

Bodhicitta



---The Love Without Boundaries

Bodhicitta: The Love Without Boundaries

A Lecture By
Dharma Master Shí Chuan Feng

- Introduction -

At the request of my precious guru, Master Shi Chuan Feng, and with the help of his and the disciple Fa-Yuan Lai's clarifying explanations, this text was translated into English during the month of January, 2004. The original lecture was transcribed into written Chinese by the disciple Fa-Ran Hao during November of 2003, and her transcript served as a reference and basis for this translation.

I pay homage to my guru, who through the process of explaining and clarifying this text affirmed once again to be my most stalwart and never-ending source of refuge. Refuge in the guru remains the source of happiness and path to bodhi.

May my own lack of understanding of the Dharma and my expressiveness solely be blamed for any misinformation or errors (whether factual, theoretical, or typographical) that may be present in this text, and not the brilliant realization and eloquence of its author nor the radiant buddhadharma. May all faults arisen through not yet having realized the fruit of bodhi be cleansed and cleared away by the unfailing blessings of the Three Jewels, and may praise, should it be offered, be given to Master Shi Chuan Feng and all the great teachers of his lineage who have preserved and passed down the precious dharma of Buddha Shakyamuni.

In translating this teaching, may whatever merit I may have garnered through such an effort be dedicated to all my parents of past still revolving through the six realms, to my parents and ancestors of present, and to the long life of my perfect teacher.

-- Fa-Lian White
Lay disciple
January 30, 2004

Bodhicitta

--a lecture by Ven. Master Shi Chuan Feng

Have you ever considered the question, "what is the meaning of life?" I think everybody will agree with this answer: *it is to be happy and free of suffering.*

It doesn't matter what career we're involved in or whether we make an honest living or not-- from a Buddhist point of view, regardless of whether our actions accrue merit or commit negative karma, the goal of our intent is all the same in the end. We all wish to be happy. I don't think anybody intentionally welcomes suffering and shuns happiness. This understanding that all people wish for happiness isn't a mode of thinking that's inspired or influenced by society, education, or even conscious thinking; deep in all our hearts, we experience a strong desire for happiness. It's very clear that all human beings-- our entire species-- regard happiness as a goal of utmost importance. Our ultimate goal, truly, is to be happy.

As disciples of the Three Jewels, we acknowledge there are six realms of existence. Thus, through our understanding of life as human beings, we can sympathize with the beings of the other five realms that they, too, long for happiness and wish to escape from suffering. In all actuality, this desire to attain happiness and to be free from suffering is the ultimate goal of all sentient beings throughout the six realms. Aside from this goal, I know of no other goal in the universe, on any other planet, or in any other galaxy that is more important than being happy.

How, then, do we access the source of happiness? How can we acquire happiness? In our quest to attain happiness, trying to find out what brings us the most happiness is a topic of great significance in our lives. I believe everybody has directly experienced that whenever we've felt great happiness, it has been when others have shown us love. So, we can see that in this universe, beings throughout all the realms require love, cannot afford lack of it, and love is the most fundamental and basic requirement for happiness.

So, today, let's discuss "love." In both Eastern and Western literature and philosophy, academics and philosophers alike debate the question of whether human nature is fundamentally good or evil. Some say that our core nature is good. Some say it is bad. What did the Buddha say regarding this? The Great Tathagata previously taught us this invaluable lesson: "Our true nature is neither good nor evil. Our consciousness merely *perceives* the notion 'good' and 'evil' as a result of differing perspectives, circumstances, and conditions." As long as we are under the influences of greed, hatred, and ignorance, our originally

boundless, pure, and unbiased nature gives rise to an image-- a reflection-- of a nature that is inherently evil. However, if we are mindful of and act in accordance to compassion, bodhicitta, wisdom, and the Laws of Cause and Effect, we can alternately cause our nature that was originally neither good nor evil to give rise to an image of one that is good.

