

The Three Types of Compassion

Topic: Compassion

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Happy Monks Publication

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THE THREE TYPES OF COMPASSION - THE ROOT TEXT

Chandrakirti says in his *Introduction to the Middle Way*:

Compassion alone is the seed of a conqueror's [2]
Perfect crop, is like water for its increase, and is
Posited like the ripening of the state of its longtime enjoyment.
Therefore, I first praise compassion.

Initially starting grasping at self by naming 'I', [3]
Then generating attachment for phenomena named 'mine'.
Praise to whatever becomes compassion for migrators
Traversing without freedom like a bucket in a well.

They see migrators as unstable and empty of [4]
Mere natural existence, like a moon in stirred water.
Every mind of the children of the conquerors,
Overpowered by compassion to completely liberate migrators,

From his *Self-Commentary*:

Now, since I wish to compose an homage having clearly differentiated the instances of compassion by their way of engaging instances of the object of contemplation, I stated 'Initially starting grasping at self naming "I".'

... in order to clarify compassion focusing on dharmas and focusing on non-focus.

Mirror Clearly Reflecting the Meaning of the Middle Way:

Verse 2: Chandrakirti is correct to initially praise compassion - because compassion alone is important at the beginning like a seed for the generation of a conqueror's perfect crop, important in the middle like water for its increase, and because in the end the state of longtime enjoyment by the disciples is posited like the ripening of the grain.

Verse 3: Migrators in cyclic existence initially start grasping at a truly existing self by naming 'I'. Subsequently the view of the transitory collections grasping at 'mine' generates attachment for the true existence of phenomena named 'mine', such as the eyes. This causes them to traverse in cyclic existence without freedom, like a bucket in a well. This is the homage to compassion focusing on sentient beings since it pays respect to whatever becomes compassion after having focused on the migrators in cyclic existence.

Verse 4: Here the homage is to the compassion that focuses on migrators by seeing them as unstable and transient as the moon in water stirred by wind. Homage is also paid to the compassion that focuses on migrators by seeing that they lack natural existence, like the moon that appears to be naturally established in the wind-stirred water.

Hence this is the homage to compassion focusing on dharmas and non-focus.

The Meaning of the Verses

Identifying the Three Types of Compassion

The three types of compassion are discerned via their focus and not via their way of apprehending - because these three are the same in being in the aspect of wishing sentient beings, who become their focal object, to be free from suffering.

Even though the three types of compassion are discerned via their focus, there is no difference between them in focusing on sentient beings, who become their focal object - because at the time of the first compassion, he says, 'Praise to whatever becomes compassion for migrators', and also at the time of the second and third, the word 'migrator' is used.

Definition of Compassion Focusing Merely on Sentient Beings

A compassion that is characterized by being the wish for freedom from suffering after having focused merely on sentient beings afflicted by suffering, who become its focal object.

There is a need to include 'merely' - because it is for the purpose of eliminating that being in the aspect of wishing for freedom from suffering after having focused on sentient beings differentiated by impermanence and lack of true existence.

Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

Compassion focusing on dharmas focuses on sentient beings differentiated by momentary impermanence. It doesn't focus on mere sentient beings, but on sentient beings disintegrating momentarily. Also, compassion focusing on non-focus doesn't focus on mere sentient beings, but on the special object of contemplation, sentient beings empty of inherent existence.

Definition of Compassion Focusing on Dharmas

1) A compassion in the continuum of a person who, with valid cognition, has established sentient beings as being impermanent as well as 2) an awareness in the aspect of wishing them to be free from suffering, after having focused on sentient beings differentiated by impermanence.

Definition of Compassion Focusing on Non-Focus

1) A compassion in the continuum of a person who, with valid cognition, has established sentient beings as lacking true existence as well as 2) an awareness in the aspect of wishing them to be free from suffering after having focused on sentient beings differentiated by the lack of true existence.

If all of the above is summarized:

The definition of the first compassion: Being compassion as well as consciousness neither directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings to be impermanent nor the wisdom realizing sentient beings to be empty of true existence.

The definition of the second compassion: That as well as being directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings as impermanent.

