

Lojong - Tonglen

Atisha, Serlingpa, Chekawa, Langri Tangpa

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Contents of first part

1- The Preliminaries (The preliminary practices of training the mind)

First, train in the preliminaries:

- Precious human life
- Death & impermanence
- Karma
- Dangers of samsara

2- The Actual Practice (The main practice: training in the two Bodhicitta)

- **A. Developing ordinary Bodhicitta (Exchanging self and other by Tchekhawa)**
 - -- Developing Equanimity
 - When practicing unconditional acceptance, start with yourself. ()
 - -- The Disadvantage of Self-Cherishing
 - -- The Advantage of Cherishing Others
 - -- Exchanging Self with Others - Toglen: Taking and Giving
 - As you breathe in, take in and accept all the sadness, pain, and negativity of the whole world, including yourself, and absorb it into your heart. As you breathe out, pour out all your joy and bliss; bless the whole of existence. (Practice a combination of both giving and taking. Commence taking progressively from your own side. Place these two astride the breath.)
 - -- Meditation on Bodhicitta
- **B. Developing Ultimate Bodhicitta**
 - Treat everything you perceive as a dream. (Consider all phenomena as a dream)
 - Find the consciousness you had before you were born. (Examine the nature of unborn awareness)

- Let even the remedy itself drop away naturally. (The remedy itself is released in its own place)
- Stay in the primeval consciousness, the basis of everything. (Place (your meditation) on the nature of the foundation of all: the essence (of the path))
- Between meditations, treat everything as an illusion. (In the meditation break be a creator of illusion)
- **C. Between meditation**
 - Understand your attachments, your aversions, and your indifference, and love them all. (There are three objects, three poisons, and three sources of virtue. Remember this by repeated recollection.)
 - Apply these proverbs in everything you do. (Practice every activity by these words.)

3- Using Adversity to Wake Up (Transforming adverse conditions into the path to enlightenment)

- When everything goes wrong, treat disaster as a way to wake up. (When the container and its contents are filled with evil, change this adverse circumstance into the path to full awakening.)
- Take all the blame yourself. (Banish the one object of every blame)
- Be grateful to everyone. (Meditate on the great kindness of all)
- Don't worry- there's nothing real about your confusion. (Remember this by repeated recollection)
- When something unexpected happens, in that very moment, treat it as a meditation. (Utilize every immediate circumstance for meditation.)
- -- Possess the four preparations, the highest of means.

4- Life and Death (How to integrate all our daily practices)

- **Work with the Five Forces. The Five Forces are:** (Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice. Blend the practice of one life with the five forces. The instruction for the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position.)
 - Be intense, be committed. ()
 - Familiarization - get used to doing and being what you want to do and to be. ()
 - Cultivate the white seeds, not the black ones. ()
 - Turn totally away from all your ego trips. ()
 - Dedicate all the merits of what you do for the benefit of others. ()
- **Practice these Five Forces and you are ready for death at any moment.** ()

5- Yardsticks (The measurement of success in training the mind)

- All teachings have the same goal. (All dharma collects into one intention)
- Follow the inner witness rather than the outer ones. (A reversed attitude indicates a transformation or Retain the two witnesses of foremost importance)
- Always have the support of a joyful mind. (One is always accompanied by only joyful thoughts)
- Practicing even when distracted is good training. (One is trained if one is capable, although distracted)

6- Commitments (The commitments of training the mind)

- Always observe these three points: (Always practice the three general points)
 - Regularity of practice.
 - Not wasting time on the inessential.
 - Not rationalizing our mistakes.
- Change your attitude, but stay natural. (Change your attitude while remaining natural)
- Do not discuss defects. (Speak not of the shortcomings of others)
- Don't worry about other people. (Think not about whatever is seen in others)
- Work on your greatest imperfection first. (Purify first whichever affliction is heaviest)
- Abandon all hope of results. (Give up all hope of reward)
- Give up poisonous food. (Abandon poisonous food)
- Don't be consistent. (Do not serve the central object leniently)
- Don't indulge in malicious gossip. (Be indifferent towards malicious jokes)
- Don't wait in ambush. (Do not lie in ambush)
- Don't strike at the heart. (Never strike at the heart)
- Don't put the yak's load on the cow. (Do not load an ox with the load of a dzo)
- Remember - this is not a competition. (Do not compete by a last-minute sprint)
- Don't be sneaky. (Do not be treacherous)
- Don't abuse your divine power for selfish reasons. (Do not bring a god down to a devil)
- Don't expect to profit from other people's misfortune. (Do not inflict misery for possession of happiness)

7- Guidelines (The precepts of training the mind)

- In all your activities, have a single purpose. (Practice all yogas (or activities) by one)
- Solve all problems by accepting the bad energy and sending out the good. (Practice every suppression of interference by one)
- Renew your commitment when you get up and before you go to sleep. (There are two duties: at the beginning and the end)
- Accept good and bad fortune with an equal mind. (Endure whichever situation arises, either (good or bad))
- Keep your vows even at the risk of your life. (Guard both points more preciously than your life)
- Recognize your neurotic tendencies, overcome them, then transcend them. (Practice the three hardships)
- Find a teacher, tame the roving mind, choose a lifestyle that allows you to practice. (Meditate on the three undeclining attitudes)
- Love your teacher, enjoy your practice, keep your vows. (Possess the three inseparables)
- Focus your body, mind, and spirit on the path. (Always practice with pure impartiality on all objects)
- Exclude nothing from your acceptance practice: train with a whole heart. (Cherish the in-depth and broad application of all skills)
- Always meditate on whatever you resent. (Always meditate on those closely related)
 - Don't depend on how the rest of the world is. (Depend not upon other circumstances)
- In this life, concentrate on achieving what is most meaningful. (Exert yourself, especially at this time)
- Don't let your emotions distract you, but bring them to your practice. (Do not follow inverted deeds)
- Don't let your practice become irregular. (Do not be erratic)
- Train wholeheartedly. (Do not underestimate your ability)
- Free yourself by first watching, then analysing. (Be liberated by two: examination and analysis)
- Don't feel sorry for yourself. (Do not be boastful)
- Don't be jealous (Do not retaliate)
- Stay focused. (Do not be fickle)
- Don't expect any applause. (Do not wish for gratitude)

Teachers

Seven Points of Mind Training - Origin of Lineage: all teachings trace back to Buddha Shakyamuni. In the course of history, great masters like Nargarjuna and Asanga held and perpetuated the Mahayana teachings. In Tibet the experiential aspect of Mahayana Buddhism has been continuously upheld through the practice of pith instructions received from the masters who are living emissaries of Bodhicitta mind and have realized authentic love and compassion.

Atisha purified the lineages and passed along the essence of the mind training teachings that he received from his master, *Serlingpa*. Atisha passed the lineage to *Dromtonpa* who passed the lineage to *Langri Tangpa*. But it was *Geshe Chekawa* who revived the lineage of lo Jong. One day he this profound pith instruction which shocked his mind:

Take all defeat upon myself.
Offer all triumph to others.

Chekawa went to see Langri Tangpa, who already passed away. Chekawa was very sad, because he thought the lineage died, but he found a disciple named *Shawara* who upheld the teachings. Chekawa stayed with Shawara for an un-luxurious twelve years just to learn these two lines. Chekawa endured many hardships to receive the seven points of mind training, which represent the depth of Mahayana training.

This extraordinary lineage has been passed down through all the sects of Tibetan Buddhism, so I simply wish to share the blessings of this teaching I have received from my masters with you.

-- http://www.buddhistinformation.com/tibetan/lo_jong_teachings.htm

Atisha

Atisha is the teacher who brought the Mind Training teaching from Sumatra to India and then transmitted it to Tibet. He was born in India in A.D 982. He was first initiated into, and became an adept in, the esoteric and magical practices of Tantra, which were very popular in India at the time, and in fact were to soon to absorb and extinguish Indian Buddhism.

However, when already a well-established practitioner of Tantra, he underwent a change of heart and made a decision to renounce the search for magical power. Wishing to develop compassion and selflessness, at the age of thirty he took Buddhist vows. Wishing to study with the master of compassion Dharmakirti (Tibetan: Serlingpa), he traveled to the faraway land of Suvarnadvipa (present-day Sumatra). He stayed there for twelve years, learning, among many other things, the Mind Training practice. Such was Atisha's gratitude to Dharmakirti that he was unable even to hear his name without bursting into tears.

On his return to India, Atisha taught for fifteen years at different monasteries and was recognized as both the most learned and the most personally realized teacher in all India. He started to receive invitations to teach in Tibet, which he initially refused. (Tibet at that time had an enormous hunger for true Buddhist teaching but an almost total lack of reliable teachers, due to the brief but severe persecution of Buddhism by the insane King Langdarma.)

Once, in his role as head of discipline at the Vikramsila monastery, he concurred in the expulsion of a monk for drinking alcohol as part of a tantric ceremony. The goddess Tara, his yidam, then came to him in a dream and said that he was responsible for the expulsion of a sincere practitioner, and that as penance he should go to Tibet and teach. The next time the Tibetans invited him, he accepted. The story is told that he had heard that the Tibetans were very open and friendly, so that he would have no-one to challenge him in his compassion practice. So he took along his sulky, bad-mannered Bengali tea boy so that he would have someone to stimulate him in his Mind Training.

He had difficulty getting permission to go from the head of Vikramsila, since his prestige in India was so great. Eventually was allowed to go to Tibet only on condition that he return in three years. However, the need

for him and his teaching in Tibet was so great that he never returned, but died there twelve years later.

The information in this biography is mainly taken from Atisha and Tibet, by Alaka Chattopadhaya. There are a lot of uncertainties in this history, fully explained by Mr Chattopadaya, which the above account glosses over.

<http://www.theflow.org/tonglen/atisha.htm>

Atisha's work of spreading Buddhadharma in India and Tibet ...

Atisha mastered the teachings of both Hinayana and Mahayana and was held in respect by Teachers of both traditions. When non-Buddhists debated with him and were defeated they would convert to Buddhism. Atisha was like a king, the crown ornament of Indian Buddhists, and was regarded as a second Buddha.

Before Atisha's time the thirty-seventh king of Tibet, Trisong Detsen (AD circa 754 – 97), had invited Padmasambhava, Shantarakshita, and other Buddhist Teachers to Tibet, and through their influence pure Dharma had flourished; but some years later a Tibetan king called Lang Darma (AD circa 836) destroyed the pure Dharma in Tibet and abolished the Sangha. Until that time most of the kings had been religious, but it was a dark age in Tibet during Lang Darma's evil reign. About seventy years after his death Dharma began to flourish once again in the upper part of Tibet through the efforts of great Teachers such as the translator Rinchen Sangpo, and it also began to flourish in the lower part of Tibet through the efforts of a great Teacher called Gongpa Rabsal. Gradually, Dharma spread to central Tibet.

