Compassion NOW!

The Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje

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Photograph of the Seventeenth Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje, Gyuto, India, 2010. © Ogyen Trinley Dorje

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His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje

On June 19, 1985, the reincarnation lineage of the Karmapas took form for the seventeenth time, with the birth of a young boy in Tibet. As he had indicated in his previous life as the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa, His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa was born in eastern Tibet, to a mother named Lolaga and a father named Döndrup. For the first years of his childhood, the Gyalwang Karmapa shared his family's simple nomadic life in a remote and rugged corner of Tibet's high plateau.

When he was just seven years old, a search party arrived at his family's camp. Following the detailed instructions of the letter written by his previous incarnation, the Sixteenth Karmapa, the party was able to locate the young Karmapa. The child's identification as the Karmapa was verified not only by Tai Situ Rinpoche, Goshir Gyaltsap Rinpoche, and many other major

Karma Kagyu lamas, but also by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In an historic first, the communist Chinese government also officially acknowledged his recognition as the Karmapa.

His Holiness returned with the search party to Tsurphu Monastery in central Tibet, where he was enthroned and given his initial monastic ordination. He thereafter commenced the process of study and training traditional for Karmapas, yet began offering spiritual instruction to others almost at once. His first public teaching — given at Tsurphu in Tibet when he was just eight years old — was attended by over 20,000 people. However, the major Karma Kagyu lineage holders were denied permission to enter Tibet to transmit the essential instructions of the lineage to him, a situation that constituted an insurmountable obstacle to his functioning fully as Karmapa in the world.

At the age of 14, His Holiness was determined to escape Tibet to seek freedom to fulfill his role as a world spiritual leader and to meet his responsibilities as head of the Karma Kagyu lineage. Crossing the Himalayas by jeep and on horseback, on foot and by helicopter, Gyalwang Karmapa reached Dharamsala, India, on January 5, 2000. There he was received warmly by His Holiness the Dalai Lama with whom the Gyalwang Karmapa has since continued to enjoy a close relationship of mentor and protégé.

During the 10 years he has lived in India as a refugee, His Holiness has undergone a traditional monastic training and philosophical education, while also pursuing a private modern education. His Holiness receives tens of thousands of visitors each year from all over the world at his residence in Dharamsala. Since 2004, the Gyalwang Karmapa has led the Kagyu Monlam Chenmo, an annual winter Dharma gathering in Bodhgaya that draws thou sands of attendees from many different Buddhist traditions around the world.

In May 2008, His Holiness made his first long-awaited trip to the West, traveling to the United States where he visited his North American seat in New York and some of the many Dharma centers under his spiritual guidance. In addition, the Gyalwang Karmapa has traveled across India to participate in the cultural and religious life of his adopted home. From inaugurating temples for Sai Baba in Tamil Nadu to commemorating the 100th anniversary of Mother Teresa's birth in Calcutta, His Holiness has met with many other spiritual leaders in a spirit of mutual respect and tolerance. In November 2009, His Holiness was invited to speak at a TED India conference, becoming the youngest person ever to do so. In January 2010, over 12,000 people attended the live performance of a six-act play on the

life of Milarepa that His Holiness wrote and produced, combining elements of traditional Tibetan opera and modern theater.

As a scholar and meditation master, as well as painter, poet, songwriter, and playwright, the Gyalwang Karmapa embodies a wide range of the activities that Karmapas have engaged in over the centuries. As an environmental activist, computer enthusiast, and world spiritual leader whose teachings are often webcast live, the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa has brought the Karmapa lineage's activities fully into the 21st century.

Adapted from the book Karmapa: 900 Years, published in 2010 by the Karmapa 900 Organizing Committe.

I am delighted to have this opportunity to discuss Dharma with you at the invitation of the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, which was founded and is lead by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I cannot really translate Foundation for Universal Responsibility in Tibetan. It comes out as something like "taking responsibility for the whole world," which I guess is okay. In any case, I am delighted to be here.

Opening greeting from His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje introducing his "Teaching on Compassion", at the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, Delhi, India, February 2010.

Compassion:
The Basis of Buddhism

Today I will discuss the practice of love and compassion.

The words *love* and *compassion* refer to things that we feel throughout our lives, that are always with us, and that are extremely familiar to us. As familiar as we may be with the words love and compassion, to actually give rise to true love and true compassion involves more than these common words imply by themselves. Giving rise to these things is not as easy as talking about them.

Why is it more difficult to develop true love and compassion than to simply speak of them? It is because in order to cultivate these, we need to first transform those adverse conditions within us that inhibit their development. As I said, the conditions that are adverse to this development are not external. They are internal; they are within us. They are kleshas such as hatred,

jealousy, and desire. It is difficult to be speaking of developing compassion and the love that is completely free of these because these kleshas are present within our minds, which are not really external to us. It is, therefore, harder to get rid of them than it is to get rid of mere external adversity unless we turn inward and work on ourselves internally. As long as we fail to do that, and are focused only on externals, it is very difficult to develop true love and compassion.

In general, we can say about all of these teachings, all that we now call Buddhism, that it is based upon and always emphasizes compassion. It is based upon compassion in the sense that the Buddha's teachings, in his giving of them and in his giving of certain teachings at certain times to certain persons, was based entirely upon the fine distinctions among individuals that arise through the observation of a compassionate eye. That is to say that the Buddha taught always in ways that conform to the dispositions, interests, and specific situations of those beings for whom he was teaching at that time. Therefore, in cases where a direct explanation of the nature of things — emptiness, and so forth — would not be helpful, the Buddha would not give it. Therefore, we find in some of the Buddha's teachings that he would say the self exists, because by saying this he was being of the greatest possible benefit to those specific beings he was teach-

ing at that time. The point behind all of the Buddha's teaching was a compassionate conformance to the actual needs of beings.

In that way Buddhadharma is distinguished by compassion; we can say that any *yana* or "vehicle" of Buddhism is essentially taught and practiced through the motivation of one or another type of compassion. This is equally true of what we conventionally call the lesser and the greater vehicles. The only distinction we can make between the different motivations is what we can call an outwardly focused compassion and an inwardly focused compassion. By "outwardly focused compassion," I mean the observation of others' suffering and the resultant seeking of a remedy for that suffering of others, which is what we conventionally call "compassion." But when this same seeking for a remedy for suffering is focused inwardly, the observation of one's own suffering and the seeking of a remedy for that, that is another type of compassion, what we call "inwardly focused compassion," or renunciation.

Therefore, the motivations for the path of renunciation and the path of compassion really differ only by the one being inwardly focused and the other being outwardly focused. Both are fundamentally the same in that they are the wish to free a being or beings from suffering and its causes. When this wish

is applied to or focused on others, we call it compassion; when it is applied to oneself, we call it renunciation.

Among bodhisattvas there are three types: those who primarily accomplish their own benefit, those who primarily accomplish the benefit of others, and those who accomplish the benefit of both. In this context it is said that the best type of bodhisattva is one who accomplishes the benefit of both. Second best are those who accomplish the benefit of others and least are those that accomplish the benefit of themselves. I suppose we could say of those bodhisattvas who accomplish the benefit of themselves, referring to beginners like ourselves, that we might normally think that such a person who is primarily involved with accomplishing their own benefit is not a bodhisattva at all. However, if we look at this in a broader context, we must recognize that without taming oneself, one cannot possibly tame others.

Even though one may be immersed in the bodhisattva vehicle, one must begin by taming oneself and that is the principal concern of the beginner bodhisattva. I think that this classification refers to this principle. In the beginning, we simply must tame ourselves, which means that as important as it is to be kind to others, it is equally important to begin by being kind to ourselves

by recognizing that we, like other beings, are immersed in the ocean of samsara and must be liberated from it.

The beginner bodhisattvas who are primarily concerned with the accomplishment of their own benefit are not doing so because they have in any way rejected the benefiting of others. They are doing it because they recognize realistically that they cannot immediately in their present state accomplish great benefit for others, although it is their aspiration to do so. They, therefore, pursue the path initially bringing about their own benefit and then the benefit of others with great diligence. I think this point is very important because we begin with a kindness to ourselves. We have been born with excellent human bodies, by which I mean especially that we have been born in a species that has the intelligence to make moral choices. With this opportunity it is especially important that we not engage ourselves in either meaningless endeavors or in trivialities.

We must begin by being kind to ourselves and by recognizing the presence within us of adventitious obscurations with which we were born in this life. Especially in the twenty-first century we are so busy and so distracted by our lifestyles and our present technology that we seem to have come farther than ever from the stance of seeing our own nature. It is as though

in our present way of living we have no time or opportunity to look at our own minds. We only hanker after and seek external benefit, the use of external technology and luxury and so on. In this context, therefore, I think it is especially important that we begin by being kind to ourselves.

In fact, we could say that it is equally important in the long run, for our own good and the good of others, that we are initially kind to ourselves. But in this context, we must ask the question, "What is actually going to do us good? What can we do that will actually be of benefit to ourselves?" Certainly, it is obvious that to callously and selfishly ignore the welfare of others and attempt to achieve our own well-being does not really help us. In fact, it harms us. We have to think deeply about this and carefully reflect on what is of true benefit to ourselves, because at this moment it may be quite unclear to us. We may be quite bewildered and unsure about what will actually do us real and lasting good. I think, therefore, that this very point of being kind to ourselves and having compassion for ourselves is to clear up this mystery.

We usually begin this process with the four turnings of the mind, which are commonly explained as the contem plation of the difficulty of gaining the freedom and resources of this

precious human body, the contemplation of death and impermanence, the contemplation of karma, and the contemplation of the defects of samsara. In the first, the fundamental idea is that this situation in which we have been born is unique. It is rare and it is only available here in this world, although I cannot particularly comment on how that might conflict with Western ideas about the universe.

In any case, the root of these four contemplations is to gain a practical and realistic understanding of oneself and one's own situation. Having done so, one then begins the assiduous cultivation of love and compassion. I therefore think it is important to begin with these contemplations.