Some people believe our nature is fundamentally evil. Therefore, these people believe that no matter how great, marvelous, or perfect the forces of love, compassion, and bodhicitta are, these forces cannot flourish in our human world. They believe, rather, that jealousy and hatred are the most prevalent, eternal forces in our world, because these qualities, they say, are deeply rooted in human nature and will always hold humanity under their dominion. After reflection and investigation, we realize that this belief simply is not true!

First, we know that although jealousy, hatred, and other such powerfully negative emotions can dominate our existences, these forces can be controlled. We can apply bodhicitta to destroy them and conquer them. So, let's try to imagine an alternate reality with a society that's predominantly dominated by jealousy, hatred, and other negative emotions. People under the sway of powerfully negative emotions would wage wars and be engaged in constant fighting, and, logically, as a result of all the fighting, the population would dwindle until the people destroyed one another, and the society would obliterate itself into extinction. However, our reality does not follow this trend. Humanity's population actually continues to rise! This means that love, compassion, and bodhicitta are the actual dominating forces that sustain and support us. However, these forces are common and constantly generated both consciously and unconsciously throughout our daily living, thus, we don't particularly notice or pay attention to them. Since we overlook these qualities that are common and alive in everyday life, we don't especially promote them, either.

We can see proof of this same tendency occurring in news reporting. The news that's reported nowadays is mostly negative, all about the latest gossip and scandals. Love, rather, is always alive and constantly being generated in the world, so being common and everyday, love isn't considered newsworthy. On the other hand, if jealousy and hatred were the common, everyday forces that were considered mainstream in society, ill-news would never be considered newsworthy. This is probably because, as the saying goes, "scarcity adds to value."¹ It was also pointed out in the Buddha's teachings that the prerequisite to acquiring a human existence is that one must have lived in accordance to the five precepts, and the heart of maintaining the five precepts and acquiring the ten qualities is embracing wholesome acts, avoiding unwholesome actions, and always fostering a truly loving heart.

¹ "*scarcity adds to value*"-- A Chinese saying about the economical concept of supply and demand, stating basically that scarcity of something increases demand for it, thereby raising the value.

Since love is constantly being generated in human society, then why do jealousy, anger and hatred still exist, as well as their effects, disease and war? It is because this love is conditional and not the love as described by the Buddha, the unconditional love of bodhicitta. If we are to overcome anger, hatred, jealousy, and extinguish disease and war, then we must expand our capacity for love beyond that of ordinary love, and elevate our love from the narrowness of conditional love to the unconditional, compassionate, all-encompassing love of bodhicitta. How, then, can we lift the love we feel from its present state towards bodhicitta? First, we must acknowledge that our love is conditional and understand it is restrictive and narrow. Therefore, by knowing our love is flawed because of its limits and conditions, we will realize there is, indeed, a need to arouse bodhicitta; and through relative intention and application, we eventually arouse absolute bodhicitta. By doing this, we can transform our limited love into bodhicitta, which is without conditions, bonds, and limits.

Through observation of everyday living and news reporting, we see love does exist and is, indeed, being generated both intentionally and unconsciously without pause; this love is, however, conditional. For example, before birth an unborn child is a fetus. Modern medicine confirms that parents' emotional fluxes and mood swings affect the unborn child's growth and development. For a fetus to be able to grow and develop in the womb and be born as a human is the effect of love being generated. Conception of a child isn't just the result of a mere sexual union, but also the result of love, as well as a pre-existing agreement from both parents to care for the child. However, the willingness to shoulder the responsibilities of child-rearing comes with conditions and limits, as parents intend to care for their child only until it can care for itself. So, even before birth, conditional love is emptied into a fetus's consciousness.