The definition of the third compassion: That as well as being directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings' lack of true existence.

Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

A person whose continuum is endowed with both types of compassion needs to be someone to whom the aspects of both characteristics arise in dependence upon having previously ascertained sentient beings as momentary and lacking natural existence.

Word Explanation

Compassion Focusing on Sentient Beings

Take the subject 'first compassion' – it follows there is a reason why it is called compassion focusing on sentient beings - because compassion focusing on sentient beings is the short form without the word 'merely' for focusing merely on sentient beings afflicted by suffering, who become the focal object without having been differentiated by impermanence and selflessness.

Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

... having considered that, compassion focusing on sentient beings is a short name for the sake of convenience.

Compassion Focusing on Dharma

Take the subject 'second compassion' – it follows there is a reason why it is called compassion focusing on dharmas – because the aggregates of form, etc., the basis of imputation for the person, are called *dharmas*, and the words 'focusing on sentient beings labeled in dependence upon the mere dharmas of form, etc.,' are not explicitly expressed.

Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

‘focusing on sentient beings labeled on mere dharmas’ is expressed as ‘focusing on dharmas’ without expressively mentioning the words in the middle.

If it is asked, ‘what is the reason why the person possessing the second type of compassion can ascertain sentient beings as labeled on the mere dharmas of the aggregates?’

There is a reason - because the person possessing the second type of compassion validly ascertains sentient beings as impermanent. If one ascertains sentient beings as impermanent, one can ascertain the non-existence of permanent, single, independent sentient beings. In dependence upon that one is able to ascertain the non-existence of sentient beings different in identity from the aggregates. By way of that ascertainment one can comprehend sentient beings as labeled in dependence upon the mere dharmas of the aggregates.

Compassion Focusing on Non-Focus

Take the subject ‘third compassion’ – it follows there is a reason why it is called compassion focusing on non-focus – because, since here ‘focus’ refers to true existence and ‘non-focus’ to lack of true existence, out of ‘focusing on sentient beings lacking (non) true existence (focus)’ the words ‘sentient beings’ are left out.

Regarding this Lama Tsong Khapa states in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

Non-focus is non-existence of the determined object the way it is held by the grasping at characteristics. ‘Focusing on sentient beings differentiated by the lack of true existence’ is expressed as ‘focusing on non-focus’ or ‘compassion lacking focus’.

Boundaries

In the continuum of a person neither realizing subtle nor coarse selflessness only the first type of compassion exists and the last two don’t. Even though the first two types of compassion exist in the continuum of a person realizing coarse selflessness but not subtle selflessness, the last doesn’t. All three exist once subtle selflessness is realized and this can be from before entering a path up to the tenth ground. The last two types of compassion exist from before entering a path up to the ground of buddhahood.

Praising Compassion in General

Compassion is the most important of the three causes of a bodhisattva because it is the very root cause of both bodhicitta and non-dual awareness. However, the word ‘alone’ in the root text is to point out that while the analogy is threefold, i.e., seed, water and the ripening, it illustrates only the single meaning of compassion.

Non-dual awareness here is the correct view realizing emptiness through the door of limitless inference, which is rooted in great compassion. In general the realization of emptiness does not depend upon great compassion, since hearers and self-liberators do realize emptiness as well, but they meditate on emptiness in a limited way. Bodhisattvas on the other hand, being motivated by great compassion, meditate on emptiness in an expansive way through the door of limitless inference.

In his *Introduction to the Middle Way*, Chandrakirti explicitly pays homage to great compassion, and not to hearers, self-liberators, bodhisattvas or even buddhas, which usually are the objects of homage in other treatises. He does this to emphasize great compassion as the root of the path to enlightenment.

In his *Self-commentary to the Introduction to the Middle Way*, to further highlight the significance of great compassion, Chandrakirti pays tribute to it by referring to it as ‘the bhagavati great compassion’, applying the name of the result to the cause. *Bhagavan* is one of the titles of an enlightened being, and the *ti* makes it female.

