

Cultivating Bodhicitta through Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others – Part 3

(lightly edited transcript)

by Ven. Thubten Chodron®, at Dharma Friendship Foundation, Seattle. 24 May 93

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I met a Catholic priest today and we had a very interesting conversation. Something he said touched me very much. When he first entered the priesthood – this was pre-Vatican II – he just did what he was taught to do. The whole notion at that time of what it meant to pursue a spiritual path was to build schools, tend to the bureaucracy, increase the church, talk to the people and things like that.

He did that for a number of years and then he had a mid-life crisis. He said it suddenly dawned on him that religion or spirituality was all about looking inside at your own self and this insight really threw him for a loop. He began to question things and asked, “How many people have I ever really loved?” Then he looked at what he had been doing within the church establishment and decided to enter therapy and he also completely re-did his spiritual practice. So for the last twenty years he has had a completely different practice. He is now in his sixties.

I was really touched by that because here he had been thinking for all those years that practicing religion meant maintaining the church’s system and all the functions it performed. It was only after a number of years that it became clear to him it was instead about looking at yourself and working on yourself. He made the comment, “Well, that is what Buddhism is all about, isn’t it? It emphasizes doing that.” And it does.

Buddhism is all about getting to know our own selves and transforming our own minds. To always come back to this and to remember it whenever we are doing any kind of Dharma activity or doing anything for that matter. I think if we do that and are able to be really honest with ourselves in everything we do during our whole life, then we will not necessarily have to go through a mid-life crisis of that nature. Also, when we die, we will not have any regrets either. I was very touched by what he said and with the fact that he would share it with me so I thought I would share it with you.

Equalizing And Exchanging Self And Others to Develop Bodhicitta

We have been talking about equalizing and exchanging self and others as being Shantideva’s method for developing bodhicitta and that this method is for us to use to look at our own minds and not merely an intellectual theory. Equalizing self and others is recognizing that we are equal with others in wanting happiness and not wanting pain. It is recognizing that friends, enemies and strangers are all equal in this regard. Therefore there is no reason to cherish anybody more than anybody else, even if that anybody happens to be our own selves.

Exchanging self with others is done in terms of whom we view as most important, or whom we cherish the most. It does not mean I become you and you become me. Anyway, I do not think you would want to be me....I would not wish that on anybody. [Laughter] Rather it means where right now we hold the ‘I’ as most dear, most precious and most sacred, we exchange that and instead we hold others as most dear, precious and sacred.

Meditation On Exchanging Self And Others

When we realize that 'I' is simply a label on the aggregates, that there is nothing inherent about 'I' and nothing 'me' here so important that needs to be valued above anything else, then there is a way of meditating where you put the label 'I' on all other sentient beings and the label 'others' becomes yourself. In this meditation, when you say "I want happiness," or "I am going to get happiness," the label 'I' means all other sentient beings. Then you look at the label 'other' and say, "That other guy is lazy and he is not doing anything," the label "that other guy" means your old self-cherishing self. This is a very interesting way of meditating.

This meditation is done on the basis of seeing the disadvantages of self-cherishing, selfishness or self-centeredness and the benefits of cherishing others. When you really feel that very deeply, then to do this exchange of whom we see as the most important comes quite easily, quite naturally. But when we hold on to the self-centered attitude as our best friend and cherish it because we believe it protects us and takes care of us; it becomes very difficult for us to exchange self with others.

Self And Self-Centeredness

As I explained last time, the self and self-centeredness are two different things. Self-centeredness is an attitude and it is one of the clouds that pollutes the sky, so it can be removed. Whereas the self that is merely a label on the aggregates – that remains. So from the Buddhist viewpoint people are not inherently, innately, irrevocably selfish. They are just attitudes that we cannot separate ourselves from. In this technique, we really have to see self and self-centeredness as two very separate things, so that when we see the self-centeredness as the enemy and as the thing that destroys our happiness, we are not blaming ourselves. Instead we are putting the blame on the self-cherishing. This is a real important point.

For those of you who have read the book "Wheel of Sharp Weapons", a thought-training text, there is this line, "Trample him, trample him. Dance on the head of this butcher of selfish concern." This is done through seeing the disadvantages of self-centeredness, seeing this self-centeredness as the real enemy, and turning our wrathful energy towards it. So we're not blaming ourselves, but we are singling out the self-centeredness as the source of our problems.

