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The Bird Needs Two Wings (Unedited)
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Well, listen... I really have my doubts whether we'll do this text that Bob wants us to do tonight, I've got my second thoughts, alright? We might do something completely different. Will you throw me out, Bob? Sack me? Send me back? It just feels we've talked enough about karma, this is just more karma, you know? I think I'd rather talk about the compassion wing and maybe some other things, you know? See how it goes... Can we all hear each other? Back there I can't hear you or see you or anything... your little hidden faces...can you hear me? Alright.

Why We're Listening to Teachings
4:37

So, we start with our little prayer, as usual, thinking: we're going to listen to these teachings of the Buddha to see if there's something useful we can take from them to put into practice in our own life; because if it's not used as a tool, there's no benefit, you know -- just listening to something and thinking it's a nice idea but doing nothing about it. And why do you want to do that? So that you can become a more wise, more loving, less neurotic, kind person. And why even do you want to do this? So that you can help others do the same thing, 'cause we're all in the same boat -- suffering, you know. So we sing a little prayer that expresses this.

(Refuge Prayers Chanted in Tibetan)

Buddha Nature- What it Means
5:49

So, we won't do that; alright, I've decided. We won't. Forget about *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*. We've done it all week anyway. So, I think -- just let's talk about -- we've talked about so far since I've been here, haven't we, the fundamental point, Buddha's view of what the mind is, and Buddha's view of our potential. This is the context, you know. This is the big picture. Buddha is saying we've all got this amazing potential. This is the point. You know, you hear in the teachings it says, 'we all possess Buddha nature'. Now, part of our problem -- like I've been saying, you know -- is that we hear these words, and we hear, 'oh, this is Buddhism' and we mystify them; we haven't got a clue what they mean, this strange medieval language, this strange ancient Asian 2,500-year-old language, we can't get our heads around it, so we mystify it. This is really not appropriate, you know. So even let's look at this simple point: if it's the context of all the Buddha's teachings, from the Mahayana point of view, that we've all got Buddha nature, let's work it out what it means, you know.

Well, first of all, the word 'buddha', you know, like I said, the word in Tibetan -- that's a Sanskrit word, but the Tibetan equivalent, '*sang gye*', the first syllable implies, means, the complete removal from our being, from our consciousness,

from our mind of every atom of negativity; all the nonsense, all the voices of ego, all the ego, all the jealousy, all the neurosis, all the anger and all the attachment, all the pride, all of this. So, like I said, the words '*sang gye*', the first syllable implies the first part of the job, which is to rid the mind of all the nonsense. And the second part of the word, '*gye*', implies the complete development of all the goodness. It's a simple way of putting it. Don't make it all fancy, you know.

A Pretty Radical Idea

7:58

Now, this is a pretty radical idea, actually. You think about it. Buddha basically is saying every living being has the natural potential to completely get rid of all neuroses, all anger, all misery, all jealousy, all depression, all nonsense and to fully develop all the positive qualities. Now, that's quite a radical statement, if you think of it this way. You know, we say it in a nice holy way; but if you think of it psychologically speaking -- because that's what Buddha's doing, he talks about the mind -- that is a pretty shocking statement. You know, you go to your therapist and you say, "Can I have methods, please, to rid my mind of all ego, all jealousy, all anger, all attachment and fill my mind with all love and compassion for every living being," they will definitely think you're mentally ill and give you a pill and lock you up, and I'm not joking. It's too extreme, you know. There's all of our models of our mind in our culture -- you think about it -- they all assume that neurosis and negativity is normal, we're all born this way and we even fiercely fight to retain these things. We think it's a normal person. We give equal status to these different characteristic -s- the so-called positive and negative. It's quite an interesting view, you know -- no wonder we're depressed in our culture. We all assume it's normal to be depressed, it's normal to be angry; it's normal to be jealous, and no-one tells us we can get rid of them. So no wonder we're miserable. Just that alone is quite depressing.

The Buddha's view is stunning, you know. He says we've got this natural potential -- and you put it in these terms, 'we've all got Buddha-nature'. Let's look at the meaning of this; in a sense, what I've just said means that. But let's just look at this and try and unpack the idea, you know, what it means, 'we've all got Buddha nature'. We don't talk like this, okay.

So, you know, I like to use the example of an acorn, or a seed. An acorn, good idea! Now we all know an acorn, that little oval thing with a hat on it, we know what it really is. We know it is a seed; that if you put it in the ground, give it water, give it sunshine, give it time, it will turn into an oak tree. This we know. Now, if you look at it, it's not evident, is it?

What's going on? More dramas out there. What's happening? People coming in. What's going on, Lillian? (people coming in) Okay. There's seats over here. Space over here. Grab a cushion.

Okay. So, we're trying to look at the meaning of this phrase, these words they use in Mahayana Buddhism, that we all possess 'Buddha nature'. We can say it nice and cute, 'we all have Buddha nature, we've all got Buddha nature' -- we haven't got a clue what it means, really. So let's look at it, and again, like I'm

saying, de-mystify it, unpack it, try and see it as something kind of tasty, something experiential. Something *real*, not just some belief. 'Cause like I'm saying, Buddha's kind of radical in what he is asserting is our natural potential. So, I'm using the analogy of an acorn, okay. Now we know, don't we, 'cause we learn it -- it's not evident; if you look at an acorn, if you've never seen an acorn before, and you look at an oak tree, you will not see the relationship, will you? You can't possibly tell. But someone tells you it, and you learn it and then you see the proof.

So, you know, we don't say it this way, but you could say accurately, couldn't you; all acorns possess oak-tree-nature. It's kind of quaint, isn't it, but you get the point, don't you? That's a seed. All apple seeds possess apple-tree-nature. It's a cute way to talk; we don't talk like this, so that's the meaning of -- so what Buddha is saying, and it's really simple, is all minds, all beings, all sentient beings -- we would say -- are potential Buddhas. All acorns are potential oak trees. They possess the characteristics that if you give them the appropriate conditions, it will grow into an oak tree.

So, this is what Buddha's saying about all minds. And it's quite a fundamental point he's saying. He's not saying -- we don't say, 'Oh, you could get an oak tree out of an acorn if you felt like it. You might get an apple tree, too.' No. We know that. By definition, an acorn is a potential oak tree. Well, this is Buddha's point. By definition, a mind -- a mind is a potential Buddha. Meaning it naturally possesses that potential, just naturally. There's no choice. Indeed, there is a choice about whether you give it the conditions to allow it to become what it really is. But it's kind of a tasty concept, you know... What's the point here? It's sort of like, right now, we all believe we're acorns. We are only an acorn right now. So we identify with being an acorn. We polish ourselves every day. We put little hats on every day. We argue about who's the best acorn. You understand my point here? We haven't got a clue about our potential. We're talking here psychological potential; we're talking here about potential for goodness. We're talking here potential to be rid of neurosis and suffering. This is what Buddha deals with. This is his expertise -- the mind.

So, what he's saying is quite a shocking point. It's not like, 'Oh yeah, I could become an oak tree if I feel like it.' It is our nature. It is what defines us. This is Buddha's view. And it's something fundamental to all minds, in other words, it's what defines the very existence of a mind. And we are all mind possessors. This is the term in Tibetan for sentient being, '*sem chen*', 'mind possessor'.

So if this is our natural potential, how foolish not to give ourselves the appropriate conditions and allow ourselves to become who we really are. In other words, an acorn -- for squirrels, it's breakfast. Nothing wrong with that. We could use an acorn as jewelry. We could use it as a weapon; but it's not what it really is, is it? What it really is, is a potential oak tree; so how foolish not to allow it to become what it really is in its bare bones -- you get my point. Well, that's the way to think about Buddha nature. What we are in our very being; what determines what a mind is, is its potential to be fully developed in goodness, and rid of all the badness. It's a simple way to put it.

Now, for me this is a very interesting proposition. Thank you very much, I wouldn't mind that. When you think about it, our culture says, 'Well, you know, we're all born with depression and anger and jealousy and it's natural and what do you mean 'get rid of it'? We'd be unnatural if you got rid of it. That's how ridiculous we are; we do not even think, 'What a good idea! Who wouldn't mind getting rid of all anger.' We'd say, 'Don't be ridiculous, you'd be unnatural if you didn't have any anger.' We hold on fiercely to our right to be neurotic, to our right to suffer. I mean, how mad can you get? And we believe this is true, 'but you've got to have anger, you've got to have jealousy, you've got to have depression.' Sure, we think you've got to have not so much of it... but this is our view -- all the materialist models of our mind would assert this. There's not one that would be so radical. That's all Buddha's suggesting. But this is the way we hear these words and we think, 'Oh, isn't that cute... oh, that's Buddha's belief system,' and you leave it there, you know. But what -- I don't care if you believe in it...it's either true or it's not. I don't care whether you *believe* one and one is two -- it's either true or it's not, and that *is* the way to think. That's where it's up to us.

You know, not believing Buddha -- not believing Jesus -- this is the Buddha's view -- okay, the Christian teachings are different because they would say God is our Creator so we have faith in God, but in the end it's either right or wrong. And the Buddha's view is we need to find out, because we need to be in touch with what is true. This is very much the Buddhist approach, and as His Holiness the Dalai Lama points out, if you can discover from your own direct experience that actually what Buddha asserts as true isn't, you must reject the Buddha. This is the approach in Buddhism; the onus is on us, you know.

Our Negativities Are Adventitious

16:26

So, hearing this idea that we all possess Buddha nature, one really needs to think about this. This is quite encouraging. Because what this means- another way to put it, using another analogy now -- another way to put it, is that what Buddha's saying -- and this takes time to think about, not just to believe, not to just get a nice gooey feeling about it, but to study the teachings and really analyze it, which gives us enormous confidence -- which is that the mind is naturally pure. Another analogy, okay? I like the analogy of water. We know that what water is, is pure, clear stuff. H₂O. That's it. We know it can be polluted.

But we know, don't we, the pollution, no matter how severe it is, is not at the core of the being of the water, it's not as if what water is is H₂O²⁷, or something, for pollution, you know... That's not what water is. The pollution is an additive, and it's not necessary to the water. It destroys the water. So the Buddha's saying, basically, you know, the goodness within us -- love and compassion and wisdom -- they are naturally at the core of our being. They are the true nature of mind. They are the H₂O of mind. They are what make up mind. Hear the point, please. And the negativity -- it's still mind, but it's -- they have a term in Buddhist psychology, we don't even use in our English language -- that they're 'adventitious'. It means they don't belong; we can rid the mind of

them, like the pollution. You don't need the pollution. This is a really important point to think about, to hear it and to be energized and inspired by it.

So what that means, what that means, is that the stuff in our minds that's called the negative states of mind, the neuroses, the disturbing emotions, the deluded nonsense that goes on in our heads -- which the Buddha says is the source of all suffering -- doesn't belong. We can rid our minds of it. This is the point he's making. I mean, I find this just so astonishing, actually. And then what Buddhism is, if you like, are the methods to do this job, you know. It's the methods to do this job.

Why don't you get a chair? Sitting cross-legged is ridiculous, get a chair... Come on! Are there no chairs? Give the man a chair. Why be miserable? It's crazy. Here. Grab a chair. I'm kind of bad at sitting cross-legged, I'm sorry. If I'd started when I was five or something, I might have been better. That's better... Good.

So, okay. So far so good, people? Is it making sense? These points are really kind of fundamental to get your head around Buddhism, you know... Yes? Go on.

Q: A lot of times people say when they hear that, they come up with the idea -- kind of a new-age-y notion that our mind was once pure, and that the pollution entered somehow...

Ven.: Yes, exactly. That's right.

Q: Can you address that?

Ven.: Absolutely. This is not feasible, because if we posit the idea of cause and effect... this is because we want the first moment. Actually, I talked to a Jesuit priest friend of mine, on this very topic, because that's exactly the Christian teaching -- that we all were pure once, we all came from God and had God-nature but then he gave us this choice, and then we sinned. We removed ourselves from God. Now -- and he said, this is a big problem for us. I said, the Buddhist view would be that that's an impossibility. If you are totally perfected, if you are completely only full of love and wisdom and compassion, this means there is no potential for badness. There's no such thing as a seed that can rise up as attachment or anger or ego... 'cause you've finished that out of your mind. When you fully develop your mind to its natural state of perfection, you've burned all the seeds of negativity, so how can there ever, ever, ever, ever possibly grow? So, it's an impossibility that you could be pure once and then lose the plot... impossible. It's a fundamental point. If you think of it logically, you know, if you think of it in terms of potentials, what nirvana means is cessation of suffering. Even the first moment of your non-conceptual understanding of emptiness is the first moment of the beginning of this process of perfecting your mind, you know. So, saying the nature of your mind is pure doesn't mean that you were it once and you lost it. It means -- which I like to hear, you know -- that if there is pollution in my mind now, it has always been there; but so has purity. But the difference is -- and this is now getting to the point I want to discuss -- this

can sound kind of intellectual. It all can until we make it meaningful for us -- is to really look logically at how negative states of mind can be removed. Why are they pollution. Why are they additives. Why are they not at the core of our being. Those believe it. And that's a really interesting point.

Everything Is a Viewpoint

21:44

So this -- in order to understand this, we have to see how -- we talked about this on the first day, on Sunday -- we have to try and see how everything in our mind -- the way we experience it at the very gross level of day to day life, of our conceptions -- is a viewpoint, is an attitude, is an opinion about something. So, whether it's love or compassion or anger or jealousy, if you put words on those feelings -- they've got words, haven't they? And you write those words down, so -- love is: 'Oh, Bob, he's a lovely man; may he be happy.' That's a statement coming from an expression in my mind of a sense of connectedness with you that sees you and delights in your happiness. But if I give words to it, it's called, 'Bob is a nice person and I want him to be happy.' Well, that's a thought, isn't it? Would you agree that's a thought?

Now, the Buddha would say those thoughts are virtuous thoughts and to some extent -- not until you realize emptiness fully -- they are in touch with reality in the sense that they're in touch with interdependence, because I've got a sense of connectedness with you. There's a sense of interdependence. Do you understand my point? And that's reality. So, that is a viewpoint, basically. It's an assessment of you. My eyes see you; my mind sees you; and what comes out of my mind is a loving thought. Well, that's reality. That's truth.

Now, if I have a thought in my mind, if I have aversion, 'That bloody Bob Jacobson, you know, with his grey hair, he's an American from Missoula, I can't stand these Missoulians, oh, he's so ugly...' Now you think about it, it's a feeling; but I write it down on a piece of paper and look at those thoughts, you analyze those thoughts; they're called 'aversion', they're called 'anger', right? It's an opinion, isn't it? Do you understand? Both are opinions.