The compassion to which Chandrakirti pays homage is the self-isolate of great compassion, i.e., great compassion itself. It is neither a specific instance of compassion such as the great compassion in the continuum of a practitioner who has not yet entered the path, nor the great compassion in the continuum of ordinary and superior bodhisattvas. If it were compassion in the continuum of a practitioner who has not yet entered the path, then it would be important at the beginning, but not in the middle and the end. If it were the great compassion in the continuum of a bodhisattva, then it would be only important in the middle, but not at the beginning or at the end. But great compassion itself is important during the beginning, middle and end, and therefore it is like the seed, water and the ripening of the crop.

Compassion in the Beginning

In the beginning compassion is as essential as the seed because when we generate great compassion our Mahayana lineage is awakened. The measure of whether or not the Mahayana lineage is awakened is whether or not one has great compassion.

Explicitly Chandrakirti's *Self-Commentary* explains how compassion is the root of non-dual awareness and bodhicitta for a bodhisattva of dull faculty, but implicitly it also shows how it is that for a bodhisattva of sharp faculty.

Of the three types of practitioners, i.e., those following the Hearer path, the Self-liberator path, and the Mahayana path, the first are of smallest capacity, the second of medium capacity, and the third of greatest capacity, or in other words, the three types of practitioners are of dull, medium, and sharp faculty, respectively.

All Mahayana practitioners are of sharp faculty compared to the other two classes of practitioners, but not all Mahayana practitioners are equally sharp. They can be very sharp, medium sharp and less sharp, and there is a difference in the sequence in which bodhisattvas of dull faculty and bodhisattvas of sharp faculty generate bodhicitta and realize emptiness.

Bodhisattvas of both dull and sharp faculty generate great compassion by first meditating on the first five points of the seven point cause and effect method, i.e., recognizing that all sentient beings have been one's mother, remembering their kindness, repaying their kindness, affectionate love and great compassion. In dependence on great compassion the bodhisattvas of dull faculty then generate bodhicitta aspiring to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Then, seeing that the attainment of complete enlightenment depends on the practice of the six perfections, they start practicing the main perfection of wisdom, and thus realize emptiness.

Bodhisattvas of sharp faculty on the other hand, while realizing the need to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings with the generation of great compassion, then investigate whether they can actually attain the state of complete enlightenment free from the two obscurations. During this investigation the bodhisattva realizes that the root of all obscurations is true grasping, and then negates the apprehended object of true grasping with countless types of investigation, analyses and proofs. Having realized via the door of limitless inference that the apprehended object of true grasping is non-existent, the bodhisattva understands with valid cognition that true grasping can be abandoned. This leads the bodhisattva to also establish through valid cognition that the attainment of complete enlightenment free from the two obscurations is possible. Only once they have done that, will they generate the wish to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings.

In such a way great compassion is the root of bodhicitta and non-dual awareness, not just for bodhisattvas of dull faculty, but also for bodhisattvas of sharp faculty.

Compassion in the Middle

After having generated bodhicitta, the two accumulations of merit and wisdom need to be built up in a very expansive manner in order to attain complete enlightenment, and that is impossible without great compassion. Therefore, once the seed of great compassion has produced the sprout of bodhicitta, that bodhicitta needs to be nourished repeatedly with the water of compassion in order to progress along the Mahayana path. Should that not happen due to a lack of compassion then the bodhicitta will wither, and the practitioner, not being able to build up the two accumulations in an extensive manner, falls into the Hinayana path and definitely attains either the enlightenment of a hearer or the enlightenment of a self-liberator.

For example, sentient beings can be very ungrateful and difficult to deal with. Though one tries to benefit them, they often react badly and return harm for benefit. In such a situation, if one loses the motivation of wanting to work for their benefit, then that is a sign that one hasn't meditated very well on compassion. But if one continues to practice compassion after having generated bodhicitta, then one will not become tired of working for sentient beings and building up the two accumulations. Superior bodhisattvas are controlled by great compassion and therefore do not get any rest. As soon as they perceive that somewhere there is a sentient being who needs help, their great compassion automatically pushes them to go there. Superior bodhisattvas never remain within the equanimity of not doing anything because they are compelled through great compassion to help wherever they can.

