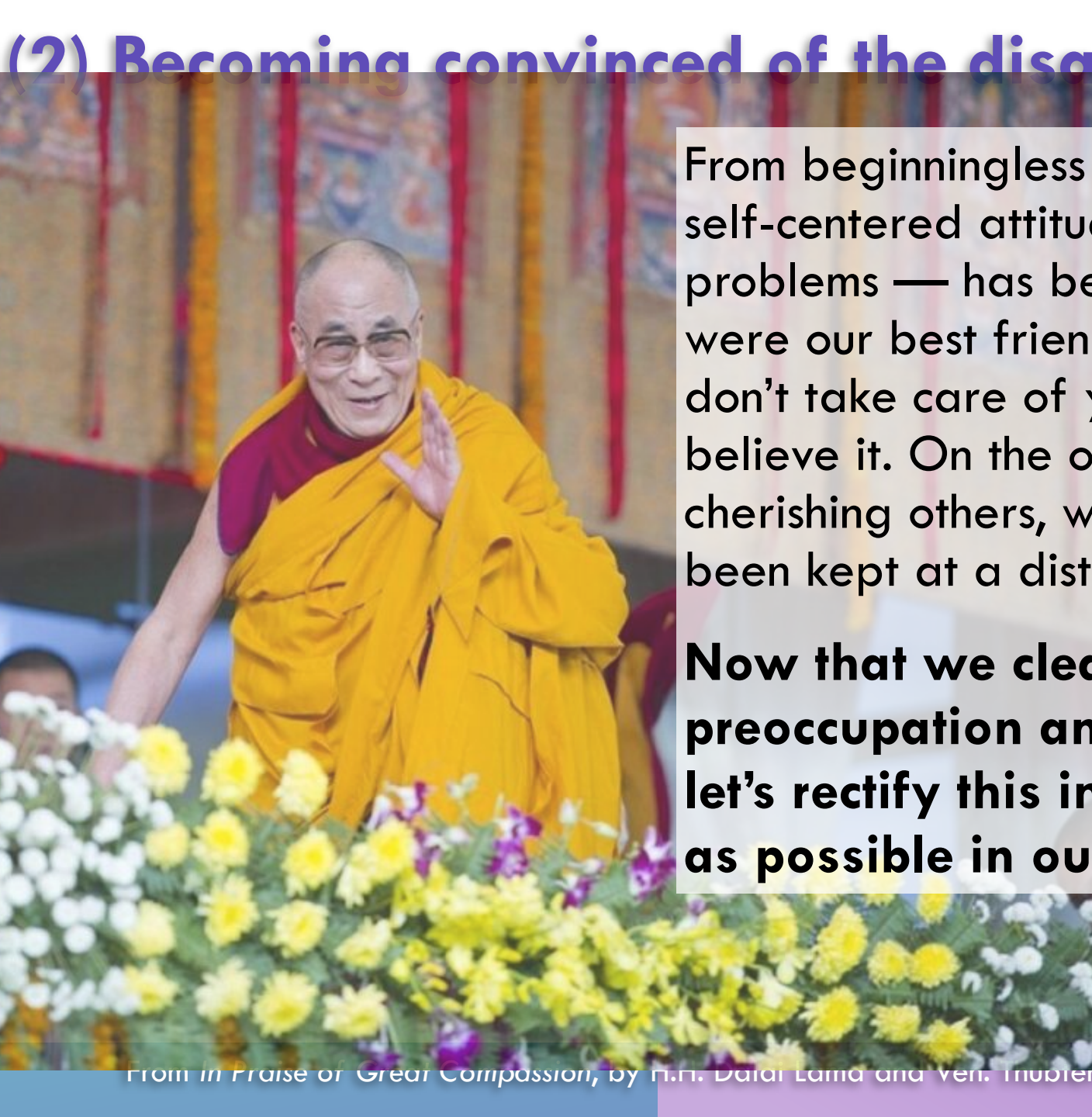
EQUALIZING SELF AND OTHERS: LOOKING AT PROPORTIONS....

“If we think only of ourselves, forget about other people, then our minds occupy very small area. Inside that small area, even tiny problem appears very big. But the moment you develop a sense of concern for others, you realize that, just like ourselves, they also want happiness; they also want satisfaction. When you have this sense of concern, your mind automatically widens. At this point, your own problems, even big problems, will not be so significant. The result? Big increase in peace of mind. So, if you think only of yourself, only your own happiness, the result is actually less happiness. You get more anxiety, more fear.”

