

Thinking about specific aspects of action and its results (lightly edited transcript)
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After thinking about the general aspects of cause and effect, we are now going into the second major division – thinking about the specific aspects of action and its results.

Here, I will cover:

What are the eight favorable qualities for Dharma study and practice?

How to utilize these qualities properly?

What are the virtuous actions (the causes) leading to a human rebirth with these qualities?

Frostings on the cake

As I explain each of the eight qualities, I will also talk about the benefits and the causes. Some points in this section can be a little bit controversial. I should preface this by saying that these eight qualities are not necessary conditions for becoming enlightened. We already went through the precious human life, giving the conditions that are most conducive for Dharma practice.

These eight qualities are like frostings on the cake. They are not necessary for Dharma practice or enlightenment. But because these eight qualities give us certain "societal power", they help our actions to benefit others more. They aid in the practice of the Dharma, making progress more rapid. They are not necessary, but they are nice to have if you can have them.

1) Long life

I think most of us can see that if we have a precious human life, it would be nice to have a long one. It is very advantageous, giving us a greater amount of time to study and practice. It beats growing up to thirty – dying, being born, having to go through childhood and teenage years again – and then not having much time until you are thirty again.

The Tibetans actually say that if you live a virtuous life, it is good to have a long one. If you are not living a virtuous life, it is better to have a short one – less time to create negative karma [laughter].

The long life helps us to have more time to practice. It gives us an extended period of time to get to know others and to establish relationships and be of benefit to them.

How to get a long life?

- Abandon killing
- Save other people's lives
- Give others food
- Give medicine to the sick
- Nurse people
- Release prisoners

In my humble opinion (my teachers might disagree), there are cultural elements in some of these causes. The scriptures often talk about how wonderful it is to release prisoners. I have a feeling that is because in ancient times, many people were imprisoned unjustly. The king had so much authoritarian power that somebody could just go into a village and arrest people they did not like and torture them.

So, in those days, releasing prisoners probably meant releasing innocent people. In our days, I think it could mean something else. But when we talk about this whole idea of prisoners in Buddhism, I think the basic thing is that imprisoning people with a wish to get revenge and to punish them is a negative action. In other words, it is the wish to harm somebody else that is negative. That does not mean that you never imprison people.

Obviously, if people are going to hurt other people – creating negative karma and sending themselves to the lower realms – you can, out of compassion, protect them from circumstances whereby they are going berserk. Then, you are doing both them and their potential victims a favor. But you have to do it with a good motivation.

It is very important that if you have these eight conditions, you have to have a good motivation to accompany them. Any of these eight qualities, in and of themselves, are not virtuous. Any of them can be misused.

Take the example of a long life. If you are living a virtuous life, a long life is great. If you are living a very destructive and harmful life, a long life is not good. It is not a quality that benefits you.

2) Sound, attractive and healthy body

Having an attractive body makes people attracted to you. Being attracted to you, they would have faith in you and like you. So, you can influence them and be of benefit to them.

You might say, “But isn’t wanting to have a nice body the eight worldly dharmas?” Well, if you want that out of attachment, yes, it is. If you want a beautiful body simply because you are attached to good looks, definitely it is one of the eight worldly concerns.

However, what we are talking about here is a positive attitude and a wish to benefit others with an attractive body that is used properly. If you are outrageously ugly, people who have their own confusions and their own "junk" are not going to want to be around you.

It does not mean being attractive makes you a good person and being ugly makes you a bad person. It just means that in terms of other sentient beings’ prejudices and preconceptions, having an attractive body makes people attracted to you and have more faith in you. There is no logic to it. We’re living in a world with sentient beings who have prejudices and preconceptions. It helps if you are reasonably good looking because people like to be around you so you can help them better.

What are the causes for having an attractive body?

The principal cause is patience. What does your body look like in this lifetime when you are impatient and angry? It does not look very attractive. When you are angry, it shows in the body right away. It creates the karma to have a body that is not so attractive in the future. But if you are patient, you have a very nice expression in this lifetime. It creates the cause to have an attractive body in future lifetimes.

