

Venerable Robina Courtin
Love and Attachment (Unedited transcript)
Osel Shen Phen Ling
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Introduction and Refuge

Thank you for having me. I'm happy to be back in Missoula; for a big-city girl, I've got two whole weeks here, that's not bad...I'm a big-city girl actually, but I'm two whole weeks in Missoula; I'm happy to be here.

Okay, so let's just think, and let's listen here together tonight to some of these ideas of the Buddha, coming filtered through the tradition of Tibet, this marvelous, this – particularly this marvelous tradition of – they call it the tradition of Exchanging Self For Others – a kind of really radical way of cultivating compassion for others; and that'll be our context for these two weeks, I'll just talk about it.

So, we're going to be listening to this. Why? Why are we listening, you know? Maybe we've heard it a thousand times before, maybe we're committed Buddhists; maybe we're not. So we think: we're going to listen, and we're going to listen to it freshly, and we're going to hear it as advice. The point of it – if this were cooking class, you know, it wouldn't just be meant to be raving on about cakes. In the end, you'd want something practical to take away, wouldn't you? Otherwise you'd have wasted your money, you understand? So, it's really important to think of a spiritual path like that as well. It should be practical. And so you don't have to take the advice being given here, but to hear it *as* advice; this is the important point. Then, if there's something you can jot down, take away in your memory – whatever – and you put into practice; that's fantastic, you know, that's the point.

So; and why do we even want to take practical – what's the advice for? To help us become a little bit less neurotic, a little bit less angry, a little bit less fearful, a little bit more kind so that we can be of benefit to others. That's the general approach. So, we sing a little prayer, the second two lines of which are sort of expressing this idea. The first two lines are expressing our reliance upon the Buddha, you know? So, those of us in this room are called Buddhists, we reiterate our reliance upon the Buddha, his Dharma, and the Sangha.

Sang gye chho dang tshog kyi chhog nam la
Jang chub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi
Dag gi jin sog gyi pe so nam gyi
Dro lag phan chhir sang gya drub par shog (3x)

So, Bob, do you ever offer the three, the three -- you know, the body, speech and mind before teachers, before teachers come; you do that? But not always, you

don't always do it...so you didn't do it this time? Some reason? You don't think it's auspicious for the center to offer...? You don't have, so maybe we just make an offering...

Q: We do a mandala offering...

So yeah, we'll do a mandala offering, so why don't we do a mandala offering, but also thinking we're offering the body, speech and mind to -- for the success of the Center and all of our realizations, yes, so we'll do a little mandala offering. So, we're imagining we're going to make, sort of, use your creative imagination and think of all the marvelous things of this world that beings use and then we sort of imagine piling them all up and making an offering to Buddha, as if the Buddha himself were here, teaching us. It's like as a request for the teachings, it's very auspicious. It's meaningful for the Center, and for all of us individually; and often what happens is we offer representations of the body, speech and mind of the enlightened beings as a sort of auspicious cause for us to actually experience ourselves the enlightened body, speech and mind. We think like that.

Sa zhi kyi jug shing me tog tram
Ri rab ling zhi nyi dag gyan pa di
Sang gya zhing du mig te ul wa yi
Dro kun nam dag zhing la cho par shog

And now imagine that the Buddha happily receives the offering, delighted.

Yidam guru ratna mandalakam nirya tayami

So, let's just give some context, a kind of reference to this little series of verses here...and it's got a really boring title, hasn't it? "The Eight Verses". Like, wow -- you know, most creative. Usually the Tibetans are so flowery and poetic, but in this case, it's 'The Eight Verses'. There's this term, 'thought transformation'; sometimes they call it 'thought training' -- sounds kind of a bit like the military, doesn't it, you know? So, what is this? Where does this fit in the big picture of Buddhist practice, you know? So as we know, you know, from hearing the teachings here all these years, the way the Tibetans present the teachings of the Buddha is quite specific to Tibet. In the eleventh century, Atisha -- some great Indian scholar -- was invited by the king to come to Tibet and teach. And he could see the Dharma had been there for a couple hundred years, really flourishing, you know; it'd come from India with Padmasambhava in the eighth century and by the eleventh century was very strong; Dharma was really flourishing.

But I think we can deduce from his approach, that he could see that maybe there wasn't really any coherent overview of the whole path. And I think this is something that was quite unique to the Tibetans that we all in general find quite surprising when we think of a spiritual path.

The Lam Rim, or Gradual Path
5:35

So, if you think of learning music, or anything at all we learn in our culture – and we're really good at learning things. Why? Because we have brilliant systems, you know? You just don't go struggling away and try to learn music – you get a bit of Mozart, a bit of trumpet music, a bit of Indian and try and find your way through the masses of music on this earth; you go to a *course*. It's really simple; we've got this *down*, you know? We know, even if it's a twelve year course – you feel a little bit daunted – but you know it'll be organized in a nice, orderly way; you go grade one, grade two, grade three and eventually you'll graduate. We know this, and so we feel confident. But when it comes to a spiritual path, we don't have the same confidence. Even if Buddhists have been sitting around here for thirty years practicing this path, we still kind of get confused, you know? Like, where am I? Am I in grade one, am I in grade two, where have I come from, where am I going, where's the end? We always get confused. We never quite are confident, like we are if we are in a course, where we fit in that course. So this is really, really important.

So then the other point, of course, from the point of view of the material – if you understand this packaging they call generally speaking -- certainly in our tradition, in Tibet, call it the *Lam Rim* – as His Holiness said recently in Dharamsala – it's just like an education course, you know, but it's a medieval term, *Lam Rim*, it's very medieval, it's arcane. We don't call – this is called 'gradual path'. We don't go, 'Oh, I'm going to do a gradual path in music.' You say, 'I'm going to do a course in music.' So we translate it as 'course'. And we understand the meaning of 'course'. Really we get it, you know? But even when we hear the word 'lam rim' we don't get it; we get confused: 'gradual path', what's this mean, 'gradual path to enlightenment'? We mystify these terms so terribly.

So the point is, from two points of view, one: if you know you are practicing the lam rim, quote unquote, if you're a member of this Center or if you're a Tibetan Buddhist, then that means you've entered a course. It just means that, quite simply. So obviously, if you're studying a course, you've got to know what grade you're in.

'What grade are you in?'

'Uh, I don't know.'

You'd be a bit stupid, wouldn't you? You have to know what grade class you've got to go to. So the trouble is, of course, the Centers don't always teach it in such a rigorous way; but if you do know the material well, when you pick up a book, and you look at the teaching here, you'll see this 'Eight Verses' and you study it even a little bit, you will know exactly where this comes. Is it part of junior school? High school? University? Post-graduate? Where is it? Where does it fit, you know? And that's really helpful. Like if you were studying music and you heard one piece, you could get a sense, 'Oh, that's way beyond me. That could be grade twelve; I'm only grade four.' You know? You'd always know. You'd always know where you are, wouldn't you? You always know where you come from – if you heard a piece that's simpler than you, you'd know you're ahead of that; and if you heard a piece more complicated, you'd know you were before that, wouldn't you? Otherwise, you'd be really confused; I mean, you'd have to say you hadn't been studying your music well. It's the same with the Dharma, I

tell you; the same with the spiritual path, and that's exactly the approach in Tibet. And if you think of it, it really should calm us down... 'Well, okay. I've got a course.' It's like having a map. You've got to know where you've come from. You've got to know where you are, and you've got to know where you're going. Otherwise, you're in big trouble.

And once you do have a map, or a course, then you can relax a bit. But of course, we don't. We're always perpetually confused; we don't know where we are, where we're coming from or, hell, where we're going, and we vaguely know it's called enlightenment, you know; we don't quite know what it is or where it is and we always think we're never getting there. We always think it's difficult, we're always kind of, 'Oh, my God, I'm hopeless...' So it's really quite silly, actually. We should be much more grounded about it.

Where This Text Fits In **8:50**

So, if we look at this text, where does it fit? Because in this lam rim, they've got this arcane term – they talk about Atisha, or certainly Tsongkhapa, the fourteenth century lineage lama, who really runs with this packaging from Atisha in the eleventh century and he calls it the 'lam rim', he divides this course into various stages, just like you would a course. He describes them as 'scopes' of practice.

Well, that, psychologically, we understand, you know; if you're in junior school, that's teachings according to your scope of capacity, isn't it? That's reasonable. But, again, it's an arcane term. We'd simply go 'junior school'. Instantly we say that, we get it, you know. The 'lowest scope'; not so sure. 'Middle scope'? Really? 'Upper scope'? I like this 'junior school' and 'high school'.

So, this (holds up text) is from university. This is. This is from university. Surprisingly, when you read it, it sounds kind of cute, you know – simple, uncomplicated; you don't have to squeeze your brain. You know, if you listen to emptiness, you've got to squeeze your brain; this is really – 'May I examine my mind in all actions and as soon as a negative state arises which endangers me and others, may I immediately confront and avert it...' Sounds really cute, you know? Simple. But actually, it isn't. It's outrageous, actually. It's from this amazing, radical approach to the cultivation of what's called 'bodhicitta'. So that means we know this is a course to enlightenment. It's a Mahayana course; it's not Hinayana. It's the university part, which is like the 'great scope', which is the Mahayana component of the path.

Thought Transformation **10:26**

So, like I said, there's this whole genre of teachings; they either call it – in Tibetan it's called 'lojong' -- 'mind training', 'thought transformation', whatever words you prefer, you know? And really, the whole path is that. What you're doing as a Buddhist is training your mind, transforming your mind. That's what you're doing. If you're learning music, you're transforming your mind from being -- knowing no music to knowing lots of music. You're filling your head with lots of music, aren't you? Then your fingers do the job of playing it. But it's your mind that's filling with music. If you're learning math you're filling your mind with a

lot of bunch of thoughts you didn't have before called mathematical thoughts. If you're learning cake-making, it's the same thing; you're filling your mind with lots of thoughts and then you make a cake. Everything is based on your mind, actually, if you think about it. I mean, if you think about it, it's so simple.

So, what you're doing here; which part of your mind are you training as a Buddhist? Well, you're not learning math, you're not learning music, you're not learning, you know, these things; what you're learning is morality. What you're learning is to be in touch with two things, actually: morality and truth; and these go really nicely together in Buddhism. So, morality, we get a bit nervous then. This sounds like religion, you know, that sounds like you must do this and you should do this and we get all guilty and neurotic, you know? But that's what Buddha's dealing with, or maybe more fundamentally – which doesn't sound so much like morality, it sounds more exciting – what Buddha's dealing with is happiness. His path is about – his course to enlightenment is about accomplishing what he would say is the potential for perfect happiness that is the potential of all minds. This is his view; this is what he is, you know?

Buddha Is Not a Creator

12:03

So, even before we talk about *that* then, and put this into that context, let's remind ourselves – I think we might have said this the last time; didn't I say it on Tuesday? Probably I did – about the Buddha; what he is – it's good to remind every time, it's good to remember how to listen to the teachings, it's so important, you know. And that is to say, you know, Buddha's not a creator. Now, we all know that if we're Buddhist: 'Oh, yeah. Buddha's not a creator.' 'Yeah, that's right. Buddha's not a creator.' Well, I think, again, I said on Tuesday – did I say it on Tuesday? Did I say this on Tuesday? Okay, I did. Let's say it *again*, because it's extremely tasty if we can kind of get the experiential implication of this; and we should think it through, actually, and it's just important to remember it. I like to remind myself.