The ultimate aim of this path is, of course, the benefit of others and it is the achievement of the benefit of others that is the final goal of all bodhisattvas who practice the mahayana. Even in their wish to achieve buddhahood, their motivation for its achievement is always the benefit of others. We could say, in fact, that bodhisattvas have no goal whatsoever other than the benefiting of others. Because of that, it is said that these courageous bodhisattvas are happy even in samsara. Why? Because their only concern is to be of benefit for others and they can achieve that most effectively by remaining in samsara. Since remaining

in samsara brings about the achievement of their only goal, they are happy to do so. It is, therefore, said that for such courageous bodhisattvas samsara can be a state of happiness and not one of misery at all. It is for this reason that many bodhisattvas take continuous intentional rebirth in samsara, because by doing so they encounter many opportunities to directly benefit beings. Even though they are effectively in samsara, they are happy. This possibility of happiness while still in samsara comes from the practice and cultivation of love, compassion, and bodhichitta. Therefore, if we practice them, we can achieve the state of happiness in this life and the state of happiness while in samsara.

We might ask why are bodhisattvas so concerned with the benefiting of others; why do they seek only perfect, omniscient buddhahood and seek that only for the benefit of others? After all, it is possible that they could, without bodhichitta and without seeking omniscient buddhahood, simply through the realization of emptiness achieve nirvana, achieve liberation from samsara and free themselves from suffering. This is quite possible. Why don't they do this? When they achieve individual nirvana through the realization of emptiness but without the generation of bodhichitta, while they have indeed achieved that state beyond suffering, it is only for themselves and in achieving that they have abandoned any attempt to help or rescue all of

the innumerable other beings who remain drowning in the ocean of samsara. From the point of view of the mahayana, from the point of view of a bodhisattva this is, to say the least, unfitting because according to the mahayana all beings without exception have throughout beginningless time been of immeasurable kindness to us in innumerable ways. With that in mind, it is obvious that to abandon them to a state of potentially endless suffering is utterly unfitting, even ignoble. Therefore, if we want to achieve a state of liberation and nirvana that is noble, we need to accept responsibility for the benefiting of others.

Now, the reason why the benefiting of others requires the achievement of omniscient buddhahood is that beings are extremely vast in number and each and every being is slightly different from all others in their individual thinking, their individual wishes, their individual makeup, and so on. Furthermore, beings exist throughout all space and are, therefore, beyond number. For example, just as we say nowadays that there are billions and billions of galaxies throughout the universe, in the same way, there are these inconceivable numbers of sentient beings.

This word *inconceivable* has many practical uses. It is sometimes comforting when you have to talk of very high numbers — and you don't really know exactly how many — to simply say, "Well,

the number is inconceivable." In order to affect and benefit all beings one needs to possess omniscient wisdom that is only achieved through buddhahood and that can — because it literally knows everything — know the exact needs, disposition, and makeup of each and every being to be benefited. Only with that omniscient wisdom can one fulfill the unique aspirations and wishes of each being. Only with that omniscient wisdom can one, by knowing everything, engage in activity that is literally as vast and all-encompassing as space itself. One cannot do these things without knowing everything and that is why bodhisattvas seek buddhahood.

According to the Buddhadharma, the mind is limitless; it is immeasurable. You can measure the brain, you can define the limits of the brain, but you cannot in that way measure or define the limits of the mind. Furthermore, we define things as knowledge — that is to say as objects of mind. Now, the connection between these two is the following: When we say that someone has achieved realization, what we really mean is that that person's mind has come to a realization of the nature of all things. In the specific case of a buddha, one of the attributes of buddhahood is that the way things appear and the way things are, or their true nature, are no longer different or distinct from one another. It is said they have the same taste or the same flavor.

Now, since that nature of all things, which is the object of realization, is at the same time the nature of the mind that realizes it, and since in the state of buddhahood that nature is no longer any different than the ways in which it appears, the mind of a buddha therefore is inseparable from, or has mixed with, all appearances. Another way of saying this is that all things have become direct objects of knowledge for a buddha. Although we may have trouble understanding or even accepting the idea of omniscience when we think of it as fitting everything into a human brain, I think if we approach it in the way of understanding the mixing of the nature of things and the mode of appearances of things, we will be able to understand it better.

As auspicious and pleasant as it may be to speculate about and to discuss the meaning of the omniscience of a buddha, it is at the same time rather difficult to talk about since we have not achieved it. We are on the way or making the intention of achieving it. Now, in this way there should arise some indication of moving in the right direction toward this achievement. This could be the ability to understand subtle things, such as an empathetic understanding of other beings' thinking or aspirations, and so on, which I suppose we could say is analogous to the understanding of subtle things that modern science has brought us nowadays. At the same time, a mere understanding of

these things without the knowledge of how to implement them for the benefit of others could not really be an authentic sign of the path. I think it is important that we think very carefully about this and understand that essentially the path consists of the cultivation of love, compassion, and bodhichitta. Being inseparable from these is the most authentic sign of pursuing that.

There are many things to be known or to find out about in the world — present concerns with the state of the environment of this world, the existence of the various epidemics which plague this world, the presence of famine, and other adverse conditions. There is a lot of this. To simply know about these things and do nothing about them is not enough. We could hear about something and say, "Such and such thing has happened; that's unfortunate," and then leave it as that, as mere knowledge. That is not enough. We have to actually take action.

For example, in this world there are many different spiritual traditions. Even within Buddhism, there are many different systems, lineages, and schools. I think the main theme of all traditions is to bring about a recognition of authentic reality, to bring us closer and closer to a direct knowledge of how things really are, to remove the darkness of our ignorance and to bring us closer to one another, to give us a greater empathy and greater

understanding for one another. However, while this is the essential aim of all traditions and must, therefore, be the aim of whatever tradition we practice ourselves, we are often unable to implement the authentic intention and behavior described by our tradition. We may, in fact, have great faith in our own tradition, but sometimes this faith can become warped. It can become too narrowly focused on our own particular tradition so that our excessively narrow faith in our own tradition causes us to denigrate other traditions. This has lead to challenging circumstances, disputation, and actual conflict between religions and between systems within religious traditions.

In spite of the fact that this should be obvious by this point, nevertheless we may continue to act in such a way that we further this kind of conflict and disputation. We do so, again, not because it is the intention of our actual tradition but because we have become obscured by the narrowness of our own faith and by our resulting sectarianism. The point of spirituality is to bring us together, not split us apart, to bring us together in the united, mutual understanding and knowledge. Therefore I think it is important that we have faith with open eyes and not faith with eyes squeezed tightly shut. Just being a Buddhist does not guarantee that you will have great love and compassion. Just knowing the words love and compassion is not enough.

Returning to the idea of kindness to oneself as an aspect of compassion, one thing about this is that if one attempts to cultivate compassion for others, love for others without having compassion and love for oneself, one will have no basis within oneself for that cultivation. It is a little bit like trying to donate or give money to others when you have no money to give. In order to give, you first have to acquire what it is you wish to give. In the same way, in order to be able to cultivate genuine compassion for others, we must start by cultivating compassion for ourselves.

When we use the word compassion we often think that it refers exclusively to compassion for others but, in fact, this is not necessarily the case. In this context we define compassion as "the wish to liberate all beings in samsara." Now, if we were not ourselves beings immersed in samsara there would be no need for us to include ourselves in that compassion; it would be fine to only have compassion for others. Since we are still within samsara, we qualify as objects of our own compassion just as much as others do. Therefore, I think that we have a responsibility both to take care of others and to take care of ourselves. If we accept this dual responsibility in both our thinking and our actions, we will fulfill it. This includes the fact that if we cultivate kindness to and love for ourselves, we will on that basis be able to have even more love for others.

Questions and Answers

Student: You have been talking about the importance of loving kindness to oneself, along with the manifestation of loving kindness and compassion to others. In actual everyday practice, would you say that we already have far too great an attachment to ourselves than to others, and is there a risk that in practicing loving kindness to ourselves, that we could become very self-indulgent? Many of us already tend to be self-indulgent as it is. What practices and techniques do we need to be aware of? What is the dividing line between self-indulgence and loving kindness to oneself?

His Holiness Karmapa: The kindness to oneself that I was speaking of is rather different from the self-fixation of selfishness. For example, the Buddha said, "I have shown you the path to liberation but know that its achievement depends on you." In other words, we have to take responsibility for the achievement of liberation through our own efforts. It is the undertaking of responsibility for one's own liberation that I am referring to as kindness to oneself. What we normally mean by self-cherishing includes within it the implicit abandonment of the welfare of others and the rejection of any effort to achieve that welfare of others. Therefore, it is very different from what I mean by

kindness to oneself. If we reject the idea of kindness to oneself altogether, then are we saying that it is acceptable to think, "It's fine if I am miserable, it's fine if I am afflicted with kleshas, I shouldn't do anything about it." Surely, that is going too far. What I mean by kindness to oneself is the endeavor to help or benefit oneself such that one will be able to benefit others as well.

The problem we have is that we mistakenly hold ourselves and others to be independent from one another. Specifically, we believe that our welfare, our wellbeing, is utterly independent from the well-being of others. Based on that, we have decided my welfare alone is important and the welfare of others is unimportant. We think that we ourselves are independent of others, but in fact, we can never really exist in absolute independence of others. Our existence is always based on and dependent on our relationship to and the existence of others. It is through the existence of others that we are able to exist. For example, without those things that produce the air that we breathe, there would be no air and we could not breathe it. In that way, we always depend on others and everything around us and therefore our well-being depends upon their wellbeing as well.

If you go to a restaurant to have a fine meal, that depends on the restaurant being open. If the restaurant is closed because it lost

its business, then that affects your ability to eat the supposed fine meal. In that way there is no such thing as absolute independence. Even such things that we cling to as our reputation and our potential fame are dependent upon others because it is in the minds and voices of others that our reputation consists. For example, people call me, "His Holiness" and other things like that, and I have such a reputation or fame. This is entirely dependent upon others. The mistake we make is to think that we are independent of others, and that only we matter and that others do not.

