



Mahayana Mind Training in Seven Points

An Essential Guide to Training the Mind
in Altruism and Wisdom

Venerable Dagri Rinpoche

Mahayana Mind Training in Seven Points presents a skillfull method for training the mind and transforming problems into a path to happiness and enlightenment. Why we transform the mind is because we want happiness and no suffering, and because the root of suffering and happiness lies within one's own mind. The Buddha gave very beautiful instructions on how to transform one's mind from the root through a better understanding of reality.



One can transform all bad circumstances into the path to enlightenment with the help of these skillfull instructions, which are like the sun. Even one ray of sun dispels darkness, and love and compassion are the inner sun, which dispels the inner darkness of suffering and depression.



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Mahayana Mind Training in Seven Points

by Geshe Chekawa

This essence of the nectar of instructions
was passed on by Serlingpa.

Understand the meaning of the text
as a vajra, the sun and a medicinal plant.
It transforms the spread of the five degenerations
into the path to enlightenment.

I bow down before great compassion.

The Actual Mind Training in Seven Points

1. The Preparatory Practices

Initially train in the preparatory practices.

2. The Training in Bodhicitta

View all phenomena like a dream.
Investigate the nature of the unborn mind.
Liberate also the antidote into its natural state.
Place the nature of the path within the universal mind basis.
In between sessions be a fictional person.
Blame the one for everything.
Meditate on the great kindness of all.
Train alternately in taking and giving.
Initiate the sequence of taking with self.
Combine both with the breath.
Three objects, three poisons, three roots of virtue.
Subsequently, to generate mindfulness,
train during all actions with words.

3. Transforming Bad Circumstances into the Path

When the environment and living beings are filled with negativities, transform these bad circumstances into the path to enlightenment.

Use directly for meditation whatever you meet, the action with four aspects is the best method.

View mistaken appearances as the four bodies, this is the highest protection through emptiness.

4. Combining All Instructions as Life Practice

The essence of the instructions is in short:

Relate everything to the five powers.

The instructions for the Mahayana transference are the mere five powers.

Value the path of practice.

5. The Measure of Having Trained the Mind

Condense all dharmas into one thought.

Rely mainly on the two witnesses.

Rely continuously only on mental happiness.

One is trained if one is able although distracted.

Reversal is the measure of being trained.

Having the five is the great sign of being trained.

6. The 18 Samayas of Mind Training

Always train in the three general meanings.

Change the aspiration but stay the same.

Do not comment on physical shortcomings.

Do not think about others in any way.

Initially purify the greater affliction.

Give up all hopes for a result.
Give up poisonous food.
Do not rely on gentle scriptures.
Do not get excited with insults.
Do not lie in ambush.
Do not attack the soft spot.
Do not put the burden of the *dzo*¹ on the cow.
Do not reverse the sequence.
Do not rely on being the fastest.
Do not channel the demon as the deity.
Do not look for happiness in others' sufferings.

7. The 22 Instructions on Training the Mind

Practice all yogas through one.
Practice all antidotes through one.
There are two actions, at the beginning and the end.
Whichever of the two comes first, be patient.
Protect the two at the cost of your life.
Train in the three difficulties.
Generate the three main causes.
Meditate without degeneration on the three.
Never be separated from the three.
Train impartially.
Value the pervading as well as the deep training.
Meditate always on the specifically identified.
Do not rely on other conditions.
Make it your main practice now.
Avoid loss.
Avoid interruption.

Mind Training in Seven Points

Train decisively.

Liberate yourself through investigation and analysis.

Do not cultivate boastfulness.

Do not be hot-tempered.

Do not practice sporadically.

Do not expect gratitude.

Colophon

Through the ripening of previously purified karma
and through the cause of my manifold aspirations
I dismissed suffering and bad instructions
and took up the instructions that subdue self-grasping.
Now I do not have regrets, even at death.

Introduction

General Introduction

The aim of all the teachings of the Buddha is to subdue the mental continuum, and out of the Buddha's teachings developed in Tibet what came to be known as the *mind training tradition*. This important text, which is called *Mind Training in Seven Points*, is the root of all subsequent texts on training the mind and contains every important aspect of the Buddha's teachings.

The tradition of Buddhism practiced in Tibet is Mahayana Buddhism, and its essence is the development of the view of dependent arising, i.e., emptiness that is supported by love and compassion. In other words, the essence of Tibetan Buddhism is compassion and emptiness.

Every sentient being has the fundamental wish for happiness and less suffering, and carries out most actions with this motivation. There are two types of happiness – happiness that arises in dependence on the body and happiness that arises in dependence on the mind. Most people direct their actions toward attaining physical happiness through a multitude of actions, such as going for walks, eating and such, which lead to an immediate experience of happiness, but do not generate deep inner happiness. Rather, what these actions are doing is merely blocking out or suppressing inner unhappiness and suffering. They do not bring deep inner happiness, and instead often lead to more suffering, which is why we need mental happiness.

There are many actions that achieve physical happiness, but it always depends on outer objects, and it is difficult to realize. Inner happiness is different, because it comes about through a change in one's view – it arises instantly the moment one changes one's point of view, even if one was suffering just a moment ago. Mental happiness does not require the sometimes immense buildup necessary for physical happiness, because it arises from within one's mind, independently from outer conditions, through a change in one's thinking on the basis of reality. There is a profound connection between understanding reality and inner happiness.

Whether one calls it a suffering mind, or an unsubdued mind, it is merely a different point of view of the same phenomenon. The creator of the unsubdued mind are the mental afflictions, not the mind itself, and the afflictions have only one function - to produce suffering and problems. It is therefore crucial to identify the afflictions and their faults.

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

The deluded afflictions are abandoned by the eye of wisdom,[4.46ab]
When cleared from the mind, where will they go?

The abandonment of the affliction of ignorance does not depend on outer conditions, but on the inner condition of wisdom. The inner development of love and compassion are the foundation, but love and compassion can only temporarily counteract the manifest afflictions, and in the long run the wisdom that understands dependent arising is needed. The wisdom realizing dependent arising is the only antidote that has the power to purify the mind from the afflictions at the root.

Every action one carries out, every experience one has, whether good or bad, exists as a dependent arising, because it depends on the basis of many causes and conditions. Actions do not arise on the basis of just one cause. This is a contemplation that widens and relaxes the mind, because the more one understands dependent arising, the more relaxed and spacious the mind becomes.

Through the understanding of dependent arising one becomes more skilful in avoiding suffering and generating happiness, because one understands that these different experiences come about through many causes and conditions, and that happiness and suffering have specific causes. The view understanding dependent arising is a realistic point of view that is rooted in reality.

The view of dependent arising and relative existence is also very useful within society in general, be it in relation to the environment, or to finances or other areas. When one understands that one is not an isolated, single occurrence, but part of a whole that is a composite put together out of many parts, then one understands that specific causes create specific results, and that results do not just arise from one single

cause. This view is also useful for the practice of patience, love and compassion, because it is rooted in reality.

The *Mind Training in Seven Points* has two aims: the development of the pure, positive thought of bodhicitta, and the development of the understanding of dependent arising, of emptiness.

Source and Transmission Lineage of the Instructions

A Buddhist instruction should always have its origin with the Buddha, who was the door to the Dharma. These instructions on thought transformation were originally taught by Buddha Shakyamuni, and then were passed on from teacher to student, down to the present day, via Nagarjuna and Asanga to Serlingpa, who was the main transmitter of the instructions to Atisha. Atisha in turn was the main transmitter of the instructions to Tibet, where he had many students, but the teaching on exchanging self with other he passed only onto his main student Drom Dönpa. “I would like to pass on these teachings to more students, but only you are ready.” Drom Dönpa in turn passed the instructions on to Geshe Potowa, who gave them to Geshe Sharawa.

There are two main lineages for the development of bodhicitta – the seven point cause and effect method and the method of exchanging self and others, which were united by Lama Atisha into eleven steps. Before starting with these meditations however, one begins with the preparatory step of the meditation on equanimity, which is not included in these two methods.

On the basis of equanimity come then the first three steps:

1. Recognition of all sentient beings as one’s mother from past lives.
2. Recognizing the kindness of the mother.
3. Repaying the kindness of the mother.

After the third step, the love that is based on pleasant appearance should be generated naturally. Then one reminds oneself of sentient being’s suffering and generates great compassion. This is how love and compassion are generated in the seven point cause and effect method.

With the method of exchanging self and others, there are also three steps:

1. Equalizing self and other.
2. Contemplating the faults of self-cherishing in various ways.
3. Contemplating the benefits of cherishing others in various ways.

Also here the love that is based on pleasant appearance is generated naturally after the third step. Although the method is different, love and compassion are equally generated with this method.

Geshe Langri Tangpa was a very pure bodhisattva, of whom it was said that his mental continuum had taken on the nature of bodhicitta. He was referred to as the moon. Geshe Sharawa's mental continuum was also in the nature of love and compassion, and in addition he was an expert in the Prasangika philosophy of dependent arising. He spread the correct view of emptiness in Tibet, and was referred to as the sun.

Geshe Chekawa came one day into the possession of a text called *Mind Training in Eight Verses*,² which was composed by Geshe Langri Tangpa, and when reading it he was greatly impressed by its special quality. Especially the fifth verse intrigued him.

Geshe Langri Tangpa, *Mind Training in Eight Verses*:

May I accept defeat
And give the victory to others.

Geshe Chekawa set off for the region of Lang Tang, to find the composer of the text, Langri Tangpa, but had to find out that he had already passed away. Geshe Potowa's other main student, Geshe Sharawa, was still alive however, and since there was no difference between Sharawa and Langri Tangpa, he attended Sharawa's teachings. Geshe Sharawa however did not mention any instructions on the exchange of self and others in his talks.

One day, as Geshe Sharawa circumambulated the stupas in the area, Geshe Chekawa approached him and said that he had a question.

Geshe Sharawa however replied that he had already taught everything he had to teach in his classes, and that he had nothing further to say. Geshe Chekawa mentioned that he had experienced the lines, “May I accept defeat and give the victory to others,” as very beneficial for his mind, and asked whether there was a direct transmission by the Buddha of these lines, and whether they were essential for the attainment of enlightenment. Thereupon Geshe Sharawa confirmed to him that there were direct statements in the sutras by the Buddha teaching the exchange of self and others, and that if one had no aspiration to attain enlightenment, then one should not practice the exchange of self and others. However, should one have the wish to attain enlightenment, then it needs to be practiced. Geshe Sharawa said that there were many direct statements by the Buddha himself in this regard, and by Nagarjuna as well, who is seen as a valid source and keeper of the Dharma.

Nagarjuna’s *Precious Garland of Madhyamaka*:

May all their sufferings and negativities ripen on me.

May all my qualities, happiness and goodness that I possess,

Go to all others, and benefit them.

This quote is seen as a source of the instructions on the exchange of self and others, and it generated great conviction within Geshe Chekawa. He requested teachings on this holy mind training, and then spent 14 years with Geshe Sharawa. During this time he received many instructions, meditated on both bodhicitta as well as emptiness, and attained in this way bodhicitta and the right view of emptiness.

Until that time, the instructions on exchanging self and others were only passed on from teacher to student on a private basis, but from then on they were taught more and more publicly. Geshe Sharawa said to Geshe Chekawa at the time, that it is good now to reveal to all that which was previously hidden, and gave a big public teaching on these instructions, from which Geshe Chekawa then compiled this text called *Mind Training in Seven Points*.

One additional factor for publicly teaching these instructions now was that they benefited the many people affected by leprosy at the time. Many of them were able to heal themselves from their sickness by purifying their karma through the exchange of self and others, and therefore these instructions came to be known in Tibet as the Leprosy-Dharma.

Homage

I prostrate to *great compassion*.¹

The term *great compassion*, or *thug rje chen po* in Tibetan, has two meanings, an interpretative one and a definite one. The interpretative meaning is Chenrezig, the buddha of compassion, and the definitive meaning is great compassion itself.

This homage here is not an homage to Chenrezig, but to great compassion, similar to the homage of the *Introduction to the Middle Way*, where Chandrakirti paid homage to great compassion because it is essential in the beginning, the middle and the end of the path.

Introduction to the Middle Way:

Compassion alone is the seed of a conqueror's perfect crop, like water for its growth, and like the ripening state of its longtime enjoyment. Therefore, I first praise compassion.

The Greatness of the Author

The essence of the nectar of instructions was passed on by Serlingpa.

Instructions refers to all the teachings of the Buddha, including the commentaries by the great masters, the *essence* of which are the instructions on training the mind in the two bodhicittas, and in relation to conventional bodhicitta, the instructions on exchanging self and other. *Nectar* is the inexhaustible nectar of enlightenment, the undying state, which never decreases, regardless of how much it is used.

These instructions originated of course from the Buddha, and then came via Serlingpa to Atisha, who is seen as the key transmitter to

¹ Tib.: *Thugs rje chen po*; this is a name for Chenrezig, the buddha of compassion. Literally it means *great compassion*.

Tibet.² Lama Atisha already had 150 teachers, many of them highly realized, but he searched for a teacher who possessed these instructions in an uninterrupted lineage from the Buddha. That is why he travelled all the way to Sumatra in Indonesia, where Lama Serlingpa lived and taught, to receive that lineage. Atisha was actually a wealthy prince, but he still took the difficult journey upon himself, because nothing aside from Dharma was of any interest to him.

It was a sea journey with many difficulties and obstacles, like the danger of the sea monsters that were manifested by Indra, and which were vanquished by Atisha through his meditation on love and compassion, when they attacked the ship. He relied also on the buddha Miyowa, one of the three deities of the Kadam tradition,³ and he was also guided by the twenty-one Taras as well. They appeared to him on his journey in different forms, like the young women that guided him with predictions. He took upon himself many physical hardships to receive these instructions, and through this he could also pass them on and spread them in Tibet.

The Greatness of the Text

Understand the meaning of the text
as a vajra, the sun and a medicinal plant.
It transforms the spread of the five degenerations
into the path to enlightenment.

The greatness of the text is shown to generate respect for the instructions. The lineage of the instructions passed on by Serlingpa is like a diamond, like the sun and like a medicinal plant.