Afterwards, the child is born and love continues to develop. As infants, we are completely dependent on our mothers' care. The first thing we do after delivery is nurse from our mothers' breasts. Our mothers must also have love for us to care for us. Imagine if a mother possessed an attitude rife with jealousy, hatred, and aggression towards child-rearing. It might very well be that milk may not flow freely from the mother's breast, and the child will find it hard to grow up healthy and happy. Physically, there are milk and nutrients, etc., to feed the child's body, and this allows the child to survive. The initial three to four years of a child's life are the most important years for developing behavior. During this time, a mother's care and love are key elements for developmental growth. The child cannot grow without a parent's attention and care. Therefore, love is actually the most essential "nutrient" for a growing child. Whether you want to broaden a child's happiness, soothe their fears, or boost their self-esteem, success of all these depends solely on the amount of love that child receives. Looking at today's society, many children live in unhappy homes. If children don't receive abundant love from their parents, they'll find it hard to love not just their parents in return, but, more frighteningly, they may be handicapped when it comes to loving other people in general. Even more sad is that when children

are raised in abusive households, they grow up to become abusive themselves; down to their actions and manner of speech, they show aggression.

Love is actually a basic necessity for all human beings. Understanding this, we also understand that the need for love isn't limited to just children; the need for love extends equally to all people, regardless of age. If a person lives his life completely isolated and alone, with only a shadow as his sole companion, it doesn't matter how intelligent or capable this person is, he would not be able to continue on living such a forsaken existence. Even the most successful, powerful, capable, and influential people cannot deny that they, in the past, completely depended on the love of others when they were helpless as children and when they were ill, and will depend on the care of others once again when they are old in the future. Using another example, if someone is lying ill in a hospital, he or she will begin to feel better under the care of a loving, understanding doctor. This demonstrates that a doctor's love is a most effective 'medicine.' Whether a doctor's healing skills are excellent or just passable, love can be felt and feeling it can make patients feel better immediately. On the other hand, if a doctor lacks sincere care and concern, and, instead, feels impatient and expresses frustration towards his patients, the anxiety and restlessness of his patients will increase. Even if a doctor is renowned, makes an accurate diagnosis, and prescribes the best medicines, the patient's mood still heavily affects the overall quality of the treatment. A patient's mental state definitely helps to determine how quickly, how well, and how completely an individual can recover. This shows that our personal well-beings and the well being of the future of humanity is contingent on two things: the state of 1) our body's physical well-being, and 2) our mental and spiritual wellness. So, which is more important? Which holds more precedence? Without a doubt, we regard mental well-being as being most important.

So, why do we feel this way? Consider this. After our bodies are clothed and fed, we chase after spiritual and emotional fulfillment even more fervently than ever. Even after our physical needs are met, we're still left unsatisfied without spiritual fulfillment. This means that we're not solely physical entities, we possess mind and spirit. This proves that material success will not bring us happiness. Chasing after possessions, thinking that doing so will bring about fulfillment of mind and soul, is a flawed and mistaken way of thinking. It doesn't matter how beautiful or expensive a material object is, it does not love us, we do not receive love from it, and we are not loved by it. So, we should reflect upon the basics, the true roots of happiness. After evaluating the foundations of happiness and fulfillment, we should come to realize that what we actually need is fulfillment of the spirit, the soul. Aside from circumstances involving starvation and illness, our physical needs are secondary in importance to our spiritual, emotional needs. Knowing this, we should realize that our minds retain, contain, and absorb everything we do, speak, and think-- however important or insignificant-- so it is extremely important to nurture and encourage the growth of a happy, peaceful, optimistic disposition.

In daily life, we notice that when we receive abundant love from others, we feel joy, untroubled, and happy. This means that happiness is derived from our mental state, and the source of that happiness is love. In other words, through observing what we experience and feel in life, we'll find that the element that brings happiness, calm, and peace into our lives is love generated by a caring heart.

Nevertheless, we usually need others to love us to be happy, but we neglect to reciprocate that love and fail to grant others happiness in return. In fact, the more we're concerned for others' happiness, the more we can feel happiness and calmness in our heart. We must also understand that the love we give is flawed with conditions. For example, in Chinese culture, parents traditionally raised sons so in the future the sons would, in return, care for them in their old age. However, the process of marrying off daughters was akin to pouring leftover water outside the door, so daughters didn't command the same amount of love and attention as sons did. The love shared between siblings, relatives, and friends all possess conditions.

