

Chapter 1

The Benefits of an Awakened Mind

THE TITLE

This book concerns the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantidevaⁱ which in Sanskrit is the *Bodhisattva-charya-vatara*. The reason this text kept its name in Sanskrit along with many other great treatises is that it originated in India and was originally written in Sanskrit. The Tibetan title is *jang chub sem pay jod pa la jug pa*. The first part of the title *jang chub (kyi) sem* means “awakening mind” which is *bodhicitta* in Sanskrit. This awakening mind relates to goodness of mind or a positive disposition of mind for benefiting others.ⁱⁱ

There are many different degrees of such a mind. Even though we may have a good intention, when we actually carry out this intention, something harmful rather than beneficial results. In this text awakening mind refers to a positive mind which does not bring harm to others. So it's not ordinary goodness, but a very particular kind of awakening mind. Awakening mind has two qualities. The first quality is that one focuses on all sentient beingsⁱⁱⁱ without exception. Ordinary persons might be helpful towards their relatives and friends, but not towards those they don't like or enemies; some may help those of the same race, but not people of other races; and some may help human beings, but not animals. There are even those who are very loving towards cats and dogs, but not towards other animals such as spiders or snakes. However, the awakening mind focuses on all sentient beings without exception.

The second quality concerns the various ways one helps sentient beings. Some persons help others through curing their illnesses, others help other beings economically or materially. These kinds of help are good, but they are only temporary help. After some years this kind of help is gone so ultimately, it is of no great value.

The motivation of awakening mind is to help all sentient beings

reach Buddhahood. This is something that will never deteriorate or be wasted. The Tibetan word for “awakening mind” is *jang chub kyi sem* and someone endowed with that mind is a *jang chub sem pa* or a *bodhisattva*. The last syllable *pa* refers to someone who is very courageous with respect to accomplishing the benefit for beings. So a bodhisattva is someone who doesn't become discouraged upon seeing that the number of beings to be helped are innumerable. A bodhisattva doesn't think, “I can't help all these beings; they're too numerous.” A bodhisattva is also not discouraged realizing that it will take a very, very long time to aid and help all these sentient beings. A bodhisattva is also not discouraged by the many difficulties undergone to accomplish the benefit of beings. So a bodhisattva is someone who is very courageous with respect to accomplishing the benefit of beings.

The final part of the title is (*jad pa la 'jug pa*) which means the way in which one enters or engages in a bodhisattva's deeds, or conduct or activities. Someone who is endowed with awakening mind is a bodhisattva which is a person who has developed goodness of mind. Just developing goodness of mind in itself is not sufficient because one has to know how to engage in the conduct of a bodhisattva. One begins by acquiring a knowledge of what a bodhisattva does and then one develops the understanding of how to engage in these deeds.

THE HOMAGE

The title of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life* is followed by a homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. This homage was written by the translators of the text. This book was actually translated three different times: the first time was by the translator Kawa Paltseg (9th century C.E.); then by Rinchen Zangpo (958-1051 C.E.) and finally by Mo Lotsawa Loden Sherab. When translators started a translation, they would start out by paying homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas to eliminate all hindrances or obstacles to the translation. In the Buddhist teachings there are what is termed the *Three Baskets* (Skt. *Tripitaka*): the *Abhidharma*, the *Sutras* and the *Vinaya*. Translators would usually pay homage to Manjushri with a text related to the Abhidharma. In texts related to the Vinaya, the

translator usually began paying homage to the omniscient Buddha. Texts related to the Sutras usually begin by paying homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. So we can see a *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* belongs to the *sutra tradition*. From this point onward the text is Shantideva's words.