- Offering light and food to the Triple Gem
- Publishing Dharma books
- Building or repairing statues and stupas (monuments with relics inside)
- Offering clothes to statues (different clothes are often put on the statues)
- Giving other people clothes and ornaments

I should add here that the Tibetans, particularly in terms of building statues and making paintings, emphasize the importance of doing it properly. If you paint a very unattractive-looking Buddha statue (poor artistry since the Buddha can never be unattractive), it could create the cause in future lives not to be so attractive. They emphasize that when you are doing this kind of artwork, you have to do it properly. When one makes something or someone else beautiful, one creates the karma for oneself to be attractive.

3) Good, reputable family

If you are born in a reputable family, you have a lot of social status. And I think this is especially true in Asian cultures. Americans have this big deal about equality, so my guess is, this is probably not as important in America. However, you can certainly see that if one of the Kennedy kids became a Buddhist, it would have a big effect on people.

What people in high-class families do affects other people, because it is easier for them to get publicity. News about them is more widely known. If you have a lot of social status, people know about what you are doing.

They respect what you are doing, not necessarily because you are good or bad, but because you have high status. That is why a condition like this is so dependent on having a good motivation. If you have a lot of social status and you abuse it, it could be very harmful.

If you are practicing Dharma and you come from a family that has status, then you can use that in a beneficial way with a good motivation. You can influence people. They will listen to you and heed your advice. They will think you are competent.

How to create the cause for this?

- By being humble, abandoning arrogance and conceit. Do not be proud of your education, your social class, your ethical conduct, your wisdom, your clothing, your income.
- Respecting others who are worthy of respect. This includes making prostrations to the Triple Gem and generally being helpful and humble to others.
- Helping people who cannot help themselves.
- Having a mind that is open to seeing value in other people, instead of walking around thinking, "Here I am. Why don't you treat me properly? This is *me*." That kind of attitude creates karma for rebirth where people tend to look down on you. Whereas, if one has a humble attitude and respects others, it creates the cause to be reborn in a family where people look up to you.

This does not mean that people born into lower class families are bad, or that lower class families are bad. We have to be clear here, that we are not looking down on anybody.

Look at His Holiness. He was born into a peasant family. Now, his family is part of the Tibetan aristocracy. Everybody listens to them. But if their son had not been His Holiness, (actually there were two other sons in the family who were Rinpoches), or if their children were not recognized as reincarnated lamas, that family would have no power. They were just a very simple peasant family.

Certainly, people from simple families can become very great Dharma practitioners. And I wonder: If somebody is born into a simple family, who then becomes a great Dharma practitioner, would that person in some ways benefit people more? Everybody else can look at that person and say, "Wow! Look how much they overcame in their Dharma practice. If they can do that, I can do that too."

For instance, there was an illiterate farmer in Thailand who became an arhat. Now, he is very revered in Thailand. The people are very excited that this uneducated and illiterate person became an arhat. It makes people more enthusiastic, thinking that if this simple farmer could do it, they could do it too. So, I think in some cases, a bodhisattva would take rebirth in a simple family to act as a good example to others. I think that is probably what His Holiness did.

4) Wealth, good reputation and many friends

If you have a worldly motivation for this, it just becomes a worldly concern. So, it is important to have a good motivation and to want these not for one's own benefit but simply because it enables you to contact more people.

If you are wealthy and you have more money to give, you will of course have more friends. If you give things to people, they will like you. I have seen many Dharma students in the East, who feel wishy-washy and are travelers in the circuit. They just happen to meet one of the teachers in a personal interview and the teacher gives them a chocolate bar or a book or something else. All of a sudden, they think, "Wow! They gave me something! This is really important." And that makes them more open to listening because they feel somebody cares for them.

When we are trying to influence others and lead them on the path, one of the ways to show our intention to help them is by giving them things. Because in ordinary societal language, giving people things means you care about them, and then people will be more receptive to listening to the Dharma.

You can see this even with your friends – that sometimes your friends are more open to you explaining a little bit about Buddhism than they would be to me or even to His Holiness. Because they know you, they trust you. So, by having a life where you have many friends, many more people are apt to listen to you.