For example, if I went to an entirely uninhabited place, there would be no one to refer to me as His Holiness. In that way, my title and my reputation are all dependent on others. An example of the practical difficulties that this type of mistaken thinking can cause is the global economic crisis, which fundamentally is caused by people thinking, "I want to be rich. It doesn't matter if everybody else is poor, as long as I am rich." That type of thinking produces this global economic crisis. In order to ensure our own well-being, we need to concern ourselves with the wellbeing of all beings that surround us and of all living things because we depend upon them and we cannot really separate our welfare from theirs. From that point of view, even our need

as individuals for the welfare of others equals our need for our own personal welfare.

Student: I do not understand why we make this distinction between buddha and bodhisattva, who both have the same aspirations and so on. Can you please tell me?

His Holiness Karmapa: You are correct in saying that both bodhisattvas and buddhas have tremendous compassion and tremendous wisdom. The term bodhisattva refers to the being who has the courageous intention to achieve the great awakening of buddhahood. This courageous intention that defines them has two aspects: compassion that is focused on all beings and wisdom that is focused on perfect awakening. In a general sense, buddhas and bodhisattvas are similar in that they both have this tremendous compassion and tremendous wisdom. Bodhisattvas can indeed benefit beings tremendously, but they cannot benefit beings infinitely the way the buddhas do. Buddhas benefit beings without limitation, without number, and without effort because they possess that omniscient wisdom of which I spoke earlier. We could say that bodhisattvas are like students and buddhas are like graduates.

It is said that only the omniscient buddhas know all of the subtleties of each and every being's karma. Regardless of the fact that from our perspective what bodhisattvas can achieve is tremendous, without knowing these things in an omniscient manner, the achievement of benefiting beings is not as effective as that of a buddha.

Student: You said that a buddha practicing even now needs omniscience in order to understand the specific needs of every sentient being. Does Your Holiness define omniscience as the union of nature and appearance, meaning overcoming the distinction of the nature of reality and the way reality appears? Your Holiness also mentioned that the realization of interdependence has a role in wanting to help others. Can you connect more specifically the overcoming of the distinction between nature and mere appearance and the experiential realization of interdependence, these three factors leading to understanding the needs of all beings? Thank you.

His Holiness Karmapa: About the relationship between the single taste of how things appear and how they are, or appearances and their nature, and interdependence — essentially we can say that the aspect of appearance is the infallible interdependence of appearances and the nature of those appearances

is emptiness beyond assertion. This is also what is sometimes called the unity of appearances and emptiness — appearances being interdependent and interdependence and emptiness in their nature being beyond assertion.

Nevertheless while we can distinguish between these as isolates in speaking of them, they are not understood to be two different things although they sound like two different things when you talk about them. How is it that they are not two different things? Consider a vase. You have the idea or concept "vase," but when you analyze a vase you will not find it. You will not find anything and can conclude from this that vase is mere imputation. Because of this it is said whatever is empty is possible because the possibility of appearance depends upon emptiness. In that sense we could actually think of emptiness as the possibility. To give you an analogy, in that sense, emptiness is a little bit like zero. Because of zero, we can have one and two and three and so on. But we could not have any other numbers without zero. We have to start from zero. And in that sense, emptiness is possibility.

If things were not empty, their interdependent appearance would be impossible. Now, we can determine that the mode of appearance of things is interdependent because it is not fixed.

For example, something that is poisonous to one person may be medicinal to another. If the poisonous quality of that food were inherent, it would follow that it would be poisonous to everyone without any difference.

Now, the idea of the relativity in origination or derivation of appearances includes the relativity of all of the imputations that we designate based on appearances, such as long and short. The concept or imputation short is obviously dependent upon the concept or imputation long and vice versa. In that way, things are relative. In fact, the mere appearance of appearances depends upon that relativity. Because those appearances are relative and depend upon relativity, they are empty because they have no inherent or independent existence.

This is the way in which we develop a conceptual understanding of this but for a buddha this is an object of direct and simultaneous realization — by simultaneous I mean that he knows everything all at once at every moment.

Developing
Love and Compassion

In his promise to compose the renowned text, the *Madhyamaka-vatara*, the glorious Chandrakirti begins by saying, "Because love is that which ripens the innate seeds into the excellent crops of buddhahood, I first pay homage to compassion before I write this." He is saying that in the beginning it is love that — through its development and great compassion — forms that which causes the capacity for awakening to ripen into the final fruit, like crops developing from a seed into the state of buddhahood. Therefore he, and by extension we, pay homage to compassion.

In that way, it is evident that great compassion is of great importance to bodhisattvas at the beginning of the path, throughout the path, and at the culmination of the path. Even after buddhahood it is great compassion that is the main cause or agent in the arising of the two rupakayas from the expanse of the

dharmakaya. That is to say, this happens through the condition of the aspirations previously made by that buddha as a bodhisattva on the path. And it is mainly through the two rupakayas that buddhas benefit beings so, therefore, we can say that even the benefit of beings by buddhas is impelled by great compassion.

Now I think I will speak a little bit about how we can train our minds in compassion and how we can increase our compassion. We could literally translate the term compassion (in Tibetan *nying je*) as "noble heart." Although the word nying can refer to the heart as a physical organ as when we talk about heart surgery, in this case it does not refer to the flesh and blood organ of the heart, but refers to the mind or spirit. "Noble" here means the most noble state of mind, the best state of mind — for example the eleven virtuous samskaras and so on. That which is supreme among all of them, that which is the best state of mind, is what we call compassion or noble heart. And I think you can regard this as the origin of the Tibetan expression *nying je* for compassion.

Another thing said about compassion is that it is like the root of virtue. We find reference to this in expressions such as "with the stable root of compassion," or "based on the stable root of compassion." I think that the reference of compassion as a root refers to the following.

Much of our work is based on the use of our brains, by which I mean our intelligence. But compassion is something that arises or is present at a much deeper level of the mind, very much just as the roots of a tree, unlike its branches, are present within and beneath the ground. Now, as with a tree, if the roots are weak or unstable, the whole tree will also be weak, in the same way strong compassion is necessary as a strong root within the mind, like the underground roots of a tree. By saying that compassion lies deep within our mind, I mean that it is something that is intensely felt and brings feeling with it.

It is by the roots of a tree performing their proper functions that all of the qualities and attributes we associate with the tree appear. The functions of the roots of a tree are to tie that tree to the ground, to hold that tree's place in the ground, and to draw water from the ground to nourish the tree.

In the same way, it is compassion that protects all of the virtue we develop within our minds, that causes the qualities or attributes of our mind to be unimpaired, and that enables us to grow or develop in virtue. Just as through the roots of a tree drawing water from the ground, that tree becomes enabled to benefit others by producing oxygen and so forth, in the same way, the roots of compassion within our minds give us the strength and

stability needed to develop those attributes with which we will benefit others as well.

In that way, we could say that love and compassion are like a seed within us and like the seed of a tree, the seed requires nurturing so that it can develop. We develop the seeds of love and compassion through patience, through diligence, and through compassionate action.

Nowadays we have so many ways to kill one another, through bombs and other types of explosive devices and so on, and in considering these one day, I had the thought, "Wouldn't it be nice if someone could invent a compassion bomb." Instead of a conventional bomb, which in one instant can kill many people and change them from living to dead, wouldn't it be nice if someone could invent a compassion bomb that could be somehow dropped amidst a crowd or large body of miserable people and in a moment transform them to laughing, happy, compassionate, and caring people? Well, in a sense, you could say that is something of a childish dream. Unfortunately, we cannot simply drop compassion on others like a bomb.

Although bombs kill people suddenly with no warning and with no preparation for death, love and compassion cannot

simply be dropped on people. They have to make the choice to cultivate them. Having made that choice — to develop love and compassion — the freedom arises to go through the process of cultivating them. We can do bad things to others including destroying them without their having made the choice, and we can do bad things rather easily in an instant motivated by the kleshas. But people can only develop love and compassion through their individual choice to do so.

Now, from one point of view, it sometimes seems that it is easier to develop negativity and harder to develop compassion, but in fact, the development of compassion and whether it is difficult or not depends on our making the choice to do so. Although at certain times and from certain points of view, it may seem that compassion is less powerful than the kleshas, I think that it primarily depends on our choice. Therefore, I think that it is very important that we make the right choices. For example, planting trees in order to save the environment and save the atmosphere of this planet is an active choice. We could take a passive attitude waiting for the wind to carry seeds into the soil that might grow into trees, but we would probably run out of oxygen before that would happen.

The development of love and compassion is like the process of nurturing a seed and causing it to grow, however this seed, the seed of love and compassion, is not one that we buy at a seed store. Nevertheless while I think of it, there is apparently in Japan nowadays the custom of being able to rent friends. For people who are lonely and have no friends, there is a place you can rent a friend for a few days so that you feel less lonely and then return them once you are cheered up. From that point of view, maybe we could actually rent the seeds of love and compassion, however, in fact, these seeds are innate within us and we have no need to either buy or rent them.

I think that even people who do the most reprehensible, vicious, and bad things still have within them the innate seed of compassion. The proof of this is that even people who do the worst things we can think of, when they are seriously threatened will have an attitude of kindness toward themselves, which may manifest simply as the instinct to protect themselves. Having that is evidence that they have the seed that can be nurtured and grow into true compassion. Now I will tell you a story. It is a story that I have already told before so you may know it, but I will tell it again anyway.

Some of the things that happened when I was very young, such as four or five years old, I remember very clearly and some of them I do not. I have a very clear memory of how I felt when I saw the impending slaughter of animals in front of the door to our dwelling. When I saw the animals bound and prepared for slaughter, I really felt that I wanted to free them from their bonds. I was afraid to do so because as a child of four or five, I thought I would be trampled or harmed by them. I remember clearly at that age being unable to stand or tolerate the prospect of these animals' impending death.

Now, at that age I knew nothing theoretical about love or compassion. I probably never even heard of bodhisattvas or bodhichitta, nevertheless as a young child I had an innate and genuine feeling of compassion for these animals. Since that age I have learned a lot about compassion, and received a great deal of instruction on it from many eminent masters. I have learned to say, "I feel compassion for all beings throughout space," but in spite of all this training I have to honestly say that I have not developed any compassion that can match, let alone exceed, that unfabricated, genuine, and heartfelt compassion that I remember feeling as a young child. In fact, I would say that nothing I have developed, through training, subsequent to that is even worth a hundredth of it. And I feel, therefore, that we have to base our cultivation of

compassion on our natural, innate, and intensely felt compassion. We all have short periods when, under whatever circumstances, we have felt this. We need to gather these together and make them the basis of our cultivation of compassion.

