


THE HEART
SUTRA HOW TO
LOOSEN THE
GRIP OF EGO-
GRASPING
SHANTIDEVA
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WITH VEN.
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COURTIN





CONTENTS

1. The Setting and Structure of <i>The Heart Sutra</i>	5
2. <i>The Heart Sutra</i>	8
3. Prepare for Emptiness by Understanding Karma, An Example of Dependent Arising	12
4. Prepare for Emptiness by Understanding The Delusions Driven by Ego-Grasping	26
5. How Ignorance Grasps at the I	42
6. Wisdom is Not Enough: We Need Bodhichitta	48
7. Dedicate in Emptiness	65

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Cover: Lord Buddha, by Jane Seidlitz.

1. THE SETTING AND STRUCTURE OF *THE HEART SUTRA*

KHENSUR RINPOCHE JAMPA TEGGCHOK

The prologue to *The Heart Sutra* is called “a basis for the discussion”, meaning the background or setting for the sutra. For example, in the case of some of the monastic precepts there is an explanation about how a particular precept came to be given. This can include a description of how a certain monk made a mistake and how, when the Buddha came to know of this he said, “This is something that the monks and nuns should not do”. From that point on the monks and nuns had to follow that precept. The background to how and why it came about is called the *ling.shi* or prologue.

The prologue to this sutra begins with: “Thus I have heard at one time: the Lord was sitting on Vultures Peak near the city of Rajgir. He was accompanied by a large community of monks as well as a large community of Bodhisattvas.” This is the common prologue. The next two lines form the special prologue. “On that occasion the Lord was absorbed in a concentration called the profound appearance.”

The common prologue describes how the Buddha was sitting with a great community of monks and Bodhisattvas. The special prologue, that he was absorbed in a concentration called the profound appearance means that the Buddha was himself reflecting or meditating on emptiness.

Meanwhile the bodhisattva, the great being, the noble Avalokiteshvara was contemplating the profound discipline of

the perfection of wisdom. He came to see that the five aggregates were empty of any inherent nature of their own. The Buddha meditates on emptiness and throughout most of the rest of the sutra starting from Through the power of the Buddha, the Buddha blesses and causes a change to occur in the mental continuum of two of his disciples, Avalokiteshvara (Tib. Chenrezig) and Shariputra. He blesses their continuums so that Shariputra asks Avalokiteshvara a question. The rest of the text is Avalokiteshvara's answer.

Both question and the answer arise through the blessing of the Buddha and are called the holy word of the Buddha. There are different types of word or teaching of the Buddha and one is called the holy word that comes through the blessing of the Buddha. Although spoken by Shariputra and Avalokiteshvara, with the question coming from Shariputra, and Avalokiteshvara giving the answer, it is still referred to as the Buddha's word. Specifically in this case it is the Buddha's word that comes through his blessing these two beings. The words at the very end of the sutra, "At that time the Lord arose from his concentration and said to the noble Avalokiteshvara, 'Well said, well said, that is just how it is my son, just how it is. The profound perfection of wisdom should be practised exactly as you have explained it, then the Tathagatas will be truly delighted'".

This is the Buddha's holy word spoken from his own mouth. Although more detail is possible, this gives a rough idea of the structure.

To recap, a question comes from Shariputra followed by Avalokiteshvara's answer, and both are the word of the Buddha called the "blessed word". Later where the Buddha says, "Well said, well said", he confirms that what Avalokiteshvara said

about emptiness is absolutely faultless. That is also the Buddha's word, specifically that spoken by the Buddha.

Thus there are three sections. In brief, The Heart Sutra, has three points – the question from Shariputra, the answer from Avalokiteshvara and finally the Buddha's approval.

2. THE HEART SUTRA

Homage to the Holy Perfection of Wisdom!

COMMON PROLOGUE

Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavan was dwelling on Mass of Vultures Mountain in Rajagriha together with a great community of monks and a great community of bodhisattvas.

SPECIAL PROLOGUE

At that time, the Bhagavan was absorbed in the concentration on the categories of phenomena called “Profound Perception”.

BUDDHA BLESSES THE MINDS OF SHARIPUTRA AND AVALOKITESHVARA

Also, at that time, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara looked upon the very practice of the profound perfection of wisdom and beheld those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

SHARIPUTRA’S QUESTION

Then, through the power of Buddha, the venerable Shariputra said this to the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara: “How should any son of the lineage train who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom?”

AVALOKITESHVARA’S BRIEF ANSWER

He said that and the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara said this to the venerable Sharadvatiputra.

“Shariputra, any son of the lineage or daughter of the lineage who wishes to practice the activity of the profound perfection of wisdom should look upon it like this, correctly and repeatedly beholding those five aggregates also as empty of inherent nature.

AVALOKITESHEVARA’S EXTENSIVE ANSWER

“Form is empty. Emptiness is form. Emptiness is not other than form; form is also not other than emptiness.

In the same way, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness are empty.

“Shariputra, likewise, all phenomena are emptiness; without characteristic; unproduced, unceased; stainless, not without stain; not deficient, not fulfilled.

“Shariputra, therefore, in emptiness there is

THE FIVE AGGREGATES

No form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness;

THE SIX SENSE CONSCIOUSNESSES

No eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind;

THE SIX SENSE OBJECTS

No visual form, no sound, no odor, no taste, no object of touch, and no phenomenon.

THE SIX SENSE ELEMENTS

There is no eye element and so on up to and including no mind element and no mental consciousness element.

THE TWELVE LINKS

There is no ignorance, no extinction of ignorance, and so on up to and including no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Similarly, there is no suffering, origination, cessation, and path;

There is no exalted wisdom, no attainment, and also no non-attainment.

“Shariputra, therefore, because there is no attainment, bodhisattvas rely on and dwell in the perfection of wisdom, the mind without obscuration and without fear. Having completely passed beyond error, they reach the end-point of nirvana.

“All the buddhas who dwell in the three times also manifestly, completely awoken to unsurpassable, perfect, complete enlightenment in reliance on the perfection of wisdom.

THE MANTRA OF THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

“Therefore, the mantra of the perfection of wisdom, the mantra of great knowledge, the unsurpassed mantra, the mantra equal to the unequaled, the mantra that thoroughly pacifies all suffering, should be known as truth since it is not false. The mantra of the perfection of wisdom is declared:

TAYATA OM GATE GATE PARAGATE PARASAMGATE BODHI SOHA

[TAYATA OM GO! GO! GO EYOND! GO PERFECTLY BEYOND! GO TO ENLIGHTENMENT! SOHA]

“Shariputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva should train in the profound perfection of wisdom like that”.

BUDDHA’S APPROVAL

Then the Bhagavan arose from that concentration and commended the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara saying: “Well said, well said, son of the lineage, it is like that. It is like that; one should practice the profound perfection of wisdom just as you have indicated; even the tathagatas rejoice”.

EVERYONE REJOICES IN THE BUDDHA’S WORDS

The Bhagavan having thus spoken, the venerable Sharadvatiputra, the bodhisattva mahasattva arya Avalokiteshvara, those surrounding in their entirety along with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas were overjoyed and highly praised that spoken by the Bhagavan. *This completes the Ârya-bhagavatî-prajñâpâramitâ-hridaya-sûtra.*

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3. PREPARE FOR EMPTINESS BY UNDERSTANDING KARMA, AN EXAMPLE OF DEPENDENT ARISING

VEN ROBINA COURTIN

KARMA: FUNDAMENTAL TO BUDDHISM

If we take on board Buddha's view that we can become an enlightened being, then understanding karma is vital; without it, it's a joke.

If we're saying we're a Buddhist and we're attempting to practice Buddhism, if we're not applying the laws of karma, if we're not taking that as our hypothesis, if we're not applying that in our daily life, we're not really being a Buddhist. This is fundamental to Buddhist teachings – his view about the world, how it comes into being, what our mind is, what causes happiness, what causes suffering, etc.

So, this law applies – runs – in the mind. In the mind, for the Buddha, is where things happen. The mind is where the workshop is, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche puts it. The mind is where the source of suffering is. The mind is where the source of happiness is. The mind is the point.

WHERE DO I COME FROM?

Think of your mind as a river of mental moments – your thoughts and feelings of now, in the simplest linear sense of cause and effect, come from the previous moment of your thoughts and feelings. And your thoughts and feelings of the previous moment come from – guess what? – the previous

moment of your thoughts and feelings. You track it back to ten years ago, twenty years ago, in your mothers' womb. "Well, maybe I began a month before conception." Well, no. If my mind existed then, it must have come from a previous moment of my mind. Then clearly you get back to the first moment of conception, when we all assume we began. If you're Christian, God put a soul there, in the egg and sperm; and if you're a materialist, you are only the egg and sperm.

Well, the Buddha has this third option. The egg and sperm come together, but what causes them to stay together and multiply is the entry of consciousness, your consciousness.

"Well, I must have begun then." Well, yes, relatively speaking, this package called "Robina" began then, but where did the body come from? Mummy and Daddy. Where did your mind come from? Previous moment of itself. So your mind is its own continuity of mental moments.

It's a very simple concept, actually. Not difficult for us to intellectualize, to theorize about. Your mind is its own continuity. And obviously, to assume this, you have to assume it's not physical. Because, clearly, if you think your mind is your brain, then you did come from your parents, which is the materialist view; that they "made" you.

YOUR MIND IS YOURS

And so the experiential implication of Buddha's view is that your mind is *yours*. And that means the contents of it are yours. And so what are the contents of your mind? All the love and the kindness and compassion and wisdom and contentment and anger and jealousy and fear and paranoia and rage – all of this. This is the contents of your mind. So all of these, being contents of your mind, they too come from previous moments of that particular quality in your mind.