In the West, it is almost exactly the opposite from the East. In Singapore, I saw kids who are interested in the Dharma, bringing their parents in. But, in the West, our parents are sometimes more willing to listen to a friend or stranger than to us.

My parents had a hard time accepting that I was ordained. When I was living in Hong Kong, they came to visit. The people who had the Dharma center, where I was teaching, had a very big business in Kowloon. They invited my parents out to lunch at a very nice hotel, and took them to downtown Kowloon and up to the office with all the computers. All of a sudden, my parents looked at Buddhism completely differently. They thought, “Oh, there are all these really intelligent people. It is only our daughter who is a little bit flaky.” [laughter]

So, sometimes, people who are not related can say things we cannot say. This example also shows that by having some kind of wealth, it can influence people in a good way when used properly.

What are the causes for wealth, good reputation and having many friends?

- Being generous to the poor
- Helping others when you really do not have to
- Making offerings to the Triple Gem
- Repainting statues and offering them clothes
- Meditating on love
- Generally, being a charitable and generous person
- Eliminating misunderstandings

All these causes create the reasons for other people to like us now and in our future lives.

5) Honest and credible speech

If we are honest, then others believe us. And this is important when teaching the Dharma. If other people do not believe us, we can teach all the precious things but people are not going to practice it.

It is important to take care of our speech so that people find us trustworthy and will put into practice what we suggest. If our speech is sloppy, deceptive or deceitful, then even this life, people would not listen to us and it would be difficult to benefit them.

What are the causes for honest and credible speech?

- Abandoning the four destructive qualities of speech
- Keeping to our word

If we say we are going to do something, we should do it. If something happens and we cannot do what we say we are going to do, we should say we could not do it.

Often, we get into situations where we tell somebody we are going to do something, then we realize that we cannot do it. We are too embarrassed or ashamed or in a hurry to tell the people that we cannot do it. We leave them sitting there, still counting on us. They trust us, and we don't come true for them. Then they lose trust and confidence in us.

So, in this life, and also to create the karma for future lives to be trusted, it is important to do what we say we are going to do. Or, if we cannot, to let the person know so that they can make other plans.

This is really important. I am continually surprised how often this happens. I see it in myself too. Sometimes, I say I am going to do something and I realize mid-way I cannot do it. Then this feeling comes: “Oh, I don't want to tell them I can't do it. They might get mad at me.” So I put it off. Then, it just

builds a lot of tension. I certainly do not like it, and I do not think any of us like it, when people behave like that with us.

So, I think it is important for relationships in this lifetime and karma in future lives that we must be attentive to this.

We should also take care about what we say and how we say things to people. If we have pleasant speech, then of course people are going to listen to us. This is why I feel that communication skills are something really necessary for Dharma practitioners. We can have a motivation to help, but if we are not mindful of how we use speech, then we can unintentionally make a mess.

For credibility of speech, there is also a certain practice of blessing of speech that you can do in the morning – reciting the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, and the mantra of interdependence.

There is value in having powerful speech. When His Holiness says something, we all listen. If some guy on the street who is known for being deceptive says exactly the same thing, we do not listen to him. This is our prejudice, isn't it?

We close ourselves off from learning from everybody, when in fact we actually could. But people do have this prejudice, so if we can work with it, and have honest speech, then when we do say worthwhile things, people will listen to us.

6) Strong influence on others

Having some kind of authority or being in a powerful position lets us influence a lot of people and get a lot done.

King Ashoka, one of the Kings of India in third century B. C., was a Buddhist king. He ruled the country by Buddhist law. He had edicts – the government rules and regulations – written on huge pillars, and they were all according to Buddhist principles. Some of these are now in museums.

With his powerful position, King Ashoka did so many good things for the welfare of many, many people. And people still study about him nowadays. You can see that if we have a precious human life where we are able to have a powerful position and influence over many people, then we can do many Dharma actions.

His Holiness is another example. He can do so much to influence others because he has a powerful position. For example, when the Tibetans became refugees, he was able to help organize them in exile and start the Tibetan Children's Village, the monasteries and schools. He could do all these because he had that kind of position.