So, the point is, if these are the teachings, say, of Catholicism, we know they come from 'God'; 'God' revealed them to various people – and then the idea is not to question God; that would be extremely rude. You back away, and you do God's job -- and I'm not criticizing that -- and you do God's will; that is by definition what a virtue is in Christianity: it's doing God's will. And by definition, a sin is going *against* God's will. And that's fine, but that's not absolutely -- and that's usually the way we think of religion; therefore you *believe* in it. So this is – I mean, you know, Buddhism in a way is so fundamentally different in its approach that it's kind of – we can easily bring that approach of religion into the Buddhist one; and it's not appropriate because Buddha's so fundamentally different in some ways, and the crucial one is he asserts there's no such thing as a creator; in fact, he even asserts you just don't need creating – it's an unnecessary embellishment, and all of Buddha's teachings explain all this; maybe we'll go into it, you know, depending on which verse we talk about. I'll try to squeeze the whole lam rim into this little text. Okay...

So, he doesn't assert a creator, therefore, of course, he himself is not a creator. So that means there's only two options: he's either – and this is unfortunate, as I've talked often enough about how we think of religion: anything goes. You're allowed to have a dream, a vision, you write a book about it. Everybody's writing their books about their own spiritual path, you know; and we tend to think that's cool. Now, of course, it is cool insofar as each of us has the right to say what we want. We have the right. No one has the right to, you know, (unclear 14:21) freedom of lie; it's true. We have the right to think what we wish. But the Buddha's key point is this -- and it's sort of surprising, but it's so tasty when we get it -- is that he is saying that what he is presenting -- first of all, what he is presenting is coming from his own experiences; and this is a big surprise. It's not something he's made up. If it is, I think it's really irresponsible and you should not -- how dare a person be so rude as to just make up a bunch of ideas! Which is sort of what we think is okay when it comes to spiritual, but it's a bit shocking; I mean, if you did that in science, they'd laugh you out of the room, wouldn't they? You'd have no say in anything; how dare you write a book and think, 'Oh, I don't think one and one is two at all. I think it's *this*.' And you write a book -- 'cause I had a vision, you know?' I mean, excuse me!

Buddha's Approach Comes From His Own Direct Experience

15:02

But the same kind of rigor should be in spiritual as well; and that is the Buddha's approach, because if Buddha's not a creator, he's either a nutter, as they say in England: a nutter, you know, he's a nutty person; mad, and he's made something up -- which is pretty shocking; or -- and this is the point -- he has discovered it from his own direct experience. Now that's a pretty intense statement to make, isn't it? It's kind of outrageous, but that's the point. That's what Buddha is; he's from his own experience has found it to be so; and what Buddhism is, assuming he's coming from a valid place -- you better check the books you read, you know, some of them are a load of rubbish -- that is what his own findings are: his own direct experience, just like Einstein. That's an interesting point.

So, clearly, you can't know it overnight yourself, it's not a question of merely believing blindly in it, which is just intellectual laziness anyway and oftentimes we prefer to do that because we can't be bothered; it just sounds nice -- 'Oh, I'll believe in that.' We don't get too far, you know, it doesn't help. You can *believe* that one and one is two, you can. But if someone asks you to help them work it out: 'Oh, I don't know...' then what good are you? A bit useless, isn't it? If someone argues with you strong enough, you'll lose faith, because you won't have any argument, you know?

So, the Buddha's point is this; it's coming from his own direct experience, but the point of it isn't just to fill your head with a bunch of knowledge so you can go pass your exam in philosophy -- which is how we think of philosophy: a bunch of clever ideas, you know. Total nonsense! What a waste of time, you know. What Buddha's views are, are about two things: one, they're a method for accomplishing freedom from suffering -- flip it over: fullness of happiness, which he says is the natural state, the natural potential of all minds. But what's fascinating, it goes hand in hand with the pursuit of knowledge, or wisdom;

because for the Buddha, the crucial point is this: the extent to which we suffer is the extent to which we are not in sync with reality. And therefore the method for getting happy is to rid the mind of the neuroses, which are liars, and to get in sync with reality. So, the more you rid the mind of nonsense, the less you suffer; the more clear you are about how things *are*. So eventually, your mind is in sync with that which is true, and your mind is in bliss. Are you hearing me, people? This is the point of the Buddha's path. This is *the point*.

Now, you can't just *believe* what Buddha says; but like anything, if you use your common sense and you study, a certain, say, something -- I like to use the example, if we've been allopathic medicine people all our lives, you know, you've only ever heard of *that*, the western method of medical blah-blah, you know, that one, allopathic -- that's the word, isn't it? Okay, let's say you've only ever heard of that all your life, and suddenly you hear about these weird Chinese people who talk about meridians and needles in the skin and everything, I mean, you think, 'What is this?' You know? But you've got an intelligent mind, and you're prepared to open your mind to the possibility that it could be valid. So that means you've got to step back from your own model, and have enough intelligence to look into this model, and not just take a little piece of it and *believe* it, but if you really want to see if it's valid, you have to take on board pretty much the whole thing. You've got to get a real overview of the whole approach, don't you? And that will just take time, won't it? You can't, you know, just kind of magically understand it overnight; you've got to study it before you go anywhere sticking needles into people; you've got to study, and -- this is the point, as far as I'm concerned -- if it is a valid system, it has to be intellectually coherent. Are you getting that point? It can't be just some cute idea, and then someone says,

'Prove it!'

'Oh, no, I can't prove it';

which is how we think of religion. If it is valid, it has to be intellectually coherent. And that just takes time. Well, exactly the same with your approach to Buddhism, you know? It's exactly the same. Whether you come from being a Christian, or you come from being a materialist, which are both different models; they're both different ways of describing the world. That's all they are, they're a system. Do you understand my point?

So, we don't like giving up the system we usually have, you know? We believe what we're told. We believe since we're born that mummy and daddy made us, for example. No one ever questions that, because the assumption is that your brain is your mind, and we know we can see the brain comes from mummy and daddy. So then we take it for granted and never question. Well, Buddha, because he asserts that the mind is not physical, he says they didn't make you, dear; they gave you a body. You know? They're lying there quietly -- or, not quietly -- minding their own business, and then you come along, you know? Probably not quietly...so you know, you can't blame your parents; they just give you a body. So, everything in Buddhism is based on a series of different assumptions, just like in your acupuncture system. You can't bring your allopathic assumptions and try to squeeze acupuncture into it; it just doesn't work. So, to really get the big picture of Buddhism -- and of course, you don't

have to if you don't want to, you can take little pieces from it; you are the boss here – but for me, I like the big picture. I want to get the big picture, you know.

So this is why it just takes time to experience the truth of it. Because the Buddha's point is: if he has seen it to be this way -- as a result of his own practices – and he gives us the methods to also see it this way, and he explains the experiential implications of it – that you get happy and stop suffering and you can benefit others – that's the result of it, you know; so then you've got to -- obviously, if you're following the instructions he gave –just like a cake recipe – you've got to get the same cake that the recipe says, isn't it? You can't get something else...so it's practical like this; but it takes time, and you go one step at a time, and that's why for me – I mean it might sound kind of wordy – I don't use the word 'believe', 'I believe in Buddhism,' I don't say that. I say, 'I'm using it as my working hypothesis.' And I mean that very seriously; and I think it gives it much more kind of – it's, you know, intellectually lazy; we can be very easily intellectually lazy and then get very fundamentalist. Buddhists as well: 'this is right, that's wrong,' you know, because we like the sound of it. Well, I'm sorry; it's just not good enough! It's cheap, you know? And then it gets us into trouble...

So anyway, there's that as an overview from the beginning. So, we're going to -- if we have never heard it before, or we've heard it a thousand times – we think of it this way. We're looking into these views as an approach to cultivating -- in this case – compassion, you know. It's from the 'university', which is the Mahayana component – a bird needs two wings, Lord Buddha says. The Hinayana path, which is the first and second scopes – or, 'junior school' and 'high school' – that's the Hinayana part of the path, which is all about *you* getting *your* liberation; and now, based upon success there – and that's assumed all the way through in this; if it is university, junior school and high school have to be assumed here, and I'll explain as I go along – these are actually, even though it's so simple looking, highly advanced practices, actually, surprisingly; because the words look so simple and cute, you know.

So we're taking it as our hypothesis; this is the idea. This is the way – I find that very useful, very grounding, you know. And it's one step at a time, one step at a time; step by baby step we go, you know. Does that make sense, people? Okay. So let's look at this then. So this thought transformation – *lojong*, or mind training system – actually, the whole of Buddhism, from junior school all the way, is all mind training; like I said, what you're doing is transforming your mind. It's just like you are if you practice singing, like I told you; or math, or cooking: you're transforming your mind from not knowing cooking to knowing cooking. Then your hands do the job; that's it, same here. But the difference here is; which part of our mind are we training here? We're training the part of our mind that we would call – you know, where morality is involved. Or in fact, where the experiences of happiness and suffering, you know? You might not ever know how to make cakes, but you don't necessarily think you're suffering...but the Buddha would say if we can't be patient, then definitely you're suffering. If you can't be compassionate, you're definitely suffering, and you cause others suffering. So, this is *that* part of our mind that we're dealing with here. That part

that we call – you know, that we refer to as spiritual. But don't mystify it, please; it's really important. Different paths have different approaches; but the Buddha does not use a word called 'spirit', like a 'soul'; he just doesn't – his explanations don't need it. Right? This is the point.

So again, let's remind ourselves of what he is talking about, then; because when we hear the word 'mind', we go *up here*, this box of bits and pieces in the brain, you know, where pieces are stacked away in there. That's not the Buddha's view. The mind, for the Buddha, covers not just our thoughts, but feelings, emotions, unconscious, subconscious, instinct, intuition; what even you'd like to call spirit or soul, using the words loosely, okay? It goes to -- the mind, in Buddhist terms goes to far more subtle, more refined levels of cognition – because cognition is the job of the mind. The mind for Buddha goes to far more subtle levels; he's got a far more radical view, one: of the level to which the mind can go in terms of its capacity for cognition; but, two: its capacity for bliss and happiness and clarity and wisdom; far more dramatic than our usual view of mind. Okay? So always keep this in mind; and we're going to go into this in different days.

Everything You Do On the Path Is Training Your Mind

24:19

So, always, everything you're doing in this Buddhist path is you're training your mind. So, the key question has to be: training your mind in what? So, basically; really simple. Again, embarrassingly simple to be able to state it. Just the doing of it is a hard job, that's all. So, basically, the Buddha's saying that every mind, every mind possessor – '*sem chen*', the term in Tibetan for sentient being: mind possessor, *sem chen*, it's a lovely term; every mind possessor – and by the way, there are trillions of them; not just humans; there's only -- we're like point naught naught naught naught one percent, you know, of all sentient beings. There's all the trillions of creature, the billions of beings in the ocean, you know, all the tiny creatures in our body, all the big fishes, all the kangaroos, all the non-physical ones you can't see like spirits – that's where the Buddha uses the term 'spirit': to refer to a very suffering type of sentient being, like ghosts, you know – hell-beings, god-beings; there's a whole spectrum of possibilities of types of mental experiences as far as the Buddha's concerned. And again, interestingly, Buddha's psychology refers to all these beings, not just humans, you know?