At that time there was no pure practice of the union of Sutra and Tantra. The two were thought to be contradictory, like fire and water. When people practiced Sutra they abandoned Tantra, and when they practiced Tantra they abandoned Sutra, including even the rules of the Vinaya. False teachers came from India wishing to procure some of Tibet's plentiful gold. Pretending to be Spiritual Guides and Yogis they introduced perversions such as black magic, creating apparitions, sexual practices, and ritual murder. These malpractices became quite widespread.

A king called Yeshe Ö and his nephew Jangchub Ö, who lived in Ngari in west Tibet, were greatly concerned about what was happening to the Dharma in their country. The king wept when he thought of the purity of Dharma in former times compared with the impure Dharma now being practiced. He was grieved to see how hardened and uncontrolled the minds of the people had become. He thought 'How wonderful it would be if pure Dharma were to flourish once again in Tibet to tame the minds of our people.' To fulfill this wish he sent Tibetans to India to learn Sanskrit

and train in Dharma, but many of these people were unable to endure the hot climate. The few who survived learnt Sanskrit and trained very well in Dharma. Amongst them was the translator Rinchen Sangpo, who received many instructions and then returned to Tibet.

Since this plan had not met with much success Yeshe Ö decided to invite an authentic Teacher from India. He sent a group of Tibetans to India with a large quantity of gold, and gave them the task of seeking out the most qualified Spiritual Guide in India. He advised them all to study Dharma and gain perfect knowledge of Sanskrit. These Tibetans suffered all the hardships of climate and travel in order to accomplish his wishes. Some of them became famous translators. They translated many scriptures and sent them to the king, to his great delight.

When these Tibetans returned to Tibet they informed Yeshe Ö, 'In India there are many very learned Buddhist Teachers, but the most distinguished and sublime of all is Dhipamkara Shrijnana. We would like to invite him to Tibet, but he has thousands of disciples in India.' When Yeshe Ö heard the name 'Dhipamkara Shrijnana' he was pleased, and became determined to invite this Master to Tibet. Since he had already used most of his gold and more was now needed to invite Dhipamkara Shrijnana to Tibet, the king set off on an expedition to search for more gold. When he arrived at one of the borders a hostile non-Buddhist king captured him and threw him into prison. When the news reached Jangchub Ö he considered 'I am powerful enough to wage war on this king, but if I do so many people will suffer and I shall have to commit many harmful, destructive actions.' He decided to make an appeal for his uncle's release, but the king responded by saying 'I shall release your uncle only if you either become my subject or bring me a quantity of gold as heavy as your uncle's body.' With great difficulty Jangchub Ö managed to gather gold equal in weight to his uncle's body, less the weight of his head. Since the king demanded the extra amount, Jangchub Ö prepared to go in search of more gold, but before he set out he visited his uncle. He found Yeshe Ö physically weak but in a good state of mind. Jangchub Ö spoke through the bars of the prison, 'Soon I shall be able to release you for I have managed to collect almost all the gold.' Yeshe Ö replied 'Please do not treat me as if I were important. You must not give the gold to this hostile king. Send it all to India and offer it to Dhipamkara Shrijnana. This is my greatest wish. I shall give my life joyfully for the sake of restoring pure Dharma in Tibet. Please deliver this message to

Dhipamkara Shrijnana. Let him know that I have given my life to invite him to Tibet. Since he has compassion for the Tibetan people, when he receives this message he will accept our invitation.'

Jangchub Ö sent the translator Nagtso together with some companions to India with the gold. When they met Dhipamkara Shrijnana they told him what was happening in Tibet and how the people wanted to invite a Spiritual Guide from India. They told him how much gold the king had sent as an offering and how many Tibetans had died for the sake of restoring pure Dharma. They told him how Yeshe Ö had sacrificed his life to bring him to Tibet. When they had made their request Dhipamkara Shrijnana considered what they had said and accepted their invitation. Although he had many disciples in India and was working very hard there for the sake of Dharma, he knew that there was no pure Dharma in Tibet. He had also received a prediction from Arya Tara that if he were to go to Tibet he would benefit countless living beings. Compassion arose in his heart when he thought how many Tibetans had died in India, and he was especially moved by the sacrifice of Yeshe Ö.

Dhipamkara Shrijnana had to make his way to Tibet in secret, for had his Indian disciples known that he was leaving India they would have prevented him. He said that he was making a pilgrimage to Nepal, but from Nepal he passed into Tibet. When his Indian disciples eventually realized that he was not going to return they protested that the Tibetans were thieves who had stolen their Spiritual Guide!

Since it was customary in those days, as it is today, to greet an honored guest in style, Jangchub Ö sent an entourage of three hundred horsemen with many eminent Tibetans to the border to welcome Atisha and offer him a horse to ease the difficult journey to Ngari. Atisha rode at the center of the three hundred horsemen, and by means of his miracle powers he sat one cubit above his horse's back. When they saw him, those who previously had no respect for him developed very strong faith, and everyone said that the second Buddha had arrived in Tibet.

When Atisha reached Ngari, Jangchub Ö requested him: 'O Compassionate Atisha, please give instructions to help the Tibetan people. Please give advice that everyone can follow. Please give us special instructions so that we can practice all the paths of Sutra and Tantra together.' To fulfill this wish Atisha composed and taught Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment. He gave these instructions first in Ngari

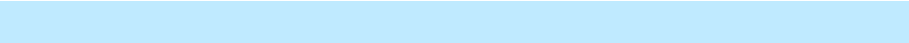
and then in central Tibet. Many disciples who heard these teachings developed great wisdom.

While he had been in India Atisha had received a prediction from Arya Tara, 'When you go to Tibet, a layman will come to receive instructions from you, and this disciple will cause Dharma to flourish far and wide.' This prediction referred to Atisha's foremost disciple, Dromtonpa. At first Atisha taught Lamrim mainly to Dromtonpa, and to other disciples he gave instructions on Secret Mantra. When Dromtonpa asked him 'Why do you give Lamrim mainly to me and not to others?' Atisha replied that he was especially worthy to receive Lamrim teachings. After Atisha's death Dromtonpa was regarded as his representative and respected as his equal. Dromtonpa taught Lamrim extensively in Tibet.

(from 'Joyful Path of Good Fortune', by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso)

<http://joyfulpath.tripod.com/dharma/Stories/atisha.htm>

Serlingpa



Geshe Chekhawa

" It is said that Geshe Chekhawa originally belonged to the old tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the Nyingma tradition. Although he was well-versed in the teachings of both the old and the new traditions of Dharma, he was not entirely satisfied with his practice. He sought teachings from Rechungpa, one of Milarepa's main disciples, and later from the Kadampa Teacher Geshe Chagshinpa. One day, when in Geshe Chagshinpa's room, he found a short text entitled 'Eight Verses of Training the Mind'. Two lines in the sixth verse caught his attention:

May I accept defeat
And offer the victory to others.

Even though he already possessed a profound knowledge of Dharma his mind was deeply affected by these words. Wanting to discover their real meaning he asked Geshe Chagshinpa the name of the author. Geshe Chagshinpa replied that the text was written by Geshe Langri Tangpa. Immediately upon hearing this, Geshe Chekhawa developed a wish to receive teachings from Geshe Langri Tangpa, and he set out at once for Lhasa where he hoped to meet him. When he arrived he discovered that Geshe Langri Tangpa had passed away and so he decided to find one of Geshe Langri Tangpa's disciples who could give him an explanation of this verse.

He met a man from the province of Lang Tang who told him that one of Geshe Langri Tangpa's main disciples was Geshe Sharawa. Encouraged by this, Geshe Chekhawa set out to find Geshe Sharawa. When he found him, Geshe Sharawa was teaching a course on philosophy to a vast audience. Geshe Chekhawa listened to the teachings, which went on for several days, but he heard no mention of accepting defeat and offering the victory to others. After the teachings had finished, Geshe Chekhawa approached Geshe Sharawa as he was circumambulating a stupa and, putting his upper garment on the ground as a seat, requested him 'Please sit down for a while. I have something to ask you.' Geshe Sharawa replied rather abruptly 'I have just given extensive teachings from the throne, did you not understand them?' Geshe Chekhawa answered 'I have one special question.' Geshe Sharawa then sat down and Geshe Chekhawa asked 'How important is the practice of accepting defeat and offering the victory to others?' Geshe Sharawa replied 'If you want to attain enlightenment,

this practice is essential.' Geshe Chekhawa then asked where this practice was taught in the scriptures, and Geshe Sharawa replied by quoting two lines from Nagarjuna's 'Precious Garland of Advice for the King':

May their negative actions ripen upon me
And may all my virtues ripen upon them.

Implicit in these words is the wish to accept defeat oneself and offer the victory to others. Geshe Sharawa gave further sources that convinced Geshe Chekhawa that this teaching was authentic.

Geshe Chekhawa then requested Geshe Sharawa to give him full instructions on this practice. Geshe Sharawa replied 'If you stay with me for several years I will teach you.' Geshe Chekhawa stayed with Geshe Sharawa for twelve years, and within six years he had become very skilled at training his mind. Other Kadampa Geshe's recognized that he had abandoned the Mahayana path of seeing by completely abandoning self-cherishing. Until this time the instructions on training the mind had not been taught openly but had remained a secret lineage. Since it was necessary to possess a certain degree of faith before practicing these instructions, Geshe Chekhawa at first taught them only to his closest and most receptive disciples.

This was a time when leprosy was widespread in Tibet because doctors were unable to cure it. One day Geshe Chekhawa met some lepers and decided to instruct them in the practice of training the mind, and especially in the practice of taking and giving. Through engaging in these practices many of the lepers were quickly cured of their disease. News of this spread rapidly and many other sufferers came to see Geshe Chekhawa, whose home soon took on the appearance of a hospital. As a result, Geshe Chekhawa's teachings became known among Tibetans as the 'Dharma for leprosy'.

Geshe Chekhawa had a brother who disliked Dharma intensely and had no faith in Geshe Chekhawa himself. One day he happened to overhear some of the teachings on training the mind that Geshe Chekhawa was giving to the lepers and was impressed by what he heard. Some time later Geshe Chekhawa noticed from his brother's behavior that he was practicing the instructions on training the mind. Geshe Chekhawa thought that if a disbeliever such as his brother could benefit from these teachings, many other beings could also be helped by them, and so he decided that it

was no longer appropriate to keep the instructions secret. Accordingly, with a sincere wish to help all living beings, he composed the text 'Training the Mind in Seven Points'. Because of his great kindness in composing this text and teaching it openly we now have an opportunity to receive these instructions and put them into practice. Therefore, we should remember with gratitude the kindness of Geshe Chekhawa. "

(from 'Universal Compassion' by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso)

<http://joyfulpath.tripod.com/dharma/Stories/chekhawa.htm>



Geshe Langri Tangpa

Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa was born in central Tibet in the eleventh century AD. His actual name was Dorje Senge, but he became known as Langri Tangpa after Lang Tang, the area in which he lived. He was a disciple of Geshe Potowa, who was one of the principal disciples of the Indian Buddhist Master Atisha, the founder of Kadampa Buddhism in Tibet.

