



### **Bodhicitta and the Paramitas**

Review the homework from the September 2 class on **bodhicitta** and the **paramitas**. They are essence of the motivation and practice of bodhisattvas--those who practice the Mahayana. Recall that there are **two aspects of bodhicitta**. Relative bodhicitta consists of compassion, generosity, ethics, patience, and other qualities for interacting with other beings. Ultimate bodhicitta is the wisdom side of awakening, the understanding and realization of the ultimate nature of the mind and of the world.

- ❖ How might you bring bodhicitta and the paramitas into your formal meditation practice, and also into your daily life?

### **Mind Training (*lojong*) and taking and sending (*tonglen*)**

LO means mind, intention, or attitude. JONG means to train, purify, remedy, or transform. So lojong, translated as “mind training” or “thought transformation,” is the cultivation of bodhicitta by **equalizing and exchanging self and other**. On the basis of seeing self and others as equal, the bodhisattva practices mentally trading places, seeing oneself from the other’s point for view, and wishing for others’ success and happiness rather than grasping at one’s own. Here are some verses from Shantideva’s *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

Strive at first to meditate  
Upon the sameness of yourself and others.  
In joy and sorrow all are equal;  
Thus be guardian of all, as of yourself.

And therefore I’ll dispel the pain of others,  
For it is simply pain, just like my own.  
And others I will aid and benefit,  
For they are living beings, like my body.

Since I and other beings both,  
In wanting happiness, are equal and alike,  
What difference is there to distinguish us,  
That I should strive to have my bliss alone?

Since I and other beings both,  
In fleeing suffering, are equal and alike,  
What difference is there to distinguish us,  
That I should save myself and not the others?

Take others--lower, higher, equal--as yourself,  
Identify yourself as “other.”  
Then, without another thought,  
Immerse yourself in envy, pride, and rivalry.

Here are some lojong sayings.

*Drive all blames into one.* (Self-grasping and self-cherishing are the cause of suffering).

*All teachings converge on a single point.* (Subduing self-grasping is the point of practice).

Another lojong teaching illustrates the practice of **taking and sending (tonglen)**:

*“Three objects, three poisons, three seeds of virtue.”*

<b>3 objects</b>	<b>become 3 poisons</b>	<b>or 3 seeds of virtue</b>
Pleasant	Attraction becomes grasping and greed	Give the pleasant to others so they are happy
Unpleasant	Aversion becomes rejecting and hatred	Take in the unpleasant to relieve others
Neutral	Indifference becomes ignoring	Pay attention to all experience

*Rather than grasping at pleasant experiences, imagine offering them to others so that they are happy. Rather than rejecting unpleasant experiences, imagine taking and experiencing others’ suffering so that they don’t have to.*

Tonglen is an advanced practice that directly undermines self-centeredness and the resulting greed, hatred, jealousy, and pride. Here are some basic instructions:

*Take a moment to open to ultimate bodhicitta, the ultimate nature of things. Opening to the way things actually are -- without ground or boundary -- undermines the felt sense of being a separate, solid self that constantly needs to be defined and defended. A phrase or a way of looking might elicit the opening. One way: regard everything you experience as being like the appearances in a dream. Another way: Regard everything to be a reflection in a mirror. A third way: drop thinking about anything and just rest in open space for a moment.*

*Then practice relative bodhicitta: Recognize that the self that grasps and rejects is insubstantial, like a dream or a reflection. Again and again, interrupt the habit of grasping, rejecting, and solidifying. The moment your mind grasps something, give it away. The moment you start to reject something, take it in.*

*Take in physical, emotional, and mental experiences of pain, discomfort, struggle, unhappiness, and failure. Whatever you dislike, fear, or avoid -- willingly take it in. Give away physical, emotional, and mental experiences of happiness, good fortune, success, and virtue. Anything you like, give it away to others. Imagine giving away your good qualities and resources, your happiness and your pleasure. Imagine that by your giving, others enjoy those good experiences and qualities.*

*Riding the breath: to support the feeling of taking and sending, as you inhale, imagine the unpleasant experiences coming into your body in a thick cloud of black smoke. As you exhale, imagine giving away pleasant experiences on a stream of cool radiant moonlight. Breath in and out of the center of the chest.*

*Extending taking and sending to all beings: Always begin a session by opening to your own unhappiness and happiness for a while. Then extend the taking and sending to others. Imagine taking the pain and suffering of those who are dear to you, and giving*

them your happiness and pleasure. Then extend the taking and sending to those who you feel neutral about. Then extend to those who are difficult. Eventually, extend to many -- everyone in the city, whole ethnic groups, animal species, and all beings.

*On the spot taking and sending:* At home, at work, on the street, whenever you feel grasping grasping for pleasure, happiness, or success, instantly give it away to others. As you taste something delicious, give that delight to others. When you feel pride arising, give all the accomplishment and credit to others. When you feel the warmth and security of having friends, give away warmth and security to others. Whenever you see someone struggling, or feel pain, discomfort, unhappiness, or failure, don't avoid it -- instantly take those difficult experiences in completely. When someone insults you, take in the feelings of anger or embarrassment for the sake of all beings. When you fail at something, take in the feelings of failure and inadequacy. Imagine taking in everyone's pain and discomfort, so that you experience it and they don't have to.

*Be sure to do both taking and sending.* You don't have to take and send on each inhalation and exhalation, but do go back and forth. Take in whatever you find unpleasant, scary, or disgusting. Give away whatever you find pleasant or joyful or uplifting.

*Don't struggle to exactly match the taking and sending.* Take and send whatever arises in your mind or experience. Take in disgust for rotten food and give away your intelligence. Take in the pain of arthritis and give away your wealth. Take in the grief of losing someone dear and give away your health. Take in annoyance and pettiness and give away the enjoyment of your favorite music.

*Include your physical, emotional, and mental resistance* as you mentally take in what is painful and give away what is pleasant. If you experience tightening against taking in pain, include the tightness and take it in completely. If you feel inadequate, as if you have no good experiences or qualities to give to others, take in the sense of inadequacy. If you feel selfish and unwilling to give away your successes and pleasures, take in the feelings of selfishness and unwillingness. Every experience is fair game. All painful experience is taken in; all pleasant experience is given to others.

*Don't fall into magical thinking* about how you're going to get sick by imagining taking in others' pain, or how you're going to become a savior by transforming others' pain into happiness. The point of taking and sending is to undermine your own self-centeredness. By deliberately going against your usual patterns of attraction and aversion, you undermine your own selfish territoriality and transform your own reactivity into presence. Keep the practice secret; don't undermine it by being obvious about your kindness and compassion. Don't expect applause. Don't try to use taking and sending to make things better or easier.

*Taking and sending combines and integrates the four immeasurables (brahma-viharas).* By taking in what we find painful we cultivate *compassion*. By giving away happiness we cultivate *lovingkindness*. By learning to do both we cultivate *equanimity*. Our growing willingness and ability to do that brings *joy and appreciation*. By training in taking and sending, we open to these inherent qualities in every circumstance we encounter.