Compassion arises within our minds and therefore is like a seed that is present within the mind. Like any seed, it has to be nurtured. In the case of compassion, we nurture it in several ways. One is to reflect on it, to direct our minds to it. Another is to take joy in compassion. A physical seed needs many things — soil, water, and sun — and these not only need to be provided, but provided in the right way. For example, when you water a seed, you cannot simply dump a gallon of water on it all at once, you have to water it gently and, therefore, it takes more time and more effort. In the same way, in caring for the seed of compassion within us, we need to be patient and persistent. If we do not take proper care of the seed of compassion, the seed will either not ripen or will ripen in an unhealthy way.

At first, patience is very important. Normally the way that we relate to patience is that sometimes we can be patient and at other times we feel we cannot. The type of patience we need to cultivate is persistent patience, which means that we are patient when we can be patient and we are patient when we feel we

cannot be patient. If we lack this, then we will have no way to overcome our kleshas because patience is the opposite of and the remedy to both anger and hatred.

Patience may be especially difficult for people in the twenty-first century because, in general, we plan so much and in so much detail that we set ourselves up for dissatisfaction and upheaval. We tend to make extremely detailed schedules of what we expect or wish to happen. As soon as our schedule is disrupted — by something that we expected to happen not happening or by something that we didn't expect to happen happening — we become unnecessarily emotional and unnecessarily busy. We may get a bad headache. This does not happen as much with Tibetans because when Tibetans are engaged in work, we tend to just do whatever it is we are doing at the moment and not worry about what we are going to do after that. The work still gets done even though we don't plan as much. Therefore, from this point of view, perhaps the conscious cultivation of patience is especially important for us in the twenty-first century.

In the *Bodhicharyavatara,* Shantideva writes, "There is no point in becoming upset at what you can change; simply change it. And there is no use in becoming upset about what you can't change since there is nothing you can do about it." It is important for

us to have this kind of perspective in dealing with things that are out of our control. While it is obviously important for us to do our best to fulfill our responsibilities, it is impossible for us to control circumstances utterly, and it is impossible for us to have things work out 100 percent.

When we are working, we are doing whatever we are doing fundamentally to accomplish our own well-being and our own happiness. Nevertheless, while we work we sometimes hope for some kind of future benefit, and thus subject ourselves to tremendous pressure and suffering in the process of work. This is ironic. It comes from our losing sight of why we are working, why we are doing whatever it is we are doing, accepting that we are doing it fundamentally for ourselves, and, therefore, it is our choice and responsibility to do it.

In contrast, the type of patience that I am speaking of consists fundamentally of seeing what is wrong with the kleshas and, through fully seeing that, having the forbearance not to indulge in them. This is a little bit different from our common experience of seeing that there is something wrong with the kleshas but still indulging them whenever adverse conditions — those conditions which excite or promote the kleshas — arise. That is not what we are intending here. What is intended here is the

patience with the kleshas that comes from not only seeing that the kleshas have something wrong with them, but seeing that they have everything wrong with them and that they are masses of defects and faults.

When I say, "they are masses of defects" I mean understanding that the kleshas or disturbing emotions are completely defective, completely rotten, or, I don't want to say "bad," but like bad, that there is no part of them that is worthwhile. An analogy for this and how it gives you the ability not to indulge the kleshas even in situations of adversity is: Someone asked you to do something that you had no interest whatsoever in doing. You would not have to think about it. "Do I want to do this or not?" You would immediately be able to clearly state to the person, "I do not wish to do this." And that is the way you respond to the kleshas when you have correctly observed their defective nature that they are naturally faulty.

Nevertheless this type of forbearance with the kleshas does not initially arise spontaneously within us. It is something we have to develop through conscious effort. It may be best to regard the effort and process of cultivating this forbearance as a game rather than a practice or training. If we are about to do something and someone tells us, "OK, now we are going to study," the whole

thing becomes a little depressing. We become depressed by the word "study." But if someone were to say, "OK, the study is over now. Now we are going to play a game," then the concept "game" cheers us up and makes us enthusiastic, even though the game may be just as much a matter of learning as the supposed study was. Therefore, in the same way I think it is best if we avoid the concept of practice here and think of the approach we take to developing forbearance with the kleshas as a kind of game. Then we will be able to enthusiastically put a great deal of effort into it, provided that we think of it as a game and not as a process of study, training, or practice.

Although this is a bit of a joke, there are instructions like this. For example, there are people who need to sleep a lot. An instruction that can be given to them is, "Sleep as much as you can. Sleep for two or three days straight if you can. Then when you cannot sleep any more, say to yourself, 'OK, I'm done sleeping,' and then play this game. See who wins — you or the sleep. And try to compete with the sleep or the urge to fall asleep." The purpose of this is to make the process of training a game rather than a task. For example, there are people who can rest their minds naturally with ease, but then if you tell them, "Okay, meditate now," immediately they lose the ability to do it and their mind is afflicted by a constant stream of disturbing thoughts. The

problem here is that the concept of meditation and having to meditate has caused them to become too serious. In the cultivation of virtue, we have to beware of our tendency to become too serious, because if we become too serious, our kleshas will become even more serious than that.

To conclude, patience is important to develop but it should not be a kind of forced patience but rather patience that arises from natural enthusiasm. If we cultivate this type of enthusiastic patience over a prolonged period, it can become and will become quite stable. I think we should stop now and open it up for questions.

Questions and Answers

Student: Would you talk about buddha mind mixed with appearances?

His Holiness Karmapa: For ordinary beings there appears to be or seems to be a great deal of difference between how things really are and how they appear, between things and their nature. When a thing appears, when it is present, its nature must be present simultaneously. Nevertheless for ordinary beings, when

we focus on a thing, we tend to isolate it from its nature, and when we focus on the nature of a thing, we tend to isolate that from the attributes of the thing itself. For a buddha the nature of things and the appearance of things are inseparable. There are several ways to explain this but probably the easiest way is with reference to secret mantra, so I will explain it that way briefly.

The concept that is key to understanding the way I am going to explain this is the nonduality of mind and prana and, especially, the nonduality of what is called the very subtle or extremely subtle mind and the extremely subtle prana. In actuality, the extremely subtle mind itself and the extremely subtle prana are not two different things. Duality and the appearances of duality come from our failure to recognize this. For example, when the extremely subtle prana is agitated by the karmic winds or karmic pranas, this is what leads to the arising of coarse appearances, which we mistake to be "other." Fundamentally this comes from the absence of recognition of the nondual nature of these.

Buddhists believe that the consciousness in a given lifetime is the cause of the succeeding consciousness in the next lifetime. The way this happens is that at death — during the process of dying and at the moment of death — first the coarse and then the subtle pranas or winds subside until the only prana functioning

is the very subtle prana, which is of the nature of rays of light. At that point, at the culmination of the interval or bardo of dying this very subtle prana, which is inseparable from the very subtle mind itself, manifests to every being as they die. However, it will not be recognized unless it has been pointed out to the person by a guru and that recognition cultivated through subsequent familiarization. In any case, if the very subtle prana and the mind that recognizes it are recognized not to be a duality, then that brings liberation. On the other hand, when we fail to recognize the very subtle prana as not other than ourselves, not other than the mind that experiences it, and we mistake it as other, this causes the emergence of the karmic pranas, first the subtle ones and then the coarse ones, which causes the gradual reemergence or redevelopment of coarse appearances and the taking of another rebirth.

A buddha has realized the nonduality of the very subtle prana and the very subtle mind itself, therefore, since that realization in a buddha is unfluctuating, regardless of the variety of coarse appearances that arise, the buddha will never mistake them to be "other."

Student: You taught about the kleshas, the disturbing emotions, as something that we should see as faulty and negative. Since

they are part of our human experience of samsara, isn't there also a way to turn them around into wisdom, into enlightened qualities by seeing them empty by nature or change them? Or do we have to run away from them?

His Holiness Karmapa: There definitely are means taught for the transforming of kleshas into the path and for bringing them onto or to the path. Principally, these are taught in the disciplines of the secret mantra or vajrayana. When the Buddha taught the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, he explained that while there are 84,000 types of kleshas, they are fundamentally all found within what we call the three poisons or three root kleshas. Especially in that context, he emphasized the overcoming of the klesha of desire. In emphasizing the defects of desire the Buddha taught its remedies, such as meditation on the unpleasant, the maintenance of the many monastic rules, and the outright rejection of desire altogether.

In teaching those practicing the vehicle of the bodhisattvas, the Buddha taught that bodhisattvas who are genuinely motivated by great compassion for others will not be disturbed by desire and, therefore, need not so much focus on it as something to be rejected or remedied. The practice of a bodhisattva is principally love and compassion, concern with the altruistic, and concern

with the altruistic benefit of others. When desire arises for them, it is not truly independent or overwhelming and, therefore, they can bring it to the path.

In teaching the vajrayana, the Buddha taught how even anger can be brought to the path, which means that when someone is thoroughly motivated by immeasurable compassion, their anger is overwhelmed by the power of their compassion and need not be separately dealt with. In secret mantra the klesha that is focused on is stupidity or bewilderment. The remedies taught in secret mantra are the applications of various aspects of wisdom, such as the five aspects of wisdoms that serve to vanquish or remedy that bewilderment.

You mentioned that these three poisons are to some extent part of our nature at present. Fundamentally we want things and we resent anything that obstructs our getting what we want. In a state of bewilderment, we mistake the misery of samsara as happiness and mistake imperfect, unstable states of pleasure as perfect stable ones.

For example, we all get angry, but think of somebody who gets extremely angry from the very depths of their being. When they are that angry, there is not present in their conscious mind any

love or loving kindness for anyone. Now, this is not to say that the inherent disposition toward loving kindness is not present in that person; it is, but it is dormant. It is not manifest. You cannot actually be in a state of complete anger and simultaneously have a thought of loving kindness arise within you. For someone who gets that angry, it is very, very helpful for them to just reject the anger 100 percent because that will enable them not to fall under its power. If they try to make a subtle distinction between types of anger or aspects of anger that are worthwhile and those that are not, it may become grounds for its re-arising. The same thing is true with the other kleshas such as desire and bewilderment.