Geshe Potowa was renowned throughout Tibet as a great scholar who showed an immaculate example to other practitioners, emphasizing the practice of bodhichitta, the altruistic mind of enlightenment. He wrote many profound scriptures of Kadampa Buddhism, and in particular a text called The Scripture of Examples in which he used everyday experiences to illustrate the meaning of Dharma. In this text he recounted a story about a thief who had broken into a house, found a barrel of chang, or Tibetan beer, and proceeded to get drunk. The family was woken by his singing: 'How happy I am to be drinking from the mouth of the barrel of chang, but how much more wonderful it would be if I were drinking from the bottom of the barrel!' Geshe Potowa used the thief's song as a parable, changing the words to: 'How happy we are to be practicing Dharma from the mouth, but how much more wonderful it would be if we were practicing it from the bottom of our hearts!' There was a saying in Tibet that Geshe Potowa's disciples were as numerous as stars in the sky, and that his two principal disciples, Geshe Langri Tangpa and Geshe Sharawa, were like the sun and the moon.

Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa was widely respected throughout Tibet as a holy person, and was recognized by many great meditators as an emanation of Buddha Amitabha. Although others regarded him as special, he always behaved in a humble manner and viewed others as important and worthy of respect. Completely indifferent to wealth, status, and other worldly attainments, for many years he was very poor, living almost like a beggar. Inwardly, however, he was engaged in the practice known as 'accepting defeat and offering the victory to others' – happily accepting whatever difficulties and adverse conditions he encountered, and offering his happiness and good conditions to others. His willing acceptance of poverty and hardship was a good example to other spiritual practitioners.

Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa's demeanor was very different from that of most people. We tend to be overly concerned that others like us, and so make a great effort to present a cheerful aspect, no matter how we feel inside. Langri Tangpa was the opposite. He maintained such a stern, unsmiling expression that he was nicknamed 'Grim Face'. His assistant once said to him: 'People are calling you "Grim Face"'. When they come to receive blessings from you, it would be good if you could smile sometimes and speak gently to them.' Langri Tangpa replied: 'What you say is true, but I find it difficult to find anything in samsara to smile about. Whenever I see someone I think of their suffering, and instead of laughing I feel like crying.' It was due to his deep compassion for all living beings that Langri Tangpa found it difficult to smile. It is important not to misunderstand this. Langri Tangpa was not unhappy; his compassion and other spiritual realizations protected him from ever feeling depressed and caused him to experience great joy. However, he saw clearly that there is no true happiness in samsara, and that confusing worldly pleasure with real happiness serves only to bind us more tightly to samsara. His stern manner challenged people to confront their actual samsaric situation and to enter into spiritual paths.

Langri Tangpa rarely laughed, and when he did it was so unusual that his assistant made a note of it. On one occasion Langri Tangpa was meditating in a cave on a hillside overlooking a river. It was mid-winter and the river was completely iced over. A traveling potter was crossing the river, but, laden with pots, he kept slipping over and breaking them. As the potter knew that Langri Tangpa was somewhere up on the hillside, whenever he slipped he would call out 'O Langri Tangpa, Grim Face!', in much the same way as people in the West say 'O God!' or 'O Jesus!' in similar situations. Langri Tangpa heard him and thought it was so funny that he started laughing.

On another occasion, after Langri Tangpa had been offered a large piece of turquoise he saw a mouse trying to steal it from his meditation table. Unable to move the stone, the mouse went away and returned with four other mice. The first mouse, which was the smallest, lay on its back, and the other mice pushed the turquoise onto its stomach. They each took one of its legs, and, pushing and pulling, managed to drag the turquoise to their mouse hole. However, when they got there they found that the stone was too large to fit through the hole, and so they had to leave it behind. Langri Tangpa found this so amusing that he laughed out loud.

Despite his stern appearance, through his actions people gradually came to understand that Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa's real nature was very special. Recognizing him to be a holy being, they made many offerings to him, but as soon as anyone gave him anything he would immediately offer it to his Spiritual Guide, Geshe Potowa, and to the community of Geshe Potowa's disciples. Just before Geshe Potowa passed away, Langri Tangpa made two promises in front of him: to give away all his possessions, and not to remain in any one place for long. From then on, whenever he traveled to a new place he would give away any possessions he had accumulated and move on empty-handed. By happily accepting poverty and continuously practicing generosity, Langri Tangpa accumulated a vast amount of merit. As a result of all this merit, later in his life he received so many offerings that he was able to establish a large monastery, support two thousand monks, and help many poor people. Without engaging in any business activities or making any effort to acquire wealth he nevertheless became rich simply through accumulating merit. Every month he would give away all he owned, but the next month he would be given even more! Although Langri Tangpa's generosity initially made him poor, the merit he accumulated through his practice of giving later made him very wealthy.

Langri Tangpa was also a great scholar and practitioner. His main practices were exchanging self with others, accepting defeat and offering the victory, and bodhichitta – all of which are explained in this book. By teaching these practices to others he led many thousands of disciples to enlightenment. Even the area of Lang Tang in which he lived was blessed by his presence, such that the local people became peaceful and friendly and the animals and birds lived in harmony. He also had a special power to cure sickness and pacify obstacles, and on one occasion was able to protect the lives of many people by causing dangerous floods to recede.

Langri Tangpa practiced accepting defeat and offering the victory to others all the time, both in meditation and in daily life. Once a young woman living nearby had a child who became seriously ill. She had already lost her first child and, fearing that this child might die too, she consulted a Lama who told her that the way to save her daughter was to give her to Geshe Langri Tangpa. 'But how can a monk look after a baby?', she asked. The Lama replied: 'Geshe Langri Tangpa is a

Bodhisattva. His nature is to accept all hardship and give all good conditions to others, and so he will definitely agree to look after your child.'

The woman went to Langri Tangpa with her baby, but found him sitting on a throne teaching a large audience. Still not really believing that he would accept the baby, yet convinced that if she did not give her to him the baby would surely die, she strode up to him and placed the baby in his lap, saying: 'Here is your baby. I cannot feed her. You look after her.' To the surprise of his disciples, Langri Tangpa accepted the child. Although some people assumed that he really was the father and began to develop doubts about him, Langri Tangpa was unconcerned. Tenderly wrapping the child in his yellow robe, he carried on with the discourse. When he had finished he took the child home, fed her, and blessed her. He cared for her for two years, and through his blessings she was completely cured. After two years the mother returned to see if her daughter was well. When she saw how healthy the child was, she asked Langri Tangpa if she could have her daughter back, and the kind Geshe immediately complied. From this and many other examples of his selfless behavior everyone came to understand that Langri Tangpa was a very special, holy person.

It was not only in that life that Langri Tangpa worked extensively to benefit living beings and spread Buddhadharma in Tibet; he had done the same in many previous incarnations and continued to do so in subsequent lives. In a previous life, as the translator Gowa Pagtse, he had traveled to India, learnt Sanskrit, and translated many Buddhist texts into Tibetan. Later he reincarnated as Je Tsongkhapa's principal disciple Khädrubje, as Gyalwa Ensäpa, and as the first and second Panchen Lamas.

When I was in Lhasa I met my Spiritual Father, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, for the first time, and just seeing him reminded me of Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa. I felt great devotion towards him and often thought that he must be an emanation of Langri Tangpa. A senior monk later gave me a small book that listed the names of Trijang Rinpoche's previous incarnations, and among these was the name 'Geshe Langri Tangpa'. I was so happy to find my previous belief confirmed!

Because Langri Tangpa is Buddha Amitabha, and a Buddha's compassion is unlimited, there are definitely emanations of Langri Tangpa throughout the world even though we do not recognize them. We can be certain that his emanations are working in the West to benefit living beings and to

spread Buddhadharma. The only reason we do not recognize them is that our minds are clouded by ignorance.

Through sincerely practicing the instructions on training the mind, Bodhisattva Langri Tangpa found ultimate happiness and helped many others to do the same. He then explained the essence of his experience of Dharma in Eight Verses of Training the Mind. Based on this text, later Kadampa Lamas such as Geshe Chekhawa spread the study and practice of Kadam Lojong, or training the mind, throughout Tibet. We should consider ourself very fortunate to have met such precious teachings.

(from 'Eight Steps to Happiness', by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso)

http://joyfulpath.tripod.com/dharma/Stories/langri_tangpa.htm



Jamgön Kongtrul (JK)

Jamgön Kongtrul was one of the giants of the 19th-century Tibetan Rime ('ree-may')(non-sectarian) movement. He was born in 1813 and raised as a priest of Tibet's pre-Buddhist, animistic Bön tradition.

When he was 14, the provincial authorities captured his father and imprisoned him in the provincial capital: Kongtrul moved there to attend to his father's needs. While he was there, his brilliance attracted the attention of some Nyingma teachers who invited him to join their monastery.

However, he made such an impression that another monastery 'requisitioned' him and installed him as the incarnation of one of their teachers for political reasons: Kongtrul is the name of that incarnation. Since his interest was in practice rather than politics, he left the main monastery in 1842 to live in an old, abandoned retreat center which he refurbished and used to teach three-year retreats. His curriculum for these retreats is still in use today.

He regretted the breaking of his connection with his former Nyingma teachers, and attributed this as the cause for later ill health and mental and karmic obstacles. Gradually he worked through these problems with the help of the great Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (who became a close collaborator in the Rime movement) and of Chokling Rinpoche.

Kongtrul developed a profound faith in all aspects of the Buddha's lineage and teaching, and saw rejecting or ignoring any of them as rejecting the Buddha himself. He used practices from many different schools in his retreats and preserved them in his writings. He was particularly concerned to preserve and teach practices directly applicable to ordinary life, such as Mind Training (tonglen and lojong).

This brief biography is based on material in the introduction to Sarah Harding's translation of Kongtrul's explanation of the motivation for visualization and deity practice, entitled 'Creation and Completion'. This is an indispensable text for any Westerner doing such a practice.

