

Defeat the Klesha
Part Two: By unlimited love and compassion.

Dharma roadside dialogue series.

Lama Tsony

January 29, 2022 #1 Exposé

This is really the time to talk about love and compassion, isn't it? So thank you for finding the time to talk about this. It looks like it's a serious time. When we began the exploration of the mental afflictions and how we can curb them, as we saw in the first part of this topic, I started confident that we could cover everything in one session, but very quickly realized it's not going to be enough time, so let's do it in maybe three sessions.

So three ways to approach the kleshas and work with them to eventually overcome them; we saw the first one last month. How to curb and control them and prevent oneself from falling under their power and being dragged away from our intention of being a good person, in the sense of generous, loving and respectful at least, and going astray from the path to awakening. If you didn't attend last month you can go on my website tsony.com and just enter dialogue and you have all the previous exposes and dialogues. Also many of the audio teachings have been transcribed if you prefer to read rather than listen.

This month I want to emphasize the second aspect. Many of you may be familiar with the idea of *tonglen*. Sending and taking...the way of transforming adversity to a path of awakening; the way to take upon oneself not only our own suffering, but at the same time that of all beings, while also cultivating generosity by giving anything that would be necessary and helpful to all sentient beings. This isn't just a common theme, which for some of you is well known, but today I want to share with you something that is uncommon. Uncommon, it's a combination of the path of *tonglen* in terms of practice and realization. The full flower that grows, or the fruit.

For this I used the instructions that were shared by Garchen Rinpoche, who is a Tibetan master who lives here in the U.S. in Arizona. He is one of the old masters, in his 80's. He shared these instructions because he received these instructions from one of his teachers, Khenpo Munsel, who shared this on a very special occasion. They were in a forced labor camp, prisoners during the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet. So in a very dangerous situation, because you were not even allowed to recite a mantra, they didn't even want to see your lips mumbling something. So it was really hard. He got these instructions and put them into practice right on the spot, there in prison.

What I like about this teaching, I guess because of the situation, the emergency, is that there is no time to lose; you have to go straight to the heart. The instructions are very concise and extremely deep, and usually these are part of what we call 'oral instructions' that are not written down, part of the oral tradition. These are not always easily accessible, for the simple reason that you can totally miss the point. Totally misunderstand because your mind is not ready for this angle and the subtlety

of this approach. But I think nowadays, recently, we've seen a lot of great teachers depart this world. This old generation is almost all gone. So I just felt it was important to share this, like seed bombs. Seed bombing the Dharma, so that maybe those seeds will find shelter in your mind and maybe in ten or twenty years from now you will be in the position where it can fully express itself and you will find great benefit from it.

I wanted to share that with you because I've been very, very touched by these instructions; in a way, that's the way Gendun Rinpoche taught *tonglen*, and I didn't know then how extraordinary it was, because I thought that was just the way it was. Then, after I had other sources of instructions, I could see that there were different ways of approaching it. I just wanted to share this with you, and in particular connect this with the management of the *kleshas*. *Klesha*. The Sanskrit root basically gives a sense of suffering, burden, difficulty, something that is hard to free oneself from, and so on. So if you look at my website I made a compilation of different translations of the word *klesha* from Sanskrit into English, just to give you the etymology of the word. If you go into the section on *Overcoming the Kleshas* you can scroll down and you'll see it.

So, we'll say afflictions in English, let's put it like this. Afflictions because they obscure the natural clarity of mind. The first function is that they prevent mind from knowing itself; it prevents mind from knowing phenomena correctly and bias' the perception of phenomena. The result is that there is a space in this misunderstanding for *kleshas* such as anger, possessive fixations, jealousy and arrogance and so forth to arise. Last month I used an explanation from Vasubandhu talking about the main problem we have connected with this idea of a self. The first one was *da mong*, confusion about what a 'self' is, and then there is *da gyal*, the arrogance about being a 'self' and feeling preeminent or superior to others, and *da chok*, the fixation on the prerogatives of 'the self,' like not suffering and always being satisfied, these kinds of things. So, on the basis of these three misunderstandings or confusion related to a sense of a self, all sorts of problems and suffering will arise. That's the foundation, that's the basis.