Disadvantages of Self-Centeredness

When we look at all the difficulties we experience this lifetime, they are all due to our negative karma created in the past. All that negative karma was created under the influence of self-centeredness. When we look at that, it becomes real clear that self-centeredness is not our friend, that the attitude, the voice that says, "But I have got to take care of myself before everybody else," actually is not our friend. It is the very thing that deceives us and makes us get involved in the creation of negative karma which then brings us pain, suffering and misery.

If you're able to see that, it will be very helpful when you have problems. Really look at all the different difficulties we have in our lives and recognize that they are all caused by self-centeredness and ego grasping. Other sentient beings are not our enemies. Self-centeredness is our enemy. That is what we have to pinpoint and smash. This has nothing to do with self-hatred. This is completely different from blaming ourselves and hating ourselves.

Also, recognize that the self-centeredness makes us very easily offended. It makes us overly sensitive and very fearful because we are clutching onto everything that belongs to the self and that, in turn, makes us perpetually dissatisfied. If we wonder how come we are not yet Buddhas, it is because of the self-centeredness.

Progress On The Path In Previous Lifetimes

In previous lifetimes we have met the Buddha's teachings and we have had the opportunity to practice, so why did we not practice and get the realizations? It is because the self-centered mind came in and said, "Oh look come on, who wants to do that? It is too hard anyway. Better go lie on the beach – your knees will not hurt so much!"

So self-centeredness is that attitude. You can see it. It is the attitude that when the alarm clock goes off in the morning, says, "I know I should get up and meditate, but I will sleep an extra half an hour. I will get up to go to work because that is really valuable. But meditation – I will do that later." That is the self-centered attitude. That is the self-centeredness that creates all the excuses and reasons why we cannot

go to teachings or cannot do this or that. It is the basic source of suffering and we can just see it wrecking havoc in our own lives.

So one of the big reasons why we have not made as much progress on the spiritual path is, basically, because we have listened to this self-centered attitude instead of listening to the heart that cherishes others, or to the wisdom mind. We have listened to the wrong part of ourselves and that is why there are so many problems now.

When we understand this, it is then a real interesting thing to look at the self-centered attitude and point a finger at it and say, "You are the demon. You are the problem! I am not going to listen to you!" So instead of all the anger and belligerence being directed towards outside people, we take the same strength of that energy and direct it against the self-centered thought.

The Wrathful Deities Of Vajrayana Buddhism

Sometimes you see the wrathful, fierce-looking deities and Dharma protectors of Vajrayana Buddhism. These guys with big fangs, black and blazing fire and eyes bulging are standing on corpses and holding all kinds of weapons. These are real fierce-looking guys. What their ferocity is directed against is the self-centered mind and its ego-grasping. These wrathful deities are not meant to intimidate us or make us feel afraid. The wrath depicted is directed towards that attitude of self-cherishing that keeps us locked up and is our jailor.

There is an interesting technique of thought training, which sounds really weird. I will explain it to you because at some time you might wish to practice it. The first time I heard this technique I thought, "What? This is the weirdest thing I have ever heard!" But one time I actually practiced it and it worked. With this technique, when you have problems, difficulties and upset, you first recognize that they come from the self-centered thoughts. Then you take all that suffering and upset you are experiencing, give it to the self-centered thought: look at the self-centered thought (which you realize is not you but just this other attitude hanging around) and say, "You are the source of all the problems. It is because of you that all this negative karma was created, that all this suffering is coming now, so here you take the suffering, you take the criticism and you take the wrath that is being directed toward me!" In this way, instead of feeling overwhelmed by all the negative energy or suffering that is getting directed at you, you just offload it onto the self-centered thought and give it all to that thought.

It sounds like a really weird kind of technique. The first time I heard it I thought, "How is this possible?" I could not imagine it because I usually saw "I" and the self-centeredness as completely in oneness. I could not separate them and so I thought that meant I was blaming myself for my problems. I could not understand it at all.

On Pilgrimage To Lhamo Lhatso

Then one time a situation happened to me where I actually did this practice. I was on pilgrimage in Tibet. This was six years ago. We were going to a lake called "Lhamo Lhatso." This is the lake at 18,000 feet altitude in which prophecies have been seen. I was on pilgrimage on horseback for several days going to this lake. There were a few other people with whom I was traveling. I had known one of them for many, many years. We had gotten along well and then at one point, I do not what happened....our relationship at the time of the pilgrimage was okay on the whole.