So, everything in the mind is that. Everything in the mind is an opinion about something -- an event, a person, a thing, oneself. So the Buddha's saying the virtuous states of mind are valid opinions, and they are the ones that are at the core of the being of the mind. That's what mind is. When it's fully in touch with reality, there is only virtue. The negative states of mind -- because they're inaccurate, because they're based in inaccuracy, because they're based in dualism, because they're based in ego -- therefore they're not an accurate assessment. They're an inaccurate assessment. So because it's inaccurate, it could be removed from the mind.

Accurate and Inaccurate Assessments

24:00

So, for example, you know, if you could see over here, and you can, and I say, 'There are two cups on my table', now that is an opinion, wouldn't you agree? Everybody, it's an opinion, right? So is, 'Oh, Bob Is a lovely man.' So is, 'Oh, Bob

is a horrible man.' They're all simply opinions, right? So, we don't tend to think that love or anger are opinions, for a start, and secondly, we don't really care if they're right or wrong -- we just say they're feelings and we're allowed to have them. But we all know perfectly well, you can think there are two cups on my table, but people will laugh at you, 'cause you're wrong. Because it's not accurate. Well, Buddha's talking about this level of accuracy in all of our thoughts. And he is saying -- I'll say it again -- that all the positive thoughts which are expressed as feelings and emotions as we practice them are actually in sync with reality; reality being that everything's interdependent. You with me? And the negative ones have got this component of being very emotional, but they have a component of being a liar. They don't see the object accurately, so it's not a truthful statement.

So, now; there are two cups on my table. Is that a truthful statement? Now, we all know what one means, 'cause we've been to school. We know what cup means, 'cause we all speak English. And we know what 'my table' means; and we put that information together, cause it's just a conventional truth, and we can establish that on Robina's table, there's one cup.

So, 'there are two cups on my table'; it's a thought, do you agree it's a thought? And it's in my mind, isn't it? But if we look to see if it's truthful, it isn't truthful, is it? Now, you'll say to me, 'Robina, there's only one cup on your table, you silly girl.' And I'll go, 'Oopsie-daisy, so you're right after all.' And so now, I will now say, 'I agree there is one cup on my table.' What happened to the thought, 'there are two cups on my table'? What happened to that thought in my mind? What happened to it? You threw it away? What else? It's gone. It's totally disappeared into a puff of smoke. It no longer exists in my mind, do you agree with that? And what caused it to go? The recognition of the truth. Do you agree? That's what you become when you're a Buddha. You now have only virtuous states in your mind. You are now in sync with reality; you see the truth as it is. And that means you have removed all the lies from your mind. That's how you get enlightened. Do you hear my point, people? You know, we don't think of, 'Bob is horrible' as a thought. Of course it is, you can see it. You read the words, 'Bob is horrible.'

'Bob is kind.' They're thoughts, therefore they're opinions.

And what we've got to establish is, are they true, or are they not. We don't think this, 'cause we just think it's our right to have feelings. But the Buddha says, I'm sorry, no, it's a question of the thoughts in your mind being valid thoughts: being thoughts that are in sync with reality. Can you hear me, people? This can make it sound very clinical, but when you look behind it, it's got enormous truth...and this is the basis of all of Buddhist practice -- learning to recognize the voices of ego which are all the neuroses, are fear based, are lies, are distortions, aren't accurate. That's the ones that cause the pain. And therefore, because they're not true, once we see the truth, this will rip those lies out of our mind. That's how you get enlightened. I'm not kidding. Does that make sense? All these nice words, 'We all possess Buddha nature' blah, blah, blah... It means this, you know.

This is why being a Buddhist really is being your own therapist. Knowing your mind deeply and well, studying Buddhist psychology, understanding carefully what is a negative state, what is a positive one...being initially very clinical, very analytical, initially.

But like anything, once you learn it, it becomes experiential, doesn't it? And that's why, you know, a person, let's say, who's said to be a good example of this path -- His Holiness -- he's quite well known so we can use him as an example. And anybody with half a brain can see that he's a happy guy, you know. Holy, happy guy. He's kind, he's funny, he laughs. He doesn't seem to get depressed or angry, although he tries to tell us he does, but you can see maybe it is true that his mind is rid of the neuroses. So, he's in touch with reality, he's seeing things as they are. But it sounds kind of abstract to us, but it's a very meaningful point. There's no longer the veil in front of everything that prevent him from seeing things -- which are what the delusions are. You see things that are ugly, you see things that are beautiful, you crave the beautiful things, you push away the ugly things, you get jealous of these, you get angry about this, depressed about that...they're all liars. They're misconceptions, but they've got this massive emotional component to them, which we know about; but we don't see the other aspect, which is the delusion aspect. When we can see that component of them, we'll really begin to understand how to remove them from our mind. We have to learn to find truth.

So, you know, when I say, 'Bob is mean,' And I say, 'He is. He punched me yesterday.' And you can all agree, you saw him punch me yesterday, let's say. So that's not being disputed, that's not a lie, that's a truth. But what Buddha's saying is, that our responses to when someone does something bad, we over-exaggerate it and we cause the whole person to be seen as ugly, you know? It's just like when we over-exaggerate the goodness of somebody when we're all attached to them. We think they're the ants' pants, you know. But -- we're blinded. We're not seeing them properly. So, this one of wisdom is a very serious point in Buddhism. It's not some -- like, you know -- fancy idea. It's being in touch with what is real.

The Mind Is Like a Mirror

29:25

And Buddha says mind in its nature is clear and pure, which means it has the capacity to reflect -- this is how they talk about mind -- to reflect accurately, like a mirror, to reflect accurately that which exists.

So, right now, you know, if you think of, like, a body of water; if it's absolutely clear and still, it reflects accurately the trees on the bank, doesn't it? But if the water's turbulent the trees look crooked, don't they? And our problem is that. Our minds now -- our capacity for cognition, which is what our mind is -- is constantly seeing things through the mirror, through the reflection of our own turbulent mind. Angry mind sees ugliness, attached mind sees gorgeous divine, over-exaggerating it. All these lies in our mind are like the turbulent mind, not seeing things accurately.

So the mind has the potential to cognize that which exists, and that's not meant to be some fancy, interesting concept. It's a very meaningful statement. And what prevents us from this is the neuroses in the mind, which have this added component of being emotional and fear-based, which cause great suffering to oneself and cause us to harm others.

So, they've got these two components -- one is the emotional component, disturbing, and the other is the delusional component, the liar. So when we can see the delusional component, we're really on track with Buddhist psychology. Do you understand my point, people? Does it make sense? We take all these things as kind of little clichés, that we believe in, you know, but it's not enough. We've got to understand them. We've got to unpack them. Then it gives us some energy and inspiration not to waste time, you know, to do something about it, and to look into our mind every moment. So that's one thing. Any questions about that? Yes, darling?

Thoughts First, Then Emotions

31:16

Q: Emotions, then you're saying, always follow thoughts...

Ven.: Emotions, do emotions always follow thoughts, she's saying, that's an interesting point. It seems to us to almost be the opposite, doesn't it? It seems to be that emotion is the more primordial, that pops up; and then we have to give words to it, isn't it? But actually, the Buddhists say, that when we really have got very good concentration, through single-pointed concentration meditation, and we're able to step back and see our mind at a much deeper level, in other words to hear all the chaos way past -- right now we only hear it when it comes out the mouth; that's when it's full-blown emotion, isn't it? It's affected the body, everything's you know, raging. But that's the tip of the iceberg, actually. Once we see our mind more deeply, and more cautiously and carefully, we're seeing the thought processes way deep down beneath that, that are the basis of that explosion of emotion which is at the tip of the iceberg. We only notice the emotion now 'cause it comes out the mouth. It's way too late. That's why we have to have these cognitive processes of concentration meditation. We can really begin to hear and you get to hear this, you know, basically that anger is a story. Jealousy -- they're just stories, they're opinions and they're fully programmed inside us from a lot of habit, and then they express themselves through the body, and through our mouth and the blood coming and the tears raging and whatever, all the emotional junk through the body, you know. But we don't even notice them and then it's just too late. They're absolutely based in being thoughts first; highly elaborate conceptual constructions. And they're from habit, the emotions there, and that's what we feel. Do you understand what I'm saying? So it really takes time to look deeply inside our minds to see this, actually. Do you understand? All our thoughts, even what we call intuition, even what we call clairvoyance, all these things, they're all coming down to being thoughts.

Like in other words, you know, when you fully develop -- if you begin playing piano for the first time, you really stumble, don't you? There's these weird looking notes of Mozart on the piano, you can hardly read them, your fingers are

like this, you know, there's no spontaneity whatsoever because it's brand new information for you, isn't it? But look how you are when you've perfected that music. It's just full-blown emotion, intuitive and spontaneous. And of course if you saw a person playing piano like that, you would say, 'Oh, music is beyond concepts. It's just intuitive and how marvelous that they play piano so perfectly,' but look what they've learned for years and years and years. And if they were to break down that spontaneous piano playing, they would label every single note that they were playing. They could go backwards and label it in this intellectual way. Do you see what I'm trying to say here? So -- intuition, intuition for example we call this -- it's just knowledge within us. If it's wise intuition, it doesn't always follow -- it's because we've practiced it.

So Mozart just touched pianos at the age of six and he had music in him so deep, he was able to spontaneously do it. A person who's practiced love and compassion spontaneously is loving and compassionate. So, you know, that little example of that little boy who was three, crying with compassion for his mummy taking the lice out of his head -- an example I give. We'll go, 'Wow, that's all so intuitive, he's got compassion intuitively.' Well, excuse me, no, he's practiced it like Mozart one note at a time in the past life, such that this life it's now spontaneous.

Practice Yields Spontaneity

34:36

So even what we call, you know, all this intuitive knowledge is still coming from having thought it and practiced it in the past. It starts with the thoughts, everything begins with thoughts. It comes down to being thoughts. And so of course, when you've got love fully developed and wisdom fully developed, it's spontaneous now because you've practiced it to perfection.

We've practiced anger to perfection; that's how come when I came out of my mummy's womb, I proved that I was angry -- I shouted and kicked and yelled. My mother can tell you it was true -- she didn't have to teach me to be angry. I knew how, because I practiced it. And so when you break it down -- think of the example of a person who's not very angry, who just doesn't have much anger. We know some people like this -- amazingly, I can never believe it, but there are people like this -- and they might just, when something bad happens -- they might just go, 'Oh, drat.' And that's about it. A little kind of slight stirring, you know, and they leave it alone. They're able to go, 'Oh that's cool, it's alright.' That's a person that hasn't got many angry thoughts, so therefore their emotion's not very strong. But if I look at *my* emotion when there's strong anger, you start to hear the screaming and yelling inside your head, you know, you've written a novel in one minute, because the thoughts were really developed. The thoughts were practiced. And so the body just spontaneously responds.

The same with love and compassion; like that little boy -- three years old, crying with compassion for the lice in his head. "Mommy, Mommy, leave them alone, it's their home, don't hurt them." Because he'd practiced it. But it began with thoughts. Everything comes down to thoughts, which is a big surprise to us. So we have to deconstruct the neurotic emotions -- that's why the very first level of

practice in Buddhism is control your body and speech, which is the emotional component, which is the part that does the problem, isn't it? It's the tears and the spitting and the words and the shouting and the punching, which is what harms others. At least you control the body and speech. And slowly, in your own practice, you can begin -- having harnessed that to some extent and now you've got some ability to listen to the thoughts behind the emotions. That's when you really become your own therapist, because then you can start to literally deconstruct the ridiculous stories and change them by replacing them with the correct story. And the more convinced you are about the correct story, that's what annihilates the belief in the wrong story, like the two cups and the one cup, you know. It's like that. It's just these lies are more entrenched.

The Deepest Lie of All

37:26

Of course, the deepest lie of all is the lie that thinks 'I'm inherent.' That thinks I exist from my own side. That thinks there's an inherent nature there. This is the most stupendous, primordial, default mode lie, the hardest one to even see. This is double-dutch trouble when you hear it --with all respect to Dutch people. I shouldn't say it- it's very rude. Poor Dutch people.

So I think when we can really get our head around this, we're really on track with Buddhism, I tell you. We're really on track with how Buddha -- his approach, you know. Really. It's very interesting. Any more questions about this approach? About the mind and thoughts and all that business? Yes, darling, yes?

Our Ideas of What Constitutes Mental Illness

38:20

Q: So, could you speak to the contemporary American assessment of mental illness?

Ven.: Do you want to give some examples...

Q: Well, yeah...

Ven.: Well, I'll use my own example, alright -- of, ah, they call it now bipolar and when I was a kid we called it manic-depression. Alright? Me and my six siblings were all diagnosed as manic-depressive. I think the psychiatrist thought he won the lottery -- an entire family! Now, I'll give an example, here. So, okay -- that's called a mental illness, isn't it? Now, first of all, really, Buddha would have liked the phrase 'mental illness'. So on one side, what Buddha is saying that just having -- I'm going to get back to the bi-polar in a minute -- just having attachment, anger, jealousy, pride -- ordinary, everyday common garden ordinary emotions that we all go, 'Oh, that's normal,' -- his view of mental illness is more radical than ours. We call that normal; he says it's mentally ill. So, his view of mental illness is having any of these at all. Now, in our view, having extreme levels of it, let's say, called bi-polar, that's when we call it mental illness. Up until then we call it normal. Buddha starts, you know, mental illness at the beginning. So that's all -- and I'm not trying to sound clichéd about it now, so for example, if I look at bi-polar, in my own experience of my own mind -- because

it's all just thoughts, you see -- depression is thoughts -- it's up-and-down mind, isn't it? So, the extreme example of bi-polar is when you're absolutely off the charts, you think you can fly in the sky and you're Mozart and you're completely delusional -- that's the extreme, isn't it? And then the other one, you're profoundly depressed and inert and you want to kill yourself. Now, you look at ordinary daily life -- we all recognize that; when everything goes nicely, when attachment gets what it wants, you're on the up mode, aren't you? Everything's all exciting and lovely, 'Wow, far out, life's fantastic, oh, I'm so excited, oh, bloody marvelous, this and that and the moon is shining and the sun is this and the people are lovely and the food is gorgeous, I'm in love...' Everything's up, up, up, mode, isn't it? But we call that, kind of, happiness.

