

4. Exchanging Self and Others

The trainings based on the conquerors child Shantideva

This has 3 parts:

1. Contemplating the benefits of exchanging self and other and the faults of not exchanging self and other
2. The ability to exchange self and other if you accustom yourself to the thought of doing so
3. The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and other

1. Contemplating the benefits of exchanging self and other and the faults of not exchanging self and other

2. The ability to exchange self and other if you accustom yourself to the thought of doing so

Think about this as an example:

Before when someone was your enemy, just hearing their name made fear arise. Then when they became your friend, when this friend would be absent you were very unhappy. This reversal resulted from familiarizing yourself with a new attitude.

Likewise, if you become habituated to viewing yourself as you presently view others [with an attitude of neglect] and to viewing others as you presently view yourself [with a cherishing attitude], you will exchange self and other

Q: Since someones body is not your body, how can you develop the same attitude that you have toward your own?

A: Your body was produced from your fathers semen and your mothers blood. Even though it was produced from a portion of someone else's body, you conceive of it to be your own by the influence of previous conditioning.

Similarly, if you become accustomed to cherishing another body as you presently do your own, you will view it with the same perspective that you now have toward your body.

Reflect thoroughly on the benefits of being other-centered and the faults of being self-centered. Thereby you will produce from the depths of your heart a great delight in meditating on the exchange of self and other. Then recognize that you can actually generate it once you have become habituated to it.

3. The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and other

The phrase 'exchanging self and others' does not indicate a training in an attitude which thinks "I am others", and "Others" eyes, etc are mine.

It indicated a change in the orientation of the 2 states of mind of cherishing yourself and neglecting others, wherein you develop the attitude of cherishing others as you presently do yourself and neglecting yourself as you presently do others.

Shantideva's statement above that says **you must exchange your own happiness for others suffering** means to view cherishing yourself as the enemy and then to stop emphasizing your own happiness. In addition , you must view cherishing others as a good quality, stop neglecting others' suffering, and instead emphasize the removal of their suffering. **In brief, this statement means that you remove others' suffering while disregarding your own happiness**

There are 2 obstacles to training in this attitude of exchanging self and other:

1. You make a categorical differentiation between people who are happy or suffering -- yourself and others

making them as a different as blue and yellow. Then you accomplish your happiness and remove your suffering because you think of them as 'mine', and you neglect others happiness and suffering because you think of them as 'belonging to other'..

****therefore, the remedy to this to not make a categorical distinction between self and other**

as being essentially different. Rather, understand that self and other are mutually dependent such that you are aware of self, you are aware of other... and when you are away of other you are aware of self.**

ex. It is like being aware of near mountains and distant mountains. Relative to you being here, you think of a mountain there in the distance as being a distant mountain, yet when you go to

this distant mountain, you think of it as a near mountain. So, the awareness of self and other is not like the awareness of blue.. regardless of what color blue is related to .. its always blue.

Thus Santideva indicates that self and other are merely posited in relation to a particular reference point and do not essentially exist.

2.

pg 54

Summary

1. Benefits of cherishing others and faults of not exchanging self and others:

being self centered is the door to all degenerations and being other centered is the basis of all excellence

2. The ability to exchange self and other if you accustom your mind to do so:

You can actually generate it once you have become accustom to it

3. The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and other.

The view is to want to remove others suffering while disregarding your own happiness.

There are 2 obstacles:

1. You make a categorical difference between yourself and other. Seeing them as totally different. **Remedy: Self and other are merely posited in relation to a particular reference point and do not essentially exist.**
2. You think "I will not make an effort to dispel others suffering because others suffering does not harm me." **Remedy: This is short sighted, like not gathering wealth in your youth because your suffering of old age does not harm you in your youth.**

Qualm: self and other are different continuum, like hand and foot are, therefore they are no the same as self and other. **Remedy:** The 'self' of yourself and the 'self' of other must be posited to a continuum or collection, so self and other are not established by way of independent existence.

Then meditate as follows:

Think about how self-cherishing has been harming you for eternity. You have been acting the same way all this time and what has it brought you? only suffering. If you had done the opposite you would be enlightened by now.. so now see that as the true and exchange self and other.

See everything you do and everything you own as for others.

Develop an attitude cherishes others to the degree which you previously cherished yourself.

Cherish others as you do yourself.

To produce this attitude you must see how beings have been kind to you and recognize that they help you.

Think about how to attain buddhahood you need to perform the bodhisattva deeds, and this requires beings.. so they allow you to attain enlightenment.

Also, all the suffering has come from harming sentient beings.

You should not for an instant be attached to your own welfare.