

Compassion – Karuṇā

*“The root or seed of all and everything is compassion.
Even in this world of fictitious being it yields many fruits
of happiness. And is the cause of sublime limpid clearness
and consummate perspicacity, it’s actuality being inner peace.
Make every effort to activate this precious inne potential.”⁷¹*

— Longchenpa

Now that we are all manifesting an open, receptive, giving state — *mettā* — what are we going to do with it? From the *Vimuttimaggā* (The Path of Freedom).⁷² “When there is suffering in others it causes good people’s compassion (heart) to be moved.” In Pali, this is called *karuṇā*. Compassion combats suffering. It can be fierce. You have to be strong to be

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fierce. It requires insight — the wisdom to know the best interests for self and other beings. How so? How to develop it?

Compassion is *com*, “together” with passion, from the Latin, *pati* which means “to suffer.” It is active love, active friendliness. There are two aspects — relative and absolute. *Relative* compassion is the desire and the action to remove the states of suffering. Loving-kindness is softer and supporting. To be compassionate is to be passionate about the involvement with the other — don’t just talk about it — *do* something about the pain. Passion is aliveness, to have a passion for life. In the sixteenth century, the word passion took on the meaning of sexual, lustful, and meant less about suffering. Today, the word is again shifting meaning toward a full engagement with life. So, in the relative sense, you disengage someone from what harms them, like quickly taking a child away from the danger of a hot stove. Sometimes compassion requires kind and sharp words. Other times gentleness with fierce energy.

We do not have time to waste, fiddling about. Beings are spreading poison. And who knows when we shall die, how much time is left? I want to live life with abundance, un-sticky passion, and with joy! It is like the question the Buddha posed to a group of *bhikkhus* (wanderers) about the person who is shot with an arrow. After being shot, would it be wise for the person to ask about what direction the arrow came from, what the arrow head is made from, perhaps bronze or wood, how long is the shaft and what type of feathers were used? Just get the arrow of suffering out, now!

Sometimes we need to know the causes of the suffering to prevent others or ourselves from blindly repeating acts of suffering, over and over. We may need to know in depth what the suffering state is before we disengage from it. This comes from a basis of loving-kindness conjoined with intelligence.

And intelligence often comes from study, the accumulation and then association of the information — perceiving patterns. I will return to the question of accumulation of information and pattern recognition a bit later.

Absolute compassion requires realization of the empty nature of being and phenomena. Recall that all beings are transient, free from an inherent self-nature, and suffer due to attachment and clinging. The question here is how to lead beings to transcendence from the three poisons (greed, hatred, and delusion) and on to vast seeing and no veils.

This teaching is about helping beings out of hell — for good. *Absolute* compassion is conjoined effortlessly with *Bodhicitta*, the Enlightenment Mind, the wish to liberate quickly for the sake of all beings. What is required is an understanding that liberation from suffering is the burning up of the defilements, not suppressing them or pretending they are not there. Not having to feel that the negative states are part of normal living, or that freedom is equivalent to acts of goodness or being nice. Countless beings are suffering because they make permanent the image of self or other, when it is clearly not permanent; it is an illusory experience. We are all rapidly shifting, oscillating, ever changing beings, not the same from one moment to another. Trillions of changes occur in the snap of the fingers, physically and mentally. We cling to this or that slice of experience.

However, the illusion of a continuous self is very strong, due in part to strong habitual emotional patterns of self referencing. So, there is a *self*, but only in a relative, illusory sense. This belief — so tightly, emotionally attached are we to self view — is the cause of our suffering. We use the word emptiness, the translation of the Sanskrit word *sūnyatā* for the experiences of transience (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and

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non-intrinsic self nature (*anattā*). Meditating on emptiness is directly observing one or more of the above three characteristics of all states, whether mental or physical. So that which is full is empty, that which is void is filled. Both are transitory, and are not permanent abiding states, just concepts. Countless beings are suffering because heaped up intellectual ideas are suffocating them. And countless beings are pinned to the mat because they primarily use emotions to move through the universe. Both stances are false. Seeing the empty (not the same as nihilistic) nature of self and other is freedom from suffering. Why? There is no necessity for sticky states. Now we can see why the full realization of emptiness is inseparable with the attainment of absolute compassion.