In this particular instruction Khenpo Munsel is not talking about the common approach of *tonglen*. He's pointing out the more absolute form of *tonglen*. To remind you, *tong* means to take upon yourself, and *len* means to offer. Sending and taking is a common translation. I think this is important because it makes the bridge between what we saw in last month's discourse and what we will explore next month, which is working with *klesha*, looking at their true essence, and looking at the wisdom and the heart of the *kleshas*. So it's a transition between the two. But in order to make this transition and to really understand what we are going to talk about next month, we have to really understand that for this specific approach we have to really start from the way things are, and not so much the ways things appear. We have to work from the understanding we gain, mainly through our practice of *vipashyana*, insight. The certainty we gain about the true nature of mind; what could be the substrate, what is below; and that everything, all phenomena just arise from this, just like waves from an ocean. So *tonglen* is treated from the point of view of the ocean and not so much from the point of view of the waves in this approach.

But it's very important to begin with a classic training, and the classic training begins with preliminary work where we free ourselves from this obsessive self-centered attitude. When we're just constantly in confusion about the self, totally convinced of the central position of myself, and also totally entitled with all the likes and dislikes that we have because of this confusion. And the way to get out of this, which is presented in the classic approach of *tonglen* and mind training, is to consider the kindness of every sentient being. To begin with. That's going to be the starting point. Because when you lift up your nose from your navel gazing and you look around, you realize there are a lot of people. And the first thing to understand is that everything is connected, everything is interdependent. Everything depends. There's not one single phenomena that exists in and of itself. You may look at anything you want; your house, your car, your shoes, your body, your mind, emotions. Everything is interdependent, it's connected by so many factors. It's amazing to look at this network, this infinite network of interdependent conditions.

So when you shift your mindset from an ego-system which is self-centered and spinning around 'me,' to an ecosystem where you are part of an interdependent network that includes animate sentient beings and inanimate phenomena; the world, the environment, your views on yourself and the world have radically changed. So it's not just an idea that you think, "Oh, that's a great idea!" You have to understand it, you have to embrace it fully, completely, until your perspective on yourself and the world has completely changed. Radically changed. So from ego-system to ecosystem. Once you are thinking differently, and you think in terms of the ecosystem, then you begin to realize that whoever you are now, and whatever achievements you have, whatever comfort, whatever, including your body, come from other people, come from outer circumstances. They have all been participating to create who you are right now.

They've been participating in two ways. A soft way and a rough way. We have some participation that brings us love and comfort and tenderness and inspiration, and that's great, but we've also got challenging participation that helps us to become resilient, creative, intelligent, resourceful and so on. We have to move beyond the *da chok*, the fixation on 'my' prerogatives and see that the contribution is not only what is pleasant to me, the contribution is also what is challenging. And both are necessary for my evolution, for my growth. We need both. We have received both and we continue to receive both; and we must at some point feel grateful for that. So that's the first thing...grateful. "Thank you." Thank you everybody, instead of the list you could make of what's not enough, like why do you keep some, you should give it all to me. This kind of ego-system mentality. This is gone now because you understand interdependence. You understand interdependence...so you come to sense, to feel, the kindness all beings have towards you, whether intentional or unintentional doesn't matter. Everything they throw at you, if you can really embrace and relate to it properly, it will be a great opportunity for spiritual development and growth.

So first is gratitude, that's the fundamental foundation. Once you have gratitude, love will come, quite naturally. Peace in your mind, wishing others well, and you have no ill intentions. And so you

wish very deeply for them to be happy and to be free from suffering. Even if people annoy you at times, you don't have to pretend you're not annoyed. You can be annoyed, but you can still love them. Like if you have children you know what I am talking about;~} Sometimes you want to throw them out the window, but you love them. So love comes. And when love collides with the suffering of the world, then love becomes dynamic, and that is compassion. Compassion is the dynamic of love. May all beings be free from suffering...not only will they all be happy, but may they all be free from suffering. And this is not just wishful thinking. But what can I do? We commit ourselves to this task. By this I mean relief and liberation for all sentient beings. So that's where we become engaged on the path, the mahayana, the path of the bodhisattva, the bodhi path, and we cultivate bodhicitta through the practice of the 6 *paramitas*. And by the way, I just gave a 2 day teaching on this in Santa Barbara (on Zoom) last weekend on the chapters on the 6 *paramitas* in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and it's all on my website. So if you search *Overview of the 6 Paramitas* on Tsony.com you can have access to these classes and get more information if you need it.