If someone can make the distinction between worthwhile aspects or workable aspects of these kleshas and those that are utterly unworkable, that is fine. If we cannot make such a subtle distinction, it is certainly better to reject the klesha outright than to fall under its power.

Student: I just want to clarify if I understood what you have said today and that the conclusion I have reached is correct. You talked about the interrelatedness and the interdependence of everything. You also talked of wanting to help others but not really being able to. Then you talked about the nonduality of

the subtle mind and the subtle energy. The appearance and the object, the quality and the object come together; they are actually one and inseparable. Does this mean that just having the intent to help others is actually helping them?

His Holiness Karmapa: With regard to the intention to benefit others and the actual action of benefiting others: In reality, even though things may be not different from one another, that is not how we experience them. In general the nature of appearances that we experience is that they are illusory, like magical illusions, but we don't experience them that way. They seem real to us. But the nonduality or the single taste of how things appear and how they really are is only the same for a buddha. They are not the same for us. Things do not appear to us in a way that accords with how they really are. If they did, then we would be buddhas and have ushnishas but if we feel on the tops of our heads, we don't find that any of us have ushnishas. Because we do not experience things as they are in our present state, the nonduality of appearances and the nature of those appearances do not apply to us.

There is also a degree of uncertainty in my mind about how this concept is being related to, because I also do not know how things appear and how things are being translated into English

and, furthermore, how you have understood these concepts. However, what I was talking about in the context of obstacles to my being able to directly help beings was impediments or obstacles to my being able to directly and immediately touch beings, directly and immediately effect a beneficial change for beings. Of course, in a general way, there is always some type of action that is possible with an intention. There is always something one can do, but it may be quite indirect, which is quite different from being able to create an immediate benefit.

Student: I have had a lot of situations come up where certainly I feel warmth toward myself and also toward all the other people in the situation. And I think I have a clear understanding of what the situation is, what's involved. But I'm unable to take action because of fear of energies that come out of diving into situations. I guess my question is whether the ability to do that comes directly out of compassion or whether it is something else on the path, if that makes sense?

Lama Yeshe: I think I understand. If the answer doesn't correspond to your question, it means I didn't understand your question. The one thing I do not understand is what you mean by the energies that will result.

Student: In His Holiness's book he talks about someone could cut our head off and we would thank them, and he says that that is best left to the experts, which I think is funny. So it's something like the physical pain of having your head cut off or the emotional pain of trying to relate properly with the situation and, for example, needing to say something to somebody and then seeing them at work the next day and all through the year. Something like that, the consequences of trying to relate with the situation bravely.

His Holiness Karmapa: Well, this happens to me in the sense that sometimes I have to speak to groups of two or three hundred or even a thousand or more people. Sometimes I feel that I don't know whether what I say will suit them or displease them. In one sense you could say that the compassion, which is our fundamental motivation in speaking, to use the example you gave, could be enough to overwhelm or overcome the anxiety and doubt about the outcome. What I recommend is to mentally pray to gurus, buddhas, and bodhisattvas with the aspiration that what you say be of real help to others and that even if it is not of immediate help, that it be of help in the future.

For people who are cultivating compassion, I think it is important not to leave the compassion lying inactive within and

let all kinds of unvirtuous drivel fall out of your mouth, but to express your compassion verbally. Although compassion itself does not have words, you can allow the compassion to flow out of you in your actions, including your speech.

Student: In the case of the experience of a sentient being in the bardo interval after death, would there still be the appearance of duality?

His Holiness Karmapa: In the case of the experience of the nondual subtle wind mind, or prana mind, by a sentient being in the bardo interval after death, there would still be the appearance of duality between the experiencing cogni tion and the experienced appearances of the clear light. But in the case of a buddha's realization of the nonduality, there is no duality whatsoever or distinction between the realizing wisdom and the object of realization.

The reason why there would be the appearance of duality for a sentient being in the bardo is that that being's aggregates at the moment of the experience of the appearances of the clear light are still the afflicted aggregates of a sentient being.

The Very Ground of Our Being

With regard to the practice of compassion, the seed of compassion is innate within all of us, which is to say that our basic nature is fundamentally good, virtuous, and compassionate. These things are attributes of the very ground of our being. Nevertheless in the way we experience things, these attributes and that ground itself appear to be obscured by adventitious or secondary stains or obscurations. These stains do not affect the goodness of the nature itself. To give you an analogy, it is like the relationship between the sun and the clouds that temporarily obscure it. Although from our point of view the sun's light is obscured by those clouds, the sun in its nature, the sun in itself, is unaffected by their presence or absence. It always retains its potential. In that way, compassion as a seed is innate in all beings.

In the Buddhist tradition, this fundamental ground of being or nature is commonly referred to as *sugathagarbha* or "buddha

nature," and this is referred to by many synonymous terms, such as *suchness* or *thatness*, *natural nirvana*, the *compassion of all buddhas,* and *emptiness endowed with an essence of compassion.* This is present within each one of us as the very ground of our being.

I think this idea that we find in the Buddhist tradition is very similar to the corresponding idea in the Indian Hindu tradition of Vishnu as the all-pervasive ground of being. One difference one could note is the ascription of form to this all-pervasive ground in one Hindu tradition and the absence of such an ascription in Buddhist tradition. But the idea of an all-pervasive perfection as the ground of being seems very similar. In the Buddhist tradition, this is also called dharmata, the nature of all things, and sometimes specifically luminous dharmata. This is all-pervasive and always retains the potential for freedom from temporary obscurations.

Given the presence of this seed within us, how do we cause this innate potential for the qualities of buddhahood to grow and develop? Principally, I think, through the development of compassion. We regard the wisdom of buddhahood, including the wisdom which correctly realizes emptiness and so forth, as the result of a process of development that is impelled, empowered, and fueled by compassion. It is the expansion of that

compassion, the development of that compassion that forms the main object of the long path which culminates in buddhahood, the path, we are told, that takes three immeasurable kalpas or aeons to complete.

This inconceivably long period of time is cultivated through the power of compassion, and it is the gradually developing and perfecting compassion of the bodhisattva that gives them the courage to be undiscouraged regardless of how many kalpas it will take to achieve buddhahood, undiscouraged regardless of how many beings there are to be brought to liberation and buddhahood, and undiscouraged regardless of how much effort it takes to bring those beings to liberation. All of this tremendous, even inconceivable courage comes from the development of compassion and, therefore, we regard the final fruition, buddhahood, as a result of that compassion.

In the *Abhisamayalamkara* of Maitreya, he says that sravakas and pratyekabuddhas arise from the speech of the sage, the Buddha. The buddhas arise from or come from bodhisattvas, who arise from bodhichitta, which arises from compassion.

The meaning of this is that the wisdom and attainment of disciples of the Buddha, such as sravakas and pratyekabuddhas

come from the Buddha's teachings, but the Buddha, including his teachings, arises from his having been a bodhisattva and bodhisattvas arise from their generation of bodhichitta, which arises from compassion. Therefore, we can say, based on the authority of that quotation, that compassion is the very root of all of these qualities and achievements.

In fact, we find the term *bodhisattva* applied to those who seek buddhahood even in the scriptures and sutras of the common vehicle of Buddhism. It is taught that those bodhisattvas gather the accumulations of merit and wisdom for a period of one hundred kalpas in order to achieve buddhahood. The state of that buddhahood is taught in the common vehicle to be no different from the state of an arhat in terms of its freedom from obscuration. However, there is not the detail about the path of a bodhisattva that we find in the scriptures of the mahayana, but the term bodhisattva itself is found in the common vehicle as well.

This buddha nature, this potential for the removal of all temporary stains or obscurations, is present as an essential attribute, within the minds of all beings. And in turn, its principal attribute is compassion itself.

Compassion can be said to have two aspects: compassion outwardly focused on beings and compassion that is essentially inwardly focused on the achievement of supreme awakening.

The object of the internally focused compassion is the achievement of a perfect awakening that actually transcends both samsara and one-sided nirvana. And the object or purpose of outwardly focused compassion is the actual performance of or engagement in benefit for others. In that these two are equally aspects of compassion, we can think of compassion as being similar to a two-sided mirror, a mirror that has two sides that are equally reflective and that are really two aspects of the same thing.

Outwardly focused compassion expresses or displays itself upon awakening as continuous activity for the benefit of beings that will continue as long as beings continue to exist, which is a truly excellent aspect or quality of mind. The inwardly focused compassion — which yesterday I said is what we would normally call renunciation — here is renunciation that is distinguished by the fact that it is not only the renunciation of samsara, but also the renunciation of one-sided nirvana.

Now, because this seed of compassion is ubiquitous, because it is possessed by all beings, we can say that all beings, including

animals and so forth, possess it, which means that the mere presence of the seed of compassion itself is not sufficient. For example, it is like gold ore found in the ground. Just as in order to produce gold, one needs to find and then refine the gold ore, in the same way, we need to discover and refine the seed of compassion within us, which we do by training our minds.

The practice of mahayana mind training has been especially emphasized by the Kadampa tradition of Lord Atisha. The term mind training here has a particular meaning. *Mind* refers specifically to "bodhichitta" and the *training of the mind* means the "cultivation of that bodhichitta." The roots of bodhichitta and the process of development include the development of compassion and that nondual wisdom which, aligned with compassion, is the cause of awakening. Of these, what must be principally cultivated is compassion, the root of bodhichitta itself. Many methods are taught for the cultivation of compassion, principally the exchanging of oneself for others and other methods taught in a series of gradual stages. I am going to present this in an eclectic way.

The first step in the cultivation of compassion is to determine an initial object toward whom you will develop compassion. This is very important, although this also is a step that can be

problematic sometimes for some people for reasons that will become evident. The reason why we need a focus, a specified focus for our compassion, is that, to give you a traditional analogy, our minds are a little bit like a piece of white paper with nothing written on it. If you try to generate compassion without a specific focus — may I feel compassion for all beings and so on — then it can lead to the compassion being no more than an abstraction: vague and indistinct and not powerful or heartfelt. On the other hand, if you focus on a person or persons, which in the analogy is like drawing a portrait of someone or perhaps writing their name on the piece of paper, then the focus for the compassion becomes precise. Because it is personal, it becomes heartfelt, rather than remaining a vague abstraction.