So this is a simple idea that implies reincarnation, isn't it? It's a simple concept. Not a difficult concept intellectually. But we're so familiar with the view that I come from mother and father and my anger comes from mother and father and my jealousy and my depression and my all the rest come from the DNA and the egg and the sperm and all the rest. They play a role, no argument. But they're not the main thing. For the Buddha, the main things are your mind, your thoughts, your feelings, your emotions, your unconscious. Your tendencies, your feelings. All of this. This is yours. This is *yours*.

We come into this life fully programmed with all of our tendencies, with all of our characteristics. It's a big surprise to us. I mean, we accept we come fully programmed, but we think the programming comes from mother and father. It doesn't, Buddha says. Tendencies in the mind are mental and mind is not physical and it comes from previous moments of itself, not from the external condition, which is called the brain.

One can see indicators in the brain of certain things, no argument with this. So this fundamental point of Buddhism is that your mind is yours. And whatever's in it is simply from you having put it there in the past. Hardly surprising concept – cause and effect.

KARMA MEANS INTENTION

This is the essential idea of karma. Karma is a Sanskrit word, that is translated as “action”, really simply. Which implies reaction. Action-reaction, in this meaning: cause and effect. Seed-fruit, you know.

It's also, more fundamentally, translated as intention, will, volition. Every microsecond of everything we say, everything we think and feel, and indeed do and say, with our body and speech on the basis of what's in the mind, is a karma. An

intentional action that necessarily will leave an imprint, or a tendency or a seed in your consciousness and will ripen in the future in that consciousness as your experiences.

What goes on in our mind, in other words, is the main cause of our future experiences. This is what Buddha says.

This is a simple concept. Not a difficult idea. It's just a question of being able to say it and get our heads around it. It isn't complicated. We think it's complicated, but it's just because we haven't got the right words, you know. It's not a complicated concept at all.

Of course, it's not evident to us. So we take it as our working hypothesis. Buddha's saying basically: we are the creators of ourselves. It's a very simple point. Whatever's in your mind is there because you put it there, not because Mummy and Daddy did something to you. This flies in the face of the assumption that we all have that's the basis of our lives, and is, as Buddha would say, a misconception. That, you know, I am angry because my father was angry. I am jealous because my mother was jealous. I am depressed because I have certain hormones. We always put an external reason to it, you know. Which sort of, for us, is a way of saying, "It's not my fault".

We've got this dualistic view. We assume we're made by mother and father. We assume the anger and the jealousy and the depression are either there because of the genes or the DNA or they're there because I've got a mean boyfriend, or because I had a lousy mother or a horrible husband or a bad kid or a horrible boss. This is the typical way we talk. And this is, in fact, the view of the materialist world. This is the philosophy of the materialist world that is backed up by the view that your mother and father made you, that you're only physical.

ACCOUNTABILITY

One has to know one's mind, because that's the one we can change. Yes, certain people's external conditions make it quite tough – if you're in a prison and you can't open that door; you can say "Well, I can't help being angry, I'm surrounded by mean people". You might say that. But the ones who are really practicing don't say that. They know that this is their physical condition, and this is indeed the result of their karma (and we'll talk more about that in a minute), and so they will adapt themselves to that condition and still work on their minds.

The person who's got the chemicals that aren't working, that seem to be the trigger for depression, yes, you recognize that you've got those particular chemicals, but the depression is your mind, it's your viewpoint. You might be around people who are mean and ugly who hit you all the time, and if you've got an angry tendency it'll make it easy for you to get angry, it's true. But if you're really being accountable, you'll recognize the anger's yours. This is what we have to do. This is the toughest part. This is the part that's massive for us. So difficult because we're so used to this dualistic way of talking. It's always like, "It's not my fault. It's not my fault".

And that's the view of the materialist world, you look. It's an assumption of ego. "I didn't ask to get born, did I? It's not my fault. My mother made me. My father made me." We don't want to blame God – well, if you're an Italian, you will. They blame God in the most rude way. They say, "God is a pig!" when things go wrong. They say even worse things about Our Lady. We don't mind blaming our parents – a bit nervous about blaming God, maybe.

So, the whole way ego works, Buddha says, is in its nature dualistic. It's always, "Poor me, the victim". Lama Yeshe would call ego the "self-pity me". And as the ego, you look at how we

are every time – instantly trying to cover ourselves, defend ourselves, “It’s not fair”, “It’s not my fault”, “I didn’t mean to”. Everything to try to deny accountability. It’s so painful for us to be accountable. You look at it. It’s typical. This is how ego is, this is its nature. This is the way it is.

So, to go against this and slowly become accountable, you listen to the Buddha’s views of karma – that your consciousness comes from you in the past, not your parents – it reinforces this ability to be accountable. Because my mind is mine, I came fully programmed with my tendencies. Don’t blame anybody else. But this includes our good ones as well, and we forget about those. We agonize, “Why do bad things happen to me?” We never agonize, “Why do good things happen to me?” We don’t care why, just give me more, you know. But we have all the good things for the same reason: I created the cause to have them.

FOUR WAYS THAT KARMA RIPENS

There are four ways in which our actions from the past lives – you know, before we even entered into this present womb of our mother – there are four ways those past actions ripen in the present. Or indeed, there are four ways in which our present actions leave seeds in the mind that will ripen in the future as one’s experiences. It’s a constant process, ongoing. Every microsecond of everything that goes on in our mind, and the things we do on the basis of those thoughts with our body and speech, this is the karmic process. This is constantly occurring. This is the natural process of cause and effect, constantly in play.

1. FULLY RIPENED RESULT: A REBIRTH

The first, main one – they call it the the Fully Ripened Result – is the type of rebirth we get born into. So, you know, if we're materialists, or if we're Christians, for example, we both agree on one thing at least – that someone else made us. I was made by God. I was made by Mummy and Daddy. They're the same principle, aren't they? That you're made by someone else. Which means it's got nothing to do with you.

Whereas the Buddha says, "Everything to do with me. " We are accountable. Our past actions are the main cause of why my mind found its way to my present mother's human womb. Why blame your parents? They're just lying there having fun and you come along. So Buddha puts us right in the centre. Which is kind of an interesting concept – who thought that you were the main cause of who you are? Big surprise!

Not more than a few weeks before conception in your present mother's womb, your consciousness was in another form, another life. And at the time – very simply speaking – at the time of the death of that life – and it doesn't always follow that it was a human life, there's a whole bunch of options of types of rebirth as far as the Buddha's concerned – at the time of the past death, then a very strong tendency of morality must have ripened at that time due to many, many, many complicated causes and conditions all coming together. So this is a very simplistic explanation of it.

We've programmed ourselves, basically – in a very major way – with past practice of morality, of goodness, in the context, no doubt, of a spiritual path, which then ripened at the past death when the consciousness got to the subtle level and eventually left the body, which is when you're dead. Then it would have been on autopilot, basically, programmed, and then in a few weeks or could have been a much shorter time,

after having been in the intermediate state, as they call it, like a dream state but out of the old body, then our consciousness found its way very precisely into our present mother's Fallopian tube and joined the egg and sperm there.

The main cause of this is our past morality. Your father and mother having sex is just a co-operative cause. They did not make you, they did not create you. They merely had sex. Your consciousness had very strong karmic connection with them from past history with those particular parents. I mean, it's a highly complex scenario, you know, but simply speaking that karma ripened at the time of your death and then caused your mind to go on autopilot to find its way into our particular mother's human womb.

One lama said that at the time of a male and female human having sex, billions of consciousnesses that are recently passed away – and that's obviously not just from the human realm, Buddha would assert a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of consciousnesses existing in different realms – that at the time of the male and female having sex, billions of consciousnesses are all hovering around trying to get in. Well, we got in. From Buddha's point of view, we should be weeping in delight every day at how fortunate we are, getting such an extraordinarily fortunate life. Human life – so few of those, obviously – we have more mosquitoes in one summer in the backyard than you have humans at any one time.

So, clearly it's easier to get a mosquito birth, dog birth, giraffe birth – maybe less giraffes, not so many of them – fish, who knows how many fish, plenty of fish – the vast majority – anyway, billions and trillions of other consciousnesses, we can see this. So, we got the human one. Amazing – already amazing. That's the first way our karma ripened – we got this

human birth. But, you know, Mother Theresa and Hitler both got one of those, so clearly there's some differences.

2. ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE: OUR TENDENCIES

That gets us to the second way in which our past actions ripened in the present. And this is our tendencies, our characteristics, our personality; our depression, our kindness, our wish to kill, our wish to lie, our being good at piano, our being good at math; whatever it might be. And that's an interesting point, psychologically speaking. In Buddhist terms, we give equal status to whether you're good at love, good at anger or good at music. It's just a tendency. We make this big dramatic difference, you know, we are honored, actually – you think about it – we are delighted and own responsibility for our being good at music .

“Why are you good at piano, Robina?”

“Oh, well, I've got a tendency and I practised five or ten years – what did you think?” We're honored to own responsibility for our being good at music.

“Why are you good at anger, Robina?”

“Oh, well, it's my father's fault!” No accountability whatsoever! We love being accountable for our being good at music, or math or being a gymnast, you know, but not emotional stuff. We have this different set of laws when it comes to emotional stuff, which I find most fascinating – no logic at all.

The Buddha says, those tendencies – whether you're angry, jealous or just being good at music – are just tendencies. Why do we have a tendency? From having done it before. Quite simple. Mozart clearly had musical tendencies. Hitler clearly

had other tendencies, and he expressed them, didn't he, in his actions.