So with the practice of the first five *paramitas*, to keep it simple, we cultivate the dynamic of benevolence. We cultivate what's called merit. We cultivate this dynamic of benevolence, we develop generosity and patience and perseverance and meditation and ethics. With these five, you cultivate a dynamic of goodness. It needs to be transcended and enlightened by the input of the 6th *paramita*, which is the wisdom of emptiness, or you could say the wisdom of interdependence. So when we are going to cultivate bodhicitta we're going to cultivate these two modalities...of relative bodhicitta, working with the kindness and benevolence, and then absolute bodhicitta, which is working from the point of view of insight...to really understand what is the real nature of suffering, what is the cause suffering. Not just in terms of who did what, but in terms of the very structure of ignorance that generates a ground for suffering.

So in terms of practice it is very important to do this first. First, to cultivate a good understanding of the suffering of beings and our own suffering, to cultivate right view or understanding of how suffering comes to be and that it can be brought to an end, and how we do that. So read and study and attend lectures on these topics and then think about it. Really make it yours, don't just repeat people's words, make them yours. Then you also cultivate the preliminary practice of calm abiding. Calm abiding is very simple, it's you stop the usual projection of your attention which is outward, and you turn it inward. So you pay less attention to all the debate and discussions and fights with others, they did this and did that to control, suppress and promote, all of that, you just step back from all that. It's a form of renunciation if you will. You step back from that, but...you let go, but you don't let down. That means you don't give up, you don't abandon. You step back so you can see better. And you see things arising and falling and you begin to see how mind works and you begin to see how quite often, following the old patterns, you're always running after things, trying to promote this and suppress that and so on...and, you know, you start nourishing this habit. You cultivate a new habit, which is the habit of mindfulness, or attentiveness. And you are thorough in your observations, so that's conscientiousness, looking thoroughly into it until things get really clear.

When your calm abiding comes to this point where you're not carried away by all these manifestations of all sorts, whether they're outer phenomena, stimulations coming through your senses, or your own inner constant dialogue, you're in a good place. Your mind is not distracted, it's not attached to stillness and it's not afraid of movement, and your mind is able to look at itself, so the gaze of the mind has been turned inward. And because you're not constantly trying to promote or push things away, there is a sense of ease and simplicity and relief. Ahhhh, free at last! Just relax there. It's very open and it's very spacious and you keep looking. And at this point you are already one foot into *vipashyana* and you didn't even know it. Because if mind can look at itself, then mind will look at itself.

Then with your practice of *vipashyana* you will look at what used to drive you bananas or totally excite you and when you try to find it, it's so elusive that actually you see that this is like a smoke screen, just like a mirror or a reflection, just like a rainbow. It's clear that it's undeniably present, yet there is nothing there to grasp. Much ado about nothing, you know, there isn't really anything to grasp there, so then you relax. And then you turn your attention towards 'who' is this person who gets really excited, who is the witness that was so excited about it? And then you look at it, and look at it, and look at it and the more you look at it the less you find it. Yeah, there are traces, yeah, like a rumor. You can hear the noise, but you don't really know where it comes from. So you relax.

And then you look at, is there a possible relationship between these two? How do they communicate, you know, the exciting object and the mind that's easily dragged into this? And it's the same, the more you look for it the less you find it. So what you discover is just that things appear through interdependent production but at the same time they're totally insubstantial; they can become the basis for a lot of concern and a lot of worries and suffering, but they don't have to. It totally depends on you whether you buy it and drink the Kool-Aid. You buy this illusion or you see through it and relax.