So – all these minds, every one of them, Buddha says, possesses just naturally -- just by their very existence -- the potential, simply, to be perfect. You know, my Catholic mum was quite shocked when she heard that 'arrogant' statement, but this is basically what Buddha's saying; and what that means is so simple: the word in Tibetan for the word 'buddha', the word '*sang gye*', the first syllable, '*sang*', implies the complete eradication from the mind of all suffering and its causes – which are the neuroses, the negative states -- and the second syllable, '*gye*' – *bud-dha* -- refers to the complete development of all the positive qualities, and thus the sources of happiness. So these positive and negative states of mind are so simple; when we look at all our complicated system in psychiatry and psychology in our culture, this is so simple it's embarrassing; and Buddha hasn't changed it in two and a half thousand years – we can assume, because it maybe works, you know. Isn't it?

So let's look at this. So, in the mental consciousness – what a lovely cup and saucer, look at that! My attachment just got satisfied... is it Dinae's cup and saucer? I mean, is it Deanna's? I thought it was; it looks like Deanna. Looks like Deanna, there you go. Okay, so this mental consciousness of ours has within it at the mental level – we've got the sensory consciousness, but that's just a bunch of dumb animals; eye consciousness, ear consciousness, you know, they don't have much power, and they don't have much capacity for decent cognition; they're a bit limited. But the real – where the workshop is, as Lama Zopa puts it, is the mental consciousness, okay; the mental consciousness.

So, this mental consciousness of ours – (sniffles) excuse me – everyone tells me I need one of those Neti- potties or something, what are they called? Thank you very much. Everyone's telling me. I know there are; doesn't do any good. Thank you very much, I've been trying...

Three Categories of States of Mind

27:36

Okay. So, our mental consciousness basically has three categories of states of mind, really simple; so simple, it's a joke: positive, negative, neutral. I mean like ha-ha-ha, you know? Not like ADID and BBDD and bi-polar and this-and-that; just positive, negative and neutral, okay. Now the positive ones are really simple, we all know them: love, compassion, joy, contentment, generosity, blah-blah-blah; we all know those. The more we get them *here*, the happier we are and the more on the receiving end, we definitely like it. And then we have the negative ones, and they're – we all know those: anger, fear, jealousy, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, blah-blah-blah; and we know they're the horrible ones. The more we have those, or the more we're on the receiving end, they're awful. We know this. So easy. Then there's a third category called 'neutral' and they're really neither here nor – they are, they're crucial pieces of mind, states of mind, many of them, but they don't have this quality of virtue or non-virtue.

So, you know, an example I use is a state of mind called 'mindfulness' which, Rinpoche points out to us, that thieves even need it as well. So don't think of it in its nature as something holy; it is not. But if you use it in relation to something bad, like shooting people, you'd be a very good shooter. If you used it in relation to doing something like, you know, spiritual practice, you'll really go far. So, it depends on how you use it; but in its nature, it's neither good nor bad in this virtue or non-virtue sense. And this is the stuff that Buddha's dealing with.

Okay, we need to know those other parts of our mind; especially if we're going to meditate. We'll be very sophisticated in our knowledge of the parts of our mind, you know, that aren't necessarily positive and negative; but to do the job of being our own therapist, as Lama Yeshe puts it, which is what you mainly do in 'high school' – 'high school', this is 'university' – you need to know the non-virtues and virtues; know how to discriminate between them.

First Level of Practice: Control of Body and Speech

29:28

So, okay – so, in junior school, the very first level of practice, first scope; Buddha’s mainly concerned about us controlling our body and speech. Given that our mind is berserk; the negative ones are berserk and are in control and run the show right now, which is how come we kill and lie and steal and you know, get depressed and all the rest – look at the world, it’s very obvious...then the first level of practice, which seems so simple and boring, you know, but it’s *profound*: control your body and control your speech.

So then, accomplishing this to some degree, which means, in Buddhist terms, abiding by the laws of karma – and I think one of the verses eventually will get into all that, won’t do it here – practicing morality; refraining from killing, lying, stealing because *you* don’t want the karmic results – we’ll go into this later. Then you get to high school; now you’ve subdued your body and speech enough – and you’ve cultivated *some* concentration so you can now begin this marvelous job, this unique job of a Buddhist, this is where you become a Buddhist, actually. Behaving nicely – good Communists do that. You share it with everybody, you know. But this is uniquely Buddha’s approach: this distinct view to what the mind is, how it functions, and this thing about the positive and the negative, and then you study that model of the mind so you know the definitions of these different things, be very precise about it, and then through these concentration techniques you go into your mind and learn to unravel and unpack the craziness and distinguish the weeds from the flowers, you know; and then to eliminate the weeds and grow the flowers. That’s what you’re doing as a Buddhist. That’s what your job is. It’s a job you’re trying to do: molding your mind, as Lama Zopa says, into the shape that you want it to become. That’s the thing.

Second Stage: The Thoughts Beneath the Feelings

And so now when we come to that – and we’ll probably do this later on; more detail about this, we’ll revert back to high school later – the key thing to understand about our mind in the job of being our own therapist – not to mention graduating from high school so we can get to do this job that’s more radical here, these really radical changes in our mind so that we can actually exchange ourselves for others, this really marvelous level of developing love and compassion – it’s so advanced, actually; these verses are the approach that one would take to accomplish that level of love and compassion. The thing we really need to understand, which we do in high school, practice in high school where we learn the Buddhist model of the mind, is we get to see – and this takes time, but at first intellectually we understand it – but beneath all the feelings and the visceral and the emotions and the dramas that we *feel*, the depression that we *feel*, the anger we *feel*, that the jealousy we *feel*; we think it’s feelings and physical, right, and those intensity of feelings we have...once we start to see our mind more clearly and go more deeply into it, we will see that all those emotions and feelings are like the packaging, the dressing, the clothing on top of the bare bones of the mind which is nothing other than conceptual thoughts. I think we began to talk about this on whatever day it was—Tuesday – didn’t we? Yeah, okay.

Third Stage: Becoming Your Own Therapist / Reconstruction

32:44

This is really hard to see, but when we *can* see this, this is the key to understanding how Buddha is suggesting we change our mind; and probably the simplest way to put it – and I'm not kidding – is learning to be a cognitive therapist. In a kind of cute way to say it, but it's kind of profound. Once you can understand that overwhelming raging of anger, where you slowly harness your body and speech, slowly through meditation harness your mind; calm the violent energy down after much practice, you can begin to hear this elaborate conceptual story that *is* what the anger *is*; and its assumptions and how they're faulty, based upon this and this and this. It's like an intelligent job to do; to unpack -- unravel; unpack and unravel, deconstruct – not kidding – these deeply ingrained, deeply held stories, tight packed inside our mind, you know. Does this idea make sense? This is when you really can begin to see how you can change your mind; 'cause once you understand anger is based on a series of misconceptions – misconceptions: wrong assumptions about me and you and what happiness and suffering are; this just takes time – then you can begin to change: you reconstruct the thoughts and slowly practice thinking *those* thoughts until *they* become the view that you hold, they become your feelings – and that's to say love and compassion. Takes time; but this is the Buddhist approach, you know.

The First Verse

34:18

Okay, so; with that in mind, let's look at the first verse of this cute little prayer, which is outrageous...

'By thinking of all sentient beings as even better than the wish-granting gem...' – already that's ridiculous to us: what on earth is a 'wish-granting gem', you know?

'...for accomplishing the highest aim, may I always consider them precious.'

Do we have any other translations? Where's that Dalai Lama little booklet? Can you give me that as well? Absolutely. Let everybody have one. Have you got your little Dalai Lama booklet? Or take this similar sheet, either way okay. Because there's so many translations of these texts...many, aren't there...

Director: This translation actually was when Geshe Phelgye was here... and we went through and talked about the meaning of the verses...

Ven.: Do you know who translated this one?

Director: We did. He did. We did.

Ven.: Oh, really? Ah... I think just have the texts for now, that'll do; take the booklets later. Let me just read...let me look at this...So let me just read this one and then I'll read an alternative translation, and we'll just see what the meaning is; then we'll discuss it. So this one says, 'By thinking...' – oh, it's the same. Even better. So, this is the one from the Dalai Lama's website; you can't have translated it? This is the same, darling. This is the one from the Dalai Lama's website, so, it can't be the one you did. You can't have created this one, 'cause that's from the Dalai Lama's website. Have you got something else in there?

Have you got another translation? Just show me... This one, I found it on the website, with its commentary, actually.

A 'Suitable Vessel'

36:26

So, anyway, 'By thinking of all sentient beings as even better than the wish-granting gem for accomplishing the highest aim, may I always...' Okay, we've got to get a bit of background to this, anyway; this weird, 'wish-granting gem' business, you know? 'Wish-granting gem' they talk about in, I suppose, in Buddhist cosmology – I don't know... sounds so boring to us; but if you can imagine – this is the point – if you can imagine such a thing as a wish-granting gem: such that if you just have it and you make a wish you get what you want. If you can imagine such a thing – which sounds pretty insane, pretty outrageous, pretty marvelous; who wouldn't love it? And the whole idea is that sentient beings are more precious than that. Okay. This is where – not kidding – as Pabongkha Rinpoche said in the lam rim – Pabongkha Rinpoche says that in order to take on board the real meaning of these practices -- I mean really be qualified -- in other words, this is sort of like – like I said -- this is like 'university'. It's like high quality level of practice. So, what I'm saying is, if a person were truly qualified to do this stuff at the level it's meant, it's pretty advanced. But we can take it on board to the level we can. But it seems insane, you know, for us in one way. It sounds so high, that it just – we end up just thinking, 'Oh, that's a nice religious idea. Oh, yeah, love all sentient beings. Great.' You know? 'Give me my coffee please. Be normal.'

So, somehow, you know, as Pabongkha Rinpoche says, to study this kind of thing and actually practice at the level that's implied here, you need to be a 'suitable vessel'. And all that means is you need to have done some high school and junior school. Obviously. For this is really university. And that's the point about the lam rim; really understand what it means; the levels, you know, not just kind of vague. It's very, very meaningful.

So, the idea of thinking right now, most of us, the way we are right now; we are riddled with attachment, which means it's the default mode. We want what I want every second; we get upset and irritated if we don't get it. Does everybody recognize that? That's right. So that means we haven't even graduated from junior school yet. That's okay; we've got to be realistic, though. Do you understand my point? We've got to know where we're at. So, most of us haven't even maybe even entered junior school; maybe we're in bubblers still, you know, where we're struggling to control our body and speech. I mean, if we'd even graduated from junior school, we'd have perfect body and speech. We would never say a single word bad about anybody, we'd never say an angry word, we'd never tell a lie; we'd never talk about people behind their backs. Are we communicating here? So, we're not even graduated from junior school yet.

Sentient Beings – More Precious Than the Wish-Granting Gem

38:59

So, let's see where we're at realistically. But we can try these. So this is implying you've controlled your body and speech, you abide by the laws of karma, you

purify your negative karma, you've got some concentration, you really are your own therapist, you've subdued to a profound degree your attachment, your aversion, your ignorance; you've done many of the first stages, you know, of the compassion wing and you're at the point where truly now you're trying to cultivate this view that every single sentient being is like this massive grist for the mill for *you* to cultivate *your* compassion. This is the approach, you know? '...being more precious...' Meaning '...for accomplishing the highest aim...' In other words, to accomplish a goal, you need some tools, don't you? Well, the approach here is not how we tend to think, you know? The approach here is that the tool for accomplishing the highest aim -- that is in this case, bodhicitta and then enlightenment -- the actual tools are sentient beings.