Our mothers and fathers – this is a big shock to us – they're not the main cause of this. The absolute default explanation in the materialist world is it's all in the DNA and the genes. That's why we always in our minds go back to the parents, to check why I am what I am. No, we don't need to. Yes, my mother was good at music. Everyone says, "Yeah, Robina's good at music because her mother was good at music". No – Robina's good at music because she practised it before. So has my mother, and we happen to come together. And then she encouraged my music by teaching me. It doesn't come from your parents, Buddha said – it's a very simple point.

So, your tendencies – they call this Actions Similar to the Cause. They're yours. You're fully programmed with every one of these from the first second of conception. Millions of these different imprints. Millions of these different tendencies.

3. EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE: HOW PEOPLE TREAT YOU, ETC.

The third way that your karma ripens, your actions from the past ripen in the present, is called Experiences Similar to the Cause, and that's all the stuff that happens to you. The people you meet, the parents you get, the teachers, the abusers, the ones who are loving to you, the ones who rape you, the ones who give you a million dollars, the ones who are kind to you, the ones who steal from you, whatever it might be. The way you're treated and seen in the world. The main cause? Your past actions.

So Buddha puts us in the centre, in the absolute centre – each one of us – in the centre of all our experiences. He says our actions are the main cause of why we are who we are and

why what happens to us happens to us. All the good and all the bad. This applies to giraffes, dogs, ants, fish, humans – all “*sem-chens*”. The term in Tibetan for “sentient being” is “*sem-chen*”, “mind-possessor”. We’re all mind-possessors. Buddha says that there’s not an atom of space where you won’t find mind-possessors. Trillions of them. Interestingly, this model of the mind refers to all sentient beings, not just humans.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL KARMA

And fourth, they call it Environmental Karma. Environmental karma, which is the very way the physical world impacts upon us. So that could mean – so here we are, sitting in this room. It’s quite pleasant, isn’t it? It’s quite peaceful, pleasant view out there, it’s quiet, you know – the walls aren’t dripping with mold. It’s pleasantly painted. It smells nice.

Don’t take this for granted – this experience of a pleasant environmental experience is the result of our collective virtue. If suddenly the building explodes, or a gunman comes in, this is due to our collective non-virtuous karma.

Basically, Buddha’s point about karma is that suffering, when everything goes wrong – could be externally, could be the people, could be the environment, could be in your own mind – when everything’s out of whack, out of balance, disharmonious, when the elements are all crazy, when people are all fighting, when people are mean to you, when your own mind’s berserk – this is when everything’s all messed up – this is the result of negativity. Negative karma. It’s not blame, it’s not punishment. There’s no concept of punishment in Buddhism. It’s a natural law.

And positive karma is the cause of things work harmoniously and nicely. When non-virtue is prevalent, everything goes berserk. It’s very simple.

So the four ways your karma ripens: the very fact that you're this human being, with this very particular family and friends and people who harm you and people who help you – whatever those experiences are. All your tendencies and even the way the physical world impacts upon you – where you were born, the way the physical world is, all of this – our actions in the past are the main cause of this. Buddha puts us absolutely in charge. “We are the boss”, Buddha says.

I'M THE BOSS

So if I am the boss of my own present experiences, if I am the cause of it, then indeed I can be the cause of my future experiences – which is why you should then check up, do I like this life, do I like people punching me in the nose? Do I like having people being angry at me? Do I like being depressed and angry and jealous and poor and living in an ugly environment and all polluted or horrible? No, I don't. Then, okay, there must be causes of this; what were they? You check up; well, do I like this? No. Well, guess what, what's the solution? Don't do it again, baby! It's pretty simple.

This is Buddhist practice. Not complicated. It's just that we fight mightily against this because it sounds like blame, “Oh you mean it's my fault...I must go and kill myself”. because we're used to this dualistic view of “poor me” “victim me” “not fair” “life is done to me, I didn't ask to get born, it's not my fault”. That is the default mode of ego.

FOUR WAYS THAT KILLING, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD RIPEN

Let me give one example of one action and the four different ways it ripens; let's say “killing”. So, one of the main – we can see, generally, if we look at the world, one of the most harmful

things we do with our bodies is to kill other beings, wouldn't you agree? It's quite an intense way to harm. And that, in Buddha's view, would be any sentient being.

So, as a result of killing in the past – those four ways I described – if it ripens at the time of your death, and it becomes the main karma, it would program your consciousness to cause you to get born in a very suffering type of life like an animal realm or a spirit or something like that. Okay. So we can deduce in our case, it was morality that ripened because we got a human life. And the Buddha would say that in general, getting a human life is the result of morality ripening.

But then we look at the next way karma ripens is as a tendency, so the second way killing ripens is as a tendency to kill. Now look at humans – we might be born humans, our main karma that caused the life itself is morality, but lots of humans kill, don't they? Can you see that? So, lots of humans, due to past killing, are born with the tendency to keep killing.

The third way killing ripens is called as an experience – which is you get killed or you die young, or you get sick. So anything that's an experience of where – the opposite to health, or the opposite to the length of life, or the opposite to that, that's the result of harming or killing. Do you understand? So, generally speaking, sickness – the elements not working properly, food not being digestible, things harming us instead of nourishing us, this is the result of past killing, in general.

So, for example, the fourth way, environmental karma, would be the very environment itself, which is meant to nurture us, nourish us, right? – it harms us. Look at people who eat peanuts – that's a particular environmental karmic result for a person from past killing, where just peanuts will

kill them. We've got the collective karma now to have poisoned water, haven't we? More and more – who drinks water out of rivers anymore? So there's pollution – polluted water, polluted air, where the elements themselves are harmful to us. That's the result of killing. Do you understand? Make sense?

IDNETIFY THE CAUSES OF A PROBLEM, THEN WE KNOW HOW TO FIX IT

In the Second Noble Truth, the Buddha states the causes of suffering. And he narrows it down to two main causes: karma and delusions. And they subsume down to the one: delusions. Delusions are the main cause of suffering: because of these we do negative actions, we harm others.

So, in relation to the two causes of suffering, karma and delusions, there are two levels of practice. The most immediate, the most urgent, as Rinpoche puts it, is in relation to the delusions: at the very least refrain from creating more negative karma in day-to-day life. So, if someone punches your nose, you at least protect your mind to not create more negative karma. And that's our ongoing, everyday practice, watching our body, speech and mind like a hawk every minute.

But the second one is in relation to karma, for all the countless past seeds we've already got, all sitting in our mind right now, trillions of lives-worth of seeds, latent, waiting for the appropriate conditions to ripen as one's suffering. Obviously we need to get ahead of the game and purify them before they ripen.

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4. PREPARE FOR EMPTINESS BY UNDERSTANDING THE DELUSIONS DRIVEN BY EGO-GRASPING

VEN ROBINA COURTIN

BEING OUR OWN THERAPIST

According to the Buddha's model of the mind, psychological states fall into three categories: positive, negative, and neutral. Leaving aside the neutral, the positive states, which are at the core of our being, are necessarily the cause of own wellbeing and happiness, and the basis of our capacity to benefit others. The negative, which are not at the core of our being and thus can be removed, are necessarily the cause of our unhappiness and the basis of our harming others.

The key job, then, is to develop the skill to look inside, to be introspective, in a clear and disciplined way, so that we're qualified to do the actual job of changing our emotions, of distinguishing between the positive and negative. To become our own therapist, in other words, as Lama Yeshe puts it.

Not an easy job. First of all, we're not educated to look into our minds. Second, we only notice we're angry, for example, when the words vomit out of the mouth; or that we're depressed when we can't get out of bed one morning. Third, even if we do look at our feelings, often we can't tell the difference between the positive and the negative: they're mixed together in a big soup of emotions – and a puréed soup at.

And one of the biggest obstacles is that we don't think we can change them: they're so concrete, so real: "I'm born this way, what can I do about it?" We so fiercely identify with the

neuroses, believing that they're the real me. We even think they're physical. And anyway, who *wants* to look into their mind? "It's not my fault, is it? I didn't ask to get born! This is how we all are! What am *I* supposed to do about it?"

Everything conspires against our doing this job.

NEGATIVITY IS NOT INNATE

To give ourselves the confidence to even start, we need to think about how the negative states of mind are not at the core of our being, they do not define us, they are not innate, and thus can be removed. This flies in the face of our deeply held assumption – one that's reinforced by all contemporary models of the mind – that the positive and negative have equal status; that they're natural; they just are who we are. If you ask your therapist for methods to get rid of all anger, jealousy, attachment and the rest, they'll think you're insane!

We can be forgiven for thinking the negative, neurotic, unhappy emotions are at the core of our being; they certainly feel like it! We identify totally with them, follow them perfectly, truly believing this is who I really am. This is the irony of ego.

NEGATIVE STATES OF MIND ARE DISTURBING AND DELUSIONAL

So, if the negative, neurotic emotions are the source of our pain and the positive ones the cause of our happiness, then we'd better learn to distinguish them. This is the very essence of the job our being our own therapist.

What are negative states of mind? They have two main characteristics (which the positive ones necessarily lack) and these are indicated by two commonly used synonyms: "disturbing emotions" and "delusions".

Disturbing Even though we can see that anger is disturbing to oneself – just look at an angry person: they're out of their mind! – we fiercely live in denial of it; or we deflect it, so determined are we to believe that the external catalyst is the main problem. My friends on death row in Kentucky told me that they receive visits from an old Catholic man who, after thirty years of grief and rage after his daughter was murdered, finally realized that the *main* reason for his suffering wasn't his daughter's murder but his rage, his anger.

