

## *Sending and Taking Practice by Thrangu Rinpoche*

When beginning meditation, one of the ways to increase bodhichitta and compassion is the practice of *sending and taking* (Tib. *tong len*). In this meditation one thinks that one is taking in others' suffering and the causes of their suffering; in exchange one gives them one's happiness and causes of happiness. We may ask if we can really transfer to others the causes of our happiness. Actually, we can't in real terms, but what we are trying to do through this meditation is to develop the root, the seed of the actual ability to do this in the future. The seed of this is compassion, bodhichitta. With this meditation we are trying to reinforce our bodhichitta which can be compared to healing nectar or medicine. It has, in fact, an important effect that is to increase our compassion and bodhichitta. The degree to which we manage to increase and develop compassion will determine the degree to which we are actually able to help other beings. So if somebody says, "With that meditation can you really take away the suffering of beings?" the answer is "Not in the short term, but in the long term, yes." This is why one practices this meditation.

Some people have worries about this form of meditation. They think that by imagining or visualizing giving happiness to others, they give away their own happiness and lose it. They also believe that by imagining that they are taking on other beings' suffering, all that misery and suffering are going to pile up on them to the point that the suffering becomes totally unbearable. But there is no need to be worried, because nothing is really going to happen. In fact, this way of thinking occurs because we have become used to thinking in an egoistic way for so long. It is very natural that we should feel this way at the beginning, but we should understand that there is really no danger of losing our happiness and receiving a lot of suffering. Sending and taking meditation is not like trading because we are not actually exchanging anything in real terms. We don't have the power to make things happen so quickly in terms of cause and effect. But we might ask, "If there is nothing happening, what is the point? Why should I bother to meditate in this way if I can't really take away any suffering, and if I can't give away my happiness?" But there is a point to this meditation in that although we aren't doing a real exchange now, we are developing compassion and bodhichitta, developing them to the point where later on they will bring forth the real ability to help in such a way. This practice is the basis for later becoming capable of taking away other beings' suffering and giving them happiness. That is why it is such a meaningful and important practice.

Most of us probably know the meditation on sending and taking, but for those who don't, the basic principle is that sending and taking are synchronized with the breathing. When breathing out, we imagine that we send out bright white light. This bright white light goes out to all beings, who are visualized before us. When this white light touches them, we think that all our happiness and the causes of happiness are now with them. We think that they feel genuinely happy and content. When we inhale, we think that all the suffering, all the pain, all the worries, troubles, and negativity of all beings are coming into us in the form of a blackish light. When this light comes into us, we think that now all those beings are free from all their problems and suffering and that they feel very happy.

-----From Middle Way Meditation Instructions