And as you relax, in a state of mind that is not waiting for something in particular, you know, where you are not expecting to achieve enlightenment so to say...you're not afraid not to accept or to achieve enlightenment, because you remember that beings are endowed with the Buddha nature, this mind right now is perfect. As the *Uttaratantra Shasta* says, "To this mind there is nothing to add and nothing to subtract." It's just fine as it is. So you relax. And the more you relax with this sharp mind that keeps looking at things, looking at the object, looking at the perceiving mind, all the myths fall apart. It's a long process of demystification of what reality is. And it just falls apart. And as it falls apart, all of this relative reality that was creating a sort of a smoke screen dissipates and then what is; the space, the clarity, the luminosity, the essential emptiness, the spaciousness that is indissociable from compassion, indissociable from bliss, indissociable from awareness, becomes obvious. And we abide and abide and abide and abide and abide and abide...until enlightenment. So that's the bottom line of our practice.

Now, when we look at gratitude, love, and compassion and we look at the suffering of beings, or we are aware of the suffering of beings, then the question comes of how can I help them? In the classic explanation of mind training, we say you take the suffering; as you breathe in you take it upon yourself, when you notice in yourself some sort of suffering fixation (here we are talking about *klesha*)...so if you notice in the stream of your consciousness the presence of *klesha* then you look at it and you own it. Usually when you see something in your mind that is not pleasant, we have two general tendencies or habits. What we do is either we blame somebody, or we pretend it doesn't exist. You bury it or you outsource it. So the strategy here is to not do any of this. Don't do it. These are not valuable strategies. I'm not going into great detail to tell you why they don't work, so trust me, they don't work. If you want to explore, explore, but they don't work. These are not good strategies.

The good strategy is to own the problem that you have. Yes, in this moment this mind is a mind of anger. This mind is a mind of jealousy. This mind is a mind of pain. And we own it. It's very important to own it. So you don't go in wrong trajectories. You own it. And as you own it in the general context of you being aware of the suffering of all beings, then the thought comes to you...and if it doesn't then make it come to you, that wow, there are so many brothers and sisters out there in this very moment, right now, not abstractly...but right NOW! So many of them are having the same problem, and may I take upon myself their suffering as I go through this challenging moment. And here something magic happens, the mind that was a mind of anger or desire or whatever, appears to be a mind of compassion. So the problem has been solved, not in trying to solve your problem, but by embracing the suffering of others. You've liberated your mind from the *klesha* that became a central focus, a point of focus for yourself and you trying to figure out how you can get rid of it and who did it to you...so just don't blame anybody and don't suppress it, you need to own it. And that leads you to thinking about the suffering of all beings and taking upon yourself their suffering and, almost in a shocking way, you realize that your problem is gone. It's gone; it was a fixation. Mind is fluid, and it's just a fixation. And because you've distracted your mind with something else, the suffering of all beings, then your own problem was solved. So in taking the suffering, your suffering was liberated.

And then, when you breathe out, what you have discovered, the freedom from the transmutation of your mind of anger into a mind of compassion and the joy and the comfort and the ease and the bliss that you experience in this moment, this is what you offer sentient beings. In this classic common approach of *tonglen*, it's not that you take and you give in two different distinct separate actions. Because you can't take take take and then give give give, because there is a point where you freak out because you took too much, and you freak out because you gave too much. So that's not a proper strategy. The proper strategy is what I just explained; you take it because you understand that so many people suffer from that and you sort of take charge of their suffering...and then you discover your freedom. And that freedom is what you give. You don't give anything that you wouldn't have discovered by taking upon yourself the suffering of others. In other words, you're not

depleting some stock of goodies by giving. Okay? And you're not storing, piling up garbage by taking.

There is an immediate transmutation of it.