Delusional The other characteristic that these unhappy states of mind possess is that they're delusional. We'd be offended if someone accused of that, but that's exactly what Buddha is saying. The extent to which our minds are caught up in attachment, anger and the rest is the extent to which we are not in touch with reality. He's saying that we're all delusional, it's just a question of degree.

In other words, anger, attachment and the rest are concepts, *wrong* concepts. It seems like a joke to say that these powerful emotions are based in thoughts, but that's because we only notice them when they roar up to the surface as emotion.

Perhaps we can see the disturbing aspect of them, but rarely the delusional.

They are distorted assessments of the person or the event that we are attached to or angry with; they're elaborations, exaggerated stories, lies, misconceptions, fantasies, conceptual constructions, superstitions. As Rinpoche puts it, they decorate on top of what is already there layers upon layers of characteristics that are simply not there. Bad enough that we see things this way; the worst part is that we *believe* that these stories are true. This is what keeps us locked inside our own personal insane asylum.

Understanding this is the key to understanding our negative states of mind and, therefore, how to get rid of them.

EGO-GRASPING: THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

At the root of this, as Buddha calls it, is ignorance: *marigpa* in Tibetan: unawareness: a fundamental unawareness of how we actually exist. The function of this “ego-grasping”, as it’s appropriately called, is to isolate and concretize this universe-big sense of self, a deluded sense of I, a totally fabricated sense of I, whose nature is fear: paranoid, dark, cut off, separate, alienated, and overwhelming.

This instinctive, pervasive sense of an independent, self-existent, real, solid, definite me, totally pervades everything – there is not an instant when it is not there. It’s at the deepest level of assumption, beneath everything. It is always there, informing everything we think and feel and say and do and experience – and the root even of existing in samsara in the first place.

THE MAIN VOICE OF THE I IS ATTACHMENT

Ego-grasping is the root but the delusion that runs our lives is attachment. The irony of ego is we actually feel empty, bereft, and that neediness, that bottomless pit of yearning, that hunger: that’s attachment. And it’s the main voice of ego. From eons of practice we come into this life with a profound sense of dissatisfaction, neediness; a primordial sense that something is missing, of being bereft, lonely, cut off. It’s just there, *all the time*, in the bones of our being.

This attachment, this desire, being a misconception, makes the mistake of believing, a million percent, that that delicious person, that gorgeous taste, that lovely smell, that nice feeling,

that idea – that when I get *that*, when I have it inside me, then I'll feel full, then I'll be content. That is what desire thinks.

This is so hard to see how desire is deluded. And it is not meant to be a moralistic issue. As soon as we hear these words we feel a bit resentful, “What do you mean – I'm not allowed to have pleasure?” That's how we feel. But as Lama Yeshe has pointed out: we're either completely hedonistic, and grasping and shoving everything in, or we're completely puritanical. And the irony is that they are both coming from a misunderstanding of desire; they both come from ego-grasping.

Buddha is not being moralistic. He is not saying we should not have pleasure – the reality is he is saying we *should* have masses of pleasure, joy, happiness, but naturally and appropriately, and, incredibly, without relying upon anything external. This is our natural state when we've depolluted our minds of the neuroses, in fact.

Right now, because of the misconception that desire has, and because of the ignorance that drives it, we have got the wrong end of the stick. They think that the delicious chocolate cake, that gorgeous thing is *out there*, vibrating deliciousness, demanding that I eat it – nothing coming from my side at all. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche points out, we don't think our mind plays any role at all. We think that it's all happening from the cake's side, all the energy is coming from the cake.

OUR MIND MAKES IT UP

And the thing is that we don't see this process! The fact is we are making up the cake – attachment has written a huge story about cake and what it will do for us. It is a complex conceptual construction, an invention, an elaborate view, an interpretation, an opinion.

We're like a child, as one lama said, who draws a lion – and then becomes afraid of it. We invent everything in our reality, and then we have all the fears and the paranoia and the depression and the grasping. We're too much!

But we make up that cake, we make up the enemy – we made them up ourselves. This sounds pretty cosmic, but it is literally true. This doesn't mean there is no cake there – there is. And it doesn't mean that Fred didn't punch you – he did. We need to distinguish between the facts and the fiction: that's the tricky part.

It is hard to see this, but this is the way delusions function. And basically they are liars. What attachment and ignorance are seeing is simply not true. What they're seeing simply does not exist.

There is a cake there, but what we think is cake and what cake actually is are hugely different. This is interesting. And because this is hard to understand indicates how ancient it is within us.

What we're seeing or experiencing, what we are grasping at – delicious cake from its own side that will make me happy – is a total lie. It doesn't exist like that at all. There is a cake there, it is brown, it is square: that's valid. And this is what's hard to distinguish – the facts and the fiction. What is actually there and what is not there. That is the job we need to do in knowing the way delusions work and therefore how to get rid of them and, finally, to see emptiness.

ATTACHMENT IS THE VOICE OF THE VICTIM

Another characteristic of attachment is that it is the voice of the victim. We truly feel we have no control – cake is this incredible powerful thing, and I just have to have it. What choice do I have? That is attachment talking. Attachment gives

all the power to the outside object. Which is why we feel like a baby. That's the victim mentality. And victim mentality, the one of hopelessness, the one of no control, that's the voice of attachment. Literally. That's exactly how attachment functions. Attachment is giving all the power to that object. It sees this truly delicious divine thing, which in reality our mind has made up, and then we believe it and then blame it.

ATTACHMENT IS NOT A FUNCTION OF THE SENSES

"We make the body the boss", as Lama Yeshe would tell us. We totally follow what the senses feel. We assume the delicious cake is an object of the senses – of course, it is; but what we think we see isn't what's there. What appears to the sense of sight, for example, is not a delicious cake but simply the shape and colour of the thing. "Delicious cake" is a story made up by the mental consciousness, specifically attachment. This is a crucial point.

Let's analyze. What is being experienced in relation to that cake? What are the states of mind? One of them is the senses indeed – we smell it in the kitchen, so there's our nose sense. Then there's the touch, the sight, we see the shape and color when it comes to the table; then we touch it, the hand feels it, then there's the taste consciousness, the one we're wanting the most. So four of the five senses are involved in the experience of that cake.

The senses are like dumb animals. Our tongue doesn't experience the hunger for the cake, it doesn't leap out of our face and grab the cake desperately; even our hand doesn't, although it looks like it. The hand goes out to the cake, but not from its own side. So what does? It's propelled by the neurotic need to get the cake in the mouth. The mental consciousness, in other words. The thought. It is the story about what is

chocolate cake, and I need chocolate cake, all the stuff about chocolate cake that is chattering away in the mind. That is where the delusions exist. Attachment is not a function of the taste. It is simply not possible. How can it be? Our tongue doesn't feel neurotic. Our tongue doesn't feel grasping, our tongue doesn't feel, "I want to have more cake", and our tongue doesn't stop functioning when we give up attachment. It is just a doorway through which this bunch of thoughts, these concepts, this ego-grasping grasps at the experience, isn't it? That is all. So the senses do not experience attachment. It is a logical fact.

WE ARE ALL JUNKIES

So of course for eons we have had the mistaken assumption that satisfying the senses is the way to get happiness. So right now, we are totally dependent on sensory objects. We are all junkies, it's just a question of degree. We can't imagine having pleasure unless we get that fix. That fix is any one of the objects of the five senses. Which makes it sound quite brutal.

But unless we can start to look into this and cut through this whole way of working, we will never break free of suffering, we'll never become content, satisfied, fulfilled. Ever. Which is why, the basis of practice, the foundation of all realizations, is morality. Discipline. It means literally practicing control over the senses. And it is not a moralistic issue; It's a practical one. The aim is to get as happy as possible. This is the aim.

This happiness, this pleasure, is not deluded. If pleasure were deluded, we might as well give up now. Pleasure, happiness, joy are totally appropriate.

So where's the problem? Why do we suffer? Why are we frantic and anxious and desperate, fantasizing about the cake before it's even there, then shoving two pieces in when it

comes, and then being depressed when we eat too much? Why all this rubbish? Because we have these delusions. Suffering doesn't come from pleasure, it doesn't come from the senses. It comes from neuroses in the mental consciousness. But right now it's virtually impossible for us to have pleasure without attachment.

ATTACHMENT TO A PERSON

It's the same with people. Let's look at the person we are attached to, the person we are in love with – even more dramatic. Again, this soup of emotions, which we never analyze, never deconstruct.

I can say, “I love you”. That means I wish you to be happy. Totally appropriate. Unbelievable, virtuous. The more of this the better. We will only get happiness if we keep thinking that. “I want you not to suffer”, that's called compassion. Generosity, maybe you'd like to give the person something. Generosity, in its nature is a virtue, necessarily the cause of happiness.

So, love doesn't cause suffering, compassion doesn't cause suffering, the senses don't directly cause suffering, happiness can't possibly cause suffering – so what does? The cause of suffering is the attachment, first of all, the neurotic sense of an “I”, a hungry “I” that sees this person, grossly exaggerates their value to me, gives too much power, puts the power “out there” in that person, just like the cake, which implies that we are devaluing the power of ourself. We're giving all the power to this person, like it's all out there, this person, vibrating, so delicious, so gorgeous, this is exactly how it feels. So attachment is hungry and empty and bereft and lonely. And is completely convinced that having that person is going to make me happy.

What attachment does is exaggerate the beautiful qualities of the person, it is exaggerating our sense of an “I” that needs that person, because attachment thinks that if I don’t get that person then I am not happy; because we don’t believe we can be happy inside, we have to have an object. Attachment then starts to manipulate this person, expects massively that this person will give me happiness.