Compassion at the End

Just as the actual ripening of the grain is essential to enjoy the benefit of the harvest, after bodhisattvas have attained enlightenment, the long-time enjoyment of their enlightened state by sentient beings comes about through great compassion. If buddhas lacked great compassion, they would not remain until the end of existence working for sentient beings.

Hearers and self-liberators are generated from buddhas, buddhas are generated from bodhisattvas, and bodhisattvas born from the three causes, which they generate in dependence on buddhas that are their teachers. But if buddhas lack great compassion and do not teach, then no further bodhisattvas will be generated, no new buddhas will be born from them, and there will be no further hearers and self-liberators. The increase of the number of hearers, self-liberators and superior bodhisattvas, continuously without interruption from one life to the next, is due to great compassion in the continuum of the buddhas, and that is why great compassion is essential at the end.

As a concluding remark with regard to verse 2, Lama Tsong Khapa stated in his *Illumination of the Thought*:

From the words ‘Because compassion alone...’ in the verse, one should gain a firm understanding that if one wishes to practice the Mahayana path one initially needs to be someone whose mind is overcome by great compassion. Then, in dependence on that, generate bodhicitta complete with all characteristics from the depths of one’s heart, and through that bodhicitta, wholeheartedly practice the bodhisattva practices in general, and in particular penetrate the meaning of the profound view.

Praising Compassion by Discerning the Different Types Individually

Prostration to Compassion Focusing on Sentient Beings

In the Prasangika system, the definition of the view of the transitory collection is an afflicted wisdom that, having focused on the ‘I’ or ‘mine’ within one’s own continuum, grasps either one of them to exist inherently. There are two types of transitory view: (1) the transitory view grasping at ‘I’ and (2) the transitory view grasping at ‘mine’. The view of the transitory collection grasping at ‘I’ generates the view of the transitory collection grasping at ‘mine’.

Sentient beings initially grasp the mere meaning of that named ‘I’ to exist truly because the view of the transitory collection grasping at ‘I’ grasps the non-inherently existent self to be inherently existent. Subsequently the view of the transitory collection grasping at ‘mine’ generates attachment for the true existence of the ‘mine’ labeled on phenomena other than the focal object of ‘I-grasping’, such as the five aggregates, the sense powers, the eye and so forth. Then sentient beings generate attachment, anger, and the different karmas, and continue to circle in cyclic existence.

The bucket in a well is used as a metaphor for the situation of sentient beings in cyclic existence. In India they dig very deep wells, and to get the water they use a windlass at the top. The bucket is tied to the rope, which goes over the wheel of the windlass, and through this one pulls the bucket up and down. The bucket in the well and sentient beings are similar in six ways.

1. The bucket tied very tightly to a rope. Similarly, transitory beings are very tightly bound by the rope of karma and afflictions because they intensely grasp at ‘I’ and ‘mine’, which leaves them no choice as to where to go. Attaining liberation means becoming free from the bonds of karma and afflictions.

2. Just as the bucket is induced by the pulley operator into the well, sentient beings are induced into cyclic existence solely by their extremely disturbed and unsubdued mind.

3. Without any interruption the bucket goes straight from the top of the well down to the bottom. Similarly, sentient beings traverse without break in the great well of cyclic existence, down from the peak of existence to the very depths of the suffering without respite.

4. The bucket travels down through its own power, but has to be pulled up with effort. Similarly, sentient beings impel themselves downward and correspondingly have to be pulled up with effort. Strictly speaking, one cannot say that sentient beings go down in cyclic existence without any effort, because the karma still has to be created. But creating the causes for the lower realms is extremely easy and comes naturally to sentient beings, while creating the causes for a higher rebirth do not come about naturally, and requires great effort.

5. It is impossible to ascertain the beginning, middle and end of the bucket's journey due to it continuously going up and down. Similarly, even though sentient beings circle in cyclic existence due to (1) the afflictions of ignorance, craving and grasping, (2) projecting and establishing karma, and (3) consciousness, birth, name and form, sources, contact, feeling, aging and death, the earlier, later and intermediate order of these three groups cannot be ascertained.

The twelve interdependent links can be grouped into three, (1) afflictions, (2) karma, and (3) the remaining three of birth and so forth, and within each set they possess a definite order. But if we look at existence in samsara as a whole, then it is impossible to tell which of the twelve interdependent links came first.