If we have that kind of position, it can be really helpful for benefiting others. Also, when people are grateful, they will listen to us. It is not just about putting the Dharma into a general law in the country or in your company. It is also a way of winning other people's respect so that you can influence them in a positive way.

Having a powerful position also means that when other people need help, they know that we can do something about it. So, it puts us in a position to be able to help more people. But again, we can see that in and of itself, there is nothing particularly virtuous about a powerful position. If you have a bad motivation, the power can destroy you.

What are the causes to have influence and power?

- Offering and respecting those who are worthy of it. Interesting, isn't it? To have power, you get the power by respecting others and by following good advice.

It is important to make offerings to and respect especially our spiritual teachers, the Triple Gem, the good advice our parents give us, the good advice other teachers and people give us.

- Making sure that in this life, we do not abuse whatever power or authority or responsibility we have. If we abuse them in this lifetime, it is difficult to have this quality in future lifetimes.

We might not be King Ashoka but we all have some power, ability and authority whereby we can get certain things done that other people cannot. So, if we use this properly in this lifetime, it can create the cause to again have that kind of strong influence on others.

7) Birth as a male

Very often, when Tibetans teach this part of the Lamrim nowadays, there are only seven favorable conditions when they teach it to Westerners. When they teach it to Tibetans, there are probably still eight. When they teach Westerners, somehow this favorable quality gets left out, I think, because they cannot handle the flak that we give them.

There are different explanations. Some people take it literally. Some people say what is referred to here are personality traits - usually associated with being male. I will tell you what the traditional teaching is, and throw in some of my own opinions.

They say that by having a male body, it is easier to live alone in a cave without problems. In old times (and still practiced in Tibet), people do retreats in caves. If you are a woman doing retreat in a cave there are no doors that you can lock at night, and so you are more vulnerable to somebody coming in and raping you. So they say, by having a male body, it is easier to live on your own because you do not have to be afraid of other people disturbing you.

They also say that you would not face the social discrimination that women do. People think that you know what you are talking about because you are a male. And this is true even in our Western culture, isn't it? In spite of all the progress we have made in the last twenty years, basically, it is harder for people to have faith in women's capabilities.

I think they once did a study. In a plane, the pilot sometimes talks to you, and it is always a man. And they did a survey on what happens if it happens to be a female pilot. Some people were really skittish about it. "A woman flying this plane? Can she do it?" Again, you can see that there is clearly social prejudice. This is nothing to do with the reality. But our society is prejudiced. So I think this quality is considered more in terms of avoiding the prejudice of society.

They also say it is more advantageous being born male in terms of your personality traits in that you will have strong will power. You will work hard. You are not afraid to stand up for what is right, or to explain Dharma to a crowd.

My personal opinion is that it depends completely on the individual. You will meet some men who can explain Dharma in a crowd, who have strong will power, work hard and stand up for what is right. And you will meet many men who do not have those qualities. You will meet women who do have these qualities and you will meet women who do not. So, my own personal opinion is that in terms of personality qualities, this part of it does not hold.

Maybe in Asian society, it does hold. If you look at the position of women in India 2,500 years ago, it is very different from the position of women in our society today. Women were never let out of the home.

The Buddha was a total social revolutionary in letting women join the order, because aside from the Buddhists and the Jains, none of the other traditions in India at that time even allowed women to be serious practitioners.

To some extent, even now, women in India are first the property of the father, and then the husband, and then the son. There are still many arranged marriages. The parents arrange the marriage for the girls, and the girl lives in her husband's family and is subservient to the whole family. Even when she is older and rules the household, her son still takes charge of the family business.

In Indian society, women have a very, very different position from our society. So in that kind of traditional society, it is going to be much more difficult for women to practice and for people to listen to women simply because of the societal prejudice.

In our society, things are changing. They are also changing in Asia. But, often, when we hear about this favorable quality, we think it means that it is saying women have less innate ability. Maybe some of the

Asians think that. Maybe some Americans think that. I am sure many Americans think that. I am sure many men think that. I am sure many women think that, too.