So that's the ordinary approach of *tonglen*, and that's gonna be our main practice. But if we practice this form of *tonglen*, now and then there will be a transcendence, an episode of transcendence. Sort of a climax, if I may compare this to a climax...you give and you take and you find yourself more and more free and more and more happy to give and more and more willing to take and as you do that you sort of disconnect from, or you let go of, the heavy weight of, "I take, I give"...you know, the substantial heaviness of taking and giving. It's much more fluid, like waves coming and going. You don't need props and accessories like smoke and lightning and whatnot to motivate you, except maybe in the beginning. You come to a point where sending and taking are still connected with your breath, it's very natural. You see suffering, you understand it's universal, you take it, it's transformed into compassion, the joy and the bliss of simple mind, compassionate mind, and this is what you breathe out and you give in a very, very natural fashion. And now and then there are these outbursts, and that's what this instruction is talking about. There is a moment where you go beyond this form of taking and giving.

I'm going to read you these instructions from Garchen Rinpoche when he thought about what Khenpo Munsel gave him. "*Khenpo Munsel gave me many special oral instructions on tonglen that weren't in the text.*" These are part of the oral transmission, they are not in the texts in the tradition of mind training; you will not find them in a book. "*In tonglen generally we say that we are sending happiness out to others and taking others suffering in.*" That's the classic idea of *tonglen*, or the ordinary.

"But for the actual meaning of tonglen you have to understand the inseparability of self and others." And how do you do that? The ground of our minds is the same. We first have to understand this as a view. When we study Buddha nature, it's very clearly explained that because the nature of the ultimate mode of being, because nature of the dharmadhatu, dharmakaya, or mind in this context...because the essence of mind is emptiness, you cannot divide it between the emptiness of Buddhas and the emptiness of unenlightened persons. You cannot do that. And as you cannot do that, the qualities that are indissociable from the empty essence cannot be divided. You cannot say that a Buddha has more Buddha nature than an unenlightened person. Or that a human being has more Buddha nature than an insect. Every sentient being partakes from the Buddha nature because the essence of the ultimate mode of being, the dharmadhatu or dharmakaya is empty. And because it is empty, the indissociable qualities of its emptiness is empty mind, equally shared or present in all sentient beings. Now the difference isn't whether this particular being relates to his or her Buddha nature or not; are they logged in, or logged out? When they are logged in they're close to enlightenment, they are like bodhisattvas or they're Buddhas. When they are logged out they are too confused to even ignore the possibility of awakening. But there is no difference whatsoever. So these instructions of *tonglen* are based on this reality. This must be understood as the view (that means we must understand the concept of Buddha nature and the fact that all beings partake from it) and of course the view must

be confirmed and validated by your own experience, and that would be the path of *shamatha* (calm abiding) and *vipashyana*, common *vipashyana* as a start, but very quickly *mahamudra vipashyana*. And if you want to understand more about what is the difference between common *vipashyana* and *mahamudra vipashyana*, then I recommend you read *Boundless Wisdom* by Shamar Rinpoche. This has been translated into many languages now so you can read it.

These instructions say that first we have to understand that the ground of our minds is the same, in essence. “In this context, even if there are many different types of suffering, there is only one thing called *dukkha*, or dis-ease, suffering.” Like fifty shades of gray, fifty shades of suffering. There are many, many shades of suffering. My suffering and your suffering is different, but my suffering, because of my confusion (the arrogance of the self that thinks that it is superior to others) my suffering is more important than yours. You know, people say they have a really bad problem, so painful, and most of the time you say, “Yeah, yeah, I understand, because I have something, but mine is a little bit worse.” Like you are one up, still above the other. My pain is worse than yours. Whether that’s true or not is very hard to say, because it’s extremely subjective. But the bottom line is *dukkha*. It’s *dukkha*, there is only one; it hurts. Ouch! Ouch, everybody. It hurts; my hurt, your hurt, hurt.

