
Verse 7: Secretly Take Upon Myself All Their Sufferings

*In brief, directly or indirectly,
I will offer help and happiness to all my mothers,
And secretly take upon myself
All their pains and suffering.*

No matter whether directly or indirectly, I will offer happiness and benefits to all the sentient beings that have been my loving mothers. I shall secretly take upon myself all my mothers' pains and suffering.

a. View all living beings as my mothers

The verse has taught us the paramount pith instruction on the path of Bodhisattvas. All Mahayana practitioners, no matter whether engaged in Sutrayana practices or Tantrayana practices, should meditate on and practice this pith instruction. Without it, we cannot call ourselves Mahayana practitioners.

It is recounted in *The White Lotus: The Great Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha*, that Buddha Shakyamuni, over hundreds and thousands of eons, discarded self-attachment, and carried out the compassionate activities of benefiting sentient beings by giving them happiness and taking upon himself their sufferings. We, too, should follow the steps of the Buddha. This is something we should seriously reflect on.

As is stated in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

*If all the mothers who have loved me since beginningless time are suffering,
What is the use of my own happiness?
So, with the aim of liberating limitless sentient beings,
To set my mind on enlightenment is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

All living beings have been my mothers since beginningless time, and while they were my mother, they have loved me as much as my mother in this life has. To make sure that their child has enough to eat, they would rather go hungry themselves. When their child is sick, the mother has no appetite for food and drink, and if it were possible, she would rather exchange the cure of her child with her own life. Not only do the mothers of human beings act in this way, but even ferocious beasts, like tigers and lions, are full of love for their children. There are detailed elaborations on this in Patrul Rinpoche's *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

Now since all sentient beings, who have been my father or mother, are suffering in samsara, or are being oppressed by the intolerable sufferings of the hell-realms, how can we, their own children, seek only our own personal happiness. What is the meaning of such a practice? So, every one of us must, with the great compassion, offer all of our happiness and benefits without a trace of miserliness, directly or indirectly, to all of our loving mothers.

b. Benefit all living beings directly or indirectly

Since my mothers, from beginningless time, are suffering unmeasurable pain in the cyclic

existence of the three realms, I secretly aspire to take all their sufferings upon myself, and quietly offer all my peace and happiness to them.

His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said that, if we can give peace and happiness to others directly, this would be the best. However, if we could not, we should aspire to offer all our peace and happiness to sentient beings, and to take upon ourselves all their hurt and suffering. If we meditate in this way progressively, by the time we reach a certain point, we will be able to directly take in the sufferings of sentient beings, and directly offer them happiness and peace.

So this is an indirect offering: If we are not now sufficiently qualified to give them peace and happiness directly, we should aspire in our heart, that all our peace and happiness be dedicated to all of our mother beings since time without beginning, and aspire to be of benefit to them to the best of our ability.

And what is a direct offering? It is to save the lives of living beings scheduled to be slaughtered and to release them again into freedom. Now, the time has come in which life-release is very much needed to help sentient beings. Not only should every one of us do life-release, but we should also, as much as possible, persuade others to do the same. Among monastics, some people do life-release very often, each time saving and releasing several hundreds of millions of living beings. The merits of this life-release are indeed inconceivable, and the future fruits of it are also inconceivable.

Life-release is different from other virtuous actions. When doing other virtuous deeds, if one's motivation is impure, the action only leads to very petty fruit. However, life release is different. Even if one saves and releases lives with impure motives, or even with wrong views, its corresponding result is unailing. Life-release directly benefits sentient beings. Therefore, I wish that, each year, we could release more captive animals than that of the previous one.

c. Pray to the guru for more blessings

As was mentioned earlier, Langri Tangpa's *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* is easy to understand in its literal meaning, but indeed, it is very difficult to truly combine that understanding with real practice.

The excellence of the instruction revealed in this verse lies in that it teaches us to exchange our own happiness and benefits, for the sufferings of others. The exchanging oneself for others spoken of here, is a little bit different from the one taught in the fifth verse. The instruction in the fifth verse is the one on the practice of the Bodhicitta; but the instruction taught here is the one on the practice of the Four Immeasurables. The Four Immeasurables are the foundation of Bodhicitta. If we build this foundation well, the other key instructions will be easier to master.

Now that we have received this pith instruction, we should use it as much as possible in our daily lives. If we cannot master the practices of this pith instruction, no matter how much we meditate on the Great Perfection, all of these efforts would be in vain. They would be completely meaningless. Therefore, we must develop faith in this instruction, and keep practicing it. This is the pith instruction of the practice of a Bodhisattva.

Dharma practitioners, on the basis of their own learning, meditating and practicing, should also supplicate to their guru more, and spontaneously, the guru's blessings will be infused into their hearts. In this way, they will master all the key instructions of both Sutrayana and Tantrayana quickly, and will be able to carry all the manifest appearances of phenomena onto the path, and the natural wakefulness of mind will exert itself. To awaken the primordial nature of the mind, without the blessings of the guru, is impossible. When giving the transmission and teachings of Manjushri Great Perfection, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said, "When you supplicate, by perceiving your root guru as being no different than Manjushri, you will definitely accomplish Great Perfection."