



Teachings by Tulku Pema Wangyal On Saving Lives & Abstaining from Eating Meat

Based on
'The Thirty Sevenfold Practice of the Bodhisattvas'
from Gyelse Togme

When we talk about killing it means to shorten the lives of others. Life is very important for everybody unless we lost our mind. Kaybje Trulshik Rinpoche gives the following example: 'If someone breaks into your house, then you never say, 'Please kill me but don't take my belongings'. But you say, 'Please take everything, but don't kill me.' That shows we care, we cherish our life. This is the same for all forms of lives. Even animals, they cannot speak but they really don't appreciate it to be killed. You might have noticed how much fear they have when they are taken to the slaughterhouse. Even if they don't see, even if they are not told that they are going to be killed, they know ... that agony.

One of the reasons that I personally became vegetarian was because I saw a situation in India. Four butchers tried to kill a buffalo, they had so much trouble to kill that buffalo – such a struggle. After seeing that it was impossible for me to eat meat. When we put ourselves in their place then it is very difficult.

Very often we eat meat because of the taste. Very often we want a particular dish, because we remember a certain taste, and then we don't want to eat the meat-dish that is being served. But that is because the right proportion of spices, what is to be added on the meat, is not done properly and therefore we don't like that meat. Most of the taste is not coming from the meat but from the different spices. So, for the taste we don't have to eat meat. I have seen the result of a research in Japan about tofu. One kilo of soya is equal to twenty-eight kilo of beef when we look at the proteins.

We can see in our society that the animals are living in unbearable, unbelievable kind of concentration camps. I couldn't believe when I saw these industrial breeding of chickens, pigs ... incredible, you will not believe ... and what we are eating is the agony, the sufferings of all these animals. Therefore we are bound to get sick, bound to get all kind of problems, physical problems and mental problems. That is why you can see all the hospitals, specially mental hospitals getting more and more filled up.

You might not believe but during my childhood in Tibet I have only seen one person who was a little bit crazy – during all these years in Tibet. There were no mental hospitals in Tibet – now there are some. I think it has to do very much with what we eat. The first time I came to the West was in 1976. Some years later I went to Scandinavia and a friend of mine told me that a friend of his was in a mental hospital and he asked me to visit him. It was in Oslo. I thought there would only be a few patients – but there were seven huge buildings and they told me that there were more than thousand people there. When I wanted to go in, the door was locked and I had to ask permission, when I was in the door was locked from the inside – the situation was not very pleasant. All this is really the result of the imbalance of our mental state, imbalance of what we eat, and is very much produced by ourselves ...

... My father, Kangyur Rinpoche, used to go around the nomad places and buy animals and free them. In that way he saved them from being killed. He often used to go and buy chickens and fishes from the slaughterhouse and tried to free them. It is really easy to do those things in Hong Kong, Asia. I used to do these things quite often. It is easy because you find all kind of animals, all kinds of insects and you can free them quite easily. It is really amazing when you free the animals you find such a joy, they are so happy when they are free, when they are released. Specially tortoises ... when you free them in the ocean they go and then they come back and they nod their heads three times to thank you ... this is amazing, they really know how to appreciate, they come back. They swim thirty till fifty meters and then they come back to you, to nod their heads three times and then they go back.

It is a funny story but last year a friend of mine in Brittany invited me for their wedding. Before getting to their place I thought maybe I should go and buy something from the Intermarché supermarket. I went around and tried to find something but I couldn't chose. The funniest thing is that I passed the spot were they have lobsters. And one of the lobsters fell next to me on the ground, next to my feet it fell down. I thought maybe I should buy that lobster. When I bought that one, another fell on the ground, and another ... so I bought twenty-eight of them. I carried them, they gave me a box and I put them in my car and I went to see my friend. I told them, 'I brought a present for you.' They came and had a look in my car and they were amazed that I brought so many lobsters. So I told them that these lobsters were not for their party but were to be saved so that they would enjoy a long and happy marriage. This friend lived near the ocean. So I requested him. 'Let's go and free them.' They couldn't believe how happy these lobsters were, jumping and swimming ... the couple was very pleased, the lobsters were very pleased, and I was overjoyed. I have once seen how a family tried to eat lobster. They put the lobster in a big pot and they had so much difficulty to kill that lobster. Even if they tried to cover the pot the lobster tried to come up again. So I thought maybe I saved twenty-eight lives from the hot hell.

Kaybje Trulshik Rinpoche says that you cannot impose anybody not to eat meat. People can have many different reasons for doing that. But Rinpoche always likes to request his friends not to make meat the principal dish of their meal. And so this is also my request to you ...

People think that if you eat meat you will have a long life. But that is not true at all. My father lived 80 years and he was really strong, he had an incredible good health and he didn't eat meat. And also - you can go and see him, he is now in his nineties - Chadral Rinpoche doesn't eat meat. What he does is to free the lives of animals, and somehow he enjoys the longest health, and the best of health. He doesn't spend days or weeks in the hospital, no ... he enjoys a very good health. It seems that there is no reason to eat meat for your health. I am now in my fifties and also I didn't have much problems.