Our mind partakes from the same ground, which is Buddha nature. My suffering/your suffering. They may have different gradients, but it’s still only one suffering. In the same manner, your ease and my ease share the same ground. Bliss because it is indissociable from emptiness, where there is emptiness there is bliss. And if there is no bliss it’s because your mind is projecting all sorts of things that create a smoke screen that prevents mind itself from experiencing its own bliss. That means there are different shades of satisfaction, but the bottom line is that the same *sukha* (happiness, bliss) is present in the mind. So there is only one suffering, that’s what Khenpo Munsel taught, that’s his point of view. “If there is only one suffering, then at this time when you, yourself, have great suffering, you should think, ‘The minds of the sentient beings of the three realms and my mind have the same ground.’ However, the essence of the suffering of the sentient beings of the three realms and the essence of our suffering is the same.” So that’s the point on which you’re going to practice this extraordinary form of *tonglen*.

So how do we do that? If you see them to be the same, then the extraordinary form of *tonglen* would actually be very similar to, not to say the same, the practice of *vipashyana*, the *mahamudra vipashyana* you would do. Here you look at all phenomena to be only the play of mind, and that the mind is empty, thereby all sentient beings partake of this mind, and therefore the essence of its phenomena and all the forms of the phenomena is the same. So the phenomenon may appear to be different, but they actually partake from the same essential reality; and they are empty in essence. When in your practice of *vipashyana* you see that, then suffering is not suffering anymore. You are not rejecting it. Bliss is not an entity that you need to cling to, so there is an absolute freedom when your mind sees what could be seen as suffering, but which doesn’t operate as suffering any more; when

the mind knows itself. So abiding in the true nature of your mind through the practice of *mahamudra vipashyana*, suffering ceases to be suffering.

Also concepts. Concepts cease to operate as concepts. Concepts in the sense of *ngonpa topa* in Tibetan. That means “an awareness that divides into subject and object.” So when a thought arises, mind recognises it as its own magical display. Clear in its presence, yet empty in its essence. This mind isn’t carried away by the functioning of a concept which is a divisive type of thought. So when you abide in the natural state, the concepts cannot maintain their divisive game. There’s no ground for it.

If you see them to be the same in essence and dissociable...if you see them as being non-dual (my suffering/your suffering), then meditate on the suffering in the mind’s natural state, which I just described as the fruition of the insight of *mahamudra vipashyana*. The suffering goes away. So you abide in this awareness of mind’s essence, the ground on which suffering acts as suffering or concepts as a divisive consciousness ceases to function, and then the pain is not pain. And as pain is not pain, in light of this awareness, what you discover is the natural bliss of mind. Pain is not pain, and as pain has been removed and hasn’t created a smokescreen, then the natural state is now in full open sight. And then what you see is that the nature of mind is bliss and its essence is emptiness...and this is what you give to sentient beings. You give to beings the fruit of the certainty you have gained through the practice of *vipashyana*.

I’ve been asked often about the value of meditation versus engagement in the world for alleviating the suffering of beings; many people can’t see the benefit of having meditators. Like, what do they bring to the world? We don’t see them, and we have to feed them, it doesn’t seem like they do much for the world. It would be much better if they were out in the field and working; at least some people think like this. It’s difficult to explain what the value of a meditator is, a true meditator that is (not somebody who sleeps through the retreat)...but someone who is truly abiding in the nature of mind. It’s very difficult because the opposition that comes from a mind which is extremely materialistic has difficulty grasping what we are seeing right now. Gendun Rinpoche once told me, “When you abide in the experience of the natural state of mind, from this point you can bless people and objects.” Because you’re connected with the ground mind and that’s the level you operate from; you don’t operate on the relative reality level. You don’t operate on the level of mental consciousness. You operate on the level of nondual wisdom. Buddha mind.

And because nondual wisdom is the union of emptiness and awareness, and because it is also the union of emptiness and bliss, and of emptiness and compassion, compassion pervades the dharmadhatu, the space of the open mind. Therefore it touches every being, from the basement up...and then this appears in their world, from the ground up, as objects as they perceive as helping. Bodhisattvas don’t have to be making “well-packaged” help, “Oh this is for you, I know you like socks so here are some socks,” and so on. No. From the ground up it appears. Goodness. Dukkha is one, sukha is one. The goodness arises, and every being will relate to this upsurge of goodness in the

way that makes sense for them; in a way that is perceptible to them. Maybe it's material? Then it could appear as trees if they need shade, as a bridge if they need to cross a river, as shelter if they're lost, or a companion if they've lost their way.

