

THE WAY OF THE BODHISATTVA
By Florence Oakley
2009

The principal focus of Mahayana teachings is on cultivating a mind wishing to benefit others sentient beings. With an increase in our own sense of peace and happiness, we will naturally be better able to contribute to the peace and happiness of others. Transforming the mind and cultivating a positive, altruistic, and responsible attitude are beneficial right now. Whatever problems and difficulties we may have we can face them with courage, calmness, and high spirits. Therefore, it is also the very root of happiness for many lives to come. The benefits developing qualities like love, compassion, generosity, and patience that they extend to all sentient beings Bodhisattva – those beings who, turning aside from the futility and sufferings of and sufferings of samsara, nevertheless renounce the peace of an individual salvation and vow to work for the deliverance of all beings and to attain the supreme enlightenment of Buddhahood for their sake Shantideva's work embodies a definition of compassion raised to its highest power and minutely lays out the methods by which this is to be achieved. It is an overwhelming demonstration of how concerned for others, in a love wholly transcends desire and concern for self, lies at the core of all true spiritual endeavors and is the very heart of enlightened wisdom.

The first time I remember learning about forgiveness I was about 13 or 14 yrs old, my parents and I was in the car going to shopping, I asked my mother about her side of the family like, her brother and sisters, and how come we don't see them. I remember seeing my mother look at my father before answering me, then my mother explained that her brother and sisters don't talk to my mother because they don't like my father because he is black. I knew that was wrong to be like that, I told my parents that I hated them for that. My father stated that two wrongs don't make a right. To hate them is wrong. I asked him if he hated them and he stated no, I forgive them for they are afraid of what they don't understand. They have never been around blacks growing up, they weren't taught to respect each other no matter what color they are.

When I was nineteen years old I was working with a bank in Manhattan for about 4yrs, I remember they sent us to training for defusing customers. It was a life changing experience to learn how to defuse their anger when dealing with customer's money. When I joined the police dept., I had somewhat of a foundation to work with people. I wanted to be able to help people as a police officer, not just lock people up. I wanted to make a difference, and to enjoy my job and make it as easy for me and for others.

I had to look at myself first before I could help others; I had to look at my own feelings, anger issues, compassion, patience, generosity, love and calmness. I wanted to correct myself before I had to deal with people that need me to be there for them. I wanted to learn how to have patience, compassion, in order to help people in the best way I can. If I didn't look at myself first my stuff would get in the way of my job.

My job has taught me to be able to handle all different situations that involve dealing with people under stressful emotional situations.

One incident that comes to mind were I needed to have control but I let my emotion get in the way plus I didn't use my patience. One day I was on an arrest sweep when I locked up this lady for theft of service in the train station. When I put the cuffs on her she started yelling and screaming that she did not understand why she was being locked up. When I explained to her why she was being locked up, she started to yell at me again. I asked her several times to stop yelling. "You're giving me a headache." She yelled the whole time in the van back to the precinct. When we got there and let them out she started again as soon as she saw me. I just couldn't take it anymore and the others cops were trying to get her to quiet down, but she refused then. I let her have it by yelling and cursing at her. When she heard me curse at her she went wild and started really yelling again. When I realized what I did I turned around and walked away to get my thoughts together. I took a couple of deep breaths and realized what I had to do to get the situation under control. I walked up to her and apology for cursing at her. "I was wrong to curse at you." She accepted my apology. From that point on everything went smoothly. I had to realize that if I wanted to keep things under control, I would have to be the better person. I'm the one that has to be calm and have patience. They will learn from me. Two wrongs don't make a right. It felt good to be able to apologize and feel good about myself for doing the right thing.

One of my many jobs was dealing with the homeless people in the train system and inside the tunnels. At first I didn't like that idea. I was afraid. I thought they were all crazy, dirty, sick. As I was in training in the homeless unit I had to learn compassion for these people. Not all of them are sick, crazy. They are homeless for many different reasons. It's not that they are all alcoholics and drug users. I realized that some of these people are very smart, educated people that just went through hard times that lead them to be homeless. Not all the time was it their fault for being homeless. We would go into the tunnels to get the homeless out of there to take them to shelters if they wanted to. If not we would bring them on a bus that we had set up to be able to transport the homeless and give them some sandwiches and milk before letting them go. I have learned not to be afraid of the homeless. I understand their position now and I used my compassion and empathy whenever I had to deal with the homeless.