1. *Bowing respectfully to the Buddhas, their sons, the corpus of their Law, and to all who are praiseworthy, I will relate briefly, according to the Scriptures, the way that the offspring of the Buddhas enter the religious life.*

The first verse is an offering of worship made by Shantideva. He follows a tradition which was followed by those who have composed the various different Buddhist texts. This verse was written for those who listen to the teachings that will be composed, those that explain the text, and those who practice what is being taught in the text. This is to induce faith and devotion for this outstanding object which is all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

2. *There is nothing really original here, and I have no skill in literary composition. I have composed this with no thought of any other purpose than to clarify my own mind.*

The verse offering worship is followed by a resolution to compose the text. Such a resolution is made by the author to write a perfect composition and to remind himself of the necessity of making a diligent or joyous effort while composing the text.

With these lines Shantideva is saying that what he is about to write down is not something that he has created himself, but something which is in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. One may wonder about the purpose or need of repeating the teachings of the Buddha. The answer is that the teachings of the Buddha are very vast. So to facilitate the practice and understanding for those of lesser intelligence, the author has decided to summarize some of the teachings of the Buddha to facilitate the practice and understanding for those with lesser grasp of the Buddha's teachings.

This verse was written to counteract arrogance and pride. Shantideva says that he himself has no special qualities and isn't

very eloquent. Therefore, what he's about to write will probably not bring vast benefit to others. The reason he is writing this text is to acquaint himself to this awakening mind. This verse shows the necessity of counteracting arrogance and pride for himself personally and for those who will be listening to the teachings of the text, those who will be explaining the text, and those who will be practicing the teachings of the text. So this is like a quintessential instruction about the necessity of counteracting pride and arrogance.

3. *The pure impetus to become good is strengthened in me because of this effort; but if another person like myself should see it, may it be useful to him also.*

This verse was written to inspire practitioners and to induce inspiration for the deeds of the bodhisattvas. In the verse it is said that oneself will benefit from such conduct, and others will be benefited as well. If one practices these teachings, one will benefit greatly. If one teaches what has been written in the text to others, they will benefit greatly as well; therefore, these teachings are very meaningful. In this way the author exhorts himself and those that come in contact with this text to engage in the deeds of a bodhisattva.

An Outline of the Book

A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life consists of ten chapters. The first three chapters present the methods for giving rise to the awakening mind where it has not yet arisen; the last three chapters present the methods for guarding the awakening mind so that it does not deteriorate; and the following three chapters present methods to enable one to develop awakening mind. Then there is the tenth chapter, which dedicates all the virtue that has been accumulated for the happiness and welfare of all beings.

The first chapter of the *Bodhisattva's Guide* explains the benefits of the awakening mind. These benefits are explained to induce inspiration for developing awakening mind. The second chapter teaches the way in which one should confess one's negative deeds,

why one should confess, and so forth. If one's negative *karma* is purified, then the awakening mind will naturally arise. The third chapter is called the full acceptance of the awakening mind. At this point one makes vows to give rise to awakening mind.

The first chapter speaks of the benefits ensuing from engendering the awakening mind. In order to give rise to awakening mind, one needs what is termed a "superior body" which refers to a human body. For example, an animal has taken an inferior body; the ability for engendering an awakening mind in an animal is non-existent because it is not possible for an animal to develop the awakening mind. So one needs the proper vessel or support to be able to give rise to the awakening mind. In addition to which, one needs to have developed goodness of mind. So that is why the following verse teaches:

4. *This favorable moment, so hard to obtain, has arrived, leading to the achievement of man's well-being. If it is not utilized advantageously now, will the opportunity ever come again?*

In this verse it is said that one should without question make use of this present opportunity. The next verse relates to the motivation to practice the *dharma*. Such a motivation to practice the *dharma* is extremely rare.

5. *As lightning is seen brightly for an instant in the darkness of a clouded night, so perhaps, for once, the thought of the world may be turned, by the gesture of the Buddha, to good things for an instant.*

For example, at night when the moon is not shining and there is total darkness, then if there is a flash of lightening, one is able to see for a very brief moment. Similarly a mind continuously bent on achieving Buddhahood is very difficult to develop. The fact that it arises only once indicates that one is very, very fortunate. Even though it occurs for only a brief moment, one is very, very fortunate that it has occurred at all; since it is very, very rare that someone is continuously concerned with achieving Buddhahood.

