

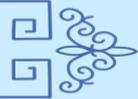


Many people have so much sufferings because they are unable to forgive themselves or others. This short note can be beneficial to reflect (and guide) on forgiving others and oneself. It is the negative attitude of (not only) not forgiving, but rather harbouring grudge and continue to hold onto the grudge (instead of forgiving); that's the faults to be overcome.

There are **two objects** in the Practice of Forgiveness:
(I) Forgiveness to Others (II) Forgiveness to Oneself

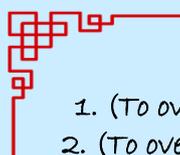
(I) The Practice of Forgiveness to Others:

- For others (as sentient beings who have limitations) that have caused harm to you in any way (they could be your children, your partner, relatives, friends or strangers), when they realize their mistakes and come to apologize, you as someone who practise Bodhicitta, immediately have to forgive them and cannot harbour the grudge.
- There are two ways to genuinely forgive in that kind of circumstances:
 - I. By understanding the limitations in sentient beings in the position under the control of delusions/ignorance and Karma (due to your own actions of harming them in the past, thus causing harm to you in this life). Therefore, you genuinely wholeheartedly forgive and accept the forgiveness.
 - II. As the practitioner of Bodhisattva, every action you do have to be initiated by Great Compassion. Thus, when someone who have harmed you regretted for their actions and asked for apology, you have to relate to that person with compassionate attitude. That person is ever be forgiven (whether that person asks for your forgiveness or not), even from the first day of the person harming you, you have already forgiven the person.
- The practice of forgiveness is a great asset of security for yourself (even in our ordinary day-to-day life, whether you practise Bodhicitta or not). When you have this value and the attitude of forgiveness, you can solve (overcome) a lot of problems. We can protect ourselves from suffering from the grudge because in life, in human society, it is so easy for us to get offended and so easy for others to harm us emotionally and physically. As long as we carry this immune system of forgiveness, we may get hurt during that moment, but we have the choice not to get affected after that moment onwards through the practice of forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is a great protection for healthy peaceful life for ourselves. So, carrying that immune system in our heart is so beneficial.
- Happy people, peaceful people, virtuous people and true Dharma practitioners never harm others. Only unhappy, non-virtuous, suffering beings would initiate to harm others.
- When someone harm you in whatever way (such as saying bad things about you, physically harm you, stealing your possessions or stealing your peace of mind) is because of that person (being) is miserable, is in suffering under great influence/pressure/stress of their past negative Karma. During that time, their mind/system/body/environment can be so negative that they are absolutely the most vulnerable being and absolutely the most important object of our compassion; and forgiveness is one of the faces (image) of compassion.
- In general level, when we are Mahayanic practitioner, we need such clear understanding in our heart and apply that into action.



(II) The Practice of Forgiveness to Oneself:

- If we have done any mistake in the past, if we're grasping on certain regretfulness, holding grudge to ourself, unhappy/angry about ourself of what we have done, (as we are also one of the sentient beings), therefore as practitioners of Bodhicitta and Mahayana, we have to practise forgiveness to ourself.
- As normal human beings, we are not perfected (when we were younger, we could have lied and hurt some people, and could have done stupid things, etc). Now that we are practising Mahayanic teaching (already grown-up), therefore we really need to let go of these grasping (to let go of the grudge and forgive ourself) and take important steps of purification of these negativities, in order to purify our own Karma.
- Could be your ex-partner, your parents-in-laws, parents, your naughty children, your mischievous siblings or could be anybody; as Mahayanic practitioners who couldn't let go and regard them as your enemies and still finding way to harm back will be absolutely disaster.
- When we forgive others, first person who get benefit is ourself (to be released from that misery). By embracing others (those who have harmed us) is forgiving ourself from the misery/suffering/grudge/negativities that we hold on to. So, forgiving others' mistake/harm to us, is in fact benefitting ourself first to get released from that misery.
- If we want peace within ourself, we have to practise compassionate attitude of forgiveness (of our negativities and our limitations), to be able to harmonize ourself and have peace within ourself.
- If you want peace and happiness among entire family members, at least you need to practise forgiveness (of all limitations of each and every one of your family members); at least from your side, you are in peace with everyone.
- If you want peace in the organisations/society/world, then at individual level, everyone needs to practise forgiveness. If everyone is able to do that, there will be no war, no conflict and no hurting of each other.
- Practice of compassion in the face of forgiveness is really the foundation/way/path to build a peaceful world.



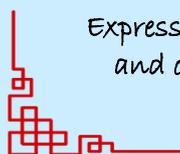
Reflection Note on Forgiveness

1. (To overcome fault of) Not forgiving even when others apologize.
2. (To overcome faults of) Not forgiving others, harbouring a grudge and holding it even when others apologize.