<http://www.theflow.org/tonglen/kongtrul.htm>

HH Shamar Rinpoche (SR)

Bio. Available at :

<http://www.shamarpa.org/>

Allan Wallave (AW)

Bio. Available at :

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/scbs/BudStud/WallaceCV.html>

The Seven Points of Mind Training

"Easy to explain, but very difficult to realize"

The Seven Points of Mind Training is at the heart of the Sutra and Tantra teachings in the Mahayana tradition; they are the skillful means of practice. The Indian sage, Atisha, composed the text later introduced in Tibet. There it spread widely and became the essential teaching practiced by all the lamas. Whatever our practice is, this mind training consists of advice which will definitely deepen it. Whether we meditate in the tradition of Mahamudra, Dzogchen, or the yidam practice of Dorje Phagmo, or Khorlo Demchok – in fact all tantric practices at whatever tantric level (be it charya, kriya, yoga, or anuttarayoga), our practice does not have real significance without the mind training. Such training is essential for any tantric practice, since it ensures the removal of obstacles along the path. -- HH Shamar Rinpoche

Lojong:

Literally meaning '**Thought Transformation**' or '**Mind Training**'. A unique group of practices related to the training of one's mind in the generation of bodhicitta and living one's life in accord with the principles of a bodhisattva. One of the main characteristics of this practice is the skilful transformation of circumstances, which might normally be considered adverse or harmful, into conditions favorable to one's practice.

- The origin of the texts related to this approach can be traced to **the Indian master Dharmara-shita**, author of *The Wheel of Sharp Weapons*.
- This tradition was continued in Tibet by **Atisha** and his immediate disciples.
- The most famous Tibetan text on Lojong is the celebrated **Eight Verses of Thought Transformation** by **Geshe Langn Thangpa**. Although very short and succinctly expressed, it outlines the essential aspects of the training of one's mind in the conduct of a *bodhisattva*. Its main emphasis is on the altruistic practices of the *bodhisattva*'s

way of life. Particularly highlighted are the skilful ways in which a true practitioner can transcend adverse circumstances and transform these into conditions which will enhance spiritual progress.

-- The Tibetan Buddhist Library

Note: The Seven Points consist of 57 proverbs divided by subject into seven sections. For each of those sections you will find commentaries by two authors:

1. *The first is an Excerpted from: A Passage from Solitude, by B. Alan Wallace. 1992 by Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York 14851.*
2. *The second is from: THE GREAT PATH OF AWAKENING, by Jamgön Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod. © 1993 by Ken McLeod. Published by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston.*

Both are copied from the Web Site: "Tonglen - The Seven Points of Mind Training - Exchanging Self for Others" which gives more commentaries from a total of 5 authors. -- <http://www.theflow.org/tonglen/main.htm>

I have also added verses from: The Seven Point Thought Transformation (Blo-sbyong don-bdun-ma) Composed by Geshe Chekawa, the virtuous spiritual friend of the Kadam tradition.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/4886/7point.htm>

1- The Preliminaries

**“I bow to the Spiritual Friends of the Supreme Vehicle,
Source of everything good in Samsara and Nirvana.
By the gracious Lama's blessings, may my mind be purified
with the three kinds of faith.**

**By the gracious Lama's blessings, knowing how hard to obtain
and how easily destroyed is this precious human life. In all my
actions according to their karmic effect, may I try to do what is
right and avoid what is wrong and develop a genuine
determination to be free from Samsara, as I train in the
preliminaries (1).”**

-- Atisha

LINEAGE:

Om Svasti: Homage to great compassion.

**The essence of this nectar of advice is in continuity from
Serlingpa.**

**It is like a diamond, the sun and the healing tree.
When the five degenerations flourish, transform them into the
path to full awakening.**

ONE – Preliminaries:

First train in all the preliminary practices.

-- Geshe Chekawa

I - The Preliminaries

The meaning of the preliminaries is to reflect on the Four Thoughts that turn the mind towards Enlightenment. No further elaboration is given here, as most of you are already very familiar with it.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

First, Train In The Preliminaries - AW

1. the preciousness of human life

In this lifetime, each of us is gifted with a human body and with circumstances, both external and internal, that are conducive to a fruitful spiritual practice of potentially great depth. To understand how precious this opportunity is, it helps to have reached a sense of conviction that we are each endowed with a continuum of consciousness that is not confined to this life alone, and, moreover, that our actions and behavior have significance from one life to another.

As we take into account this linear progression from past life to present to future, we can appreciate the rare and precious opportunities that this fully endowed human life presents to us right now: the gifts of our teachers, the circumstances that are conducive to practice, the countless means we have for transforming our lives in a wholesome way. From this context we can also look laterally, to other sentient beings around us. Everyone desires essentially the same things as ourselves - a lasting state of contentment and freedom from suffering, pain, anxiety, and fear.

Although this common ground we share with every sentient being in the universe is utterly simple, the ways that individuals strive to fulfill this eternal longing vary with infinite diversity. And, for so many people, these methods are pathetically ineffective. We don't need to be great sages to see that many people fail tragically at finding happiness and freeing their minds from unnecessary grief. It takes no deep insight to see that the source of both our well-being and our maladies lies within our own hearts and minds. To change our experience of life we must inevitably change our hearts and minds, or rather our heart/minds.

The Buddhadharma starts from where we are right now, with our uncertainties and our shortcomings, as well as our wholesome qualities. It

starts here, not after we have become Bodhisattvas. It shows a clear path for living a meaningful, wholesome life of increasing contentment and good cheer in this very lifetime, and it shows us how to sow the seeds for our well-being in future lives.

As this sinks in, priorities change. Before, we might have said, "The teachings are good. They are all very well, but given my job and my family, my bills, the city I live in, all my responsibilities and commitments, I just don't have time. I don't have time to hear teachings, or to meditate, or to read books on dharma. I don't have time to bring my mind to Dharma." This suggests a set of priorities that leaves precious little time for dharma. What could be more important? Keep in mind that Dharma is not confined to formal practice, sitting cross-legged in meditation or reciting sadhanas. Dharma is meant here in a broad sense; but not in a sense so diluted - or deluded - that "living Dharma all the time" means very little Dharma at all.

2. death and impermanence

An awareness of death and impermanence enhances the vivid realization of the preciousness of a fully endowed human life in a way that transforms the heart and mind. It is possible to be lethargic in a very dynamic way: lethargic in relation to dharma but dynamic regarding samsara. We have plenty of time for entertainment, movies, vacations, sports, and partying. We have plenty of time for work. But we have precious little time for dharma, thinking, "Perhaps, when the kids are older, when I retire, when the work eases off a bit, or when winter comes, or summer. . . ." We always assume that there will be time later, but in the process we are aging and our vitality is waning. Impermanence means we are changing, and approaching death.

Meditation on death and impermanence shows that there is no time to squander. The need for dharma is urgent. Death may be imminent for each of us, and the fact of our death is utterly certain. All mundane goals that we strive for will certainly pass, and all that will remain is the imprints: the growth derived from our Dharma practice or, on the other side of the ledger, the force of habits that are motivated by mental distortions.

3. actions and their results

An awareness of death and impermanence leads very quickly to an investigation of the nature of actions and their results. Actions provide the coherent relationship that links one life to another. Each action leaves its imprint upon our consciousness and, sooner or later, inevitably manifests its fruit unless it has somehow been nullified by other actions. Actions need not be physical. With each phrase, each comment, and, most frightening of all, each thought, we are creating our futures for better or worse. And the present that we experience right now is what we have created by the karma of our past actions.

Having reached the certainty that each of our actions and its results is profoundly significant, not only within this lifetime but beyond, it is important to use this wonderful discovery. Let the understanding of karma transform our priorities, our values, our world view, and thus transform our way of life.

4. the unsatisfactory nature of the cycle of existence

The last of the four fundamental preliminaries emphasized in Geshe Rabten's commentary is the unsatisfactory nature of the cycle of existence. The term samsara, translated as cycle of existence, is often misused by Westerners. Even people familiar with Buddhist teachings use the term casually to refer to their physical environment, be it the planet earth or Los Angeles. This is missing the point. Samsara is not a geographic location, nor is it nature. Buddhas have lived on planet earth, and yet they are utterly free of samsara. Samsara is a condition of life, but it is not life itself. Escaping from samsara does not mean being extinguished or annihilated, any more than it means leaving the city for a mountain retreat.

The priorities change. Before, we might have said, "The teachings are good. They are all very well, but given my job and my family, my bills, the city I live in, all my responsibilities and commitments, I just don't have time. I don't have time to hear teachings, or to meditate, or to read books on dharma. I don't have time to bring my mind to Dharma." This suggests a set of priorities that leaves precious little time for tantric sadhanas, dream yoga - for that matter, we could go to a good movie or

out for a pizza! With all of this competition, why meditate on suffering? So we can escape from suffering.

There is something unsatisfying about the way we live, and this need not continue. Otherwise, the Buddha would never have troubled us by pointing out the unsatisfying nature of life - even a successful life, a delightful family situation, a good job, a sunny day. Why is there an element of dissatisfaction and anxiety in all human relations, lying so often just beneath the surface, even in times of pleasure? Something is awry, but the fault is not outside us in the environment. Samsara is not out there, but rather in the way that we experience our environment. To target it precisely, samsara is in the quality of our minds. Our minds are not functioning in accord with reality, and therein lies the problem.

The New Age movement has emphasized the power of affirmative thinking: focusing on the positive aspects of our lives can reinforce or help to realize them. This could imply that meditation on suffering increases the experience of suffering. If we practice incorrectly, this can be quite true. I have met very sincere Buddhists - usually Western Buddhists - who walk about in a cloud of pessimistic gloom and doom that they have created in their meditations. Their enjoyment of something as simple as ice cream is soured by the notion that everything is suffering. This response to life is a distortion of the practice. On the other hand, people who have spent a great deal of time in Lam Rim meditations on suffering and its sources tend to be cheerful, serene, and contented as a result.

I once translated for a Tibetan lama who spoke to a large group about the different types of suffering that we experience. When it was time for questions, a member of the audience asked, "Lama, you have been speaking at such length about all these forms of suffering and the fact that all of our experience is permeated by dissatisfaction. Yet, while teaching this, both you and your interpreter seemed so happy. How can you talk so cheerfully about suffering?"

The lama paused and then responded, with a big smile, "There is such a thing as untainted joy." By this he meant joy untainted by the mental afflictions of attachment, anger, or confusion. Why meditate on suffering? So that we can escape it and discover, gradually through our own experience, the contentment that arises from a wholesome and balanced heart and mind. What can prod us to cultivate this quality of awareness

from day to day, from moment to moment? A vivid awareness that investing our lives in the acquisition of pleasant external stimuli results only in dissatisfaction.

What it would take to be really happy? Do we think of a change in our environment, relationships, acquisitions, or health? Or do we answer instead, "If my heart and mind were more loving, if I were free of resentment, more forgiving, more fluid in my responses to life, endowed with greater wisdom and mental stability...."

Meditation on suffering holds enormous practical value and is a necessary foundation for making full use of the Seven Point Mind Training. Many Buddhist teachers have emphasized the need for deep insight into the nature of suffering in order to develop true compassion and loving kindness towards other living beings. Otherwise compassion arises only when we see someone in obvious pain. When we see the bland, expressionless faces of people walking down the street, we may feel nothing much at all and think, "So what? They are living their lives and I am living mine." But if we look deeper, with vivid awareness, into the actual nature of our existence, the source of happiness and suffering, the role of karma, the fact of impermanence and of death, and the precious value of a fully endowed human life, then a much deeper sense of compassion for other beings can arise and endure. Only this compassion can form the basis for bodhicitta, the spirit of awakening.