The Training of a Bodhisattva

The training in the bodhisattva's way of life is a matter of gradual training. One gradually trains through reason. One first gains an understanding of why one practices. One then acquires an understanding of why one practices. One then acquires an understanding of the vast benefit that ensures for oneself and others. One develops understanding of this by developing the awakening mind and the result of suffering is avoided. If, on the other hand, one doesn't develop the awakening mind, suffering ensues both for oneself and others. So, by means of many logical arguments, the *Bodhisattva's Guide* points out why one is to practice and engage in this bodhisattva's way of life. Since the reasons for the practice is clear to one, there won't be a tendency to suppress one's own desires.

During the time of Padmasambhava (Tib. Guru Rinpoche) and the king Thrisong Deutsen in the ninth century there were three main Buddhist translators. Their short names were Ka, Shong, and Jya. The Ka refers to Kawa Paltseg who first translated the *Bodhisattva's Guide* into Tibetan. Then later on there was a Tibetan king Lang Darma (ruled 901-906 C.E.) who destroyed the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. After that, a translator named Rinchen Zangpo (958-1051 C.E.) translated this text again into Tibetan because the previous translation had become corrupted during the time of Lang Darma. Thereafter, Mo Lotsawa Loden Sherab who was a very great translator re-translated the text. Tarthang Tulku who presently lives in Berkeley in the USA has the Dharma Publishing house which uses two emblems—a two-headed parrot and a two-headed duck. The two-headed parrot relates to the first two translators: Kawa Paltseg and Chogro Lu'i Gyaltsen. The two-headed duck refers to the first seven ordained monks in Tibet, two of which were outstanding and it is these two that these two-headed ducks represent. Since a duck is yellow, it represents ordination (a monk robes in Tibet has yellow in it) and represents these two outstanding members of the sangha in Tibet.

The Benefits of Awakening Mind

If one has a thorough knowledge of the benefits of awakening mind,

one will naturally be inspired to develop the awakening mind. One doesn't have to push in order to do so. Knowing the benefits ensuing from having generated the awakening mind, then naturally without any effort, one will have great inspiration to do so.

6. *Indeed, goodness is weak, but the power of evil is always great and very dreadful. By what other goodness could evil be conquered if there were not surely the Thought of Enlightenment (bodhicitta)?*
7. *This benefit was discovered by the greatest sages after reflecting for many eons on the problem: Thus, happiness was heaped upon happiness, and happiness overflows to the immeasurable flood of humanity.*
8. *Never is the Thought of Enlightenment to be relinquished by those who are desirous of escaping the hundreds of sorrows of existence, by those who are desirous of assuming the suffering of beings, or by those who are desirous of enjoying many hundreds of pleasures.*

Generally speaking, there are many methods to accumulate virtue. One can accumulate virtue through physical activity, verbal activity, or mental activity. The best of these different methods is engendering awakening mind. These verses show that awakening mind is the most outstanding method to accumulate virtue. Various beings have different desires: some want to eliminate suffering, some think of attaining happiness, some want to help others. The desire for awakening mind is indispensable because with awakening mind one is able to accumulate vast virtue. The consequence of accumulating vast virtue is that one is able to eliminate suffering. So awakening mind is then indispensable with respect to attaining whatever one desires.

In the past I have been asked why Buddhists speak of benefiting others, but do nothing on a practical level but emphasize meditation. Which is to say that on a practical level they don't actually benefit anyone. Wouldn't it be preferable to look around and see what kind of help different persons need and give them money or clothes or something practical. Yes, on the spur of the moment this might seem true, but material goods benefit someone only temporarily. The main point of benefiting others is to have a stable and firm motivation. If one lacks such a motivation, the benefit to others might not ensure making only a slight, temporary benefit. Whereas a very stable and

firm motivation to benefit others is preferable. So therefore one should try to increase such a steady and complete motivation.

9 The wretched one who is bound by the fetters of existence instantly is proclaimed a son of the Buddhas. He becomes worthy of being praised in the worlds of men and of immortals when the Thought of Enlightenment has arisen.