You can read this in the *Bodhicaryavatara*, there are all these wishes of Shantideva, "As long as space endures, may I..." And it's not like he'd be producing all these things, but because he abides in the natural state of mind the radiance of compassion will come to the surface and each being will be blessed by this. If they can relate. But if they are too closed into their own illusion it will be difficult. So you need emergency services, like nurses and firefighters, who break into their houses to help them. But if they can just open to the grace, the eminent, ever-present grace, then they connect with it. So that's the input of meditators in the world. And we need more of them! We really need more of them. We need a lot of people working on the relative level and helping, for sure. But we also need a lot of people that are able to bless the dharmadhatu, and sentient beings throughout the dharmadhatu. So that's what is here in the special instructions of *tonglen*. If you abide in the natural state of mind, whatever suffering you have will stop being suffering, and will be experienced as realization...that means bliss.

So if you understand your suffering and that of beings to be of the same nature, when you solve your suffering you solve theirs. When you solve your suffering you find bliss, and because mind is not separate, then your bliss becomes their bliss. But you see how subtle that is. And if you approach this in a slightly materialistic way, this magic bubble bursts, you cannot really communicate it, and that's why this was not printed as 'general' advice. It's a very subtle application of your experience of *vipashyana* in the management of suffering, whether it is your own or *klesha*, all sorts of suffering, the suffering of old age, sickness, and death. Abiding in the true nature of it liberates it, and as you are liberated you have solved the suffering of others...and the bliss you discover pervades the space of the dharmadhatu; and therefore from the ground up it will come and surface in the field of experience of all sentient beings because their mind, our mind, the mind of all Buddhas are inseparable in essence, dissociable.

"At that moment you have been able to lessen the suffering of all sentient beings of the three realms, all at once." That's really why true meditators are so important. This world, without them, would be massively more painful than it is, if not for the bodhisattvas, the meditators who can bless the substratum, and by that touch all sentient beings all at once. And what they receive, all of them, there are no differences such as this deserves more than that. Now the real question is, "Did you open your package?" Did you open your present or not? That's the only difference. Could you notice your blessings or were you so entangled in your own confusion, arrogance, and sense of entitlement that you cut yourself off from the blessings? Cut yourself off from the grace.

"The *len* of *tonglen* means taking. First, take in this way."

Through the awareness that suffering is one...my suffering/their suffering is the same, they merge into one. And then when you take this, you realize that the suffering ceases to be suffering because

you abide in the natural state, and there, instead of suffering, what your mind experiences is the union of emptiness and bliss, or emptiness and compassion. First, do that.

“If you understand your mind's nature, then you recognize the essence of whatever suffering and afflictive emotions there may be to be emptiness.” And that is the difference between ordinary compassion and bodhisattva compassion. Ordinary compassion takes suffering as its object. This is like everyone’s compassion; you are suffering, your heart is broken, and you want to help, which is a great starting point, of course. The bodhisattvas understand that the suffering comes from confusion, and the suffering doesn’t really exist outside of the mind of the person who suffers and who is convinced that this is truly substantially existent. So their compassion is not essentially targeting so much the different aspects of suffering, of course, bodhisattvas do still work at this superficial level, but their compassion is more focused on the ground, the basic substratum, the ground basis of all sentient beings, and then operate the liberation at this level.

“If you understand your mind's nature, then you recognize the essence of whatever suffering of afflictive emotions, *kleśha*, there may be, to be emptiness.” Emptiness doesn’t mean they don’t exist, it means they appear to be painful, at times they feel painful, but truly if you look at it their essence is emptiness. Just like a rainbow, a hallucination or an echo, you know, the twelve similes of illusion.

“When suffering does not harm you anymore (that means you have not eliminated suffering, rather that you have seen its fictitious nature, so it ceases to be suffering) the mind has great bliss. If at that time, you meditate, making self and others inseparable, then that bliss can diminish the self-grasping of all sentient beings.” Which is the true source of their suffering.