Self-confidence is the key

In my view, the important point is not about societal preconceptions, but our own self-image. If we have confidence, we can go ahead in the practice, whether we are male or female. If we do not have confidence, for whatever reason, based on gender or based on anything else then it is difficult to progress along the path.

Self-confidence is a really crucial element in the path. Self-confidence does not mean pride, thinking: "I'm a big shot. I can do it!" It is a sense of feeling good about ourselves in our hearts. We like ourselves and we feel: "I have the Buddha potential, I can do something useful with my life. Even if other people criticize me, even if other people think I'm stupid, or think I'm illiterate, or think whatever they think, I know I can go ahead."

If you have this attitude, no matter who you are, whether you are poor or rich, male or female, that kind of confidence gives you the ability to go ahead in your practice and also to be very beneficial to others.

In fact, I think that nowadays, due to the changing social conditions, sometimes women can benefit in Dharma situations more than men. This is not necessarily a good reason for selecting a teacher, but many people say, "Oh, I come to your teachings because you are a woman." My being a woman has nothing to do with my ability to teach. But some people feel more comfortable with that. In the past, people may seek a man because he is an authority figure but, nowadays, many people seek a female teacher. But again, it depends on the person.

[Audience:] What are the causes for having a male rebirth?

Admiring the male form and masculine qualities, remembering the disadvantages of the female body, rejoicing in the Triple Gem, reciting Manjusri mantra and a particular prayer to Manjusri, abandoning castrating animals, praying to be courageous and not being childish or calling your adversaries names.

I'm going to tell you a story that really got to me. Somebody got mad at somebody else and as a way of criticizing and putting them down, said, "You're just like a woman." And as a result, he was born as a woman five hundred times. And that's considered really unfortunate. So, don't call people names.

They also say don't call people names like 'monkeys' or 'dogs'. But we all do that when we are angry. This creates the karma to be born like the animals.

There's another story of somebody who was losing a debate with some monks and he started calling all of them different animal names. "You're like a monkey." "You're like an alligator."

One day, some monks were walking with the Buddha, and out of the water came this incredible, horrible-looking creature with eighteen heads, each of them different. The monks asked the Buddha what karma did somebody create to have this horrible kind of body. The Buddha said it was this person's incarnation.

8) Mental and physical stamina

If you have a strong body and mind, then you can endure physical hardships in practice. You can make lots of prostrations and you can do Nyung Nay, take the eight Mahayana precepts and you can do retreats and circumambulations. If you are always getting sick, practice becomes more difficult.

A powerful body makes practice easier. If we have a powerful mind, then we would not have regrets or hesitate to work for the benefit of others. We will have the "go-forward" energy. And we can have the pleasure of working for the benefit of others.

What are the causes?

- Doing what others cannot do. If you are in a position and have some ability to do something that people around you cannot do, help them out
- Abandoning hurting others and helping them when you can
- Making prostrations
- Carrying others' loads and their burdens

- Not hitting others

Questions and Answers

[Audience: Inaudible]

I didn't see any, but in the Vinaya, for example, the bhikshunis or the nuns are subordinate to the monks. When asked about this, His Holiness said that is because of Indian society and culture. And that makes sense to me.

Buddha already shook everybody up. He shook the men up by letting their wives out of their houses and letting some of them become nuns. If he had made them completely equal, I think the men would have freaked out! So I think that in many regards, when you look at the Vinaya rules, the Buddha was going along the societal traditions, and I think this was one of them.

[Audience:] Is there hostility in India towards Tibetan Buddhism because the Tibetans have an open approach to women's position?

I don't think so, because the Indians are not so interested in Tibetan Buddhism. You don't find so many of them studying Tibetan Buddhism. There are a lot of them who converted under Dr Ambedkar to Buddhism in general (but not Tibetan Buddhism in particular). He was the first person from the outcaste class who became a parliamentary minister in India. He converted to Buddhism and half a million people converted with him. And now there're eight million outcastes who have converted to Buddhism because Buddhism doesn't believe in the caste system....

[Teachings lost due to change of tape.]