Why, then, do we attach conditions to our love? Buddha explained to us, "it is the result of attachment to the concept of 'self' that has occurred since beginningless time. At worst, clinging to the idea of 'self' can control us to where we're unable to even arouse conditional love." First, we are attached to *me*, then we are attached to what is *mine*. Some people are attached to their children, their relatives, their friends, jewelry, antiques, luxurious houses and cars, etc. All attachments to 'me and mine' thus arise continuously like a wave, one after another. So, the root of conditional love actually springs from selfishness. Thus, conditional love is shallow and narrow, and this self-centered, conditional love causes sorrow and suffering all throughout the six realms. Whatever happiness conditional love brings to us is ultimately short-lived, transitory, and hardly long lasting. This is because the happiness that comes from conditional love isn't real, nor is it true. What is true remains true; true happiness is not altered or affected by changes in time and place. True happiness remains steadfast and constant throughout past, present, and future. Throughout shifts in time and space, true happiness should remain eternal and undimmed, not short-lived like the flowering of the night-blooming cereus.¹ Real happiness isn't ephemeral and fleeting like bubbles that form on the surface of water after a dewdrop has fallen-- here one moment, gone the next.

When we generate conditional, self-centered love, it is certain that such a cause will not bring about the result of abundantly ample, boundless, long-lived, unflinching, true happiness. This is an absolute certainty in accord with the laws of cause and effect. As it is true that planting melon seeds will result in melons,

¹ *Night-blooming cereus*-- What the Chinese call 'tan hua,' a flower that only flowers at night, releasing a strong floral fragrance. The duration of the bloom lasts for only one evening.

and planting beans will produce beanstalks, this is the doubtless truth. The cause we sow will definitely be the result, or effect, we reap. In order to acquire true happiness, establish the safety and security of our nation, and achieve world peace and universal harmony, our love needs to ascend beyond its current state. We need to transcend from loving conditionally to loving unconditionally. Buddha analyzed the detriments and failings of conditional love, and he expounded the heart-method on how to overcome the selfish egotism that is its root. That heart-method--that antidote--is bodhicitta. But what is bodhicitta? It is a concept. It is the universal understanding that we must at all times benefit all beings.

Nurturing this altruistic understanding that we must always benefit others will lead us further and further away from suffering. Happiness, calm, and peace will arise in our hearts. This altruistic attitude also helps us quell our conscious and unconscious fears and overcome our phobias. It also gives us strength to overcome obstacles and adversity. We can say that it is the source of success and well-being in our lives. Bodhicitta can bring us to the perfect understanding that all sentient beings originated from the same universal source--an inseparable body--and, thus, benefiting others is benefiting yourself. Conversely, harming others is actually harming yourself. Thus, bodhicitta can defeat the selfish, self-centeredness of egotism and delivers us away from a shallow, narrow, and limited state of mind. From there on, our outlook on life ascends to one that is universally ample, bountiful, and boundless. Only through embracing bodhicitta and always maintaining its altruism can we enjoy true, unremitting happiness.

What is bodhicitta? Bodhicitta is the wish to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings whom have all been our parents. To benefit and help beings, we must first develop achievements and ascend beyond our present level ourselves. What is a buddha? A buddha is someone who is awakened and fully aware. Now, awakened to and aware of what? A buddha is someone awakened and aware to the true nature of everything in the universe. A buddha is also one who is awakened and leads others towards awakening. Thus, we must first, like Buddha, cultivate awareness that leads away from suffering. Throughout daily life, there are many happenings, occurrences, fluxes, and changes, but we must never stray from this awareness. Only one who has achieved the union of perfect understanding and perfect practice (or perfect application of the teachings into practice) is a 'buddha.' So, we must cultivate towards buddhahood ourselves to truly be able to benefit beings and lead them away from suffering.

Although the unconditional love of bodhicitta is void of conditions sprung from egotism, it is *not* void of reason. The love of bodhicitta is steered and guided by wisdom and is governed by cause and effect as its principle. It transcends ordinary love. In understanding this, we will grow more diligent in becoming compassionate and sincerely sympathize with the beings of the six realms and the suffering they undergo, and strive to them liberate themselves

from suffering through teaching them the Four Noble Truths. We can remove the very root of suffering through bodhicitta and our joy, wisdom, and peace will naturally expand and amplify.