Let's return to relative compassion. Here's an example: Someone comes to you, they have broken their leg and you help them. Nevertheless, they continue to keep breaking it. You ask why the leg keeps getting broken and they mention that they have dangerous stairs in their house, or alternatively, slippery floors, or they lack mindfulness. In the absolute sense, one recognizes the root versus the relative causes. You aid in the removal of the one great root of all suffering — ignorance or delusion (*moha*). The ability to assist a being on the path to remove delusion (the constant self-reference, a state of profound conceit about life) requires wisdom grounded in direct experience of emptiness. Otherwise, it is the practice of the good, but not necessarily decisive in removing the origin of *dukkha*. As has been said by many great teachers, recognition of the root of the mind, the empty nature of mind is decisive — it is liberation. Constantly watching and being aware of the calm mind or thoughts and ideas is not decisive.

Merging a compassionate mind with realization of emptiness is great liberation. A great yogi of Tibet, Shabkar (1781–1851)

said: “Without compassion the root of dharma is rotten.” Many times in Shabkar’s autobiography he shows that although some of his students had profound experiences of emptiness, they still needed to strengthen compassion for deeper realization.

Now I have some heart advice to give to you: a sky needs a sun, a mother needs a child, a bird needs two wings. Likewise, emptiness alone is not enough. You need to have great compassion for all beings that have not realized this emptiness — enemies, friends, and strangers. You need to have compassion that makes no distinctions between good and bad. You must understand that compassion arises through meditation, not simply from waiting, thinking that it may come forth by itself from emptiness.

The same number of years you spent meditating on emptiness, you should now spend meditating day and night on compassion — a compassion a hundred times stronger than that of a mother for a child being burnt in a fire, an unbearably intense compassion that arises when thinking about the suffering of sentient beings.

Once such compassion is born, you must practice until you come to think, with fierce energy, “Until enlightenment, I shall do whatever is possible to benefit all beings, not omitting a single one — and no matter what difficulties I must endure.”⁷³

I remember Namgyal Rinpoche saying on many occasions, “The psychic powers to attain are love and compassion.” To bring the relative and the absolute together, act from *lokuttara*, beyond location or place. *Lokuttara* is a Pali word meaning beyond a world, or beyond location, usually translated as “supermundane” or the transcendental) Have no-where to stand

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fixated. From this view of emptiness of all things and beings, and knowing the extent of suffering and its causes, arises the heart of compassion — the elasticity of vast, encompassing, spacious mind.

On Burnout and Anxiety

Question: Why is there so much “burnout” with people in the healing and therapeutic professions?

Here are some observations. I don’t have all the answers.

1. Unresolved issues within themselves, that bounce off others. Those in healing and therapeutic professions need to be in much better mental and emotional health — in a state of *mettā*. In addition, one has to clear one’s own mental defilements to heal well.
2. Healers work with people in very difficult spaces — it physically affects you and gets into your cells. It is poison and one may not have enough strength and equanimity to clear it.
3. You see the same symptoms, same problems, repeatedly. Alternatively, different symptoms, shifting problems, same core emotional problems re-appear year after year. You are helping but something is missing. The root of the suffering has not been severed.
4. You are also working in cities, immersed in low- and high-level anxiety.

You will “print” this dissatisfaction out on dream level — a day, weeks, a month, or a year later. To really help others you need to root out greed, hatred, and delusion, pride, jealousy, frustration, moodiness, mania, depression, envy, and so on. You may be doing good work but not liberating beings. You are

supportive and sometimes miraculously effective. This cycle of helping can be very tiring.

May I be candid? I know of a number of healers who are excellent at what they do, and are very supportive, good human beings. Yet they still carry around a lot of inner turmoil. Professionally, they can be mindful to keep most of their personal turmoil out of the healing space but, energetically and mentally, this is difficult to carry around over many years.

There is always something *I* want that *I*'m not getting. Right? Ask yourself the following questions: What is it? Is it affection, space, or time for you? Or is it primarily about not getting love, not being full of interest, which equates to energy? Are you really interested in what you are doing? You can tell when you've gone away for a while, a week, or month and when you come back to work or home, the whole situation wears you out, fast. This is what people call burnout, broken views. Burnout, what a word! What is this concept of burn out? What is pulling down the energies?