So we were in this group together and going on pilgrimage. The day before we climbed to the top to reach the lake, we were walking up towards a place where we were going to camp. This man had an incredible horse. When we were in the middle of the river his horse would stop in the river and not move and somebody would have to go in and pull the horse out. After a while his horse just could not go any further and he was not going to be able to ride it. My horse was okay and I was not feeling too exhausted, and we were close friends, so I offered my horse to him to ride and said I would walk because I felt okay.

Somehow this made him so angry. He just totally blew up. Completely blew up! I think he was just feeling frustrated about everything and the difficulties of the trip. He went on this tirade saying, "You did this and you did that. I heard when you lived in France you said this to that person and you hurt that person's feeling. When you lived in Italy, you did this and when you lived in India you did that and all these people there did not like you." He went on and on; he was just so angry! He was completely dumping on me.

Practicing Giving Criticism To The Self-Cherishing Thought

Somehow, and I think this was the blessing of this pilgrimage, I had the thought, "I should practice this thought training technique at this moment." I hate getting criticized. When you talk about somebody who is easily offended and easily hurt, I will admit to it. Normally this would have been very miserable for me, but when he started dumping all this stuff on me, I said, "OK I'm going to practice this, so self-cherishing thought, you take these all! All this negative energy, you take it. It is all directed at you. You have it!"

I remembered Lama Zopa saying that when you really practice this you can almost say, "More, more, I want more criticism," because you are floating it all onto your real enemy, the selfish thought. So I began to think, "OK. All this pain and suffering I give it to the self-cherishing thought. OK, come on, (let's have) more and more criticism." It was really an incredible experience because by the time we pitched camp I was completely okay. I was not the way I usually will be after somebody is at me. Usually I would feel crushed. I was actually completely okay. It made such a strong impression on me how powerful this kind of thought transformation technique is.

Why Ask For More Criticism

[Audience:] Is the reason for asking for more (criticism) because you want to give it to the self-centeredness?

Right. You are saying, "Give me more ammunition to dump on this self-cherishing over here." And he did. He gave me more. He complied quite willingly. [Laughter] It was so amazing because here we were in the middle of nowhere on pilgrimage to this holy lake when this happened. This technique is very useful to use whenever there are difficulties and problems in our life.

Harm From Others Versus Harm Through Self-Cherishing

This technique helps us to check and analyze who is our friend and who is not our friend. It helps us recognize that other sentient beings might harm us once or twice, but it is a limited amount of harm, whereas the self-centeredness has never once been kind to us. It continuously harms. So where a sentient being might harm us sometimes and help us other times, self-centeredness always harms and never helps.

And also, with harm received from sentient beings the worst that could happen is we get criticized or even die. Other sentient beings might kill us, but they cannot send us to the lower realms. No sentient being can cause us to be reborn in an unfortunate rebirth. But the self-centered attitude can. So even if another sentient being kills us and we separate from this body, we are going to have to do that some time or another so it is really not that catastrophic. But in terms of what our next life is going to be after we separate from this body, that is where the self-centered attitude comes in and completely wrecks havoc.

Other sentient beings cannot send us to the lower realms. Even if they curse us up and down and say, "May you go to hell 50 million times," they do not have the power to do so. But this self-centered mind can send us there. Be real clear that other people might bug us and we might have conflict with them at some time, but it is always possible to have a good relationship later because karmic energy changes, personalities change and people change. Whatever conflict we are having now with someone is not a permanent situation. It is possible to become friends with that person later, whereas with the self-centeredness it is never possible. It will never be kind to us, whereas other sentient beings can be kind to us. See clearly which the enemy is.

The Advantages of Cherishing Others

In addition to contemplating the disadvantages of self-centeredness, we also contemplate the advantages of cherishing others. This is a really nice kind of meditation to do, just to sit down and think about all the advantages of cherishing others. I will list a few advantages, but when you meditate you can do some research and make up some more.

When We Cherish Others, They are Happy

The basic thing is when we take care of others and when we cherish them, they are happy. That is a really nice thing. It is wonderful that other beings are happy. We know what it is like when people care for us and do nice things for us. The very same kind of warmth or singing feeling in the heart that we get when other people are kind to us – that is the same kind of thing we can generate in other people by

cherishing them and taking care of them.

