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## The Reasons for Arousing Bodhicitta

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### B2: Encourage to Arouse the Mind of Bodhicitta

#### C1: The Reasons for Arousing Bodhicitta

*For the sake of all sentient beings submerged in the fearful ocean of samsara,  
In order to help them attain the eternal happiness of Buddhahood,  
You shall shoulder the responsibility of benefiting others,  
And discard the poisonous food of attachment to yourselves.*

a. Why Should We Take the Responsibility of Altruism?

We must shoulder the grand responsibility of benefiting others and discard ego-clinging, which is like poisonous food, for the sake of helping sentient beings wallowing in the cyclical horror of samsara to attain the ultimate happiness of Buddhahood.

In general, living beings can be classified into two categories: the enlightened beings who have already obtained the temporary or ultimate peace and happiness, accordingly arhats, pratyekabuddhas, bodhisattvas, as well as buddhas who achieve perfect merits and wisdom; the deluded or ignorant beings who have never tasted such peace and happiness gained through enlightenment, and have been dragged by karma to wallow in samsara which is full of dangerous circumstances.

Samsara means wandering about or moving on without interruption. There are six realms of beings in samsara, who are gods, Asuras, human beings, animals, hungry ghosts and hell beings. All these beings wander about in the six realms, sometimes being upgraded to the three higher realms where the suffering is not so fierce, while without a short rest being quickly dragged into the abyss of three lower realms by their own negative karma. As said in Chandrakirti's *Introduction to the Middle Way*,

*Beings think I"at first, and cling to self;  
They think of mine"and are attached to things.  
They thus turn helplessly as buckets on a waterwheel,  
And to compassion for such beings I bow down!*

Based on the authentic teachings and the personal perceptions of the enlightened buddhas and bodhisattvas, we have learned clearly that all deluded beings have previously been our parents and now are suffering. So carefully they have cared for and tended us, so closely we have connected with each other. Even though they do not recognize us now, anyone with a certain level of conscience would never leave them aside to pursue his or her own peace and happiness, but would rather guarantee their greatest peace and happiness. That is, to liberate them forever from the dreadful ocean of samsara and attain supreme enlightenment.

Therefore, we must shoulder the responsibility of altruism in order to help them obtain temporal happiness with good food and nice clothes, and meanwhile to guide them to achieve the ultimate happiness through the realization of arhats, bodhisattvas and buddhas. We must

get rid of poison-like selfishness as much as possible; otherwise retribution could be very serious. It is stated in Shantideva's *The Way of the Bodhisattva*,

*If to serve myself I harm another,  
I'll suffer later in the realms of hell.  
If for others' sake I harm myself,  
Every excellence will be my heritage.*

b. Discard the Poison-like Attachment to Oneself

In the past, when Ra Lotsawa<sup>1</sup> was meditating on his deity in a quiet place, he felt that he had wanted to be in this kind of solitary retreat all of his life. But one day his deity told him, "You might as well go out to benefit living beings. The merits of even a brief moment of doing so will be much greater than diligently meditating on your deity in quiet isolation for billions of eons." Hence the merits of helping others with an altruistic mind are far greater than selfish penance for endless years.

Again in Shantideva's *The Way of the Bodhisattva* it is said,

*All the joy the world contains  
Has come through wishing happiness for others.  
All the misery the world contains  
Has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.*

Therefore, we must not allow our Bodhicitta to drift away during the course of our practice. Patrul Rinpoche also said, "If you practice the unsurpassed Great Perfection without the premise of Bodhicitta, it will become the practice of Hinayana or Tirthika".

Hence His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said that selfishness is poison-like, which is an excellent metaphor that we should contemplate frequently. People with a strong sense of selfishness will fail sooner or later, regardless of where they are situated. Most of our arguments, afflictions, and quarrels are the products of selfishness, which would not appear if we become selfless. Thus we should strive towards this and become real bodhisattvas.

