



Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

CULTIVATING JOYFUL EFFORT

HOMEWORK FOR CLASS EIGHT

1. What does Master Shantideva advise us to do if we grow weary due to our hard work for spiritual goals, and what are some practical measures we can take to carry out Master Shantideva's advice?

He says we must leave off for a while and rest so that we can come back to the task later refreshed and happy. One way to regularly refresh ourselves is to keep our mornings free for meditation, quiet contemplation, and study. Another way is to take one day off a week and just rest and relax in order to restore ourselves to do our spiritual work happily and vigorously the other six days of the week.

2. List the components that should be included in the daily spiritual practice of every serious practitioner.

Every day one should a) reflect on one's leisure and fortune and remember the fact that our death is certain and we don't know when it will come; b) spend some time in meditation, contemplation, and prayer; c) some kind of exercise (yoga, tai chi, etc.) with the proper motivation; d) keep track of our morality; e) do something for someone else; f) think about how nice it would be to get out of this suffering life; g) do some daily study of a spiritual text ; and h) get a good night's sleep so that one can wake up refreshed and ready to work hard for one's spiritual goals the next day.

3. What is the weapon we should use to combat our mental afflictions, and what should we remember if that weapon should somehow slip away?

The "blade of recollection" is our best weapon against a mental affliction attack. Should the blade of recollection slip away we should "recall the terrors of hell" and "recover it quickly."

4. What reasoning does Master Shantideva use to prove that we are capable of watching our minds closely and keeping them away from anger and the like?

Suppose a person gave us a bowl of oil and told us to walk across a room with it, and then followed us with a sword at our neck, and told us he would slice our throats if we spilled even a single drop. We would never spill the drop. This proves that, if we set our minds to it, we are



capable of extraordinary concentration in avoiding mental afflictions, if we really want to.

5. What should we do when we fail in our spiritual practice?

We should feel regret – but not guilt, which is self-indulgent and non-productive -- and think about how to avoid failing again like that in the future.

6. What are the “four forces” of purification that we can use to cleanse ourselves of negative karma?

The four forces are a) recalling our highest ideals and getting back up on our feet after having fallen; b) regret for the misdeed we have done; c) restraint: promising ourselves not to do that kind of thing again for a given period of time; and d) the antidote force, whereby one performs a “make-up” activity in compensation for the misdeed.

7. What is one of the best antidotes or compensatory activities for any kind of spiritual misdeed or failure, and why?

Studying, contemplating, and meditating on the relationship between karma and emptiness is perhaps the best antidote for any misdeed. For if we understand the fact that things are empty, on the one hand, and that the way they do exist for us is totally dependent on how we have treated others in the past, we will follow our true, enlightened self-interest and be careful to avoid all negative deeds in the future.

8. Master Shantideva recommends “mindfulness” and “self-vigilance” as the main methods to protect ourselves against losing focus and becoming forgetful about what we should be doing with our lives. What kinds of practices help us stay in the “here and now”?

Cultivating a strong meditation practice helps us with both focus and staying in the moment, instead of daydreaming about the past or future. Maintaining that meditative focus or *samadhi* throughout the day requires constant reminders, as we transition from one activity to another, to be mindful and self-aware. Another way to remain concentrated in the moment is to “lose ourselves” in our virtuous activities. Other methods for “being here, now” include “losing ourselves” by constantly thinking about others, or to be perpetually aware of the presence of our Holy Lama.

9. Name the two kinds of “supernatural powers” one can develop through the steady cultivation of joyful effort and resolve in one’s spiritual practice. Where do such powers really come from?

One type of miraculous power that one develops as a result of good practice we can call common, or lower, or worldly. These include flying through the sky, becoming



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invisible, reading minds, seeing your past lives, knowing the future in advance, etc. The second kind of miraculous power accompanies the attainment of Buddhahood: having an omniscient mind, perfect love and compassion for all beings, and the ability to emanate countless bodies on countless planets to help countless beings in just the right way. Both kinds of powers come from cultivating kindness towards others and developing one's wisdom about the true nature of reality.

Meditation assignment: 15 minutes a day on constructing a schedule for ourselves that includes all the components of a daily spiritual life and one day off a week for rest and restoration.

Meditation dates and times: