



# Compassion Day

## Group Leader's Guide for Discussion of Joyous Effort

The following seven questions encompass a comprehensive outline for discussion of the practice of joyous effort according to the lam-rim tradition that has been designed specifically for use in the activities for Compassion Day 2013. Relevant passages extracted from two lam-rim texts are provided as a guide for leading discussion. For further exploration of joyous effort, please refer to any of the texts in the list of additional resources, which you will find on the fourth page of this document. A separate version of this document with only the questions is provided on the fifth and final page.

### 1. What is joyous effort (or perseverance)?

From *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p.587:

Perseverance [i.e., joyous effort] is, by nature, gladness for performing virtue. It is the best means of carrying virtue through to completion.

### 2. What are the three divisions of joyous effort?

From *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp.590-591:

#### (a) ARMOR-LIKE PERSEVERANCE

It says in the Guru Puja:

Bless me to perfect perseverance

Even if I have to stay

In the fires of the Hell Without Respite

For oceans of eons

For the sake of each sentient being

May my compassion not flag,

May I strive for supreme enlightenment.

In other words, train yourself to feel that you could even endure having to stay in the Hell Without Respite for hundreds of thousands of eons for the sake of each sentient being. In the tantric context, you should enter tantra with the thought, "For my own part, I would be able to endure this. But sentient beings would still be left suffering for a long time." Your wish is to rescue sentient beings as soon as possible from their suffering, just as a mother would rescue her beautiful boy from drowning.<sup>1</sup>...

... This training is called the armor-like perseverance because you face difficulties for the sake of others at a time when Dharma has so degenerated that people no longer practice such things.

### **(b) THE PERSEVERANCE TO COLLECT VIRTUOUS THINGS**

This perseverance is collecting [merit], purifying yourself, making offerings, persevering in the practice of the six perfections, etc.

### **(c) THE PERSEVERANCE OF WORKING FOR THE SAKE OF SENTIENT BEINGS**

An example of this is persevering with the practice of the four ways of gather disciples. It is a training that resembles "The Ethic of Working for the Sake of Sentient Beings." (please refer to pp.580-581 of *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*)

## **3. What are the advantages of cultivating joyous effort? How do these inspire you to practice joyous effort?**

From *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp.587-588:

*An Ornament to the Sutras* tells us:

Perseverance is the best among the whole range of virtues:

When you cultivate it you will later succeed.

Through perseverance you will soon reach the best of happy states

And have both the worldly and the transworldly psychic powers.

Through perseverance, you will obtain your mundane aims.

Through perseverance, you will come to be pure.

Through perseverance, you will be freed and transcend your views of equating the self with the perishable.

---

<sup>1</sup> This passage refers to the fact that in tantra, although the bodhisattva has the willingness to endure a rebirth of such long duration in the worst hell realm for the sake of each sentient being, he or she moreover generates the wish to attain enlightenment in the shortest possible time based on the compassion that finds it unbearable that sentient beings would continue to suffer while one remained unenlightened and incapable of helping them.

Through perseverance, you will gain supremely enlightened Buddhahood.

Thus this text says that perseverance is the best of all virtues; everything up to Buddhahood derives from it. Engaging in the Middle Way says:

Every good quality follows from perseverance.

Thus do not behave like a stubborn donkey digging in its heels when you should be doing your recitations, etc. Commence these activities by taking great delight in performing virtue.

4. Discuss what Pabongka Rinpoche says in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (p.588), "Accustom yourself to doing only a little in the early stages; increase this as your perseverance increases."
  
5. What are the three types of laziness that hinder joyous effort and how do you eliminate each of them? Discuss your own experiences with these hindrances.

From *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp.588-590:

(a) **THE LAZINESS OF SLOTH [or PROCRASTINATION]**

This means losing the chance to perform virtue because you keep putting it off. You continually procrastinate because your heart is not in it. As its antidote you must meditate on impermanence or on the difficulty of gaining the optimum human rebirth.