The Tibetans say there's no discrimination between men and women in their culture. A few Tibetans I've met are honest and admit that there's discrimination. But it's very interesting – in terms of chores around the home, the men and women are quite equal. The men take care of the kids very often, and the women haul water and chop wood. In business, if you go to Dharamsala, many of the businesses are women-owned and operated. They're the big business people in the community.

In politics and religion, there's a big discrimination. The Tibetan society is now keeping a certain number of positions open in the assembly of people's deputies for women. So, they are improving. It's certainly not half of the people's deputies, but there're a few positions reserved for women.

His Holiness' sisters have both done a lot for the community, basically because they're His Holiness' sisters, so they've been given the chance to do it. If they weren't His Holiness' sisters, I think it would be more difficult. His Holiness' sister-in-law is the one in charge of Tibetan Women's Association, which has done so much incredible good work. But again my personal opinion is that she has the opportunity to do that because she's in the family.

Tibetan society is very, very class conscious. Even though Buddhism outlaws castes, there are some castes in Tibetan society. My experience is that there has been discrimination against women. That's talking about the society and the institutions created by people.

In Buddhist philosophy, when you look into the scriptures, especially the tantric scriptures, it's very clear that men and women equally attain enlightenment. So, in terms of the potential to become a Buddha, there's no difference in terms of tantra.

In the Theravada school, they'll say something different. They'll say that in the last rebirth, before becoming a Buddha, you have to have a male body, because one of the 32 physical signs of a Buddha is the sexual organ.

However, those 32 signs of a great person also existed in ancient India prior to Buddhism. Excuse me if I'm a heretic, but it seems to me that the 32 signs accepted in general Indian society, later got incorporated into Buddhism. The Tibetans still accept the 32 signs, but they say, "Actually no, you can

become enlightened in the last rebirth in a female body." So there're different positions on this in different traditions.

I think in the Tibetan system, philosophically speaking, men and women are equal. But in terms of the institution, in terms of general Tibetan society, there's discrimination. That's my opinion. Other people might see it very differently.

[Audience: Inaudible]

Yes. They always talk about mother sentient beings, specifically bringing up the female image here. Yet, there seems to be the feeling that if you're a mother, you're very attached to your kids, and that makes an obstacle for attaining enlightenment because there's a lot of attachment. So, it seems contradictory.

When they talk about mother sentient beings, one of the reasons they do that in Asian society is because usually (probably in Western society too), people generally feel closer to their mothers than to their fathers because their mothers are more involved in raising the kids. And they have more contact with the mother.

When you are a baby, usually it's your mother who feeds you, changes you, talks to you, teaches you to talk and walk, gives you cookies and milk after school, and things like that. So I think in most cultures, people have a more affectionate feeling towards their mothers than towards their fathers. This is only a general thing. It's not true in every case. So, to evoke in people this feeling of fondness and love that they have for the principal caregiver - they say mother sentient beings.

It's interesting that when they talk about bodhicitta, they talk about motherhood – caring for all beings just as a mother cares for her only child. And, on the other hand, thinking that mothers are so attached that it's difficult for them to practice. I think they're really talking about the sacrificing attitude of mothers. They give up so many things for their kids without feeling that they're giving up anything.

I remember talking to my grandmother who raised my father during the depression, and she told me that sometimes there just wasn't very much food, and she just gave it to her kids. I could tell by the way she said it – it was no sacrifice to her. She would have been more miserable eating it herself and watching her kids go hungry.

And I remember talking to another woman who's a Dharma student, and she was saying that after she became a mother, she just watched the change in herself, that so many things that she would never do for anybody else she would just automatically do for her kid. No questions asked. No feeling of sacrifice. No feeling of pain in giving.

[Audience: Inaudible]

I think that's a very good point. The tricky thing is: "How to generalize that same feeling you have for your child towards other people?" Often, that feeling of connection and compassion gets completely focused on one sentient being to the exclusion of others. In that way, it becomes partial. Attachment gets involved.

What you said about getting in touch with that feeling of love for somebody (that you've never had for anybody before) because of being a mother, and then giving that love out to other beings, is very beneficial.