They have this phrase in Tibetan: 'In order to cultivate compassion, we need suffering sentient beings.' Now, we don't need them to suffer; that's not the point. But, if you are not hearing about suffering sentient beings, if you never see suffering sentient beings, how can you cultivate compassion? You see my point? You've got to see suffering sentient beings; and that's suffering at the subtler level, not just at the gross level. And they are the grist for the mill for *us* to develop *our* enormous compassion such that we want to lead them all to enlightenment. And then, even more dramatically, our enemies are the best ones of all, as Geshe Sopa says, 'Bodhisattvas need their enemies.'

So the whole point being stated here, that even if we could imagine such a thing as a wish-fulfilling gem -- such that if you had it, you'd get what you wanted, you know -- that sentient beings -- any old Joe, the smelly old homeless person, your mean ugly old mother-in-law, your ugly old ex-husband who chucked you out for a younger version, the people who annoy you at work; these ordinary, miserable sentient beings. The rats; all the creature you hate... think of our ordinary view of the world. Every one of these sentient beings is more precious for you, as a tool that you need to get you where you have to go. That's kind of the idea. Do you understand what I'm saying, people?

Now, who thinks like this? Blimey, you know? All sentient beings are precious? Give me a break! Maybe our little cute babies... Maybe our little poodle... You know, the ones we're attached to are precious. That's the usual place we're coming from, isn't it? So, you can hear, it's an outrageous statement, actually. You kind of get my point here, people?

So, we can aim for this, can't we? We can go for it; we can imagine just the thought -- how fantastic, you know? So, the next time you're feeling miserable about somebody, you remember this: sentient beings are precious. And you've got to see why: because -- and this is the point here: this is the bodhisattva path, okay? And they talk about the bodhisattvas as being these really courageous warriors. They're brave. You know, in the first stage of practice, in junior school, you basically back off and you play safe. You watch your body, you watch your speech and you back away from your problems, because you don't want to make a mess.

In the second part, you're still in the retreat mode. It's like the retreat mode: you're mainly working on your own mind. You're being cautious about sentient beings, you're minding your own business; your mind is your business. This is the first stages of practice where you really get to know yourself profoundly and deep and well. You get my point here. *You're* the main emphasis. But now you're getting courageous. You've come down from the mountains and you're bang in the middle of this chaos of these insane sentient beings who are out-of-control, lost, confused, raging along, murdering, killing, stealing, bad-mouthing their next-door neighbor, lying, killing, stealing: ordinary, ordinary sentient beings; out-of-control, lost. So, unless you are a suitable vessel – you've done the work on your own mind; you're like a rock – which is what wisdom gives you – this will make you crazy, right? That's why we have to get away. That's why we need a quiet place like, well, Missoula – you come to the mountains to get peace, isn't it, instead of New York City, you know? I mean, you want peace; you don't go to New York City and sit on the freeway, do you?

Being a 'Suitable Vessel' for This Practice

43:22

But bodhisattvas would. This is the point. Bodhisattvas – that's what they like *best*, you know -- the crazier, the better; because they're *suitable vessels*. And for them, they *need* the insanity of sentient beings, because these are grist for the mill for them to – what's another way of saying it? They're the stuff that they've got to push up against to smash every last fraction of their own ego-grasping so they can go to this incredible degree of great compassion, great love and bodhicitta. You've kind of got the idea I'm talking? You get the approach. So, the bodhisattvas are these outrageous people; outrageous, courageous, brave, you know, in the midst of the chaos. And the more they're in that, the more that is, like I'm saying, grist for their mill, 'cause they're capable. They're ready for it; they're suitable vessels.

So, it's quite a dramatic level of practice. You get my point, now. And we don't think of love and compassion like this. We think of it as some soupy, wishy-washy, gooey feeling. Believe me, it ain't like that. It could be, but it's something more powerful, you know, more courageous. The usual love and compassion we have now is for children and dogs, you know, maybe a cat. Children and animals...little baby victims. Then we're comfortable; that's our comfort zone. But the love and compassion we're talking here is for the murderers and the rapists and the maniacs and the terrorists, you know? *All* sentient beings. *All*. So, you can be clear; to have that view, you've got to have done some inner work, to have that truly. But we can at least attempt to think it. This is the idea, you know? Are we communicating here, people? Okay.

So, I don't know why you want me to talk about equanimity...do you get equanimity from this? Anyway, is this okay? I just...keep going? Is it alright? Good. If I'm wrong you must argue with me... Oh, good, okay.

So, we've got eight days, and eight verses; is that the plan? Okay... 'Consider them precious'...tough one, isn't it? So, another translation, to get another take on it, you know, I think I like this one better... 'determined to obtain' – this is

very interesting, this is a very different take on it, this translation, on the meaning, actually. Listen to this one. 'Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit' – listen to this – '*from* all sentient beings' – this, somehow we can't get initially, it doesn't make sense. The words sound weird, like you're going to be greedily using up sentient beings – 'who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel, I'll hold them most dear at all times.' I've got a feeling that's a better meaning. Honestly. Because what it means – this is this whole attitude the Tibetans take – well, the Buddhists, but the Tibetan scholars, the Tibetan practitioners of this Mahayana path – that like this whole idea, that these sentient beings are grist for your mill. Do you understand? So, if you're trying to remove even the shred of the garbage, all the shreds of self-cherishing; you're trying to rid your mind of ego-grasping, you're trying to rid your mind particularly of self-cherishing, of being selfish, of putting self first, that obviously, the best thing is to have a person in front of you who's mean to you; have a person in front of you who's making you crazy, have crazy, suffering sentient beings. You understand my point. To be around lovey-dovey people, that's not practice. That reinforces your nice gooey feelings. So if you're really – it's like Lance Armstrong, he prefers the tough mountains. You get my point. So for him to get the best, to make the most, you know, to get to his highest aim, you know, what's most precious is the toughest mountains of all. The comfort zone *we* want is going *down* the mountain; it's easy -- we crave -- the attachment in us *craves* comfort, *craves* things to be pleasant.

But – 'determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit from all sentient beings' – it's quite an intense concept. You with me, people? You, you know, you've got to hold them as precious, because every one will test one or other of your delusions. And the whole point is, like Lance, is to get rid of every ounce of – so, you can just go up, you know, to the goal. This is the same here; we've got to go against the impulse of ego, against the impulse of self-cherishing, against the impulse of self-centeredness, of putting self first, which is *primordial*.

So, these are really the warriors, you know. In the first stages of practice, we're playing safe; we're in our own mind deeply. Here, we're in the midst of the chaos and you are grateful; the crazier the sentient beings, the better, because it's going to smash up against your delusions so that you can conquer the delusions. That's the approach.

So, I've got a feeling that's a slightly better, more tasty approach to it. It's interesting to look at different translations, isn't it? You see, it says, 'for accomplishing the highest aim', 'determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit from...' – and I remember seeing a translation of this, someone changed it to 'the greatest possible benefit *for* all sentient beings'. Wrong meaning! You getting the point I'm saying? It's like they're the grist for the mill. So you've got to get the best, the most benefit *from* them. Bodhisattvas *need* them, you know, that's the attitude. It's quite a very interesting approach, you know.

Director: It's almost like a strange juxtaposition: in order to receive the benefit from them, in order to do that, I have to hold them dear.

Ven.: That's right, exactly. I get you. Exactly -- that's the point. That's where it's nicely expressed in the verse here: 'for accomplishing the highest aim...' you know; which is enlightenment. So it's very interesting. So, you can see, it's quite dramatic, the meaning. God... 'All sentient beings are precious', give me a break, you know? 'Get me away from them', isn't it? I mean, this is what I find so interesting; you look at the default mode we have when we think of a big city. You understand? When we think of a big city, all you think of is all the busy cars, the roads, the hundred-storey buildings full of -- but if you analyze it from the bodhisattva point of view -- excuse me, who is driving those cars, people? They're not driving themselves, believe me. Who is walking in the streets? Who is in the underground? Look at all the poor people out living in the sewers. Who is in the hundred floors of buildings? Every single one of them is a sentient being. And those sentient beings are the ones we're trying to see as most precious. So, it's almost as if every time we go against the city, you know, 'I can't stand the city, I want to get into the bush,' we're actually creating the causes not to be a Mahayana practitioner! We have to be so careful what we say, you know. Do you understand? I mean, we're prepared to think, 'Oh, I'm prepared to think, 'Oh, I'm going to serve sentient beings as long as they leave me alone and give me peace! Then I'll like them from a distance,' you know? 'Oh, yeah, I'm working for sentient beings but keep me away!'

I mean, we understand, we're humans... it shows how difficult -- I mean, one day in a busy, busy -- even in busy Missoula must be exhausting; you want to get home and have peace and close your door and, you know, relax; because it's sentient beings who make us crazy. So, we've got to look at where we're at, now; which shows we're way, way, way from *this*. You hear me, people?

So, okay, and this is where we've got to be a suitable vessel. You can't just leap in to university level and think all sentient beings are so precious and have a mental breakdown... You've got to have wisdom; and that's why His Holiness says, 'Compassion is not enough. You need wisdom.' And speaking in this context, wisdom is what you get from the first two scopes of practice. You understand my point. Lama Zopa says, 'Meaning well is not enough.' We need *wisdom*.

So the practice of the junior school and high school -- controlling your body, speech and mind, harnessing your crazy energy, knowing your mind profoundly and well, knowing exactly what a delusion is, understanding the way it thinks, I mean really having a sophisticated knowledge of your own mental processes -- I'm not kidding -- and I have to say, to degrees that we don't even consider possible in our culture: that is what makes you a suitable vessel. That is what gives you sanity. That is what makes you like a rock on the earth and nothing can disturb you. *Then* this is the approach; then you're able to move into this approach. Because you have such understanding of your own mind, what causes suffering, and *that's* what gives you renunciation.

Renunciation

52:13

So, another way to say it: *renunciation* is what you get from practicing the wisdom wing. And what renunciation is -- has two components. The first one is

the recognition that you're suffering. Now, remember what suffering is: first noble truth, it doesn't just mean you're having punches in the nose; you've got a mean husband. That's the gross level, called 'the suffering of suffering'. The second one, we don't even call it suffering. For us, we call it happiness! And that's what the second level, the 'inner prison' as Lama Zopa Rinpoche said to one young prisoner who wrote to him, who's living in his cell twenty-three hours a day in his little orange jump suit and ten books, the inside of a pen 'cause he can use the other part to whack his celly, and that's about all for the rest of his life. And he said to him, 'Your prison is nothing in comparison with the inner prison of ordinary people.' Ha – that's us. The prison of attachment, the prison of anger, the prison of depression, the prison of pride. That's the prison that the second type of suffering is referring to; and most of us in our world don't even think we're suffering, 'cause we use the grossest level of suffering. Not to mention the *third* kind of suffering, which is so subtle we can't even factor it in, which is called 'all-pervasive suffering'.