Another learning experience was when I was working in the train system and I got a call on the radio. A male in the street area is lying on the ground. When my partner and I responded we saw a young man lying against a light pole. He looked really white in the face and really skinny. I asked him what was wrong. He stated that he was in the last stage of AIDS and that he was very weak and could not stand up. I called for EMS on the scene. When EMS showed up, it was one female and one male. I was giving the info to the male EMS and I heard the female EMS who was attending to the male. "I am not picking you up from the floor. You have to get up on your own two feet and get into the ambulance. That is not my job." When I heard that I asked her what was wrong. She stated that it was not her job to pick him up and put him in the ambulance. I asked her how she expected him to get into the truck. "I don't know and I don't care." At that point I told her to move out of the way. "Me and my partner will do your job for you." We helped him into the ambulance and strapped him in. Then I stepped out of the truck and I called on the radio to have my supervisor to come to the scene. When he arrived I told

him that I wanted to file a complaint against the female EMS and explained to him what happened. My boss called for their boss to come to the scene. When he arrived I told him what happened and I told him that I wanted to file a formal complaint on her. "She should not be working in a job where you have to help people in all ways; you have to have compassion for people in that type of situation. The guy was dying of AIDS. He was going to the hospital for the last time and he knew it." I felt so bad for him, especially the way she treated him like a dog. I wanted him to know that I was not going to accept that behavior from her and he thanked me for my kindness and he hoped that one day she will find compassion for people that she comes into contact with. I just hoped that she learned a lesson that day.

As I did my job, I had to learn to be able to guard my mind and thoughts so that I was able to complete each job that I came across. I would have to stop, listen, think, then react calmly and compassionately, with as much patience as I could. I did not want to make my job any harder by not thinking and doing and not realize the pain and suffering I am causing other people or could cause. Sometimes you don't see all the suffering behind closed doors, like finances--handing out summonses. How could this summons affect this person? Will it be a learning experience? Or will it put financial burden on them? Every action you make has an impact on people positive or negative. I learned to be able to control myself to be able to help others. I wanted to be able to treat people with respect, compassion, and patience; even though they don't do the same to me I am hoping that I could set an example. Even on my bad days I had to remember I don't have any bad days if I could guard my mind from the lion, tiger, and bears and give myself and other people protection from suffering.

After I learned to control my own emotions, I thought how would I be able to strengthen my own values on a day-to-day basis. I decided to become a field training officer, to teach other police officers the ability to be able to learn about patrol and how to learn to deal with people on a daily basis without getting upset, angry, impatient, and feeling miserable. I wanted them to know that we work in all different type of situations. We have to learn to be able to control our own anger so we can help other people to control their emotion, anger. I wanted to teach them to have patience, compassion, calmness, and empathy to learn that there are people out there with worse problems than us--homelessness, drug addiction, death of a loved one, financial problems, a sick daughter, etc. These are reasons why people get so emotional. We cannot take their words to heart. Most of the time you can learn to defuse people's anger and make them feel that you are listening to them and not judging them.

Shantideva points out that anger, the normal reaction to hostility and adversity, achieves nothing but to increase our suffering. It is our "sorrow-bearing enemy." Irritation arises naturally in the mind against fellow beings perceived as unpleasant or threatening and it seems normal to resent the aggressor. The hostile behavior of enemies does not arise spontaneously; it too is the product of causes and conditions. Why resent those who are themselves the victims of emotional defilements?

PATIENCE BY FLORENCE OAKLEY

The teacher Shantideva said the meaning of patience is

- a) To understand that those who harm us are not masters of themselves to analyze the evil of
- b) Our actions
- c) Our body
- d) Our mental attitude
- e) To realize that there is no difference between one person having certain, & someone else other, faults
- f) To examine the usefulness (of harmful persons)
- g) To understand them as benefactors to realize
- h) The chance they give us for aspiring Buddha hood
- i) Their beneficial influence

Example for

- a) A man, who harms me, is not master of himself because of his malevolence which being related to an undersized object, is not something independent. Therefore, since such a man is not a master of himself, it is not right that I should retaliate.
- b) To analyze the evil of our actions is to remember that the harm I am now suffering was caused by similar action on my own part. Therefore, since it is my fault, it is wrong for me to retaliate
- c) To analyze evil resulting from having a body no one could strike it with a sharp or blunt weapon. Since however does exist such harm may befall it and it is wrong to retaliate

Fostering the five ideas of develops patience

1. Favoring a harmful person
 2. Following only the dharma
 3. Impermanence
 4. Misery
 5. Gathering beings around oneself
1. The first means to show patience by being favorably inclined to a harmful person because in former lives such a man may have been our father or mother, brother or sister, or teacher since the benefit is immeasurable it is not fit that I now retaliate for the harm that they do
 2. The second means that this harmful person does evil because of certain conditions and is bent on doing harm due to these conditions, and therefore it is only proper to be patient because there does not exist some

absolute entity such as pure ego a mental substance a life principle or a personality that is abusing beating reviling or fault finding

3. The third is sentient beings are transitory and subject to death and that the worst harm is to deprive them of their lives. Therefore, since sentient beings by their very nature must die it is not proper to kill them. Hence we have to show patience.
4. Misery means that three types affect all sentient beings. Not wanting them to experience the brand that ought to be removed. I must because of reflection on misery have patience with the harm they do
5. The fifth idea means to accept all sentient beings as my brothers and sisters, thinking that I shall work for their benefit in developing an attitude directed towards enlightenment. When we accept them in this way we show patience, because we reflect that it is not proper to retaliate for the smallest harm done

Patience is the antidote to anger regarded in Buddhism as the most destructive and perilous of all mental factors. Anger, defined as the flooding of the mind with violent and aggressive feelings, leading naturally to hostility and conflict is outlawed in Buddhism as in no other religious tradition. Anger has absolutely no place in the scheme of spiritual development.