— Dalai Lama XIV, [The Wisdom of Forgiveness](#)



(2) Becoming convinced of the disadvantages of self-cherishing



From beginningless time until now, our sworn enemy — the self-centered attitude that is responsible for all our problems — has been residing comfortably inside us as if it were our best friend. It keeps whispering in our ear, “If I don’t take care of you, no one will,” and in our confusion we believe it. On the other hand, our true friend — the mind cherishing others, which is the source of all happiness — has been kept at a distance with suspicion.

Now that we clearly see the disadvantages of self-preoccupation and the benefits of caring for others, let’s rectify this injustice and cherish others as much as possible in our daily life.

(3) understanding the great benefits of cherishing others

Contemplating the benefits of cherishing others will inspire you to do so. Then, when you actively cherish others, you'll experience the benefits yourself.

1. It is the source of all happiness in this and future lives.
2. Others are happy and your life becomes meaningful.
3. By being kind to others, they will be drawn to you and you will have harmonious relationships.
4. Others will respect you and will take your words to heart.
5. You will create great virtuous karma that will bring a fortunate rebirth and happiness in future lives.
6. This virtue will also fertilize your mind so that the teachings will enter at a deeper level.
7. You will die free of regrets.
8. Generating love, compassion, and bodhicitta will come easily.
9. Whenever you look at any sentient being you'll have a feeling of warmth.
10. Make more examples from your experience.

(4) Exchanging self and others

Two principal obstacles block our exchanging self and others. The first is thinking self and others are inherently separate; the second is believing that since others' happiness and suffering doesn't affect us, we don't need to care about it. Regarding the first obstacle, self and others depend on each other.

“Self” is posited only when “others” is also posited, similar to one side of the valley being this side only when the other side is that side. Of course, which is this side and which is that side depend on our perspective — where we happen to be standing. They are not inherently this and that; when we go to the other side of the valley, it becomes this side.

The second obstacle is thinking that it's not necessary to dispel others' suffering because it doesn't harm us and it's not necessary to care for others because that doesn't benefit us. This, too, is based on seeing self and others as unrelated and entirely separate, when in fact we living beings depend on one another. It would be similar to thinking, “There's no need to save money for my old age because that old person is a different person and her suffering doesn't harm me.” It would also be similar to the hand refusing to pull a thorn out of the foot because they are unrelated and the foot's pain doesn't hurt the hand.

(5) The actual exchange

The taking-and-giving meditation has its source in the Precious Garland, where Nāgārjuna says (RA 484cd):⁴⁰

***May their ill deeds ripen on me
and all my virtues ripen on them.***

This meditation is also championed by Śāntideva. Because it is so powerful, in the past it was practiced privately and taught only to advanced disciples who were spiritually prepared. Even the thought of experiencing our own suffering, let alone taking on others' suffering, is anathema to most people. Similarly, to consider offering our body, hard-earned wealth, and merit to others is antithetical to our ingrained self-centeredness.

It wasn't until the twelfth century that the spiritual mentor Kadampa Geshe Chekawa (1102–76) dared to publicly teach this meditation. He taught the practice to a group of lepers, who cured themselves of leprosy by doing it. Wanting these teachings to be available to others, he composed the now-classic text *The Seven-Point Mind Training*.

(5) The actual exchange

Practicing taking and giving for someone who is ill or experiencing difficulties and then dedicating the merit from that practice to them can benefit them by nourishing the conditions for their own good karma to ripen.

Although we cannot in fact take the sufferings of others and give them our happiness, imagining that it is possible strengthens our courage, love, and compassion. It also eliminates any hesitation or reluctance to help others when we have the opportunity and propels us toward full awakening where we will have all the faculties necessary to be of the greatest service.

When doing the meditation seriously, anxiety may arise, fearing that perhaps this is not just a visualization but we may actually experience the suffering of others. At this time, use the fear to identify the object of negation in the meditation on emptiness, because at that time the ignorance grasping an inherently existent I is clearly manifest. Then using Madhyamaka analysis, refute the existence of such an I.

...gradually transform the mind that anxiously clings to I and mine into a relaxed, joyful mind that cherishes others more than self. The method to do this consists of the following steps:

(1) equalizing self and others,

(2) becoming convinced of the disadvantages of self-centeredness,

(3) understanding the great benefits of cherishing others,

(4) exchanging self and others,

(5) taking others' duḥkha with compassion and giving them our happiness with love,

(6) ...

(5) taking others' duḥkha with compassion and giving them our happiness with love

At the beginning, it may be helpful to imagine taking on your own future suffering of tonight, tomorrow, and the rest of this life and giving happiness to your future self.

Then expand to take the suffering of dear ones and to give them happiness.