On a relative and immediate level, take good breaks that give you a satisfying rest that indisputably recovers your energies. Do you know how to have a real, refreshing rest? I suggest that the best thing is to know *you* better and better. Not the false images, but you as a being, immersed in this world, wanting, holding on, and trying to be happy and loved. What is the deep want? It tugs and pulls and pulls. One gets profoundly tired shifting from one solution to another, the new job, the new relationships, environments, etc. Discovery is not tiring — defending ego boundaries is. Are you discovering, uncovering, or defensively making boundaries, safe boundaries? If the deep want is awakening, it will all sort itself out. Do you have this confidence? Is it freedom or incessant wants? Do you know what you really desire? Do you really want freedom?

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Question: What do I do about anxiety?

Get physically clear — become more and more open. Surprisingly, I recommend first putting a smile on your face, whether you feel like it or not. The smile affects your belly, physically changing hormones — try it, it works! Breathe, over and over. Don't hyperventilate, but get air and energy circulating, especially deep in the belly and high in the chest. Establish a good basis of loving-kindness, beginning with ever-deepening awareness of the body and feeling sensations. For this you need a teacher.

Find out where the anxiety is located. (You will be surprised. Sometimes you'll find bands in the body, sometimes spots the size of golf balls.) Then breathe light and life into it. Combine physical posture awareness, such as Bioenergetics⁷⁴ or Feldenkrais to unlock the breath naturally. You do not need to dialogue about it. It is biochemical and often initiated by mental chatter and worry dialogues, so *reset* the biochemistry with breath, *prana*, and hormonal changes. When the whole breath body is opened, anxiety will vanish; but you must learn this craft. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness through *Ānāpānasati* is a most direct route to freedom from anxiety. This is a very real, biological teaching.

Anxiety is visceral; get into the guts of it. Balance the elements;⁷⁵ bring about contact with the earth element — get grounded. In ancient times we would have had you dig a square pit in the earth, sit or lie in it — engulfed, infused by solidity, dimension, and focus. It can be so straightforward if you don't make it complex, trippy, or difficult. Slow way down. Retreat deeply in nature. Let the anxiety self liberate, leak and pulse out, sometimes fast, sometimes slow. Anxiety wants to

be set free. It is like a wild creature caught in a cage, shaking, screaming, crying out to be free — so let it. The process needs time and patience.

In the teaching, there are many ways, that if you do the work and study, you will cross the ocean of suffering. Do you want to lessen the outer environmental inputs that support anxiety? Do you want to give up the internal dialogues supporting your anxiety? I recommend starting at the physical level. (See the section titled *The Four Dialogues* below and *The Four Main Protections Against Anxiety*, page 96). To start in a clean, clear, experiential manner, find those aspects of your life (i.e. fast foods, too many carbohydrates, MSG, motorway driving, etc.) that support and foster the base anxiety.⁷⁶

The relative root of all neurosis and inappropriate behaviour is anxiety, which is non-unitive.⁷⁷ The root of the anxiety is primal, womb born, and conditioned, then augmented and elaborated in childhood — for some more than others. My god, this birth in the human realm, what suffering at times! The nervous system is trying to find a way to shake free of this constricted energy. But the outer manifestation of the anxiety, perhaps a profound need to be loved or submissive, sees these needs as the person's mask. The mask may have worked in childhood, but now it is worn and outdated. It sucks life energy out. Work with your *Kalyāṇa-mitta*, your spiritual mentor — it may take some time, be patient, but keep working at it with kindness.

The Four Dialogues

As a further means to deepen your practice, and because you have raised the question of anxiety, I am confident that an understanding of the following four major dialogues will help profoundly. When you note an activity, ask, "Was it the mind or the body?" Most of the time, the body follows the mind. It

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is hard to glimpse the drive-mind (Pali: *citta*) because it is often too subtle and hidden. As in bird watching, “What was that bird that just flitted from tree to tree? I think it was green, with yellow feet, but I’m not sure.” So too, in a similar manner, identify the states of the drive-mind, the volitional messages. We must realize that many of the dialogues we carry are a form of madness, split from the way things actually are. I know a number of students who have seen this madness all too well. It shocks them like earth tremors. Thank goodness, for it is a step to freedom. If these dialogues are not actively shaping our being then they are often preventing enlivening growth — even go-nowhere states.