An individual who has not yet given rise to the awakening mind is term an “ordinary being.” An ordinary being is concerned with his or her own welfare and therefore wanders and is fettered in *conditioned existence* (Skt. *samsara*). Once one has given rise to the awakening mind, one is a bodhisattva. Awakening mind is very powerful and great benefits ensue. So once the awakening mind has arisen, one becomes a bodhisattva or a “son of the *sugata*.^{iv}” One’s activity will become more meaningful, since awakening mind is very powerful. Because of this one is worthy of respect by both men and gods of the world.

Analogies for Awakening Mind

10. Having overpowered this impure likeness of one's self, one should create the priceless likeness of a Conqueror's jewel. Seize firmly that very lively elixir which is the concept of Enlightenment.

Shantideva now begins to explain awakening mind through five different examples or analogies. The first analogy comes from what in the west is called alchemy. There is the example of a particular substance called the philosophers’ stone which is able to turn iron into gold. By means of this stone one is able to transform an inferior substance into a superior one. This analogy describes the necessity of becoming enlightened. Presently, we are ordinary beings and we need to transform ourselves into buddhas.

This is done by firmly accepting and developing awakening mind. So developing awakening mind is like the philosophers’ stone.

11. You who are accustomed to dwelling abroad in the marketplaces of destiny, seize firmly that highly priced jewel, the Thought of Enlightenment, so well-attested by those of immeasurable thought, the

unique leaders of the world's caravan.

In the second analogy, awakening mind is compared to a precious jewel. In the old days merchants who bought and sold jewels would cross great oceans to find a place where there were a lot of jewels. Often these merchants depended on a guide who had previously crossed the oceans and found the jewels. The analogy then is the Buddha who is called “the sole guide of the world” (the *bhagavan*) who first found these precious jewels, that is, the awakening mind. After discovering these jewels, he showed them to us. So in the same way as a merchant finds jewels and carefully takes care of these jewels, we should firmly find and take hold of this precious awakening mind.

- 12. All other goodness, having lost its fruit, like the banana tree, begins to decay: But that tree which is the Thought of Enlightenment begets and does not decay. It bears fruit perpetually.*

In the third analogy awakening mind is compared to a plantain tree. A banana tree bears fruit only once and afterward the trunk of the tree dries up and it perishes. This is comparable to virtue that has been accumulated which lacks the motivation of the awakening mind. When this happens, the virtue perishes. On the other hand, there are perennial trees which bear fruit every year and the fruit usually grows bigger and bigger. Since virtue that has been accumulated out of the awakening mind will increase constantly until one has attained Buddhahood, this virtue is never wasted and flourishes without end.

- 13. Whoever has committed the most dreadful evil may escape at once by taking refuge, as one escapes great dangers by taking refuge under the protection of a hero. Why is this refuge not taken by ignorant beings?*

The fourth analogy compares awakening mind to entrusting oneself to a brave person. In one is afraid of something and combats this fear by entrusting oneself to a brave person who, for example, has a weapon that can protect one, one can proceed without fearing anyone or anything. In the same way, if one has engendered the awakening mind then one doesn't need to fear the effects of the evils that one

has committed. So if one entrusts oneself to the awakening mind, then one doesn't need to fear anything.

14 . *Like the time of fire at the end of a world cycle, it instantly consumes the greatest evils; its immeasurable benefits were taught to [the disciple] Sudhana by the wise Lord Maitreya.*

The fifth analogy is of the hell fire which is said to come at the end of our eon (Skt. *kalpa*). So here it is taught that if one has engendered the awakening mind, then immediately all evil one has accumulated will be eliminated. If one, for example, has some paper and lights it, the paper will burn up immediately. Similarly, the awakening mind will instantly consume all evils that one has accumulated.