... I have a request – whenever you are able to free some lives of animals or if it is possible, if your health permits it, try to indirectly contribute to saving the lives of others, meaning try to eat less meat. If we eat less meat then naturally we directly contribute to the saving of lives of others. Last year there was a campaign in Malaysia. The students there heard about all the troubles about the animals and many of them became vegetarian. Because of this they had to close down twelve percent of all the butcher's shops in all Malaysia. So they had to find other jobs. Often we say, 'Oh it is good because it gives people a job'. But human beings are very intelligent and they will find other jobs. So, if we could provide shelter, love for the animals, that is really a great contribution. Also because it directly contribute to the animals, but indirectly contribute to us. If we could put ourselves in the place of the animals, that will be quite unbearable. By saving the lives of animals we indirectly contribute to our health, to our mental peace. You know, eating these days all the industrial breeding animals, and the suffering they have to go through ... What we are actually eating is the suffering, the agony of these beings what effects our own health. Therefore there are so many different types of diseases and we have to find medicines for them. We talk about concentration camps but in our society the animals concentration camps are really unbearable. If we could try to physically and mentally contribute to support them then that is the greatest accomplishment of the practice of the bodhisattva. When we say bodhisattva – he or she should be able to help others. Others includes all sentient beings.

Tibetans believe that they cannot live without meat. But really we can. There are now so many Tibetans who live without meat and they survive and enjoy a really good health. For example my father, Kangyur Rinpoche, lived really very, very healthy – I rarely saw in my life such a strong and healthy person – but without eating meat. His Holiness the Dalai Lama requested many of the monasteries in southern India where there are a lot of monks, to stop eating meat. What does that mean? That hundred of thousand of animals are being saved. He asked them not to bring any meat to the monasteries. Of course you cannot forbid them, so if they want to eat meat they have to do that outside the monastery. And once the Dalai Lama told me that he wanted to become a vegetarian. Of course his doctors said; 'O, no, no that will be so terrible for your health if you stop eating meat.' Then he had to negotiate with these doctors and he told his Tibetan doctors: 'So, because you treat me I cannot disobey you, I will listen to you but we will make some kind of deal. The first month of the year is miracle month of Buddha, the fourth month the birth of Buddha, the six month the month of the turning of the Wheel of Dharma, the ninth month Buddha's descending from Tushita heaven- these four months I will not eat meat. And every month there is full moon, new moon, and the eighth day, they are all very special and you cannot force me to eat meat on these days. For the rest I will eat meat, but on one condition – I will eat meat every other day'. So he managed to avoid eating meat for eight months a year.

Then last year the Dalai Lama told to all his attendants and everyone that he had realised that when they served him chicken that they had to slaughter for him. And he told them that from that day on he didn't want to have any meat in his kitchen. And His Holiness told Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche that when he was requesting his monks in the south of India not to eat meat something became so vivid, the suffering of all the animals, that he could not continue to speak at that moment and he stopped and the tears came from his eyes. But recently he became sick and he had terrible, terrible pain in his stomach and of course there was the pain but the tears didn't come from his eyes. And he asked Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche; 'What do you think? Why, when I was talking about the animals I really couldn't bear it, but when I was sick I didn't cry.' And Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche said; 'His Holiness, when you were talking about the sufferings of the animals you really felt this from your heart and when you had this pain, you maybe felt this physically but not from your heart.'

Of course I cannot say that 'please to this or do that.' But my sincere request is that if there are days that you can avoid eating meat and dedicate this for the peace of the whole universe then that will give incredible power and blessings. You know, you find in the 'Words of my Perfect Teacher' a story about a monk and his friend who was a butcher. The monk said to his friend-butcher; 'Please find another job and stop killing animals.' But the friend said: 'How do you expect me to stop, I have to take care of my family.' The monk said: 'Of course I cannot ask you to stop killing animals during the day. But would you be able to stop killing during sunset and sunrise?' 'I can try', answered the friend. What happened? When that butcher died half of his experiences were that the moment the sun raised he experienced all those animals he killed as monsters, and he had to go through all the tortures he had inflicted on these animals. That exhausted his negative actions. But at sunset all those monsters transformed in beautiful goddesses, making offerings to him, he experienced the most enjoyable time. In that matter, if we could avoid whatever we could that puts others in danger that is something really precious for others and for our own benefit.

This is just something that came from my own heart and I hope you can fulfil my small request. Thank you so much!



Source:

Fragments of teachings by Tulku Pema Wangyal Rinpoche on the subject 'The Thirty Sevenfold Practice of the Bodhisattvas' from Gyelse Togme, given between December 2000 and March 2002 in the Netherlands. Transcribed by Lidy Bügel of the [Nyingmapa Monastery Dongag Chanchub Chöling](#), Greonterp, The Netherlands.