Sometimes you can change the focus. For example, to continue with the analogy, you may want to initially develop compassion focused on both or one of your parents. You would write, in the analogy, their name or names on the paper with pencil so that if at some point, for whatever reason, you found one or both of your parents difficult objects to feel compassion for initially, you could erase their name, it having been written in pencil, and then write someone else's name instead.

In general, one should begin by cultivating compassion for whoever has been kindest to you, for whomever it is easiest for you to feel compassion. In general, we need to start the development of compassion with some precise object; otherwise it will be too vague.

However, on the other hand, there is also a sense in which to make it not too specifically focused can be helpful as well. For example, to use a different analogy, there are a lot of people in this room. If I were to go into the marketplace and buy a huge piece of cloth or tarpaulin, I could easily drape it over everyone, if the cloth were big enough, all at once, without having to cut the cloth or make any specific measurements. If, on the other hand, I wanted to make a hat or head covering for each and every person, that would involve a lot of cutting, a lot of measuring, a lot of counting and so — in short, a lot of work. In the same way, if one attempts to focus one's object of compassion on one person, because one may have a limited amount of benevolence toward that person, either through a lack of familiarity or through excessive familiarity or through simply not having that good a feeling about the person, one's compassion may be somewhat mixed. For example — and His Holiness used me as an example for this, which is apt in so many ways — you might think it is easy to think about everyone in this room: may they all

be happy, may they never suffer. But if you focus on one person, for example Lama Yeshe, you might think, "Well, I want him to be happy, but I'd also like to see him suffer a little bit. I think it might do him some good," which would place a bit of a limit on the intensity or purity of the compassion, in which case it is difficult to develop compassion using that type of focus. If one tries to force oneself to do so, in spite of the specific focus, it will still remain just an abstraction, an idea of compassion, rather than the actuality of it. In this case, sometimes it is good not make too fine separations. For example, sometimes in the development of compassion we separate beings into friends and enemies. We initially try to develop compassion for friends, but when we try to develop compassion for enemies, we have a very hard time. Sometimes it is best to develop compassion without making such distinctions.

The starting point or root of development of compassion is to pick one person, the one person for whom it is easiest to develop compassion. Traditionally, and for many of us this would be our mother in this life because simply for most of us, the people to whom we feel the most gratitude for are our parents and especially our mother. Because we feel the greatest amount of gratitude toward her, it is easiest for us to develop love and compassion toward her. The way that you do this is that you

first cultivate compassion directed at that specific person or object until it acquires authenticity, until it becomes authentic, heartfelt compassion. Then you gradually expand compassion beyond that limited object, so that it includes more and more beings. This expansion, however, does not involve separately working out the whole logic behind compassion, such as the relationship between gratitude, love, and compassion for each person. It having been worked out in relation to the initial object, typically one's mother, one then simply extrapolates the compassion itself and expands it to embrace other beings and eventually all beings by means of the recognition that all beings are fundamentally similar to one's mother or whomever the person is on whom the compassion was initially focused. It has to be done this way because if you attempt to go through the whole process, the logical process of the development of compassion for each person again separately, then the process becomes endless. One initially develops authentic compassion for one person and then expands it to include all beings.

Some people have trouble with certain traditional objects of the initial focus of compassion. Some people have trouble feeling compassion for their enemies. Other people have an easier time feeling compassion for enemies than they do for their parents. They may regard their parents as having been abusive, cruel, or

too strict. Because they have this resentment, for them parents are not a suitable object to begin the process of compassion. In that case, one should simply pick the person for whom it is easiest for you to initially feel compassion and then, having gained authenticity in compassion with regard to that person, expand it as before.

One need not select a human being as one's initial focus. It could be a different kind of being, even something in the environment, like plants and trees. I feel it is appropriate and beneficial in several ways to select plants and trees as initial focuses of compassion. One would go through the same process, beginning by reflecting upon the kindness of the plants and trees to us, reflecting on how much good they do for us, how much our survival and well-being depends on them, and so on.

One of the advantages of doing this is that if one focuses on a specific person and attempts to wholeheartedly cultivate an attitude of gratitude for that person, one may subsequently be affected by their particular display or reaction to the changes in one's attitude. One does not face this obstacle with a tree.

With trees and plants reflect on the fact that they create the oxygen that we need to live, as well as being sources of our cloth-

ing, our food, our paper, and so on. As well, reflect upon the awful plight which they face — being cut down, being carved up, being processed, being turned into whatever they are being turned into. Now, I don't know whether trees and plants are literally conscious or not but they certainly are life in some sense. They want to continue to live. They would not grow if they did not have the desire to do so. For example, they will grow even in relatively inhospitable environments, such as on the faces of cliffs and occasionally even on rooftops.

Compassion focused on living things in the environment, green compassion, is particularly valuable and appropriate nowadays. In general, my point is that one's initial object or subsequent objects of compassion need not be limited to human beings alone. One's root object can be other types of beings, including animals, including trees and plants, or even me. You could think about me with compassion, "Oh, he suffers so much. He has so little control over where he goes and what he does, so little freedom. And he's under so much pressure."

Traditionally it is taught that once we have cultivated compassion for the initial focus, the initially chosen object of our compassion, we then extrapolate it gradually toward all beings, based upon the understanding that throughout beginningless samsara

all beings have time and time again been our mother. Now, obviously the acceptance of this depends upon the belief in rebirth, in past and future lives, which in turn usually depends upon the study and understanding of the logical proofs establishing rebirth. Just as a distinction is made in ways of pursuing the path, based upon gradations of individual practitioners, initially it is possible to begin by focusing only on one's connection with others in this life, which obviates the necessity of believing in past and future lives.

There are other advantages to this as well. This life, this world is an object of immediate experience to us. It is, therefore, relatively easy for us to feel strongly about others in this world. The way in which we extrapolate compassion toward others considering this life alone is by reflecting upon the fact that pretty much every significant event that occurs in any locality in this world will eventually affect everyone in the whole world. We can regard this type of interdependent connection among the beings on this planet as a type of karmic connection. One can reflect upon this in a negative way but perhaps it would be best to approach it in a positive way by reflecting upon how the benevolence of other beings enables your welfare. You could, however, think about it negatively, for example, the fact that the suffering and misery of other beings becomes a direct or indirect cause of your misery

as well. Even though you do not for the moment consider past and future lives and that all beings have been your mother, and so on, even though you are limited to the consideration of one set of parents in this life, you can still extrapolate this compassion toward all beings based on the connectedness of all beings in this world.

I say this because sometimes when people are taught to cultivate gratitude for others they start to feel strange, as though they are being pressured to cultivate a gratitude that they do not naturally feel. This feeling of pressure is unnecessary and we can avoid it by simply attending to the actual circumstances, the real reasons why we are dependent on the kindness of others, then the natural feeling of appreciation and gratitude will arise.

When we reflect upon the kindness of another person, how much they have helped us, how much good they have done us, and how loving they are to us, we will naturally and gradually start to feel love for them. We will come to cherish them and treasure them. It will be like the attitude of small children toward their stuffed animals of which they are fond. Small children will feel great attachment toward their stuffed animals such that they intensely wish that the animals not be lost, not be destroyed or damaged in any way and so on. In that way, one will develop an

attitude of treasuring the person whose kindness one appreciates and this will cause love to arise naturally and then in the wake of love, compassion.

Compassion arises and develops based on our free choice, our free and conscious choice. Compassion is not developed by accident. It is not developed without freedom of choice. In general, virtue arises based on a conscious choice. This is somewhat different from the way kleshas arise within our minds. Kleshas typically arise without much choice on our part as a result of our previous habituation to them. On the other hand, virtuous thoughts, to be fully authentic, must arise as a result of our free choice to give rise to them. Remember that you have the freedom to make the choice to cultivate compassion and to cultivate virtue. I say this because sometimes people become hopeless. They think it doesn't matter to cultivate virtuous thoughts or not because they have no power to stop kleshas from arising. This is incorrect. It is important that we actually consciously choose to cultivate freedom and control of our own mind.

Compassion is essentially the desire for freedom from suffering, and when focused on others that they be free from suffering. The *Sutralankara* explains ten reasons why it is appropriate to feel compassion for beings. One reason mentioned in this text

is that beings are under the power of a blazing enemy and this blazing enemy refers to the ignorance and kleshas of beings. This causes them to, without any control or freedom, undertake continuous rebirth in samsara. Another reason is that beings are obscured by the darkness of their suffering. This means that as a result of these kleshas and ignorance that cause rebirth, beings accumulate karma and this accumulation of karma in turn causes beings to actually suffer. In that way, beings are oppressed and menaced by their great suffering. Third, in the midst of all this suffering when beings experience a brief moment of relief, such as rebirth in a higher state and so on, they cling to the defiled and unstable happiness that they briefly experience there as though it were going to be lasting and more stable. This clinging itself causes the accumulation of further actions that lead to further rebirth and so on. In short, for these and many other reasons, it is explained in the *Sutralankara*, *The Ornament to the Sutras*, why it is appropriate to feel compassion and how one can develop it.

Furthermore it is taught that we must not keep the compassion we develop hidden within us. One might consciously cultivate compassion for beings while in the shrine room, but then when one goes to work one might abandon all compassion and return to a habitual state of angry grumpiness. This is not enough. We need to express the compassion we develop in compassionate

action. We need to act compassionately. We need to take the feelings of compassion to which we give rise through our practice and bring them into and express them as action or activity. The feelings themselves are very good but they must be expressed in action as well.

Questions and Answers

Student: Your Holiness spoke about the subtle prana mind. Could you explain the relationship between that and interconnectedness? And secondly, why are we on this earth and how long will we be here?