Excerpted from: A Passage from Solitude, by B. Alan Wallace. © 1992 by Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, New York 14851.

First, Train In The Preliminaries - JK

There are two points here, the preliminary to a period of meditation and preliminary instruction.

preliminaries to a period of meditation

First, at the beginning of every period of meditation, imagine your root guru sitting on a lotus-and-moon seat above your head. His body is radiant and his face happy and smiling as he regards all beings with non-referential compassion. In him, all the root and lineage gurus are present.

With intense respect and devotion, repeat the lineage prayer if you wish and, in particular, the following prayer a hundred or a thousand times.

I pray for your blessing, my guru, great and completely worthy spiritual friend. I pray that you will cause love, compassion and bodhicitta to arise in my mind.

Then, imagine that your guru descends through the aperture of Brahma and sits in your heart in a pavilion of light, like an open shell. This exercise in intense respect and devotion is known as guru yoga. It is important to begin every period of meditation this way.

preliminary instruction

Second, with respect to preliminary instructions, if the four contemplations -that is, the difficulty of obtaining a free and well-favored existence, death and impermanence, consideration of the shortcomings of samsara, and action as seed and result - are new to you, they are fully explained in the graded-path texts. You need to work at these contemplations so that they definitely become part of your thinking. Here is a concise presentation of the basic points for those who would like one.

the actual instructions

In order to obtain the framework for the practice of dharma, this precious human existence, which, in being free and well favored, offers excellent opportunities, one must practice excellent virtue, since this is its karmic seed. Since the proportion of sentient beings that do practice virtue thoroughly is very small, the result, a free and well-favored existence, is difficult to obtain. When one considers the numbers of other sentient beings, such as animals, it is evident that human existence is just a remote possibility. Therefore, you should, above all else, work at dharma wholeheartedly so that the human existence now obtained is not wasted.

Furthermore, since life is uncertain, the causes of death are numerous, and one can't even be sure that death won't come today, one must exert oneself in the dharma right away. At the time of death, except for virtuous and nonvirtuous actions, nothing will follow, not wealth, food, possessions, nor land, body, or status. Since these are not even as helpful as a straw, there is not the slightest need for them.

After death, the power of karma causes one to experience birth in one of the six classes of beings. Whichever it is, there will be nothing but suffering, not even a strand of happiness.

Since happiness and suffering infallibly develop from virtuous and nonvirtuous actions, one should not do anything evil even at the risk of your life. One should practice only virtuous actions with great diligence.

You should energetically train yourself in this kind of thinking. At the end of every period of meditation, perform the seven-branch prayer as many times as you are able to. In postmeditation periods, put the points of your reflections into practice. These instructions apply to all forms of preparation and actual practice.

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2- The Actual Practice

“By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I purify the untruth of duality into the space of voidness and practice the profound exchange of my own and others' happiness and suffering, meditating continually on the two aspects of Bodhicitta (2).”

-- Atisha

TWO - TRAINING IN THE TWO BODHICITTA:

Having gained stability, receive the secret (teaching).
Consider all phenomena as a dream.
Examine the nature of unborn awareness.
The remedy itself is released in its own place.

Place (your meditation) on the nature of the foundation of all:
the essence (of the path).
In the meditation break be a creator of illusion.
It is like a diamond, the sun and the healing tree.

When the five degenerations flourish, transform them into the
path to full awakening.
Banish the one object of every blame.
Meditate on the great kindness of all.

Practice a combination of both giving and taking.
Commence taking progressively from your own side.
Place these two astride the breath.

There are three objects, three poisons, and three sources of virtue.
Remember this by repeated recollection.
Practice every activity by these words.

-- Geshe Chekawa

II – Bodhicitta

There are two aspects to Bodhicitta. They are the ultimate and relative bodhicitta representing the union of wisdom and skilful means. To develop ultimate Bodhicitta, we have to meditate. Meditation comprises of three phases: the introduction, the body of the practice, and post-meditation.

Ultimate Bodhicitta - the introduction

In the introduction, first reflect that you are really in the presence of your Lama or the Deity of meditation. If you are in a temple, you will likely be facing Buddha statues on a shrine. Think that all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are appearing in front of you and offer them the Seven-Branch Prayer. Then straighten your body and sit in the seven-point posture. Let your mind rest on your breathing for twenty-one complete breaths so as to calm and stabilize the mind.

Ultimate Bodhicitta - the body of the practice

Think that all the events, manifestations, and movements of mind are illusory as in the nature of a dream, unreal and false. For example, when we are sleeping, our dream seems real to us when it is absolutely unreal: if it were real, then the dream would really be happening. In the same way, our world and the beings in it in all their diversities are but the illusive manifestations of mind. While the illusion is taking place, it is "real", but its essence is unreal like a dream. Therefore regard all phenomena as insignificant, similar to a dream, and rest your mind in this perspective in the moment.

Ask yourself, "is mind itself real, or not?" This is your own experiment to lead you to recognize mind. You have to meditate on the mind and ask yourself: What color is it? What is its form? Where does it come from? What is its purpose? Is it inside or outside of the body? What happens when it experiences heat or the cold? Reflect on the mind in this way. You may come to the conclusion that the mind defies any such determination and that is the essence of mind. You must meditate on this point.

When a thought arises, look at it directly and ask yourself, "What is its true nature?" Remain in the understanding that "it is nothing." It is said that all the thoughts are stored in the alaya. The alaya is the mind

unconscious, the thinker of the mental confusions. It is the one who runs after the sounds, the forms, the odors, the tastes and the feelings. The mind is seen when one remains in a state free of running after something. For example, when one has work has to do, the mind is thus engaged and thinks, for example, "What will I cook today? or, "I will clean...",etc. When the mind is no longer carrying on with such thoughts, it is the alaya. The body of the practice is to remain in this kind of meditation for as long time as possible. In fact, it is a meditation similar to the way of Mahamudra.

Ultimate Bodhicitta - post-meditation

During your everyday life, exert yourself to recognize everything as illusory-like and unreal.

Relative Bodhicitta

The training of relative Bodhicitta is "Tonglen" (to send and to take). This is a very important practice because it can purify our obscurations and deepen our capacity for meditative absorption. We have to get used to the exchange of self for others. By this method, we can cut right through to the roots of the ego. We begin first by reflecting on the defects of ego clinging. It is on account of our fixation to a self that we experience the five disturbing emotions. From the moment when there is "I", we have like and dislike. We are attracted to what we like and we feel aversion towards what we dislike. This dualistic interplay is at the core of all our problems, and it will continue to create problems for us until we put an end to ego clinging.

The next step is to exert ourselves in being compassionate towards others. We begin by using the self as the subject of reflection. What do we feel when we are hot, cold, hungry, thirsty, or when we are sick? It is this same suffering that every living being feels. Our compassion must be directed towards all animals as well and not exclusively towards humans. Animals suffer indeed much more than humans do, mainly because of their own inadequacies and limitations. However, some sufferings are inflicted on them by humans. Fish are perfectly happy in water, without disturbing men. Nevertheless, for the sake of sport, men catch them with hooks and then leave them to die on the sand. How would we feel if the same thing were done to us? If someone is starving and eats fish, there is at least some reason for his action – though still negative but excusable.

Recently, I was at the seaside. People there were all well off. They were far from dying of hunger. For them fishing is a source of recreation. They threw them on the ground to die. Some even trampled the fish to death. Also, think of the lobsters, the way in which they are plunged alive into boiling water in the restaurants. How would we feel if we were the lobsters? It is by such reflections that we develop compassion. The sadness and sorrow in all of us when we remember the vast number of people killed in the two World Wars is compassion. But compassion must be extended to the animals as well. Day and night, animals are being killed. When the compassion is directed only towards humans then it is not true compassion, but a form of attachment.

What should be our mental attitude during the practice of sending and taking? We must ask ourselves what would happen if we personally experienced all the suffering of all the living beings. This reflection must take place in a relaxed state of mind without any erroneous views as in: "Oh, perhaps then, I will know this suffering indeed!" And then let the mind take on the anxiety. It is not necessary to bring up the suffering, it is enough to think of it. Then gradually, our attitude will improve. For the moment, our minds are confused and dull, making us an easy prey to pride. This pride must be overcome and the method for that is to think of the suffering of others.

Emotional suffering is also a form of suffering experienced by living beings. Nowadays, many people suffer from mental disorders caused by the disturbing emotions: pride, anger, jealousy, desire and ignorance. Moreover, it is the emotions that condition and shape the world that we experience. How can that be? The world that we live in is nothing more than the illusory appearances of our confused mind. The appearances are produced by our karma. How is karma created? The movement of the emotions in the mind creates it.

When bodhicitta is developed, the illusory manifestations become positive. For example, when one is in a hell realm, one can awake from this state and be reborn among the human beings. All humans know the emotions of pride, of desire, of anger, etc; it is through them that unlimited negative karma is accumulated. Therefore in the future, when the effects of the negative deeds mature, living beings will inevitably

experience the negative conditions and results in the various forms. This is why we need to develop compassion towards all beings.

Hell is not a place though there are many kinds of hell. The Tibetan word for hell simply means "suffering"; so hell is "a world of suffering". The other manifested worlds are places where the experience of happiness and suffering are both present. Our own world is one such example. There are also worlds that know only of happiness: they are produced by beings having only positive karma. Do not believe that these pure worlds, such as Dewachen (the pure land of Amitabha Buddha), are imaginary. Compared to our "real" world, it is just as real.

Thus to practice sending and taking, think of all the suffering of all forms of living beings. To help you become familiar with this practice of compassion, you can use another method, and it is concentration on the breathing. This latter method has two advantages: it will improve the calming of the mind and it will increase your compassion. For this practice, sit in the same posture as before and place your attention on your breathing. When you exhale, think that you are sending your happiness to all the living beings and it penetrates them. When you inhale, take into yourself all their suffering. Do that for as long as you can. When you feel a mental suffering, think about the suffering of another person, and think that his suffering penetrates you. Now apply the ultimate Bodhicitta practice that you have learnt and look directly at the concept that you have taken in another's suffering. Realize that this thought has no real existence. You have thus entered into the meditation of ultimate Bodhicitta. The development of ultimate and relative Bodhicitta alternately will usher in benefits that are limitless. This is the body of the practice. Then, in your daily activities, reflect like this: "May all living beings be released from all the disturbing emotions in all their forms; and may the resultant sufferings from the activities caused by these emotions mature on me rather than on them."

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

Treat everything you perceive as a dream.