Now, let's continue to discuss bodhicitta. From the previous example, we understand that mundane, ordinary love is given with the condition that the giver will receive love in return in an attempt to secure happiness. We are happy when we are loved by others, and we are not happy when others do not love us. This is not only true with human beings. In fact, all beings throughout the six realms also desire to be happy. Thus, we can safely deduce that all beings desire to be truly loved by others. However, the love we offer is conditional, so we end up receiving the same conditional love in return. Without first generating unconditional love ourselves, we will never receive in return true, unconditional love. Conditional love arose as the effect of attachment to the concept of self since beginningless time. Attachment to self has confined and narrowed our originally vast, pure, unbiased, and universally boundless mind-state, which has led to our presently constricted, obscured, and foggy state with the effect being that we possess partiality and lack clarity in the way we view things. Because of this, we tend to see things from a skewed, biased slant that is convoluted and unclear, leading to unending streams of suffering, doubt, anxiety, and frustration. This suffering arises through the expressions of delight, anger, grief, joy, worry, sorrow, and fear-- the ever-fluctuating seven emotions of samsara. In the end, it is because of these fluxes of emotions and the effects of the actions incurred as a result of them that propel the cycling rebirths of beings throughout the six realms of samsara.

Regarding humankind, we need to realize that relationships between people aren't consisting of separate entities; we're not isolated islands, rather, we are intertwined and connected to each other and completely inseparable from one another. When we operate under an ego and through a self-centered perspective, that is when greed, love, attachment, anger, hate, and the seven emotions of samsara arise. It is the endless rise and fall of the tides of these emotions cause reflections of the six realms to mirror within our hearts. We experience the realm of the gods when we are joyous, and we feel the pains of hell when we are suffering. The fluxes of emotions in our hearts influences and affects our speech and actions. For example, when we see our environment, what we see changes with the ebb and flow of our emotions. What was once pleasant is not so anymore when our tempers flare or our mood turns foul. Our feelings and actions not only cause us to feel and experience the pleasures and sufferings of the six realms internally, but also cause the other realms to exist externally, as well. Agitation unleashed can lead to discord, arguments, and can temporarily change one's home into the asura realm wherever such arguments take place. When our actions are swayed by our emotions, it also affects how other people view us. That is why we must evaluate ourselves before we place

blame on others for how they treat us-- if we wish for others to change their treatment towards us, we must first change ourselves.

Bodhicitta, the sublimation of the heart, is a state of mind that can tolerate and embrace everything. It causes us to realize that it is our selfishness and clinging to self that separates and segregates everything from our original, boundless mind that could embrace everything. Our self-centeredness causes our way of thinking to become obscured, narrow, and restricted. Then, like spinning a cocoon around ourselves or wrapping a noose around our own necks, our egotism causes our own suffering. Now, we all want to eradicate suffering, but how is it done? How do we eliminate suffering? We need to ascend beyond this self-centered perspective and selfish attitude, and shift our awareness back to our vast, pure, unbiased, all-embracing state of bodhicitta.

We can also temporarily call bodhicitta “universal altruism” for now. It is the opposite of egotism. We need to try our best to cultivate and develop the universal altruism of bodhicitta in our daily lives. Why? Because we’ve come to the profound understanding now that everybody, every action and occurrence, and everything is connected and unable to become separated. Thus, the direct result of benefiting others is that we benefit ourselves. Conversely, harming others results in harming ourselves. If we bear anger and hatred, we can bring no happiness to other beings. When others suffer as a result of our negative treatment towards them, they reflect the same negative attitude, reciprocate the actions unto us in return, which strips us of our happiness. If we really develop true bodhicitta-- the great, boundless compassion that is guided by wisdom, upon which cause and effect is its principle-- we will feel that others will change slowly, transformed by the power of our transformed mind-state. They, too, will little by little become more kind and altruistic and slowly develop compassion and bodhicitta. This way of benefiting others results in no negative reactions returning onto ourselves.

