WORKSHEET 2

THE BODHISATTVA PATH

Every being strives for happiness, but rarely are methods for achieving this goal comprehensively presented. In school and university this subject is not taught, and even in one's personal environment probably no one experiences uninterrupted happiness or considers it possible. Buddha showed a path to permanent happiness and pointed out that it is possible to achieve this.

The enlightenment mind, the attitude of evolving with compassion and wisdom for the good of all and attaining enlightenment, is fundamental in the Great Way (Mahayana) and the Diamond Way (Vajrayana).

Understanding that all living beings wish to experience happiness and that one's own happiness is not separate from that of others, one develops the desire to be able to benefit others. Love and beyond-personal compassion are a natural expression of enlightenment. Beyond-personal compassion does not exclude any living being and is independent of whether one likes or dislikes someone. Compassion sees the potential of others and strengthens their abilities.

Practitioners of the Great Way and the Diamond Way are called Bodhisattvas, which translates as "enlightened courageous ones".
They are called courageous because a Bodhisattva is undaunted, no matter what adverse circumstances or obstacles arise. Thinking of the welfare of others is included in his every action. The active implementation of this Bodhisattva attitude is through the Six Liberating Actions (generosity, prudent action, patience, joyful action, meditation, and the resulting wisdom) . Buddhist meditation is a method for allowing inherent qualities such as fearlessness, clarity, joy, and love to emerge more and more. As one develops beyond-personal compassion and wisdom, one becomes increasingly independent of external conditions, while one's natural inclination to do something meaningful for others increases.

Wisdom has many faces: there is a practical wisdom, namely to recognize what leads to happiness and what brings suffering and to act accordingly.
Through meaningful action, more space is created and the view for others becomes increasingly free. The less attachment to one's own "I", the more one feels connected to others and can be there for them. Because one is no longer limited by feelings, hopes and fears, the ability to perceive how a situation really is becomes more apparent. Immovability comes from understanding impermanence, when one realizes that difficulties that arise are not permanent, or even real in the end. Buddha taught that all phenomena have no independent existence, but are composed by conditions. With this understanding of conditional reality, a Bodhisattva acts wisely and takes action at the right time.

Through the unfolding intuitive wisdom, a Bodhisattva can also open an access for others to a level where spontaneous joy, inspiration, help, protection and love can be directly experienced.

[1] *See chapter on Six Liberating Actions*

EXERCISES

Discuss the exercises with a partner.

1. Compare the attitude of the Bodhisattva with the inner causes of happiness that you worked out in **Worksheet 1**.
2. Explain the Buddhist terms "compassion and wisdom".
3. What is the significance of Buddhist meditation?