The text mentions five analogies but there are actually an innumerable number of other analogies as well. Shantideva stops at these five analogies and continues saying that there are other examples in the sutras. One in particular is the sutra called the "Don Po Kur Pay Do" in Tibetan [the Gandavyaha Sutra?]. One can look up different analogies in other texts. Shantideva mentions five and then goes on to say that other explanations can be found in other texts.

The Two Aspects of Awakening Mind

15. *This Thought of Enlightenment is to be understood as twofold. Briefly, it is the idea of dedication to Enlightenment (bodhi-pranidhi-chitta) and then the actual pilgrimage towards it (bodhi-prasthanana).*

16. *As concisely stated by learned men, this difference is that between a traveler and someone desirous of traveling.*

Awakening mind has two aspects: the mind that aspires to awaken and the mind that ventures to do so. The first aspect is similar to desiring to go to a place and the second aspect is similar to actually going to the desired destination. The first aspect of awakening mind is the desire to benefit sentient beings and the second aspect is the actual practice of helping them. The benefit of beings is accomplished by meditating on the awakening mind and practicing the six paramitas. One may wonder what benefits ensue from these

two aspects. The text therefore goes on to explain these benefits.

17. The idea of dedication to Enlightenment brings great fruit even on the wheel of rebirth (samsara), but not the uninterrupted meritoriousness of the mind which is set upon departure.

The first aspect of aspiring awakening mind does result in benefits; but, the benefits ensuing from the venturing mind that actually practices awakening mind is greater. The text says:

18. As soon as one undertakes to free himself from the unbounded realms of living beings, he concentrates his mind (citta) with steadfast thought;

19. that soon, in spite of sleep and repeated excitement, floods of merit, equal to the sky, begin to flow without ceasing.

Once one has given rise to the second aspect, then from that time onward benefits will always ensue even if one is asleep or unconcerned.

One may now wonder who has said that great virtue and benefits ensue from cultivating awakening mind. How can we know that this is really the case. Well we can find this out about in the teaching of the Buddha in various sutras. We may also wonder why the Buddha taught these teachings. The reason is that these teachings help overcome the fear of developing the awakening mind. Certain practitioners may fear such an approach of trying to enlighten all sentient beings. So for our benefit the Buddha taught about the great virtues ensuing from giving rise to the awakening mind, particularly, the second aspect of awakening mind. To understand these teachings given by the Buddha, we depend on scriptural authority and on logical reasoning. The next verse is concerned with scriptural authority:

20. This the Buddha himself correctly has asserted in the [scripture] Subahupriccha for the sake of beings of lesser aspiration.

The next two verses establish the benefits of the awakening mind by means of reasoning:

21. One who is a kindly benefactor thinks, "I will cure the headaches of

beings." Thus by this benevolent intention he has acquired immeasurable merit.

22. How much more the one wishing to remove the infinite ache of every single being and for each one to create infinite virtue!

These two verses are concerned with the first aspect of awakening mind that is the aspirational quality. As has been mentioned before, infinite goodness ensue from engendering this aspect of the awakening mind.

There is a story in relation to this. Once upon a time there was a merchant called Sawo Phumo who had many children who were all sons. All his sons, however, died. To prevent the death of his latest born son, he gave him a girl's name thinking that would prevent the boy's death. This boy was generally a very good person; being very good to his mother and so forth. One day though, this boy decided to go and find jewels. His mother became very upset fearing he would die. She begged him not to go saying, "you will die on the road." The boy became very upset and angry with her and kicked her in the head and left. As a result of being a very good person, he found a lot of good jewels on his first voyage. He crossed a great ocean and came to an island where he found a lot of quality jewels. He then wanted to the south but everyone warned him not to go there. But he decided to go south anyway and continued until he came to another island where he found a house made of iron. He became curious and went into the house. In the house he found a man who had a iron wheel turning in his head causing great pain. So this boy asked how this had happened and the man who was suffering answered, "It is because I kicked my mother in the head once and this is the result of having done so." At that point, the same thing happened to the boy. But rather than being bitter at this misfortune, he thought of all the sentient being that suffered and he developed the desire to relieve them of that suffering. The moment the genuine desire to relieve all sentient being of suffering arose in his mind, the iron wheel stopped turning in his head and rose into the air.