Like a Vajra

The diamond is the most valuable of all precious stones, and even a

²The lineage is explained in greater detail in the outline “Source and Transmission Lineage of the Instructions.”

³The practice of Buddha Miyowa, lit. the Undisturbed One, is used to overcome obstacles. Buddha Miyowa is one of the three Kadam deities.

small diamond outshines all other precious stones. Similar to a sliver of a diamond outshining other precious stones, the practice of even just a part of this mind training outshines self-cherishing egotism.

Like the Sun

Similar to the sun dispelling darkness, even just one part of this mind training dispels self-cherishing egotism.

The sun dispels darkness, even one ray of sunlight is able to dispel darkness. Love and compassion are like an inner sun, and the stronger they are present in the mind, the more happiness and well-being one experiences. The outer sun dispels of course the outer darkness, and brings in this way some limited happiness, but it also brings sufferings. Since the main causes for suffering lie within one's mind, the inner darkness of suffering and depression is dispelled by the inner sun of love and compassion, and not by the outer sun. Love and compassion are the inner sun that completely dispels the inner darkness of suffering and depression, and fills the mind with the light of love and compassion. This inner sun does not have any harmful side effects, and one can never have too much of it; contrary to the outer sun, which can cause damage like drought, and the drying up of lakes and rivers.

If one translates this mind training into practice, there is no doubt that the mind will change. When a person generates love and compassion in their mind, then they will have a strong mind with courage and charisma. They will be a person whose mind is unplagued by doubt or fear, and who will develop into a good and reliable person. If instead one always thinks in a self-centered way, only thinking about one's own advantage and how to cause harm to others, then fears and doubts will form deep within one's mind. Whatever others do, one will always be distrustful, worried and unhappy. When the other person acts or talks, one will always be distrustful and think the other person is out to harm one. In this way, no matter where one goes, one will never be able to live in harmony with others, and always be unhappy.

The Buddha gave very beautiful instructions on how one can transform the mind from the root through a better understanding of reality.

This is the main instruction of the Buddha. Why we transform the mind and subdue it is because we want happiness and no suffering, and because the root of suffering and happiness lies within one's own mind. When the mind is unsubdued it brings many sufferings with it, and therefore the basic practice in Buddhism is non-harmfulness.

The strength of love and compassion in one's mind automatically prevents actions that harm others, and on the basis of avoiding harmful actions one can then benefit others. Not to harm others is the basic principal, and building upon that, one can benefit others, which of course is even better.

This Buddhist way of acting arises from the Buddhist view of dependent arising. One does not want suffering but wants happiness, and by avoiding causing suffering to others one is happy. If one inflicts suffering onto others, one experiences suffering immediately, but looking more closely, inflicting suffering onto others is a negativity that will also bring with it infinite suffering in the future.

A person whose mind is filled with love and compassion will always feel more comfortable and happy, regardless of where they go. When the mind is balanced and happy, one also has less physical sicknesses and suffering. If one becomes sick, medicines are more effective, the person heals quicker, and has fewer signs of aging. If the mind is unbalanced and disturbed, one often experiences physical sicknesses, or becomes sick more easily. Medicine is less effective in healing the body, and the body ages more quickly.

Like a Medicinal Plant

Similar to each part of a medicinal plant, such as the leaves, dispelling sickness, this training dispels self-cherishing egotism.

One will outshine hearers and self-liberators, eliminate the poverty of sentient beings, dispel the darkness of the afflictions, and be able to destroy the great sicknesses, by just internalizing one part of the meaning of these instructions, without having fully accomplished the text in total. One should come to appreciate these and the many other qualities of the text through gaining experience, by putting them into practice.

In the present time, when the spread of the five degenerations of life-span, mental afflictions, sentient beings, time and views abounds, when the white side⁴ loses strength and the strength and armies of the dark side⁵ increase, when there are many unfortunate and obstructing conditions, one can transform all bad circumstances into the path to enlightenment with the help of the skilful methods of these instructions.

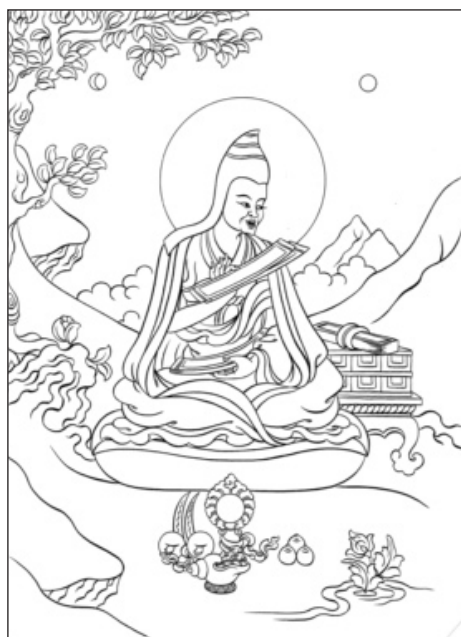
If we look at a medicinal plant, then we can see that all of its parts have medicinal properties. There is no bad part to the plant, everything has medicinal properties, be it the root, the stem, the branches or the leaves.

Understand the Meaning of the Text

One should understand the explanations of the text through study and practice. These are not just stories, but realistic instructions, which one can understand through one's own experience arising from one's practice.

⁴ virtuous side

⁵ non-virtuous side, negative side



Serling-pa

The Actual Mind Training in Seven Points

1. Training in the Preparatory Practices

Initially train in the preparatory practices.

The preparatory practices are the contemplations of the precious rebirth with freedoms and endowments, the great meaning they have and how difficult they are to find, on death and impermanence, the suffering of the lower realms, refuge, karmic cause and effect and the contemplations on the sufferings of cyclic existence.

Here one trains the mind as preparation for the path common to the great capable being in the thoughts of the general first two stages in the Lamrim, i.e., in the stage common to the person with small capacity and in the stage common to the person with medium capacity.

The training in the thought of the person with medium capacity centers around developing the aspiration for the definite happiness of liberation. Wherever one takes rebirth in cyclic existence, one experiences suffering uninterruptedly, and what binds one to cyclic existence are the fetters of afflictions and karma. Liberation from cyclic existence means to be liberated from the bonds that bind one to cyclic existence, and it means total freedom from suffering. The liberated person just experiences happiness, and no further suffering. For them suffering does not exist even in mere name.

The bonds that bind one to cyclic existence are afflictions and karma, and they bind us to the continuum of the contaminated aggregates like a rope. That called cyclic existence is the continuum of the contaminated aggregates under the control of karma and afflictions. As long as the aggregates are controlled by karma and afflictions, it is irrelevant where one is, because they are samsara.

The realm in which one finds oneself as a bound person is one of the three realms: the desire realm, the form realm or the formless realm. The aspect of one's rebirth takes one of six forms: hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human, demi-god and god. That is how karma and afflictions bind us.

Out of karma and afflictions, the main fetter is the bond of the afflictions. When a person has overcome the afflictions through an understanding of dependent arising, then one can say that the person is free from cyclic existence. When the main effort lies in conquering the afflictions, then that is the training in the thought of the person of medium capacity.

2. Training in Bodhicitta

The training in ultimate bodhicitta is the meditation on emptiness, and in the case of a Mahayana student of sharp faculty, ultimate bodhicitta is taught first, and conventional bodhicitta second. But in accordance with the general way of proceeding, which is mirrored in the sequence taught in the Lamrim, one has to teach conventional bodhicitta first, and ultimate bodhicitta after. I am going to follow therefore the sequence outlined in the Lamrim, and we are going to first talk about conventional bodhicitta, and only later about ultimate bodhicitta.

Shakyamuni Buddha first generated bodhicitta in the lower realms, on the basis of being a hell being, when he generated compassion there for his companion, who was beaten while pushing the coal cart, wishing, “May his suffering ripen upon me.”

Equanimity

Love and compassion are the root of our happiness and well-being. We have many possessions, but love and compassion are our most valuable possessions; they are invaluable. Everybody likes love and compassion, and they are qualities that everybody can generate.

The love that is meant here is the love based on pleasant appearance, and is generated through specific reasonings. Our perception of the other person is influenced by our view of them, whether we look at their qualities or their faults.

If we look at the qualities of the other person then they appear as pleasant and attractive, but if instead we look at their faults, and just think about their faults, then they appear repulsive and unpleasant. If we see qualities in the person, he or she appears as pleasant, even if there are faults. If we see faults, the person will appear as unpleasant, even if he or she has qualities. Here, in this meditation, we look at the actual good that exists in the other person, and through this arises, in dependence on facts, the love based on pleasant appearance.

One initial obstacle to generate this love is a mind that is torn between attachment and anger. We have attachment for one person, and anger

for another person, and this makes it impossible to generate the love that is based on pleasant appearance. But if our mind views others as the same, then one can also generate the love based on pleasant appearance. Therefore one has to initially remove attachment and anger. Attachment and anger arise relative to others, who are categorized into enemy, friend and stranger. Enemies and friends are the specific objects of anger and attachment, while strangers are usually viewed with indifference.

How does one meditate on equanimity? One does it by first focussing on the object, and then investigating it. First one meditates on the stranger and contemplates the reason why they are a stranger to us. The reason is that we do not experience an immediate benefit or harm from that person. Then one considers that the other person was countless times our friend in past lives, and benefited us in these lives, like our friends in this life, and that it is therefore not okay to view this person with indifference.

If we consider the enemy, then there is the perception that this person has harmed us in the past a lot, is harming us in the present, and that one is unhappy because of them. Due to this reasoning one develops aversion toward the other person.

When we consider the friend, we like that person, usually because one has received food, clothes or other help from that person. Then one focuses again on the enemy, and considers that this person has benefited us even better in the past than the friend in this life, and that they provided food, clothes, help and so forth, over many lifetimes. Therefore there is no reason not to like this person, and there is also no reason for anger towards this person.

The same form of reasoning is then used on the friend. Here there is no reason for attachment, because this person has harmed us in the past countless times, more than the enemies of this life, and they are also going to harm us again in the future.

Therefore, all sentient beings have harmed us and benefited us equally, and therefore it is appropriate to stay mentally balanced and retain one's inner calm.

Once anger and attachment are reduced through this meditation, one can then direct one's attention toward the stranger, and also meditate here that one has been equally benefited and harmed by that person in past lives. In this way all three – stranger, friend and enemy – are equalized.

One has to meditate repeatedly in this way on the facts, and thus generate experiences of these points. After having in this way equalized all sentient beings, and compared the harm and the benefit one has received, then overall the benefit outweighs the harm by 99% to 1%. Sentient beings of course harm us from time to time, but primarily we experience benefit, and that is why we can view them with love and compassion, free from anger.

When the situation arises that we meet sentient beings who harm us, then we need to meditate on patience, but this is difficult without training. If the mind is well-trained in patience, then one can meditate in any given moment on patience. Patience purifies in one moment the negative karma of many eons, one does not fall into the lower realms, one will have a beautiful appearance, one will find food and clothing, many friends, and in short, experience everything good. This comes through the power of patience.

Patience is a calm mind. Even when the other person becomes angry, one's own mind stays calm. The definition of patience is a calm, undisturbed mind without anger.

I have personally observed how a person with patience can defuse a situation, even if the other person is extremely upset and ready for a fight. The person with patience defuses the situation because they have no anger, stay calm and do not say anything offensive or provocative. The practice of patience is very valuable.

When one observes sentient beings, one can see that they want happiness, yet are separated from the happiness they desire, and instead experience much suffering. This is the misery of sentient beings, and additionally they are blocked by attachment and anger.

Sentient beings categorize other humans into enemy and friend; the buddhas on the other hand, seeing all things as they really are, do not

see enemies and friends. They see all sentient beings as lovable, even stronger than an extremely loving mother sees her child. Since this is the reality, buddhas do not divide sentient beings into enemy and friend, which is a distortion we have due to attachment and anger. Even among sentient beings there can be different views regarding the same person. The person who is for some a bad person who has inflicted much harm is seen by others in a good light and well-liked. All of that is just created by one's own thoughts, just like the suffering generated through this, and has no basis in reality.

Recognizing this, one decides to give up attachment and anger, and to generate equanimity, which is important as a basis for love and compassion.

These meditations and analyses are based on reality, and of course make less sense in the context of only one lifetime. Rather, one has to think in the context of the existence of past and future lives. Past and future lives are an actual reality, there are infinite past and future lives, without beginning or end.

A common argument is that one cannot see past lives. But just because one cannot see something does not mean that this phenomenon does not exist. Additionally, there are people who can remember past lives, like recognized reincarnations for example, who as kids recognize objects and people from their past life.

In India there is a girl who as a small child remembered her past life, and described this life to her parents repeatedly in great detail. She repeatedly asserted that her parents lived somewhere else, and described the village, the street, and the circumstances. When the parents of the girl gave in and went to have a look, they found that everything was exactly the way the girl had described it. They also found out that the family described by their daughter had lost their own daughter in a car accident, shortly before the girl had been reborn to the new family. For the child it was as if she still belonged to the parents of the past life; she remembered something that actually existed. This is an example of the memory of one life, but there are also memories of two, 10, 100 or even 1,000 lives.

Love Based on Pleasant Appearance

After having trained the mind in equanimity, and having pacified the disturbances of attachment and anger, one has to meditate on how sentient beings have benefited one, and how one has received more benefit than harm. One meditates on love by becoming mindful of how much others have benefited us.

From the point of conception up to actual birth, and after, one could only develop due to the kindness of others. At the beginning one does not have the necessities to stay alive, like clothes, housing or food, and one cannot even dress or feed oneself. The love that is based on pleasant appearance is developed through the meditation on the kindness of others. The meditation on the love based on pleasant appearance has many benefits, because even just one brief meditation on this love builds up vast positive potential, which otherwise would require months or years of effort to accumulate.

There are four forms of generosity – material generosity, generosity of protection, generosity of Dharma and generosity of love, and the highest form of these four is the generosity of love. Although one does not give anything directly, the generosity of love is the highest form of generosity, generates the most positive potential and brings with it countless positive results.