I suggest you give these Four Dialogues a full personal study. They are the primary dialogues that most Westerners carry around in their consciousness in one way or another. They started when we were children, and became concretized as adults, remaining a form of infantile inner dialogue. Become certain which is your main dialogue.

1. **The hypercritical chatter** — Directed toward self and others. For example, “I am not succeeding at this meditation,” or “Look at those people. They are chatting and smiling. They are not good meditators.” Spot it and stamp it out like a forest fire. It is the pattern of tearing you and others apart. It is incredibly destructive. “I am no good. I am not as good as so and so. I’m never going to be good enough. God, they are stupid. Why can’t they get their act together? Why are they so successful?” One of the students here asked if this dialogue comes from guilt. Yes, guilt may play a part, but hyper-criticality has much to do with perfection, having to be the best, etc. “If I was only the best it would solve everything.” Watch for

the deep conceit behind the self-directed statements, a false criticality, and false humility.

2. **“I’m hurt”** — The voice of the hurt child. They develop and become sophisticated adult voices. Constantly talking about their illness: they love their illnesses and won’t give it up. “If I don’t have an illness, I’ll get one,” mental or physical. This can become the primary dialogue. “I’m hurt. I’m suffering. Can you please take care of me?” Or hurt, but no one can take care of them; no one can heal them or give support. They are constantly looking for symptoms. They think they had a crappy childhood. Everything gets blamed on the bad childhood or a past difficult relationship. “Everything that is wrong with me is because of my mother/father. They don’t respect me.” It becomes their entire psyche and they won’t give it up. “I am damaged goods.” Or the dialogue always turns to what herb or food will cure or balance their being — the search for the ultimate diet or perfect medicine. Try to help them out of it and they *resist*. It can be very small dialogues, but it may be every day. I know people that spend most of their day swapping stories of their illness — it becomes their life before death — or is it death before life?
3. **Guilt** — The guilty child. You feel there’s something you’ve done wrong in your past for which you must repent. You carry it all the time. “I’d like to talk to you. What have I done wrong?” The child was told he/she did something bad — perhaps around sexuality. You become so accustomed to the feeling of guilt that it becomes part of you. Then you see the rest of the world as guilty. “I bet they’re holding something. I bet they have committed a crime.” What do people do when they hold a lot of guilt? Apologize, or confess their imagined crimes. They look to

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a higher authority for forgiveness, or they are hugely generous. Nevertheless, they are still not happy. People beat themselves up and cause themselves harm or get into weird sexual practices. Guilt — “I know I’m bad. If I beat myself up I’ll feel better.” On the other hand, they get into extreme physical sports, more acceptable in our culture than weird sex, and push themselves until they drop or get hurt over and over again — then they feel better (under the guise of fitness).

4. **The angry child** — The nasty, angry being. Loud, angry breathing! Stomp, stomp, stomp. Chomp, chomp, chomp. Bang, bang, bang. The sounds of frustration. We know the type: rigid body motions, sometimes with a rigid smile on their face, knocking things over. Instead of placing a cushion down to sit, they chip or toss it like a depth charge hunting for an enemy submarine. They are hunting for something to beat up! Hate their neighbours — Slovaks, Jews, “What a jerk!” They carry anger. “Let’s kill a million people today.” Watch for hate. Watch for the submissive type, quiet, very nice — but angry and frustrated. Passive aggressive actions are hard to pin down, they hurt — “But what is that barb I feel in my chest?” Nice beings, going around being passively aggressive. “Why, I didn’t do that! What are you talking about, you’re projecting on me about my actions again.” Then there is the cutting language and nasty tongue type. Or the loud, powerful type, that are pushing anger around. The nasty mommy and the nasty daddy, inward directed and projected onto many. We can feel a physical emanation of anger exuding from their pores.

Your mission, should you wish to accept it, is to find the predominant dialogue ... and cut it! Another useful practice is

to use words in the opposite way. Take for example, the hurt child, and transform it. Rather than, “I’m sick,” create “I’m healthy.” Those with the hurt child syndrome sometimes gravitate toward the healing arts. They see themselves in reference to their ill health. There is always something wrong. As healers, look for the healthy being. Compliment people on their health, even when sick there is something healthy and don’t support the dialogue of “something is wrong.” To transform be the opposite of hypercritical, learn to praise beings. Look for the positives. Transform the guilty mind ... “Look at what I have done — right and good.” Through mindfulness, catch the internal or external dialogue and transform it to a positive. Altering our speech alters our energy, our body, and our mind. Clarity of action does not happen magically, it requires moment after moment of clear states to ripen.