So we see from this story that the boy's beneficial intention had an immediate effect by relieving his suffering instantly. With respect to awakening mind, we shouldn't be concerned only with beings that suffer in a specific way, but be concerned with the suffering of all

sentient beings. There are, of course, an inconceivable number of sentient beings and we should be concerned about all of them.

The Greatness of Awakening Mind

The next verses explain that the awakening mind and bodhisattva practice can dispel all suffering of sentient beings. So the benefits ensuing from the first aspect of aspiring awakening mind results in indescribable benefits.

23. *Whose mother or father is endowed with this benevolent desire? To what gods or sages or Brahmins does it belong?*
24. *Even in sleep this desire has not previously arisen for these people, not even in self-interest: How much less its appearance for the sake of others?*
25. *This unprecedented, distinctive jewel among beings: How is it given birth? This intention which is for the welfare of others does not appear in others even in self-interest.*
26. *This merit-of the seed of the world's joy, of the medicine for the world's sorrow, of the jewel of the mind (chitta): How, indeed, may it be measured?*

So not even the love that fathers and mothers have for their children have such a beneficial intention as a bodhisattva. Since bodhisattvas have engendered the awakening mind and this ends the suffering of all beings, bodhicitta is, then, the cause which relieves beings of their pain.

The ensuing verses explain the benefits from the second aspect of the awakening mind which is making the actual effort of benefiting all beings without exception.

27. *The worship of Buddhas is excelled by merely having a desire for goodness: How much more by zeal for the total welfare of all beings?*
28. *Yet some rush to sorrow only because of the hope of escaping sorrow. Although striving for happiness, like their own enemy, they stupidly destroy their own happiness.*

29. *The one who bestows the satisfaction of all pleasure cuts off the afflictions of those who are avaricious for pleasure*
30. *and thus constantly afflicted; so and, likewise, he destroys confusion. What goodness is comparable to his? Where is there such a friend or such merit as this?*

The following verses continue in the same way describing the benefits ensuing from developing the second aspect of the awakening mind established by means of reasoning. The verses are:

31. *Truly, whoever reciprocates for a service rendered is highly praised; but what can be said of a Bodhisattva who is not concerned with his own good?*
32. *The one who gives a feast for a few men is honored by men, who say that he is a doer of good, because he proudly supports life for half a day by giving a brief measure of food.*
33. *What of the one who gives in limitless time to a limitless number of beings that full satisfaction of total desire which is imperishable even when the inhabitants of heaven perish?*

So there are those individuals that give away food to poor people which gives them a full stomach for only half a day, but these people don't feel any respect for the beggar. Such a patron is then honored as a very virtuous and generous person, even though in comparison to a bodhisattva, a patron does very little. A bodhisattva, however, engages him or herself in activity that results in the complete happiness of Buddhahood which results in fulfilling all the hopes of sentient beings.

The Qualities of a Bodhisattva

The qualities of an individual who has engendered the awakening mind are explained as follows:

34. *Indeed, whoever conceives evil in his heart against the Lord of the Feast, the son of the Conqueror, he will dwell for eons in hell, because of the reckoning up of evil interest. So spoke the Lord.*
35. *But he whose mind is turned to tranquillity will produce fruit which is superior to it; for, certainly, an act of evil requires great strength, but*

goodness to the sons of the Conqueror is without effort.

36. *I reverence their bodies, wherein this most excellent jewel of the mind has arisen, wherein even a sin results in happiness. I go for refuge to these resources of happiness.*

The text says that one should venerate and respect a bodhisattva, since such an individual is an outstanding person and has outstanding qualities. One should, therefore, respect a bodhisattva and take refuge in him or her.