It is also scientifically proven that children who meditate daily for 15 - 20 minutes on the love that is based on pleasant appearance already have after one week a more relaxed, happier and broader mind. A person who is meditating on this kind of love has a more relaxed, calmer, happier and more peaceful mind.

Great Compassion

Great compassion is the specific cause for enlightenment, since bodhicitta needs to be born directly out of great compassion. Great compassion decides the question of whether one belongs to the Great Vehicle or not. Within a person with great compassion the Mahayana lineage is awakened, and without great compassion this is not the case.

Great compassion is the direct cause for enlightenment and important at the beginning, in the middle and in the end. At the beginning, great compassion is like the seed, in the middle it is like water, and in the end it is like the enjoyment of the crop. It is equally important for the generation of bodhicitta.

In the middle, great compassion is important for the equal, wide and pure generation of the bodhisattva actions, that are carried out up to the attainment of enlightenment. Here great compassion is like water, which is important for the growth of the crop. In the end, great compassion is important for the enjoyment of the crop of complete enlightenment. When the bodhisattva attains enlightenment, their enlightened mind leads countless sentient beings to liberation and enlightenment, by showing them the different objects of abandonment that have to be given up, and the different objects of integration that have to be practiced in an infinite way.

Infinite space has no end, and similarly, sentient beings have no end – there are infinite sentient beings due to their karma. A buddha works for as long as there is infinite space, and this is likened to the enjoyment of the ripened crop. If the crop is well-ripened, then one can enjoy it well, and similarly, the enjoyment of the actions of the buddhas depends on the great compassion of the buddhas.

After they have generated the pure thought, there are many differences in the speed with which different bodhisattvas attain enlightenment, because bodhisattvas with greater compassion attain enlightenment faster than those with great compassion that is less strong.

Extra strong compassion is also necessary for the practice of tantra, which includes a special method to attain enlightenment in this life. Only a person who wants to attain enlightenment extra quickly, in this life, because of not being able to bear the suffering of sentient beings, and who wants to be able to do as much as possible for others, is qualified to practice tantra. For this a very strong, intense compassion is needed.

The main reason for the generation of compassion is the perception of suffering, through seeing suffering. If one experiences much suffer-

ing, and when one wants to be free from one's suffering, then this compassion for oneself is called renunciation. When one considers that others experience this suffering, then love and compassion are generated, and one gives birth to self-confidence.

This love and compassion bring inner peace and balance with them, as well as self-confidence and the ability to bear difficulties. If someone is unhappy and when the mind is disturbed by suffering, then it is impossible for this person to be happy, even if the outer conditions are excellent. Even if the person sees very beautiful flowers, it will not bring happiness. Similarly, melodious sounds, extremely pleasant smells, exquisite food, pleasant tactile contact or good accommodations, do not bring happiness to this person.

What these outer conditions cannot generate, can be generated through love and compassion, namely inner well-being, mental balance and happiness.

Love and compassion have many benefits, for others as well as for oneself, for this life and for future lives. Love and compassion are like the life force, it is like someone one cannot do without. If a person needs something to be able to live with others in harmony, to have friends wherever one goes, then it is love and compassion. Love and compassion are also the causes for one's trustworthiness, whether one will be trusted by others. Love and compassion are also the necessary qualities for a Mahayana teacher. Of course a Mahayana teacher needs to be learned, but as the most important quality he needs to take the well-being of others as more important than his own. Someone with love and compassion does not only bring happiness to their own mind, but also brings peace to the animals and other sentient beings in the environment, because this person has love and compassion deep within their mind. Such a person will also be famous, and in a positive way be renowned for their compassion, to the degree that other people will be happy just by remembering them.

In short one can say that love and compassion have many benefits.

Question: What is the difference between compassion and great compassion?

Answer: There is a big difference. Normal compassion is often combined with attachment, it develops on the basis of attachment. It is usually very seldom that someone has absolutely no compassion. Great compassion develops on the basis of contemplating and investigating, it is generated from understanding that sentient beings in cyclic existence are separated from happiness and are overwhelmed by suffering. Cyclic existence is in the nature of suffering, even though one has here and there small contaminated happiness. But this small happiness disappears and turns into suffering. When one feels hot, and goes into cool water, then initially this feels pleasant, but it is suffering in nature. Then there is also contaminated suffering, like the pain of hot water on the body.

Great compassion will liberate all sentient beings from suffering, without attachment or anger, and when this compassion is generated in the mind strongly and in a natural way, then it is great compassion. If it is generated with effort, then it is not yet great compassion.

Great compassion is based on the love based on a pleasant appearance, because the more dear and pleasant the other person appears, the less one can bear the suffering of the other person. Once we can view all sentient beings without attachment or anger as dear, then we can generate strong compassion when we perceive their suffering.

Love and compassion are very important character qualities, and if someone has developed these qualities fully, then this person can be labeled a holy person, and even the place where this person lives will be a holy place. When this person performs practices such as healing with the hands and such, then it will be very effective, because this person channels the love and compassion of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the sick person can be healed. I have observed myself how people were healed through the laying of hands by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is in reality a buddha, even if he always denies this, and asserts to just possess a certain measure of wisdom and insight.

The Meditation on Equalizing Self and Others

Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen in the *Lama Chöpa*:

There is no difference between myself and others:
none of us wishes even the slightest suffering
or is ever content with the happiness we have.
Realizing this, I seek your blessings that I may
generate joy for the happiness of others.

Oneself and all others have no wish for even the slightest suffering, and regardless of how much happiness one has, it is never enough. Even if it is just a small happiness, one needs it desperately. In this regard, self and others are equal in the wish for even the smallest happiness, and in the wish to not experience even the slightest suffering. One loves and cherishes the self, views it as attractive, and gives others up. The reason for this is that one has not equalized self and others, which is impossible for as long as one only cares about one's own happiness, and gives up others. This view lacks a foundation in reality, however. Is the self good and kind to us? The answer is no. The only reason for the self-cherishing attitude is that one wants happiness and no suffering.

Out of this fact arises the reason for cherishing others – others also want happiness and no suffering. Once one starts to investigate this, then one realizes that there is no difference between self and other. In the same way one wants happiness and to avoid suffering, others also want happiness and to avoid suffering. Thinking deeply about this reduces the egotistical thought, and increases the cherishing of others.

Contemplating the Faults of Self-Cherishing in Various Ways

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

Whatever sufferings are found in the transitory worlds, [8.129cd]
came from the wish for self to be happy.

In cyclic existence many sufferings exist, and their source is the self-cherishing thought.

Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen in the *Lama Chöpa*:

This plague of cherishing myself

Is the cause giving rise to unsought suffering.

The self-cherishing thought is seen as the cause for every suffering. It is like a chronic sickness, out of which everything undesired arises.

Geshe Chekawa:

Blame the one for everything.

Everything unwished for, all suffering, arises due to the self-cherishing thought, and therefore one should always blame the self-cherishing.

The *unwished for* refers to rebirth in the lower realms; the worst that can happen to one is rebirth in the hells, which does not happen without cause. A cause for rebirth in the hell realms is for example, the action of killing another, due to the self-cherishing thought that loves self and gives up other.

If one generates greed for the wealth of others, or even makes their wealth one's own, due to the self-cherishing thought that loves self and gives up other, then this will be a specific cause for rebirth in the realm of the hungry ghosts. Also here the basic cause is self-cherishing.

If one dismisses and despises others, due to the self-cherishing thought that loves self and gives up other, then this becomes the cause to be reborn as an animal, with the main suffering of naturally present ignorance.

If one goes to war, or if there is fighting in families, due to self-cherishing that loves self and gives up other, then it is all the fault of self-cherishing.

Therefore blame the self-cherishing
for all suffering and problems!

One wishes for oneself all the good in samsara, such as a strong, beautiful body, health, wealth and fame, but it does not come. One always wishes for the best, but it does not come. Even though one wishes for health, sicknesses always come, even though one wishes for pleasant conversation, criticism comes, even though one wishes for financial success, what comes are loss, unemployment and other diverse problems.

These things do not come without a reason, but have negative karma as their cause. The root for that lies in the self-cherishing thought, because one commits negative harmful actions out of the thought that loves self and gives up other. It is this harmful karma that brings about the unwished for suffering.

If one looks at a situation where one person is abused without having harmed the abuser, then this seems strange. Why does this happen? It is because in a previous life one abused others, and this karma becomes the cause that one is abused in this life just like that.

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

I previously caused sentient beings [6.42]
harm similar to this.

Therefore it is suitable that

I receive now the harm that sentient beings inflict.

Because one harmed other sentient beings in past lives, and has accumulated negative karma in this way, then it is natural that one experiences harm in this life due to this negative karma. If it is asked who caused this karma, the answer is: The self-cherishing thought. We can say that the self-cherishing thought causes nothing good for oneself, and instead everything bad.

Some people suffer from melancholy. The cause for this could lie in a past life, when one caused sadness to people who loved one, such as parents, friends, spouse, children and so forth. This created the karma for oneself to experience sadness as a result.

If one has right understanding, then one does not get angry about it,

but takes it as a reason to practice taking and giving on the basis of this better understanding of reality. One generates the awareness that there are many others who experience the same problem as us, and then one experiences the problem for them, by meditating:

“May, through myself experiencing this problem,
all others be free from their problems!”

One meditates that others actually become free from their problems and sufferings. If one transforms one’s sadness in this way with the practice of taking and giving, then one purifies infinite karma, and builds up infinite positive potential. This method is called *transforming negative conditions into the path*, and it is the fast way to enlightenment. One who can transform their mind in this way is a courageous person.

One can observe that in cyclic existence people suffer because they are jealous towards the wealth and high status of others, because they compete with those they see as equal, and because they are arrogant and despise those they see as inferior. These mental poisons are born out of self-cherishing. The self-cherishing thought has been with us since beginningless time, and has harmed us all this time. Here in the text it is sometimes described as *grasping at self*, which sounds similar to self-cherishing, but in reality refers to a different mental state, although occasionally these two terms are used interchangeably.

The grasping at self is an unrealistic mental state that perceives something that does not exist, namely an independent self. When one searches for this self, one cannot find it. The self-cherishing thought is focused on the self, does not want to let it go, and wants to improve its situation. And for as long as one carries both within oneself, one does not have a chance for happiness or well-being, and one will only experience bad things and suffering.

In reality the self-cherishing thought and the grasping at the self are two different mental states, but they often occur together, and they are the same in the sense that there won’t be happiness for as long as they are existent.

Contemplating the Benefits of Cherishing Others in Various Ways

Geshe Chekawa:

Meditate on the great kindness of all.

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

Whatever happiness is found in the transitory worlds⁶ [8.129ab]
came from the wish for the happiness of others.

Every happiness in the transitory world, from the smallest happiness up to the very strong and inexhaustible happiness of liberation and enlightenment, is born from the wish for the happiness of others. It is the result of love and compassion.

Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen in the *Lama Chöpa*:

The mind that cherishes mothers and places them in bliss
is the gateway leading to infinite qualities.
Seeing this, I seek your blessings to cherish these beings
more than my life, even if they rise up as my enemies.

The text here says, “Meditate on the great kindness of all,” which is done through the meditation on cherishing others.

Here one has the greatest variety of meditation topics. One is the kindness that we have received from our parents. From our father and mother we have received a great deal of positive things, because they brought us up, supported us and protected us over many years.

Even people who are not our father or mother have been kind to us in many ways, which we can contemplate. For example, that we can drive comfortably in a car from the airport to the center is due to the kindness of sentient beings, and the dependent arising contained within this event is immense. It came about only in dependence on

⁶ Tib.: *jig rten*, is literally translated as *the transitory base*, and does not just refer to the earth, but to whole realms of transitory existence.

the hard work of many people, since both the street and the car had to be built first, so their existence depends on those people and sentient beings, they came about in dependence on their kindness.

Another topic of contemplation on the kindness of others is our food. That one can eat in a restaurant rice with vegetables does not come about randomly. The vegetables for the different foods have to be planted first, and this process contains many steps and many difficulties. Subsequently the food has to be transported to the shops, among other things. In the restaurant, it has to be washed and prepared, for which one in turn needs salt and other ingredients, which also have to be brought from other places.

As a human one cannot exist or survive without other humans and sentient beings, because surviving is only possible in dependence on other human beings. Therefore, others are kind to us when they are our parents, and also when they are not our parents, and hence the instruction to meditate on the great kindness of all.

These contemplations should lead to the cherishing of others, to a wish for the happiness of others and to a wish for the freedom from suffering of others, and also to love and compassion. Once one has totally internalized these attitudes of love and compassion, where one loves others as much as one initially loved oneself, and where one wishes others to be free from suffering as much as one initially wished oneself to be free from suffering, then the negative actions, with which one harms others, cease automatically, and everything good comes to us, from a higher status³ up to the permanent happiness of enlightenment.

This attitude is very important because it has a deeply transforming effect on one's own life. One will be more relaxed and happier. Looking at famous personalities, who are renowned for their altruistic actions and great benefit for humanity, one can see that their fame and success came because they considered this attitude of cherishing the welfare of others very deeply, sincerely internalized it and translated it into practice.

To meditate on this attitude is extremely valuable and powerful, also

from a karmic view, even if one cannot meditate on this attitude for very long. Just meditating on this attitude for one or a few minutes purifies an infinite amount of negative harmful karma that was accumulated in the past. The positive karma accumulated by just one minute of meditation on this attitude builds up so much positive potential that if it were to have form, space would not be able to hold it.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that all steps and aspects of the path, as well as all paths, arise due to the pure thought. Out of the positive motivation develops all good things, such as medicine and such, in a general way, and the *bhumis* and paths in the Dharma.

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

The nature of cyclic existence is suffering.

Samsara is in the nature of suffering, and he who recognizes this, and who can contemplate this with a broad mind, will not let his mind be disturbed, but investigate well what the causes and conditions for suffering are, and then reverse these. One does not need to let one's mind be disturbed, but rather investigate in a calm manner what the actual causes for cyclic existence and suffering are.

Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen in the *Lama Chöpa*:

In brief, infantile beings labor only for their own ends,
while Able Ones work solely for the welfare of others.

With awareness realizing the distinction between faults and qualities,
I seek your blessings to enable me to exchange myself with others.