Often, we see these dialogues in retreat, as we become more generous and able to accept what is manifesting. These dialogues are draining our energy and destroying our concentration. They make us into dried up prunes. With release our voice and energy will transform. People are all locked up because of these mind parasites. I don’t use the word parasites lightly.⁷⁸

The deep fear for many is being swallowed up by the mother — engulfed, being controlled. For some, being swallowed up is just fine, but underneath is an angry, resentful being. Ha! And that is just what you want, to be mothered! Beings so much want the mother, but once they have the object or concept of their desires they cannot wait to get away! They feel smothered, hurt, or resentful toward the mother or the mothering type.

This feeling is about life at the big level, the superego. Right now you are walking around in your womb, the conditioned womb that you live in: mother’s womb, society’s womb, father’s womb, sibling’s womb, friend’s and relative’s womb. We are

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unconsciously carrying a limited womb view with us every moment. We want out. We want freedom. However, it is like the frustrated child who does not know what to do, or where to turn. It just *wants*.

The Four Main Protections Against Anxiety

Another way of formulating dialogues and anxiety of being, was developed by Karen Horney in the 1930s.⁷⁹ Many find this system straightforward and in accordance with everyday experience. I have seen it quickly clear up years of confusion. Please use it to support your spiritual growth. Again, as with the four dialogues, identify *your* main method of protecting the psyche from the four basic anxieties: affection, submissiveness, power, and withdrawal. Each protection has a basic dialogue or motto. Listen to your internal and external speech very carefully. They all revolve around not getting emotionally or physically hurt. By identifying how you operate in the face of deep wants, anxiety, you will begin the unravelling process.

1. **Affection** — The need for affection is a thirst in almost everyone. How could it not be so? It is the thirst for love, to be loved, and the powerful anxiety surrounding affection. Because not getting or giving affection is so painful, the protection not to be hurt is very strong and often invisible. We have been hurt many times by feelings of un-love. The hurt starts early in life and keeps on happening. Most healthy organisms do not want to be hurt, so at some point, we figure out a way to prevent feelings of un-love. The motto that Karen Horney describes is: *If you love me you will not hurt me*. We can easily grasp how this works. If you mistakenly believe, as does a young child, that if someone loves you they

will not hurt you — there will be tremendous suffering. No matter how much another loves you, even without intent, at some point (many points!) they will cause pain. It could be the wrong word (in your mind), the wrong gesture, activities not matching what you want, or the need to feel loved — and it will hurt. If we don't have a strong basis of *mettā* for our being we will be hurt, because we so badly want love and affection from outside of us. The neurotic falsely believes that to be in love and have someone love them is a protection against this basic anxiety.

2. **Submissiveness** — Horney divides submissiveness by application to persons or institutions. There is an enormous pressure to be good and submit to traditional or individual values, religious views, society, institutions, or persons. Many actions comply with the potential wishes of persons or institutions; compliance is a method to avoid resentment. This requires a repression of one's needs, demands, criticism of others; it is often exhibited as over-helpfulness and willingness to be abused without defence. The anxiety is often covered by thoughts of self-sacrifice. A person may pay any price for affection and security. Horney's motto: *If I give in, I shall not be hurt*. Another strategy used by the being who does not have confidence in affection, or who has complete disbelief in affection, is submissiveness to win protection. Protection is commonly used by families and institutions.
3. **Power** — In an effort not to be hurt, a common strategy to reduce anxiety is to gain power or success, possessions, admiration, or intellectual superiority.⁸⁰ Where there is a need for love, there will be those that take power and those that dislike power. To be powerful, someone needs

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to submit to it, and there are plenty willing to do that! There are also those that claim not to like having power, but find other, perhaps more subtle ways of security through power. In this case the method is borrowed from group sports — a good offence is a good defence. The motto is: *If I have power, no one can hurt me*. We see this today because it is so highly visible in the media, with top executives, religious teachers, and politicians — the types of people who can take power. Those who can take power also include the wife or husband, schoolteacher, friend, lover, colleague. There are always power dynamics working beneath the surface, ready to emerge at any moment, as indeed they do. When there is sufficient insecurity about who you are, or your needs, and feelings of love, then power works well to mask the feelings.