I think what they were talking about in terms of attachment being an obstacle on the path is when you take that and you just keep it focused on *my* kid. Most parents say, "My kid's the best!" If my kid is going to get sick, then the school has to change. But if my kid is not in that school, I don't really care so much what that school does. What happens to other people's kids isn't so important, but my kid, it's a real big thing. That's where the attachment, the partiality, gets involved. But if you can have that same experience and then train the mind to look at every other living being with that same love, that can be very, very powerful.

[Audience: Inaudible]

I think that it's extremely important, as Buddhism comes to the West, starting things fresh and new, that we bring things over on a very equal basis. Especially in translations, we should have gender-neutral language.

The Tibetans are not aware of this, and even many Westerners, surprisingly, are just not aware of this gender-bias language. When we see it, it's very good to politely point it out to people so that it can be corrected.

I don't see any sense in bringing over gender-bias language because it does affect people. And also in terms of opportunities offered to women, in terms of establishing Buddhist institutions in the West, I think it's really important that we're quite equal.

[Audience: Inaudible]

When you are a Buddha, your mind is completely beyond being male or female. Actually, even now, I think, when you sit and watch your breath, when you sit and watch your mind, can you find anything in your mind that's male or female?

The labels 'male' and 'female' are given totally on the basis of the body. When you call certain qualities male or female, they sometimes get ambiguous, because people of both sexes do have all those qualities. And when you're a Buddha, your physical form is completely a manifestation of your mind, so definitely, there's nothing male or female. If you appear in a male form or a female form as a Buddha, it's just an appearance for the benefit of others. It's not assuming an identity.

[Audience:] We are trying so hard to overcome attachment to wealth, power, fame, social prestige and all these things, and now we're talking about creating the karma to get them. So doesn't this seem contradictory?

I think this is where the motivation is so crucial, because if you're aiming for these eight, it should not be with our usual attitude of "I want these things because they make me better. I want to be a big person so that I'll have more respect," – doing things in a really egocentric way.

But, due to societal preconceptions, if you can be born in a reputable family, and you have good motivation and strong practice, you would be able to help people more than if you're born into a very scandalous family where your family is always in the tabloids. You might be very honest and upright, but because of the family, other people are going to have a harder time listening to you.

So this is completely dealing on the level of societal prejudices. The point is that if you want to attain these, it should never, ever be with a selfish motivation, because attachment to them is harmful for our practice.

[Audience:] Even by talking about this being a favorable thing, aren't we reinforcing that view? Talking about having wealth, aren't we reinforcing the view that wealthy people are better people? And that wealthy people should be elected to public office because somehow they're better?

I think the point in teaching this, is that we should definitely overcome these societal prejudices. They're definitely things that society has prejudices about. As individuals, we have to work to overcome that prejudice, and we have to try and help others overcome that prejudice. Sometimes, the best way to help people overcome, is to be in that position yourself.

[Audience: Inaudible]

All these eight qualities are completely empty. They're valuable just totally based on societal conception. In the last few hundred years, society is really challenging these values. Challenging all the reputable families. Look at the French Revolution.

There is a big movement in society for equality for disabled people and to let go of prejudice with regard to having a sound, handsome and healthy body. Again, being wealthy doesn't make you good. There's a lot of societal change going on because, in and of themselves, these qualities don't have value.

[Audience: Inaudible]

What is gender-bias? If a man was to carry the pack in America, he gets accused of gender-bias. But in Asia, if the man carried the pack, he would be accused of gender-neutrality, because the women should carry the pack. It's the women's responsibility to carry the heavy stuff. That's not in all of Asia, just in some cultures.

If there's any kind of difficult physical or mental thing that needs to be done, have a buoyant attitude and go in and do them when you're capable of it, instead of being lazy and thinking: "I can't do it. It's too difficult. You do it". That kind of attitude creates the cause not to have a powerful body and mind because we don't have that attitude now.

This teaching is based on the *Lamrim* or *The Gradual Path to Enlightenment*. Please refer to the following web-page for its outline and other transcripts or to listen to the audio recording of these talks: <http://www.thubtenchodron.org/GradualPathToEnlightenment/outline.html>