It’s the same with the person we loathe. We really believe that that person, from out there, from their own side, independently, definitely, is an awful person, as if ugliness is coursing in their veins along with their blood. We hear their name, it appears awful, we see their face, it appears awful. The discomfort in our mind is huge. We think the discomfort, the unhappiness, the hurt, the anger, the pain, we actually think and believe they are doing it to us.

But it’s a lie. It’s our own anger that causes the person to look awful, the anger that makes us so miserable.

GOING BEYOND ENEMY, FRIEND, STRANGER

Usually the only person we wish to be happy – that’s the meaning of love – is the person we are attached to. And the only person we are attached to is the person we love. So we assume because they come together, they’re the same thing. It is just not accurate. We need to start going beyond those limits, which is so scary. When we start practicing equanimity, we analyze: enemy, friend, and stranger – we try to cut through this narrow self-centred view of attachment, ignorance and aversion.

Right now we assume it is normal that when a person is mean to me, I don’t like them. So we call them enemies. And we assume it is normal that when a person is nice to me, we call them friend. And when a person is doing neither, they are

called stranger. That's the reality of the entire universe, isn't it? We need to go beyond this one.

WHAT IS ANGER AND WHAT IS ANGER NOT?

A perfect question. And the perfect answer, which I heard from a lama, is: "Anger is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants". Attachment and aversion are utterly linked. Being a fantasy, attachment is not sustainable; the bubble has to burst, and it has nowhere to go but aversion (or ignorance, which manifests as boredom, indifference, uncaring).

In our never-ending efforts to keep the panic at bay, we hungrily seek the right sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, thoughts, words, but the split second we don't get them, aversion arises, exploding outwards as anger or imploding inwards as depression, guilt, hopelessness, self-hate.

We have a lot of misunderstanding about what anger is. So, what is it not?

Anger is not physical. Anger is part of our mind, and our mind is not physical. It exists in dependence upon the brain, the genes, the chemical reactions, but is not these things.

When anger's strong, it triggers huge physical symptoms: the blood boils, the heart beats fast, the spit comes out the mouth, the eyes open wide in panic, the voice shouts. Or if we experience aversion as depression, the body feels like a lead weight; there's no energy, a terrible inertia. And then, when we boost our serotonin, the body feels good again.

But these are just gross expressions of what, finally, is purely thought: a story made up by our conceptual mind that exaggerates the ugly aspects of the person or event or oneself.

Recent findings prove what is explained in Tibetan Medicine: that what goes on in the mind affects the body.

Anger is not someone else's fault. This doesn't mean that the person didn't punch me; sure they did. And it doesn't mean that punching me is not bad; sure it is. But the person didn't make me angry. The punch is merely the catalyst for my anger, a tendency in my mind. If there were no anger, all I'd get is a broken nose.

Anger does not come from our parents. We love to blame our parents! Actually, if Buddha is wrong in his assertion that our mind comes from previous lives and is propelled by the force of our own past actions into our mother's womb; and if the materialists are right in asserting that our parents created us, then we *should* blame them. How dare they create me, like Frankenstein and his monster, giving me anger and jealousy and the rest! But they didn't, Buddha says. (Nor did a superior being – but we dare not blame him!). They gave us a body; the rest is ours (including our good qualities).

Anger is not only the shouting. Just because a person doesn't shout and yell doesn't mean they're not angry. When we understand that anger is based on the thought called aversion, then we can see we are all angry. Of course, if we never look inside, we won't notice the aversion; that's why people who don't express anger experience it as depression or guilt.

Anger is not necessary for compassionate action. His Holiness the Dalai Lama responded to an interviewer who suggested that anger seems to act as a motivator for action, "I know what you mean. But with anger, your wish to help doesn't last. With compassion, you never give up".

We need to discriminate between good and bad, but Buddha says that we should criticize the action, not the person. As

Martin Luther King said, it's okay to find fault – but then we should think, “What can I do about it?”

It's exactly the same with seeing our own faults, but instead of feeling guilty we should think, “What can I do about it?” Then we can change. Anger and guilt are paralyzed, impotent, useless.

Anger is not natural. Often we think we need anger in order to be a reasonable human being; that it's unnatural not to have it; that it gives perspective to life. It's a bit like thinking that in order to appreciate pleasure we need to know pain. But that's obviously ridiculous: for me to appreciate your kindness, you first need to punch me in the nose?

Anger is not at the core of our being. Being a delusional state of mind, a lie, a misconception, it's logical that anger can be eliminated. If I think there are two cups on my table, whereas there is only one, that's a misconception. What to do with the thought “there are two cups on my table”? Remove it from my mind! Recognize that there is one cup and stop believing the lie. Simple.

Of course, the lies that believe that I'm self-existent, that delicious objects make me happy, that ugly ones make me suffer, that my mind is my brain, that someone else created me – *these* lies have been in my mind since beginningless time. But the method for getting rid of them is the same.

What's left when we've removed the lies, the delusions, is the truth of our own innate goodness, fully perfected. That is what's natural.

PRACTICE IS PAINFUL

Real practice is painful – real practice. Until it is painful, it is not practice, we're just playing safe. We're just keeping our nice comfort zone. Practice has to threaten something – it has

to feel painful. Just like when we are overweight, we decide we are going to get thin and beautiful, and we start doing push-ups. It has to be painful at first. We know that if the second we start feeling pain from doing pushups we stop, we will never benefit from doing them. We can always pretend “Oh I did my pushups this morning”, but if the second they started being painful, we stopped, we know that if our muscles don’t hurt, they will never get strong – it is logic. Giving up attachment is like that – it has to be painful.

Until then, we are just being in our comfort zone – we’re playing safe, thinking that being spiritual means smiling and being holy and having a pleasant manner. It is just not so. Until we stretch, until we go beyond our limits, we won’t get better at doing anything. We really get our body strong when we go beyond our limits every day. How do we become an accomplished pianist or anything? We have to go beyond our limits. That’s what spiritual practice is – we have to stretch our limits.

This means we have to be facing our attachment every day, feeling the pain of it, seeing it. And then, the second we start to do that, somehow we become fulfilled, satisfied. That is what is interesting. When we start to give up being a junkie, we start to become happy. We begin to taste our own potential. As long as we continue to follow attachment, which is so deep, we will never be happy.

PRACTICE STARTS WITH MOTIVATION

So how to begin? It all comes from motivation. We can start the day by deciding we will begin, be very courageous. It starts from the thought. We tend in the West to dismiss thoughts. We say, “It’s only in the mind”, we give no value to the mind, even though we are caught in it. We give no value to just thought.

The point is, that if we really understand this fundamental, and easily provable, truth that every thought programs us into what we will become, we would be so happy to have positive thoughts, and be content with them. Because of two things; first, everything that we do comes from the thought that we think. If I am going to get up and walk out the door, what is the first thing that has to happen? My legs don't just jump up and walk out, my mind has to say "I want to walk out that door". So what does that mean? How do we walk out a door? The first thing is to think "I want to walk out that door".

So every day, you're saying "I want to be compassionate, I want to be beneficial". You're aspiring, and then you'll act. It is no mystery. That's how we become pianists, footballers, a cook – or a happy, beneficial person. It starts with the thought, the motivation, the aspiration.

So we just start our practice with powerful sincere motivations. We are sincere, after all; we do want to be these things, loving, compassionate, etc. Genuinely wanting, seeing the reasonableness of having a compassionate thought, seeing the reasonableness of turning around a negative thought. Not thinking that thought doesn't matter. What we are is the product of our thoughts. It is simply a fact. This is what karma is saying. No one else made us into anything, we made yourself. As Lama Zopa says, we can mould our mind into any shape we wish.

Practice is, in the beginning, every day, is motivation, motivation, motivation. I want to do this, I am aspiring to that. When we start every day, we wish "May I be useful, may I not shoot my mouth off to too many people", etc. Even this is so profound. We have to value the thought, value the mind, it is so powerful. Like the Dalai Lama says, we are then on the right track for the rest of the day. Don't underestimate that. If we

really got that, we would be so content, knowing we were sowing the seeds for future crops of happiness. It is like we had a big open field, and we are sowing seeds for the future. That's practice. That's how we start.

We shouldn't fret, "I'm hopeless, I'm useless". We are too concrete in our thinking. So we start with the motivation, start with the thoughts, and we go into the day, and bring that awareness with us. Watch our mind, be careful of the rubbish, try not to shoot our mouth off too much, try to be a bit useful, rejoice in the good stuff. At the end of the day, we look back, we regret our mistakes and rejoice in our efforts, and then go to bed with a happy mind. That's one day of practice. One day at a time. It is organic, and it's humble. We start one day at a time, and slowly, something develops.

5. HOW IGNORANCE GRASPS AT THE I LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

THE MOUNTAIN OF SELF

Our conception of ego instinctively feels that I'm somewhere around here; Thubten Yeshe is somewhere here. Where is Thubten Yeshe? My ego's instinctive interpretation is that I'm here, somewhere in my body. Check for yourself. See what comes up in your mind when you think of your name. The huge mountain of your self will arise. Then check exactly where that mountain of "me" can be found. Where are you? Somewhere around your body. Are you in your chest, in your head?

You feel this instinctively. You don't have to study philosophy to learn it; you don't have to go to school; you parents didn't teach you. You've known this since before you were born.

Buddhism describes two kinds of ego identity: *kun-tag* and *lhen-kye*.

LEARNED GRASPING AT SELF

Kun-tag means the sense of self that's philosophically acquired. It's something that you learn through outside influence from teachers, friends, books and so forth. This is the intellectually derived ego. Can you imagine? You can even acquire an ego through reading. This one is easier to remove, of course, because it's more superficial. It's a gross conception. The simultaneously born sense of self is much, much harder to get rid of.