Giving up the self-cherishing thought and adopting the cherishing of others contains many benefits, and if one wants to compare these closely, one only needs to compare oneself with the buddhas. In Buddhism there is nobody who was a buddha from the beginning, even Shakyamuni Buddha was not a buddha from the start, but an ordinary person. He came to enlightenment by reversing the self-cherishing thought, and cherishing others. If one likewise gives up the self-cherishing thought and cherishes others, like the buddha, then everything

good will come one's way; but if one holds onto the self-cherishing thought, then one will not attain even a good rebirth.

One realistic reason to cherish others is that the realization of the path depends on others. To attain a precious human rebirth, one has to practice ethics, and even to attain a general human rebirth one has to practice at least one form of ethics. But the practice of ethics does not come about without others, because the thought to avoid harming others, can only be generated relative to the basis of the other person. Therefore a higher rebirth comes from others.

The practice of generosity, patience and so forth can similarly only be practiced relative to others.

In samsara one is born from one's mother, and is then given food, clothing and shelter among other things, from her, which is also an example of how all happiness comes from others in cyclic existence. Great enlightenment depends on the generation of the pure thought of bodhicitta, which in turn depends on great compassion, for which the suffering of sentient beings is unbearable, which in turn needs to be focused on sentient beings. The practice of the six *paramitas* of generosity, ethics, patience, etc., can only be practiced in dependence on others. Hence, the mind needs to be directed toward others to attain the state of enlightenment. One has to meditate on the path of course, but the mind has to be focused on others.

One can recognize that every happiness in cyclic existence and the development of the path depends on others, and therefore one has to cherish others. If one cherishes others through love and compassion, then one will temporarily attain the higher status of a good rebirth as a human or in the god realm. But not only that, one will also have many helpful friends and a vast, helpful entourage. One will also have a long life, because if one has love and compassion, one will not kill another sentient being, which leads to a long and healthy life. One will also practice the four forms of generosity, which will result in having wealth in that future life.

Even though one initially thinks that the self-cherishing thought is useful, in reality it inflicts only suffering onto us. Love and compassion on

the other hand, and the attitude of cherishing others, improve our situation in cyclic existence. They prevent us from falling into the lower realms, and they improve our situation in cyclic existence more and more, until finally one attains liberation from cyclic existence and the state of full enlightenment.

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

There is not much to say,
the childish only love themselves,
while the Able Ones are for others.
Consider this difference.

One does not need many words, but only has to compare oneself to the buddhas. The buddhas generated love and compassion and attained great happiness through this. How is it with you, do you have more happiness or more suffering? If one cultivates love and compassion then this leads to stable, unending, inexhaustible happiness. Buddhas are happy in every situation, their experience of happiness is much greater than ours, they experience 100,000 times more happiness than us. We do not even have good contaminated happiness, not to mention uncontaminated happiness. Out of this the necessity to purify the self-cherishing thought and train the mind in love and compassion is born.

The Actual Exchange of Self and Other

Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

If one does not exchange
one's happiness with the suffering of others
then one won't become a buddha.
One will also not have happiness in samsara.

If one does not exchange the self-cherishing thought with the cher-

ishing of others, then one will not attain enlightenment. Not only will one not attain enlightenment, one will also not have happiness in cyclic existence.

The exchange of self and others does not mean that one labels self as other, and others as self, but that one exchanges the focus. Instead of being focused on self and aiming for the benefit of self, while denying others and their benefit, one focuses on others and their benefit, and gives up self and the benefit of self. One loves others as one initially loved oneself, and one gives up self in the way one initially gave up others.

It is possible to exchange the self-cherishing thought with the cherishing of others in the same way as how we became habituated to view the body as our own, even though it actually belongs to our parents. The body actually comes from the bodies of one's parents, and is therefore a part of them, but one views it as "mine."

If one stands on a mountain peak, and looks at another mountain peak, then the mountain peak where one is standing is here, and the other mountain peak is there. But when one goes to the other mountain peak, then this changes, and what was previously here becomes there. Here and there do not exist inherently, but are labelled by the mind. It is the same with the exchange of self and other.

The meditation on the benefits of cherishing others and the disadvantages of the self-cherishing thought are for the purpose that one starts to feel better. It is a special method to bring about the happiness of the self. What it does not mean is that you give yourself up, do nothing for yourself anymore, or that you do not buy food or clothing for yourself anymore.

But if one trains in cherishing others as one loves oneself, develops empathy for others, meditates on love and compassion, then one automatically attains what one wishes. Everything good will come to you, temporary happinesses and well-being, and finally also the stable happiness of liberation and omniscient enlightenment. In reality one achieves everything good and beneficial for oneself, even though one gives up the self-cherishing thought.

Question: It was said that the exchange of self and others does not mean an identification with the other person, but an exchange of priority. But Shantideva often describes the exchange of self and other as an exchange of identities in his *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*.

Answer: The exchange of self and other is in reality the exchange of aim and priority, but there are also those meditations where one puts oneself in the position of the other person, or where one identifies with the other person, so that one can understand the suffering of that person better. In the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions* there are these verses that explain a meditation where one identifies with the other person, and then meditates on pride, jealousy and competitiveness. To reduce the self-cherishing thought one treats oneself from the viewpoint of others either with pride, or jealousy, or with competitiveness, which is a very effective method.

The reasoning for the kindness of others, and why one can cherish others, is rooted in reality, because one needs others for the things that keep the human body alive, such as food, clothing, housing, friends and the like.

The causes for the higher status of a human body were also generated in dependence on others, because one can practice the six *paramitas* of generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilization and wisdom only relative to others. Generosity is the cause for wealth, and can only be practiced relative to others. Ethics is the cause for a higher rebirth, and needs to be practiced in relation to others, such as giving up killing or stealing. Patience, which is the cause for many positive results, can also only be practiced in relation to another person who is angry with us.

To cultivate compassion, others are needed as the focus for this compassion, because compassion depends on the suffering of the other person. The attainment of enlightenment depends on bodhicitta, which also needs to be generated in dependence on others.

The attainment of enlightenment depends of course also on a buddha teaching the Dharma, but all practices that one has to implement in order to become enlightened can only be implemented relative to others,

and therefore one says that others are as important for us and as precious as the buddhas, and need to be treated with the same respect.

Therefore, everything good, be it the highest aim of enlightenment, or the temporary aim of a higher rebirth, or the aspects that make up a good life, such as a healthy and long life, enough food and clothing, housing and friends, all of this comes from others.

Geshe Langri Tangpa, *Mind Training in Eight Verses*:

Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit
from all sentient beings,
who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I shall hold them most dear at all times.

Sentient beings are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel because one attains every temporary happiness and the ultimate happiness of liberation and enlightenment only from others.

To attain enlightenment one needs to exchange self and others, and for as long as one has not done that, one cannot attain enlightenment. Not only does one have to remain in the unenlightened state, but this state in cyclic existence is full of sufferings. Perhaps it would not be too bad not to have attained the enlightened state, if one could have some happiness at least, but even that is impossible due to the self-cherishing thought.

The Training in Alternating Taking and Giving

Geshe Chekawa:

- Train alternately in taking and giving.
- Initiate the sequence of taking with self.
- Combine both with the breath.

Taking

This training contains two practices, taking and giving, and in accordance with the explanations one can first concentrate on taking, and leave aside giving till later.

One can meditate that one is taking in the suffering of others in the form of black light, and the result is that the other is free from that suffering, from obscurations and negativities, and one also meditates that has eliminated one's self-cherishing.

The meditation on taking primarily has the aspect of compassion, on which it exerts much effort.⁷ After having trained in love and compassion, and finding the suffering of others unbearable, one trains in taking on the suffering of others. The worst suffering is the suffering of the hell realms, and then upwards to the suffering of the hungry ghosts, the suffering of the animals, the suffering of the human realms, and the suffering of the demi gods, and the gods.

First one meditates on compassion because of these sufferings, and then one takes these sufferings from them by taking it in within oneself, and destroying the self-cherishing thought with it. One meditates that with this suffering one destroys the actual enemy, the self-cherishing thought, and that through the absence of self-cherishing and grasping at the self, well-being is generated in the mind, and one is filled with happiness.

Beginners in this practice and the less courageous should start this practice by taking suffering from self. If one meditates in the morning, one meditates on taking on the sufferings that will come in the even-

⁷ This is meant literally, that the mind takes on the aspect of compassion.

ing, and that they are purified through this action. Then the sufferings of the next day, next month, next year and so forth, up to all the sufferings of this life. One meditates that one has eliminated them through the practice of taking.

If one has not attained liberation, then one has to take further rebirth in samsara, and therefore one takes on all the sufferings of all lives one will experience up to the attainment of enlightenment. One gives all these sufferings that one took within oneself to the self-cherishing thought, which is the root of all suffering. The self-cherishing thought as well as all these sufferings dissolve and become non-existent, so that one does not have to experience them in the future.

Once one has taken in all of one's sufferings in this way, and they become non-existent, one turns to the sufferings of close ones, like the sufferings of parents, friends and so forth, and subsequently to the sufferings of strangers, and then to the sufferings of enemies. Lastly one takes in the sufferings of innumerable sentient beings equalling the expanse of space.

Some students experience fear or tension during this meditation. This is however not a cause for worry, as it is good to have this feeling, as it is a sign that one is doing the meditation in the right way. Some experience their mind being pervaded by well-being when there is less self-cherishing.

To actually take suffering upon oneself is only possible for highly realized yogis, but even if one has not reached that high a level, one still trains in this practice. One easily builds up very much positive potential and one also purifies negativities quickly and easily.

Previously it was often observed that even heavy sicknesses were cured through this practice, and also these days one can observe this phenomenon. I myself have seen a person cure themselves from cancer specifically through the practice of taking.

One meditates initially that the sickness, which is a result of past karma, totally uses up this karma, and that through this one's own purpose is fulfilled. Then one meditates that through this experience of suffering all others are liberated from this suffering, which fulfills the

purpose of others.

Even to meditate just for four minutes in this way is very effective, because of the power for the purification of negative karma and the accumulation of positive potential through this practice. This happens even though one is not able to take on the suffering of others as a beginner.

Giving

The meditation on giving contains the aspect of love, the wish that all sentient beings may have happiness. One practices this meditation with the awareness that all sentient beings lack happiness, and with the wish that they may have happiness.

Here one can meditate on one's body as a wish-fulfilling jewel, from which everything good that others need, comes. One sends out manifestations of one's body in all directions, which transform into everything that is needed, such as clothing, food, shelter and medicine. These emanations transform into drink for the thirsty, food for the hungry, clothing for those without clothes, warmth for those freezing, into conditions for a precious human rebirth, into everything good and useful.

The worst suffering is the suffering of the hells, where the body is burnt in fire without interruption. To end this suffering, the manifestations transform into cooling rain, which frees the hell beings from their suffering, and fills them with happiness and well-being. They instantaneously take rebirth as a human, and their suffering transforms into the suffering of human beings. Now one sends food and clothing to all human beings, who are satisfied through this.

The most important generosity is the generosity of the Dharma; it is not enough to satisfy others with food and clothing. Therefore one also now gives the Dharma, by manifesting as infinite virtuous friends, who show to infinite sentient beings, who are all in human aspect now, what must be practiced and what must be abandoned. With the help of these instructions they meditate on the path, and attain the different results of the path. Now one can meditate that one has brought them

the definite happiness of liberation and enlightenment. The meditation on giving is perhaps slightly easier.

Teachers and buddhas are not objects for the taking of suffering, but one can meditate on manifesting all kinds of excellent objects, and offering them to the teachers and buddhas of all directions and buddha fields. These offerings generate great bliss indivisible from emptiness in their minds. They of course always have bliss, but one meditates in this way, and if one could meditate in this way for 5 - 10 minutes, one accumulates vast amounts of positive potential.

This meditation is for the accumulation of one's positive potential. The manifesting and offering of thrones to the teachers who are still alive, serves for their long abiding. The main object of giving is one's positive potential of the past, present and future, which transforms into offerings, thrones and the like. Wealth and the bodies of the past cannot be given to others, because they are in the past. One can only give objects of the present and the future.

Geshe Chekawa:

Subsequently, to generate mindfulness,
train during all actions with words.

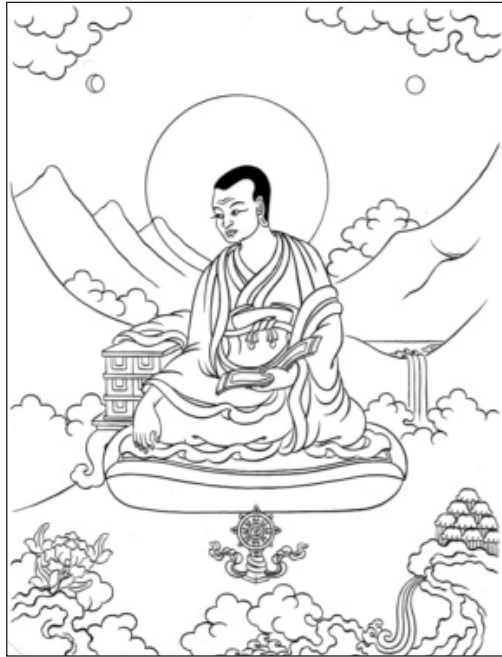
The training in the practice of giving and taking is combined with the recitation of suitable verses that highlight the meaning of this practice, and the best verse for this was composed by Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen.

From the *Lama Chöpa*:

And thus, venerable and compassionate gurus, I seek your blessings:
May all negativities, obscurations and sufferings of mother migrators
without exception ripen upon me right now,
and by giving my happiness and virtue to others
may all migrators become endowed with happiness.

This verse has five instead of the traditional four lines because Panchen Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen was so enthusiastic that he added the extra line requesting the blessings of the teacher.

Once one is familiar with the meditation on giving and taking, then one can combine it with the coming and going of the breath, which is referred to as the combining of the meditation on taking and giving with the vehicle of the breath. With the out-breath one meditates on giving, and with the in-breath one meditates on taking. It is said that the breath and consciousness go hand in hand, and in this way one can understand the saying that buddhas are useful for sentient beings even in their breath.