This concludes the first chapter of *A Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life* which has explained the benefits of engendering awakening mind. The reason for this explanation is that one needs knowledge of these benefits to be able to raise awakening mind or bodhicitta. One won't be able to engender these attitudes just by thinking, "I will do it." One needs some inspiration to do so and this inspiration can be drawn from the knowledge of the benefits ensuing from the awakening mind. One will feel inspired to give rise to the awakening mind. So the first chapter begins by explaining the benefits giving rise to awakening mind, then it explains the benefits ensuing from the two aspects of awakening mind and finally it explains the outstanding qualities of a bodhisattva that has already developed the awakening mind.

Questions

Question: Why can't gods, sages, and Brahmin reach enlightenment?

Rinpoche: The gods, sages, and Brahmin are only concerned with their own welfare. They practice to attain Buddhahood only to eliminate their personal suffering. Therefore they have never even dreamt of an attitude of awakening mind being concerned only with their own welfare.

Question: What is the philosopher's stone?

Rinpoche: At the time of Nagarjuna this gold-making elixir existed. It has been said that if one had an ounce of this elixir, one would be able to transform one thousand ounces of iron into gold. In those days Nagarjuna constructed a great university of Nalanda and other

holy places. He was, however, an ordinary monk and had no wealth whatsoever. So to construct these places, he did a practice that made use of this gold-making elixir.

Question: What is the wish-fulfilling jewel?

Rinpoche: One can supplicate or pray to the wish-fulfilling jewel and it will fulfill whatever one wishes; whatever one wishes will be accomplished. In the text it refers to a precious jewel. This is different from the wish-fulfilling jewel. If one has a precious jewel; one won't be poor any more and that is the meaning of this analogy.

Question: Could you explain further the fear of a bodhisattva faced with the task of helping absolutely all sentient beings?

Rinpoche: The fear of engendering awakening mind is thinking, "Well, I'll never be able to help all these beings, since they are so numerous." One thinks of all these numerous and various beings and all their desires and that one is not able to fulfill all their hopes and desires. So there is a fear of engendering the awakening mind or engaging in bodhisattva activity.

It might seem that this effort involves suffering, but it also involves happiness. For example, if you are concerned about ten people and you help one of them, then you feel very happy. You will be content with your effort of having been able to help one person. So if you are able to help two or three or more of these people, you will be even more happy. So in the case of a bodhisattva who is concerned with a limitless number of beings, the bodhisattva's happiness and joy is continuous. It is continuous because the bodhisattva is concerned with the welfare of so many and each time someone is helped, the bodhisattva is happy. So, in fact, there is a continuous happiness and joy, rather than suffering with this commitment.

Question: How much negative karma is erased from doing good actions?

Rinpoche: The virtue resulting from giving rise to the awakening mind is very powerful. In fact, it consumes negative karma. In the case of extremely strong negative karma, awakening mind will, so to speak, take away the effect, though one will have to experience some of the effects of this negative karma. In the case of a slight misdeed, it will be eliminated totally by awakening mind. If one, for example, has accumulated karma which will result in rebirth in hell and after

one has given rise to the awakening mind, the future effect of this negative karma will be very slight. For example, if you drop a ball, it bounces back off the ground. In the same way, rather than having to dwell in the hell realms for a very long period of time, one might just fall down into the hell realms and then bounce up again like a ball.

i This text has been translated at least three times into English. First is xx. Second is by Stephen Batchelor as Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Dharmasala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Third is xx .

ii Bodhichitta is the desire to help all other sentient beings reach enlightenment and often takes the form of the bodhisattva vow in which one vows to keep on returning life after life until all beings have reached enlightenment. One could say there are two levels of practice: the hinayana and the mahayana. In the hinayana path one strives to reach individual salvation and one does this primarily with sitting meditation of shamatha and vipashyana meditation. The ideal is the arhat who has complete control of his thoughts and feelings and sees the emptiness of the mind. In the mahayana path, one cultivates love and compassion and bodhichitta and tries to help all other beings

iii Sentient being refers to any animal or any non-visible being such as a ghost because it has a mind. It wouldn't refer to plants or rocks.

iv "Sugata" means having gone to bliss and refers to the Buddha. A "son" is figurative since there are female bodhisattvas.