But Buddha calls that hyperventilating attachment. You understand my point? When it's really extreme, it's called bi-polar. And then when the bubble bursts, when the boyfriend doesn't turn up on time, and within one second you turn on that dime and you're now down in the depths of despair and tears and crying... we call it bi-polar; Buddha then calls it just deflated attachment, when it doesn't get what it wants. You've blown up this huge bubble of fantasy, and the bubble bursts, where do you go but crashing down? And that's called despair, aversion, anger, or whatever. I'm not trying to be clichéd, now. That is kind of an ordinary approach to saying what bi-polar is. And we -- just a second -- all are this way; it's just a question of degree. Okay, so things are more complicated; you get people who are truly psychotic and hearing voices and all kinds of things, and I can talk about that in a second as well, but go on...

Q: So, is that really... we've just been brought up in this culture so we're with this clinging attachment...

Ven.: As far as the Four Noble Truths is concerned, it's the day-to-day source of our suffering. This constant default mode, frantic, desperate, panic-stricken need to get what I want every microsecond. And we say that's normal. And Buddha says that's the serious mental illness of attachment.

Q: That is so powerful...

Ven.: Yes. And the second it doesn't get what it wants, that's called anger. What anger is, is the response when attachment doesn't get what it wants. So, if you've got the kind of mind that goes more internal, that becomes despair and depression. Another person becomes violent -- external. One's internal, one's external. They're the same state of mind; they're called *aversion*. And so, that's panic and fear and hopelessness. Truly. When attachment is thwarted. So, you can have a person who, let's say, has got a lot of love and compassion, and wants the world to be a better place. That's called love and compassion. That's called compassion. Perfect. But it comes along with attachment. We now can not have any experience without having it with attachment, until you're highly advanced. It's a question of how big the attachment is; you understand my point? So you might have a lot of compassion and want the world to be a better place; and then you start to see -- but- okay -- so you've got compassion, this is a virtue; but it's mixed with, it's polluted with the frantic need for the world to be the way you

want it to be. Are you seeing my point? The compassion is “may the world be a better place” -- no-one can fault this; but then it’s mixed with attachment. And that’s the part that causes the problem, because as soon as we see the suffering, then aversion arises and we either get panic-stricken and want to go out and kick and scream and yell and demonstrate, or we become despairing and depressed. Are you seeing my point?

So the depression and the despair or the anger are the responses to thwarted attachment, not the response to wanting the world to be a better place; that’s good -- you see Buddha’s psychology’s quite specific -- and this is quite unique to the Buddha -- we have virtuous states of mind; and then we have the non-virtuous. *But they come together.* So one day, you know, in my relationship with you, you know, I do have love, I want you to be happy; and I do have attachment, which means I’m frantically wanting you to make me happy. They come together. So one day I might wake up and I’ve got seventy percent love, and thirty percent attachment; that means I’ll be more kind and more patient to you. But the next day, it’ll be seventy percent attachment and only thirty percent love; so that’s the day I’ll get angry and jealous and resentful and have a fight with you. So they always come together; we never have one hundred percent attachment or one hundred percent love. Only when you realize emptiness will you get a hundred percent love, eventually.

So, we’ve got to be able to distinguish, like this water and milk mixed together, and establish what the virtue is and what the non-virtue is. And so the attachment is the bottom line. It’s the one that is driving us every second. Buddha says this is effectively the main source of our day-to-day suffering. And it’s this constant neediness to get what I want when I want it. So if we get sick, and we get angry; it’s because we have attachment. If we get upset because someone did the wrong thing, it’s because we have attachment. If we get upset when the carrot cake comes instead of the chocolate cake, it’s because we have attachment. If we see the world being horrible and it’s not the way we want it, it’s because we have attachment. *That’s why we suffer.* If we didn’t have attachment, *we would not suffer.* It is complete logic.

Q: What about disease?

Ven.: What about it? What’s the question there? Darling, disease is a result of karma, everything we experience is a result of karma; so having aversion to it and fear of it is because we have attachment to not having disease. You know? Of course. So no fear means you’re accepting it fully, one hundred percent, and you’re greeting it and saying ‘Go for it, I’m content with this.’ That means not much attachment. ‘No fear’ is not much attachment. Accepting it is not much attachment. The more we have aversion -- aversion, panic, anxiety, depression, anger; they are the proof every second that we have attachment, which is a frantic, panic-stricken need to get what I want every second, otherwise I’m having a mental breakdown.

So, if we’ve got past that, and accept the sickness, accept the way the world is, not passively, but ‘this is the way it is’ and then as Buddha says ‘If you can do

something about it, hey, honey, do it. If not, why worry?' It sounds cute, but it's so profound, and that's what brings courage. We're communicating, aren't we? That's right, darling. Yes?

The Bird Needs Two Wings

45:51

Q: I once attended a lecture here in which you used the metaphor of a bird with two wings and wisdom and compassion...

Ven.: This is the wisdom wing -- the nuts and bolts of working on your mind. This is the wisdom wing. And why wisdom? It's cause as long as I'm caught up in anger, attachment and neuroses, I can't see past my own nose; I'm seeing nonsense. That's the, you know, the two cups instead of the one. So, working on your mind gets rid of -- and then you work on the compassion wing -- and the two have to go together.

Q.: That's what I was getting at -- the idea of one without the other...

Ven.: You can't have -- wisdom without compassion, you're just a smarty-pants, you know? And then eventually, even the Buddha's view, you've realized your own potential, but you just haven't got enough empathy with others. Then you sink -- you whisk off into nirvana and you're blissful for a few eons then Buddha's going to come along and tap you on your shoulder and say, "Okay, mate, get back on the Mahayana path and become a Buddha now." You know? And the compassion wing is not enough without wisdom; because it hasn't got a high enough ceiling. There's always an assumption of an 'I' that's being compassionate. But when you've got the wisdom, there is compassion; there is no sense of an 'I'. There is empathy. There is connectedness. That's it, you know, it's true. Yes. Someone else? Yes, darling?

Q: Going over to the compassion wing from the wisdom wing -- so wisdom seems like we're really working on ourselves; and as we do that, we go back to the thought deconstruction and switching to more and more accurate thoughts...

Ven.: That's right...

Q.: ...and so then, the compassion wing, 'cause compassion deals with others, we start interacting with others; it seems like -- I don't know if you've been in this situation where you were working somewhere and the person that was training you was upset because you weren't learning as quick ...

Ven.: That sounds like me perfectly... so impatient...

Q.: How do you ... what's your advice on... you know, since, you know, we can't make somebody think ... or, you know, you start to see the benefits that you yourself feel and you see how maybe with a little tweaking, you know, 'what if I just show him this' -- how do you -- I guess it comes to when you've started working on yourself, how do you, I guess, start generating that

compassion for others without trying to feel like you're that boss... like, 'you're supposed to be learning this quicker'...

Ven.: Okay... I mean, I think the way to say this, for me, is this... You cannot...okay... Compassion is the wish to benefit others, is empathy with others, and is mixed with love which wants them to be happy. But that is not what gives you the ability to be compassionate. Wisdom is what gives you the ability to know how to help the other. So when whether you're teaching them piano, or, you know, how to do something, your ability to know their mind well and to know where they're at, and therefore be patient or skillful or compassionate is coming from *your* work on *your* mind. That's it -- there's no shortcut. The more you know your mind, the more you see yourself, the more you understand your mind and your self, the more you're able to help the other person. You cannot help the other person if you haven't worked on your own. That's really the answer. It's up to our own level of ability to know our minds well. That's it. You don't look very convinced.

Q.: So, you're saying in your own example, when you're training somebody to do something, you said you have difficulty...

Ven.: I mean, yeah, I'm a bit speedy, you know, and if someone's a bit slow, maybe... dear, it could be that way, easily. So then the only -- so that would be -- because the point is, being impatient with somebody means you're not seeing their ability clearly enough. You're just not seeing where they're at. You're wanting them to be where *you* want, rather than where they're at. So, you know - - and that's a tough one... as long as you haven't realized emptiness, it's always going to be this way.

Q.: Well, I guess what I'm kind of alluding to is what kind of practices and I'm not just talking about patience but ...

Patience as a Courageous State of Mind

50:00

Ven.: I think it's patience, no, it is patience. Patience is an amazing state of mind. We tend to think of patience like repressed anger, kind of gritting your teeth and waiting... you know, like passive aggression. That's what we think patience is, like gritting your teeth and waiting for this thing to happen. Patience is actually a really courageous state of mind; because here you've got attachment, okay? One's own need for this person to do the thing well, because you're all excited, and you mean well, as well. Your good side is there too, but it's mixed with this attachment to getting it how you want it. So then -- what patience is, is recognizing 'this is how it is,' and you kind of welcome it. And you truly kind of welcome it, you greet it; there's no resistance of it. Anger is resistance. Impatience is resisting. All the negative emotions are: 'if only, why not, should, shouldn't, how dare,' you know; that's their voice.

Reality, which is wisdom and compassion and patience, is, they're truthful: 'this is how it is'. It's quite profound, actually. Patience is accepting truly, 'this is where it's at' and so therefore you have the wisdom to guide that person exactly

according to their skill, not letting go, with you keeping the tension on moving it forward, not just being passive. Patience is not passivity. Patience is truly proactive, because you're accepting 'this is the reality'. As long as we've got impatience it's meaning we're thinking 'it shouldn't be this way'. The moment we think this, schizophrenic, you know, that's dualistic. Do you see what I'm saying? It's truly recognizing where it's at. This is how it is. And then you've got the wisdom to know how to move it forward.

But all the time it's this disconnect between 'it should be this way', and you're always bumping into something. You see my point? Can you hear what I'm saying a bit? Patience is a very brave state of mind. Very courageous. It's seeing 'this is how it is', not 'it shouldn't be this way'; which is what anger is. Do you see what I'm saying? Are you sure?

Q.: Yes, to an extent...I guess I'm trying to be I guess, more precise on... 'cause talking about when we deconstruct our views into more accurate view, it's like, taking an example of our current, you know, culture we live in, you know, we have this strong culture of materialistic, you know, that 'material will bring us happiness' but then we know the truth is that they won't. But there's this huge force that we're living with in this culture that is like that...and I guess how I see how I'm trying to use my wisdom in conjunction with compassion is how 'what would the Buddha say' or any other practices that would ...enhance...

Ven.: Maybe you should think about it... think about it. Do it later. Someone else? Okay...so then, where were we going... Yes, darling?

'Sem Chen' Defined and Clarified

53:12

Q.: You mentioned *sem chen* meaning 'mind possessors'...

Ven.: Mind possessors -- the term in Tibetan.

Q.: So what about mosquitos, squirrels...

Ven.: Mind possessors.

Q.: They are sentient...

Ven.: They are sentient beings.

Q.: Sometimes does it mean 'feeling'? I've heard 'sentient' means...

Ven.: I know, it's a weird phrase in English, I don't know why we use it, it's such an odd one. I prefer this Tibetan word 'mind possessor', it's a wonderful phrase. Oh, by definition, you know, all those creatures that we see, that we can see are moving around, they've got little eyes, and everything; I mean, they're sentient beings. They've got a mind. Your human mother of two lives ago is now a monkey, you know? Rats, mosquitoes... but the trouble is, it just -- just because something moves, doesn't mean it is a sentient being. And just because you can't

see it doesn't mean it's *not* a sentient being. So there are lots of sentient beings we can't see, like spirits...for example. You understand my point. But we're -- there are lots of creatures, lots of beings, things that move, that look like they have life, but they wouldn't be sentient beings.

Q.: Like what?

Ven.: Well, like a flower...it's got the elements, like a mosquito, its body is made of the four elements; so is a flower. But a mosquito, it's... imbued with a consciousness; which is a particular being. It's a person, yeah, well, Buddha would say that, sure. So, what, people? Anything else? Something else? Yes, where are we?

Q.: What makes the Buddha so sure that flowers, for example, don't have....

Ven.: Well, we have to deduce that if the Buddha's omniscient, sweetheart... let's take this for a moment, can we? A Buddha is a mind, a consciousness, that pervades the universe, that is wherever there is existence without limit, sees exactly that which exists without limit, sees all the minds of every living being -- all their pasts, all their future, perfectly; has infinite empathy for every single one, and is able to manifest their mind in a trillion forms throughout a trillion universes for a trillion eons for the sake of sentient beings. So, I think, if there is such a mind, they probably know what they're talking about.

So, you see my point, though, darling. What you have to deduce is, you don't just believe it; we take this as a thing of the moment, we run with it as our hypothesis until you can discover it's not true. Until you've got clairvoyance and you can see that a flower's not a sentient being. All I can tell you is what Buddha says right now -- it's beyond my pay grade; I don't know 'cause I'm not clairvoyant. You see my point? So, one takes it as a hypothesis. But be very spacious with it. You know, keep an open mind that you never know what is a flower might be a sentient being; and when you get to the point of being clairvoyant you can finally prove it. Do you see what I'm saying? Yeah. Okay.

So, um... there's something else I wanted to talk about; I forget. Compassion; and all these are leading to it, in a way. So this is the point...so why am I sitting forward like this, look at me... Let me sit back again. Okay.

Back to the Root Delusion

55:50

So, these two really do go totally together...the more we think about them, the more we can't separate them. Speaking about it like this, for example, you could say -- when you're omniscient -- this is the potential for all minds; it sounds really insane to us, but this is what Buddha's saying -- one of the key faults that's no longer there is this sense of subject/object, this they say, this sense of separateness. So try and hear this not in a cosmic way... so when you -- so right now, we go to the other end of the spectrum, which is us in the middle of samsara with ego and neuroses and God knows what... there's a bunch of separate Is, isn't there? There's my I and your I; we divide the Is into friends,

enemies and strangers and I'm prepared to like those Is over there as long as they agree with me, you know? I don't like that lot there 'cause they don't agree with me and I couldn't care less about 99.95% of them cause they're the strangers who neither harm nor help my I.

So we're all divided into these millions of Is and we assume this is the normal thing and so what's happening is, in the mind, totally polluted by these delusions, by these neurotic states -- the root one being ego-grasping, which is the root of the problem, which truly believes in a self-existent, real, findable, pointable, separate, independent *me*, which then has attachment to get what it wants, aversion when it doesn't, jealousy and all the rest and pride and arrogance and low self-esteem. These are all the outcroppings of this root delusion, and this is what runs these separate Is, so then, fortunately, aren't we, as humans -- we have a little bit extra added there. We've got some love and some compassion, and some kindness and some patience, if we're lucky. And look how hard it is to exercise them, as soon as "I" doesn't get what it wants; that's what runs the show right now, even with nice people.