If we can sincerely apply bodhicitta to practice in our daily living, we will experience, undoubtedly, the brightening and expansion of our hearts, and the quiet calm and peaceful freedom within our lives. The remarkable happiness that comes from arousing bodhicitta is sublime, wonderful, and increases steadily like the gradual rising of the sun at dawn that shines brilliant from the east and melts away the ice of our worries and suffering. The light of bodhicitta radiates from the heart and showers all beings with its bright warmth, and eases and warms the hearts of beings, allowing them to feel happiness. Thus, the relationship between people will be harmonious and warm. Interactions between families will be true and sincere, relationships between merchants will be mutually beneficial, interactions between religions will be mutually tolerant, and interactions between nations will lead to peace. Eventually, it will lead to world peace and universal harmony. Why? From understanding the Law of Cause and Effect, through arousing bodhicitta, everybody will develop altruism, and the cause of benefiting others will reap the effect of peace, harmony, and happiness. An example of

such a world already exists. The World of Joy and Bliss¹ often stated in Buddhist sutras was created by bodhicitta.

When we begin to cultivate bodhicitta, there is no possibility that we can reap the obvious results and effects listed above immediately. However, if we yearn for happiness that can only come from peace of mind and calm of the heart, we must persevere because bodhicitta is the only catalyst that can bring about this happiness. Merely knowing it is not enough to develop the universal altruism that Buddha Shakyamuni taught. To merely fantasize and intellectualize about its perfections and lack of flaws and defects is not enough. In the practice of cultivation, we aren't putting on a show for others to see. We must adopt all determination to nurture and expand bodhicitta, apply it in all our actions, dealings, and interactions in daily life as an antidote to transform our self-centered, ego-driven tendencies.

A point worth emphasizing is that as long as we possess patience and time, we absolutely possess the ability to develop and cultivate bodhicitta. Instead of ignorantly, blindly, and anxiously fantasizing about obtaining instant results, like "setting up a pole and seeing its shadow,"² we should arouse true, consistent, uninterrupted, compassionate altruism. This way is the sensible approach to choose. On this path, it doesn't matter the type of reactions-- positive or negative-- we receive from others; we will feel ease and achieve perfect peace of mind and handle situations with calm. When we receive praise or admiration, we won't shift towards smugness or pride, and be moved from our state of abiding calm and happiness. On the other hand, if we *don't* receive praise or admiration, we won't feel upset or deprived, and as a result forfeit our bodhicitta (and much less forsake other beings who have all previously been our mothers out of anger or spite). As a result of developing profound sympathy for everybody through understanding that every being is universally connected to each other, we will also arouse unconditional affection. Thus, love ascends and is freed from the bonds of egotism. Our inner calm, peace, and splendid joy will be felt and become more and more fathomable.

If we only comprehend the theories and the concept but do not put universal altruism into practice, it means that our bodhicitta still hasn't truly arisen. It also means that we haven't truly experienced the bodhicitta we contemplate and meditate upon. So, we should put bodhicitta into practice the moment we understand its concept and persevere in its practice without pause or disruption, with diligence and constancy. Then as a result of continued practice, the perfect result will bloom in the ability to incorporate bodhicitta into our lives

¹ Also called "Western Pure Land." It is the domain of Buddha Amitabha. The great Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas Mahasthamaprapta (Mahasthama) and Avalokitesvara are also associated with both Buddha Amitabha and the Pure Land.