For example, in the context of one set of twelve interdependent links the dependent link of birth is classified as a resultant suffering link arising subsequent to the causal links of afflictions and karma. But in the context of many interacting sets of twelve interdependent links it is not possible to ascertain whether afflictions and karma precede birth, or whether birth precedes mental afflictions and karma, because implicit in taking birth under the control of karma and afflictions is the further generation of afflictions due to the multitude of karmic seeds on the mental continuum.

6. The bucket has to go up and down in the well, day after day, without respite. Similarly, every single day, without respite, sentient beings are completely overwhelmed by the suffering of suffering, i.e., mental and physical pain, the suffering of change, and per-

vasive compounded suffering. They never go beyond the miserable state of being within cyclic existence.

The metaphor of the bucket in a well is not just for the purpose of merely understanding the situation of sentient beings, but to explain how to meditate on compassion for them. After emphasizing earlier the need for compassion for those wishing to practice the Mahayana path, it explains here how to generate great compassion by meditating on how sentient beings are similar in six ways to a bucket in a well. By reflecting on the way sentient beings are bound to cyclic existence by the twelve links one generates very deep compassion for them, even though one does not see all their sufferings directly. What is the agent that is keeping sentient beings circling in cyclic existence? It is the extremely disturbed and unsubdued mind alone. In what place does one go round, and in what manner? One circles from the Peak of Cyclic Existence down to the hells called Suffering without Respite, and the various realms of existence in-between. There's never a time when one is not wandering in cyclic existence.

What are the causes and conditions through which one is circling? One is circling through the power of karma and afflictions. Through the power of non-meritorious karma and the concordant delusions one circles in the lower migrations. For this no effort is needed - it comes naturally. The second cause is through the power of meritorious karma, immovable karma and the concordant delusions one circles in the happy migrations. This is more difficult since the causes need to be created with great effort.

Therefore the Buddha said that the sentient beings taking rebirth from the higher realms to the lower realms equal all the grains of sand of the earth while sentient beings that take rebirth from the lower migrations into the happy realms are equal to the few grains of sand we can pick up with our fingertips.

Meditating on the twelve links in relation to oneself will generate renunciation, and meditating on them in relation to others will generate compassion. As Lama Tsong Khapa says in *Illumination of the Thought*:

A beginner who has not previously manifested some renunciation by contemplating the way oneself is wandering in cyclic existence, will not find the suffering of others unbearable when reflecting on it. As it is taught in the *Commentary on the Four Hundred Stanzas*, first one has to contemplate in relation to oneself, and then meditate in relation to sentient beings.

In order to generate strong compassion one needs to meditate on one's own suffering first, because then one can relate the suffering of others to one's own experience.

Question: Is meditating on the suffering of sentient beings and its causes enough to induce great compassion, or are other conditions needed? Arhats do realize the suffering of sentient beings, but they do not have great compassion.

It is because of not perceiving the enemy or stranger as loveable that one does not find the suffering of an enemy unbearable, but actually finds joy in it, and one indifferently waves off the suffering of a stranger who has neither benefited or harmed one. But we find it unbearable when we see a friend suffering, and the more we perceive that person as being likable the more intense our inability to bear their suffering will be. Therefore it is vital to establish sentient beings as near and dear in one's mind.

According to the great scholars of the past there are two systems to generate the perception of sentient beings as near and dear. One follows the seven-point cause and effect method for generating bodhicitta, and the other follows the method of exchanging self and others. In the first system, followed by Chandrakirti and outlined in his *Commentary on the Four Hundred Stanzas*, one reflects on how sentient beings have been one's friend many times over in beginningless past lives, in the aspect of one's mother, father and so forth. Here sentient beings are established as near and dear by meditating on them as having been one's mother in the past, and it would take a very rough mind not to be moved by that meditation. Even though we may superficially sometimes feel that we don't get on with our mother, and be somewhat resentful towards her, if we think about the points of the meditation in great depth, it is virtually impossible not to be affected in a positive way. One will definitely start to see other sentient beings as near and dear, which makes it possible to bear being in cyclic existence in order to liberate them. This system was also followed by the great Chandragomin and Kamalashila.