So what we're trying to do -- this is the wisdom wing part of it -- and the whole path is a seamless, constant moving forward; the first stages of it are called the wisdom wing, the rest of the stages of it are called the compassion wing. But you can't separate them. So all the first stages are the main work of working on getting inside this ridiculous "I"; learning to look at all the nonsense, all the misconceptions, all the lies and all the delusions and how it breaks *my* heart. How this causes *my* suffering. You've got to break your heart for *yourself* first, and want to get the hell out of this nonsense.

So as you keep lessening attachment to what *you* want, guess what you're doing? You know -- when I want a chocolate cake and he wants something else and we're together; the moment he wants something else, that's giving me an opportunity, isn't it, to not follow what *I* want. So as soon as I try not to follow what I want, and I exercise kindness, I'm weakening my attachment and I'm growing the compassion. So it's sometimes by working on your own neuroses, it helps you become more compassionate. And every time you work on the compassion side, it helps you get rid of your own neuroses. So you can see, it's just a question of where you're working. Sometimes on yourself, something to the other. But they both come down to the same thing. You're working on lessening the neuroses, which causes you pain, causes you to harm others, and that separates you from others. So as you keep progressing -- you get rid of attachment and anger and pride, you get renunciation, you keep moving, you realize emptiness, you've cut the root... you're already got a sense of incredible connectedness with others, but you keep perfecting that, with more compassion, more connectedness, more wisdom, more blah blah, you know, until there's nothing left to purify... one vast limitless consciousness that's now completely in sync with all other beings, sees them as they are, and *only* wants to benefit them, and has the power to do so.

The Paradigm Shift- Exchanging Self For Others
1:00:09

So it's just a psychological progression, that's all. Are you with me, people? So of course, in all the practices, you know, it's all laid out as little techniques -- first these and then these; grade one, grade two, junior school, then high school...of course, you get very involved in where you're at, you know, oh, I'm in junior school, wow, wow, wow. But you know, it's an ongoing, gradual, deconstructing of the nonsense and a growing of the goodness, until eventually you've perfected the goodness and rid the badness, you know? It's a psychological procedure. That's it. Buddha's deal is the mind. That's his expertise. So, you know, all the compassion techniques are all laid out -- this marvelous set of eleven techniques that the Tibetans have been practicing for a thousand years, and they've found -- coming from Shantideva, in the eight century, the great bodhisattva, you know, these marvelous techniques -- all rooted in this, you know, the second part of them rooted in this extraordinary, outrageous psychology called 'Exchanging Self For Others'; this radical, this paradigm shift one makes where literally eventually others become more important than self.

Now, again, in our materialist world this is an inconceivable idea -- an insane idea. When I first heard these teachings on bodhicitta I thought, "These people -- how can they say this stuff with a straight face?" I couldn't believe it, you know. Now I say it with a straight face. At least I can see the logic of it now. It's outrageous...when you see His Holiness, when you see these lamas, these ones, let's say, these certain ones, I know Lama Zopa... when he had his stroke recently -- what you suddenly saw was not suffering, but this -- in my words -- just this unbelievable kind of leap in the most outrageous levels of compassion and empathy with others. It's just like dripping off him, you know? He was even cracking jokes -- and there he is, all puffed up and swollen, couldn't walk, had a stroke, his words like a drunken sailor all out of his mouth, I can't tell you...but he was like overwhelmed by compassion already, you know, like this suffering of his own -- just like radical 'more compassion'. I could not believe what I was seeing. He was cracking these ridiculous jokes with this slurring speech, you know. Like spilling his medicine, laughing. The Catholic nuns in the hospital couldn't believe it, you know. I mean, the complete opposite -- we'd be in panic and fear and drama, anxiety, hysterical, self-centered... from the first second, I swear to you, he was so hilarious... I couldn't believe it, you know?

So, 'Exchanging Self For Others' -- outrageous, and you can see the proof of it. You hear the stories of these -- and that's why it's so inspiring -- to read the stories of all these great masters, these great yogis, you know, if we're going to be inspired, if we're going to beat our little hearts, you know, get moved by all these things. We know it's possible. I can do it, too, you know.

So the first step in the development of compassion in these series of eleven techniques is already outrageous -- and it's the *first* one, and it's called Equanimity. Already, if we can accomplish this every day, it's astonishing, you know. Outrageous. And equanimity is -- and all these states of mind, they're quite precise, you know. You get them a little bit mixed up, but it's a very precise state of mind. It's such that when we've got it, what it is is a heartfelt recognition that enemy, friend and stranger are equal. Now, they're equal from many points of view. They've got noses, probably; they've got ears and they get

constipation. That's not the point. They're equal in particular from the point of view they equally want to be happy.

Now, we'll go, "Yeah, all right, I'm happy. My mother wants to be happy -- I love my mum -- but, George Bush -- or whoever the latest political enemy is -- what do you mean he wants to be happy?" We don't even want to think that. But all we've got to do here is try to see the logic. It's logical if you do your analysis, do your market research, you're going to prove indisputably this is the fact: everybody wants to be happy. But of course, you've got to get past your aversion for the enemy, whom you can't stand, to even think it's possible that they're human, that they want to be happy. We don't even want them *to* be happy -- and that's the point. Love comes a few steps later, and love is defined as 'may you be happy'. But if you want people to be happy -- and Buddha says, if you want to have love for everybody, the first step is you've got to recognize that they want to be happy -- that's the basis for wanting them to be happy. Are you seeing my point? So this first step is already profound -- a recognition -- if you step out of the equation, which is what you have to do with equanimity -- right now, everybody in the universe is seen through the -- seen through my perspective. Those who do what I want are called friends. Those who don't do what I want are called enemies. And do you know what? The rest, 99.99% who neither harm me nor help me, we could not care less. They could all drop dead. We do not care. They're called strangers.

So we see the entire universe through our own eyes. It's quite embarrassing, how self-centered we are. This is all the world does. Giraffes do it, dogs do it, ants do it, monkeys do it...it's just the way the world is. Friend, enemy, stranger; based on attachment, aversion and ignorance, the three main delusions. So, what we've got to do is start breaking this nonsense down, you know. And this first step, this equanimity, is you start stepping back out of the equation. You start to actually, actually be mature enough to actually consider that actually because a person does what you want that doesn't mean that they're an extension of you, dear -- which is what we think -- attachment thinks they're *mine*, they belong to *me* -- they're a separate person, okay? Put 'em out there. Then you have an enemy and you have the stranger. Pretend you don't know them, look back, see them separately. They've got nothing to do with you, actually. But how rude we are -- we define them in our own terms. This is what the world does -- we think it's normal. So we've got to step back and realize they're equal -- they all want to be happy. And how do you prove it? In many ways, you know -- you analyze. First you analyze how ridiculous it is that we put these three labels. One way to prove how ridiculous this is, is how a person who's your friend was your enemy once. Suddenly, one day you fell in love with him -- you couldn't believe it. Now, he's the most divine person you've ever seen in your whole life! When he was totally a stranger, if he'd dropped dead last week, you couldn't care less. Now that you've known him for two months and you're in love with him, it'd be devastating now if he died. Just 'cause your view has changed, you know? There's no logic to it, we can see... it's shocking to us.

And so then you have to ask people -- it's an easy way to prove it; you ask your friends, 'do you want to be happy?' 'Oh, yeah!' You ask George Bush, he'll say

'yes' too. And the stranger as well. So we're trying to prove here that they are equal in their wish to be happy. And it is true. You check -- for me, a great example is this to use to break down ego's view: you think of yourself right here, one person. And now you think, you have got some people who adore you, they get starry-eyed when they look at you. Some people who hate you -- daggers -- and some people who couldn't care less. We all know that. Right? So, you know yourself you are the same, whether you're seen as a friend, an enemy, or a stranger. You want to be happy every minute. Just 'cause someone doesn't like you, that's got nothing to do with it. Of course you want to be happy! So, we're trying to prove *this* point with Equanimity. You don't try to make them happy yet... we don't even try to want them to be happy yet, we're going gradually, we're going incrementally, psychologically speaking. It's already very profound. Step out of the equation.

Now, this doesn't mean you've got to be like flat lining, kind of being indifferent... 'Oh well, might as well go and live with my enemy then, what the hell... they're all the same.' That's not the point. You've got karma with your friend; go right back home and live with your boyfriend, that's cool. Maybe you even avoid the enemy, because you can't cope with it -- that's fine, recognize your own faults. And you might never see that stranger again. But in your mind you know they are the same from the point of view of wanting to be happy. This is a profound point, and it's just the first one. So it really does some kind of calming of the mind. You still have your beautiful boyfriend, that's cool... 'may you be happy, sweetheart' -- which is love. So we do have love, for the friend. But as Lama Zopa says, it's unstable. Or as we would say, it's got strings attached. 'Of course I want you to be happy, as long as you make me happy, baby.' Look what happens when, you know -- I always like this example: If I'm watching Fred, you know, I'm in love with Fred -- while there's Fred beaming at me, and I'm just so blissed out 'cause I know Fred's happy 'cause I'm making him happy -- and I love to see him happy when I'm making him happy -- but one day I come home and it dawns on me that Fred's happy 'cause now *she* makes him happy -- oh, my God! I want to rip that smile off his face! I wish he would suffer, because I am no longer the source of his happiness. So it shows -- I mean it just shows nakedly the depth of our pain, you know, the depth of ego's voices, which we've all got. Frantic. I-based. Frantic. Like a little vampire in there. Desperate. Frantic every second to get what it wants. We can see -- it's the most intense suffering. So we keep doing these techniques to gradually move our minds from one step into the next step, the next step, the next step, and eventually we get to the one of *tonglen*. You know, *tonglen*: giving/taking: this seeming simple little practice but outrageous, over-the-top- practice where you actually imagine in meditation, in daily life, whenever you like, offering others -- taking upon yourself their suffering and giving them your happiness.

Tonglen

1:09:56

Now, this is truly insane to us, and we can really hear this wrongly, so it's really important to get this right. First of all, when you do the breathing meditation and breathing in the suffering of the person, you know, you breathe in the suffering like they've got a headache; the aim is not to get a headache, so please do not

misunderstand. When you do *tonglen* meditation, you're not breathing in and saying, 'Oh, I'm getting a headache, I'm getting a headache, I'm getting a headache.' Not like that. What you're trying to do, as a technique to help smash *your* self-cherishing -- nothing to do with the other person if you think about it -- you're merely using this person in front of you, visualizing their suffering -- you're using it as a catalyst to help *you* smash *your* self-cherishing and have the courage to cultivate genuine love and compassion. So what you're doing, when you're imagining breathing in a headache, you're imagining as you're breathing it in and taking the headache off them, and you're so delighted that they no longer have a headache. That's what you should be feeling, not 'Oh, I've got a headache.'

So what it is, is this, you know: there's love and there's compassion. They're the essence of this entire path, of the compassion wing. Love is, 'may you be happy', a delight in others happiness. Compassion is, 'may you not suffer' - empathy with their pain. That's bare-bones love and compassion. Now, a hinayana arhant has this. The person who does just the wisdom wing has this. No question. How could you not? If you removed the grosser levels of all the delusions and ego, how could you not be full of love and compassion? Of course you are. That's what's left.

When you've de-polluted the water, all you've got in the water is pure clear water.

When you've de-polluted the mind -- the first stages -- all you've got is wisdom, love, compassion and joy. Of course you have -- what else? So there's infinite love and compassion in the mind of the person who's accomplished the wisdom wing, the hinayana arhant, the "Foe Destroyer". They've destroyed the enemy of the delusions. But, because for countless lives, their motivating force has been getting out of samsara, liberation, their own liberation -- 'I must get out of samsara. I must get out of samsara.' That's what's motivating them from life after life. So when you've achieved that nirvana in that life and you're completely in bliss, full of love and compassion for every being -- how could you not be? But when you die, your motivation then overrides your bliss, overrides your love and compassion and you zap into bliss of your own, for a few eons, like I said before. Then Buddha comes along and taps you on the shoulder. Whereas if you're on the Mahayana path, your motivation is not only, 'I must get out of samsara' -- you must want to get out of samsara -- but you've added on to this the compassion component, the bodhicitta: 'I must continue to never give up working on my mind so I can then be qualified to benefit sentient beings.' That's bodhicitta.

So you get your own liberation on the way. So it's a more extensive motivation. So, you've gone through the same stages as the person on the other path, the same path; you get to the point where you've rid your mind of the main stages of delusion, you've accomplished the wisdom wing to some extent, but when *you* die, because your motivation has been this extra compassion, this *great* compassion -- compassion is, 'may you not suffer'; *great compassion* is, 'what can I do to take it away?' -- the responsibility of the bodhisattva. As His Holiness calls it, he used to call it 'universal responsibility'. That's the unique characteristic of

the compassion of the bodhisattva. So you've got to the same level as the wisdom guy, but you've got this added compassion -- 'it's my job'. So when you come to die, your motivation of 'I must continue to benefit others' overrides the bliss, and you will keep being reborn, even though you don't need to be.

So this compassion of the bodhisattva is a unique one, it's the one of *great compassion*, 'it's my job, it's my job -- if I don't do it, who will?' That's the one we have to cultivate. It's the courageous view of the bodhisattva. That's what we have to have. We constantly cultivate that one. But then when you do tonglen, you're adding an even extra little bit of cream on the top. First you're going, 'Oh my God, look at this suffering. This person's got a headache, it's unbearable'. But then you go, 'What can I do to take it away?' And then you go, 'You know what? I can take it. Give it to me. Rather me than you.' That's tonglen. 'Rather me than you.' Like, mothers say this about their children. One of my friends in prison, a maniac Mexican gangster -- he says, 'I see my people,' -- he's in prison for life -- 'I see my people' -- these young, you know, 15 year old boys coming into life sentences and things -- and his heart breaks, he says. And then he said, 'I wish I could take it upon myself.' Let them go, you know. That's unbelievable. That's what mothers and parents have for their children. 'Rather me than you.' That's what you're doing in tonglen, you're saying. It's love, it's compassion, it's great compassion. What can I do to take it away? Even more than that, 'You know what? 'Give it to me, I can take it.'