Consider The World As Dreamlike - AW

What does "dream-like" mean here? If we understand it superficially to mean unreal or dreamy in a vague, unfocused sense, we miss the whole point. Other analogies may serve as well: the apprehended world is compared to a mirage, a magical illusion, an echo, or a reflection in a mirror. But a dream is especially apt.

Think back to an actual dream, a vivid one. While we dream, the events in the dream seem really to be happening: we find ourselves on another continent, a conversation takes place, we are punished or rewarded, perhaps even die. Anything can happen. All the appearances are there. But in spite of appearances, no such events are occurring. A woman dreams that she gives birth to a child, the child grows up, then is killed, and the woman grieves. She has experienced the whole process, but wakes up to recognize that there was no birth, no child, no death. In this sense phenomena are dreamlike; there is no substantial reality that accords with appearances. We observe phenomena as being far more concrete and tangible than in fact they are, and this is misleading. It occurs because of the mental process of reification.

Sechibuwa explains that there is no entity apart from the mind that is anything more than a deceptive appearance to the mind. Nothing exists independently of consciousness or mental designation. At first glance this looks like idealism, a denial of external reality: everything is just of the stuff of the mind.

...

Even through Physics we could build a strong case that the world of absolute space and time as we experience it with our senses is an illusion.

...

Phenomena exist as dependently related events, but they do not appear that way. When I look at the mountain across the valley, do I see that its existence depends on its attributes? Do I perceive that the existence of this mountain depends on the mental designation of it, and depends also on its own causes and conditions? I have to say no. The mountain appears to

exist entirely in its own right, resting there, utterly self-sufficient. And that is an illusion. In that sense the mountain does not exist as it appears, and in that sense the mountain is . This is true of all the environment, and also of our bodies.

Regard All Phenomena As Dreams - JK

Actual phenomena-that is, the world and its inhabitants-are objects that we grasp at with our senses. These appearances are simply our mind's manifestations of confusion. In the end, they are not actually existent in any way whatsoever, but are like the appearances in a dream. By thinking along these lines, train yourself to have some feeling for looking at the world this way. Should you wonder if mind in itself is real,

Find the consciousness you had before you were born.

Investigate The Nature Of Unborn Awareness - AW

When we seek something to grasp as our personal identity, we naturally arrive at the mind. What Sechibuwa challenges here is precisely this instinctive sense of personal identity that regards the mind as an entity in its own right. He asks us to investigate whether awareness does in fact exist in its own right, whether our minds exist intrinsically, independent of other people's minds, of the environment, and of our bodies.

In the continuum of such mental events we then discover behavioral, cognitive, and emotional patterns. Out of these patterns we develop a sense of personality, which we identify as "I am". But to equate ourselves with these patterns is fallacious. There is no real personal identity, no "I," no self, in these ever-changing, dependently related events that constitute our stream of awareness. In an ultimate sense, the nature of awareness is unborn; that is, it does not intrinsically arise from some preceding cause. Only on a relative or conventional level can we speak of awareness arising and passing again and again. The concept of mind as an abiding, isolated, changeless entity that performs a variety of mental events—choices, memories, imagination, hopes, fears—that mind as an entity existing in its own right is in fact a non-entity. It is a purely artificial fabrication, and by identifying with that false concept of mind we do ourselves great damage.

At this point the author has discussed both the objective world and subjective awareness, and has concluded that neither exists intrinsically. Whereas he seemed at first to lead us towards idealism, denying that the objective world has any intrinsic reality independent of awareness, he then turns around to deny the intrinsic reality of awareness as well. Both the objective world and the subjective world do exist. Their ontological status is fundamentally the same: both exist as matrices of mutually interdependent events, but in neither do we find an absolute foundation for reality. This is neither materialism nor idealism, but something different. How different, we are about to see.

Examine The Nature Of Unborn Awareness - JK

When you look directly at the presence of mind, no color, no shape, no form is perceived. Since mind has no origin, it has never come into existence in the first place. Now it is not located anywhere, inside or outside the body. Finally, the mind is not some object that goes somewhere or ceases to exist. By examining and investigating mind, you should come to a precise and certain understanding of the nature of this awareness, which has no origin, location, or cessation.

Let even the remedy itself drop away naturally.

Even The Antidote Itself Is Liberated In Its Own Place - AW

The next verse of the root text continues on the subject of ultimate bodhicitta, or realizing the nature of reality, as a practice during meditation sessions. The direct realization of ultimate truth is the fundamental antidote and ultimate healer of the distortions that afflict the mind. The author is saying that even this realization itself is "liberated in its own place." And here "liberated" means lacking intrinsic existence. Even the notion of ultimate truth is itself devoid of inherent existence.

Sechibuwa has shifted here to a third aspect of reality. After denying first the intrinsic existence of objective reality, and then that of subjective awareness, he now moves on to transcendent awareness. Even this transcendent experience of ultimate reality, in which there is no sense of subject/object, no duality of this as opposed to that, self as opposed to other, no sense of time, no conceptual discrimination - even this fundamental antidote to the fundamental distortion of ignorance has no inherent existence. On what grounds can one make such a statement? The Madhyamaka view proposes the thesis that any dependently related event is devoid of intrinsic existence. Conversely, any entity that is devoid of intrinsic existence is by that very fact a dependently related event. This sums up the ultimate and conventional natures of all phenomena.

Even The Remedy Is Freed To Subside Naturally - JK

Thoughts about this remedy for the tendency to cling to existence may come up. For example, you may think, "mind and body all are empty" or "nothing is helpful or harmful in emptiness." If this happens, then

Even the remedy is freed to subside naturally

When you look at the presence of the remedy itself, these thoughts about the absence of true existence, there is nothing for mind to refer to and they subside naturally on their own. Relax in this state.

Stay in the primeval consciousness, the basis of everything.

Establish The Nature Of The Path In The Sphere Of The Foundation Of All - AW

Once we have arrived at this point honestly, with insight and intelligence, the nature of the meditative practice shifts. Now we free the mind of the conceptualizations we were using before, free it of any kind of ideation or discursive thought, any conceptual grasping to past, present, or future. The mind relaxes in the nature of non-grasping, and yet we maintain a state of vivid clarity, free of dullness or agitation.

This state is what Chekawa identifies in this next verse. The nature of the path is our own mind and the foundation of all is shunyata, or emptiness. The ontological foundation (or absence thereof) of all phenomena is emptiness of inherent existence; and from emptiness arise myriad phenomena, whether objective, subjective, or transcendent. Having arrived at the awareness of that emptiness, you then abide in it free of conceptualization, with the mind at rest, without tension but with vivid clarity.

When conceptualization eventually starts to creep back in, the author advises us at that very moment to direct our awareness to awareness itself. Look right at the conceptualization, and, as it vanishes, maintain the awareness, once again bringing to mind the experience of emptiness. Abide there, he says, rest in the sphere of reality, and thereby liberate your mind.

He also encourages us to limit this phase of the meditation to relatively brief periods. This avoids that spaced-out, nonconceptual state we have all experienced, where the mind is peaceful but not very clear, with no real vividness or insight. We may also return to the more analytical, investigative meditation, arrive once again at the insight, and then again enter the non-conceptual, non-grasping state of awareness. During one session we may have numerous short periods of this meditative equipoise.

It's time to ask why we should do any of the preceding. Even if the world is illusory in nature, even if objective, subjective, and transcendent phenomena do not exist intrinsically, why should we do any of this? In

other words, what's in it for us? The answer is the solution to a fundamental problem.

Our minds are not a blank slate without ideas and assumptions regarding reality, our own existence, the nature of our minds and our environment. On the contrary, we instinctively sense that phenomena, internal and external, exist in their own right. And this causes problems. For example, let us bring to mind someone we really despise. Now see if our mind isn't grasping that person as an entity in his or her own right, intrinsically existent, totally independent, and ultimately responsible for his or her own actions. See if we don't also do the same thing for ourselves. In response to the question, "Who am I?" there naturally arises a sense of "I am," a sense of identification with something that apparently exists intrinsically.

In other words, we are not merely ignorant of the nature of reality but actively, day by day and moment by moment, we are misconstruing the nature of reality. We see things as isolated and intrinsically existing. We reify our own existence and that of friends, loved ones, indifferent people, enemies, the environment itself. And here is the real crux of the matter: this reification is fundamentally out of accord with reality. It creates distortions in the mind and enhances the obscurations that shroud the Buddha nature. In practical terms, it is because of this grasping onto intrinsic reality that a false sense of self arises, as well as the myriad mental distortions that are invariably based on this reification. Jealousy, hatred, resentment, anger, craving, pride, conceit, fear, anxiety - all of these afflictions are based on a misconstruing of reality.

Such reification is the fundamental affliction of the mind; and the realization of emptiness cultivated through this practice acts as an antidote to the fundamental misconstruing of reality. It heals the mind by bringing it into accord with reality. In so doing it attenuates the mental afflictions that are based on that dynamic ignorance until finally they vanish as the Buddha nature is unveiled. In other words, here lies the path to freedom: freedom from suffering, and from the evil, unwholesome actions that arise from mental afflictions. That is the reason for the practice, and it is a pretty good one.

We are coming now to the end of the meditative practice for cultivating the realization of ultimate truth. Sechibuwa instructs us at the end to set aside the subject of meditation. Then, assuming we really believe that this practice is an authentic means for realizing ultimate truth and not just

speculative philosophy, he encourages us to cultivate great compassion for those who lack such realization...So Sechibuwa suggests that we meditate on great compassion for those who lack such realization. Dedicate this practice to them, with the hope that we may lead them skillfully to deeper and deeper truth, healing them of mental afflictions. Finally, he suggests that we relax if we have been sitting cross-legged or in full lotus position, and he encourages us to end with a devotional practice such as the 'Seven-Limb Devotion.' A devotional practice is very appropriate for the conclusion of a meditative practice, wonderfully merging compassion with wisdom.

Rest In The Nature Of All, The Basis Of Everything - JK

This instruction presents the actual method of placing the mind. When there is no involvement with the activity of the seven groups of consciousness, there is still the nature of all phenomena, the natural state, which is the basis of everything. It is pointed out by the term "noble Buddha-nature." Let go and rest, without the slightest idea of a nature existing as something, with absolutely no mental clinging, in a state distinguished by non-discursive clarity and pure simplicity. In summary, for as long as you are able, follow no train of thought, but rest evenly in a state in which mind in itself is clear and free of discursiveness. This is placing meditation. Then, complete the period of practice with the seven-branch prayer as before

Between meditations, treat everything as an illusion.

Between Meditation Sessions Act As An Illusory Being - AW

Arise from the meditation cushion maintaining a continuity between the insight that you had during the meditation and your mental state afterwards. As you stand up, walk to the door, or speak to someone, try to maintain the awareness that phenomena - including your self, your mind, other people you come in contact with, everything around you - exist not as intrinsic entities, but as dependently related events.