“It can lessen the self grasping.” Confusion about what is the self, the arrogance about the self, means “myself” being superior, and all the fixations and entitlements that we attribute to the self. All of this will stop. You know, all these stories where the Buddha taught and then the deer came, and Milarepa taught and the hunter, his dog, and the deer sat next to him and everybody was pacified...Saint Francis and the birds. All these great bodhisattvas create an environment of peace around them. It's Shangri-la. Dewachen. When you’re around them, everybody just feels blissed out. These are extraordinary times, and that’s because this particular being is talking and operating on the relative level so we can connect, but also his/her mind never departs from the awareness of the ultimate reality, and so he or she blesses the surface and the ground at the same time. And because we are the ground, we feel it. We feel the beauty, suddenly it’s not this ugly, terrible world, there is something that’s almost like a pureland. This golden time around the Buddha, or around Karmapa, around Shamar Rinpoche; these great bodhisattvas, they bless to this level of the practice of *tonglen*.

“The happiness that is being given is the bliss that comes from the practice of giving and taking.” So basically, even giving, what are you giving? It’s something that all beings are endowed with, but some don’t connect with it...so you’re giving something they already have. But actually what you’re giving is that you’ve created a sort of ease and lightness where they can connect with the bliss of

their own mind. So it seems that they receive something, but they were just placed in the circumstances where they discover it in themselves. So maybe they don't know it's theirs, they attribute it to somebody, but in the end it doesn't really matter at this point.

“This is how you should practice. This is very special. Others don't explain it this way.” This is a very uncommon explanation of mind training. This is mind training in the ultimate bodhicitta. The reason I wanted to give you this is because I think we're entering a time of emergency, it's already difficult to meet it. It's like darkness is everywhere, we really have to be able to relate to the fundamental sanity, the brilliant sanity of mind through our practice. And of course we practice sending and taking in a mostly classic way; you're grateful, you sense a feeling of peace and goodwill and loving kindness for everybody. You really feel their suffering, you share it because you know in yourself that you have the same problems. And then you take it upon yourself and you give; and you do that very honestly, and not expecting any reward or attainment of any sort; you just do it because it has to be done. And then you just give. And now and then, as your mind gets more and more relaxed, and you're less and less thinking the giving and thinking the taking, and more and more feeling the giving and feeling the taking, there is something that opens up. And there is this moment of like a lightning bolt, pshewww. Wow. Maybe you abide for a split second in what Khenpo Munsel was describing. Maybe for a little time you are just there.

I want you to know that if this happens, it's fine. Abide there. Don't feel like, whoops, I'm not taking, I have to give, I have to take. You build up something and there is a climax when something opens up into a space of openness, simplicity, pure beauty, bliss, compassion, and that's liberating for you....and don't doubt that when you are there that you are working on the ground, and that it will resurface in the experience of all sentient beings. Stay there as long as it's natural. If you notice that you are already trying to maintain it, because you thought it was cool so you want to maintain it...you create a picture of it, it's analogic, it's not the real thing. You reproduce it and then copy and paste, copy and paste, copy and paste this snapshot, so that you have the impression that you are abiding in the real state, because you lack the ultimate state. It's much “higher” than everybody else who does the “common” sending and taking. Basically, you're tripping on it. When you notice you're tripping on it, let go. Because anyway it's not here anymore, it's dead. You're playing with a picture. And then just go back to a sense of gratitude, and a sense of love and equanimity. And then you see the suffering, you feel it, and then take it and give. And maybe the magic will happen again. Just stay there. And when you stay there forever, it's called enlightenment. You are Buddha. Ha ha. As long as you're not Buddha you're not going to stay there forever. But it's good to touch and go. So I just wanted to share this with you, because this has been a central aspect of my practice for many decades, and I'm very grateful for Garchen Rinpoche to have shared this very intimate instruction he received at a very difficult time of his life, when he was not even sure he would survive. I think we are in difficult times, well, not that there was ever a time when samsara was great, yeah, but you can feel the pain and a lot of agony in the world, and so it's good if you can use these methods.