INNATE GRASPING AT SELF

The one I'm talking about is *lhen-kye*, the simultaneously-born one; the one that exists simply because you exist. It was born with you; it needs no outside influence for its existence. Like the smell that comes with a pine tree, they're one. The pine tree doesn't grow first and then the smell comes later. They come together. It's the same with the innate sense of ego;

This instinctive conception of ego is really convinced that around my body is where you'll find Thubten Yeshe. Someone looks at me and asks, "Are you Thubten Yeshe?" "Yes", I reply, "I'm Thubten Yeshe". Where is Thubten Yeshe? Around here. Instinctively, I feel I'm right here. But I'm not the only one who feels like this. Check up for yourself. It's very interesting.

MY NAME IS NOT ME

Until I was six years old, I was not Thubten Yeshe. That name was given to me when I became a monk at Sera Monastery. Before that time, nobody knew me as Thubten Yeshe. They thought I was Döndrub Dorje. The names Thubten Yeshe and Döndrub Dorje are different; different superstitions give different kinds of name. I feel my name is me, but actually, it isn't. Neither the names Thubten Yeshe nor Döndrub Dorje are me. But the moment I was given the name Thubten Yeshe, Thubten Yeshe came into existence. Before I was given the name, he didn't exist; nobody looked at me and thought, "There's Thubten Yeshe". I didn't even think it myself. Thubten Yeshe did not exist.

But when one superstitious conception named this bubble, my body – "Your name is Thubten Yeshe" – my superstition took it: "Yes, Thubten Yeshe is me". It's an interdependent relationship. One superstition gives the name Thubten Yeshe to this bubble of relativity and my ego starts to feel that

Thubten Yeshe really does exist somewhere in the area of my body.

THUBTEN YESHE IS MERELY A NAME

The reality, however, is that Thubten Yeshe is merely the dry words applied to the bubble-like phenomenon of these five aggregates. These things come together and that's it: Thubten Yeshe, the name on the bubble. It's a very superficial view. The ego's instinctive feeling that Thubten Yeshe exists somewhere around here is very superficial.

You can see that the relative reality of Thubten Yeshe is simply the name that's been given to this bubble of energy. That's all Thubten Yeshe is. That's why the great philosopher and yogi Nagarjuna and the great yogi Lama Tsongkhapa both said that all phenomena exist merely in name. As a result, some early Western Buddhist scholars decided that Nagarjuna was a nihilist. That's a conclusion that could be reached only by someone who doesn't practice and spends all his time dealing in concepts and words.

If I were to show up somewhere and suddenly announce, "You're all merely names", people would think I was crazy. But if you investigate in detail the manner in which we're all merely names, it becomes extremely clear. Nihilists reject the very existence of interdependent phenomena but that's not what Nagarjuna did. He simply explained that relative phenomena exist but that we should view them in a reasonable way. They come, they go; they grow; they die. They receive various names and in that way gain a degree of reality for the relative mind. But that mind does not see the deeper nature of phenomena; it does not perceive the totality of universal existence.

RELATIVE AND ABSOLUTE EXIST SIMULTANEOUSLY

Phenomena have two natures: the conventional, or relative, and the absolute, or ultimate. Both qualities exist simultaneously in each and every phenomenon. What I've been talking about is the way that bubbles of relativity exist conventionally. A relative phenomenon comes into existence when, at any given time, the association of superstition and the conception of ego flavors an object in a particular way by giving it a name. That combination – the object, the superstition giving it a name and the name itself – is all that's needed for a relative phenomenon to exist. When those things come together, there's your Thubten Yeshe. He's coming; he's going; he's talking. It's all a bubble of relativity.

THUBTEN YESHE IS A BUBBLE

If right now you can see that Thubten Yeshe's a bubble, that's excellent. It helps a lot. And if you can relate your experience of seeing me as a bubble to other concrete objects you perceive, it will help even more. If you can see the heavy objects that shake your heart and make you crazy as relative bubbles, their vibration will not overwhelm you. Your heart will stop shaking and you'll cool down and relax.

If I were to show you a scarecrow and ask if it was Thubten Yeshe, you'd probably say it wasn't. Why not? "Because it's made of wood". You'd have a ready answer. You can apply exactly the same logic to the argument that this bubble of a body is not Thubten Yeshe either.

I believe very strongly that this is me because of the countless times from the time I was born up to now that my ego has imprinted the idea "this is me" on my consciousness.

“Me. This is me. This bubble is me, me, me”. But this bubble itself is not Thubten Yeshe.

THUBTEN YESHE IS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND

We know it's composed of the four elements. However, the earth element is not Thubten Yeshe; the water is not Thubten Yeshe; the fire is not Thubten Yeshe; the air is not Thubten Yeshe. The parts of the body are not Thubten Yeshe either. The skin is not Thubten Yeshe; the blood is not Thubten Yeshe; the bone is not Thubten Yeshe; the brain is not Thubten Yeshe.

The ego is not Thubten Yeshe. Superstition is not Thubten Yeshe. The combination of all this is not Thubten Yeshe either – if it were, Thubten Yeshe would have existed before the name had been given. But before this combination was named Thubten Yeshe, nobody recognized it as Thubten Yeshe and I didn't recognize it as Thubten Yeshe myself. Therefore, the combination of all these parts is not Thubten Yeshe.

If we call the scarecrow Thubten Yeshe and then analyze it to see exactly where Thubten Yeshe can be found, we can't find Thubten Yeshe in any of the parts or on all the parts together. This is easy to understand. It's exactly the same thing with the bubble of my aggregates. Neither any single constituent part nor the whole combination is Thubten Yeshe. We also know that the name alone is not Thubten Yeshe. So what and where is Thubten Yeshe? Thubten Yeshe is simply the combination of superstition flavoring an object with the words, “Thubten Yeshe”. That's all that Thubten Yeshe is.

BEYOND THE NAME, THERE IS NO THUBTEN YESHE

Beyond the name, there is no real Thubten Yeshe existing somewhere. But the simultaneously-born ego doesn't understand that Thubten Yeshe exists merely as an interdependent combination of parts. It believes that without question, around here, somewhere, there exists a real, independent, concrete Thubten Yeshe. This is the nature of the simultaneously-born ego. Therefore, if we do not remove conceptions like, "Somewhere in this bubble, I'm Thubten Yeshe", we cannot release the ego.

The conception of ego is an extreme mind. It holds very concretely the idea that somewhere within this bubble of the four-element combination body there exists a self-existent I. That is the misconception that we must release. If the ego mind assessed the situation reasonably and was comfortable and satisfied perceiving that superstition giving the name Thubten Yeshe to this interdependent, four-element bubble was enough for Thubten Yeshe to exist, that would be a different story. But it's not satisfied with that. It cannot leave that alone. It wants to be special. It wants Thubten Yeshe to be concrete. It's not satisfied with Thubten Yeshe being a mere name on a collection of parts. Therefore, it conceives an imaginary, unrealistic, exaggerated, concrete self-entity.

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6. WISDOM IS NOT ENOUGH: WE NEED BODHICHITTA LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

CHERISHING SELF MORE THAN OTHERS IS THE CAUSE OF ALL PROBLEMS

By cherishing the I, you experience all the shortcomings. It not only interferes with but actually harms any attempt to achieve ultimate happiness, liberation and enlightenment, especially enlightenment. Not only that, it even interferes with having the success of this life; it even creates obstacles to temporary happiness. As the great bodhisattva Shantideva mentions in *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, "What is the need is there to mention? The childish work only for their own end while the buddhas work solely for the benefit of other. Just look at the difference between the two".

The results of self-cherishing are only suffering, only problems, opening the door for all the problems if your attitude is only seeking happiness for yourself. If, on the other hand, you seek the happiness of others, if your attitude is wishing happiness for others, cherishing others, then you achieve all the happiness up to enlightenment, including the day to day life's peace and happiness.

When you are seeking only happiness for oneself, by cherishing the I, from there you open the door to all suffering. We can prove this by seeing that what has happened until now has only ever been through the self-cherishing thought and because of that has never been true happiness. From

beginningless rebirths, we have only sought happiness for ourselves, cherishing the I, living that kind of life. This is why Shantideva calls such a person “childish”. That means the ordinary beings who live their lives with the attitude seeking happiness only for themselves, working only for themselves. Such a person is called childish. We have been doing just that, living our life with that attitude, from beginningless rebirths up to now, therefore we are still a child, still childish. We have so far done nothing at all to become enlightened.

THE BUDDHA GAVE UP CHERISHING SELF

The Buddha himself changed his attitude from self-cherishing to cherishing others. From seeking happiness only for himself, he changed his attitude to one of seeking happiness only for others, and as he changed his attitude, he changed his actions.

Therefore, because of this in Tibetan the Buddha is called the “Mighty One” (Tib: *Thu-pa*). This name denotes he was able to change his attitude from the self-cherishing thought to cherishing others, as well as the actions.

Even at the very beginning of the Mahayana path, the Buddha was called *Thu-pa* because even though Shakyamuni Buddha had been the same as us, with all the delusions, sicknesses, problems, obstacles and so forth, he was able to change his attitude. He didn’t stay like that forever. By realizing the extensive shortcomings of self-cherishing and the extensive benefit of cherishing others, he changed his attitude and developed bodhichitta.

Having generated bodhichitta, he was able to enter the Mahayana path and complete the two types of merits, the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue, the merit of wisdom is the cause of the dharmakaya, the holy mind of a buddha, and merit of virtue is cause of the rupakaya, the holy body of

buddha. He achieved full enlightenment and he has liberated numberless sentient beings already and is still enlightening them. In each minute, in each second, he liberates numberless living beings.