This means that if I seek my self among my physical or mental constituents, I am nowhere to be found - neither among them, nor as their sum total, nor apart from them. Why is this? Because I exist as a dependently related event. Dependent upon what? I exist in dependence upon my mental designation of my self I conceive of myself and in so doing I mentally designate myself on the basis of things that are not myself.

In the act of identifying things we are co-producers of the objects we perceive. How does this occur? In what way are we co-producers of the events that present themselves to us? As we reach out with the mind in response to events, we identify them-as joy, ill health, poverty, wealth, and so forth. We conceptually designate them and we thereby create the world we experience, moment by moment. We are finally responsible for the events that we encounter.

In a life devoid of dharma the response to misfortune is anger, resentment, and fear. When prosperity arises, the response is attachment, clinging, and anxiety in anticipation of loss. When events are neither pleasing nor unpleasing, the response is indifference; the mind is cloudy and sluggish in ignorance. In this mechanical behavior we recognize the three poisons: anger, craving, and confusion.

In dharma, the creativity of spiritual practice lies in transforming our responses to the myriad events that present themselves to us. A profound aspect of this practice is to recognize how we have created, and are still creating, the events, objects, and people we encounter by the manner in which we mentally identify them. Our daily spiritual practice is

profoundly empowered when we bring to it this insight into the emptiness of intrinsic identity of phenomena.

In Post-meditation Practice, Be A Child Of Illusion - JK

After meditation, do not allow the experience of resting evenly to dissipate, no matter what form of activity you engage in. Continually foster the feeling of knowing that all appearances, yourself, others, animate or inanimate, appear though they seem to be nothing - be like a child of illusion.

**As you breathe in, take in and accept all the sadness, pain, and negativity of the whole world, including yourself, and absorb it into your heart.
As you breathe out, pour out all your joy and bliss; bless the whole of existence.**

Alternately Practice Sending And Taking - AW

To understand what this next verse of the root text means, let's simply follow Sechibuwa's commentary. He suggests that we sit comfortably on a cushion and while clearly visualizing our mother, cultivate loving kindness and compassion for her.

It seems crucial, and profoundly beneficial, that he chooses to begin with our own mother. If we do not have a loving relationship with our own parents, something is going to be awry at the very core of our spiritual practice, creating disharmony throughout our lives. I say this not naively, but knowing that some parents abuse their children sexually, physically, and psychologically. Those of us with ill-feeling towards a mother or father may be tempted to say: "This is hard for me because I had a rotten childhood. I'll skip my parents and begin instead on firmer ground, with a close friend, or my wife or husband."

There is, of course, no law against this. But as long as our feelings remain unresolved towards our own parents, we lack a firm foundation for other relationships. Regardless of how our parents have treated us, it is crucial for a balanced and harmonious life that we come to terms with any resentment we feel, and so bring insight to bear on the relationship that loving kindness and compassion can arise from our heart.

Sechibuwa encourages us first to reflect that our mother has given us this precious, fully endowed human life, which means, in essence, that we have time for spiritual Practice if we do no more than shift our priorities. Regardless of how she might have treated us afterwards, it is because she gave us birth that we have a wonderful potential for spiritual growth in this and future lives.

Think too, says Sechibuwa, that while our mother has cared for us so long in this and previous lifetimes, sometimes even sacrificing her life for her

children, she has meanwhile suffered grief, anxiety, fear, and physical pain. Not only because of her children, but throughout the course of her life, she has experienced the suffering of mental afflictions, aging, sickness, and death. As we ponder this, a feeling of compassion for our mother arises without much effort. Compassion, in this case, is simply the wish, "May you be free of suffering."

Take the example of a mother who is a drunkard. We can reflect upon the unhappiness, the lack of satisfaction and meaning in life that gave rise to a habit of drinking and made her dependent on alcohol to get through each day. If a mother is an alcoholic, it naturally follows that sometimes she is not a very conscientious mother; and thirty or forty years later the child may still suffer resentment. But as we feel compassion for her, we can empathize with the sorrow and anxiety that gave rise to the affliction of alcohol dependency. And we can wish from our hearts, sincerely and without hypocrisy, "May you be free both from the dependency, and from the unsatisfied need that gave rise to it. May you be free of the suffering as well as its inner source."

Imagine now the suffering that your own mother experiences. For this potent practice to be done correctly, it must become a very personal meditation on your own mother. Bring to mind the suffering you have seen her experience, physical or mental, related to her internal condition or external circumstances. Go right to the source of the suffering, the basic mental afflictions themselves: attachment, hostility, ignorance. Imagine her own experience of the suffering, particularly if you have a mother who is handicapped by a problem such as drinking.

Practice "taking" this suffering. Imagine taking upon yourself your own mother's suffering together with its sources: all the mental distortions and the instincts for their arising. Imagine that you are peeling this off her, removing it from her continuum. As Sechibuwa says, "Slice it off with a knife." Imagine it as dense, black smoke; draw this black smoke from her and bring it into your heart. Visualize a blackness there in your own heart, like a black egg or sphere, symbolizing your own self-centeredness. Draw in the black smoke of suffering and its sources, and dissolve it into this blackness at your own heart. The point here is not to imagine yourself experiencing your mother's anger, pain, or confusion. Instead, imagine that the suffering comes directly into your heart, specifically to the self-

centeredness in your heart, and totally annihilates it, leaving not a single trace.

As you draw in the black smoke, see your mother in your mind's eye arising from the suffering and the mental afflictions that are its source. For example, if she suffers from arthritis, imagine her looking at her hands and her joints, moving them freely and delighting in the experience of the full and proper use of her limbs, her back, her neck. Imagine her regaining vibrant health. If strife or anger plague her, imagine the anger quelled, the strife pacified. Imagine her serene, content, at peace with her surroundings. If she is anxious by nature, see her face becoming calm, relaxing as you draw out the black smoke of her worries.

In this way, imagine taking off layer after layer of internal and external unhappiness and misfortune, and dissolving them into your own heart. This is the practice of "taking" as applied to our mother, the first half of the practice for the cultivation of relative bodhicitta.

The second half of the practice is known as "sending" or "giving." Let the aspiration arise: "May I bring about all happiness for my own mother." Imagine that you are giving your body, your possessions, and all your virtue, without any sense of reservation, to your mother. Imagine sending this in the form of a white light that radiates from a precious jewel at your heart, a jewel from which all favorable circumstances for your mother come forth: food, clothing, dwelling, helpers, and spiritual guidance. Imagine her being endowed with everything she needs for the realization of full awakening.

Once again, let the full wealth of your imagination be brought to bear in this practice. Visualize this jewel fulfilling her wishes, so that she can put them aside. If we really long for something worldly, it may well enhance our spiritual practice to satisfy that wish, "May you be free of suffering."

Take the example of a mother who is a drunkard. We can reflect upon the unhappiness, the lack of satisfaction and meaning in life that gave rise to a habit of drinking and made her dependent on alcohol to get through each day. If a mother is an alcoholic, it naturally follows that sometimes she is not a very conscientious mother; and thirty or forty years later the child may still suffer resentment. But as we feel compassion for her, we can empathize with the Christian mentor, her devotion deepening, and her life

more and more emulating that of Jesus Christ. Imagine her receiving the fullest possible benefit from this spiritual path and following it more and more deeply. Imagine her attaining full awakening. Imagine the qualities that would arise; how her personality would be transformed. Imagine the loving kindness, the wisdom, the ability for serving others that would arise, and then, finally, imagine her attaining full awakening.

Gain some familiarity with both taking and sending in this practice. As you become familiar with them separately, practice them alternately, first taking and then sending. Let them enhance and enrich one another. At times go back and simply allow the affection for your mother to arise with a heartfelt concern for her well-being. Then once again, on the basis of loving kindness and compassion, practice taking and sending. Sechibuwa writes: "Truly long to be able to give her all happiness, even offering her your body, your own possessions, your own virtues."

Virtue in this context means the wholesome imprints on your mind stream. Keep in mind that this is the very source of your future happiness, what brings you success in mundane as well as in spiritual matters. Imagine offering this up to her as well. The point of the practice is to release the attachment we have to our own body, possessions, and virtues - not only to detach ourselves from them, but also to offer them sincerely for the service of others. So we start with our mother to experience the longing, "If I only could offer you my merit, my body, my possessions."

To some extent of course we can. If our mother is in need and we can in fact help her, then the meditation must manifest in external activity and not remain on the level of imagination. Let the compassion that arises be not simply an armchair compassion, such that we sit here and think these very nice thoughts and then treat her thoughtlessly or repeat old, unwholesome patterns. Rather, let the meditation while we are in solitude arise into our aspirations and, as in the previous meditation on ultimate bodhicitta, let it then be integrated in our actions following meditation so that we really develop the intention to serve our mother.

This practice of sending and sending with regard to our mother can constitute the first session of meditation. We might want to take a break before expanding this practice in a second session to focus on other people: our father, for example, or close friends. Then gradually move on to indifferent people and finally to those whom we really dislike.

In each case, it is very helpful to meditate first on the kindness of these other beings. Meditating on our friends' good qualities is an easy beginning. Then take one friend to mind and think of this person's misfortunes and the specific kinds of suffering to which he or she is subject. Place yourself in this person's shoes and imagine experiencing her anxieties. Then begin the practice of taking: take into your heart as a black smoke the mental and physical suffering of this person, as well as the mental distortions that give rise to such suffering.

Repeat this with one, two, ten, or twenty different people, from session to session, day to day, until the practice becomes very fluent. Gradually include people whom you regard with indifference. Here the practice becomes extremely potent. Focus again and again on such people, recognizing that just like us they wish to experience happiness and be free of suffering. This is the bottom line. Regardless of whatever kindness they may or may not have rendered to us in any observable way, we are kin. We belong to the same family of sentient beings.

The practice is the same in each case: taking suffering, taking the sources of suffering, then offering your body, your possessions, and your merits. just as you did with your mother, send them all causes and favorable circumstances for their spiritual growth, so that they can recognize the inner source of their discontent and not mistake it for some external situation. Send them the circumstances that will enable them to follow the path of their choice, purifying their minds of the sources of misery, confusion, and strife, and bringing them to joy that arises from the essential nature of the mind itself, rather than from some pleasant stimulus.

We are working up to the enemy. Don't postpone this facet of the practice, thinking you are not ready; it is worth entering soon. Plunge in and bring to mind a person you really cannot stand. Perhaps someone has treated you contemptuously, abused you, or taken something that you really cherished. For whatever reason, repugnance may arise toward a certain person. Perhaps they have really done nothing wrong at all, but something about their personality or behavior gives rise to abhorrence.

