

Eight Verses for Training the Mind

by Kadampa Geshe Langritangpa

Week 2

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Recap on week 1

- bodhicitta is *mysterious* - metaphor and image
- has to be developed
- bodhicitta is extraordinary
- qualities of the bodhicitta – sunyatakarunagarbha
- bodhicitta is something that flows
- arises in community
- needs daily practice to arise
- the eight verses for training the mind gives us a means to practice, to open up to the bodhicitta
- background to verses, langritangpa and atisha
- framework of verses
- verse 1 - evokes the basic attitude – ‘*May I always cherish all beings....*’
- verse deals with klesa of self-cherishing
- what it means to cherish beings – know their needs

2

The highest good

- to cherish others leads to a commitment to accomplish the **highest good**
- To give the best to others need to find yourself
- But what motivates us?
- Buddha first motivated to alleviate suffering
- But suffering is not just physical & psychological – it is also *sankaradukkha*
- Pain of un-fulfilment; absence of meaning; not giving expression to deepest spiritual potential – the Buddha seed
- Cherishing means seeing the beauty, energy, spiritual vitality in others
- Looking for it and connecting with it yourself
- Seeing it all around you & living to bring it forth

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Buddha's compassion

- Is more in relationship to beings spiritual potential
 - Simile of the lotuses growing up in muddy water
 - Buddha sees being in various stages of development
 - He sees the extraordinary potential all around
 - This causes him to feel compassion
 - Maybe compassion not quite right word
 - *Anukampa* – 'to shake, tremble with' perhaps gives a better meaning
- The bodhisattva is like the Buddha sees beings & desires to bring forth their true potential
 - The removal of suffering is a kind of by-product

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Wish fulfilling jewel

- The highest good higher than the *chintamani* – wish fulfilling jewel
- A strong image – pervades many myths
- Maybe says something about us & our deeper potential
- In Buddhism what you wish for you become
- Making aspiration is important
- Highest good is *Enlightenment*
- Enlightenment *fulfils* all our needs!
- The bodhisattva relates to the expressed needs and desires
 - E.g. story of Kisagotami

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How to develop cherishing

- Can cultivate empathy by reflecting on sameness of all
- Try to identify the humanity, the human needs that lie behind everything, even behind acts seemingly so inhuman
- Develop a kind regard for the interests of other to cherish them
- Key is in **understanding your own humanity**
- We too do acts that harm thinking it will benefit us
- If we see how we do it it'll help us understand others
- Need to practise the reflections of the first verse constantly, moment-by-moment, day-by day

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Higher than the wish fulfilling jewel

- Many different translations
- Another translation: *"All sentient beings are greater than the wish fulfilling gem"*
- This draws out the fact that all beings are to be cherished
- Without them it would be impossible to develop the qualities of Enlightenment

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Verse 2

***Whenever I am in the company of others,
May I regard myself as inferior to all,
And from the depths of my heart
Cherish others as supreme.***

- Very challenging verse
- Difficult when there is poor self-view
- Strong stuff – but it is targeting something very strong in us – pride and conceit
- This atma-mana – our very deep love of self where we feel special, unique, etc.

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Atma-mana

- Catch various manifestations of it in many ways
- Even when we think we are bad or flawed we are really thinking we are special
- Can notice this when we feel affronted
 - When others think, or seem to think they are better than us
 - When they take something better than our share
- So here we think 'let them go first'
- They are more important in so far as they provide us with an opportunity to practice self-transcendence
- Provides opportunity to overcome our pride

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A strong practice

- Need to accept this and then expand out on it
 - Not try to eradicate all our pride
 - Might be part of spiritual grow, of the evolutionally principle
 - But needs to be refined, developed and in the end seen through
- Some practices intended to help us reach a higher state, this is a practice to correct imbalance within ourselves
- But not easy to see ourselves as inferior

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Another approach

- Regard everyone we meet as worthy of being served by us
- Everyone is worthy of our kindness and attention, equally
- All beings are a field of care, ourselves included
- This is particularly difficult with our Indian Buddhists
 - Their background is from the 'untouchable' caste
 - In the Hindu caste system as being the lowest of the low
 - They found they could understand this in terms of the honoured guest (honoured guest treated like a king or god), treated with extraordinary grace and courtesy
- We can treat others like this
- All beings are a field of care, ourselves included

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Issues of self-worth

- In West issues of self-worth issues so word 'inferior' probably not very helpful
- But can't get away from pride and conceit
- Possibly a big issue in the West – many people have a sense of superiority
- Comes with education, leisure, social conditioning, even if we have a poor self-view it can be a form of arrogance

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Everything that lives is holy

- Quote by William Blake
- Not so much a question of inferiority but of raising people up in your consciousness
- Their superiority is not a psychological, nor social, nor political superiority it is spiritual, a religious
- So everyone you meet you see them as sacred, as holy
- You feel a reverence, even humility in relation to others
- Not a false humility – that is another form of ‘pride’

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Counter-acting pride and conceit

- Buddha taught the Tathagatagarbha doctrine
 - Every living thing as Buddha Nature – so why are you so special, so unique?
- Gratitude to others counteracts atma-mana, we are not that independent as we think
- Might help to make list of all who have helped us
- We are so dependent on others
- In Tibetan Buddhism there is the believe that in the round of birth and rebirth all beings at one time have been you mother and father
- Without being given birth we would not benefit now – i.e. without our parents.
- Serving others, the Dharma –without reward – selfless service
- Shantideva ‘May I be a servant to beings...’

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