So this is this extra level of incredible, over-the-top compassion which is this incredible courage. And you're using this to smash your own self-cherishing. The other person sticks with their headache. They stay with their headache. That's not the point here. You're using them to cultivate this massive sense of responsibility, this enormous sense of empathy with this other person. And so as you're doing this practice, what you're doing is perfecting yourself. And then when the time comes, you could easily, if you wished, take on the suffering. You'd give your life for others. Not a problem, because you've perfected this, you know, you've done tonglen, you've exchanged self for others. Yes?

Q: So, how, when you're practicing tonglen, how can you make sure that you are doing it with wisdom and taking on the suffering in the right way so that you're not...

Ven.: You're not taking on the suffering. You're not taking on the suffering, that's my point. *You're not taking on the suffering*. You're not getting a headache. You're not getting ill. You're not getting sick. You're imagining that if you could, you happily would, and as you're doing this, you're not thinking about yourself, you're looking and saying, 'Oh, this person's free of suffering. I'm so glad.' I remember -- and this is a really important point. You're so courageous, you couldn't care! 'Bring it on!' You're not worried. You're not worried about it. If you're worried, forget it. You don't even do it, you know. 'Oh, I might get a headache. I better be careful. You've got to be kind of insanely courageous. I remember seeing a movie program -- a documentary -- years ago about mothers and the insane things mothers would do to save their children. Like mothers picking up cars and jumping into rivers and running -- one of them -- running

into a burning fire. Now listen to my point. That mother, at that moment, what is in her mind? One million percent, what is in her mind when she runs into that fire? What's in her mind?

Q: Her child.

Ven.: Only her child. One hundred percent, right? If she started thinking, 'Oh, I'm running into a fire...I hope I don't get burnt,' she will stop dead. She will not run into the fire. So, you've got to pretend that you're only thinking of the other one. And you know, it's like she didn't care. All she thought about was getting her kid. She didn't care if she was going to get burnt. Are you hearing my point? It's like a really courageous view. Don't worry, you won't get a headache. It's cultivating this huge wish to -- and in the beginning, of course, like everything else, you fake it 'til you make it -- this huge wish that if I could, I would take it upon myself. I would rather suffer than them. That's what tonglen is. It's a courageous attitude, you know. You try to just think the right thoughts while you're doing it. And don't try to get a big fat *feeling*; it mightn't come, you know. It doesn't matter. The thought of even attempting to do it is pretty stunning. I mean even just one kind thought, Lama Zopa says, is so outrageous in this crazy world. So, to actually imagine you're pretending to take on someone else's suffering is pretty intense, pretty amazing, pretty purifying for you, and it makes you courageous. Do you understand?

Q: So the focus is really on courage....

Ven.: It's courageously thinking if I could, I would take upon myself this headache. And so what compassion is -- the mother was thinking of the child, she wasn't thinking of herself. Do you hear my point? So, when you're doing tonglen, you're not thinking of yourself, 'I'm getting a headache, I'm getting a headache...' you're thinking of the person, you're seeing them freeing themselves of a headache, and you're happily going, 'Great! Smash my self-cherishing.' And then you breathe out all your happiness and delight in seeing them be happy. That's what a mother does -- they're happy to see their child eating -- they'd rather not eat. They're not thinking, 'Oh I'm starving,' 'cause that's self-centeredness. You've got to pretend you're doing it. That's all. Are you seeing my point?

Q: Yeah... I don't think I've ever really understood....

Ven.: Do you understand it a bit better now?

Q: I think so, yeah.

Ven.: All you're doing -- you see, listen to me -- this is one of our biggest mistakes we make in the West -- when we think of all these compassion meditations, we think we're trying to force a *nice feeling*. So we get this little feeling one day, and tears come, we'll go, 'Oh, I had such a nice meditation.' That's not the point here. It's called *mind training*. You're simply sowing the seeds every day. You're practicing *thinking differently*. In the beginning it's just

boring thoughts, you're just doing it. But eventually, guess what? You'll perfect it, and you will genuinely have compassion for others, eventually. That's the point of it. The point isn't to get a good gooey feeling. It's just simply training your mind. It's like driving on the back streets so you can get on the freeway and really drive. You're training yourself. You're training. We've got to really realize this. You just do it. You think it through. Much of it's to do with logical thoughts. You see my point? You just imagine doing it. Breathing in, I'm smashing my self-cherishing. Breathing out, oh I'm so happy to give this person all things. I'm so happy to see them smiling. Breathing in their suffering, I'm so glad they're free of suffering. In the beginning, there's nothing much there. Don't worry about it. But just to think it -- you can't describe how astonishing that is, 'cause you're sowing those seeds, sweetheart. And everything exists on the tip of the wish. You build this up every day -- people do years and years of meditation on this until eventually they actually accomplish genuine love and compassion. They truly do exchange themselves for others from then on. You've got to start somewhere. It's just training the mind; it's called 'lojong' -- mind training. It's a technique, learning a technique, learning how to think it. Don't wait for feelings; feelings will come eventually. Do you see what I'm saying? Okay. We're not used to this way of thinking in our culture.

Q: I guess I've always kind of tried maybe...I was always trying, looking for the feeling...

Ven.: Yes...you can't force it...

Q: Maybe it's just my ego....

Ven.: No, that's how we think it is...no, it's okay, it's alright. No, no, no, stop. That's just what we think we're supposed to do. Give it time, you know. It's like trying to get feeling when you start to play piano and you're doing C Major scales... you're just not qualified yet. You've got to keep practicing the technique until eventually it becomes more spontaneous, then some feeling will come -- the same with these techniques. Just learn the technique properly. That's all. And remember every thought you have is a karmic seed. How marvelous! Do you understand what I'm saying? Are you building it up? Does it make sense now? Yes?

Q: Could you elaborate on the happiness that you're giving back to that person?

Ven.: You're just breathing out...You're breathing in -- the "tong" is giving and the "len" is taking, so you're doing the "len" first, you know. You visualize this person with a headache, your good friend. When you breathe in, you imagine breathing in this yucky smoke, and you're literally peeling off their headache and coming into you, it goes -- and then, you visualize-one way you take a little, like a little rock at your heart, which is your self-cherishing, and you breathe in and you kind of feel it chips away at your self-cherishing. And then you breathe out. You imagine giving your good things to this person and seeing them be happy. In other words you're taking responsibility to make them happy, you're taking responsibility to take away their suffering, not just, 'I hope they are that.'

It's an expression of great compassion and great love. But you can do this anywhere; you can go down the street, you can see a homeless person...

You know, we daydream all the time, but we're always the center play in all our daydreams, aren't we? So we're daydreaming about giving something, or someone giving it to us...we never daydream about giving something to a boring old beggar. Who cares? If it's our lover, yeah, we see them all excited and they thank us and we get excited. But you know, we're using the same skill we use for ourselves all day. So, you see the homeless person. You're daydreaming tonglen meditation. You visualize yourself going over there, you visualize giving him your car keys and giving him your address and taking your clothes off and taking their clothes off and sitting down and sending him off to your home! That's tonglen, honey. It's an outrageous meditation to do. And don't underestimate it -- maybe you're not ready to do that yet, but to just think it sincerely is beyond incredible. Do you understand? It's beyond unbelievable. That's what tonglen is. Every day you see people in the street suffering. 'May I have their headache.' You see a person who's limping, a person who's very ill. Just have the thought. 'I'd rather be ill. I'd rather them be happy.' That's tonglen, honey. It's stunning thinking! Do you understand my point? You don't have to do it with your breath. Just think it. It's an incredible thought. It's so astonishing!

Giving is the Cause of Receiving

1:23:00

Q: There's a -- I mean there's almost a conditioned...superstition of fear... a superstitious fear that that kind of thought will eventually manifest... and I understand the wisdom, yes, but, you know, 'may I be a homeless person', you know, in our culture there's a superstitious fear....

Ven.: Of course, because in our culture we're so self centered... Yeah, but we all know, it's also not true -- but we know it's not true, it's also not true, we do this all the time -- you know, you give me the cake instead of you taking the cake. You're not panicking at that moment, that you're going to not get cake anymore, you're just know you're being generous. So, I mean, there's no fear, if you really see the meaning of generosity, when your heart is reaching out with sincerity, you see a person ill, 'Oh my God -- this person, I wish they were happy...you know, I'd rather be sick'. So, that's not self-centered -- it's only when it's self-centered, when it's I-based, when it's neurotic, is it going to then cause problems; but if it's genuinely other-based, it's the most -- it's like an atomic bomb on ego, it's the very opposite. *Giving* is the cause of *receiving*, so then you'd be right never to give because you'd think you'd have nothing left -- that's what people *do*. But giving is *the* cause of receiving. Because when it's a genuinely generous or loving thought, it smashes the self-centeredness, it smashes the fear and it brings the exact opposite of fear; it brings all the other stuff.

The Appropriateness of the Practice – 'You have to be a Suitable Vessel'

1:24:32

So we do it to our ability; every now and again, just walking down the street. Don't worry about watching -- doing the meditation. Just think it...it's just thoughts, you know, it's thoughts. To have the thought when you see a person

who's homeless -- 'I wish they could have my house and be happy and I be homeless instead of them.' But you see -- okay. One of our problems -- if we're still stuck, if we haven't -- you know, Pabongka Rinpoche said one time to do this type of work -- inner work, as we would call I -t- you've got to be a 'suitable vessel'. Meaning if you haven't done much of the wisdom wing, you're really still pretty neurotic, and a bit of a victim, a lot of people get their victim kicks out of looking -- acting like they're doing things for others. I'm not trying to be mean, now. But the 'good girls' of the world -- I know, I'm a 'bad girl' so I'd always, you know, I didn't -- but, we've all got attachment, right, so I would be angry out of my attachment but another person who wants to be a good girl is *kind* out of their attachment. Now, better than being angry out of attachment, at least you're doing something...but it's hard to -- you know, when a person's all over you like a rash? It's not really a kindness, it's their way of getting what they need. It's kind of -- it's being a victim. And then you get blamed for everything, and you get dumped upon, 'cause you're weak, you know. That isn't necessarily skillful...

So, when you're more in that mode of being a victim, you easily can imagine yourself taking on suffering and you do that in your daily life but you wonder why people abuse you, 'cause it's actually coming from ego. So we've really got to be a suitable vessel. Do you understand what I'm saying, people? We got to be very skillful in what we need to learn to do and how we have to do it, you know? If you're not qualified, don't do *tonglen*. If it's misunderstood, or you're fearful, or you think, 'Oh, people will love me if I do it,' that's just ego-rubbish; don't do it. It's pretty -- it's a non-victim who can do it...it's a fearless thing to do. So we do it according to our capacity. We know where we're at on the path. What else, people?

So let's talk about -- I want to say some more -- it's 8:30, 8:40, it's getting on here...So then, you culminate in bodhicitta -- I leapt through most of the eleven points -- the first one and the last bit, and now you've got bodhicitta. And what bodhicitta is, is like, it's the result, it's the culmination of this great love and great compassion. It's the culmination of *tonglen*. *Tonglen* is, you know, you see, you've got this great compassion, you see the suffering of others. *It is unbearable*. And then because you've got this great compassion, you think, 'What can I do to take it away?' But then you say, 'I'm not qualified yet.' So then you don't go kill yourself out of despair, you then say -- and that's bodhicitta- 'I must never give up working on myself to become a Buddha, because then I will be qualified.' And it gives you this courage. That's why the bodhisattva's not called for nothing, you know, 'bodhisattva warriors'. You have this huge courage to never give up.

Thinking Long Term- Persevering Until You're Qualified to Truly Benefit Others 1:27:11

It's a bit -- it's a simple analogy for me, I always think of the one of if you go up to Nepal, you go up to the mountains, lots of people have cataracts, okay? So you go there and you see these people with cataracts and you have compassion -- 'Oh my God, this suffering is unbearable.' So then you think, 'What can I do to help them?' And then you think, 'But I'm not a surgeon, I can't do anything.' And this

is where you've got to have wisdom. Can you imagine how stupid you are -- 'Oh these poor people, their cataracts' and you get a scalpel and run and try and cut their cataracts and you cut their eye out instead. Well, thank you for leaving their cataracts alone! You've got to have wisdom. So, you've got to say -- you've got to have the compassion -- 'this is unbearable, what can I do about it,' you say.

Then you realize, 'I'm not a surgeon yet. What can I do?' So what do you do? You don't despair, you go back home to Melbourne, you go to university, you study for seven years, becoming a surgeon. Now, this is what bodhicitta means: what motivates you every time you get up? You remember all the people in Nepal waiting for you. That propels you to have your breakfast. That propels you to get on the bus. That propels you to go to class. You're talking to your friends and you're chatting away -- you're not going on about these people, but in the back of your mind, like a mother for her children, you know they're waiting for you. You know you must get up every day and you must keep being a surgeon. That's what bodhicitta is. It keeps making you do whatever you do every day to become a Buddha, never giving up and always having in the back of your mind these suffering sentient beings. Every thought you have, every breath you have is to help you become a surgeon, so then you're qualified; now you can go and help their cataracts, because every day you don't do it, they're suffering. That's the level -- that's what bodhicitta is -- these insane people like His Holiness and Lama Zopa -- this insane level -- it's almost impossible to imagine that level. Unbearable compassion, as Rinpoche says. That's what they have. So we can just hear it, technically. It's just thinking, you know. One step at a time. It gives you courage. And then you will never give up. As His Holiness says, "Bodhisattvas think in terms of eons." You never despair. Because if you despair, you drag everybody else down with you. How selfish of you! You've got to have courage.

Joyful Effort

1:29:28

Now, this gets us to the six perfections of the bodhisattva, and I want to talk about the fourth one, the most important. The first four are where you perfect the compassion wing- generosity, morality, patience and this fourth one- enthusiasm, joyful effort, as they call it. The last two are where you perfect the wisdom wing -- concentration and wisdom, meditation and emptiness. The bodhisattva's doing these two, you know. So, the fourth one is the most important, so let's look at it. It sounds cute -- enthusiasm -- it sounds hilarious, you know, hyperventilating people -- my God. Joyful effort sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? But let's look at it in the context of the opposite, it's really sobering. You listen, and you'll recognize it perfectly. The opposite is called, surprisingly, laziness. Let's look at what they mean by laziness. There's three levels, okay? And we will recognize every one. The first one is, 'Oh, can't be bothered. Too much effort.' Now, even we just think of ordinary, worldly activities, this is the grossest of gross worst enemies. Because we are completely addicted to our comfort zone. We are addicted to having what we want when we want, how we want -- a nice meal, a nice this, a bit of a break, some pleasant times, sit back and watch the telly, be comfortable, oh, it's too much effort. We don't achieve anything in our lives because it's too much effort. We can't be bothered changing

the status quo, you know. 'Oh, I can't be bothered. Too much effort.' That's the grossest laziness of all. Here, of course, we're talking spiritual path, persevering; but here we're talking even ordinary life.