Geshe Chekawa

3. Transforming Bad Conditions into the Path to Enlightenment

Transformation Through Thought⁸

Transformation Through Conventional Practice

Geshe Chekawa:

When the environment and living beings are filled with negativities, transform these bad circumstances into the path to enlightenment.

The transformation of bad circumstances into the path to enlightenment means that one is utilizing these bad circumstances for the generation of the pure thought, the thought of bodhicitta. In these degenerate times many obstacles exist that hinder the practice of the Dharma. Some have a happy life and because of this it does not enter their mind to practice the Dharma, and at the end of their life they have great regrets, not having used their good opportunity. For them their life is a loss at the end, because they did not practice the Dharma. Others yet are distracted from the Dharma by their high position at work with its long hours. Others have many bad conditions like lack of success, broken financial deals and such, and again no Dharma practice comes about. Some are so sick that even one minute of Dharma practice is impossible.

All these conditions need to be transformed in the mind into good conditions for Dharma practice. Negative conditions are the result of negative karma, which in turn is generated by the self-cherishing thought.

The environment and the sentient beings within, filled with the results of negativities, are transformed into the path to enlightenment. That could be sicknesses, difficulties that are given to one by others without obvious reason, as well as the other problems in one's environment or country, which are all results of harmful karma that has ripened.

In short, negative inner and outer conditions are the results of negative karmas accumulated due to the self-cherishing thought, karma that

⁸ This has two parts, relating to conventional aspects of the path, and relating to the view aspect of the path.

ripens now and needs to be purified. One should recognize this and in this way not let one's mind be disturbed by these circumstances.

Sickness is a broom against negativities and obstacles.

One sees sickness as a broom that exhausts negative karma and obstacles. Similar to a broom that sweeps away dirt, sicknesses purify negative karma and obstacles. In this way one can meditate with joy that one will be free from suffering in the next life.

Suffering is an incentive to virtue.

Suffering that one experiences is an incentive for virtue. The different sufferings that one experiences, some of them unimaginable, are an incentive to the positive, and the positive that is meant is positive karma. It is an incentive to accumulate positive karma and give up negative actions.

As long as everything is going well, the thought to attain liberation or enlightenment does not cross one's mind. Only when one experiences suffering, and the mind becomes sad, does one start to think about how this can be avoided in the future, and how instead happiness can be achieved. In this way suffering is an incentive to virtue.

Suffering is movement toward Dharma alone.

Through suffering comes Dharma. The suffering and problems that we experience allow us to understand how others experience these sufferings too. In this way our suffering also becomes a condition for compassion that cannot bear the sufferings of others. In relation to self, the suffering generates the wish for liberation, and in relation to others, it generates compassion. A further positive effect is that the experience of suffering and problems makes the mind humble; it cuts through pride.

Normally one does not wish for suffering, and is happy about the absence of suffering. One wishes for happiness but in reality one experiences suffering, and therefore it is good to meditate on the advantages

of suffering. It is also good to train oneself in the attitude of not wanting to avoid suffering, but to be happy about it, by making oneself aware of its benefits.

Malicious gossip is a realization of the gods.

When others talk badly about you, whether it is accurate or not, it purifies your negative karma, and this can be seen as a realization bestowed on one by the gods. One purifies much negative karma and obstacles, and builds up much positive potential, and it will inspire one to virtuous actions. If one experiences the opposite, then it is the result of positive karma, and one dedicates this karma to full enlightenment.

Transformation Through the View

Geshe Chekawa:

View mistaken appearances as the four bodies,⁴
this is the highest protection through emptiness.

The transformation through the view consists mainly of the meditation on emptiness, since it is the view of dependent arising. When we talk about the absence of a self, the self that wants to be happy and to avoid suffering, this self cannot be found, even if we search for it everywhere on the inside and on the outside. In the same way, the others that one labels as friend, enemy or stranger, if one searches where this person is really to be found, in the body or in the mind, then this person is unfindable, and this is the absence of the self.

Everything has been empty of inherent existence from the beginning. Regardless of whether one investigates or not, the object is empty of true existence. If one investigates the object with one's own mind, then one finds that the object is indeed empty of true existence, it is empty of existence from its own side. By meditating more and more in this way one realizes that all phenomena are empty of an independent nature. Then one condenses the emptiness of all phenomena into one single focus, and then meditates on this with a clear mind. The mind

does not analyze the object anymore at this stage. It is simply the focus of the recognizing consciousness that abides calmly on emptiness, and which is pervaded by great bliss. Then one recognizes this as the very subtle mind that is the *dharmakaya* with emptiness, and generates the pride that one is this *dharmakaya*.

One is the *dharmakaya*, which is one with the non-dualistic wisdom of all buddhas, and also with the subtle mind of all sentient beings. The subtle mind of all sentient beings is uncontaminated by the tendencies of ignorance. This mind is called the clear light with suchness, and one meditates on the pride that one is this *dharmakaya*. One meditates on the unity of one's own clear light mind, the transcendental wisdom of all buddhas and the clear light of all sentient beings. This is a very important meditation, even if one does it only for one brief moment.

If one has first built up one's positive potential well, and has purified negativities well, then one can generate well the view that realizes emptiness. If one carries out this meditation even just for a brief moment, then it has great value, and makes our human life meaningful.

All inner and outer phenomena have been empty since beginningless time of inherent existence, they are dependent arisings and empty of true existence. But we do not know this and perceive phenomena mistakenly as truly existent; they appear to us in a mistaken manner. In actuality they are totally empty of independent existence, true existence, inherent existence, and therefore they are like the unborn *dharmakaya*.

The *dharmakaya* is the omniscient consciousness of a buddha, understands all phenomena directly and abides in the meditation on emptiness inseparably from bliss. Every sentient being has a very subtle consciousness that is the basis *dharmakaya*, or fundamental *dharmakaya*.

The basis *dharmakaya* is the extremely subtle consciousness of clear light, which has been free from mistakes from the beginning, and is also free from mistakes right at this moment. It is not going to improve by attaining enlightenment. This is the *dharmakaya*, and it is very im-

portant to know that one possesses something like this in one's continuum.

This consciousness in our continuum is also called buddha essence, and every sentient being possesses it. The temporary deluded mental states that disturb the consciousness do not exist in the nature of this essence.

What obscures this buddha nature temporarily are in general the different conceptual mental states, and specifically the mental afflictions, which are based on ignorance, and which are counteracted by the wisdom understanding dependent arising.

One is talking further about the non-abiding emanation body, and the unceasing enjoyment body, which means that the emanation body is free from ultimate abiding and the enjoyment body is free from ultimate cessation.

Then there is also the *svabhavakaya*, or nature body, which is of inseparably one nature with the *dharmakaya*, enjoyment body⁹ and emanation body.¹⁰ The *svabhavakaya* is not a separate body from the other three bodies, but is in the nature of these bodies.

The *dharmakaya* is our special consciousness, and the *svabhavakaya* is the nature of this consciousness, they are inseparably linked. The *nirmanakaya* and the *sambhogakaya* are both form bodies of the buddha that manifest on the basis of the *dharmakaya*, together with the *dharmakaya*, to bring the different sentient beings to enlightenment.

The purpose of the *sambhogakaya* is specifically to bring the already very developed superior beings to enlightenment, and the *nirmanakaya* is for all other sentient beings. When one attains enlightenment then all four bodies must be available.

The emptiness that is explained in the *Heart Sutra* is the highest protection. All phenomena exist dependently and empty of independent existence, which is the best protection.

⁹ Sanskrit: *sambhogakaya*

¹⁰ Sanskrit: *nirmanakaya*

Geshe Chekawa:

Three objects, three poisons, three roots of virtue.

The three objects are friends, enemies and strangers. The three poisons are attachment, anger and ignorance. In relation to friends one generates attachment, in relation to enemies one generates anger, and in relation to strangers ignorance is generated. Out of these afflictions, mainly out of anger and attachment, the three objects carry out actions that accumulate negative karma and lead to resulting suffering. The three roots of virtue are non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance. One takes upon oneself the three poisons of the three objects, and one gives others one's three roots of virtue, which means this is also a meditation on taking and giving.

One takes the primary causes for suffering, the three poisons of others, within oneself, transforms them instantaneously into the three roots of virtue, non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance, and then sends these out to others.

Then one meditates as follows:

"I have stabilized the root of virtue of non-attachment.
I have stabilized the root of virtue of non-anger.
I have stabilized the root of virtue of non-ignorance.
I have stabilized the absence of the three poisons.
I was able to fully achieve their purpose."

Transforming Through Application

Geshe Chekawa:

Use directly for meditation whatever you meet,
the action with four aspects is the best method.

1. accumulation of positive potential
2. purification of karma and obstacles
3. torma offering to protectors
4. entrustment of virtuous activities

A highly realized person performs the torma offerings and entrustment of virtuous activities with the request for more difficulties to strengthen the practice of giving and taking. The underlying thought is that the person recognizes that they were already able to easily accumulate much positive potential, purify much karma and attain realizations through problems, sicknesses and difficulties, and were able to accomplish many aims in this way. Therefore one requests the actions of the deity that it may continue like this, that more harm may come.

A beginner makes these offerings also, to benefit their practice, for the accumulation of positive potential and the purification of obstacles, but with the request for less difficulties and protection from problems and obstacles. Whoever the protecting goddess is, she is asked for her actions with the request for less obstacles and a gathering of all good conditions.⁵

Regardless of the conditions one meets, good or bad, one should transform everything directly into practice. One should transform all good and bad conditions that one meets into conditions for one's enlightenment and in this way transform one's mind into a mind of equanimity. If one meets with good conditions it is good, and if one meets with bad conditions then it is also good.

For example, if one is sick then this is good because it purifies past negative karma. In this case the sickness is like a broom that purifies negativities. If one is not sick then it is also good because one can use

the good situation and the strong healthy body for Dharma practice.

If one has no financial success, but has lots of material difficulties, then this situation is good because great wealth uses up merit, and if one has less, then less of one's merit is used up. If on the other hand one has greater wealth, then it is also good because one can use it for diverse Dharma purposes, such as making offerings and other actions.

In this way one can transform all good and bad conditions into positive conditions for Dharma, and a mind of equanimity is generated that sees good and bad conditions as equally conducive.

If one meets with difficulties, then it is good because karma gets purified, i.e., used up, and if one is free from difficulties then this is the result of positive karma. One can rejoice in one's positive karma and dedicate it to the enlightenment and happiness of all sentient beings.

There exists the term *three thousand-fold world systems*:

1. 1000 transitory world systems.
2. 1000 x 1000 transitory world systems, i.e., 1,000,000 transitory world systems.
3. 1000 x 1000 x 1000 transitory world systems, i.e., 1,000,000,000 transitory world systems.

These three are then added together, and this is what is called the three thousand-fold world systems. It is therefore strictly speaking 1,001,001,000 world systems, and not one billion world systems.

All sentient beings in these world systems are connected with each other. One changes from rebirth to rebirth in these realms, and has all kinds of connections with the different sentient beings. There are pure transitory realms and impure transitory realms. In the pure transitory realms the sufferings of birth, sickness, aging and death do not exist. In the impure transitory realms these four sufferings exist, and there are differences in life span, wealth and the like. Within these different worlds, ours is the one with the shortest life span, the most sufferings, and here renunciation is generated the easiest. For this

reason the buddhas, such as the 1000 buddhas of the fortunate aeon, visit mainly the impure transitory realms.

The impure transitory realms are called the transitory realms without fear. This means that although the beings are under the control of karma and afflictions, the positive aspect of the impure transitory realms is that one can recognize the problems clearly, and that one can free oneself quickly and easily. Therefore one does not need to be afraid of the afflictions.

Because of the manifest sufferings and the obvious problems of the afflictions in the impure realms, the sentient beings there find it easier to generate renunciation, bodhicitta and such, and thus find it easier to enter the path and develop along the path. It is said that in the impure realms one can attain enlightenment relatively quickly. In the pure transitory realms the beings do not have manifest sufferings and obvious problems, and always have access to the Dharma, but it takes longer to attain enlightenment.

There are many pure transitory realms, like the 35 pure realms of the 35 confession buddhas from the *Sutra Confessing the Bodhisattva Downfalls*. Through the recitation of the 35 Buddhas' names, one creates the karmic causes for a rebirth in these realms. The same applies for the practice of the medicine buddhas, or the prayers to Chenrezig. The prayers to Chenrezig in Sukhavati,¹¹ and the recitation of his six-syllable mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum*, while mainly being for the attainment of liberation and enlightenment, also create the causes for a rebirth in the pure realms. This mantra has six syllables, is the essence of the *dharmakaya*, and has a very strong effect.

The *Om* is a combination of the three syllables *Ah*, *Uh*, and *Ma*, which contain the meanings of the enlightened body, speech and mind, into which the impure body, speech and mind are transformed. Then there are the syllables *Mani* and *Padme*, which are a flowery name for Chenrezig that contains the method and wisdom aspects of the path,

¹¹ *Sukhavati* is the Sanskrit name of the pure land of Amithaba, and means literally *Full of Bliss*, *Sukha* meaning bliss and *vati* full. In Tibetan it is De-wa-chen (བདེ་བ་ཅེན་)

which are the perfect qualities of Chenrezig. *Hum* at the end is like a prayer that it may come about in this way, i.e., “May I attain the enlightened state of Chenrezig.”

The mantra of Chenrezig is very short but it is very powerful and has many positive qualities, like the qualities that one creates the causes to be reborn in a pure land. If one is reborn in a pure land, then one is not automatically enlightened, and has not yet achieved liberation, but at the same time one is free from the sufferings of birth, sickness, old age and death. One does not experience any sicknesses anymore, no death under the control of karma and afflictions, one can practice the Dharma continuously and it is certain that one will attain enlightenment, but this attainment of enlightenment takes much longer to achieve than in the impure transitory realms. But the advantage is that one is irreversibly free from the suffering of the lower realms, and the general sufferings of cyclic existence.

Also the practice of the Lama Tsong Khapa Guru Yoga, which is primarily practiced to attain enlightenment, is a main cause to be reborn in the pure land of Gaden Yiga Chödzin.