² "*setting up a pole and seeing its shadow*"-- A Chinese saying about immediacy that uses the analogy of the quick appearance of a pole's shadow the moment it's erected to convey instantaneousness.

effortlessly and naturally. Just like this, we can experience the calm, joy, peace, and freedom that comes from arousing bodhicitta.¹

Because we continue to discuss bodhicitta time and time again, we plant the seed of bodhicitta in the Eighth Sense,² and it will sprout, grow, blossom, and ultimately produce the fruit of bodhi that is buddhahood. The most precious and marvelous result of this will be that through cultivating universal altruism, the true state of real, inner bodhicitta becomes unendingly expansive and far-reaching, which will allow us to return to our original, wonderfully profound mind that is ample, pure, and unbiased; achieving such a result we will have the ability to thoroughly perceive the original appearance of the universal dharmadatu³, the ever-present, ubiquitous realm of dharma.

When we apply bodhicitta into daily practice, we should begin by utilizing it with our closest relations-- with those whom we share the parent-child bond or our spouses-- as these are the people with whom we share the closest, most prominent relationships. We then should apply our bodhicitta to our extended family (with our aunts, cousins, etc.). Then, we broaden our bodhicitta towards strangers. Finally, the true state of bodhicitta expands limitlessly until it melts away the two polar concepts of “close” and “distant,” like the springtime sun melting away winter ice.⁴

With spouses, both people need to transcend beyond ordinary love and expand their love to the scope of bodhicitta. In this modern world, this appears to be a difficult thing to accomplish. In fact, it's as if it's preposterous to accomplish. When we take a closer look at today's sex-obsessed society, it seems to promote romantic love⁵ with the majority of couples in love being glued at the hips like love struck teenagers. However, now there are less and less couples making it to old age together. This means that romantic love cannot bring about or sustain long-lived, everlasting happiness. Divorce rates have risen to alarmingly high levels. People switch out one spouse for another. Doing that still doesn't, however, bring about everlasting happiness. Sexual desire is like a fire that won't

¹ This paragraph refers to and outlines the four steps of the practice: 1) learning, 2) putting what's been learned into actual practice, 3) maintaining the practice, 4) putting it to use in daily life.

² *the eighth sense*-- The *alaya-vijnana* (Sanskrit) or *ba shi* (Chinese). The Eighth Sense is considered to be a “storehouse” of sorts that contains all our past experiences (somewhat like Carl Jung's ‘collective consciousness,’ although there are many differences between that and the Eighth Sense) and from it flow the seeds of our consciousness.

³ *dharmadatu*— “Realm of Dharma.” According to the Mahayana view, the dharmadatu is the unconditioned, immutable realm from which all phenomena arise, dwell, and pass away.

⁴ Here, “close” and “distant” refer less to physical proximity than it does to the concept of ‘closeness’ (or lack thereof) felt amongst relatives, friends, strangers, and enemies.

⁵ *romantic love*-- In the original lecture, Master Chuan-Feng calls this as “glue-love” or “sticky love,” referring to how the delirium of romantic love causes lovers to stick to each other as if glued during the duration of the romance.

be extinguished and an ocean that keeps churning. This means that the troubles, sufferings, and the other negative emotions of the mind flow nonstop like the waves of the ocean.

The main reason for this is this type of love is mingled with attachment and desires. During the period of courtship before neither party has a true understanding of the personality and nature of the other person, people usually rely on desire to establish the relationship and not real love. It's very possible that people will see a potential mate they think is good in cases where physical attraction and desires are strong. In reality, this potential mate may or may not be good at all! On top of that, the enamored will feel inclined to exaggerate upon his or her beloved's good qualities, however insignificant or small they are in scope. This results in the creation of Snow Whites, Prince Charmings, and other such handsomely named, exaggerated romantic characters. After the couple lives together for a long period, their feelings calm and become more level and they begin to investigate deeper into their mate's personality and nature. Then, they perhaps realize that the beauty and good they saw in the other person wasn't real. Sadly, as a result, people then grow more anxious and sensitive and even come to frustratingly view everything the other person does or says as flawed. Quarrels and fights may soon replace the romance and love that was once shared. What we can see from this is that ordinary love is usually driven by the needs of individual egotism and less by sincere concern for others. Thus, it cannot bring eternal, everlasting happiness. So far, we can see that if we want to achieve and enjoy true happiness, it is truly necessary that we must cultivate bodhicitta and use it in our daily lives. And remember that real bodhicitta isn't just comprised of reactions of emotions, but is built upon a foundation of reason.

