



The Benefits of Saving Lives

by
Chatral Rinpoche

I bow down before the Lama, Buddha Amitayus,
And the bodhisattvas in training.
I shall now in brief describe the benefits
Of freeing animals and ransoming their lives.

To save animals from slaughter and any mortal danger,
With an entirely pure motivation and conduct,
Is without doubt a practice to be taken up
By all followers of the Buddha Shakyamuni.
Many sutras, tantras and commentaries
Describe in detail the advantages it brings,
And countless learned and accomplished masters of India and Tibet
Have stressed the value and importance of benefitting beings.
Even in the basic vehicle one avoids inflicting harm on others,
In the mahayana this is the very training of a bodhisattva,
And in the secret mantra, a principal samaya of the ratna family.
The reasoning behind this is as follows: in this world,
Nothing is as dear to someone as his or her own life,
So no greater crime is there than taking life away,
And no conditioned virtue brings greater merit
Than the act of saving beings and ransoming their lives.
Therefore, should you wish for happiness and good,
Exert yourself in this, the most supreme of paths,
Which is proven through scriptures and through reasoning,
And is free of obstacles and potential dangers.
Consider your own body and with this as an example,

Make every effort not to kill any living creature,
Birds, fish, deer, cattle and even tiny insects,
And strive instead to save their lives,
Offering them protection from every fear.
The benefit of doing so is beyond imagining.

This is the best practice for your own longevity,
And the greatest ritual for the living or deceased.
It is my main practice of benefitting others.
It dispels all external and internal adversity and obstacles,
Effortlessly and spontaneously, it brings favourable conditions,
And, when inspired by the noble mind of bodhichitta and
Completed with dedication and pure aspiration prayers,
It will lead one to complete enlightenment,
And the accomplishment of one's own and others' welfare —
Of this you need have no doubts at all!
Those whose minds incline to virtue and acts of merit,
Should prohibit hunting and fishing on their land.
Some birds, in particular, such as geese and cranes,
Are impelled by their karma to migrate
And fly south in autumn, north in spring.
At times, weary from the efforts of their flight,
Or having lost their way, some are forced to land,
Distressed, afraid and anxious; when this happens,
You should not throw stones or shoot at them,
Nor try to kill them or do them any harm,
But protect them so they may easily fly once more.
To offer care and affection to sentient beings
In desperate situations who lack protection
Brings just as much merit as the meditation
On emptiness with compassion as its core —
So it has been said by glorious Lord Atisha.
Lamas, officials, monks, nuns, men and women,
In all the places over which you have control,
Exert every influence and do all within your power
To release animals and ransom their lives,
While encouraging others to do the same.
In all those places where this is done,
Sickness among people and livestock will cease,
Harvests will be plentiful and life will be long.
All will enjoy happiness and well-being in abundance,
And at death let go of deluded experience,
Before finding an excellent rebirth within the higher realms.
Ultimately, there is no doubt that this will lead one easily
To find the supreme and perfect state of awakening.

In response to the request of Doctor Dordrak,
Who offered a pure silk scarf and a hundred Nepali rupees,
The one called Chatral Sangye Dorje,
Who strives continuously to ransom lives,
Wrote down spontaneously whatever came to mind.
By the merit of this may all sentient beings
Come to practise enlightened actions!

Mamakoling samanta!