This is what Buddha is doing, liberating unimaginable sentient beings, even with each beam that emits from Buddha's holy body within each second. This is what is happening. This is why Buddha is called the Mighty One. Buddha has infinite qualities of holy body, speech and mind. He has inconceivable qualities. It is beyond our concept to know Buddha's holy actions' extensive benefit to other sentient beings, how Buddha is able to benefit sentient beings. It comes from cherishing others, from changing the attitude; it started from there.

WE HARM OURSELVES BY CHERISHING SELF

If we haven't changed up to now, if we haven't achieve full enlightenment up to now, if we haven't even achieved liberation from samsara, it's because of following the ego, the self-cherishing thought. It hasn't allowed us to have any realizations up to now. From beginningless rebirths up to now, our mind has been empty of realizations, we haven't had any attainments up to now. This is due to the self-cherishing, which has caused all the other negative emotional thoughts to arise, such as anger and, attachment and all those things.

And because of that, we have had to experience all the sufferings of samsara up to now again and again, without beginning. If we never changes our attitude and continue to be the same person, continuously following the ego, the self-cherishing thought, keeping the demon self-cherishing thought in our heart, then there won't be any realizations—neither enlightenment or liberation, not any realization. We will endlessly experience the sufferings of samsara without end.

That is how it has been in the past and it will be continue to be like this in the future. We will have to experience the sufferings of samsara endlessly. Therefore, the ego, this self-cherishing thought, is much more harmful than all the atomic bombs there are in the world, because even if all the atomic bombs explode, if we have bodhichitta, they can't cause us to be reborn in the hell realm, the lower realms. Even if the actual atomic bomb exploded, even though it caused the mind to split from the body, if we have bodhichitta, it doesn't cause us to be born in the lower realms, but if we have the self-cherishing thought, if we die with the self-cherishing thought, then due to that negative emotional thought arising, that causes us to be reborn in the lower realms.

So with ego, with the self-cherishing thought we are thrown into lower realms. No matter how many atom bombs there are, they are nothing compared to the harm our own self-cherishing thought can do, how much it has done since beginningless rebirth up to now and it will continue to do. As long as we don't change it, as long as we don't eliminate it, it will torture us, it will make us suffer without end.

WE HARM OTHERS BY CHERISHING SELF

And then we will give problems to other sentient beings, giving them so much suffering and harm, cause them to create negative karma from life to life—all due to this ego, this demon the self-cherishing. When we say “life to life harm to all the sentient beings” it is like that. The atomic bombs can't do that, all this harm to all the sentient beings. This ego, this self-cherishing thought abiding in our heart is much more harmful than the atomic bomb. An atomic bomb is nothing compared to this.

CANCER AND OTHER ILLNESSES ARE NOTHING IN COMPARISON WITH SELF-CHERISHING

Normally, people are terrified when they their doctor tells them they have cancer. Their mind gets so terrified. But, for example, many of my gurus have had cancer but they passed away in a state of meditation, and have reincarnated again in a monastery in order to benefit sentient beings. They changed the body, just took another young, fresh, healthy body to benefit sentient beings. They took that aspect to benefit other sentient beings, by showing this aspect of ordinary being, then they go to a monastery in their childhood to inspire others, in order to go through what ordinary people go through.

Buddha also did the same thing. He was born a prince, then as a child, he played and took part in competitions. Then he got married. Even though Buddha became enlightened inconceivable eons ago but he showed the aspect of only in that life discovering suffering, old age, sickness and death, and then rebirth. Looking for a spiritual guru, he led an ascetic life for six years, then he showed the aspect of becoming enlightened and revealing the Dharma. At dawn time, just before become he became enlightened he was attacked by millions of maras, not wanting the Buddha to be enlightened at all but Buddha, without the slightest movement, in meditation state on loving kindness, subdued all those many millions of maras.

Only if you have the self-cherishing thought, if you die with the self-cherishing thought will you be born in the lower realms. Even if you experience a sickness such as cancer, you can also go pure land of the buddhas, such as the Kalachakra pure land, Shambhala, the Amitabha pure land, the Vajrayogini pure land or the Heruka pure land – those pure lands where there are tantric teachings and you can become enlightened in that next life.

Therefore, what is *really* frightening is the ego, not the sicknesses, not the cancer. Of all the four hundred and twenty-four sicknesses, all of the harm they can do is nothing compared with your own ego, your self-cherishing thought. All those sicknesses are nothing; they do not even compare with the harm the ego does.

How many weapons there are in the world is nothing, their harm is nothing compared to your own self-cherishing thought, how it is harmful to yourself and all other sentient beings. If there is a good heart, bodhichitta, no matter how many weapons you own, they are harmless. But even if you don't have any weapons, but your attitude is the self-cherishing thought then there is danger to harm others with the body with the speech with the mind. There is great danger to harm others with the body, with the speech and with the mind.

How much pollution there is in the world, how much poison there is in the world, all those external harms are nothing compared to how much harm the ego, the self-cherishing thought does to you and other sentient beings from life to life.

SELF-CHERISHING BLOCKS ALL REALIZATIONS

This self-cherishing thought is something that you must get rid of without delaying for even a second. Without delay of even a second you need to get rid of it, it needs to be abandoned.

This self-cherishing thought always interrupts with your ability to practice Dharma and even to meet the Dharma. Even when you finally, *finally*, meet Buddhadharma, or when you finally try to meditate, to open the mind to meditate, to help yourself to have realizations – something that has never happened before from beginningless rebirths, this chance to have real change – when you finally do this, again this self-cherishing thought comes and doesn't allow even for one minute to

concentrate one pointedly. It causes attachment to arise which distracts the mind, moving it to other objects.

Not only does it block perfect meditation even for one minute, it doesn't even allow a full mala of reciting OM MANI PADME HUM to happen. Even if you have a wish to practise Dharma, the self-cherishing thought not only interferes with that wish, it actually causes a fear of practicing Dharma, because it causes a fear of letting go of the I and of cherishing others, of offering the victory to others. It doesn't allow this.

Because of self-cherishing thought, desire arises which doesn't allow you to practise the renunciation of samsara, the renunciation of this life. It doesn't allow you to be able to practise pure Dharma. Even if you wish to practise, even if you know that to practise Dharma is a good thing for yourself and for others, still the ego doesn't let you practise Dharma. It always finds excuses for you to do something else. There is always something else to do and the Dharma practice gets delayed.

Similarly, the self-cherishing thought doesn't let you take vows, take precepts, not just the higher ordination of a monk or nun, but even the lay vows. The self-cherishing thought gives you a fear of taking precepts. Even if you have the opportunity to do so because you are in the right environment, the ego doesn't allow that to happen, causing inferences, making attachment arise. And even if you have taken vows, the lay or higher ordinations of a monk or nun, the self-cherishing thought again harms you by not allowing you to practise purely. Due to it, many other emotions and attachments arise which cause you to break the vows. The ego harms you even if you are trying to have a pure life. It ego doesn't allow it. The ego doesn't allow it, even if there is

opportunity to collect merit, to create good karma, by practicing charity by making charity.

SELF-CHERISHING STOPS YOU FOLLOWING THE GURU

Having met your guru, even if you were to meet Shakyamuni Buddha himself, or Maitreya Buddha or Manjushri, there is nothing more you can learn from these buddhas, nothing more you can achieve from them than you can learn from your guru. I am not saying that I am one of them. I am not saying that, you shouldn't think that way. But, for example to receive teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama or Geshe Sopa Rinpoche and then meet Manjushri, there is nothing else he could teach you.

However, due to the self-cherishing thought, having met a virtuous friend like that, you are still unable to follow their advice, you are unable to surrender to the guru who reveals the path to enlightenment. Again, this is all caused by the bad ego, the self-cherishing thought. This why, even though you have met a virtuous friend, the most qualified you can find in the world, still nothing happens in your mind.

Even if you have received all the most profound and most secret sutra and tantra teachings, containing the whole path to enlightenment, even if you have heard it many times, still nothing happens, there is no change in your mind. That is completely, totally because you follow the ego, the self-cherishing thought instead of following the guru. Instead of surrendering to the guru, you surrender to the ego, you follow the ego, you become a disciple of the ego, follow it day and night, listening to what it says all the time. This is why there is no change, no realization, even after having met the Dharma and hearing so many teachings, for years and years.

That is completely the shortcoming of following the ego, of surrendering to the ego. Even if all the buddhas come in front of you and give you teachings, as long as you don't give up this ego, this self-cherishing thought, you won't be able to achieve realizations because as long as you don't change the mind, as long as you follows the ego, there is no way to achieve enlightenment.

WITH SELF-CHERISHING THERE IS ONLY UNHAPPINESS

Whenever you experience unhappiness or depression in daily life, this is caused by the ego, the self-cherishing thought. Any obstacle you experience, to practicing Dharma or even to achieving the happiness and success of this life, this is caused by the ego. How many times you have suffered due to relationship problems, one after another, on and on, all this totally is due to the ego.

Because of the self-cherishing thought, attachment, desire arises and this creates all this suffering and confusion and all these relationship problems. Others' unhappiness, anger, jealousy and so forth, all these problems are also caused by the ego. So many times the thought comes that life is totally overwhelmed by suffering, you are totally suffocating. Because there are so many problems such as relationship problems, you experience life as suffocating. Then when there is no other solution the thought arises to commit suicide. You can't think of anything else so the thought arises to kill yourself by jumping from a roof or from a bridge like the famous Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco or like the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The thought comes many times to commit suicide.