The next one is real sneaky. It's called procrastination. 'Oh, I'll do it later.' I'm too busy, we will say. And we believe our own propaganda. And what is the thing you procrastinate doing? The things that you can't be bothered doing, that takes too much effort. But you lie to yourself, 'Oh, I'm too busy,' you know, I mean, it's just not true. We prioritize. And we can see, our practice goes the way of, you know, everything else. First thing in the morning, you get all excited, you do your practice, and one morning, 'Oh, I've got to get to work. I'll do it later. I'll do it later.' You do this three or four thoughts, and you've skipped over, and you've come to this conclusion, you say it like it's virtue, oh I'm too busy, I've got to get the kids to school, oh I'm too busy, I'll do it later, oh I'm too busy, I've got to get breakfast. Well, you don't say that about taking your rollers out of your head before you get in the car, you don't say that about putting all your clothes on and go in your nightie still, to work. No -- 'Oh, I'm too busy, I can't put my clothes on, you know, I've got to do my practice... I'm too busy, I can't put my lipstick on.' No. Rubbish! We prioritize. If you're being honest with yourself, you don't prioritize your practice, because you haven't thought about the benefits of it. That's why. And it takes effort to do this every day. Effort is what we don't want to do, people. This is the point.

The third one; the worst. 'Not possible.' We don't even notice we do this, because we believe it is the absolute truth. You suggest something to somebody. 'Well, why don't we do this.' Already we say, 'Oh, that's not possible. No, I can't, that's not possible. No, I can't do that.' We don't say it like a bit nervous, we just say it as the truth. We've skipped over about five points, and just because it's just impossible; doesn't seem like it's possible that we can do this; 'I can't see it's possible,' we think. That's the worst laziness of all. The worst one. 'I can't do it.' And it sounds like humility. It's just a lie. I always use this one example; I remember reading years ago when I was in California, in Silicon Valley there were these three young guys, or four young guys, seventeen or eighteen, doing this little start-up, you know, some tech company. And they were getting ready for their IPO, you know, on the stock exchange, and the coming in of millions of dollars for their project. Now, you think about it carefully. Absolutely with certainty -- oh, that's right, I heard they worked for like nine months, eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. Now, don't tell me they didn't wake up completely exhausted one morning. All they wanted to do was go back to sleep. But what did they do? They remembered their goal and they leapt out of bed. And don't tell me they would rather not have put it off, because they wanted to sit back and watch telly with their girlfriend, or something. All they had to do was remember their goal and they did not procrastinate. And the third one -- for sure they would have had agonies of doubt; this is not possible, this big goal you've had for years, you can't even imagine achieving it. We all have this. 'No, it's not possible. This is impossible.' I bet they thought this countless times. But what did they do? They persevered. They never gave up. And guess what? They got the result.

So I'm just talking in our ordinary lives; forget spiritual practice. We are our own worst enemies. And we believe our propaganda. I was talking recently about this, to somebody. And I learned so much of this from working on the prison project. To have the courage to think -- even the first step is, you know, when someone might say, 'Oh, let's go off and do a retreat for a month in something-or-other', you know, the first thing we'll say is, 'Not possible'. We'll just say it's not possible, because we've leapt through the several thoughts and we go straight to 'it's not possible.' But why not say, 'What a good idea. Let's think about it.' Even opening the door to the possibility -- it's not going to cost you a penny. It doesn't mean you're going to do it yet. You've got to open the door to the possibility first and then you see if it's possible. But you've first got to think it's possible. You've first got to want it. You've first got to want it.

This takes training. This is the third level, and this is the greatest one of all that we need and this is the source of all success. It brings incredible confidence, incredible perseverance. Incredible joyful effort. And then, eventually, like anything, it's effortless. This is the most important of the four, I tell you. They say you cannot get in life without this. You can't achieve anything without this -- the first one, going past our own comfort zone; the second one, don't lie to yourself and say you're too busy; it's just not true, you have to prioritize. And the third one: never say you can't. Wrong, completely wrong. We keep ourselves stuck, you know. This is really the most important, and they say it's the most important. And it makes sense. And you've got to have courage.

So then, as all the lamas say, when you know the benefits of something, then you will do it. So these guys, they had like a beacon guiding them: their vision of their IPO. And every time they wanted to stay asleep, they remembered it and leapt out of bed. Every time they wanted to put it off, they stopped putting it off and they did it. Every time they panicked and said we can't do it, they remembered it and they did it. You've got to keep having this vision of your potential right there, whether it's simply going on a retreat, getting rid of your delusions, doing your practice, whatever it might be. Such an important one, I tell you, you know. Whether you're doing a thing like this center, a business, I'm talking anything in our lives. Having a goal. Because we all know -- our worst suffering -- they say that to die -- one of the worst ways to die is to die with all these terrible regrets of the things you haven't achieved. That you didn't think it possible, you kept putting them off, because we're bone lazy, you know. It's true, isn't it? We can see it in ourselves; we all recognize this. We live in this kind of 'if only...' you know, and then we have our New Year's what-do-you-call-them? New Year's Resolutions and one day later we break them and off we go again, back to sink into the oblivion of can't-be-bothered, too-much-effort, I-can't-do-it. Because it's attachment, it's the status quo. This craving, this junkie's craving for comfort. Questions about that? See... no, you've got to start- it makes sense- you know, you've got to start with having the goal. Just like if you go to, you drive from here to wherever. You've got to have a goal. You have to know where you're heading. And then you've got to have the method. And then you do it. If you forget your goal, you'll get lost. So, you've got to have a goal. You know? And then, no matter how difficult it is, you have to persevere sometimes through many obstacles. But if you lose sight of your goal, the whole thing goes. You

forget, and you sink back into oblivion again. And if you think of a goal, and you *will* think of it, you will therefore open all the doors, and you'll meet the right people, and all the things will happen. But you've got to keep having this one and persevering with it and not giving up, you know.

Never Give Up

1:38:11

One of my friends in prison, years ago -- he's now out of prison -- I'm so happy -- finally, after twenty-five years; and he wrote to us, one of the things he first wrote to us in ninety-six when I began the prison project and he wrote about this experience he had with meditating. He liked Tara, okay, and he started doing this meditation every morning. He did it very nicely, got up early in the morning 'cause he lived in this section of the prison that was completely berserk, eight hundred people, no peace at all. So he'd get up at four in the morning and do his hour of meditation, very nicely, and the visualization, all his nice prayers; he said it was really nice. But he said in the evening he did his practice, he said, 'Robina, eight hundred people wide awake and wound up, a very different story', you know.

But he would do his meditation every night, regardless. Now, already that is unbelievable. Can you imagine? We -- 'Oh I can't meditate. Will you please be quiet,' one person daring to make a noise... He's got eight hundred people like maniacs, screaming. 'Oh, gentlemen, please be quiet. I'm trying to meditate.' I mean, what a joke. He did his meditation every day, regardless. This insane asylum, like being in Bedlam every day, he said. The noise, inconceivable, in the evening. And he said one day the noise just got too much. He said he was about to give up. And he said, all of a sudden, all the noise went away. So, what happened is, I think, he through his own -- he was meditating on Tara, visualizing Tara, all these things, and all of a sudden his mind went to a subtle state, you know, when you'd got to a subtle state in meditation, really deep, your senses are no longer functioning; so he couldn't -- there was no sound. All the noise went away, he said. And of course at the more subtle level of your mind, when you're meditating at this very subtle level, he got this experience of complete visualization of Tara, the entire merit field... and he said it was bliss -- I forget the word -- ecstasy in every atom his being and it lasted a long, long, time. He had a complete visualization of the Buddha, Tara as real as you and me, he said, and it lasted a long, long, time.

So when he came out of this, he said, you know, he said what I learned from this, Robina, and this was in capital letters -- was NEVER GIVE UP. Because he made the effort. He did his meditation in the face of 800 insane people, did it with determination, and then some blessing came, you know. And that's what he got, and that's the point -- never give up. This is the point. This is the one. This is the courage of the bodhisattva. Never give up. And this is what makes us successful. Otherwise we just live in fear -- 'can't do it, too difficult, too much effort, can't be bothered, too busy...' We lie to ourselves every day. Because, literally, it's not true. We *can* do it. We can prioritize. There is no reason to put it off and we can do it. But because we see the end result and it feels like too big a space between us and that, we can't see that it's a gradual, incremental progression. One step at

a time. When you realize cause and effect more logically, you're not panic-stricken about it. You do it one step at a time and before you know it, there you are. The result will come. You just do it one day at a time. A little -- one step at a time -- you pick your foot up and put it in front of your other foot, and you do it one step at a time. When you realize cause and effect more humbly, then it's not so freaking-out to us. And we don't have a choice, do we? We can do it; and whatever the goal is, we can achieve it. Just have to start somewhere. So, what else, folks? Nine o'clock, twenty to nine... Questions?

Q: I got a question.

Ven.: Where are you, darling?

Q: I'm back here. What are the eight great fears?

Ven.: Oh, I don't know, I don't know, darling...tell me, what have you read? Tell me about them.

Q: Well, we do the Tara practice...

Ven.: Oh, yeah, it says it in there, I know... well, let me ask Google...I'll ask Google God for you. I don't know. I've heard the phrase, I know, 'the eight great fears'. I forget. I honestly don't remember. Where are we...eight great fears...it has to do with Tara, isn't it? It has to do with Tara? She's called "The Liberator From the Fears of Samsara" 'cause she's courage, success, action energy. That's what she is.

Q: The Action Mother...

Ven.: That's right, she is that. Courage...never give up. Eight Great Fears...Eight Great Fears MySpace, Eight Great Fears Facebook, Eight Great Fears Coventry, bloody hell, Eight Great Fears geek, oh dear, Eight Great Fears Tara practice, we'll do Tara, see what comes...Tara...nothing there... I don't know...Bob will have to look it up for you...I can't... I don't know what it is... eight... Tara origin and development, the eight great fears, here she is...Tara origin and development, ...my years of meditation on the Goddess Tara... eight great fears...oh, lordy where is it?

Q: I think it's in Pabongka Rinpoche... I think it's in "Liberation" [in the Palm of One's Hand] ...I've looked it up before and I just can't remember...

Ven.: I can't remember either... I can't find it, darling- look up in Google and find it, here it is, in "Tara, Her Origin and Development", it's in there somewhere...So I can't answer your question, that's the long and the short of it. Darling, I'm sorry. Go on? What else? Any other questions? Any other questions? No? Done? Finished? Cooked? Yes, darling?

Burn Out
1:44:51

Q: Well, sometimes, for myself I really have this motivation to do a lot of good and so I go out and I'm volunteering here and there and everywhere, but there's a problem that I burn out. So, do you have any advice?

Ven.: What do you mean by "burn out", darling?

Q: Well, it's like, not knowing when to step back and say 'no', maybe, or how should I explain that...

Ven.: What's it feel like, "burning out"? What's it feel like?

Q: When you start out very positive, with good thoughts and motivation, but then you go down...

Ven.: I understand. I'll tell you why. I know. The answer is, and it sounds cruel, the answer is because in the beginning our compassion is mixed with attachment and we get all excited. But attachment after a while gets bored, and then we give up. No perseverance... so it's mainly because of attachment and aversion. I saw that with the prison project -- most people after a while just gave up. Try for a while, then you get bored. That's attachment. That's because of attachment, sweetheart; very simple. I'm not trying to be mean, it's just that's the reason. With compassion, you never give up. But it's attachment, and you over-exaggerate what you can do, you over-exaggerate all the compassion and all the good you're feeling; so you go too far and then the bubble burst and you burn out, as you said. But if you do it steadily and reasonably as part of your daily practice, fitting it in reasonably without being overexcited and practicing every day, you don't burn out, you don't go extreme. When it's attachment, we get extreme, you know. Then we go to the other extreme when we give up.

Q: I was more thinking more also down the road if you work together with people, you see; not on some mind level, but if you go out and you say, 'I want to do good for people, like this doctor who wants to go up....

Ven.: What do you mean, 'not on the mind level', what are you saying?

Q: Well, because you were explaining more if you...

Ven.: Sweetheart, I'm talking about your mind, because your mind motivates what your body and speech does. And if your mind is full of too much excitement and attachment and then you get bored, then your body and speech will stop going to the place to help! So, of course it's to do with helping others, but it comes from your mind, sweetheart. So, I'm saying if your mind is more stable, and you don't over-exaggerate what you can do, you don't over-exaggerate your compassion, you just do it steadily and reasonably, then you won't give up. This is my point... you don't get it, do you- it doesn't make sense to you. I can't give you an answer that will suit your mind, I'm sorry...

Q: Oh, no, there is a point about going steadily...

Ven.: That *is* the point. That is the point. That is the point, darling; you were the one who used the term *burnt out*, because you go too fast too quickly. If you go steadily, and make it an integrated part of your daily life...and also because attachment thinks we're such a good person, we exaggerate... it's very hard to distinguish the attachment from the compassion in the beginning, but the attachment is all about "I", and then after a while, I get bored. And then you give up all the compassion. If you're more steady and more reasonable, and just do it because you have to do it, not because you're such a noble, special person and we've got to love you, then you *won't* give up, because you'll see the benefit. Do you see what I'm saying? Use a more reasonable, steady approach to it. Do you understand my point?

Q: Yes, I do understand it, everything has to do with attachment.

Ven.: That's right...and it takes time to look at it... Yes?

Q: I don't know...maybe she's the kind of person that with her mind and staying with it, you know, a lot of it -- the burn-out also comes when, you know, you go to work in the morning, maybe she has low blood sugar, you got to stop, have your boundaries, have a sandwich, boost yourself up again, let your blood sugar go again, work a good afternoon... you know what I mean?

Ven.: That's right...

Q: So you gotta keep your balance, too...

Ven.: Well, I disagree with balance, I think balance is rubbish. I don't agree with balance.

Q: I'm talking about blood sugar.