So Buddha's deal on suffering, again, is quite sophisticated, quite deep, goes in quite subtle levels. So, when you know you're suffering at all these levels and you are vomiting at the thought of more of it because you are sick of it, that's the first part. But the second one is the point. *Finally*, you know why you're suffering. Two causes, in Buddha's view: second noble truth, so simple. One is the past *karma*, that set you up for the present suffering; and two is the *delusion* that propelled the cause of that suffering in the past that will then arise again and perpetuate it again and so keep the whole ball rolling; karma and delusions.

So when you have renunciation, you are revolted by your own suffering, you're exhausted from your suffering; but you know *why* you are suffering: *your* karma and *your* delusions and this gives you this massive wish to get the hell out of it. Are you with me? That is renunciation. When you've got this, that's the basis of genuine compassion, and you cannot have compassion – genuine, valid compassion – until you've got this. So, way to go, baby; because compassion is exactly the same as this, except the object is different. So one is the renunciation: 'I am sick of this suffering, and what can I do to change it because now I know why I'm suffering: my karma, my delusions.' And that gives you the method: change your mind, purify your negative karma. That's the method; you're already on the case. You're so powerful, you're so confident. You know you're suffering from your own junk, and you can change.

Valid Compassion Grows out of the View of Karma

55:01

So, from renunciation comes this huge confidence, this huge self-respect. That's renunciation. You just revert that now – change that to others. One: you see their suffering, and *that* is unbearable. That's what real compassion is, and of course, it's a long way to go for us. *You see the suffering of others and it is unbearable*, just like your own is. And two: *now you know why they are suffering*: because of *their* karma and *their* delusions. That is valid compassion; and you cannot have it until you've got it for yourself. This is the meaning. You cannot have it. Right now, we have compassion that's based upon attachment; and it's for victims and *our* people. And it's usually children and animals – that's about the extent of our

compassion. And our compassion next instant turns into anger: 'Who caused it? How dare you do that to innocent babies!' You know? This is our view. Buddha says: absolutely faulty, wrong view. It's the samsaric view, and it's not valid compassion. It's better than nothing; but it quickly turns into anger, because, according to the Buddha, we've got the wrong assumption about what the cause of suffering is. We love to have an innocent victim, and we only have compassion for innocent victims...

The view is so faulty, according to Buddha. That's why we've got to get the big picture. We've got to think about the meaning of karma, really think about it carefully; and then the fundamental change that arises in your own mind in relation to yourself, it cuts right across the victim, the self-pity, the 'poor me' which is the nature of victim, which is the nature of ego. And you courageously owning your own garbage dump inside; but because you know you have this marvelous potential, you are happy to investigate the garbage dump, because you know it's the source of your pain, and you're so delighted to see your junkie mind. 'Now I can change it!' So, it does imply – this renunciation does imply enormous confidence, enormous courage, enormous self-confidence. You're sick of the suffering, you know why it is, and you want to get the hell out. Then you change that to sentient beings; and that's compassion. And once you've got it here for yourself, you have compassion for the victims, you have compassion for the perps – no different. In fact, you have more compassion for the pilots on September 11th than the victims. That's a fact, as a bodhisattva.

Of course, you have compassion for everybody. And – but why; what's the logic? Compassion's based on karma, too; that sentient beings *are* suffering because of their own past actions and those who are harming now *will* suffer because of their present actions, which is the reason to have compassion for them. Your heart will break when you see sentient beings doing the crazy things they do, because they don't realize they're harming themselves – like a mother for her kid, her junkie kid, like I mentioned. Everybody else hates him, that wretched old heroin addict: rude, steals, lies; hopeless to be around. But the mother's heart breaks for their junkie son, because she can see he's harming himself. That's the basis of compassion. When you've got this, it includes *everybody*, you know. And no wonder you are courageous at that point. You are courageous and brave. There's no fear, there's no pathetic, wimpy, 'poor victims', and all going crazy, 'Why is the world the way it is, I can't stand it...' which is all the fear in us. I mean we've all got it, so we've got to go one step at a time in this path, you can't just leap over and get all – a lot of people have a connection with the compassion wing. Fantastic, you know? But, get your wisdom first, please; otherwise, you'll just make a mess and you'll get crushed by the suffering of the world. Are you with me, people? So, ask me some questions now. Yes, sweetheart?

Kindness, Tough Love and Compassion

58:47*****

Q: As far as compassion goes, like when I have experienced someone...driving into my building or running through our fence...

Ven.: You mean someone harming you?

Q: Yeah...

Ven.: Okay, good. Go on.

Q: ...and I felt compassion for that person...

Ven.: Compassion, meaning...? Just analyze it for a second. Meaning?

Q: I felt sorry for the person that he was in the situation that he was ... that he drove through and damaged...

Ven.: Sure.

Q: The difficult thing for me is someone closer... the biggest challenge but more subtle, like brother-in-law who ...does all kinds of things I don't

Ven.: Does things to harm others, you mean? Sure. Is that what you're saying? Does bad things to other people...

Q: And not even necessarily bad, but just... is a lazy-ass...

Ven.: I see, okay. So it's very hard, I mean, it's very hard to have compassion for him when you see the mess he's making and how he's not pulling his weight and that kind of thing... I understand; and that's where compassion is almost – we're so used to a certain view of compassion that it sounds like a feeling of empathy with poor people suffering... That really takes time to have that kind of feeling towards a person who's trouble-making or a person who's just like you're saying. So, we've got to, really – it just takes time, because it's not obvious to us because the view of karma's not obvious. And then the other point is, because we think of compassion as something gooey, then we don't realize it's like – we do know the term 'tough love', but it's got to come from the right place.

So, first of all – there's a whole bunch of things here. This person clearly is not directly in your control, are they? They're just in your family; you know them. And you're not in charge of them; therefore you can't give them advice. Is the person they're married to or the person – any of them your...?

Q: He's married to my sister...

Ven.: Does she ask your advice and things? You talk a lot...

Q: We talk a lot, yeah. We have an understanding about the fact that yes, this is how he is, he's lazy and... she's 51 and in her last year of nursing school and...

Ven.: Sure. Okay, so then, you see, that's where – the easiest part for us is to go to the angry, get annoyed with him, then you support your sister, you feel sorry for her; she probably complains and you support her in it. It's not an easy one. So, it doesn't mean you can't support her; you must support your sister, but the

point is – and this is where it's tough for all of us – she's married to him. She hasn't left him, and that's so – and I'm not criticizing her now – so often what happens. We see a person in a relationship: one's the victim, one's the meany, and we love to feel sorry for the victim person. But the point is; we all have to be accountable. So how long has she been with him?

Q: Twenty-five years.

Ven.: There you go. And she's got no thought of leaving him, has she? Has she? Okay, good. Now – this is the point: this is where we all have to have the courage to be accountable. We all have to find the bravery to do what is right. But, because – most interestingly, I remember reading "The Guardian", the paper in England did a survey; some nurses did a survey of the five things that are most common for people who are dying. And one of them was – the regrets – and one was the regret of not following what they really wanted to do, the fear of doing what they wanted because they were worried what other people think. This is what most people do in their lives. We are full of fear, we don't follow our own thought, we're too scared to make our own decisions and then we end up just being victims and complaining and getting frustrated and therefore getting ragingly angry with the person who does it. But the fact is, she's seen this for years – I'm not being rude about her – she's seen it for years and years and years, she's always hoped he'd change, and then she'd feel, 'I couldn't leave him', and 'I love him,' then get mad, then get angry, then forgive him and we go round and round and round in circles.

But the point is, whatever it is we decide, we have to make a choice. So, for example, a friend of mine, a Buddhist, has a husband who's a quiet alcoholic. He drinks himself to oblivion every night. She made a decision twenty years ago that she belonged there. It was right for her to stay in that relationship, but she made that decision. She owned it, she accepted it, and she has made her own life within that and so she's a happy human being. Are you seeing what I'm saying? So, we love to get frustrated and angry because we're fearful of making decisions and then we blame somebody. But, excuse me, she can leave him – you could say, she *could* leave any time she wanted. But this is what's so difficult and this is how most relationships are; and we're all scaredy-babies, and then we blame the other person. But she's willingly in that relationship. No one's forcing her; she's not in prison, but this is the scary part, you know?

So, we have to be accountable; and 'accountable' means we've got to stop blaming. It's *so hard*. And your job is not to buy into it. This is *their* business. You are not responsible for him, let it be and learn to see the good qualities and love him for who he is. That's your job. Are you seeing my point? That's your job, darling. And it's so tough, isn't it? It's difficult, isn't it? Because we love to complain, we love to blame, we love to get angry; we love to get frustrated. It's just our *habit*. You understand my point, don't you? So, you're working on yourself; that's wonderful. But our delusions are saying we're addicted to that. So you want to change; this is good.

So, your practice is to support your sister, but pop in some wisdom every now and again: 'This is your life, darling, I mean, you've been with him for twenty-five years, you know? What do you think? We've got to make our own choices...' That's to help her. But then your practice is to see something good about him and learn – he's there, he is who he is – you have to learn to see some good and accept him for who he is and respect him as a human being. Excuse me. You have no choice. And that's for *your* sake, honey. That's for your sake. Instead of criticizing him and talking about him behind his back – this is what the world does, no wonder there's schisms every day in families. It happens all the time.

Q: But I feel terrible...

Ven.: Don't feel terrible, it's natural; this is just typical deluded behavior.

Q: I can't find...it's very difficult for me to find anything that's ...about him...

Ven.: Well, there's plenty there, but you just can't see it because you're mad as hell... That's right, and that's *your* anger, baby. So this is why – this is tough; this work we're describing here is junior school, still. Just look at the context – and that's okay. Join the club, darling, we're all the same. We're all the same, and it's just tough; and it's scary for us 'cause we're most of us fearful, most of us support victims, most of us are too scared to even see what the options – most of us are even too scared to say to a victim, 'Well, you know...' You can't say it because you can't force a person. It would be rude to give them a lecture about being a victim; but you have to have that understanding yourself, and that can inform your skill as a sister, every now and again, to give suggestions; be sympathetic, but in the end, our sympathy is just reinforcing our own victim mentality, our own fears, our own inability to grow up and be accountable for what's in our own mind and to make choices.

Q: Well, and I feel like that's what instills the victim mentality in her and the most compassionate thing I could do would be to say 'You need to sort this out on your own.'

Ven.: No, it's okay; be her friend. No, you can be her friend but don't think – this is the other part, this is your anxiety thinking you have to solve it all the time. You don't have to solve it, darling, it's not yours to solve; you just be there and be her friend. Just listen. Stop giving advice maybe. Just listen; and – 'water off a duck's back': that's your skill. That's what we have to learn. That's what being friendly – helpful to other people. Let her talk, but don't buy into her stuff, and then get agitated about him. Don't. That's the skill you have to learn, for your sake. And that's better for her. What?

Q: It's hard to know how to do, how to not get hooked in with the...

Ven.: Because this is the – this is why I'm talking about it step-by-step: first level is control your body and speech, next level is know your own mind, be your own therapist, do your meditation, know your mind well; this is the kind of classic

Buddhist approach that I'm talking about. Then we've got some skill; that's what wisdom is: knowing what to say, when, how; knowing how to keep yourself clear and strong. It's not an easy one because we're locked into each other's prisons, you know. We're completely bound with each other's junk; because our attachment, our own attachment is so involved, you understand. Yes?

Do What it Says

1:07:23

Q: Venerable, these verses have always resonated with me and I've tried to apply them in terms of sitting practice, but that's always where they've ever stayed...