The diverse physical representations of the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, like statues, pictures and thangkas fulfill a very important function. The person looking at them accumulates very strong positive karma through the power of the object, independently from their motivation, because buddhas and those following the bodhisattva actions are extremely pure objects. Even if one views the buddhas with a mind of anger, this leaves the karmic potential for a rebirth in the pure realms and for enlightenment.

It is impossible for the buddhas to harm others because they have conquered the mental afflictions and are totally pervaded by compassion. Their single aim is the well-being of all sentient beings; they are totally filled by this wish to help others. Their mental attitude is, “May the suffering of all others ripen upon me, and may my happiness go to others.” Because of this very strong motivation, regardless of whether one benefits them, harms them or views them with equanimity, their appearance always leaves a good impression on the mind, it

leaves the karmic potential to be guided by that buddha to enlightenment, and to be reborn in the pure land of the individual buddha.

The great Nagarjuna said, that very much positive potential will be accumulated when someone with strong faith sees buddha statues, does not need to be mentioned. But even if someone looks at the representations of the buddhas without faith, the causes for liberation and enlightenment are created, even looking at a buddha statue with strong anger accumulates the positive potential to meet one of the 1000 buddhas directly in the future.

Therefore, the representations of the tathagata and their children are very important and effective, because they are very powerful objects.

Out of the different transitory realms, ours is probably the worst and is therefore the one that is visited by the buddhas the most, and it is the one where one can attain realizations the fastest.

4. Synthesizing All Instructions Into One's Life Practice

Geshe Chekawa:

The essence of the instructions is, in short:

Relate everything to the five powers.

The Five Powers

(During One's Lifetime; At the Time of Death)

The Five Powers During One's Lifetime

1. the power of the white seed
2. the power of familiarity
3. the power of motivation
4. the power of repudiation
5. the power of prayer

1. The Power of Motivation

The power of motivation is essential. If one motivates oneself in the evening to wake up early, then one will wake up early the next morning more easily. Then, upon waking up in the morning, one can motivate oneself as follows:

“I have this precious human rebirth with very great potential, and I will not waste it. I will meditate today on love and compassion, and on the basis of this, I will not give in to my arch enemy, the self-cherishing thought. Instead I am going to train myself in giving and taking.”

To motivate oneself in this way is very important and useful.

Motivation is very important because it determines the difference between virtue and non-virtue, and the difference between Mahayana

and Hinayana. Actions do not arise simply like that out of nothing. Rather, these differences are determined by the inner attitude, by the thoughts that one has, and this is what constitutes the power of motivation.

Motivation is essential for an action, as one can see in an example of the action of cooking. A good meal depends on the motivation of wanting to cook a good meal. At first one thinks well about how to cook a good meal for the other person, what the other person likes, how to cook it in the best way, and the following action will be led by this motivation. One can find the same principle in many diverse actions, such as road works or the production of cars.

If one begins the day with the determination not to generate anger on that day, upon the basis of being mindful of the disadvantages of anger, this becomes the cause that even if one generates anger, one immediately catches oneself and repudiates that anger. Independently, whatever the issue is – be it an explanation, a discussion or another action – it can be carried out without mental afflictions. The disadvantages of anger are such that nothing good can come out of it. When an action is carried out in conjunction with anger or other mental afflictions, it is better to recollect the antidotes, and then carry out the action without mental afflictions.

2. The Power of the White Seed

The power of the white seed, or the pure potential, refers to the accumulation of positive potential and the purification of negative karma. This needs to be carried out as support for the generation of the two bodhicittas. It also refers to the meditations on love and compassion.

3. The Power of Familiarity

The meaning of the power of familiarity is to train the mind in the pure thought, independently of the action that one is carrying out. Whether one sits, lies down, eats, or any other action. If the mind is well-trained, then qualities such as the pure thought, love, compassion or pure perception arise by themselves.

The contaminated body follows the harmful physical tendencies because it was generated by contaminated karma and mental afflictions. The mental afflictions are generated effortlessly in relation to the body, and therefore it would be difficult to practice virtue if body and mind were not different phenomena. Because body and mind are different phenomena it is possible to train the mind independently from the body. Shantideva in the *Introduction to the Bodhisattva Actions*:

There is nothing in which the consciousness cannot be trained, through habituation everything becomes easier.

Here is an example of the power of habituation. An *umze*¹² has to repeatedly initiate prayers in the course of a puja. There was once a case during Monlam where the *umze*, towards the end of the puja, could not remember the first line of the prayer for the spread of the Dharma. He asked the monks who sat next to him for help, but they told him that as *umze*, he should know it, and if the *umze* does not know it, then it is his own fault.

Well, usually the prayers are initiated with the words being drawn out in a very deep voice, with the words hardly recognizable sometimes, and this prayer also uses a gesture of the hat. So the *umze* resorted to a trick, and pretended to initiate the prayer with the sweeping gesture of his hat, and by making prayers with a very deep voice. The monks are very familiar with the different prayers, and know exactly at which place which prayer comes, so that they only need something to start them off, and the prayers carry on automatically.

4. The Power of Repudiation

The power of repudiation means the repudiation of the self-cherishing thought. As soon as the self-cherishing thought arises it needs to be directly counteracted with the antidote. On the basis of remembering its disadvantages, the self-cherishing thought is recognized as the enemy, that which harms self and others, and is then repudiated with the antidote.

¹² chant leader

We can look at the biography of Geshe Ben Gungyal. During one puja, yogurt was passed out to the monks, and Geshe Ben Gungyal started worrying whether he would get some or not, that the bucket would be empty by the time the monk had come down the aisle to him. He thought, “Probably there won’t be enough for me.”

Then he recognized that it was the self-cherishing thought that created the worry, and in that moment he turned over his bowl and put it upside-down on the ground. When the monk finally came to him, and asked him whether he did not want any yogurt, Geshe Ben Gungyal replied, “Self-cherishing has already drunk the yogurt.”

Geshe Ben Gungyal is very well-known for his direct repudiation of self-cherishing and the mental afflictions, in different instances of his life. On another occasion he was visiting a family that had many tea bricks at home. Geshe-la was living in a cave, without many possessions. He thought, “Oh, they have a lot of tea, and drink it all the time. Surely they won’t mind if I take some,” and was just about to take one brick.

He became mindful of this thought as soon as it started, and he remembered the time from before his Dharma practice, when he was a criminal. He thought, “I was a robber and bandit and have stolen much tea, but obviously I am still not better, since I am still trying to steal tea.” Then he grabbed with his left hand his right hand and shouted out loud, “Here is a thief, I have caught a thief.” All the people in the house came to him excitedly, but of course they did not find a thief, just Geshe Ben Gungyal.

Geshe Ben Gungyal was a renowned bandit for many years, but later, when he practiced the Dharma, he used to say that he had only one responsibility, and that was to keep the mind free from afflictions. For this he became very well-known. He said that when his mind is free from afflictions, then he relaxes, but when afflictions are there, then he practices strong alertness and effort to free the mind from the afflictions.

He also made it a practice to draw a black line on the wall for every negative thought, for every mental affliction, and for every positive

thought, a white line. Initially there were more black lines than white ones, but bit by bit the white lines became more and more. Then he also complimented and said to himself, "Geshe Ben Gungyal practices the Dharma very well now." One can see that it is possible to change the mind.

5. The Power of Prayer

The power of prayer refers to the dedications, which are prayers with which one dedicates positive potential. These are very important in order to give the accumulated positive potential a direction.

Regardless of whether a virtue is small or great, one should dedicate it with a big prayer for the enlightenment and welfare of all sentient beings. One should not use small dedications that are only for the purpose of this life, such as the dedication to be free from sickness in this life, and the like.

The dedication should be very big and wide, that one will be able to realize the well-being of all sentient beings, that one wants to attain the state of complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, to then achieve the purposes of self and others fully.

The dedication is like the steering of a car, which determines the direction and which has to work well, regardless of how powerful the car is.

The Five Powers at the Time of Death

Geshe Chekawa:

The instructions for the Mahayana transference are the mere five powers.
Value the path of practice.

The Mahayana instructions for the transfer of consciousness are:

1. the power of motivation
2. the power of the white seed
3. the power of repudiation during death time

4. the power of prayer

5. the power of habituation

1. The Power of Motivation

One motivates oneself to remember at the time of death, the pure thought, the thought of bodhicitta, or to remember love and compassion. If one does that, then one will definitely have a good rebirth, as a human with a special, good basis for liberation and enlightenment, and as a Mahayana practitioner with sharp intellect. If not that, then one will be reborn in a pure land, but one will not be reborn in the lower realms.

This is the transmission of consciousness to a good rebirth, that one carries out oneself. It is not something another person does for us. If one directs one's mind during the time of death toward love and compassion, and then allows it to remain there, thinking, "This is it, more is not needed," then this is the transference.

One can also motivate oneself specifically to remember the pure land in which one wants to take rebirth, such as Tushita or Gaden, and to be mindful of their qualities and the living beings therein, such as the specific buddha of that pure land and all the pleasant aspects of that environment. In the pure lands, suffering does not exist, only happiness; the ground and environment are made of precious substances, there are no thrones, the ground is even and so forth.

Even though actual animals do not exist here, there are manifestations of bodhisattvas as animals, such as deer and so forth. The whole atmosphere is peaceful and pleasant. There are many positive phenomena in relation to the pure lands that one can remember, which become a condition to be reborn there.

2. The Power of the White Seed

The power of the white seed at the time of death refers to the giving up of possessions. During one's lifetime one should use one's possessions without attachment, in accordance with the situation, and then, when the time of death nears, one should give them away be-

cause one does not have any more use for them. One bequeathes them to a special field, such as the Three Jewels, or other people who can use them after one's death. If one holds onto one's possessions, then this becomes an obstacle for a good rebirth.

There was once a Geshe in Amdo, who was very sick and who, although the time of death had already arrived, could not die. He had high realizations and was actually ready for the transference to Gaden, but there was an obstacle due to an attachment he could not let go of, and which gave him many difficulties. The Lama Gungtang Jampel Yang saw the situation through his clairvoyance, and sent a monk to the Geshe with the message that in Gaden Yiga Chödzin they had very tasty meat. In that region in Tibet they had very tasty meat, and the people of the region had developed a very strong attachment to this meat. The monk went to the Geshe and relayed this message, "Gungtang Jampel Yang wanted me to tell you that in Gaden Yiga Chödzin they have very delicious meat, much more tasty than here." The Geshe replied, "Oh, really?" and could finally let go in that moment, and be reborn in the pure land. Actually he had been ready to take rebirth there, but his attachment to meat became an obstacle.

About 10 years ago there was an elderly woman who could not die. An acquaintance who had some experience in the Lamrim and the Dharma, had the suspicion that there was something the woman was holding onto. She talked to the woman, who initially denied that there was anything she was holding onto, and even swore an oath in front of a picture of His Holiness. But slowly it transpired that she was hiding several kilograms of gold in her wall, and finally she let go of the gold, and requested the acquaintance to give one half of the gold to her daughter, and the other half to His Holiness, so that he could do many pujas for her good rebirth. As soon as she gave up her attachment to the gold she was happy. Fully relieved and happy she could now die and take rebirth in a pure land.

After having given up her attachment, her mind was fully freed. She was relieved and rejoiced, and even danced around before dying. Later on, when her daughter asked the Dalai Lama where she had taken

rebirth, he answered that she does not need to be worried, that her mother had taken rebirth in a pure land.

3. The Power of Repudiation

This power at the time of death refers to the confession and purification of negative karma. It is customary to recite prayers that the dying person can hear, such as self-initiations, which are a very powerful practice that purifies karma already just by hearing it. Another customary prayer is the *Sutra of Bodhisattva Confession*. By hearing the prayers, corresponding thoughts are generated in the person's consciousness.

4. The Power of Prayer

The power of prayer refers ideally to the practice of taking and giving, to bodhicitta, to the strong motivation to lead all sentient beings to the state of complete enlightenment.

Another example of this power are prayers to be reborn in specific pure lands, which would be the minimum to fulfill this power. To concentrate just on oneself makes the prayer small. If instead one concentrates on all sentient beings with the wish to free them from their suffering, and motivates oneself to attain the state of full enlightenment towards this end, then this is the best power of prayer.

5. The Power of Habituation

The power of habituation refers to being habituated to the pure thought. Here one can use different prayers to remind oneself of the pure thought. In general, as a Buddhist, one has many prayers and texts that one can use, and much to meditate upon. One of the main methods are the prayers to the guru *vidam*.

The more habituated one is with the pure thought, the easier it is to die with the pure thought. Therefore it is important already during one's lifetime to carry out all actions with the pure motivation as well as one can, and to take care to keep the mind free from anger.

Also as a non-Buddhist, it is important to train oneself as well as one can in the general pure thought, and to keep the mind free from anger. Here one takes care to keep the mind virtuous, free from anger and happy.

A good body posture for the time of death is the lion position, where one lies on one's right side, which is said to be a very conducive position for the mind to take rebirth in a pure land, and to remember Dharma at the time of death.

The most important point however is the motivation of the pure thought, through which one will have a good rebirth in the next life, into an influential family, with high status, a long life, and one can continue one's bodhisattva actions in this way.

When Geshe Chekawa was in the death process, he instructed his students to quickly make offerings on the altar, because he said it did not work out the way he had hoped. He was only getting a sign that he would take a higher rebirth, and not a lower one, but he wanted to take rebirth in the lower realms to teach the Dharma to the beings there.

It went the same way for Geshe Potowa. He also said at the time of death that it did not work out according to plan because he was getting only signs for a higher rebirth, and not for a lower rebirth, as he had aspired to.

Another story from Tibet tells of a younger and an older woman, who both wanted to cross a river and got carried away by the waters. Both only thought about rescuing the other person, and not about rescuing themselves, but neither one could swim. In the end they both died, but because they died free from the self-cherishing, with the pure thought of cherishing the other person, they were both reborn in Gaden Yiga Chödzin.

