

Tara Institute

News

September 2020



Compassion the Answer in a Troubled World

On July 29, 2020, His Holiness the Dalai Lama attended a virtual meeting with students from Indian educational Institutions by video link from his residence in Dharamsala. Prof Raman Mittal of the Delhi University Law Faculty gave a short welcome address. He acknowledged that the world is going through difficult times during which everyone has been reminded of the fragility of life. Forced to turn inward, they sought His Holiness's guidance with regard to compassion and hope.

"When we face problems and difficulties," His Holiness responded, "I find it useful to rely on the 8th century Nalanda master, Shantideva's advice. Analyse the problem that confronts you. Examine whether it can be overcome. If it can, there's no need to worry. Put the solution into effect. If the problem can't be overcome, worrying about it won't help. I find this to be a very realistic assessment.

"If we have only a narrow, short-sighted outlook, our problems can seem to be huge. But if we look at them from a wider perspective, they don't seem to be so daunting. Great Indian masters in ancient times suggested that galaxies have a beginning and an end. Whatever has a cause, logically must come to a conclusion. Our sun had a beginning, so eventually it too will come to an end. In such a context, our immediate problems are relatively small. "There is also mention in ancient texts that the universe may be consumed by fire, water or



wind. Present indications of global heating suggest that in our era the end will be by fire. Scientists say that unless changes are made, global heating will reach a point where lakes and rivers run dry and what is now green land will turn to desert. In such a wider context, disagreements between human beings diminish in significance.

"Meanwhile, the consequences of this pandemic have been very sad, but we must face it as best we can. Research must go on into how to deal with it. I believe that traditional medical traditions may have something useful to contribute. In the 8th century, the Tibetan Emperor, Trisong Detsen, convened a conference of practitioners of Ayurveda, traditional Chinese medicine, Tibetan medicine and other traditions to share their knowledge. A similar conference today with allopathic physicians could be fruitful."

His Holiness remarked that whatever problems we face, it's always better to be honest and truthful. He reiterated his belief that if we revive the

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ancient Indian traditions of 'ahimsa' and 'karuna', non-violence and compassion, humanity will be happier. He declared himself a disciple of these traditions, whose aim is to create a more compassionate society. Both 'ahimsa' and 'karuna' arose out of the practices for cultivating concentration and wisdom. These are common to the meditative practices of Hindus, Samkhyas, Jains and Buddhists alike. Cultivating compassion contributes to peace of mind.

His Holiness pointed out that in order to remain healthy we observe codes of physical hygiene, but, in addition, we need to cultivate emotional hygiene too. This involves coming to recognise our whole system of emotions, understanding of which, along with the workings of the mind, is something unique to ancient Indian knowledge. He stressed that although explanations of these things are to be found in spiritual treatises, the knowledge can be applied in an objective, secular way.

[See dalailama.com/news for complete article]

Doctor Anjali Khushu talks about how her practice has sustained her during Covid-19

The past six months have been a turbulent sea of thoughts and emotions, both personally and professionally, and there is no doubt in my mind that the teachings have helped me stay afloat.

At a personal level, my first reaction to the pandemic was fear and anxiety: fear for myself, for my family, and for my peers and colleagues – nurses and doctors who were at the frontline. I also felt anger and frustration at not being able to do things I was used to, at having to change long engrained habits and routines.

At a professional level, I was overwhelmed by the intense suffering around me: suffering of patients, a lot of whom were elderly. It seemed so unfair and tragic that their very last days were being spent in hospitals without any loved ones around them. And the suffering of their family members, who were kept away from their sick and dying loved ones because of hospitals' visitor restrictions. I also felt frustrated by the inefficiencies in our bureaucracy, especially in the context of residential aged care settings.

Our Gurus' advice to "take everything onto the path" seemed to be the only way to deal with the situation.

I cannot claim success in my efforts, but I thought a lot about self-cherishing in the context of my

own fears. I also tried to see the suffering around me in the context of dependent arising, and tried to put the suffering of this life in the perspective of the infinite rebirths of our mind stream. And sometimes when anger arose, I tried to bring to mind teachings from Shantideva's wonderful chapter on patience in Bodhisattvacharyavatara.

The brief times I was able to recall and contemplate on these points were a source of comfort, strength and resilience.

I also drew inspiration and joy from rejoicing in the virtues of others. I witnessed immense love and compassion. I saw nurses hold the hands of patients as they took their last breaths. I saw numerous young doctors having phone conversations with families patiently reassuring them about their loved ones. Strangers

dropped in food baskets and cooked lunches for hospital staff. I witnessed staff work tirelessly to keep things running in a challenging and very demanding environment without care or concern for themselves.

This tragedy has also brought out the best in people and reinforced the teaching that compassion is intrinsic to the human mind.

- Anjali Khushu



Life in LOCKDOWN

In writing this I am surprised at how buoyant my spirit is in response to Sandra Kinread's question: "How has your Buddhist practice supported you during this time of covid 19". I am grateful to say that not only has my practice supported me during this time of the corona virus pandemic and all the challenges associated with it, but the conditions of the pandemic have given me an opportunity to deepen my practice in ways that have touched and surprised me. I am without a doubt a very slow learner. I think this experience has enabled my practice to mature or maybe I am finally willing to take what I have been given seriously.

I have been doing an online retreat with B.Alan Wallace who I had the good fortune of doing a two month retreat with last year in Italy. Alan is a wonderful teacher and communicates in a way that is so accessible. He helps guide my practice every day. I have been able to see aspects of my



mind that were previously hidden to me, probably because I didn't want to see what was there. And by seeing old patterns of thinking and bringing compassion to old wounds I feel as if something is loosening (less self-grasping) and with it my ability to be less judgemental of others and to develop a more loving relationship towards us all. However, I reckon the Christians got it right when they said Charity begins at home.