His Holiness Karmapa: First of all, we need to understand that the term prana, "wind," does not refer to literal wind. It is used to refer to movement and in this case, the inseparability of the very subtle mind and very subtle movement. The inseparability of mind and wind, in general, refers to the movement of the mind that is, for example, the entrance of one's cognition, one's mind, into an object, the interaction with that object, which can be referred to as a movement of the mind. In that it is a movement, it is considered a wind. If we make a distinction between the

mind in its essential attributes and the wind, this distinction is a distinction between isolates that are not in actuality two different things, but which we can isolate from one another in discussion in terms of discussing the attributes which are possessed by that inseparable unity.

For example, when we talk about this inseparable unity as mind or cognition, we are talking about its fundamental attributes being lucid cognitive capacity or lucid awareness. And when we talk about it as wind or movement, we mean its attribute of moving to or the capacity to move toward an object, to interact with an object and so forth. These are isolates but not two different things.

As far as the relationship between this inseparable wind mind and interdependence, it is through the movement or motion of this wind mind that all of the things of samsara and nirvana arise. When there is movement, all of the phenomena of samsara and nirvana arise from the ground or basis, which is luminous awareness, this extremely subtle mind. They arise through movement of this very subtle cognition, and they dissolve back into the ground of that very subtle cognition itself also through movement just as, for example, the waves on the surface of an ocean arise from that ocean and dissolve back into that ocean

and are made up of nothing but the water of the ocean itself. That is the first question.

By how long are we going to be here, do you mean on this planet or in samsara? First of all, let's limit our field of consideration to this galaxy because if we start talking about the universe as a whole, it's just going to get mind boggling. There are said to be billions and billions of stars in this galaxy and many of them apparently have planets. But so far, as far as we know, this is the only planet that can support life as we know it. If there are others, they are presumably too far away to be of any practical use to us.

This planet is referred to as the place of karma. In one sense it is because the situations on this planet are very karmic in nature. In particular, it is understood that this planet, as a place that can support life, is a product of the collective karma of those beings who take birth here or become involved with this planet. If we think about it, the circumstances of the earth are amazing. For example, the earth is the third planet from the sun and just considering that alone, it is one of the things that is necessary for it to be a potential support for life. If we were much closer to the sun, it would be too hot; we would be burned. And if we were much farther from the sun, it would be too cold and

we would freeze. Amazingly this planet stays in the right orbit so that we get the right range of temperatures and so on. All of this is said to be a result of the collective karma of beings of this planet. As for the details, I don't know exactly what karma we have accumulated for this to occur.

As far as how long we are going to be here, each and every one of us is here until we die and then we are not here any more. We are somewhere else. Is that what you mean or are you talking about 2012? Someone might continue to be reborn on this planet, principally by accumulating the necessary virtuous karma and by making the aspiration to be reborn here.

Moderator, Rajiv: If I could take that a little further, the question, I think, was that what is the purpose of human existence and not just physical existence but the very notion of consciousness? Does His Holiness believe that consciousness is a byproduct of biochemical processes? And in that sense and in those terms, what is its goals and its destination?

Lama Yeshe: Do you mean purpose in the teleological sense?

Student: Well, in the sense that His Holiness interprets it and what he understands this to be, because when we look at this life I think we are looking at the issue of consciousness, if we

look at how life evolves into consciousness. So this evolutionary process, does it have a purpose? Does it have a grand design in the absence of a creative god?

His Holiness Karmapa: Well, when we talk about mind or consciousness, which has the fundamental attributes of cognitive lucidity, the capacity to know, then we think of it as one of three categories or things: forms, nonmental formation or noncognitive formations, and then cognition. And of these three, consciousness can also be called cognition.

Now, when scientists examine consciousness, because of the procedure of science they are necessarily doing it based on the examination of the physical, such as the examination of the interaction of brain chemicals or other physical processes in the brain and the consideration of mind or cognition, consciousness, as a result of some interaction of chemicals, such as in the proposed evolution of consciousness. But the question remains if consciousness resulted from the interaction of chemicals, why did those chemicals interact in such a way as to produce consciousness. Furthermore, we think of our mind, our cognition, as the controller of our bodies, but the mind and body exist as an interdependent union of two things. A union must always be the union of two things. You can never use the term union

for just one thing. And in the same way, the interdependence of mind and body would not have arisen through the preexistence of the body or form and the subsequent arising or arrival of cognition. So I think that when we examine the attributes of consciousness through the examination of the interaction of brain chemicals, the interaction of chemical processes in general, we are certainly examining one aspect of it, but through such examination, I don't think that we have yet ascertained the fundamental cause for the presence of consciousness.

Student: Your Holiness, I have a question about suffering on the level of the nirmanakaya tulku, which is illusory body. I want to ask you, is there suffering and in which way is there suffering or do you experience it? Basically, what I want to ask is do you experience suffering on your level, which I perceive as nirmanakaya tulku? And in which way do you experience it? And if I relate to that in my own way, is it my deluded perception that there is an experience at all? I guess that's my question.

His Holiness Karmapa: Well, if you are asking about the actual nirmanakaya that is part of the trikaya — dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya — then nirmanakaya does not suffer, because suffering is a sensation, one of the afflicted aggregates that have been abandoned. So therefore, nirmanakaya does

not suffer. If you are asking about those who are called tulkus conventionally, such as myself, then oh boy, do I suffer. I definitely suffer. You need have no worry. I suffer both in my own experience and in the perception of others.

Student: Thank you so much for teaching us today, Your Holiness. It is wonderful to see you again. You talked about playing with kleshas, a game so that who would win — me or the klesha? I hope to hear a little more about this. In my life and my formal practice right now, I think the obstacle is many, many blessings and not really being certain what to do. It's a kind of confusion with how to organize my time. And when I push against it, it wins. And when I let it go, it also wins. So I thought maybe your suggestion to play with it like a game might be very helpful to me and maybe to others to learn more about.

His Holiness Karmapa: It sounds as though you have the sensation or the feeling of having received great blessings but you are unsure of how to organize them into a practical, accessible format. In order to organize them you need to gather more blessings, but you do this by blessing your own being through the cultivation of virtue. The need for further blessings in order to organize and care for the blessings you have received is very much like the a person who has many properties and has need

for a caretaker or organizer who can take care of all of them. Bless your own being through the accumulation of further virtue.

There is a saying about this. It is said, "Without governance, one's virtues are like a treasure without an owner." Governance in this case refers to circumspection and the faculty of mind that is attentive vigilance with regard to one's virtues. If one lacks this governance, then even if one may accumulate virtues, then they will be uncared for, left to be, so that anything can happen to them, like a treasure that is left without an owner or a guardian so that anyone could pick it up. It could be picked up by someone with a virtuous intention or someone with an unvirtuous intention. Even though one may have received many, many blessings, one needs to organize them by blessing one's own being through circumspection.

Student: Two questions, Your Holiness. In the choice of a person as the object of compassion, can it be oneself? Is it appropriate?

His Holiness Karmapa: Yes, if you can feel compassion for yourself.

Student: The second question is about subtle mind and subtle wind being one indivisible entity. The mind, as we know, is not amenable to the senses — no color, no taste, etc. I have

definitely never heard that it possesses movement. Now, subtle prana, howsoever subtle it may be, would demonstrate some kind of particle aspect I would imagine or aspect dissimilar to the mind. I am just wondering. Two things which demonstrate such divergent characteristics — how do we see them to be one indivisible entity?

His Holiness Karmapa: It is true that the mind itself has no color, shape, and so forth, but nevertheless, the mind thinks and thinking is a type of action or movement or change. And the mind thinking is how the mind enters into or interacts with objects of mind, objects of knowledge. And it is that entry into its objects, the mind's entry into objects that is being referred to as movement or motion. It does not mean the movement of the mind from one place to another, like a physical entity.

Student: When someone breaks a big stone — I feel that is wrong. I would like an explanation about that feeling and if we should feel compassion for stones because it is really a strong feeling that something is wrong with that.

His Holiness Karmapa: If it works for you, if it actually helps you to develop compassion, then of course it is fine to focus on boulders, large rocks, and so on because by the very fact that it

works for you, it is achieving its purpose. Therefore, it is fine. There is a saying in Tibetan, “If it improves the quality of the butter, one may even add dog fat.”

Chenrezik Practice of Love and Compassion

This afternoon I am going to present to you the transmission for the meditation practice of Arya Avalokita, the bodhisattva Chenrezik.

I have been speaking quite a bit about compassion and basically have been saying whatever occurred to me at the time. If we reflect on our lives up to this point, we will see how important compassion really is in our lives. We will also see that we actually have experienced compassion although we tend to ignore those experiences or undervalue and discard them. Just as when we dedicate virtue and gather all the merit accumulated throughout past, present, and future into one thing, in the same way, we need to gather together all of our experiences of compassion and based on that, cultivate it consciously in our lives.

The bodhisattva Arya Avalokita or Chenrezik in the form of a single deity is the embodiment of all of the compassion that resides within the hearts of all buddhas of all the ten directions and all times — past, present, and future.

He is depicted as brilliant white like the disc of the full moon to indicate that his compassion is unfluctuating. It does not wax and wane. And that is his compassion toward all beings, without exception. He has four arms because he is so busy and hardworking. No, he has the four arms to show that he benefits beings by means of the four immeasurables.

The four immeasurables are love, compassion, empathetic joy, and impartiality, but I can't tell you which hand represents which of the four. Whatever occurs to you about that is probably fine. And I think that the reason why he appears dressed in the costume of a layperson or a householder rather than a monastic is that more of those who are tamed by him are laypeople than monastics.

His name is, in its fullest form, Arya Avalokiteshvara, but I am not going to analyze his name as it appears in the original Sanskrit because there are, no doubt, many people here of Indian origin who are learned in Sanskrit and which means that if I slipped

up, I might get caught, which would be embarrassing. Therefore, in order to avoid that, I will comment upon his name as it is translated into Tibetan, which is Pakpa Chenrezik Wangchuk. He is called Chenrezik, or He Who Gazes with His Eyes, because his eyes are always gazing upon or seeing all beings all the time. This name, therefore, should not be particularly regarded as an ordinary name of him as a person but more as a description of the qualities of his mind.