On another occasion, six monks and one lay person wanted to cross the Yarlung River. The six monks were invited by the lay person to perform puja, but had to cross the river for this, which had very strong currents at the time. Together with the boat's captain there were eight people, and they soon saw that there were too many for the small

boat. Since altogether they did not have a chance for survival, and because the captain could not swim, he asked whether one of the others could swim, because one person had to leave the boat to rescue the others.

The six monks just sat there silently and did nothing. The lay person thought to himself, "Someone has to jump overboard," and even though he could not swim he jumped, to rescue the lives of the monks. Through giving up his self-cherishing he attained high realizations, and not only did he not go underwater, he was simply propelled by his pure karma to the other shore. In contrast to the monks, who simply were drifting further down the river, he had gained great benefit from his selfless action.

If one visualizes Amitabha Buddha above oneself at the time of death, and meditates on transferring one's own mind into the consciousness of Amitabha Buddha, then there is no doubt that one will be reborn in Sukhavati. On the basis of being human it is easy to be reborn in a pure land, but the better transference is the meditation on love and compassion, because it allows one to continue one's practice in the next life as a human, while it takes a long time to become enlightened in the pure realm.

5. The Measure of Having Trained the Mind Well

Geshe Chekawa:

Condense all dharmas into one thought.
Rely mainly on the two witnesses.
Rely continuously only on mental happiness.
One is trained if one is able although distracted.

Reversal is the measure of being trained.
Having the five is the great sign of being trained.

Condense all dharmas into one thought.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught so many instructions in accordance with the karmas, potentials and aspirations of diverse people, with the ultimate aim to eliminate the self-cherishing thought, and the grasping at self, and to lead them in this way to liberation and enlightenment. The essence of all instructions is to view the self as the main enemy.

Rely mainly on the two witnesses.

The two witnesses are self and others. On one hand, one needs to be a witness for whether one has practiced the Dharma well or not, and if one has practiced well, then this will also be noticed by others, and they will comment on this positively. If one analyzes one's mind, and anger has lessened and one is happier, then this will also be seen by others as good, which is a sign of good Dharma practice.

Rely continuously only on mental happiness.

Through the practice of transforming problems the mind remains undisturbed, regardless of whether one meets good or bad conditions. For example, if one has wealth, thinking, "it is good because I can use it for the accumulation of merit and purification of negativities," and if one has no wealth, thinking, "I can practice other types of generosity such as saving lives, or make things that are useful for others."

In short, a state of mind of “it is ok if I have it, and it is also ok if I do not have it.”

If one is healthy, “this is due to the kindness of the Three Jewels, having accumulated good karma,” and if one is unhealthy, “this is good, because it purifies my negativities and obscurations.”

In short, whatever happens, relying only on mental happiness, taking care that the mind stays happy regardless of what happens.

One is trained if one is able although distracted.

A skilled rider who is well trained, will not fall off the horse, but react instinctively in the right way, when the horse jumps suddenly in an unexpected manner, even though they are distracted at the time. A rider of lesser skill will be thrown off the horse when it makes an unexpected jump, but a skilled rider will manage to stay on the horse.

Similarly, if one does not react with anger despite being suddenly criticized or abused, while being distracted, then this is a sign of having trained the mind well. A person whose mind is well trained in thought transformation will not lose their calm even when suddenly confronted with unforeseen positive or negative conditions, even if they had not trained their mind with regard to those conditions previously, and even though they are distracted at the time.

Reversal is the measure of being trained.

One form of reversal is the reversal from cyclic existence, when one has attained renunciation and the mind has turned away from cyclic existence. But here it refers to the reversal from the self-cherishing thought, where the mind, instead of cherishing self and giving up others, reverses from cherishing self, and cherishes others as it would normally cherish self. Once this exchange of self and others happens naturally in the mind, then this measure is achieved.

Having the five is the great sign of being trained.

a) Regardless of the difficulties one experiences from others or

through conditions, the mind remains undisturbed, balanced and free from mental afflictions, and one can meet all difficulties with patience. It is said that patience is the greatest of all austerities.

b) The big thought, the reversal of the self-cherishing thought, which is the sincere thought cherishing others. It is a big and wide thought.

c) All actions are transformed into dharma practice. This does not mean that one has achieved a *bhumi*, but that all actions are combined with love and compassion.

d) Great and subdued behavior: even small negativities are avoided, the actions of body and speech are subdued, and the mind becomes gentle. This comes through the reduction and elimination of the manifest afflictions, which cause the opposite.

e) The ultimate great yoga: the ultimate yoga refers to that which is important, and that is the Mahayana mind training, the generation of the pure thought, the generation of love and compassion. Even if one is not able in this life to practice elaborate *sadhanas*, but one is able to translate the Mahayana mind training into practice, then one has practiced the ultimate, the important, and is a yogi.

Mind Training in Seven Points

Geshe Chekawa:

Always train in the three general meanings.
Change the aspiration but stay the same.
Do not comment on physical shortcomings.
Do not think about others in any way.

Initially purify the greater affliction.
Give up all hopes for a result.
Give up poisonous food.
Do not rely on gentle scriptures.

Do not get excited with insults.
Do not lie in ambush.
Do not attack the soft spot.
Do not put the burden of the *dzo* on the cow.

Do not reverse the sequence.
Do not rely on being the fastest.
Do not channel the demon as the deity.
Do not look for happiness in others' sufferings.

6. The 18 Samayas of Mind Training

The meaning of *samaya* is something that one is not allowed to transgress, and there are 18 *samayas* of mind training.

Always train in the three general meanings.

1. Not to act against one's vows: Do not discriminate against any advice, from the *Vinaya* up to Tantra, saying that one does not need them now since one is practicing mind training, and cannot be harmed by anything.
2. Not to carry out bad actions: Do not use mind training as an excuse for negative actions, saying that one does not have self-cherishing anymore, and then using this as justification for harming other people and non-humans, harming the environment, felling trees randomly or similar actions.
3. Not to be selective: This means one should not meditate on patience for friends and on anger for enemies, or practice love and compassion with humans, but not with hungry ghosts or animals. Rather, one should train one's mind equally with regards to all objects.

Change the aspiration but stay the same.

4. Mind training means to change the inner aspiration. One generates bodhicitta, love and compassion, an understanding of impermanence and emptiness and so forth, i.e., inner positive insights in the mind, and changes the mind through them. However, on the outside one should keep one's usual, normal behavior. If one suddenly behaves in a grandiose manner on the outside, then this is perceived as strange by others.

At the time of the Buddha there was a monk called Phagpa Lamchung. Initially he was a student of a Brahmin, but he had a small intellect and a hard time remembering things, and could not even remember two words at the same time when he was trying to learn how to read. When he was learning the word *siddham* for example, by the time he knew the second syllable *dham*, he had forgotten the first syllable *sid* again. So the Brahmin, after some time, sent him away with the words,

“I cannot teach you, as you do not possess the required intelligence, and I have many other children that demand my time. My time is better used to teach them.”

He then went to another teacher specifically to learn how to read the Vedas, and started to read these. First he had to learn the word *Om bhū*, but he could not retrain both syllables at once. By the time he had learned the *bhū*, he had forgotten the *Om* again, and vice versa. And so he was sent away again with the words to his father, “I cannot teach him. Your child only understands minimal instructions, and I have many other children to teach.” Later on Chudapanthaka went to see his brother, the arhat Mahapanthaka, who checked his karma with clairvoyance, saw that his brother had great potential, and then accepted him as a student and ordained him. He gave him four lines to memorize, but even after three months, despite persevering, he could not do it. Even cow herders, who just passed by him, could remember the lines, but he could not, and the people started to make fun of him. His brother considered how best to subdue him, and decided that to be insulting was best, and threw him out on the street with the words, “You are too dull, why did I ever accept to teach you?” As he was saddened on the street, contemplating his fate, the Buddha appeared out of his great compassion to Chudapanthaka, and asked him whether he was able to clean the sandals of the monks. Chudapanthaka said yes, and all the monks were instructed to recite the words, “Abandon dirt, abandon stains.” After some time, when he had purified enough karma, he could recite the words by himself, and got the job of sweeping the courtyard while reciting these words. After a while, he realized that the words did not relate to external dirt and stains, but to karma and afflictions. He persisted, and through his efforts eventually became an arhat, but this whole transformation happened on the inside, while on the outside he stayed the same and continued to sweep the courtyard, clean the clothing of the monks and so forth. He continued to be known as the monk who could not memorize even two lines.

But the Buddha wanted him to be known as teacher, and sent him as a teacher to the nunnery, without anybody knowing that he was in re-

ality an arhat by now. Among the nuns were many that were very learned, and who perceived this as an insult, almost as if the Buddha wanted to criticize and put down their understanding. Some 12 nuns spread the news that the next day their teacher, who was a Shravaka arhat, would be teaching in the monastery, and that everybody who desired liberation should come, or spend a long time wandering in cyclic existence. Their aim of course was to embarrass Arya Chudapanthaka, and to this end they also built a high throne without any steps to reach it. But the arhat had supernatural powers, and could manifest himself without stairs on the throne. He started his teachings by saying, "I am now going to teach for three months on the verse that I could not even memorize in three months." He then gave teachings for three months, and many who attended became arhats themselves, or at least realized emptiness. He was a very skilled and realized teacher.

Another example of the point of changing one's aspirations but staying the same on the outside was the great master Chandrakirti. Even though he was a highly realized bodhisattva on the inside, to the outside he kept his appearance fully normal and inconspicuous. On one occasion in the monastery however, he showed his realizations by first drawing a cow on a wall, and then proceeding to milk the cow and then distribute the milk to the whole monastery. Only at this point did the monks realize the scope of his realizations.

It is therefore important to maintain one's normal behavior on the outside, even if one has qualities of realization, high realizations, or has actually mastered the practice of mind training. It is seen as inappropriate to display one's abilities, and even though one may be a great yogi in reality, to the outside one stays normal and the same as before. For example, if someone who found a great jewel announces this fact everywhere, then soon there will be a thief stealing the jewel.

Do not comment on physical shortcomings.

5. One should not comment on the physical shortcomings of others, but address the other person with their actual name, and not with a hurtful nickname. In general one should avoid any abusive language.

Do not think about others in any way.

6. One should avoid thinking constantly about others with a critical mind, looking for their faults. Instead one should consider one's own faults, and investigate one's mind and one's own actions.

Initially purify the greater affliction.

7. Out of the different afflictions of attachment, anger, ignorance, pride, jealousy and so forth, one should initially counteract the strongest affliction one has, with the appropriate antidote, and in this way free the mind from the manifest mental afflictions.

Give up all hopes for a result.

8. The way of thinking where one hopes for an immediate result from a small virtue one practiced, comes naturally to the mind, but it is something to give up. Generally, we do give up the hope for samsaric results, but not for results per se.

Give up poisonous food.

9. The poisonous food are actions that are carried out in conjunction with self-cherishing. Even if one practices virtue, but one practices this virtue with self-cherishing, then it becomes poisonous food, e.g., a positive action with the motivation to experience something good in this life.

Do not rely on gentle scriptures.

10. Gentle scriptures refer to instructions that say one should not worry if afflictions are generated in the mind, and that one should do nothing, or that one should treat the afflictions gently and be patient with them. When afflictions are generated, one should not simply let them be.

Do not get excited with insults.

11. This refers to direct retribution through harmful speech. When a person says something undesirable, the thought to reply with two un-

desirable things is generated immediately, and if one is abused by another person, one considers how they can abuse the other person in even stronger terms. For example, if a person calls us a thief, and we reply by accusing the other person of being a bandit. There is also the situation where, even though one talks very softly, one speaks with a motivation to harm the other person.

Do not lie in ambush.

12. This means that one should not hold onto one's grudges and lie in ambush, just waiting for the right time to exact revenge. One thinks one has received harm, and waits for the right moment of revenge to say something hurtful or similar. This is something one should abandon.

Do not attack the soft spot.

13. One should not refer to the fault of a person in front of a group of people, after having found out something bad about that person, in order to harm that person. This point means also not to recite wrathful mantras in a place where many non-human beings reside, to harm them, but rather to meditate on love and compassion.

Do not put the burden of the *dzo* on the cow.

14. If one is experiencing a difficulty, then one should not pass this difficulty onto someone else through some means. If one has a job to do, then one should not pass this job through deception onto others, and give them in this way additional difficulties, but rather carry out the work oneself.

Do not reverse the sequence.

15. Mind training is for the purpose of reducing self-cherishing and one should therefore not cultivate mind training for worldly or ulterior aims, such as avoiding harm by non-human beings, profit, being praised and becoming famous, i.e., as a cause to increase self-cherishing.

Do not rely on being the fastest.

16. Do not always try to get the best or the most for oneself through deception, such as in the case where something has to be shared between oneself and others.

Do not channel the demon as the deity.

17. Mind training is for the purpose of reducing self-cherishing, and therefore one should avoid that it become the demon that aids self-cherishing, rather than becoming the antidote to self-cherishing. The fire truck can put out the fire very quickly with water, but this would not work with burning water.

Do not look for happiness in others' sufferings.

18. One should not hope for suffering of others as a condition for one's own happiness, such as hoping for a sponsor to die so that one can inherit something. One should also not rejoice in the unhappiness of others in general, or in the unhappiness of enemies in particular, thinking that the more the enemy suffers the more happiness one will have. One should not have the pure view of one's happiness, where one thinks that it does not matter how much others suffer as long as one is happy.

Samaya

Sanskrit: *samaya*

Tibetan: *dam tshig*

English: lit. binding words, i.e., pledge, vow, precept

Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The meaning of *samaya* is something that is not to be transgressed.

Geshe Chekawa:

Practice all yogas through one.

Practice all antidotes through one.

There are two actions, at the beginning and at the end.

Whichever of the two comes first, be patient.

Protect the two at the cost of your life.

Train in the three difficulties.

Generate the three main causes.

Meditate without degeneration on the three.

Never be separated from the three.

Train impartially.

Value the pervading as well as the deep training.

Meditate always on the specifically identified.

Do not rely on other conditions.

Make it your main practice now.

Avoid loss.

Avoid interruption.

Train decisively.

Liberate yourself through investigation and analysis.

Do not cultivate boastfulness.

Do not be hot-tempered.

Do not be fickle.

Do not expect gratitude.