Reflection:

Express Compassion in the face/attitude of Forgiveness to ourself and others. Consecrate ourself as such a peaceful, loving and compassionate person.



by Geshe Topa, February 2022



❖ **Q&A1: When Geshe-la talked about forgiveness as face of Bodhisattva, I would very much like to do that, but it is really hard to do (I tried to forgive many times but somehow one thing happened again and I couldn't forgive again). How do I really forgive others?**

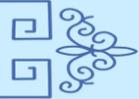
- You have been trying (and have been failing), that itself is thumbs-up.
- All the past Buddhas and Bodhisattvas including Chenrezig (Kuan Yin Pu Sa) have practised similarly like yourself and have failed numberless times (more than you); so always keep trying, don't get discouraged and never give up. Trying itself is a great practice.
- Even to be able to let go and forgive, sometimes may take years. However, once you really able to forgive and really able to let go (purify), the realizations and benefits are unbelievable relief and unbelievable liberation. (Remarks: You will enjoy it; just don't give up, just wait for that liberation from that forgiveness. All your effort will be paid off).
- When you're practising Buddha Dharma, there's so much reasons to forgive. You need to keep encouraging yourself to achieve that and you will be able to do so.
- You have the reason of Enlightenment for the person to whom you're unable to forgive, and also for your own Enlightenment. Your objective of Enlightenment for all sentient beings and your own Enlightenment are the reasons why you need to forgive.
- You also need to understand that whatever harm that you receive is because you have caused that kind of harm in the past. Now that you have met the Dharma, it is wise to cut the bondage of this negative relations with that person, or else it will repeat again and again in future. In future, you're in the position to harm him, he's unable to forgive you; after that he will harm you and you're unable to forgive...Samsara continues. So, for your own sake, you have to cut the chain.

❖ **Q&A2: (Remarks from a new student) Thank you very much to Geshe-la for the teaching on forgiveness. It helps her to overcome obstacles that stay in her heart for a long time; it helps her to let go. She really wants to express that the teaching is so beneficial.**

- Geshe-la said thank you to hear that she's able to let go of the obstacles in her heart. Geshe-la is really happy to hear her sharing and expressed that itself is a great gift to him.

❖ **Q&A3: I have a question on Forgiveness about forgiving myself, otherwise we cannot clear our Karma. My problem is sometimes I cannot stop blaming myself about doing some stupid things and bad things. About using Four Opponent Powers (4OP) to purify myself, purify the Karma. One of the powers is Power of Regret; but in regretting, I also blame myself. Can you please talk more about it?**

- From the Four Opponent Powers, the second one is the Power of Regret. Yes, in the writing it's right written as "Regret" but Geshe-la prefers to translate it as "Acknowledging."
- Acknowledging that whatever you need to purify, have to be purified because it is not helpful, it is negative. For some people, feeling regret intensify their negative emotions. So, you would rather recognize that those things are not helpful, therefore you need to let go.



- So how do you let go of something done by yourself? You have to be kind to yourself. You forgive yourself because you are one of the sentient beings. You are not Buddha yet. Thus, you deserve forgiveness for whatever stupid/bad things you have done, be kind to your ownself and let go.
- Letting go will create the basis to take the effect of the Third Opponent Power of Antidote.
- If you do not let go, however much you apply antidote—but without finding way to distil/purify—the antidote would not work.
- You always regard you are one of the objects of anyone's compassion because you are a sentient being. You are one of the living beings, therefore you must forgive.
- Only by forgiving and letting go will start to progress yourself to the pure being, and moving on to your new phase of pure start.
- Don't worry. Everybody does so many stupid things. So, you don't need to take it too negatively about yourself. We are still samsaric being. Samsaric being doing stupid things is like part of the package within us.
- But we met the Dharma. We met such amazing Buddha's emanations of Gurus, then we carry this wisdom.
- Therefore, you need to be sensible person to really cleanse yourself by letting go.
- Not only us, even some Bodhisattvas and Arhats sometimes also commit stupid things; but for very short time. The Karmic imprints only remain for just a glimpse as they immediately apply their capabilities of Great Compassion and Wisdom to purify immediately. We take them as the role model (example). So, each time we do stupid things, very effective and very fast, we let go (don't let it remain in our mind) and purify.
- In conclusion, we have to be very kind and very gentle to ourself. That's the very basic that will set the foundation to be kind and compassion to the rest of the sentient beings:
 - o When you talk to yourself, talk very nicely with lots of kind words, full of respect and full of gratitude to yourself.
 - o The continuum of this very life's past lives worked so hard; that's why you achieved Precious Human Rebirth.
 - o Since young, even though there are so many obstacles of not encountering Dharma, obstacles not to be kind, etc. Journey of your life is almost like the light wood log floating on the flood of river, finally able to reach and settle at the calm ocean.
 - o You didn't get distracted. You are still able to bring yourself up to this stage, and still training yourself to be a better person; you have to tell yourself that you have worked so hard, and give thumbs-up to yourself.
 - o Before you go to bed every night, always give thumbs up to yourself; acknowledge that you have worked so hard, and tell yourself that you have done well. Then, when you wake up the next morning, you acknowledge that too.
 - o Even though, maybe you lost your coolness, got angry, having attachment or jealousy during the day; but at least at the end of the day, you still think of Chenrezig (Kuan Yin Pu Sa) and you need to purify because you recognize these negative emotions. So many people don't even bother and sleep in full of anger, but you are at least remorse.
 - o So, every day, you tell yourself "You are great. Well Done" and treat yourself like that; very kind, very gentle and very compassionate.