World Peace

Also, when other people are happy, it creates a more harmonious environment that indirectly benefits us. When we speak about creating world peace, this does not come about through legislation and it does not come about through U.N. Peace Keeping Forces. That is not how real peace comes about. But rather, real peace comes about through an attitude that cherishes others, values them, wishes them well and wishes good things for them. This is the way to promote world peace. If we do not have that kind of attitude, then even if we do pass legislation, the legislation will not work because legislation only works when there is the attitude behind it that really wants to respect and take care of others.

This means that we do not have to see world peace as something we are helpless against. Very often nowadays people just feel helpless and hopeless when confronting the situation of the world. But if we really see that we can contribute quite directly to world peace by being peaceful ourselves and by being kind to other people, there is then definitely something we can do towards world peace.

Kindness Is Contagious

This attitude is contagious. Just think: if you develop an attitude of kindness, then that means everybody in your whole family can relax. At least they will feel secure that you will not harm them and so they will receive much happiness. It also means everybody that you work with will not be harmed and will receive happiness; and everybody whom you come to Dharma class with will not be harmed and will receive happiness. You can see it has quite a wide-spreading effect when you think of how many people are in relationship with you even on a daily basis.

One Person Creates Far Reaching Effects

If we develop that thought or that heart that cherishes others, then it very directly affects a great number of people, not only in making them happy, but also in preventing harm. When you see the harm that one person can do motivated by the self-cherishing thought, it is actually quite remarkable. For instance, look at Mao Tse Dong or Adolf Hitler. What did they do? Because of one person's self-cherishing thought, look at what happened to so many people! So if just one person changes their attitude of self-cherishing, it can have really far-reaching effects.

Our Attitude Towards Others Affects Our Happiness

If we have this attitude that cherishes, respects and cares about others, we are going to be able to be happy wherever we are and whomever we are with. When we have a real positive attitude and walk into a room full of people, already the mind is predisposed towards friendliness and you can see the results of that. When you walk into a room of strangers when you are in a bad mood the results are not so good. But if you walk into that room and your mind has an open-heart, kind attitude then everybody just seems very nice and wonderful. By the virtue of the thought that cherishes others, we can be happy no matter whom we are with and no matter what is going on. We can enjoy being with the people we are with and enjoy inter-relating and serving them.

Cherishing Others Creates Good Karma And Benefits Us

When we cherish others we create a lot of very good karma because we act constructively. To have the seeds of the Dharma germinate in the field of our mind, the field needs water and fertilizer. This is what good karma, positive potential is: they are the water and the fertilizer. So when we act kindly towards others, we enrich our own mindstream and that means when we meditate it is easier to get understanding from the teachings. Or, when we listen to teachings it is easier to hear them and it is easier to put things into practice. So this collecting of positive potential is very important.

Creating Positive Potential Through Cherishing Others

When we have a kind heart then even when we do simple things it becomes very, very rich. We were talking before about the benefits of bodhicitta, that if you offer an apple to the Buddha and put it on the shrine, by the force of your bodhicitta and wishing to become enlightened for the benefit of everybody, you create a huge amount of positive potential that helps to purify your mind and create suitable conditions to gain Dharma understandings and realizations. So if we want to develop our mind and be able to meditate better and gain some experience, then the creation of positive potential is quite important and cherishing others is one excellent way to do this.

Not Acting Out of Guilt and Obligation

I should make clear here that when we talk about cherishing others, it is not done out of guilt and obligation. It is done out of a real respect and care and affection for others. Helping others because we feel guilty, because we feel obliged, because we feel that they are going to criticize us if we do not, or if we are worried about what other people are going to think about us if we do not help, is not helping and cherishing others at all. It is not cherishing others, because the heart is not thinking about others, it is thinking about itself.

So you have to be real clear here. Cherishing others does not mean running around and doing goody-two-shoes actions with an un-goody-two-shoes mind, one of guilt or obligation. That is not cherishing others. But rather, this is a real transformation, really looking at others as beautiful and worthy of respect and love. This is developed through seeing their kindness to us, which we discussed in the last few talks.