4. **Withdrawal** — The above three methods involve interacting with others. Protection from being hurt can involve not interacting, but staying out of harm's way. It is not necessary to abandon society or go into a mountain hermitage to withdraw. This level of solitude may force us to look at aspects of our psyche that may prove uncomfortable. All that is required to gain self-sufficiency and try to avoid being hurt is a level of independence from others. Horney's motto is: *If I withdraw, nothing can hurt me*. Horney points out the use of possessions — different than how the person uses power — where possessions are amassed to gain independence. She points out that using this method rarely leads to the enjoyment of the possessions as too much anxiety is invested in them. People curtail their needs, food, clothing, and transportation, to the point of an ascetic. Then the belief goes that having little, even few emotions, will not sub-

ject one to the pain of loss or rejection. There are those, very common today, that are cool to all activities, an intellectual mask pretending indifference and detachment: “If I don’t take things seriously, I can’t get hurt” ... Hah! Here one does not have to act good, it is not required, only to be independent of others.

Listen to the dialogues around each of these motifs. Can you catch your inner voices? It helps to write down all your main dialogues and number them. No need to write major stories, just go through point-by-point and identify the statements going on internally — they will definitely be reflected externally! Connect the above protective measures to the individual dialogues and fantasies. Dwelling in fantasy is a state of un-love. If the organism is absorbed in life, it has no time to make up stories about what is or shall be or what was. Good meditation dries up the fantasy life. It is a classic sign of spiritual progress. One does not have to be frenetic to be subsumed by life. Required is an interest conjoined with enough joy and bliss. Interest will produce joy, which will support bliss.

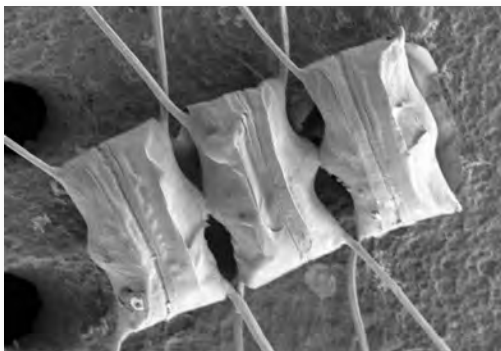
In the case of the highly neurotic, the needs are very strong, the clinging is powerful, so there will be a large disparity between behaviour and what is reasonably required, and as mentioned earlier, an over-inflation or under-inflation of activities. Also, these strategies to avoid being hurt, the feeling of un-love, are not necessarily for pain or pleasure, but for reassurance — taking out an insurance policy from getting hurt or feeling one of the basic anxieties.

Sense deeply that your organism, like a single-celled amoeba, does not want to be hurt — physically or emotionally. It is ultimately seeking pleasure, not pain, though it may not know how to obtain pleasure, it hurts or it gets hurt along the way. In

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the case of masochism, pleasure gets so twisted that pain is perceived as pleasure. Have compassion for the tangle that is human conditioning. All beings seek the light of freedom.

In connection to the meditative life, we need to be aware that the desire to still the mind, or maintain ongoing quietude, may be a withdrawal-defence strategy. Without clear comprehension of the dialogues, we may be sitting on a mountain of confusion and unwholesome states. Many of the dialogues are not at all obvious to us; they are like thin films in the consciousness, transparent but powerful like deep ocean currents. First bring one's activities in accord with wholesome, liberating concepts — smooth things out — then wake it all up! It is the question of skill and means that is crucial. How do beings seek the light? Ask: "What is appropriate for ourselves and others?"



The Three Poisons

Now for a few words about the three poisons, mentioned throughout these talks.

Delusion, or *moha* in Pali, is "dullness," but it is synonymous with "not seeing" which in Pali is *avijjā*, which also means

“ignorance;” to ignore a situation, activity or phenomena — a common trait of humans. It is the primary root of all suffering and encompasses greed and hatred. It is not seeing truth, not seeing the origin and cessation of suffering. Delusion is the hardest to shift — the person is not listening to what is. The wall of resistance is so high. On the other hand, they may hear you, but in their mind, what they hear is totally different from what is being said. Beings in dull states are so cut off and not hearing, that it is very hard to help them. They need clarity, clear, open seeing, like a vast sky. Someone who is dull and foggy should be given something to sharpen their nervous system — like awareness of breathing. To achieve a continuum of *mettā* and *karuṇā* you have to be able to listen.