The second method of generating bodhicitta is the method of exchanging self and others, which was pioneered by the great bodhisattva Shantideva. Here, after initially equalizing self and others through realizing that oneself and others are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering, one establishes others as dear and loveable by reflecting from various angles on the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the benefits of cherishing others. Having established sentient beings as extremely cherish-able and loveable one then reflects on their lack of happiness and on their suffering, which gives birth to a love and compassion for them that equals the intensity and strength of the love and compassion felt by a mother for her only sick child.

Having deeply contemplated their suffering with compassion, a bodhisattva joyfully wants to rescue sentient beings. Chandrakirti pays homage to compassion focusing on sentient beings and explains how to generate that compassion in the same verse.

Prostration to Compassion Focusing on Dharmas and No-object

When the reflection of the moon in a body of very clear water pervaded by ripples caused by a slight breeze and its momentary changes, occurs simultaneously with the movement of the water, is directly observed by holy beings, then they see the appearing moon's momentary transience and its lack of self nature. Similarly, bodhisattvas overcome by compassion see sentient beings floating in the ocean of the view of the transitory collections, which is fed by the wide blue river of ignorance and stirred up by the wind of mistaken conceptions.

Just like the moon's reflection, sentient beings appear as reflections of their black and white karma. Having taken these sentient beings as their object of meditation, seeing them burdened each moment with the compounded suffering of momentary disintegration, and at the same time seeing their lack of inherent existence, bodhisattvas generate great compassion for them.

This great compassion is also the result of having contemplated sentient beings as endearing and the way they wander in cyclic existence, as was explained previously. Ignorance is mentioned separately, even though the view of the transitory collections is ignorance, along with the self-grasping at phenomena that induces the view of the transitory collections. Mistaken conceptions prepare the mind for attachment or anger by distorting the object as either very desirable, or very undesirable.

Definitions etc.

The Definitions of the Three Types of Compassion

1. Compassion focusing merely on sentient beings is the compassion that is not directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings as impermanent, or by the wisdom realizing sentient beings as lacking inherent existence.
2. Compassion focusing on dharmas is the compassion that is directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings as impermanent.
3. Compassion focusing on no-object is a compassion that is directly held by the wisdom realizing sentient beings' lack of inherent existence.

All three types of compassion are great compassion because they are all in the aspect of wishing to rescue all sentient beings from their sufferings, which makes them superior to the compassion of hearers and self-liberators. In dependence on that type of compassion, one generates the thought 'I definitely have to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings'.

And even though they are differentiated by their focus, the three compassions are still the same in that they focus on sentient beings, as is clearly stated in the root text. The difference is that the first type of compassion focuses merely on sentient beings, while the other two focus respectively on sentient beings differentiated as impermanent or empty of true existence.

The compassion focusing on dharmas focuses on sentient beings after they are realized to be impermanent. Realizing impermanence means realizing subtle impermanence. First the practitioner realizes impermanence, then transfers that understanding to sentient beings, and then generates compassion. The subtle impermanence of a person is the momentariness of the person, which initially has to be realized through valid inference. It means the person is completely devoid of any moment of abiding as it continuously changes moment by moment. The coarse impermanence of a person refers to changes that one can observe directly without the help of inference, such as the changes that happen from week to week.

We can directly observe that the person is not the same this week as last week. But that weekly change comes about only because the person is changing moment by moment. A person will change after just one minute has passed in their one-hundred year life span. Actually even though instinctively we feel that it is the same person, the person who goes to bed in the evening is not the same person who wakes up in the morning. We might accept intellectually that the person is changing moment by moment, but rather than really feeling that the person is changing moment by moment, we will have the feeling that we are always the same. And that is due to innate grasping at permanence and its imprints.

The compassion focusing on no-object focuses on sentient beings after it is realized that they lack true existence.

In each case sentient beings appear differently to the meditator's mind, and therefore the compassion that is generated also differs.