Through Cherishing Others We Have Good Rebirths

By cherishing others we also receive a precious human life that enables us to continue our Dharma practice. Why? Because when we cherish others we cease harming them. When we cease harming them, we do not create the negative karma that gives us unhappy rebirths. When we cherish others and treat them kindly, we create the kind of good karma that gives us the ability to have a precious human rebirth and continue our Dharma practice for many, many future lives. So from cherishing others, we benefit ourselves.

Long Life

A long life is something that we all want. The way to have long life is by cherishing other people's lives and protecting their lives, not by harming or killing them. And protecting them if they are in danger.

Material Security

The way for us to have security in terms of our possessions and in terms of having the wherewithal we need to live and not worry about our house getting broken into or something like that, is by being generous to others and by not destroying their property. If we cherish others, we do not steal from them. We do not covet their things. We do not cheat them of their possessions. So in this way we do not create the karma to lose our things. If we cherish others, then we are generous to them and by being generous, we receive the things that we need to live.

Our Present Life As The Result Of Us Having Been Generous

We have an extraordinary amount of leisure here in the States to come to Dharma teachings. It is really remarkable. Nobody here is starving. Nobody here is living on the streets. It is easy for us to jump in a car or onto a bicycle to come to Dharma teachings. Just having the wealth that enables us to practice the Dharma is a result of having been generous in previous lives and that in turn is the result of cherishing others.

Harmonious Relationships

Having harmonious relationships with people, which again is something that we all want, comes from respecting other people, cherishing them and taking care of them. If we do not cherish others, we may engage in unwise sexual behavior, hurt other people through having extraneous relationships, or hurt people by lying, slandering, using harsh speech or abusing and ridiculing them. If we cherish them, however, then we stop those actions. So we stop the cause for us to have difficulties in all of our relationships with other people.

In addition, with a heart that cherishes others we are kind to other people. Karmically that creates the cause for other people to like us and be kind to us, to be generous, friendly and responsive toward us. It also causes us to be able to have stable friendships that do not go up and down like yo-yos all the time and to have long-lasting friendships.

Reaping Good Karma By Cherishing Others

When you look at the kinds of things that we want to have for happiness this life and the kinds of circumstances that we want to have so we can practice the Dharma well, all of these things come from cherishing others. Also, all the spiritual realizations that will completely free our mind from all suffering and its causes, also comes through our cherishing of others. There is only good to be gained by being kind to others. There are no negative things that can happen to us by us being kind to others. This is

something to think very, very deeply about.

Really go over this again and again in our mind and contemplate karmically how this works. So often in our life our old thought pattern is, "If I give, I won't have. If I am kind to somebody, they are going to take advantage. If I volunteer, they are going to ask for more. If I let something go, they are going to trample all over me." That is our usual way of thinking. But I am not advocating we become a doormat.

Being Taken Advantage Of?

If we have a heart that genuinely cares about others, there is no way other people can take advantage of us. Because if you look at it in your own mind, what do we really mean when we say that somebody has taken advantage of us? It is basically a situation where we have not been real clear with other people and have said, "Yes" when we meant "No." So I think a lot of times we feel taken advantage of because of our own lack of clarity.

See if this is making sense to you. Are you thinking things like, "I feel taken advantage of because I did not really want to do this thing and I did not really want to go along. But I felt guilty and obliged and I was not very clear within, so I said, 'Yes.' And the whole time I was saying 'Yes', I was feeling a lot of resentment, so I blamed my discomfort on them and said that they took advantage of me."

So being taken advantage of – at least I find with me – has a lot to do with that kind of psychological mechanism. Whereas, when we have a heart that really cherishes others then when somebody comes and wants something, our heart is happy and we freely give. Even if they ask for something outlandish, if our heart is happy and we give, other people may say we are being taken advantage of, but from our side, we do not see it that way. From our side we are just happy to give.

You hear all these stories in the scriptures, outrageous stories of people giving parts of their body away or things like that and we might think, "Who in their right mind would do that?" Or take the stories in the scriptures of people coming and just asking for outlandish, outrageous things, but the bodhisattvas, from their side felt, "Why not?" and gave them what was asked. The bodhisattvas' minds were happy. I am not saying that we should give everybody everything they ask for because sometimes people ask for things that harm them. We should not give people things that harm them, but we really need to look carefully at what is going on in our minds when we say we are being taken advantage of.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

For instance, look at Lama Zopa Rinpoche. He does not sleep and people come and talk to him and stay in his room until three or four in the morning. On one hand you could say, "Look at all these people. They are just taking advantage of him." But from his side, he is completely happy to give. He does not see it as something like, "Oh, look at all these people. They are making me stay up so late. I really do not want to stay up. They are taking advantage of me but I have to do it. This is part of the job description of being a Rinpoche." [Laughter] That is not what he is thinking. From his side, it is happiness to do these things.