This experience has shown me yet again how important it is to have spiritual friends and besides my teachers (who have shown me that there is another way to live) I have one of the best spiritual friends anybody could wish for. The friend that I refer to will feel very uncomfortable reading this, but read it and PRINT it she must, as it is Sandra Kinread. To phone someone and know you can have a real and honest conversation, to know you are loved unconditionally and accepted as you are, to be metaphorically held exactly where you find yourself to be; is one of the great blessings of my life.

May you find the friendship you need in yourself and in others to support you along the way. As Sandra always says when we are speaking about working with our minds: "It is the only show in town" and through this pandemic, I understand why.

- Kim Krejus

Quiet Achiever

Mary-Lou Considine

I first came to TI after the 1992 visit by His Holiness to Australia. A few years later, I joined the TI Publishing team set up by Adair Bunnett, Alan Molloy and Mark Emerson. In the early days, the weekly routine involved cassette tapes, floppy disks, and volunteer drivers. That was before the advent of dial-up modems brought us into the era of digital file transfer!

Twenty-five years on, just before the COVID-19 lockdown, the Publishing team was still delivering weekly Tuesday and

Wednesday teaching transcripts – an incredible achievement. It's wonderful to be part of a group of people who cooperate to meet that weekly deadline, year in and year out. The feeling of mutual trust and support makes a difference.

Geshe Doga constantly reminds us to care for those close to us. His advice about family, especially the importance of showing gratitude and kindness to our parents, has been invaluable. When my Dad passed away six years ago, Geshe Doga offered the support of prayers. It was hugely comforting. Since then, I've been caring for Mum. It's been challenging but very rewarding.

I feel for those families who have



lost loved ones to COVID-19. I hope that we as a society learn to take better care of our most vulnerable as we emerge from this crisis.

Excerpt from the extensive commentary that Geshe Doga gave to study group in 2005 on Shantideva's

“A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life”

Chapters 9 & 10

The Ninth Chapter: Wisdom

THE CONDENSED EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO GENERATE WISDOM

The first verse explains the need for the generation of wisdom.

The Able One explained all these different limbs

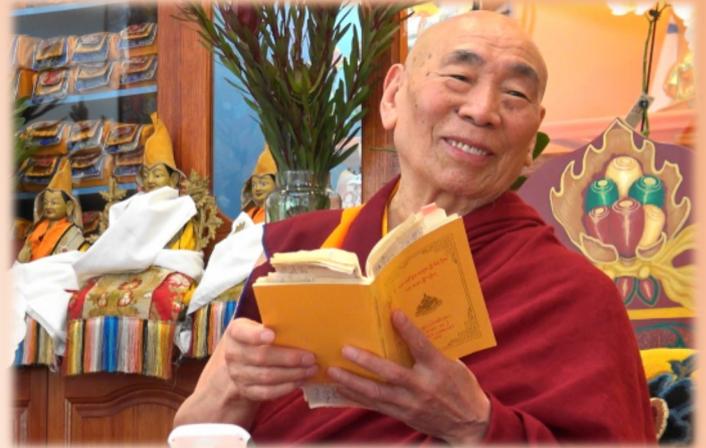
For the purpose of wisdom;

Therefore those who wish to pacify suffering

Should generate wisdom.

There are two different explanations of the meaning of the first line. According to one explanation 'these different limbs' refers to the eighth chapter alone - the explanation of mental stabilisation. The other explanation is that the other five perfections such as generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm are included. We will concern ourselves only with the second possibility. When it says all these different limbs were taught by the Able One for the purpose of wisdom, it means that the other five perfections of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm and mental stabilisation are the supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom. So the final aim of all these different practices is to generate wisdom.

What it shows is that if one wants to attain a state of complete enlightenment then one needs to practise a path that combines method and wisdom. One needs a path that unifies method and wisdom on the basis of the Two Truths, through meditating on the Four Noble Truths in a way that combines method and wisdom. Then one can attain the two bodies of a Buddha. That is what is implied here - the first initial five perfections act as supporting limbs for the generation of wisdom. Therefore, those who wish to attain mere liberation for themselves alone also need to rely on the generation of wisdom. So wisdom is indispensable, regardless



of whether one wants to attain complete enlightenment, or mere solitary liberation.

It is important to understand that to attain mere individual liberation one also needs to generate wisdom. One could get the idea that it is only necessary to generate wisdom if one wants to attain complete enlightenment, but that it is not necessary for the attainment of individual liberation. There are certain debates in regard to that, but these are based on a misunderstanding. One needs to generate wisdom for the attainment of both complete enlightenment and individual liberation.

The question could arise, 'In order to realise emptiness does one need to engage in the bodhisattva practices of all the six perfections?'. The answer here is, 'No, one does not need to do this, because, for example, followers of the hearer path realise emptiness'. But one needs wisdom. That is why the last two lines state explicitly, 'therefore those who wish to pacify suffering should generate wisdom'. This states explicitly that those who want to attain individual liberation also need to generate wisdom.

Auspicious days in September are calculated according to the lunar calendar. On these days, the benefits of actions are greatly multiplied, so are especially good for spiritual practice.

Wednesday 2	Tibetan 15	Full Moon	Precepts
Saturday 12	Tibetan 25	Tsog Day	Guru Puja
Thursday 17	Tibetan 30	New Moon	Precepts
Thursday 24	Tibetan 8	Tara Day	Tara Puja
Saturday 26	Tibetan 10	Tsog Day	Guru Puja

You are welcome to contact the Tara Institute newsletter editors Allys Andrews and Sandra Kinread at allys.andrews@gmail.com for issues relating to the newsletter