(b) **THE LAZINESS OF CRAVING EVIL PURSUITS [or ATTACHMENT TO MEANINGLESS ACTIVITY]**

This is craving mundane pursuits and engaging in them, and in non-virtuous actions as well, because you have not yet tired of them. Reputation, society, idle gossip, ... are examples of such things. We do not talk of perseverance in relation to such things: we call it obstinacy. Engaging in the Deeds of Bodhisattvas mentions its antidote:

Happiness' cause is the infinite, holy Dharma;

But you are lost among the causes of suffering

And abandon supreme happiness.

Why do you delight in ruin and the like?

In other words, the pursuits of samsara are without essence and cause suffering. Think in this way and you will prevent this form of laziness.

### **(c) THE LAZINESS OF DEFEATISM [or INADEQUACY]**

This is a deep-seated form of laziness. Examples of it are: "How could someone like me achieve Buddhahood?" or "How could I work for the sake of all sentient beings?" or even "How could someone like me possibly sacrifice my body, arms, or legs?"

Feel instead, "I shall be patient even though it may take my whole life to train in just one meditation topic, such as the difficulty of obtaining an optimum rebirth." Or think, "I can persevere with such worldly pursuits such as trading, and how patient I can be with such hard work for so small a profit. Thus if I can manage this much, I must be able to persevere and work hard enough to achieve enlightenment!" ...

## **6. Discuss the four favorable conditions for joyous effort and your experience with them in your practice.**

From Lama Tsongkhapa's *Middle Length Lam-Rim*, pp.195-196:

Relying on favorable conditions for joyous effort has four [types]:

### **(a) THE POWER OF DEVOTION [or ASPIRATION]**

The power of devotion is to meditate on causes and effects, so as to aspire to discard [unwholesome actions] and adopt [wholesome ones].

### **(b) THE POWER OF STABILITY [or STEADFASTNESS]**

The power of stability is not to engage in anything haphazardly without investigating it, and, having investigated it and engaged in it, to consummate it.

### **(c) THE POWER OF JOY**

The power of joy makes one's undertaking of joyous effort uninterrupted and insatiable, like a child engaged in play.

### **(d) THE POWER OF SUSPENSION [or RELINQUISHMENT]**

The power of suspension is to rest, when your body and mind are worn out due to your joyous effort. As soon as you have recovered, you start again.

## 7. What role does joyous effort play in your own practice of the Dharma and specifically your practice of compassionate service?

For more information on the practice of joyous effort, please refer to any of the following:

- *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongka Rinpoche, Edited by Trijang Rinpoche, Translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications 2006 (pp.587-592)
- *The Middle Length Lam-Rim*, Lama Tsongkhapa, Translated by Philip Quarcoo, FPMT, Inc. 2008 (pp.192-196)
- *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Two*, Tsong-kha-pa, Translated by The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Joshua W. Cutler, Editor-in-Chief, Snow Lion Publications 2004 (pp.181-207)
- *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment: A Commentary on Tsongkhapa's Lamrim Chenmo, Volume 3: The Way of the Bodhisattva*, Geshe Lhundub Sopa with Beth Newman, Wisdom Publications 2008 (pp.417-477)

## Questions for Discussion of Joyous Effort

1. What is joyous effort (or perseverance)?
2. What are the three divisions of joyous effort?
3. What are the advantages of cultivating joyous effort? How do these inspire you to practice joyous effort?
4. Discuss what Pabongka Rinpoche says in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (p.588), "Accustom yourself to doing only a little in the early stages; increase this as your perseverance increases."
5. What are the three types of laziness that hinder joyous effort and how do you eliminate each of them? Discuss your own experiences with these hindrances.
6. Discuss the four favorable conditions for joyous effort and your experience with them in your practice.
7. What role does joyous effort play in your own practice of the Dharma and specifically your practice of compassionate service?