Expand it further to take and give to strangers, then enemies, then all beings.

Having taken on sentient beings' duḥkha, don't neglect to transform it into lightning (or whatever cleansing agent appeals to you) and destroy your self-centered attitude and self-grasping ignorance.

Stop and feel the effect of that within yourself. Imagine what it would be like to be free from the constant attachment, fear, and worry about the self. Imagine feeling the openness of genuine love and compassion that can welcome anyone into its space.

(5) taking others' duḥkha with compassion and giving them our happiness with love

REFLECTION

1. With compassion take on the problems and confusion of others by inhaling it in the form of black smoke.
2. This turns into a thunderbolt of lightning that completely obliterates the black lump of selfishness and ignorance at your heart.
3. Feel the open space, the lack of wrong conception about self and others, the absence of self-preoccupation.
4. In this space, imagine a white light that radiates to all beings and think that you are increasing and transforming your body, possessions, and merit into whatever others need and giving it to them.
5. Imagine them being satisfied and happy and rejoice that you've been able to bring this about.

Review



TONG-LEN

“TAKING” CONNECT WITH COMPASSION

Review



TONG-LEN

“GIVING” CONNECT WITH LOVE

...gradually transform the mind that anxiously clings to I and mine into a relaxed, joyful mind that cherishes others more than self.

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- (6) bodhicitta.**

(6) Bodhichitta: The Mind of Enlightenment

Generating the mind of bodhichitta means developing the mind to its greatest possible potential for the benefit of numberless sentient beings.

Bodhichitta is the thought of renouncing self and cherishing others. It is rooted in compassion and characterized by the aspiration to attain enlightenment in order to be of benefit to sentient beings.

A perfect human rebirth with the leisures and opportunities is the most conducive basis from which to generate this supreme thought. It is very rare for those who are born in the celestial realms to generate bodhichitta, although it is possible for them to do so if they have very strong imprints of extensive listening and understanding and have collected very strong imprints of bodhichitta in a previous human rebirth.

Session 2:

Bodhisattva Vows and Confession

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Review

Relative BODHICHITTA

(Skt.; Tib. *jangchub kyi sem*)

The Mind / Spirit / Heart of Enlightenment:

- The main Mahayana motivation. The altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings.

Review

Ultimate BODHICITTA

(Skt.; Tib. *jangchub kyi sem*)

The Mind / Spirit / Heart of Enlightenment:

- The main Mahayana motivation. The altruistic mind that seeks enlightenment in order to benefit all sentient beings-
**In the mind of someone who has realized the emptiness of inherent existence directly/
perceptually.**

Relative Bodhichitta

BODHICHITTA

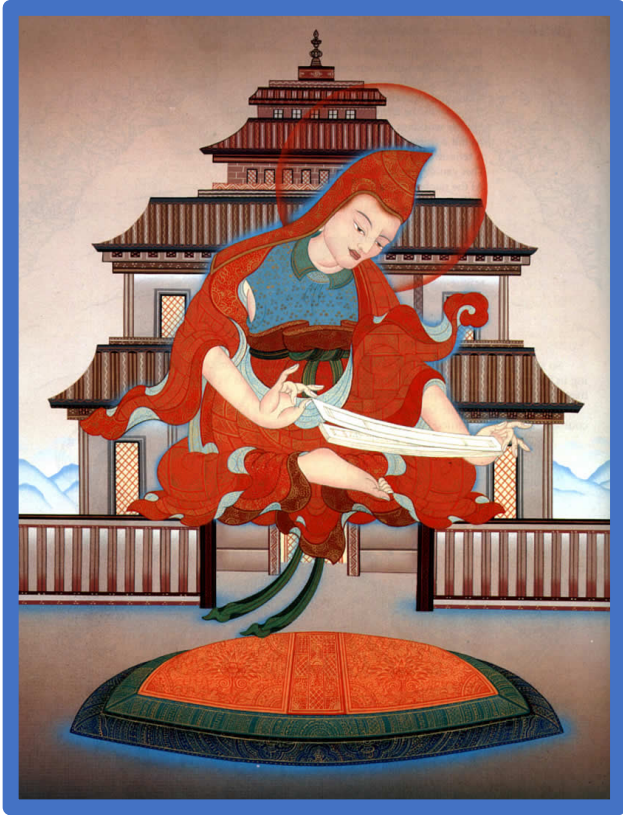
- **Aspiring**
- **Engaging**

The difference is like the desire to go and actually going

Chapter 1: Benefits of the Mind of Enlightenment

Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life

by Master Shantideva



15. In brief, you should understand
The mind of enlightenment to be of two types;
The mind that wishes enlightenment
And the mind that engages enlightenment.

