

The Real Bodhitcitta

Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche - Extracted from Kopan Course

It is definitely possible to help any other being, but first it is necessary to help yourself to be free of confusion, to be free from ignorance. So then, through this you get freedom, control, and complete understanding of the different methods that fit those different living beings. As you have the complete understanding of the different methods that fit their minds, and the complete understanding of the different levels of their minds, there's no confusion, no problems arising—one can help with free mind, and that help never harms any other being, never becomes the cause of problems.

But at the moment, before cleaning ourselves, before getting out of the problem ourselves, it is extremely difficult to help all living beings as the enlightened being does. And, for instance, in the world, many people try to help without understanding the methods, without having wisdom, but it becomes the cause of problem and confusion. That is because of not having achieved freedom within one's mind.

Without achieving freedom yourself, without cutting off your own confusion, your own problems, your own obscurations, it is difficult for any of your actions that you think are helping to never harm other beings. It is like this—for instance, if you are cleaning the floor with a dirty broom it makes the floor dirty instead of clean. If you clean it with a dirty duster the dirt from the duster will get on the floor. But purifying yourself, making yourself ready and capable to help other sentient beings, that

is helping other sentient beings. Because your main aim is to release, to guide other sentient beings from suffering.

Since that is your main aim, every action that you do for the purpose of achieving control of your own negativity is for the purpose of helping other sentient beings, it is work for other sentient beings and that is the best way, the most correct way to be able to help other sentient beings. Therefore it is necessary to practice Dharma. So the purpose of practicing bodhicitta is only that, to guide, to help to release other sentient beings from problems.

Every action that you do with bodhicitta especially, no matter how great or small, even breathing out, if you do it with this holy beneficial thought, it helps other sentient beings because you are doing the action to purify your negativity in order to enlighten them. So then that action that you are doing is the cause of enlightenment. Enlightenment can't be received with the aim for oneself alone, but only with the aim of others. Enlightenment cannot be received with self-cherishing mind—it is impossible. So action done with bodhicitta is the best, quickest cause for enlightenment.

It is totally this—the more purification we do with this aim, the closer we get to the freedom to help sentient beings. The actions that we do, breathing with that pure thought, can definitely help all sentient beings. For instance, just one example—if in one country there are thousands of beggars and refugees under miserable conditions—let's say I want to help them by collecting money, for example, I want to give them

1,000,000 rupees. The collection of 1,000,000 rupees depends on the collection of one rupee. Without the one rupee I collect, the 1,000,000 cannot be collected, so I go to each door and collect one rupee. As I do this, it seems impossible that this one rupee will help them. But as I collect them, the amount gets bigger and bigger, and finally I have 1,000,000 rupees and I give it and then it helps. So of course the one rupee I collected each day—or one paise—is useful for them—of course it is useful.

So the merits that we create with virtuous actions, at each time this is like collecting 1 paise or 1 rupee. When we collect the 1,000,000 that they need, or when we complete the collection of merits that is enlightenment, like the 1,000,000 it is sufficient for them.

Collecting merits is not something that has no end. It has end, purification has end, because the obscurations, the mental hindrances, have end. That's why the Dharma practice has end. Whenever we gain the complete merits, we also gain enlightenment at the same time. That is the final time of the Dharma practice, meditation practice. Therefore, for complete achievement of Dharma practice, we should not have small heart, small mind, thinking that we will achieve it easily without going through physical and mental difficulties of practice, without experiencing physical and mental difficulties. Such expectation and thought only disturbs our practice, makes it unsuccessful, discourages us. Thinking, planning that final goal is the utmost need, we should think, "Working for that is the meaning of my life, no matter how much trouble has to be experienced." We should think, "It doesn't matter, I must

achieve the final goal, the most perfected goal, enlightenment, no matter how long it takes to be able to achieve.” If we practice with such impulse, then whatever hindrances arise in the meditation, we don’t feel discouraged, feel a disturbance, because we have already planned for that, so when it comes we don’t get shocked. For example if we plan to help another person, we think, “No matter what trouble comes, I will experience it with gladness in order to make him happy and comfortable.” So when the trouble and disturbance comes, you don’t get shocked, so when the problem arises you don’t get discouraged, you still work with gladness to make him happy. It is the same thing with Dharma practice, working for the supreme goal, enlightenment.

Just one example - if we plan to climb over Mount Everest, the highest peak, during which you have to go through many dangers, you plan from America. Even though there’s not a comfortable road, you really want to get to the top—that is your biggest hang-up, that comes into your mind more than anything else. It is your greatest thought—thinking no matter how it is difficult, by bearing the difficulties, climbing, making the trek, feeling cold, and experiencing many other dangers, planning to climb to the top of Mount Everest with such strong desire in spite of all the dangers on the road. As you are on the trek, no matter how much difficulty you find, falling down, getting wounded, getting sick, the strong desire to get to the top makes you to carry on, to experience the difficulties. That pushes you to get to the top. But if you didn’t plan from America, if you planned to make the trek easily, if you were not expecting any difficulties on the trek, then you would find many troubles, such as an avalanche in the way. Then the mind

would get discouraged, thinking, “Oh, I can’t make it,” and start to go back. It is the same with Dharma practice; if the mind is not wise, knowledgeable, so you stop your own Dharma practice, your own progression. This happens many times. This just came by the way here, but has to be kept in mind because there is a long way to go.