Ven.: Well I don't have blood sugar, I don't know about blood sugar. Mine's probably too high or something...Darling, I get your point, I do know your point but I think...all those things are real, we've got to know what our body...you're deadly right, darling, but that's another way of saying, you be steady. More steady. Not so excited -- and that's attachment. More steady, and when you've got wisdom, you will have the strength when you need it. You will say "no" when you need it. You will have the sandwich when you need it. When it's all attachment, and then fear of what people think, you get all extreme and unbalanced. You're right. In that sense balance, it's true. But that just demands we know our minds well and that just takes time, darling. It just takes time.

Q: Sounds like the 'middle way'...

Ven.: Well, yeah, middle way sort of but not quite the middle way. People misuse that a bit. Go on, darling. But yeah, you're right, but saying it another way. Yes?

Q: This just reinforces your point -- I've been an environmental activist for my full adult life; and I started noticing, you know, like, cycles of people that would burn out and leave and become carpenters or whatever, and at first it was a concern because these were good people and you were losing them, and I eventually had to realize it was only because I became a Buddhist that I was able to *not* join that sort of cycle and over time what I realized the difference was that if your focus is basically on 'external', on, like, 'this has got to change and it has to change in this way' and all your focus is out there and you don't see that happening, then you get fed up...

Ven.: And that's attachment, again...

Q: And if your focus instead is, 'this is the situation out there and this is an appropriate response' and you're focusing on *your response* instead of the world situation, and that's your major focus, then...

Ven.: And I think the other thing really is the bodhisattva's never giving up. You do according to your own capacity, steady as a rock, doing what you said -- I forget your name -- what's your name, darling? I remember now...it's another way of saying it, you're steady as a rock, you take care, you do the right thing, you're working on your mind. You do it because it's the right thing and no expectations. I mean, when I was an old radical lefty, I would scream and yell shout and and rush out there and do all these things, and then you give up, you get bored, you know, 'cause it hasn't turned out the way you wanted it to. Then you just give up. But you've got to, as the Dalai Lama said, when you come in from compassion -- one person said, 'Anger is good, because it makes you act.' He said, 'I know what you mean. But when you're coming from compassion, you never give up. 'You do it because it's just the right thing, you know? And you do it according to your capacity and, you'll look back and see you're doing more than you ever could. But you don't have any big fancy expectations of all the magic changes, 'cause you know it could take eons. Bodhisattvas think in terms of eons, His Holiness said. That's pretty stunning, you know. That means no fantasy expectations. I mean, look at His Holiness -- he's a perfect example. For fifty years plus, he just hasn't given up. He's always buoyant, always positive, always upbeat, no change looks like it's coming -- his country's ruined; but how can you give up, you know. And that means -- that's another way to put it -- you've got to pace yourself. You've got to pace yourself. All this is wisdom, really, and wisdom is the opposite to attachment. So, yes -- take care of your blood sugar, have a sandwich, it's as exactly as she said. Or a good sleep, whatever, you know, instead of guilt and all these things.

Q: It should be having a good effect on your mind, you know. If you're doing volunteer work...

Ven.: Precisely, darling... So -- what else people? Anything? Time? Nine o'clock?

Q: May I go in the back and take some pictures?

Basic Criteria for Being Ready to Take Refuge

1:52:50

Ven.: Yeah, sure, go. Somebody wanted to take refuge....? We should do that now then. So, are there any other questions, from anybody, about taking refuge if you haven't done it before? Where's Cynthia? You want to do it, darling, don't you? Do you have any questions or are you clear? Was there anybody else who wanted to do it for the first time? Are you clear about what's involved? Taking refuge? Okay? There are two things, darling, yeah. There's taking refuge, which is one thing -- there's two things. One is simply committing yourself to becoming a Buddhist and then the other one is committing to the five lay vows. Any or all of those. They're two separate things -- and if we want, we can do the both.

So the refuge -- basically, the criterion for being ready for taking refuge -- I put it this way, in my own way, coming from being a westerner, coming from being -- having a creator religion, that you're really very comfortable with the idea that the Buddha's not a creator. I would say that -- they don't say that in the Buddhist texts, right? 'Cause that's a given. But for our mind, it's really important. You've got a real comfortable idea about Buddha and karma. In general, it doesn't mean you have to know it all; and the basic Buddhist ideas. And the other one is, have a genuine feeling, which is a basic Buddhist idea, of not wanting to harm sentient beings. That's really the fundamentals of refuge.

Absolute and Relative Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

1:54:17

So then you're taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. So the Buddha -- it means you've got a comfortable idea about Mr. Buddha, from two and a half thousand years ago, of his teachings, you know, and of the Sangha. Literally speaking -- well, the Three Jewels, they're called. They talk about absolute Buddha, relative Buddha. Absolute Dharma, relative Dharma. Absolute Sangha, relative Sangha. And what that means is, the "absolute Buddha" just means the omniscient mind. Consciousness fully developed, you know. And then out of compassion, that mind manifests in forms, like Shakyamuni Buddha's body. So that's the relative Buddha. The actual Buddha is the Buddha's mind, and we can't communicate with that, you know? So, the Buddha, out of kindness, manifests in human forms which we can communicate with; that's the relative Buddha. And that's what we need. And you've got the 'absolute Dharma', which is the realizations in the minds of not just the Buddha, but all 'superior beings'; but that's fine, too -- for how can you access a person's mind? You can't: so they speak words. So the words of the Buddha is the 'relative Dharma', whether it's on a tape recording, in a book; that's the relative Dharma and that's the most important refuge. It's like, you know, you can have fifty-two Buddhas standing in front of you looking very handsome, but if they don't speak their words, which is the advice we have to put into practice, then we can't change ourselves. We need their Dharma; that's the relative Dharma.

The Sangha, strictly speaking in Buddhist teachings, that refers to the ordained Sangha; and a certain number, usually it's four, I think, need to be -- any four fully ordained people in one place is the criterion, is the indicator of the existence of the living Dharma in that place; which is why in the Asian -- coming from

Buddha's teachings -- there's this great respect paid to those who live in the fullness of the vows. So broadly we can use the term 'Sangha' to refer to our spiritual community, like here, even if there's no one ordained. But strictly speaking, in terms of being the Refuge object, it's the ordained Sangha, the relative Sangha.

The absolute Sangha is those holy beings whose minds have the Dharma in them, but we can't recognize them; so the relative Sangha is the ordained one. So that's Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. So, one relies upon them. Takes refuge, as they say, in them. So it's a commitment to rely upon them every day. So that means you commit yourself to at least say three times in the morning and three times at night, "I take refuge in the Buddha, Darma, Sangha." Three times. Minimum this. If not a little bit more practice would be helpful, of course. Something in the morning.

The Five Lay Vows

1:56:56

And then, you know, in relation to the Dharma, in relation to all, to sort of have respect for the images of the Buddha and the books and the things like this because they represent the Buddha, the Dharma for us. Having great respect for those things. So that's roughly what that is. And then the vows, if we take the vows -- you've got killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, alcohol and drugs, and something else... killing, lying, stealing, oh, that's right. Five. But you don't have to take all those five. But it's really interesting, these days, it's a bit depressing, really, our degenerate time -- His Holiness, the two times that I've heard him recently giving refuge -- you know, 'killing' usually refers to you break it in a major way if you kill a human -- commit murder, in other words -- and then you break killing in a minor way if you kill another sentient being, but His Holiness is giving the vow now without even talking about other beings -- 'cause most westerners just can't stop killing. A bit depressing... so, you know, he's been giving it as just merely not to murder, not to kill a human. But, I mean, I'm doing it based on the way Lama Zopa does it, which is the way I've been doing it in the past, which would be a vow not to kill any living being. Intentionally. It has to be intentional- we're killing all the time, we can't help it. It has to be intentional. You see a living being, don't kill them.

Lying means, you know, you break it in a major way if you lie -- tell a major lie -- a lie about your spiritual attainments. And telling a minor lie is saying anything to mislead somebody.

Stealing is taking -- Rinpoche calls it 'taking the ungiven'. You break it in a major way if you take something of value to someone else. And in a minor way if you take anything that hasn't been offered to you. These days I think it's quite complicated, with the Internet and everything, one has to really think about this...

And then, sexual misconduct can be interpreted in many ways. Broadly speaking, the way I will give it if people take it or you renewed it, renewing it, is not to cheat on your partner, or not to sleep with someone else's partner. And

then -- and also, you know, you could keep it, think of it in terms of, you know, not misusing, not abusing people sexually. You could think of it this way, certainly.

And the fifth one, alcohol and drugs, you can take this or not. And again, His Holiness gives it in a lesser way, he says he gives it to not get drunk. He quotes one of his own teachers giving it to someone like that. But the only way I'd be giving it would be to not have any alcohol at all, so if you want to take it, you take it; if you don't, you don't take it -- it's very simple. You know, in your own mind, you can decide that you won't get drunk, kind of lose control of your senses.

So that's the five vows and there's the refuge, just brief. So, are there any questions from that? Any questions from that? No?

Q: The not killing one, does that mean not eating meat?

Ven.: No, it doesn't mean that. Not at all. It can mean that -- first of all, the action of eating is not killing, it's very obvious. The action of eating is not killing, is it? Can you agree with that? It doesn't mean... eating meat is -- would you agree that eating a piece of flesh cannot be the same as killing a sentient being. First of all, that point? I'm not trying to get out of anything, I'm just -- we've got to agree on our terms here. So eating is not the same as killing; it's very obvious it's not. But usually -- of course, if you get someone to kill that animal right there, you've killed it and you've done it out of attachment so you can eat. So, of course, it's awful, of course it is. But you know, sometimes the meat is just there, and the world is so complicated now, with the global industry -- that piece of lamb on that plate was a little lamb gamboling in New Zealand six months ago... then you know, it's quite hard to see if you didn't eat it, it's not going to affect the world, but of course on the other side, the real reason to do it is out of compassion, you know? Of course. But it doesn't follow if you take a vow not to kill, that you can't eat meat. It doesn't follow. It depends on the situation, the time, many factors, you know. Do you understand? Somebody else? Any questions -- you wanted to do or renew? Well, we could do now, it takes about three minutes... I'll put my robes on, anybody who wants to do...

Q: I have a question.

Ven.: Yes, darling?

Q: You mentioned something about offering bodhisattva vows...

Ven.: I know I did, didn't I? If people really want, we can certainly -- I mean, I'm not in a hurry... I've got nothing else to do. I'm more than happy, those who want it can stay on after, we can talk about it first; we'll need about an hour altogether for that -- talk about it and then do it. It is a very auspicious thing to do, if you want to do it; it's an extraordinary thing to do if you want to do it. I mean, I'm happy to sit around, I don't have anything else to do but go home and sit around on Fran's couch. So we can let's do the refuge first, for those who want

it. I'll put my robes on, my other robe, and then we can, those who want to do, can renew their refuge and take the vows, and those who don't want to can go home or whatever you want to do, or wait for the bodhisattva vows. Thank you very much. So those who do want to do it should stand up... my gosh, the whole place... Okay. So I'm going to prostrate and sit down, and those who want to do it should do six prostrations, three to the image of the Buddha on the altar and three to the person who's giving it to you, whom you're supposed to try and see as the Buddha, do your best there...

(everybody prostrating...)

Refuge, Lay Vows and Bodhisattva Vows

2:03:22

So do your six prostrations and then kneel on your right knee. Then kneel on your right knee and have your hands in the prayer mudra, and repeat after me... so first let's imagine all the Buddhas are here, so delighted, so blissed out, that we're making this incredible commitment to, you know, committing our lives to not harming, to benefitting others, and to developing our own qualities; it's a pretty stunning thing on this crazy, crazy earth, you know, so special and marvelous. So you repeat after me...

(Refuge follows)

Five Lay Vows

2:06:46

So now, those who want to take the vows, any or all of them, you repeat after me:

(Vows follow)

Bodhisattva Vows Introduction

2:09:08

Okay, so the bodhisattva vows, we didn't do too much talking about all this. It's like a whole other level of vows, they're the second kind level, and if you've taken any tantric initiations, Chenresig or any of those, you've taken your bodhisattva vows. So that's already marvelous. And if you do eventually, you will be taking the bodhisattva vows as well as the tantric vows, you know? So, the bodhisattva vows -- I mean, I can't really say much about bodhicitta, all I can do is just quote the holy beings, you know... So now, are you going? Are you going now, some people? We should say goodbye... You're not going? You're going, darling? So we dedicate all the merit of our work together these past few days; that all these seeds ripen and that they develop in our potential in the future for as long as time exists, we'll never give up being like the holy beings... Alright? So you want to say goodbye to me, before we go... then do the bodhisattva vows in five minutes. We'll do it in five minutes. Let's say goodbye to those who want to go. Come and say goodbye to me. Have a quick break here.

(goodbyes)

2:18:50

Okay, let's go, people...Do we have the text here? Do we have a copy of "The Path of Bliss" here?

(a few minutes tracking down the text)

Okay, now, so let's talk about this for a minute. This is pretty outrageous to do...if you read these vows, there's a whole pile of them, you know, and I think this is something... okay, where's Bob? And where's Deanna, is she here? And anybody else who's tied to the center...I want you to commit that you will hold a class on the bodhisattva vows; that you will study the vows together, with commentaries. That you will promise that you will do that.

Q: Okay.

Ven.: Then I will give them. You must do it together, between you, you know, you find the commentaries that exist; Rinpoche's given some, you get the prayers that you're supposed to do, or I'll send you that prayer... and it's in *Lama Chopa* but I'll send it to you and you say this in the morning three times, and that you study the vows together. You see, when you study these vows there's a whole bunch, there's like forty-six or something, I forget, secondary vows and fourteen or eighteen first vows and they also have ?? (unclear) (2:19:44) and if you look at them you'll see the context is they're given to really highly realized beings way back who had abbots -- who were abbots of big monasteries; you can see the context, you know, so clearly these are degenerate times when there's ordinary people like us taking them, so you've got to really try and get the essence of them and all the vows are related to the six perfections. They're related to keeping the vows relating to generosity, morality, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom. So just go through them quietly together using the commentaries that are existing so that you can all learn to understand them. Because if you're taking vows, you should know what they are. And they're quite difficult, some of them, you've just got to try and really understand the meaning behind them; then that's very beneficial for your minds. It really is. And the bodhisattva vows go from life to life. So, you know, why you're sitting here even now wanting to take them is because you've taken them before. And they will carry on after life. So it's an inconceivably marvelous thing to do, to put these powerful imprints in your mind. And the thing is, if you're listening to this now and you don't want to take them, you can take them, they say, in an aspiration. You can make the wish to take them in the future. You don't have to take them now. But you need to learn what they are, so you've committed yourselves you'll do that. That's really good. Alright -- so, yeah. We won't even go into what they are now, but they're all to do with helping `you put others first, basically -- you're committing your lives, you know, to at least practice the bodhisattva path. To want to cultivate generosity, morality, and benefit sentient beings and it's sort of articulated in these eighteen root vows and the forty-six, I think, secondary -- I can't remember the number, something like that. And it's just a marvelous thing to do, to put these imprints into your mind, it's quite extraordinary, you know. You should be very delighted with yourselves.