Ven.: Well, I don't know... you must be putting something into practice in life, come on, don't be too...

Q: But, I guess the question that I have is that just in your experience and the experiences that others have had, do you know of any specific strategies for actions on the application side of it in terms of really working with it throughout the day and ...

Ven.: Sweetheart, it's all to do with internalizing the thoughts. That's the strategy. You can't – you can't apply it if you haven't thought it through and heard the meaning of the words. It's like you learning cooking but, what's the strategy to make the cake? Keep learning the recipes and do what it says. 'Do what it says, baby' is the strategy. I'm not joking, now. And I think you are, but you're probably not thinking you're doing enough; which is our usual dissatisfaction. You try to be kind to people? Do you? You try to control your mouth every time, not every time, maybe? You try to be forgiving when you see - - you try to see something good about somebody? You're doing it already, so don't be so dramatic.

Q: I guess, what I come back to is, you know, you mention the word and I really see it in that light, 'radical' and that you take such a bold stance with it, and really make a radical decision not to do it anymore...

Ven.: I know, but one step at a time, sweetheart. So, maybe you rejoice – so, you've got to know where you're at, and you rejoice in your progress. And then you go to the next step, and you keep rejoicing. I think you're being a bit extreme in your assessment of where you're at, and we all love to do that, because we always think we're never enough. That's not appropriate either. Do you understand? Yes?

Karma and Purification

1:09:07

Q: You were speaking before about delusions and karma. We come into this life with karma from maybe previous...?

Ven.: Fully programmed, Buddha says, with everything that's in there. Fully programmed, ready to go; this new person.

Q: Okay. So you talked about purifying the bad karma?

Ven.: That's right.

Q: I understand you can, with growth and wisdom, move forward and change that. But, is this karma that you're talking about from the past?

Ven.: Oh my god, yes, of course it is. Sweetheart, yes, yes, good lord god, if you can't, you give up and kill yourself now, don't even bother. Give up! Cut your throat! No, hang on; so let me see where we'll bring in karma, maybe the negative states...verse three I think, is where we could do that one; negativity, suffering...find a treasure; it's all the same...What the hell, I can stick what I like where I like, can't I? I'm trying to be organized here... Okay! Listen – the Buddha's view is this: that all these trillions of mind possessors, including you and me and what's your name behind? Christy, okay, Christy and your beautiful brother-in-law, what's his name -- so we can make him a person – dear Joe, right? All these mind possessors, these sentient beings didn't come from mummy and daddy – their mummy and daddy gave them a body – but every one of their tendencies have come from their own past practice.

Karma – what You have a Tendency to Do, You do Again

1:10:45

So in the most simple way, the most obvious – karma really almost means the very – it's the movement of your mind; 'whatever your mind does' is the meaning, the broadest meaning of 'karma'. And what your mind does, obviously, is based upon what you put in before. So, if your mind runs to the piano, it's because you've done it before. If your mind runs to being good at cooking, it's because you've done it before. Whatever you have a tendency for; you tend to do it again, right? We can see this with people. So, this of course includes your emotions. We don't think that, but it does. So:

'Why are you good at piano, my dear?'

'Oh, I've practiced, Robina.'

'Why are you good at anger?'

'Oh, that's Fred's fault!'

Our problem is; we dump *those* things on someone else. The music, we're honored to own, you know. You understand? So, the Buddha says we come fully programmed with these tendencies, from – guess what – having practiced them before; and whatever is the stronger tendency is the one you practiced more; and that's why we get depressed easily or get jealous easily or get angry easily or, indeed, have compassion easily. Like that example I might have used last night, or maybe I didn't – I always use these two examples, you know: one woman came to me about her little boy when he was three, he ran like a magnet to fishing, which is called 'killing animals', okay? He spent the rest of his life a fisher. I'm not criticizing him, but just looking at imprints; and because it was a habit, he saw it as good. And that's what attachment does: If it's a habit, you come along with a habit, you add attachment to it, and you think fishing's wonderful. Of course, the world says fishing is good, so he didn't stop. Like, I

always say, if he had a tendency to kill poodles, he might have been in trouble. Had to do it at night, you know? Sneak around poodle killing! Oh my god!

So then the other example was another friend of mine – I've mentioned this one, I'm sure – he's three years old and she's taking the lice out of his head and he is in tears: 'Mommy! Mommy! Leave them alone, don't hurt them, it's their home!' He was trying every method possible for the mother to leave the lice alone in his own little wee head. Neither parent had taught these children...and indeed, you know, they gave Mozart a piano at the age of six and off he went writing his sonatas; or Hitler – you can't blame his poor old Austrian housewife mummy for old Hitler. They came with their own stuff, you know. And whatever you do, it's because you must have done it before.

Of course, you can't deduce this in the materialist model, because 'it's the genes', it's a bit complicated. It sort of is, you know, but the Buddhist one is very simple. Of course, you've got to hypothesize this view; because you can't see it immediately, but you're a fully programmed little person from the first second of conception, and then by knowing this – you're looking at a person – you check their tendencies; you can see 'angry, lying, stealing, loving, compassionate', do you understand? And then you – with skill – then indeed you see your own mind in this way. So, all of those tendencies are from having done those actions before. That's one way karma ripens, the main one, like the movement of your mind, the direction that your mind takes, based upon having been there before, done it before, or put those potentials in your mind, you know? Whether it music or cooking or anger; the same – or love.

Throwing Karma

1:13:44

Then you've got the kind of even the rebirth you're born with; that's due to karma as well, you know. At the time you passed away, before you even stopped breathing, the virtuous – in our case – the strong habit of morality; the strong habit of morality, Lama Zopa says, practiced in the context of keeping vows of morality, which gives a very powerful rocket boost to our morality, left a strong imprint in the mind such that the virtuous karma ripened before we even stopped breathing, and that programmed your mind that caused you to run to your present mummy's human womb, as opposed to her dog in the backyard, you know? Like; oops! Missed! Not like that... So that's very, very much – that's your past actions.

The third way our karma ripens is, because we are intimate social beings and we do everything in relation to others, don't we; animals, creatures, humans – therefore we create strong history with other people. We create karmic connections with sentient beings' minds. So, we're going to meet them again. It's what brings us together, so how come you go to that mother? It's not random. You've got strong history with that mother; then you've got strong history with that Catholic nun who beat you at school. You've got strong history with that person who steals from you. You've got strong history with the person who gives you a million dollars, whatever it might be. Those experiences are the fruit of your past actions in relation to those minds as well.

So, all Buddha's saying is, that every sentient being is like – the best way to say it -- is the creator of their own experiences. There's no dualistic idea that 'I didn't ask to get born, God did it, Mummy did it and I was just plunked on this earth,' and that's why we have victim mind. This philosophy actually produces the mentality being of a victim –you understand what I'm saying? But if you take the view of karma, it totally empowers you. It's scary, because initially you've got to own the rubbish, but it also means you own the good stuff; because we are the ones whose actions in the past, set it up to be this human with these tendencies, these characteristics, and have these friends or these enemies. It's a super-tasty view, in my opinion, you know. I like it very much. You understand what I'm saying?

So, then, there are millions of karmic seeds in your mind. The word 'karma' actually is synonymous with the word 'intention'; so every thought we have is a karma; and we're unaware of ninety-nine percent of them. That's the trouble; we're just on autopilot, you know? Every one of those is an intention, a karma; that leaves a seed in your mind that – unless you pull that seed out – will ripen in the future as your happiness or your suffering. That's it.

So, with this in mind, then obviously -- in relation to the Second Noble Truth, where, as I pointed out, there are two main causes of your suffering: the past karmic action that left a seed and then the delusion that propelled that action; and they subsume down to the one: the delusions; they're the main cause of suffering; the neurotic states of mind – then, in relation to these two, as Lama Zopa points out, there are two main levels of practice. The most urgent and immediate is day-to-day watching your body, speech and mind like a hawk and not responding in a negative way to the situation that rises. That's your first level: control yourself; body, speech and mind; as much as you can, so you don't create more negative karma. Do you understand? But the other one – you're carrying around these trillions of seeds, latent in your mind; that haven't yet ripened as suffering – honey, pull them out as quick as possible, please. So in relation to the karmic cause, you've got to purify past negative karma. Prevent it from ripening as suffering. That's what a daily practice is: watching your body, speech and mind, and purifying your karma. That's it, really; the most basic level. Do you understand?

Q: Will we talk about purifying karma?

Ven.: We will, yes. We will do a practice like that. We will do it, too. One day, we'll do the practice, yeah. Questions, anyone? Yes, sweetheart?

Spirits

1:17:30

Q: You mentioned earlier about the suffering of spirits and ghosts and I'm a little confused about how Buddhists explain that, you know; could you explain that a little bit more?

Ven.: I will. Okay, like I said first of all, Buddha's psychology refers to all living beings, and Buddha's view is there's this whole spectrum of trillions and trillions of mind possessors, all occupying what the Buddha would call different realms of existence. And really the way to say about a 'realm of existence' is that it's a certain mindset that comes along with a certain type of physicality. So, that way to understand this – I find quite helpful, actually – in the tantric model of the mind, which is a similar system – the most advanced system, you know; this is post-graduate – that the Tibetan medical system uses, right? So, you've got gross consciousness, and gross body that comes along inextricably linked with it – which is in this case, our conceptuality and our sensory mind, which are not physical, but utterly and inextricably linked to this gross body. You can't separate them, you know? You can separate them, but you couldn't have a cognition of eye consciousness if you didn't have an eyeball. You couldn't have tactile consciousness, which is non-physical, without the body and the nervous system.

So, gross consciousness, which is so limited, this is the level that we posit as existing in our materialist world. It's conceptuality and sensory. But, it's obviously clearly limited. I mean, even at seven in the morning, if you've been up for one hour, you don't remember ninety percent of it, so forget about remembering a past life, we all say, as if that's a logical reason – I mean, today; we don't remember ninety-nine percent of today; our conceptuality doesn't have that capacity. You understand what I'm saying. So, the mind at this gross level is really limited because it's filtered through this walking sewer, basically. You get my point. So that's why the mind is so limited.

Now, we've got subtle consciousness; and the only time we normally touch that is when we dream; now indeed, some people can have clairvoyant experiences – even, I would suggest, even when we have slightly sensitive experiences about each other, that we're sort of just getting on to the subtle consciousness a bit. There's an awareness, a connectedness to others, because subtle consciousness, when you've accessed it through meditation – and these meditation techniques enable you, in a really disciplined way, to go to that level. And this is even in the sutra practices, it's not as subtle as we're describing here; but just broadly speaking, we know from all the Buddha's teachings that you can access a more subtle level of cognition through these marvelous techniques called meditation. And the Hindus – this is straight from the Hindus; even pre-Buddha, you know – and that level of mind, it's not quite the same as what they call 'subtle' in tantra, but never mind; if you saw a person who was in that state of mind – basically, they've plumbed the depths of their consciousness – they've literally gone beyond the gross level, which we don't even think is possible – and they would look like they were dead; but they've accessed subtle consciousness, and that level doesn't need a body. And that's the level of mind that can leave the body, and can see the past and see the future because it's more subtle and is not encumbered by this big, gross bag of bones here. And that subtler level is what's capable of clairvoyance, seeing past, seeing future, seeing distances; in other words, cognizing phenomena that the gross level is not capable of. Okay.