A synonym to that name is Mik Midzum, Eyes Never Shut. It doesn't literally mean that he never blinks or never shuts his eyes. We know from our own experience that if you have eyes, you need to occasionally blink. What is referred to by the title of "eyes" is his compassion, the gaze or regard of his compassion, which is unceasing and unfluctuating.

In short, his name and title refer to his qualities. Therefore, in performing the practice of Chenrezik, it is important to not simply imagine his form but to essentially focus on the cultivation of his essence, which is great compassion. I think that as long as you cultivate the essential attribute of Chenrezik, which is great compassion, it is okay if you, in addition to that, visualize his form, but it is also okay if you don't. I say this because I think that sometimes we overemphasize the importance of the

visual image of a deity in the practice of deity meditation. In overemphasizing that, we sometimes neglect the wisdom qualities within the mind of the deity. In the case of Chenrezik, we pay no attention to his essence or attributes of mind, which is principally great compassion. Therefore, it is important here to pay more attention to his essential attribute. Do not visualize Chenrezik without compassion, because if you produce some kind of Chenrezik lacking in compassion, that would be extremely odd.

I am going to tell you a story and as funny as the story may be, it's not entirely a joke. In an unspecified part of eastern Tibet — and we will leave it unspecified because I don't want to offend anyone — there was a charlatan. This charlatan told people, "I recently went to Sukhavati, the blissful realm of Amitabha, and I went there to meet the Buddha Amitabha." He calls the Buddha Amitabha by a funny name, Abo Ulu. He went to meet the Buddha Amitabha and he said, "While I was there, Amitabha was asleep, so Arya Tara walked by and woke him up saying, 'Amitabha, Amitabha, you must wake up because (he gave himself the name Tulku Drowa Drenpa, which means the Nirmanakaya Who Guides Beings or Leads Beings to Liberation) Tulku Drowa Drenpa is about to go to the human world and you've got to wake up and give him instructions.'" He continued with the story.

"Then Amitabha did wake up suddenly and he said, 'Oh, Tulku Drowa Drenpa is about to go to the human world. Quick, we must offer him tea to drink and tsampa, parched barley flour, to eat.'" And he continued with the story.

"Now, the tea maker, the preparer of tea in the realm of Sukhavati, is the bodhisattva Vajrapani, and if you've ever wondered why Vajrapani is dark blue in color, it's because he's making tea all the time [His Holiness said this is a reference to the fact that Tibetan kitchens are often very smoky places and this charlatan, of course, assumed that they must be like that in Sukhavati] and gets all that smoke on him so that he's dark blue. And as for the color of Chenrezik, you know he's white because he's the one who fetches the tsampa, the parched barley flour. He gets the flour all over himself and that's why he's white."

Having told them that, he got to the point of his story. "And then Tara instructed me and she said, 'This year it is extremely cold here in Sukhavati. And the Amitabha,' whom she referred to in his relation of the story as Abo Ulu, 'is suffering from the cold. So you, Tulku Drowa Drenpa, please go to the human world and acquire,' and in different versions of the story, different numbers are given but let's say ten, His Holiness said, 'white lambskins or sheepskins of good quality and bring them back here. Surely all

who offer these to you will be reborn in Sukhavati as a result.' " Then he concluded the story, "And I agreed to do so and that is why I am here." And so his whole point was just to scam to acquire good quality sheepskins.

The point of the story is that this is the kind of thing that comes from paying too much attention to the appearance of deities without any recollection of the meaning of that appearance.

The kalyanamitra, or the spiritual friend, is the guide who can be a bodhisattva such as Arya Avalokiteshvara. There are four types of spiritual friends: There is the spiritual friend who is a person; the spiritual friend that is the dharma, the teachings themselves, which is when the teachings arise as a spiritual friend; there is one's own mind as a spiritual friend; and there is the spiritual friend within all appearances.

As the Buddha taught, we must achieve liberation for ourselves through our own effort. With regard to reliance on a spiritual friend, from one point of view, of course, the path is something that we must traverse through our own efforts. Nevertheless, to emulate the example of a great bodhisattva, such as Chenrezik or Arya Manjushri, is of great benefit. This is especially the case in that, as the

Buddha taught, all buddhadharmas depend upon the spiritual friend because it is the spiritual friend who teaches us what to accept and what to avoid.

In the case of the bodhisattva Chenrezik, his deeds and his example teach us in a profound way what to do and what not to do, which means that even though we may not personally and directly encounter the bodhisattva Chenrezik, he naturally becomes our spiritual friend because we are learning what is to be done and what is not to be done from his example and from the histories of his deeds.

The practice of Arya Avalokita and meditation on him was traditionally widespread in India, Tibet, China, and other countries and was, by and large, the quintessence of the practice of many. In the particular case of Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is regarded by us as the appearance of Chenrezik, of Arya Avalokita, in human form for the benefit of beings. All Tibetans feel a very personal connection with Chenrezik who is literally a living Buddha who appears among us and on whom we rely in a very direct and personal way.

I was born into and grew up in a family and home that was filled with the warmth that comes from the practice of Chen-

rezik meditation. As some of you may have heard, my maternal grandmother, and my mother after her, constantly recited the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM, which meant that from the earliest age, I was engulfed by the sound of this mantra. When I spoke about having a kind of compassion from the earliest age, I think it resulted from that.

Whenever there is a family, we can speak of the inheritance that one receives from one's parents. Because I received no other inheritance from my parents — as in my seventh or eighth year I was recognized and moved elsewhere — I regard Chenrezik practice as the inheritance that I received. Because of my experience of it in early life, I have the habit of it; I have the blessing of it. You can think of it as my paternal inheritance, my maternal inheritance, but whichever, I think of it as my sole inheritance from my parents and, therefore, I almost invariably share this inheritance with everyone by offering the transmission for this four-armed Chenrezik practice at every public audience. In doing so, in sharing my only family inheritance with you, I feel that I am making us all into one family, like one home.

The transmission that I give for this practice is based on the liturgy "Benefit for Beings Throughout all Space," which was composed by the Mahasiddha Thangtong Gyalpo during the

fifteenth century. At the beginning, I will recite the liturgy and then give the transmission of the mantra, and then we will meditate for a little bit and it will be done.

[His Holiness gives the transmission.]

I am delighted to have been able to spend the last two days with you discussing compassion. In times like we live in, it is said that both the environment and the inhabitants of the environment are pretty well down to the dregs, which means we inhabit an environment more or less filled with carbon dioxide, and we the inhabitants are afflicted by a great degree of ignorance. In such times, to even recollect loving kindness and compassion is tremendous virtue and, therefore, I am delighted to have had this opportunity to offer you some familiarity with the ideas behind loving kindness and compassion and to plant seeds within you.

In addition, I would like to thank from the depths of my heart and express my gratitude to the Foundation for Universal Responsibility, founded by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and to Rajiv, who leads it. If you translate Foundation of Universal Responsibility into Tibetan, you get something like "group who takes full responsibility on themselves for the well-being of these billions and billions of worlds" so I guess we have to be very

grateful to Rajiv because he evidently takes that responsibility on himself. I want to thank him and the Foundation from the depths of my heart.

In addition, I want to thank all of you, thank everyone involved in any way. I did not really prepare myself for this. From Bodhgaya I went to Varanasi and remained there through preparations and initial celebration of Losar, the Tibetan New Year. Since the celebrations of the New Year or Losar are continuing, in a certain way I would say that my head is in Losar and not really in compassion, for which I apologize. At the same time, I am very pleased to have had this opportunity to intensify my feeling of connection with all of you and I thank you all for providing me with this opportunity. I hope sincerely from the depths of my heart that our discussion will produce great benefit for you and for others.

With regard to compassion, sometimes when compassion is held within and not expressed, not applied in action, it can become a source of suffering. Having compassion and feeling that you cannot do anything to help can be frustrating. Someone once came to me and said that they had seen a dog who had been hit by a car. The dog was wounded and was lying there and was also being fed upon by some insects. There wasn't much this person

could do for the dog. Even if he removed the insects, those insects would starve to death, so he really felt lacking in any way to implement his compassion and he found it rather depressing.

That being the case, we need to remember that situations that we encounter are not always like that and compassion does not always have to be viewed as something where there is nothing we can do because, in fact, there always is something we can do. If we start small, start with the actual implementation or practice of compassion with small things and in very simple ways, we will, in fact, be emulating the example of great masters of the past, who ensured that whatever they did, even neutral actions, were motivated by the altruistic wish to benefit others so that when great masters of the past went into retreat, with every step they took toward the place of retreat, they thought, "May with this step I bring benefit to beings. May this step benefit beings." Whenever they tied their belt on at the beginning of the day, they would think, "May my tying on this belt be of benefit to beings." In that way, if we think that everything we are doing, even if it's a neutral action that is not directly beneficial to other beings, if we think that it is done for the purpose of benefiting others, while it's not the case that it immediately produces some kind of fantastic benefit for others, it will be the case that your motivation will accrue and will eventually produce action

that will be directly beneficial to many. Without such profound methods, starting from very simple actions and so on, we don't have any way to implement compassion. So please keep this is mind and thank you all very much.

Moderator, Rajiv: It is with great trepidation and hesitation that I intrude following the words of a great master and the profound impact it has had on us, but I think as a collective gesture of deep appreciation to Peter for having been such a wonderful interpreter and such an eloquent transmitter of His Holiness's ideas, words, wisdom, and much of his humor: Thank you, Peter.

Lama Yeshe: You're very welcome. Thank you.

Moderator, Rajiv: There is little that we can offer His Holiness in material, physical terms other than our deep, profound, passionate gratitude for the time that he has taken and spent with us. It is quite beyond what you have said, Your Holiness. It has been your presence and who you are as much as what you say to us that is truly, profoundly, and deeply transforming. I guess that it is just 200 full hearts that must speak for themselves, because I really don't know what to say, except for a prayer for your long life, your continuing happiness, so that we may have the ongoing privilege and pleasure and blessing of listening to

you again and again. And I would also be failing if I did not say that when His Holiness had kind words about me, I felt like the white dust from the flour in the kitchen covering me up. The people who have really done the work are hiding in that corner and I would invite them to come and present a scarf on behalf of all of us — Raji Ramanan, Thupten Tsewang, Kunchok Dolma, and Devender.

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