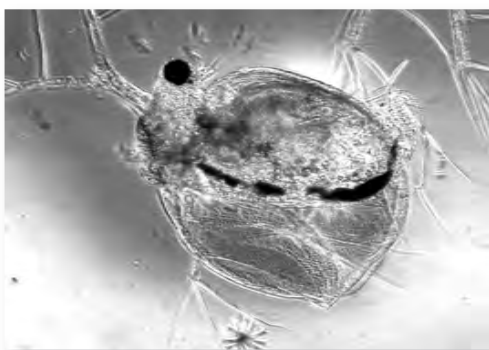
Delusion means that you believe in the permanence of “I” and “Thou.” You self-reference all events to you as a subject, for example: “I am waiting for my White Knight. This person loves me and I don’t love them. I’m happy, you’re depressed.” “I’m an awful meditator, and you’re so good.” Emptiness must be experienced at a profound depth and level of realization to fully eliminate delusional states. It must be real. Realization comes from the Latin *res* and means “real, to touch, to manifest.” This is transcendence. *Amoha*, “non-delusion” is wisdom or Buddha Mind. Not to discourage you, but it is the last fetter to fall before enlightenment. So we all have lots of work before us!

Anger is *dosa* in Pali. Note the hard sound of the word. It includes all those emotional states of frustration, rage, irritation, passive aggression, and hatred. Its opposite is *adosa*, which is the absence of hate, which of course is *mettā* — love.

And *lobha* means **greed**: sticky, clingy, attached states. You can hear the feel of it in the word *lobha*, and its root, *lubh*, like thick, lubricating oil slowly seeming to cover everything.

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Types of beings that are primarily rooted in greed, called *lobha-carita*, or greedy-natured do not do well with the practice of loving-kindness. There is too much affect, love as attachment, to practice this meditation effectively. Most often, they require not-so-nice meditations (*asubha*), for example the meditation on the 32 parts of the body or the ten stages of the decomposition of the human corpse.⁸¹



Fear of Freedom

The greatest suffering is the view of “You & I.” Each moment we’re built up of film scripts that we believe are real! Hearing and seeing this, we might start to face the fact that our empty self-nature is blowing pictures in the wind. We are just images, coming and going, dancing blindly on a screen of light; a constant parade of movies, multiple masked balls, countless histories colliding with our current inner and outer environments. This realization leads to true compassion. Not to see this is similar to being on a roller coaster going around and around through events, caught in the ferris wheel of life, acting out and dreaming up stories.

For some of us life is fairly smooth, so the ups and downs are not dramatic. Some are rich, or well-off, but are they free?

This can be a crisis, a crisis of freedom, as Eric Fromm described — there is so much potential but we don't know what to do about it.⁸² A couple of years ago a man who was in his late thirties came to see me. I asked what I could do for him. He responded that he was at the top of his career, had lots of money, good family, top amateur in sports — everything was perfect, but it did not feel right, something was wrong. He questioned deeply if this is what life was truly about, was this all? There was distress. So, for many, many people, life can appear to be very rough and distressing. Now to me, this is sad because it is unnecessary. Look around, the bewilderment (*dukkha*) is immense.

There is a strong resistance to let go of this weight, because we are fearful of freedom. Many do not know freedom. Many are so fearful of having their being dissolve. Have they not played or loved so fully to have experienced the bliss and trust in fully letting go of the self-referencer — even for a moment? It is a letting go of the preoccupation with self for clear spacious awareness. Even for some who taste these experiences, for a brief time afterwards, there is fear. This is due to lack of merit (karmic strength), a necessary prerequisite before insight. The vast majority of people do not even consider, never even think, that freedom is possible. This is tragic.