Then you've got 'very subtle consciousness', which happens only every time you go to sleep, or when you die; that's the subtlest level. So they have this, as you know, the death process -- they describe it in great detail -- where you're kind of throwing off all the grosser levels and the subtler levels of your gross physical and -- oh yeah, even at the subtle level; sorry -- that's inextricably also linked to a subtle level of physicality. And in tantra, and as you know, the Tibetan system, the Tibetan medical system they call it the *kundalini* energy, like they do in yoga; the wind energy, the *prana*; and the subtle nervous system. And this is, you know, a subtle physical, but it's still physical. Like, again, the subtle physical and mental are inextricably connected; then the subtlest level, which, when all the other levels are thrown off, you get to this very subtle level of consciousness. They even call it indestructible consciousness; and it's also linked inextricably to a very subtle level of physicality, which in this model, which is the same as we used to use in the time of Galileo and our mob in the west; is the four elements, you know?

So the very subtle one is the wind energy, so the very subtle physical is the wind and the subtle consciousness linked together, and they're inextricably linked. Now, at the time of death, depending on the karma that ripens for that person -- so if the tendency of that person -- like in our case, we can deduce it was morality karma. We must have practiced strong morality in the practice of a spiritual path; no doubt vows; so our mind was programmed with morality. We've got negative as well, but the morality was our training; and whichever's most prevalent is the seed that ripens. So that would have propelled our consciousness into our mummy's present human womb. Are you with me? But let's say in that life, we've got like, *strong* like, say, sexual desire, or *strong* grasping and attachment; really greedy or really self-centered; really like, lying or harming others, maybe; you know, strongly activating our attachment, very greedy for beautiful things but to the point we're so self-centered about it. You understand; in other words, practicing mainly attachment.

That mind, at the time of death, freaked out at dying and giving up this body, would be then instantly manifest as a spirit, which in a very subtle energy, now manifest -- like subtle physical energy, subtle; their mind is totally oneness with attachment, and they're pushed from pillar to post by their unbelievable junkie attachment mind. So, if you've got strong attachment to possessions, the common thing that spirits do, they go to where their possessions are -- they want their possessions -- so, they go to people and --what do you call it? --possess them; a common story with certain kinds of spirits. This is a wonderful story, actually; well, scary, but explaining spirits.

This Geshe Lama Konchog, this wonderful lama from Kopan Monastery, you've heard about him; he was a great yogi up in the mountains; he lived up there for twenty years, naked, no food, no sleep, no anything because he had bliss and he was an amazing practitioner. Lama Zopa said he lived in Vajrayogini's Pure Land; and he was an astonishing being. Actually, his reincarnation now is about ten, but there's also a little girl in Scotland; who's also a reincarnation of him; she's outrageous, an amazing girl. I'll tell you about her later. Anyway...where was I?

Oh yes, Geshe Lama Konchog; he was up in the mountains for years and years, way up by Nepal and Tibet and he took care of all the villagers for many years. So, he took care of the nuns there, and the monasteries and all that. At some point, one of the nuns went wacky, you know, and so the nuns traipsed up twelve hours up to his cave crying – obviously this was before mobile phones; thank you for mobile phones! – so, they got up there, ‘Oh, Ani Tenzin’s gone crazy. Ani Tenzin’s gone crazy,’ – they say ‘Ani’ for ‘nun’ – so he said “It’ll all be alright; you stay here; I’ll go down.’ So, first of all, he got down there in about a quarter of the time because he can run on the air; because he’s got complete control over his physical energies and also the external elements; he can completely control the weather, make the sun come, make the wind come, make the rain come and go, whatever; and he can also control his own physical elements, which is like, he doesn’t need clothing and food, and he can run on the air as well; these great yogis can do this.

So, anyway, he got down to the nunnery, and even before he walked in the door, the nun in the bed – and we’re deducing she was possessed, this is the story, okay, and like, she must have known he – the spirit in there – must have known him, already could see him coming; ‘Gen-la, no, go away, go away!’ you know. So he came in, and you’d go to the person, because they want something; that’s why they’re there. They’re totally pushed by the power of their own attachment energy, in a subtle kind of light body -- which is not pleasant – pushed from pillar to post to your possessions and your attachment objects. That’s why people, you know, are always called ghosts, in houses. They’re totally attached to their house; some people even see them, in the image, you know, see this ghost, like; because they’re there, haunting the house; because of this powerful attachment, the spirits have powerful attachment – certain kind of spirits.

So this story, Gen-la goes to the nun, and obviously he’s clairvoyant -- which he was – he can see who it is; and the thing they do, because they don’t use the term ‘exorcism’—because the Catholics would say it’s the devil in there – but for the Buddhists, it’s just a spirit, you know, a certain kind of suffering being, wanting their possessions, or the person – maybe you’ve got a strong karmic connection with a certain person, and so because you’re angry, you spend your life like, you know, who knows? Spend your life mad at this partner, but you never leave him so you end up dying with anger and you bloody go and possess him, or haunt the house and make trouble, you know? You’ve got to be so careful with attachment, I tell you...

But listen to this one; ‘What do you want,’ Gen-la says to this spirit, ‘What do you want?’

‘I want my pink Thermos with the white flowers! I want my pink Thermos with the white flowers!’ And they look around; sure enough, there’s the pink Thermos with the white flowers! And the nuns remembered; this villager who died recently had given this Thermos of tea to the nun; she forgot to give it back! I mean, a Thermos, people! Please! A cautionary tale... I guess poor old Sherpas don’t have many things...

So, anyway, the poor spirit's freaking out about his ridiculous Thermos, so Gen-la helps him and says, 'What you've got to do, is you have to get rid of the object so it cuts the connection,' you know? In this case, because they knew the spirit, they gave it away and did prayers; and then the spirit was crying – and this is the suffering of spirits, 'I can't find my way... I can't find my way...' -- you're just pulled by your own crazy attachment; you've got no body, you know; you've got no choice about it.

That's just an example of a kind of spirit; some are far more suffering; and some are very powerful; very, very powerful. They cause, like – for the Tibetans, the Buddhists – huge weather things are caused by very powerful harmful spirits. Sicknesses -- it's so common, so common in their interpretation. The Tibetan doctors can look at your urine, and they can tell if it's spirits, as well. Spirits interfere with you, 'cause they have some karmic connection. I had sciatica for a couple of years, really intense. I went to my sister who's a chiropractor, in Australia, and nothing shifted; and I asked Lama Zopa, and he said it's 'spirit interference', they call it. So, I must have upset some spirit – they're all around, everywhere, everywhere; in this room, outside, everywhere, you know; and I must have upset one of them. So they make you ill, and they – so as long as they're upset, they kind of have this power...so for two years, nothing changed and then, I remember, some people did prayers for me every day at Kopan for a couple of weeks and suddenly, I had two treatments and it finished, it went. So, this is very common. Certain illnesses, that we say in the west that you can't cure, like cancer, which seem so random, you know, skin diseases; these can be the result of spirit interference, they say. All kinds of things like this; spirits; and there's lots of them around. It has to do with attachment, and it's like, fierce, desperate, frantic attachment with no other options; just pushed, like berserk, you know? Does that answer your question?

Q: More than!

Ven.: There you go, okay! We're getting a lot in tonight, Bob. What else? Any more questions?

Nothing is Random

1:28:32

Q: You mean the spirits inhabit a random body?

Ven.: Never random -- there's karma; there's always karma – you run to the body that you know. Never random; can't be random.

Q: So, there's these angry spirits, and they interfere with your back...

Ven.: You've got some karma with a sentient being, yeah.

Q: What's that mean?

Ven.: What?

Q: What's that mean?

Ven.: Oh, it has to be; it's not random. There's no way – karma can't be random; for us in the world, because we don't have the view of karma, we think most things, ah well, no one knows why it happens – I'm walking along and some bloke punches me on the nose – 'Ah, well, no one knows...' Buddha says that's ridiculous, it's a law; for him, karma is a natural law. It's like botany or gravity; it's just occurs. No one runs it; no one's pulling the strings – and so, if it's a law, it's got to be consistent. It can't be random, that's bizarre. Can't be, not possible, Buddha says. Do you understand? Any more questions?

There's Nothing That Isn't Karma

1:29:26

Q: Can you say all disease, all cancer is karmic?

Ven.: There's nothing that isn't. There's nothing that isn't the result of the actions of that sentient being. If we take it as general, across-the-board; there's not a single thing that grows in the earth that isn't the result of a seed, would you agree? And it has to be a seed that was planted there, right; not the next door neighbor's seed – Whoops! I get a weed and you planted a seed! Don't be ridiculous! So, by definition, whatever's in a garden is the fruit of a seed planted *there*.

Well, everybody has their own garden; and everything that ripens in that life: every person, every thing, every event, every happiness, every suffering, every good, every bad is the fruit of their past actions. Necessarily. Across-the-board. It's kind of a simple philosophy; it's just that it's utterly mind-boggling to us because we've thought so totally differently for so long. It's not a difficult concept, but it's completely opposite to the instinctive views we hold now. Do you understand? So, it needs thinking about, you know...taking it on board. And of course, the experiential application of that philosophy is accountability and courage and 'I can change.' Do you understand? That's the part that I find so helpful.

Q: I guess it kind of sounds like blame, anyway...

Ven.: What, darling?

Q: It kind of sounds like blame.

Ven.: Because that blame – that's why -- because blame, if you think about it, is coming from the assumption that we hold in our mind that someone else made us; and therefore I'm innocent. So, therefore if you told me that I'm as the result of my bad, I must be the blame. But if you don't have that concept of someone making you – like if you, you know, you just don't have that concept – that's why it takes time for us to internalize this; because there's no view of somebody pulling the strings, somebody running the show. But the other most fascinating point is this: we only ever worry about the bad stuff. 'Why do bad things happen

to me?' We *never* agonize, 'Why do good things happen to me?' So, you are the blame, yes.

I remember one person at Kopan. She was in a wheelchair; and she was hearing these teachings and she was in tears when she asked the question, 'Do you mean it's my fault? I am the blame?' She said that you said it, and we all do; and I thought about how to answer, and then I said, 'Yes, you are the blame: for being beautiful, for having good friends, for having good health, for having a spiritual heart, for all the good things that have happened in your life, yes; you are the blame.' So, when you hear that, you go, 'Oh...' You understand my point?

Q: Yeah, I do...

Ven.: That's a good point. It is a good point. We are responsible, yes; if there's anything that good happens in our life, anything -- even one grain of rice, it's the result of your past virtue. So we should be blissed out, if we compare ourselves with the most suffering of this earth; that we have got life so blessed, that we can be sitting in a place like this. Just to think about these things is like a miraculous gift, and that's because of our immense past virtue; which is why this really ought to give us courage, you know; not just obsess about our negativity; which of course, is what we do. It's the irony of ego is that we're always worried about the bad. That's why we always see only bad in other people. That's why you find it so hard to see the good in Joe. Join the club, okay. Yes?

