

## **(2) The Dharma of exchanging oneself with others**

### **1. Visualisation of equanimity**

In order to give rise to equal, unbiased compassion, we need to view every sentient being with equanimity, which means not being pleasant to some people and being repelled by others. When Trungpa Sinachen asked Padampa Sangye for complete instruction in a single sentence, he replied, "Whatever you want, others all want as much; so foster equanimity between yourself and others!"

We often feel very close to our friends and relatives, while we seem rather distant from those we do not like and are indifferent towards unrelated people. With this unequal approach to people, our compassion will have a very strong sense of self-cherishing.

In fact, in this endless cycle of samsara, every sentient being has been our parent, our relative, for countless times. They have protected us, loved us, and brought us happiness. Since we are reluctant to part with our attachment to emotions, the majority of our loved ones and friends have in fact brought about difficulties and obstacles in our practice. In another way, all of these sentient beings, who have been like our mothers have also actually been our enemies, have harmed us countless times, and brought a lot of suffering upon us. Our enemies in this life bring us many afflictive emotions, pain and suffering, which urge us to conscientiously consider the suffering qualities of samsara. Due to this we have given rise to renunciation and turned towards Buddhism, whereby our enemies are a stimulus for our practice. From this perspective, all our causes and conditions with respect to all sentient beings are equal.

Furthermore, every sentient being, just like us, wishes to be happy, to be free from suffering. Every person feels the same with respect to their mind and their body. Every sentient being in samsara is bound by the five aggregates or skandas – form, perception, consciousness, action, and knowledge – and the suffering of the afflictive emotions of the five poisons. The body of every person is made up of flesh and blood. They all have emotions, wish to be understood and accepted. They all fear being lonely, being cast away, and they all are afraid of being helpless, without alternatives, facing the unknown world.

All the time we are thinking of how to increase our peace and happiness. We never wish to experience even the smallest amount of pain. It does not matter from which angle we look at it, all sentient beings are equal. When we see somebody else experience suffering, imagine that this person is you. Imagine yourself in the same situation eager to be happy.

Normally when we practise and visualise equanimity, we should see all our parents in our current and past lives above our right shoulder and all of our karmic creditors and enemies in our current and past lives above our left shoulder. Imagine that they are all equal. Visualise for a long time that all sentient beings and ourselves are all equal, until this feeling naturally arises.