All this is definitely related to the self-cherishing thought. You can definitely see the connection to it. When a

businessperson fails in business, losing, say, thousands of millions of dollars, then has a nervous breakdown and commits suicide, all these unhappy life's problems are definitely related to the ego, because in the past, out of ego, he did actions of stealing, covetousness and such things, and created negative karma which resulted in all these things, such as lack of success. Because he wishes are not fulfilled he takes his life. From success, suddenly one day he is plunged into loss and his business fails and there is so much difficulty in his life.

Why we have been so unhappy in the past can all be related to the self-cherishing thought, but also they come from negative karma. As I have mentioned, how that negative karma happened, first there is the self-cherishing thought then due to those actions that's how they become negative karma, stealing and telling lies, covetousness and so forth. First there is the thought, but the resulting actions of speech and body become negative karma because the motivation behind them is the self-cherishing thought. That is how they are transformed into negative karma.

Then, because of this, these problems arise and you are unable to succeed in business. When you have problems in your job – other people are jealous and they try to kick you out, to sack you – all these things are shortcomings of self-cherishing. They are caused by the self-cherishing thought.

So many relationship problems come not only because you are unable to control desire, unable to control the self-cherishing thought, but also your companion or friend you rely on, who you trust, lets you down. You want to live with them, you want to live together harmoniously, but they change their mind and leave you, they abandon you. These are the results of slander, the past negative karma done out of self-cherishing. The other person leaving you, giving you up,

splitting from you, is due to your own negative karma of slandering in the past out of self-cherishing.

As well as sexual misconduct in past lives, done out of self-cherishing, became negative karma, all this unhappiness is related to the present self-cherishing thought and related to past lives' self-cherishing who committed that negative karma. Therefore all those problems you normally experience came from the self-cherishing thought.

Those normal problems you always see on TV, that you always hear and you yourself have also experienced are shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought, caused by the self-cherishing thought. Even in one day, what makes life empty is the self-cherishing thought. Why every action you do in each twenty-four hours doesn't become cause to achieve enlightenment is because of the ego. Because ego is abiding there, there is no place for bodhichitta, no place for the altruistic mind to achieve enlightenment, no thought of cherishing others.

So in that twenty-four hours your activity did not become the cause to achieve enlightenment and your life is wasted; it did not become meaningful, because it did not become the cause to achieve enlightenment. Then not only did that twenty-four hours of your activity not become the cause to achieve even liberation from samsara, but because of the self-cherishing thought – the attachment to samsaric perfection, to samsaric pleasure – with those activities during the twenty-four hours there is no attitude of renunciation of samsara. Your attitude is only the desire clinging to samsaric happiness.

Due to the self-cherishing thought, desire arises, attachment, clinging to this life, seeking the happiness of this life and so due to that, in the twenty-four hours activities, even if you try to meditate, or even if you manage to meditate or

chant mantras, those things do not become Dharma. What appear to be Dharma such as making charity, giving things to others, since the attitude comes from attachment, clinging to this life, it does not even become the cause to achieve the happiness of future lives because it does not become Dharma.

Each activity of the twenty-four hours is the worldly dharma, it is non-virtuous due to the attachment clinging to this life. Therefore, the twenty-four hours' life becomes totally empty, totally meaningless—not only not Dharma but non-virtue. Everything becomes non-virtue. Therefore the ego makes your life during each twenty-four hours totally meaningless, empty, and not only that but every action is non-virtue, the cause of suffering, the cause of the lower realms. Therefore, this self-cherishing thought is to be abandoned, to be renounced without delay for even a second. What is called the I, this is to be let go of forever because cherishing this is opening the door for all problems, all obstacles.

BODHICHITTA IS THE SOURCE OF ALL HAPPINESS

Bodhichitta is the source of all the success, of all happiness, yours and all other sentient beings. Your bodhichitta brings all the happiness up to enlightenment to you, it completes all your work, ceases all the gross, subtle defilements such as anger, and completes the works for others, completes all the realizations up to enlightenment.

One person's bodhichitta gives happiness to all sentient beings, causing them happiness in all future lives, causing them ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara, and full enlightenment. One person's bodhichitta causes all this happiness to numberless other sentient beings. The numberless hell beings are liberated from all their oceans of samsaric suffering and are brought to enlightenment. Your

bodhichitta causes all the numberless hungry ghosts to be free from the oceans of samsaric suffering and brings them to enlightenment, besides all the other happiness. Your bodhichitta liberates numberless animals from the oceans of samsaric suffering and brings them to enlightenment, and causes all the other happiness. Your bodhichitta causes numberless human beings to be free from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment and all other happiness. Your bodhichitta causes all the numberless suras and asuras to be free from all the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Your bodhichitta causes the numberless intermediate state beings to be free from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment.

Normally I recommend to even just think about the animals, the number of fish in the ocean or even in just one lake. Just thinking of one spot where there is a lake or river, without talking about the ocean, how many fish are there? Without talking about other animals, just the fish there is an uncountable number. If we think just one place, if you have bodhichitta then you liberate those numberless beings from that one lake – you liberate so many fish from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. That is fantastic; it is unbelievable!

Then think of all the fish in the ocean, all the fish in any universe, you liberate them from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Even without thinking of any other sentient beings, without thinking of any other animals, just looking at the fish you liberate, how fantastic it is!

If you think of just the ants you liberate, there are numberless ants, even in just those living one mountain or one

field. It is unbelievable how many ants there in one field, even under a rock there can be a whole nest with thousands and thousands and thousands of workers that your bodhichitta is liberating from those oceans of samsaric suffering and bringing them to enlightenment. How wonderful is that! How incredible is that! This is what you do with your bodhichitta if you have bodhichitta.

Now think of all the ants living in all the universes – not only on this continent but in all the universes. You are able to liberate them all from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. How wonderful is that! How incredible is that! Similarly, we can talk about the numberless hell beings, the numberless hungry ghosts, the numberless animals, the numberless suras, the numberless asuras, the numberless human beings, all the numberless sentient beings are liberated from the oceans of suffering and brought to enlightenment.

When we think about one type of worm, there is an unaccountable number, and to be able to liberate them and bring them to enlightenment is incredible. Therefore, they get all the happiness up to enlightenment from you, from your bodhichitta. It is up to you. It is your responsibility. All their happiness up to enlightenment comes from your bodhichitta, so you are responsible. How crucial, how urgent it is to generate bodhichitta, the good heart. This is an emergency. You can't wait, you can't delay for even one second to have this bodhichitta realization. All the numberless sentient beings, their happiness up to enlightenment comes from your bodhichitta. They all depend on you, so you can't wait. Your bodhichitta is crucial. It is so unbearable that sentient beings are suffering, that they *are suffering* is unbearable so you can't delay for even a second. All happiness comes from

bodhichitta. All your happiness, all other sentient beings' happiness comes from bodhichitta. All your past, present and future happiness comes from your good karma. Your good karma is the action of a buddha working within a sentient beings' mind, within your mind. There are two types of action of a buddha: there is one where a buddha possesses his own mind, a buddha's mind, and there is one within us sentient beings' mental continuum. So this is the action of a buddha, our own good karma is the action of a buddha. And a buddha came from a bodhisattva, a bodhisattva came from bodhichitta and bodhichitta came from the root, great compassion. From this you can understand. You can see that a bodhisattva came from bodhichitta. From this explanation, you can understand how all your happiness and all sentient beings' happiness came from bodhichitta. Now it's clear, it came from bodhichitta. All the happiness every single comfort that you experience, past, present and future, all happiness came from bodhichitta.

ALL MY HAPPINESS COMES FROM SENTIENT BEINGS: FRIENDS, ENEMIES, AND STRANGERS

Bodhichitta came from great compassion and great compassion is generated by depending on the existence of suffering of sentient beings. Great compassion is generated dependent on the existence of suffering of sentient beings. It happens by the kindness of the suffering obscurations of sentient beings. This is where all your past, present and future happiness came from, from other sentient beings. That means every sentient being. You can't only include the friend and leave out the enemy; it is not like that. All your past, present and future happiness – including enlightenment and all realizations – everything you have received is by the kindness of every single obscured suffering sentient being.

So that also includes the enemy, the person who abused you, the person who criticized you, the person who doesn't love you. All the past, present and future happiness you have received is also from this person that you call enemy, because compassion, from where bodhichitta arises, is generated by depending on the existence of that suffering sentient being.

Great compassion has to cover all sentient beings. The compassion that feels how unbearable is the suffering of all sentient beings who are obscured by suffering, that compassion covers *all* sentient beings, and wants to free them all from suffering and its causes by oneself. That is great compassion – without leaving out any sentient beings, without exception, without leaving out any sentient being.

All your three times' happiness came from this person who also abused you, who got angry at you, therefore this person is the kindest, most precious person in your life. It is like that with all other sentient beings. Every human being, every animal, every hell being, every sentient being is the kindest, the most precious one in your own life. Everybody, including the person next to you. Look around here, starting from here, there is the kindest, most precious one in your life.

THEREFORE, I MYSELF, ALONE, MUST FREE ALL SENTIENT BEINGS

Therefore think:

In my life, there is nobody for me to cherish except only the other sentient beings, There is nobody to work for except only the other sentient beings.

I have no purpose to work except only for others. Any work other than this is meaningless, senseless. What

sentient beings want is happiness, what they do not want is suffering.

Therefore, I must free them from all suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment by myself alone – alone.

There is no other means to do that except first myself achieving enlightenment.

6. DEDICATE IN EMPTINESS

BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by
me, buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient
beings – which are totally non-existent from their own
side –

May the I – which is also totally nonexistent from its own
side –

Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment –
which is also totally non-existent from its own side –

And lead all sentient beings – who are also totally non-
existent from their own side –

To that enlightenment – which is also totally non-existent
from its own side –

By myself alone – which is also totally non-existent from
its own side.