In fact, we need not pay much attention to what people say, but instead, should just do whatever is possible to benefit others when we are still alive and capable. Whether people are aware of what we are doing or not, it is quite alright either way. I believe that some of the things that we have done may not ever be known by other people in our lifetime, but all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as our gurus clearly know. Also the law of causality will prevail. Therefore, it is of no value to help others for the sake of our own reputation and fame. Rather than being contaminated by all kinds of worldly concern, we should solely resolve to try all our best to benefit others.

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## The Merit of Arousing Bodhicitta

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### C2: The Merit of Arousing Bodhicitta

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Ra\\_Lotsawa](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Ra_Lotsawa)

*This blocks the gate to lower realms,  
Allows you to attain the happiness of higher realms,  
And eventually leads you to the ultimate liberation from samsara,  
You shall practice this essential teaching without being distracted at all.*

a. The Merit of Bodhicitta

The merits of arousing Bodhicitta include: blocking the gate to the lower realms, allowing us to obtain relative temporal peace and happiness in the higher realms of human beings and gods, and enabling us to ultimately attain liberation from samsara. With the understanding of this fact, every dharma practitioner must practice this essential teaching without distraction.

The merits of bodhicitta, either the bodhicitta of aspiration or the bodhicitta of action, are immeasurable and boundless. This has been addressed in great detail in *Compendium of Trainings*<sup>2</sup>, *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, and many other Mahayana sutras. Simply put, the merits of bodhicitta can be manifested in two ways:

1. If one arouses genuine bodhicitta, all negative karma can be eliminated in one's mind continuum, as a result, the doors to lower realms are blocked. Shantideva says:

*Just as by the fires at the end of time,  
Great sins are utterly consumed by bodhicitta.  
Thus its benefits are boundless,  
As the Wise and Loving Lord explained to Sudhana.*

The great sins refer to heavily negative karma that is difficult to purify, such as is accumulated through the five crimes with immediate retribution<sup>3</sup>, or by criticizing the Dharma. But they can all be consumed the moment bodhicitta arises in one's mind, like the fire at the end of time burning out the entire world. If one's negative karma is cleansed, there will be no chance of falling into the lower realms.

Hence His Holiness said that a person with bodhicitta cannot possibly fall into lower realms. We must try our best to generate bodhicitta before we die, and must make sure our bodhicitta is not impaired after it arises, in this way we will not take rebirth in lower realms.

2. With bodhicitta, one's virtuous roots will become stronger and stronger. Consequently, one can gain rebirth as a human being or god to enjoy all the temporal peace and happiness of the higher realms; and furthermore, one will perfect all the merits of the five paths and ten bhūmis, and attain the ultimate and unsurpassable fruit of Buddhahood.

Therefore, the benefits of bodhicitta are indeed immense for living beings. Shantideva also said,

*The pain-dispelling draft,  
This cause of joy for those who wander through the world—  
The precious attitude, this jewel of mind,  
How shall it be gauged or qualified?*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Shikshasamucchaya>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Five\\_crimes\\_with\\_immediate\\_retribution](http://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Five_crimes_with_immediate_retribution)

b. The Conclusion Made by Buddhas

It is the conclusion made by buddhas through long-term contemplations, with their unsurpassable wisdom, in numerous eons. Just like some scientists who devote themselves to research for a long period of time, so that they can invent something they believe will be of great benefit to all humankind. Similarly, the Buddha discovered that bodhicitta would bring the most benefit to all living beings. After repeated observations over a long period of time, it is seen that uncountable living beings can easily attain the supreme fruit of buddhahood by arousing Bodhicitta in their mind. Therefore Shantideva said,

*The mighty Buddhas, deeply pondering for many ages,  
Have seen that this, and only this, will save  
The boundless multitudes,  
And bring them easily to supreme joy.*

Hence His Holiness encourages all his disciples to cultivate bodhicitta and practice this essential teaching without being distracted at all. We must not allow our minds to be tempted by the eight worldly concerns and so lose our direction. We must earnestly practice the pith instruction of bodhicitta, for it is the most important and precious approach among all the practices.