7. The 22 Instructions on Training the Mind

1. Practice all yogas through one.

One unifies all yogas in one yoga, which means to make the exchange of self and other one's heart practice. One bases any virtuous action on the exchange of self and other; regardless of what the action is, it is carried out with the thought of exchanging self and other. The yoga of exchanging self and other contains all points of training the mind, it improves our actions of body, speech and mind, and develops the aspects of method and the view.

One motivates oneself:

“I am going to carry out all actions for the welfare of others, regardless of the action, whether it is eating, drinking, using objects and so forth. I will let my actions become the cause for enlightenment.”

Nagarjuna, in his *Letter to a Friend*:

By seeing this food as medicine
I will use it without attachment or anger.
It is not for arrogance, conceit or pride,
but to support the body.

2. Practice all antidotes through one.

Regardless of which condition one meets, good or bad, and regardless of which of the three poisons arises, one needs address these situations with this mind training, seeing that it suffices for everything.

3. There are two actions, at the beginning and at the end.

The action at the beginning is the pure motivation, and the action at the end is the dedication, and these two are the most important part of any action.

4. Whichever of the two comes first, be patient.

Regardless of whether the experience is good or bad, one should take them all as conditions for mind training. Both good and bad experiences can be very dangerous for Dharma practice. If on one hand, one has great worldly success, such as wealth, this can lead to forgetfulness regarding the Dharma. If on the other hand one becomes very poor, meets many difficulties and has to suffer through poverty or other deficiencies, then it can also happen that one forgets one's Dharma practice. These are two main conditions for giving up one's Dharma practice, and therefore it is important to transform them into conditions for enlightenment, so that one never loses the practice of exchanging self and other.

5. Protect the two at the cost of your life.

The *two* refers here to the commitments and instructions of mind training, and one should not give them up even at the cost of one's life.

6. Train in the three difficulties.

- identify the mental afflictions
- manifest the antidote to the afflictions
- cut the continuum of the afflictions

These three points are seen as the most difficult parts of one's Dharma practice, and also the essential practice.

7. Generate the three main causes.

The three main causes for Dharma practice are:

- a pure teacher
- a flexible mind that can analyze
- food and clothing

If any of these three conditions is not present, then one should pray that it comes about.

The 22 Instructions on Training the Mind

8. Meditate without degeneration on the three.

- faith and respect for the Mahayana teacher
- generating enthusiasm for mind training
- not forgetting the instructions of mind training through mindfulness and introspection

9. Never be separated from the three.

The three one should never be separated from are the three roots of virtue – virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. One has at present a body with freedoms and endowments, and one should use it for virtuous actions of the body, such as prostrations, mandala offerings and such, for virtuous actions of the speech such as recitations of mantras, and for virtuous actions of the mind through meditations on love, compassion, bodhicitta and the right view of emptiness.

In relation to the physical posture, while meditating one should abide immovably in the right posture, without changing even one part of it. In this way the meditation can develop well and become virtuous.

10. Train impartially.

One needs to train the mind impartially with regard to all objects, whether the object is a friend or an enemy, sentient or not sentient.

11. Value the pervading as well as the deep training.

One needs to train the mind pervasively with regard to all objects from the depths of one's mind, whether the object is a friend or an enemy, or whether the object is sentient or not sentient.

12. Meditate always on the specifically identified.

There are three objects that need to be taken as main objects of one's practice:

- the enemy – patience for the enemy, which is difficult to generate
- the teacher – the near object of the field of positive potential

- the parents – the field of kindness

Patience for the enemy, faith in the teacher and recognition of the kindness of one's parents are difficult to generate, and need special attention.

13. Do not rely on other conditions.

One should not make the practice of mind training dependent on outer conditions. The practice needs to be continued, regardless of whether the outer conditions are good or bad, regardless of whether one has enough to live on or not, whether one is in a comfortable place or not, and so forth.

Some pretend to be good practitioners as long as the conditions are good, as long as they are surrounded by friends, but when the circumstances turn bad, then their conduct is worse than the conduct of someone who does not practice mind training. This is not good, because when circumstances are bad, that is the time when mind training should show its effect, when the mind should be undisturbed through the power of mind training.

14. Make it your main practice now.

The *now* refers to the present situation of our precious human rebirth, and the main practice is mind training. One should practice what is most important now, while one has the opportunity of a precious human rebirth.

Even though our present situation is difficult, one has the opportunity to meditate on bodhicitta and in this way, give great meaning to the precious human rebirth for oneself and others. One should meditate on bodhicitta to complete the purpose of self and others. If one just practices for the purpose of this life, and bears difficulties just for that purpose, then it is a small purpose, but if one practices for full enlightenment, then it is a great purpose. Therefore one should practice the main point through the meditation on bodhicitta, which is very powerful.

15. Avoid loss.

This instruction refers to six points:

a) Misguided patience: The practice of patience relates to Dharma practice, and not to worldly actions. When we practice patience with difficulties to complete worldly actions, then it is the wrong kind of patience. Rather, we practice patience with the difficulties we encounter in the course of our Dharma practice of hearing, contemplating and meditating. This is a must and the actual practice of patience.

b) Misguided taste: It is necessary to avoid the wrong type of taste and experience, and rather aspire to the good inner experience that comes from the steps of listening, contemplating and meditating. If one gains a taste of the Dharma through good inner experience and well-being through listening, contemplating and meditating, then this is the right way and desirable. On the other hand, if one develops a taste for worldly actions, such as business or war, and the mind gets lost in the experience of these actions, then this would be examples for misguided taste for wrong actions.

Also, if one preoccupies oneself with all kinds of worldly topics such as politics, or the lives of movie stars, and tries to understand and get a taste for these topics, then this means one is searching for the wrong type of taste. There are many things for which one can develop an interest, and for which one can develop a taste, and if one gets used to talking about these topics incessantly, and gets a taste for these topics, then this is a wrong taste and the wrong type of experience. There is also the situation where a person gets a taste for harming others, which is also a wrong type of taste.

What one needs is the taste of inner well-being that develops from the three steps of listening, contemplating and meditating.

c) Misguided compassion: One main object of compassion are human beings who have carried out very strong negative actions, which will bring very heavy suffering results in the future. If instead one develops compassion for a person who intensively practices the Mahayana

Dharma through listening, contemplating and meditating, and who is therefore poor, does not have good clothing and whose life seems full of difficulties, then this is wrong compassion.

One example for this comes from the life of Milarepa, who sat one day by the side of the road as five very well-dressed young women came along, who made fun of him and behaved very arrogantly. One of the women even prayed to never be reborn like him. To this Milarepa replied that she did not need to worry, that she would not be reborn like him, even with many, many prayers. Milarepa was already enlightened at this point, and did not travel by foot, but could fly here and there, and had all the qualities of enlightenment. There was therefore no danger that the young woman would be reborn like him. This is an example of the wrong type of compassion, where the person just looks at the poor outer appearance. There is a place called Lachi in Tibet, where one can see the footprints of Milarepa, that he left behind when he pushed himself off into the air. One can see these footprints very clearly in the stone.

d) Misguided aspiration: The main aspiration that one needs is the aspiration for enlightenment, and aspirations for worldly happinesses, successes and objects one should give up.

e) Misguided rejoicing: If one rejoices in the virtuous actions of self or other, then this is the right type of rejoicing, but if one rejoices in the harmful actions of self or other, then it is wrong rejoicing. If one has carried out positive actions, and in retrospect repeatedly rejoices in them, then this is virtuous and increases the positive potential. It is very important to rejoice in one's positive actions, even if they were small, by thinking, "I have carried out this and that action, and it was very good." Also if one rejoices in any positive action of others, then it is right rejoicing. On the other hand, if one sees others acting negatively, and rejoices in that, thinking, "This is very good, this is very useful," and cultivates joy in this way, then this is the wrong type of rejoicing.

16. Avoid interruption.

Dharma practice should be carried out slowly and carefully on one hand, but be constant like a river. One should have a wide mind and have the long view. For example in meditation, one meditates a little bit, and then stops while it is good. Then, the next day or the next session, one returns to the objects and repeats it in the same way. In this way one improves one's meditation over a long time, and one does not make huge efforts one day, and then the next day, nothing. One should not practice like the hare, in the story of the hare and the tortoise, where the hare first took a nap, thinking it had a lot of time and was faster than the tortoise anyway. But in the meantime the tortoise worked slowly but steadily towards its goal, the hare overslept, and so the tortoise won the race. This is not how one should practice.

17. Train decisively.

One should practice mind training with deep determination and aspiration, and not immediately give up when difficulties arise.

18. Liberate yourself through investigation and analysis.

One should liberate oneself through investigation and analysis, which are both investigating types of consciousness, but the investigation is the coarser type, and the analysis the subtler type.

One investigates what is really useful for oneself and what is not. If one investigates the affliction of anger in this way, then one recognizes its disadvantages, and rejects it completely. Investigation has a decisive function, because through the recognition of reality arises a decision and from that a change in the mind.

19. Do not cultivate boastfulness.

One needs to avoid the wrong view that one has already done a lot for others, and if one practices the yogas and meditations of mind training, one should not boast about them, saying one is practicing the Mahayana, working for all sentient beings, and so forth.

20. Do not be hot tempered.

One should not be bad tempered in situations where anger can generate easily. Some people react to everything with anger, and react to the slightest provocation with anger. For example, if we get blamed for something we did not do, in front of a lot of people, then one should not immediately react with anger.

Geshe Langri Tangpa was once in a situation where a woman presented her child to him during teachings as his own child, but he did not react with anger. This woman had had many still births, and another Lama had advised her on the basis of a divination to seek out the advice of Geshe Langri Tangpa. When the child was born and survived, she presented it to him in the middle of a teaching in front of everybody with the words, "Here is your child." Geshe-la did not react with anger, but calmly took the child into his arms, and passed it on to his helper, who took care of the child. After class the child was returned to the mother.

21. Do not be fickle.

One should not be easily influenced and swayed, as some people are, who immediately feel extremely good when they are praised just a little, or when the circumstances are looking up just a little. As soon as they are criticized just a little, or as soon as the circumstances turn bad just a little, then they go immediately into the opposite direction and become extremely sad and depressed. One should not be like this and instead develop inner stability.

22. Do not expect gratitude.

One should not hope for fame and renown as a result of one's virtuous actions.

One should also not hope for great gratitude, especially if one has carried out just a small insignificant action for the benefit of others. Some have great hopes for gratitude after such an action, or even expect it and wait for thanks.

Colophon

This lineage of instructions comes from Serlingpa, and especially in the time of the five degenerations, where one has many problems and adverse conditions, one can transform these into conducive conditions for the path.

Through the ripening of previously purified karma
and through the cause of my manifold aspirations
I dismissed suffering and bad instructions
and took up the instructions that subdue self-grasping.
Now I do not have regrets, even at death.

This is said by Geshe Chekawa, a yogi with realizations and attainments. Through the condition of his manifold inner aspirations, and because he did not pay attention to suffering and bad instructions, and did not let himself be impressed by them, did he receive the instructions that subdue the grasping at self. Therefore he could die without regrets.

I myself have received the lineage of these instructions twice from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the transmission of the text I received from Ratö Kyongla Rinpoche. Therefore, that you received a blessing in the last two days is certain. Due to time constraints we were not able to deal with the different points in more detail. There are different commentaries, if someone is interested, but the main point is to translate these instructions into practice.

Dedication

We can dedicate the positive potential that we created in the past two days for the happiness of all sentient beings, that immediately love and compassion are generated in the minds of sentient beings, that their negative states of the mind may disappear, and that they attain happiness.

A main condition for the presence of the Dharma in these days is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and so we dedicate for the long and healthy life of His Holiness, that he always shows a healthy aspect and teaches the Dharma.

A further dedication is for Tibet. In these days the situation there is very difficult, which is also expressed through the different self-immolations. The person expresses through this that they do not have freedom, and that their situation is bad, especially the situation that they cannot practice their own religion.

Pray also that the relations between the Tibetans and the Chinese improve, and that the Chinese change their politics. Our resistance is not against the Chinese as a people, but against the politics of the Chinese government. Dedicate that something changes in these politics, so that the Tibetan people can live in independence and freedom, can practice their religion, and live without suppression.

¹ Wikipedia: A dzo (Tibetan མཛོ་ mdzo) (also spelled zo, zho and dzho) is a hybrid between the yak and domestic cattle. The word dzo technically refers to a male hybrid, while a female is known as a dzomo or zhom.

² Mind Training in Eight Verses

May I always cherish
all sentient beings,
viewing them superior to a wish-granting gem,
with the thought of achieving the great purpose (obtaining the great purpose from them).

Whoever I encounter, at that time
I shall always hold myself as the lowest,
and cherish the other as supreme
from the depths of my heart.

I shall always investigate my continuum
during all actions, and as soon as afflictions are generated,
since they harm self and other,
I shall oppose them forcefully right away.

When I see sentient beings of bad character,
overcome by heavy negativity and suffering,
May I view it like finding a treasure of jewels -
difficult to find, and cherish them.

When others, out of jealousy,
behave unsuitable, criticise me and so forth,
I shall accept the loss
and offer the victory to others.

When someone I benefitted and
placed great hopes in,
acts extremely inappropriate and harms me,
even then may I view them like a holy spiritual friend.

Mind Training in Seven Points

In short, I shall offer benefit and happiness,
both directly and indirectly, to all mothers
and take all harms and sufferings of my mothers
in secret upon myself.

May all of that be untainted by the stains
of the thoughts of the eight worldly dharmas,
and, knowing all phenomena to be like an illusion,
be free from grasping and be liberated from the bonds.

³ higher status in cyclic existence, i.e., a good rebirth

⁴ The state of full enlightenment is made up of the four *kayas*, i.e., the four bodies: (Sanskrit) *dharmakaya*, *svabhavakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*; (English) truth body, nature body, enjoyment body and emanation body.

⁵ For example Palden Lhamo and her four actions.

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Om Hanu Pahasha Bhara He Ye Svaha

Just by seeing this mantra, 100.000 eons of negative
karma and obscurations are purified, it is taught in
Phagpa Chulung Rölpaï Do.

SARVA MANGALAM