16. As is understood by the instances
Of desiring to go and going,
So the wise should understand respectively
The distinction between these two.



Directive to
take the
bodhisattva
vows

This is true of all
vows and why
they are so
important /
powerful for
progress

17. Although great fruits will arise in cyclic existence
From the mind that wishes for enlightenment,
An uninterrupted flow of merit will not arise
As in the case of the engaging mind.

18. For one who has perfectly adopted this mind
With the thought never to turn away
For the sake of totally liberating
The infinite realms of sentient beings,

19. From that time onwards,
Even while asleep or lacking conscientiousness,
A force of merit equal to the sky
Will continuously ensue.

BODHICHITTA

- Actions and Antidotes
 - Taking and maintaining bodhisattva vows
 - These 18 root /46 secondary vows boil down to:
 1. Refraining from negative actions
 2. Engaging in positive actions
 3. Benefitting sentient beings

BODHICHITTA

- **Actions and Antidotes**
 - **Hearing**
 - Listening to oral teachings again and again
 - **Contemplating**
 - Deep, personal reflections on the topic
 - **Meditation**
 - Methods using logic and experience

Bodhichitta Methods

Equalizing and Exchanging - *logic catalyst*

Foundation: Equanimity

- Recognizing all sentient beings **are equal** in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering (and in many other ways)
 - Logic of numbers (we are one and others are many etc.)
 - Recalling the disadvantages of self cherishing
 - Recalling the advantages of cherishing others
 - Deciding to exchange
- “Actual” Exchange: *Tong-len* leading to Bodhichitta



Tong-len indicator verse

The Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life
by Shantideva

Chapter 10, Verse 2

“However many sick people there are
Suffering in body and mind in all directions,
Due to my merit may they obtain
An ocean of happiness and joy.”

The Sevenfold Cause and Effect – *gratitude catalyst*

1. Recognizing All Sentient Beings as Mother
2. Recalling Their Kindness
3. Wishing to Repay Their Kindness
4. Loving-Kindness
5. Compassion
6. Great Compassion / The Highest Intention
7. Bodhichitta



Methods for developing

BODHICHITTA

- **Actions and Antidotes**

to self-cherishing
and self grasping

- **Hearing**

- Listening to oral teachings again and again

- **Contemplating**

- Deep, personal reflections on the topic

- **Meditation**

- Methods using logic and experience

The Twin Demons: Self-Cherishing and Self-Grasping

self-cherishing (*rang gces 'dzin*).

The deeply ingrained thought that cherishes the welfare of your own self and makes you oblivious to others' well-being. This is one of the “twin demons” (*'gong po gnyis*) that lie within our heart and serve as the source of all misfortune and downfall (the other twin demon being grasping at selfhood).

self-grasping (*bdag 'dzin, ātmaḡṛha*).

Instinctively believing in the intrinsic existence of your own self as well of the external world. Self here means a substantial, truly existing identity. The wisdom that realizes emptiness eliminates this self-grasping.

These two thoughts—self-cherishing and self-grasping—
are the primary focus of combat in the mind training [*lojong*] practice.

Methods for developing

BODHICHITTA

- **Actions and Antidotes**

- **Hearing**

- Listening to oral teachings again and again

- **Contemplating**

- Deep, personal reflections on the topic

- **Meditation**

- Methods using logic and experience

➔ After having made mistakes because under the influence of self-cherishing and self grasping

Chapter 2: Confession of negativities

Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life

by Master Shantideva



Verses 1-22

mainly making offerings

For developing generosity, closeness and creating merit

Verses 23-27

mainly making prostrations

For subduing pride, generating respect that support receptivity, honoring our own Buddha Nature

Chapter 2: Confession of negativities



Verses 28-65

mainly confession

For developing purifying negative actions through the four opponent powers, explicitly refuge and regret and implicitly is remedy and resolve

1. **Refuge:** To suitable inner and outer “objects”
2. **Regret:** recognizing a fault to be a fault
3. **Remedy:** a countermeasure
4. **Resolve:** practical, time specific, promise to refrain from harmful actions in future

Chapter 2: Confession of negativities

Verses 26 & 27



1. Refuge: To suitable inner and outer “objects”

- Visualize Vajrasattva...

2. Regret: recognizing a fault to be a fault

3. Remedy: a countermeasure

Verses 28 - 40

- Om Vajrasattva Hum

4. Resolve: practical, time specific, promise to refrain from harmful actions in future

- Physically, verbally and mentally...