If we wish for our love to transcend to the expanse of boundless bodhicitta, we need to start with ourselves and begin to practice it now. Put it into practice now in daily life. We should take the love we give our spouses and expand it into bodhicitta. We should take the love we feel towards our parents and develop it into bodhicitta. We should take the love of our extended family and develop it into bodhicitta. We should take our love for our friends and develop it into bodhicitta. Then, using our understanding of reincarnation, we must reflect upon the certainty that beings have been born and reborn so numerous a number of times that all have been our parents. By that understanding, we should expand our bodhicitta and apply it towards people we perceive to be strangers. As a result of thoroughly understanding that all sentient beings are equal right down to their right to pursue happiness—all of us desire and thirst for happiness—we will naturally develop great sympathy towards all who share the same nature as ourselves. Through practicing and training our minds towards universal altruism, we get accustomed to thinking this way.

Cultivating bodhicitta will lead us to a great, powerful vow. What is this vow? It is the vow to save all beings who have been our mothers so they can eventually be freed from suffering and attain bliss. This vow isn't selective and

partial. It is impartial, unbiased, and nondiscriminatory. As long as they, like us, can feel happiness and pain, then there is no excuse to treat them with partiality, and when they behave poorly or rudely, there is no excuse to slip from our state of bodhicitta. So, this is the “unconditional, great sympathy of single-bodied inseparability¹.” I believe that anybody who can practice bodhicitta in this way, regardless of where they lived or their age, will all feel calm, joy, peace of mind, and rejuvenate the people surrounding like a breath of fresh air. If this bodhicitta influences one person, and that person influences another person—or more people, even—the expansion of bodhicitta will be inconceivable. This is only a numerical analysis of quantitative measure. When bodhicitta truly arouses from our hearts, the power is unimaginably inconceivable. The sutras tell us that all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions and three ages all pay obeisance to the recently arisen bodhicitta of bodhisattvas. This is to say that the extraordinariness of bodhicitta is something we’re unable to comprehend through ordinary means, nor are we able to evaluate it through ordinary logic. Only through continued, stalwart practice can we attain and experience bodhicitta. So, we should apply bodhicitta in our interactions with our closest relations, then expand it to include all beings whom have been our mothers. This kind of practice will become a very useful, practical, and efficient method of cultivation. When universal altruism arises in our hearts and we are never distracted from that state, it destroys all the suffering that comes from clinging to the ego, and as a result, peace, calm, and happiness spring from the mind. Thus, bodhicitta is, to us, a very effective dharma and way to cultivate.

After probing into this discussion, we can come to this conclusion: bodhicitta transcends race and ethnicity, so it can extinguish racism; it transcends religion, so it can melt away religious differences; it transcends the borderlines of countries, so it can diminish the strife between nations; it transcends the sphere of the world, so it can put an end to wars in this world; it transcends the universe’s time and space, so it can bring about great harmony. It is the universally ever-present, ubiquitous dharmadatu—the expansive state of mind.

If one day, you lay-disciple bodhisattvas can, from the depths of your inner hearts, truly experience the calm, peace, and bliss that comes from compassion, then I must congratulate you. Bodhicitta has truly arisen in the deepest, innermost place of your heart. You would have truly entered into the original, real nature of the human journey and will already be on the great bodhi path. In the end, you will definitely achieve the ultimate happiness, the meaning of life. This happiness will not be limited and short-lived, rather, it will transcend time and space. It is the eternal, unchanging sympathy-- the eternal, unchanging shunyata.² So, we truly and definitely need to take our love and transcend it

¹ Single-bodied inseparability’ refers to the feeling of connectivity towards others knowing that all beings exists as one, single body; this great sympathy for others springs from feeling so intimately connected and inseparable towards all living beings.

² *shunyata*—“Emptiness.” Ultimate reality, void of inherent existence.

beyond the confines of conditional love to the broad state of unconditional affection for all sentient beings-- bodhicitta.

- THE END -