Changing Our Mind, Changes Results

We can see that with a change in our mind many things that seem like, "Oh I cannot do that and I do not want to do that. I do not have enough energy," become something that actually is completely okay to do. In fact we are happy to do it. And we do not see it as being taken advantage of. For instance, somebody calls you and they need a ride somewhere. Sometimes we say, "Oh yeah, sure. You need some help? I will be right over." And you go over to help your friend, but you drudgingly go over because the whole time the mind does not really want to be there. You know about these things, don't you? Or is it only me that feels this way? [laughter]

When somebody asks you and you really do not want to do something, but you go and do it because you know you should, the whole time you are there you might wish you were somewhere else. The mind is totally miserable being there and you do not create any positive karma at all. It also makes the other person feel lousy. All it takes to change the entire situation is just a slight change in our attitude, of saying, "Wow! This is an incredible opportunity to help another sentient being who wants to be happy just as much as I do. This is an incredible opportunity to create all this positive potential that is going to get me closer to enlightenment. It is an incredible opportunity to repay the kindness of a sentient being that has done all these things for me, all these times since beginningless time." This is just a switch in attitude, but then the mind is so happy to go and do it. And since you are going to go do it in any case, if

you do it with a happy mind it totally changes the atmosphere.

Changing Our Minds About Work

It is the same thing about going to work. Instead of us going to work thinking, "Oh God, work!", or thinking that the only thing getting you to work is the idea of a paycheck at the end of the month, really say, "Wow! This is an opportunity to create positive potential and to offer service. This is an opportunity to give to these people. Even if they do not appreciate it, it is okay. There have been many times in my life when I have not appreciated what other people have done for me. Even here I am working at this job and it seems other people are not appreciating me, but that is okay. I have been in the same situation many times when I have not appreciated others, but from my side now this is an incredible opportunity to really further my spiritual practice and benefit others." So in this way we change the mind and then the whole feeling about the situation changes.

Questions and Answers

[Audience:] When you direct anger at the self-cherishing, isn't that the same as getting angry at anything else and therefore an affliction?

It is the same energy, but it has a slightly different flavor. You are right that anger in general is an affliction because it is exaggerating the harm of something else outside of us. When we are angry at another sentient being, we are exaggerating the harm. But when we direct that same strong energy against the self-centeredness, we are not exaggerating the harm of self-centeredness.

[Audience:] So anger at others always disturbs us?

Right! One of the reasons it disturbs is because it is exaggerating and not seeing things realistically and beneficially, so it is out of control and results in harm. Whereas this anger we are directing towards the self-centeredness, when you turn that energy against the self-centeredness, it is of a slightly changed character because it is not exaggerating the harm and is not out of control.

[In response to audience:] But if we understand things exactly clear, we usually are not angry. When we understand things real clear there is no distortion. You might still have an impetus to act in the situation, but there is not an out-of-control anger energy that wants to destroy.

[Audience:] Please explain further how the anger toward the self-cherishing is beneficial when anger at others is harmful.

Because it is not uncontrolled and is not the same anger, it is the anger energy transformed. It is not something like, "I am angry at you and now I am angry at the self-cherishing." It is not an out-of-control complete berserk thing. When we are angry, there is the distortion and there is the energy that is fuelling the distortion. When we are angry, there is a lot of energy and there is a whole distorted conception of the situation, and that is what makes anger so harmful. What we are doing when we turn that forcefulness against the self-grasping and self-cherishing is using the force of that energy but without the distortion.

[Audience:] Is it better to direct anger at the self-cherishing before or after the anger has arisen?

It can be done either way. Sometimes after the anger has arisen and you are starting to get angry at another person you realize, "Hold on, this whole situation is coming about because of my negative karma, so I am going to switch it to the selfish attitude." But in the case where you are doing deity practices with the wrathful deities, then you are tapping into the same strength of that energy, but you are using it to be real clear in your own mind about self-grasping and self-cherishing being the enemy. So it can be done both ways.

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>