So, this ceremony is based upon one that His Holiness did -- it's just me reading, literally, from the time that he did it. This particular chapter in here. So, I'll kind of -- we'll summarize it briefly, you know, we'll go through it. So first of all, to enhance and stabilize your generation of bodhicitta you should, you know, engage in the ceremony, to reinforce it. It's recommended that all the Mahayana practitioners, you know, you do this. It gives you a strong sense of commitment to engage in these actions of the bodhisattva. So this is based upon a text called "The Main Path to Enlightenment" by Tsongkhapa, so, the practice of bodhicitta, Exchanging and Equalizing Self With Others which we were talking about before, is at the core of all the practices of all the Buddhas and all the bodhisattvas of the past. So you want to realize it's an advanced stage of altruistic attitude within your mind, it's really important to train your mind in these stages, or the lam rim, you know, as we've practiced up until now. So, a very powerful way to do this is to repeatedly enhance it by taking this bodhicitta right from one of our spiritual lamas, one of our own lamas. So, doing this will have added value in that you're taking the bodhisattva vow at the same time, thus increasing this bodhicitta in your mind.

And so of course, doing it in a formal way reminds us that we've done this and puts it in the front of our mind. And one of the main benefits -- and I should have said this before -- but it should remind us, it's so very beneficial to remember this -- the power of a vow. Generally speaking, for example, you know, the vow of killing, that we just took before -- okay, this is just reminding us the way karma works. Karma means intention, right? Equivalent, it's actually equivalent to the word intention. So you create karma when you do something intentionally. When there's intention there. That's when you sow a seed. You can do something without intention -- you know, you drop money on the ground and a beggar gets it -- you don't create generosity because you didn't intend to. You can kill an ant without realizing it and you don't create the karma of killing because there's no intention. In general you can say this.

So, in general, we want to accumulate bucket loads of morality karmic seeds in our mind. And the very first level of vows -- no killing, lying, stealing and all of these, we need to proactively grow that energy in our minds. So clearly, because we're all fairly weak practitioners, we don't run around that often thinking, 'I must never kill, I must never lie.' It never occurs to us, you know. So then we only create the morality of doing that when we think of it. But if we've got a vow not to do those things, every second we've got that vow, you're ticking over the morality, you're ticking over the karma every second, whether you're thinking about it or not.

So, you know, you're only creating the karma of not killing -- and you need bucket loads of those seeds in your mind -- when you intentionally not kill (if you do not have the vow). But if you have the vow -- asleep, walking, talking -- every second you're keeping the vow -- you're ticking over, you're growing those seeds; and we need masses of those seeds.

So it's a practical issue. It's very beneficial, it's very powerful to have vows. And that's why you should remember your vows every day and do the four opponent

powers at night and re-iterate your commitment never to break them. It makes it hugely beneficial. It makes it an easy way to live a life of morality. It's not kidding; it's very serious. And it's just marvelous to do it. It's extraordinary to live your life in the context of vows -- Rinpoche says, 'Virtue is just not good enough.' You need -- no doubt, in past lives we have practiced the virtue that is the cause of this human life, not just in the context of keeping a spiritual path but in the context of keeping vows of morality, because they give like a rocket boost to your virtue. It's a practical issue; it's very powerful.

So, here we're taking this extraordinary commitment to be of benefit to others, to enhance our bodhicitta, to never give up on bodhicitta, it'll go from life to life to life, you know. It's extraordinary, it's marvelous. So you should be so delighted with yourself, so powerful.

So, we've all got this Buddha-nature; so we have to remember that all the beings of the past, all the bodhisattvas and Buddhas have done exactly this; we're following in their footsteps, you know? We're taking the exact same path that they are. We've all got this Buddha-nature, all got pure light minds, pure mind... so, it's in the presence of the representative of the Buddha Shakyamuni in the aspect of his image here... although we didn't have the fortune to be at the time of the Shakyamuni Buddha in person, we have the good fortune of having access to all his teachings, which is actually superior -- all the great masters, all the teachers throughout the centuries; all their teachings perfectly in books and things ready for us to study. In Tibet during all the profound times of all the translators, and now in the present, all the high holy Lamas, speaking our language, His Holiness the Dalai Lama giving most of his teachings in English now -- it's extraordinary, you know? Speaking our language; it's just so kind of him.

So now in the space in front of you, you visualize all these amazing lamas, right back to Shakyamuni Buddha -- Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, the eighty mahasiddhas, the great masters of the Nyingma tradition, Atisha, his followers, the masters of the Kadampa tradition, the five great masters of the Sakya tradition, the lineage of the Lhamdre practice, the five masters of the Kagyu lineage, Marpa, Milarepa, their followers, and all the masters of the Gelugpas- Tsongkhapa, and his followers. And around you all are all the protectors who have taken the oath in the presence of Buddha, to safeguard and protect the precious doctrine of Buddha.

So visualize all these holy beings around us.

So then surrounding us all are all the sentient beings in the aspect of humans, all undergoing their own particular sufferings. So now, have a strong feeling of compassion, wanting to benefit all these sentient beings, especially our enemies.

So, having this mental image, now you question yourself as to how all these objects of refuge, the Buddhas and all the masters of the past have achieved such a high state of realization. They did this by having this bodhicitta. So today, I will also follow in the footsteps of these great lamas and take the initiative of generating bodhicitta.

So, strictly speaking, a practitioner who's taking the bodhisattva vows should have at least the prerequisite of having the aspirational attitude of bodhicitta. Although this is very rare, some among you might have it, but for the majority of us it's very difficult to possess such a genuine and non-simulated bodhicitta. But at least, you know, we have the aspiration. And I can certainly say, as His Holiness says here, I can say -- no question -- I'm not qualified myself, either, but I have a real appreciation of this path, seeing with confidence all the holy beings before me who've accomplished this that give me the courage to see that it's possible for us as well, you know.

And I received all this -- as His Holiness says here too -- and I have as well received from my holy lamas -- Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa, His Holiness, Ling Rinpoche, Tsong Rinpoche, Serkong Rinpoche, all these lamas I've received these vows from -- I'm passing on what I've received from them.

So now, you kneel on your right knee, just for a second; if you can't kneel, stay sitting, and you repeat after me:

(Request to bestow the vows) (2:28:27)

Now, I should be telling you all about the advantages of bodhicitta and the main one is to think of the power of the vows. The power of this aspiration based upon compassion: 'I must never give up working on my mind so I can be qualified in the future, no matter how long it takes, to benefit sentient beings. That's bodhicitta, based upon compassion and love. 'If I don't do it, who will?' As Lama Zopa says, I promise to do this, by myself, alone. So now, you just listen to what I say...

(Vow Ceremony)

So now, I will give you the encouragement by explaining all the benefits again of having taken the vows, and that just means again remember, just keep remembering, somehow, you know -- we keep -- see, the thing is we grasp at this self so strongly -- we've done this astonishing action -- it's like you won a hundred million dollars right now, but we'll walk out the door feeling not much different, because it takes time for us to truly appreciate the import of what we're doing, of just having positive thoughts. We just don't realize, I think, the power of it. If we did, we'd be so blissed out; it's such an extraordinary thing we've just done, you know, taking these amazing vows, committing ourselves, for life after life, to never give up, becoming a Buddha so you can be of benefit to sentient beings. It's truly stupendous. It's like phenomenal.

So truly be so delighted, and then have the wish -- like I said, you promised you'll study together these vows -- learn them as well as you can, read the commentaries and you do this particular short prayer. It's a very short prayer that reaffirms your commitment every day, purifies your broken vows and strengthens your ???24132 It's a marvelous little prayer. It's in the prayer books, but I'll send it to you and Bob can send it all to you guys so you must give Bob

your email, so you all have it. And you arrange when you're going to meet together -- as soon as possible, please. Do not wait, so you really know what your vows are well. You all have copies of them and you learn them and you understand them so you keep them very precious, like precious jewels in your life. Okay?

So now, the sadhana says, they're superior to many other forms of vows, and taking them constitutes the accumulation of incredible amounts of virtue; and it protects you from many negative actions – this is the point about vows, they protect your mind, you know?

So, Lama Tsongkhapa says in his text that the moment we have taken them, all the Buddhas in all the directions will have an indication of this great event and will bear witness to us. So, they will perceive that on such-and-such a day here in Missoula at Osel Shen Phen Ling, you know, many disciples – all of you – with Bob, and the rest of the people at the center have taken these vows from Bhikshuni Robina Courtin, Thubten Kunsel, that's me; and because of this all the Buddhas will pray for the success of these bodhisattvas, and always sustain them as their own family, you know. So feel like you're part of this huge, incredible, powerful family; realizing the Buddhas and bodhisattvas *are here all the time*.

The more you understand the nature of mind, the more you understand bodhicitta, the more you know that's true. It's not just some vague belief. So you really take refuge in them. Keep them to support them in your daily life, protecting you, guiding you, every minute. Don't forget. You're not alone. And so don't speak unnecessarily of these vows to untrained people, and those who have no faith in the bodhisattva practices; doing so can be harmful to the listener who doesn't appreciate the bodhisattva principle and such people may speak against the vows and thus indulge in grave negative actions. When speaking about them, it's crucial to judge the suitability of the listener. So like a little groupie, you know, like this little family group. It's the Center's job to support you in these vows. You should come together every now and again, you know, this little group of people, who've taken these vows together. So we'll just finish by ending up with the Seven Limb Prayer again. Just listen to the prayer, have your hands in the mudra of prayer like this.

O lions among humans,
Buddhas past, present and future,
To many of you as exist in the ten directions I bow down.
I prostrate with body speech and mind.

On waves of strength of this king of praises
Of exalted and sublime ways,
With bodies numerous as atoms of the world,
I bow down to the Buddhas pervading space.

On every atom is found a Buddha sitting amidst countless bodhisattvas
In this infinite sphere of mystic beings I gaze with eyes of faith.
With oceans of every possible sound and eulogy of the perfect Buddhas,

I give voice to the excellent qualities, hail those passed to bliss.

Garlands of supreme flowers I offer them, and beautiful sounds, supreme parasols,
Butter lamps and sacred incense I offer them to all awakened ones.
Excellent food, supreme fragrance, a mound of powder as high as Meru
I arrange in mystic formation and offer to those who conquered themselves.

All these peerless offerings I hold up in admiration for those gone to bliss
In accord with exalted and sublime ways I prostrate and make offerings to the
Buddhas.

Whatever ill deeds I have committed under the power of desire, anger and
ignorance
Through my body, speech and mind, I confess and purify these individually.

In the merits of all sentient beings, solitary realizers, learners and those beyond
learning,
Buddhas in ten directions and their heirs, I rejoice in all their virtues.
Over the light of all universes of ten directions who realize Buddhahood through
the stages of Enlightenment
I appeal to all of you protectors to turn the unsurpassed wheel.

I entreat with folded hands those intending to enter Nirvana
To live for eons equal to the atoms on earth for the benefit of all beings.
Whatever little merit I have accumulated through prostrating, offering, rejoicing,
confessing, and entreating, I dedicate all towards attaining full enlightenment.
And then we just finish with this lovely prayer that Rinpoche kindly wrote about
His Holiness and the Tibetans that was read out to His Holiness in Australia
recently. We'll just finish with these little prayers, and Long Life Prayers for
Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

“Remembering the Kindness of His Holiness The Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan
People”

“The object of refuge of myself and of all transmigratory beings in all our
lifetimes
is the embodiment of the Three Jewels; the all-encompassing three refuges in
one.
The guru, the wish-granting Jewel, His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, the Master,
Padmasambava,
the Dharma Kings, Tsongtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen, the abbot,
Shantarakshita, and the numberless holy beings who preserved and spread the
Buddhadharma in Tibet, and the Tibetan people who practiced and served
Buddhism so faithfully for a thousand years, as well as those who, along with
many others, died, sacrificing their lives for Tibet and His Holiness. May all their
positive wishes be fulfilled immediately. Due to their limitless kindness, the sun
of Tibetan Buddhism has now risen in the West, which is a dark land. But now
that I have met with the Dharma, I have received the perfect human body
enabling me to lead a meaningful life. Our Refuge and savior, the Supreme One,

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people have been so kind to us. Remembering this, we make the following dedication prayers. May all His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wishes be successful immediately. May the snow land of Tibet achieve pure freedom and develop the Buddhadharma even more in Tibet, and may all mother transmigratory beings achieve enlightenment quickly."

Bob, did you print the prayer for Rinpoche? The Hayagriva prayer? What a pity. So, I'll say that prayer three times and you just listen to it. It's a prayer to Hayagriva, this wrathful aspect of compassion.

"Your pure three heads adorned with skull ornaments of the five Buddha families,
Your six hands holding weapons in the mudra of accomplishing siddhis,
In the aspect of great bliss, your dignified horse head held high,
I supplicate you, o holy and powerful deity." (3x)

So we imagine that we pray strongly for the long life of Rinpoche, that he becomes healthy and well, and that we purify all the karma that we've created, you know, as Centers, as individuals, his students – like he's asked us to do things and we haven't accomplished his wishes. This is what it means, 'breaking samaya', you know, not doing the guru's wishes. So if any of us in our own mind, you know, in the work we've done, like I think of the centers I work for with Rinpoche, not doing his wishes. If Rinpoche's asked us to do things at the Center that we haven't done, that means we've broken our samaya with Rinpoche, you know.

So we make the aspiration to renew the wish to do his wishes, 'cause then the Lama will appear, shiny and bright and healthy, and teach us Dharma. So we make the strong aspiration that we do that. And any Lamas we do have, you know, we keep their wishes perfectly, we do their wishes perfectly by keeping these vows perfectly.

And all the merit we've created by doing this, may all the seeds we've planted ripen in the future in exactly the way we've talked, so we really can be of benefit to countless sentient beings and may bodhicitta grow and grow in the hearts of all.

Jang chhub sem chhog rin po chhe
Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig
Kye wa nam pa me pa yang
Gong ne gong du phel war shog

Okay, that's it. Thank you, everybody.

Transcribed by Fran McDermott