We go to see a film. We are so engrossed in the images, that we think it is real. But intellectually, we know it is not. So too, when having a thought, conception, sensation, or emotion, we think it is real, firm, like a block of lead or gold that will last unchanged forever (or at least it feels that way)! Look at the movie images. They are just images moving along and we are completely engrossed in them. Moreover, if we are not so engrossed we turn on a different movie, constantly, throughout our whole lives! But it is just clear film (and now it can be

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a digital pattern of zeros and ones imprinted on a piece of plastic). Eventually, if we go back far enough, we experience the radiant bulb in the projector. Clear light, with no source or origin, manifesting an infinite range of forms, technically called in Dharma, “luminosity.” With lucid, clear consciousness, free of dullness, and with images playing upon it, we are not fooled. We are fooled when the thought or image is strongly emotionally affective! Then watch ... away we go. We see directly that which gives rise to the images. Let us see who the puppeteers are. Hah! Intentions. Is the intention-mind driven by greed, hatred, and delusion, or generosity, love, and clear seeing?

We can recognize the components of the screen by slowing down, way down. There are exercises, many variations on the Four Brahma Viharas, to calm the mind of chatter, worry, and agitation. Be continuously mindful and brightly aware of what is taking place. Then there is a breakthrough — a glimpse of the clear, lucid, oceanic, still mind. If there is clear recognition for what it is, or is not (actually neither “is” nor “is not,” for this recognition is beyond any words) then there is essence of mind experience; mind recognizing mind — *satori*. It is an extraordinary shifting. First, there is recognition of the screen, then recognition of the projector, then you take another step. Come to see the images on the screen — the thoughts — for they are the same as the vast, open screen itself.

The great teacher *Karmapa Rangjung Dorje* said:

Perceiving is mind, being empty is also mind.

Realizing is mind, being mistaken is also mind.

Having arisen is mind, having ceased is also mind.

May we cut through all our doubts concerning mind.⁸³

Samaya

Samaya is the pledge of compassion.⁸⁴ *Samaya* is the great discipline. It is helping beings out of the fear of freedom by being an emanation of freedom. Who knows how many heads, arms, and legs it will take to cut through delusion? You may require thousands of arms, perhaps eleven heads, a body shaped like a dagger, perhaps a sword, or swirling silks.⁸⁵ It is the greatest gift one can give to one's self and another, for it relieves beings of a blind hell. By hell, I mean life without experiencing the door to liberation. It is like being in prison, the door is open, but we know it not.

Compassion is stirring and shaking the roots of being. Compassion brings forth the feeling for the possibility of enlightenment, giving a clue by pointing in the right direction. Instill, impart the seeds, and let the enlightenment mind be watered until flowering. In other words, one must have an inkling of enlightenment for there to be enlightenment. At a vaster level of comprehension, when the little "I" shrinks a bit, we can perceive a level of support and compassion from myriad sources of life.

Contemplate how many beings and environments are supporting us, enriching us, helping us right now: trees, plants, friends, teachers, books, authors, artists, schools, craftspeople, stars, planets, microbes, plankton, worms, *Bodhisattvas*, Buddhas, gemstones, music, parents, bugs, medicines, animals, water, rain, oceans; so enormous, so vast a scope. Learn to draw on this level of compassion for yourself and others. Right now, imagine each of these riches, treasure chests, entering your being, adding to your *maṇḍala*⁸⁶, expanding your range of knowledge and wisdom. Now to further expand the power of this meditation, imagine hundreds, thousands, millions receiving the same gifts, streaming into their beings, enriching their lives, freeing them from suffering.

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Have some *com* and *passion*. I like to think of the word compassion as “with passion” and communication with passion “full of life.” You will come to see that if actions like deep retreat are for one’s self, and the deep drive of the being is to be a manifestation of *samaya*, then what you do for *you* results in immediate sharing of the merit with countless others. The field of merit, the strong activities of exploration and awakening are spontaneous and immediate for other beings — no thought of compassion, just doing to allow freedom to manifest. Compassion is the act of helping others partake of life without fear. *Samaya* is the most selfish, yet totally unselfish activity. No longer different, compassion is abiding in the freedom of what is.

One day while in retreat the following statement arose and I try everyday to attain to its full scope. Let’s all make effort to have the courage to practice as follows: “From this moment onward, may my every action of body, speech, and mind be for the relieving of suffering and the liberation of myself and all beings that I encounter.”

*May all sentient beings become separated from suffering
and its causes.
karunā — compassion*