Equanimity

1:32:27

Q: I have a lot of confusion about the notion of equanimity when it comes to praying for someone in particular, as opposed to praying for everyone equally...*****

Ven.: I understand. I understand your point. So, first of all, equanimity, which was meant to be the topic tonight...it's a very specific state of mind which you're indicating; where you -- and it's like the first, when you move into, sort of, university, and you start the compassion practices -- the very first one, is the cul -- it's like a foundation practice -- it's the cultivation of this thing called 'equanimity'; you've got a very specific meaning. What it means in this context is -- when you've achieved it, of course -- it's this heartfelt recognition that enemies, friends and strangers are the same, from one point of view, really: that they want to be happy. And why that? Because that's the basis for *wanting* them to be happy: which is called 'love'. So, we've got to see the logic of all beings actually want to be happy. Joe wants to be happy, there's no question; you know that's a fact; just you don't like to *think* it: 'He doesn't deserve it,' you know? But, really doing this equanimity is very, very, humbling -- I'm going to get to your answer, okay -- you put Joe in the middle, as your enemy; you put your dearest friend to the left, and you put a stranger to the right; and this is the way we divide the world. Everybody does this: the giraffes, the kangaroos and the ants all have their friends, enemies and strangers; and it's a completely faulty representation of the universe, because we see everybody through the filter of *our* needs.

So, *friends* are those who do what my attachment wants, *enemies* are those who do what my attachment *doesn't* want, and strangers do neither, and therefore we don't care about strangers, we get annoyed with enemies and we love our friends. So, love is good; we do have some love – but it's based on attachment.

So, when you've got equanimity, you've got this really heartfelt view that they *are* the same: that they all want happiness, they all don't want suffering. But, honey, you've got personal karma with Fred; you go home again to Fred. You might never see Joe, the enemy, again; because, you know, there's some karma with you in this life, but you don't spend time together. But *in your mind*, you know that Joe is equal to Fred in the wish to be happy. You get my point? But you have some karma with Fred in this life – and don't cross your fingers, wish you'll have Joe next life, you know? That's the point, too. The stranger, you might never see them again, but in your mind, you know they're equal, you know there's no difference; it's just that personally, in this life, you've got some karma to live with Fred. So, your job is to take care of Fred, but that -- you see, but when you do do prayers specially for some people, because you know their names; but you just add everybody else; say, '...and everybody else who's ever suffering...' you know? Do you understand what I'm saying? You can include that; but you've got a responsibility to Fred in this life, to the kids in this life, to your auntie, to this, to that; they're the ones who you've got this close karma with. But in your heart, you know they're all the same; do you get my point? There's a big difference, darling. This doesn't mean you can't – therefore don't care about everybody or try to care equally. Eventually we *can*, but you've got karma – even bodhisattvas have karma with certain people, you know –to live with them and not live with someone else. But in your heart, you're growing it for everybody. You get the point? Yes... What else, folks? Yes, darling?

Beginninglessness and Individuation

1:35:43

Q: So, you talked about, when we were conceived, and that we were, we already came from – already the whole package...

Ven.: Yes...all the karmic seeds were...

Q: So, what is the source that we came from?

Ven.: Ah, there's no – beginningless. Beginningless. Your mind is beginningless; it's insane, we don't like it, it's annoying to us, we think there's a beginning; but the Buddha's kind of saying 'What do you want a beginning for? What a dumb idea...'

Q: Well...

Ven.: Beginningless.

Q: My next question is, is it possible that there is, like, no individuation or individuals within that beginningness...

Ven.: Okay; Buddha would say that when you become enlightened, and Isaac becomes enlightened, and I become enlightened, that means you've purified your own mind completely of all pollution, which is what has kept you as being individual for eons and eons of time; because you've had ego-grasping and nonsense. But when you've purified all of this, your consciousness now pervades the universe, sees everything, knows everything, has infinite compassion for all beings; well, so will my mind be doing that and so will Isaac's. Believe me, we won't bump into each other in the sky...so, effectively -- you could say -- at that level there's only one Buddha. There's no 'separate' then. But you'll take many manifestations and bop around being a dog and an ant and a human to help others and I'll do the same. So, there's lots and lots of manifestations of Buddhas, but when you've accomplished it, the actual *mind* of a Buddha is the same. There's no difference. Do you see?

Q: I do... I think I do...so... and when we're holding other sentient beings precious, that's why; because we all *are* the same.

Ven.: Well...you can sort of say that but that's not the literal logic here; no, okay; 'same'; the thinking to get us to that point is that right now, like I said, we divide the world into enemies, friends and strangers; there's no fourth category, because we have attachment, aversion and ignorance. They're the three root delusions, Buddha says; and even in these delusions, the animal realm is a predominant manifestation of this 'ignorance' one; the spirit realm is the predominant manifestation of the attachment; and the hell realm is the result of the anger. So, they're all psychological states, these states of mind, these realms; they're all psychological states -- because like I said, Buddha's psychology refers to all.

So, when you've gone beyond attachment, aversion and ignorance and you have equanimity and then you've slowly developed love and compassion for all; it's at this point you do see that they are all equal; they all want happiness, all don't want suffering, all have the potential to become Buddha; that's your basis for why we are the same, not some vague thing of a big, cosmic consciousness. Because right now, what divides us and separates us from others is the presence of ego-grasping and my needs and my neurosis. That's what we're trying to smash, all through the path; and eventually you have this awareness, actual, that everyone is equal and you have this bliss and love for every living being, and then you become a Buddha and you bop around the universe until time ends; benefitting others all the time, you see. Do you understand?

Q: I understand.

Ven.: ...the words, exactly...

Q: Thank you.

Ven.: Alright. We've got to talk for another seven days... Do you think I'm going to run out of words? When Lama Zopa told me to start teaching, it was back in 1987, one of my main fears was I'd run out of words... Then I said to myself, 'If I run out of words, I'll say, 'Okay, ask me some questions.'" Then I'll

relax; it didn't matter. So, I think we've had enough for tonight, unless there's more questions...

Q: I got one.

Ven.: What, Isaac?

Q: Can you talk about the karma of teachers?

Ven.: What do you mean, darling? Karma of teachers?

Q: Any encounter with a teacher is a good thing...

Ven.: What kind of teacher? You mean your math teacher? What are you talking about? I'm a bit confused, Isaac, could you be more precise, please?

Q: Just ... (unclear) more specific in the context; I was talking with Bob, and he said any encounter with any kind of teaching...

Ven.: You mean, teaching about how to kill people? What are you talking about? That's a teaching...

Q: Teachers in general...

Ven.: I don't know what you're talking about, Isaac. I demand that you be clear in your question. I can be cheap and imagine what you're meaning, but you have to be clear, otherwise I won't answer you.

Q: Okay.

Ven.: What are you asking, Isaac? Okay, then think about it and ask it Thursday.

Q: Okay.

Ven.: Which is today... What day is it? When is our next class? Saturday? Saturday. Get your question and bring it to me on Saturday.

Q: Okay.

Ven.: Thank you sweetheart.

Q: ... think about it.

Ven.: Yeah, that's right. Thank you, Isaac. Yes?

'Equanimity' of the Great Scope
1:40:21

Q: Back to equanimity, I mean there's (unclear) people you're attached to, and the ones you have aversion to, but what about the self? Isn't there equanimity in understanding that your own ego...

Ven.: You see, this equanimity one is the first practice in the beginning of 'universality', which is the compassion wing; you're dealing with yourself in the first two scopes. You've begun already to get this really profound sense of who you are in a valid way, which isn't only to the – that's all. So already you're coming into this, if you're going progressively, with a strong, valid sense of an appropriate self, who's interdependent, who wishes to be happy, who doesn't want to suffer and who's got Buddha nature. That's already come with you. Exactly. That's right. Exactly. Because during this type of practice, even – forget even Exchanging Self For Others – but Equanimity, unless you've done the work first on yourself, you're full of self-pity and misery – which we all are – and fears and worries and you've been victimized all your life and you've been abused and you've got no courage; you can't start having equanimity for others, you can't start seeing enemies as good; forget it, it's way too high, you know? You've got to deal with yourself and that's what the first two scopes are about: dealing with yourself, you know; becoming your own best friend, really; seeing your own amazing potential; because then you can do it for others -- that's the point. Yes, sweetheart?

'Equanimity' in the Hinayana Point of View

1:41:45

Q: I was going to argue with you on that because for me, equanimity seems like it profoundly applies on the personal scope, because you – one of the first steps I at least work on, a lot, is equanimity towards what arises in my mind.

Ven.: What do you mean by that – I think it's a different interpretation of 'equanimity', perhaps? What are you interpreting as 'equanimity, here?

Q: What I'm referring to as 'equanimity' is, what arises – not having a reaction to it.

Ven.: Okay – that's another whole discussion, yes.

Q: ...and *that* is the basis for having equanimity with other people...

Ven.: But this 'equanimity' is a bit different.

Q: ...and then based on watching the arisings of my own mind, comes equanimity with other people...

Ven.: Yeah, I think the interpretation of this 'equanimity' you're using is from the Hinayana point of view; it's a very specific practice, and exactly you're correct; and that's the wisdom wing work, absolutely; this 'equanimity' is a different interpretation of the term. It's used in the Mahayana context as seeing others as equal from the point of view of wanting to be happy. It's a specific use of the word; quite different. The one you're talking about is perfect. Yes, exactly.

Are we communicating? Good. Thanks. What else; or is that enough? Quarter to six, quarter to nine, that's it. That's enough, I think. Food for thought... So we started off with this verse, but I think we should conclude again with it: 'Determined to obtain' – this is a different translation – 'the greatest possible benefit from all sentient beings, who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel' – if we could even imagine such a thing – 'may we hold them most dear at all times. May I always consider them precious.'

Homework

1:43:24

So, conclude with the thought, 'precious' because they are the object of my aversion; so every time I meet a person I don't like, how precious they are because they are showing me my anger. Thank you, sentient being. Every time I see the attachment object, they're so precious because they're showing me my attachment. And every time I see a stranger, they're showing me my indifference. So, this is the point: they're all grist for the mill that they help me see *my* mind and the obstacles to my accomplishment, you know; 'the highest aim.'

So, may we bring this home with us, you know; make an attempt even *once* between now and Saturday. This is our homework, okay? Apply this even once; once. Check *once*, before Saturday, if I'm going to see you again Saturday. See if we can do that. See Joe as most precious, because he's showing you your anger; that's the reason. He might be a creep, but the point is, he's precious because he's showing you your anger. The high mountains are exhausting, but Lance loves them, because it's showing him where he's at; that's the approach; you understand that perfectly. For all of us, find your Joe. Between now and Saturday, be delighted you've got this wretched person in your life, who's showing you your aversion. That's the point. That's the point. That's our homework between now and Saturday, just *once* I'm asking you to do it. Okay?

Q: She gets to practice her patience and compassion...

Ven.: All of us, that's the point. All of us; we find our Joes. She's just given us an example.

Q: ...but we get the benefit from that...

Ven.: Yes, exactly right, okay... So thank you everybody; and we dedicate this hour and a half, hour and three quarters, gone like a dream, my goodness, hour and fifty minutes – no – whatever. What I'm trying to get at is, every single moment, we have sown seeds in our mind; every one of those is come from an intention or a karma, so there's millions of seeds we've just planted; and we delight in this, and we think, 'May we nourish them from this moment forward with our efforts to practice these things; to put them into practice, so we can manifest in the future our marvelous potential as a Buddha, so we are then effortlessly capable of benefitting all suffering sentient beings.'

Jang chub sem chhog rin po che

Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig
Kye wan yam pa me pa yang
Gong na gong du phel war shog

Transcribed by Fran McDermott