Word Explanation of the Three Types of Compassion

1. Compassion focusing on sentient beings is short for compassion focusing merely on sentient beings. It is given that name because it focuses merely on sentient beings afflicted by suffering, without differentiating them by either impermanence or selflessness.
2. Compassion focusing on dharmas is short for compassion focusing on sentient beings that have been labelled in dependence on the dharmas of the five aggregates.

Apart from beings in the formless realm, where the form aggregate is non-existent, the basis of imputation of the person is always five aggregates.

The person with the compassion focusing on dharmas realizes that sentient beings are impermanent. By ascertaining sentient beings as impermanent one is able to ascertain that sentient beings are empty of a permanent, solitary and independent self. In dependence on that one realizes that they are merely labeled in dependence on the aggregates that are their basis of imputation by eliminating sentient beings as existing as a different entity from these aggregates.

Sentient beings are empty of a permanent self because they are not static. They are empty of a solitary self because they exist in dependence on parts, and they lack independent existence because they are established in dependence upon causes and conditions.

3. Compassion focusing on no-object is short for compassion that focuses on sentient beings that lack true existence. Here object refers to true existence, which is the apprehended object of true grasping, and no-object to the lack of true existence, which is the non-existence of the apprehended object of true grasping.

The assertion by an early Tibetan scholar that the first compassion necessarily focuses on permanent, solitary, independent sentient beings is mistaken. Compassion that focuses on the mere sentient being, without having discerned it as impermanent or selfless, exists both in the continuum of practitioners who have not realized coarse or subtle selflessness as well as in the continuum of those who have.

For example, a person who has negated the apprehended object of the grasping at permanent vase, and has realized impermanence, does not necessarily differentiate the vase as impermanent every time when seeing vase. Similarly, someone who has not realized the impermanence of vase does not necessarily differentiate every time the vase as permanent when seeing it.

Boundaries of the Three Types of Compassion

Compassion in the continuum of a buddha will be held directly both by the wisdom realizing impermanence, and the wisdom realizing selflessness, and is necessarily both compassion focusing on dharmas as well as compassion focusing on no-object. Similarly, compassion in the continuum of a bodhisattva who is abiding in the post-meditation period will also be both the compassion focusing on dharmas and the compassion focusing on no-object. The compassion in the continuum of a bodhisattva who is abiding

in meditational equipoise is the compassion focusing on sentient beings, because that compassion is not directly held by the wisdom realizing coarse or subtle selflessness.

For compassion to be directly held by the wisdom realizing coarse or subtle selflessness, both the compassion and the wisdom need to be manifest in the mind of that person. In the mental continuum of a bodhisattva in the post-meditation period both the wisdom realizing selflessness as well as compassion exists manifestly. But when the bodhisattva abides in meditative equipoise only the equipoise is manifest, and the other consciousnesses such as compassion recede into a non-manifest state. This does not mean they vanish completely; rather they become subliminal for the time of the equipoise.

Some scholars assert that at the time of meditative equipoise compassion and bodhicitta are non-existent in the bodhisattva's continuum, but this is a mistaken view. Even though compassion might not be manifest at that time, it can still be present subliminally in the consciousness. But when it is not manifest it cannot be directly held by the wisdom realizing emptiness.

It is very important to not just intellectually understand what each type of compassion is and how they are generated, but to put that knowledge into practice and actually develop and increase one's own compassion. If we don't increase and develop our compassion now while we have the opportunity, then that is a very great loss.

The Buddha said in the *Sutra requested by Pagpa Yul Khor Kyong*:

Due to not knowing emptiness, peace and non-generation
Migrators are wandering in samsara.
The compassionate ones guide them
With method and hundreds of analyses.

Because it is necessary to realize emptiness in order to be liberated from cyclic existence it is important to try to understand emptiness. One has to relate this to one's own practice by reflecting on emptiness according to one's potential. Even if one cannot realize emptiness in this life imprints are placed on one's mind to realize it in the future. We should try to see that for as long as one has not realized emptiness, afflictions will continue to be generated due to true grasping and the karmas resulting from those afflictions. Due to these one is then further bound to cyclic existence. Thus homage to whatever becomes compassion for migrators after having seen them, though appearing to exist inherently, to be empty of inherent existence, like the reflection of the moon in stirred water.

SARVA MANGALAM