How do we behave in a hostile environment?

Shantideva focuses on the real source of the problem the basis of anger as of every other defilement. This is the ego, the self, the sense of "I" experienced as the center of the universe, a universe interpreted as friend or enemy in relation to how it is perceived from the egocentric viewpoint.

His concern is to show how the problems of enemies- aggression and retaliation can be dealt with in the context of everyday experience. The angry response must never be allowed to develop but that situations of conflict endured and resolved through patience are invaluable in fact indispensable as occasions for spiritual growth.

Patience, as Shantideva describes it implies an almost incredible degree of resilience and courage the courage of Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King.

Shantideva points out that anger, the normal reaction to hostility and adversity, achieves nothing but to increase our suffering. It is our sorrow-bearing enemy.

Irritation arises naturally in the mind against fellow beings perceived as unpleasant or threatening and it seems normal to resent the aggressor. When we suffer the physical discomforts of illness. We may dislike the pain, but it would be absurd to resent it angrily. The hostile behavior of enemies does not

arise spontaneously; it too is the product of causes and conditions. Why resent those who are they the victims of emotional defilement?

When we are attacked, it is important to remember that our aggressors, acting on the impulse of their own defilements are creating the causes of their own suffering.

Shantideva show how enemies are not merely the objects of tolerance they are to be cherished as indispensable helpers on the Bodhisattva path. Our enemies do for us what no friend or loved one can. By awakening us to the reality of our own ego clinging, our enemies provide opportunities for patience, purification, and the exhaustion of evil karma

VIGILANT INTROSPECTION

Meanings-

Vigilant – watchful

Introspection – examination of one's own thoughts and feelings

The problem lies in the mind itself or rather in the emotions that arise there. The simple but difficult task is to become aware of how thoughts emerge and develop. This is the theme of this chapter.

We have to have practical optimism- the mind can be controlled and trained.

What are we trying control to prevent their consequences?

- d) destructive anger
- e) lustful impulse
- f) cruel or arrogant word that can have life- changing consequences
- g) flash of impatience

If we want to keep the training of the mind we must guard

Without guarding our minds
the training cannot be preserved
when our minds wander it brings pain
with mindfulness our fears disappear

PARA #1 PG 61

Those who wish to keep the training
must with perfect self-possession guard their minds
Without this guard upon the mind
the training cannot be preserved

#4

Tiger, lion, elephants and bears (anger, fear, negative emotions)
snakes and every hostile foe
those who guard the prisons in hell
ghosts and ghouls and every evil wraith

#5 By simple binding of the mind alone,
all these things are likewise bound
by simple taming of the mind alone,
all these things are likewise tamed

How do you constantly guard your mind?
How do we let nothing go by emotions, thought?

The technique prescribed by Shantideva is that of constant, unrelenting vigilance- a continuous advertence to what is happening within the inner forum. He says that we should guard our minds with the same care with which we would protect a broken or wounded arm while moving through an unruly crowd; and here again the educative methods of fear and encouragement have their place.

Shantideva recommends that as soon as we feel the urge to do anything ex. to speak, even walk across a room, get into the habit of self-scrutiny.

The slightest impulse to negativity should be greeted with a total paralysis (bring to a stand still) of the system- stop, listen, think about reaction then react in a positive way.

No thought should be allowed to develop into action unchallenged.

Given the required degree of self-awareness including everyday minutiae behavior all the little things we normally overlook it's insignificant to bother about it's the small impulses and behavior patterns that require the closest attention

EX.

You're in a supermarket and the cashier is not smiling no eye contact and when her co-worker asks her for a price check so doesn't hear her. Then she rings up an item that belongs to the customer behind me. When I told her that was not my item she stated very nasty, "You should've used the divider so I don't have to waste my time voiding an item."

I didn't say anything to her but I thought, "Maybe she's having a bad day, or maybe she has a sick child at home and she's at work, or maybe her washing machine broke and now she has to figure out how to pay for it. So, I shouldn't take her attitude personally. Everybody has a bad day.

What would have happened if i did say something to her? Would it have been a nice comment or will we both get angry? Would that had put you and her into a negative way?

Everything we do affects the world. Whatever happens in the USA, it can affect all other countries, too.

Any action can be the cause or the cause of the cause of another's suffering.

EX.

The way we eat, the way we walk, move furniture around even matters of personal hygiene. The body has its place and value but the mind must be freed from an obsessive and enslaving preoccupation with it.