Because it is a mental distortion, hostility towards another person tends to be fundamentally stupid. As we look at a person with objectionable qualities, hatred invariably grasps onto that person as existing intrinsically. Because hatred itself derives from the ignorance of grasping

onto such intrinsic existence, it naturally carries that same characteristic of ignorance with it. Hostility is stupid in the sense that it ignores the manifold causes and conditions that have given rise over years and years, lifetime after lifetime, to the present characteristics of the person in question.

To some extent we may be free of the qualities that we find so abhorrent in another person, especially if we have had the benefit of excellent teachers and a background in dharma. Has the other person been so fortunate? Has that person had close and meaningful contact with authentic spiritual guides who can show them the source of their suffering? Or have they been deprived of this precious guidance?

Anger tends to ignore a person's history, to reify him, and hold him intrinsically, autonomously responsible for every objectionable quality. Anger does something else: it hones in on small instances in which this person seemed especially obnoxious, narrow-minded, or superficial. On the basis of selected vignettes, perhaps even without direct contact, we build a caricature. In the mind of our own anger, we build a conceptual construct of a human being who has only negative qualities, a person with no Buddha nature. We look at this cartoon of our own creation that has no existence at all as a human being, because no human being can exist totally saturated to the core with repugnant qualities, and we feel, "How disgusting you are! " Of course what appears in our mind's eye is disgusting and repulsive; it is also a fabrication of our own distorted mind.

Let's come back to the real person. I am not suggesting that every disagreeable quality we perceive in others is a fallacy and that everyone, with the exception of ourselves, is pristine pure. People are three-dimensional. Every single person is endowed with Buddha nature, and every single person has a history. As we seek to cultivate loving kindness and compassion for people we dislike, and on that basis to practice sending and taking, it is invaluable to keep their personal histories in mind. Even if we know nothing about them, we can infer that there have been causes and conditions that gave rise to the behavior we perceive. When our minds are settling in meditation, with hopefully greater clarity than normal, we can seek out in the mind's eye occasions when these people did not display repugnant qualities. Anger does not care about those times at all; it wants to sift them out and completely forget about

them. Balance anger's view with the dharma view the sources of suffering, then offering your body, your possessions, and your merits. Just as you did with your mother, send them all causes and favorable circumstances for their spiritual growth, so that they can recognize the inner source of their distress. In the first act of taking, identify the specific disagreeable behavior or personality traits that you find repugnant in this person. More than likely they are mental distortions or direct expressions of them. Here the term "mental afflictions" is very helpful. Anger, attachment, and ignorance are not bad simply because they produce bad results on some future occasion. Even as they arise they hurt, causing some degree of subtle or gross suffering.

Bring these afflictions to mind, and feel compassion for this person who suffers their disease, recognizing that we ourselves are not immune, although the afflictions may be temporarily attenuated. We are not yet free, and we can imagine future circumstances that might prompt similar behavior from ourselves. This is a brother, a sister, we are dealing with. To be subject to such afflictions, and the actions that derive from them, is indeed to suffer as a victim.

Imagine, in empathy and kinship, taking the black smoke into the blackness of self-centeredness at your own heart. Peel the suffering and its source off that person. As you do so, hold the person as clearly as possible in your mind's eye, and imagine him or her free of repugnant qualities and behavior. Then, in the practice of sending offer your body, possessions, and merit, so that this person's mind may become clearer and his heart warmer and more open, so that he or she might recognize wholesome behavior and delight in cultivating it. Imagine this person becoming a Bodhisattva and gaining deeper and deeper insight. Imagine your body as a jewel sending out all favorable circumstances for his or her spiritual maturation. Finally, imagine this person becoming a fully awakened being.

Once we have practiced taking and sending in this manner with regards to mother, father, friends, indifferent people, and finally our enemies, we can take a 360-degree approach, and reach out to every sentient being. Saying "every sentient being" avoids the blurry vastness of "all sentient beings," which can become an impersonal "to whom it may concern." Recognize that this includes the animals, human beings of all races, all worlds, and all other types of sentient beings. As before, practice taking

and sending on the basis of loving kindness and compassion for each and every sentient being.

Sechibuwa encourages us to practice this not only in purely mental meditation, but also to recite verses verbally to this effect. For example, express in words the aspiration, "May I become a cause of all worldly and transcendent joy for every sentient being. May I become a cause for dispelling the suffering of every sentient being." There are some very beautiful lines to this effect in the third chapter of Shantideva's *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. The idea is to saturate our mind, our voice, and our physical activities in the practice of taking and sending.

APPLY THOSE TWO TO THE BREATH.

The next verse of the root text offers a wonderful extension to the practice of taking and sending. It also adds a new dimension to the practice of breath awareness, though it should not replace straight breath awareness as a substitute. This rich but very simple practice has its own fruits.

As you inhale while focusing on your mother or another person, take in the suffering in the form of black smoke. Then, as you exhale, send out white light offering all you have for that person's well-being. With each in-breath, take in and with each out-breath, send out; taking and sending again and again. You can do this in the solitude of meditation, but also very effectively when the suffering of others confronts you directly. When you see someone who is angry or in pain, when you visit someone in the hospital, or watch the news of some calamity, practice right there on the spot. Since you are already breathing, you might as well make it more meaningful.

Train In Taking And Sending Alternately. Put Them On The Breath - JK

First do the preliminary practice of guru YOGA as it was described above. Then you should meditate on love and compassion. They form the basis for taking and sending. start by imagining that your own mother is present in front of you. Think about her carefully with such reflections on compassion as these:

This person, my mother, has looked after me with great effort right from the moment I was conceived in her womb. Because she endured all the hardships of illness, cold, hunger, and others, because she gave me food and clothing and wiped away my filth, and because she taught me what is good and steered me away from evil, I met the teachings of Buddha and am now practicing the dharma. What tremendous kindness! Not only in this life but in an infinite series of lives she has done exactly the same thing. While she has worked for my welfare, she herself wanders in samsara and experiences many different forms of suffering.

Then, when some real compassion, not just lip service, has been developed and instilled, learn to extend it step by step:

From time without beginning, each sentient being has been a mother to me in just the same way as my present mother. Each and every one has helped me.

With this sort of reflection, first meditate on objects for which it is easy to generate compassion: friends, spouse, relatives, and assistants, those in the lower realms where suffering is intense, the poor and destitute, and those who, though happy in this life, are so evil that they will experience the hell realms as soon as they die. When compassion in these areas has been instilled, meditate on more difficult objects: enemies, people who hurt you, demons, and others. Then meditate on all sentient beings, thinking along these lines:

All these, my parents, not only experience many different kinds of suffering and frustration without intending to, but are also full of potent seeds for future suffering. How pitiable! What's to be done? To return their kindness, the least I can do is to help them by clearing away what hurts them and by making them comfortable and happy.

Train in this way until the feeling of compassion is intolerably intense.

Second,

Train in taking and sending alternately. Put them on the breath

As you think:

All these parents of mine, who are the focus of compassionate hurt directly by suffering and indirectly by the source of suffering, so I shall take on myself all the different kinds of suffering in all my mothers' course of experience and the source of suffering, all disturbing emotions and actions.

meditate that all of this negativity comes to you and foster a strong feeling of joy at the same time. As you think:

Without regret, I send all my virtuous activity and happiness in the past, present, and future, my wealth, and my body to all sentient beings, parents

meditate that each individual receives all this happiness and cultivate a strong feeling of joy in each one's receiving it.

In order to make this imagined exchange clearer, as you breathe in, imagine that black tar collecting all the suffering, obscurations, and evil of all sentient beings enters your own nostrils and is absorbed into your heart. Think that all sentient beings are forever free of misery and evil. As you breathe out, imagine that all your happiness and virtue pour out in the form of rays of moonlight from your nostrils and are absorbed by every sentient being. With great joy, think that all of them immediately attain Buddhahood. To train the mind, use this practice of taking and sending with the breath as the actual practice for the period of meditation. Subsequently, always maintain the practice through mindfulness and continue to work with it. Shantideva, who has described this practice extensively, says:

If I don't completely exchange My happiness for others' sorrow, Buddhahood will not be realized. There is no happiness in samsara.

Understand your attachments, your aversions, and your indifference, and love them all.

Three Objects, Three Poisons, Three Roots Of Virtue - AW

The next verse refers to the three objects: agreeable, disagreeable, and neutral objects. As we relate to these three types of objects, the three mental poisons arise: attachment, hostility, and confusion. The point is to use these poisons as opportunities to nurture the roots of virtue.

As we engage in the affairs of daily life, as soon as we become aware that attachment, craving, or clinging has arisen, right then is the time to recognize that there are an immeasurable number of sentient beings who are subject to the same mental afflictions. Expand your awareness of this right on the spot, and let the aspiration arise: "May those countless sentient beings be endowed with the root of virtue that is freedom from attachment. May they be free of this attachment that I am now experiencing." The aspiration itself is a root of virtue.

Similarly, in moments of anger, simply recognize the anger as it arises. This presents a way for those of us with a dharma friend or spouse to help each other. Provided the anger is not directed at the other person, when one flies off the handle the other can simply say, "Anger has arisen." This can, if not vanquish the anger, at least snap us halfway out of its craziness. The anger presents us also with the opportunity, once we have recognized it, to recognize also that there are innumerable sentient beings who, like ourselves, are subject to anger. And so let the aspiration arise: "May they be endowed with the root of virtue of freedom from anger." We can likewise apply the same practice to the third poison, confusion or ignorance. This is truly a practice for our daily life.

Three Objects, Three Poisons, Three Seeds Of Virtue - JK

The three poisons continually arise in connection with three objects. Compulsive attachment arises for objects that are pleasant or useful; aversion arises for objects that are unpleasant or harmful; and stupidity or indifference for other objects. Recognize these poisons as soon as they arise. Then, for example, when attachment arises, think:

May every bit of every sentient beings' attachment be contained in this attachment of mine. May all sentient beings have the seed of virtue of being free of attachment. May this attachment of mine contain all their disturbing emotions and, until they attain Buddhahood, may they be free of such disturbing emotions.

Aversion and other emotions are used in practice by working with them the same way. Thus, the three poisons become three limitless seeds of virtue.

Apply these proverbs in everything you do.

In All Activities Train With Words - AW

In this final verse of the second point, we are encouraged to recite phrases in accord with the practice of taking and sending, particularly when we are alone. For example, Sechibuwa suggests the words, "May the suffering of all sentient beings be drawn to me." Keep in mind that this means "be drawn to my own self-centeredness, that it may be vanquished." Another example he offers is, "By my joy may all beings experience joy." The point of uttering such words is to saturate the mind and the heart in these thoughts for the cultivation of relative bodhicitta.

Use Sayings To Train In All Forms Of Activity - JK

All the time, repeat these or other suitable sayings and cultivate these attitudes vigorously.

From Shantideva:

- While their evil ripens in me, May all my virtue ripen in them.

From the oral advice of the Kadampa tradition:

- I offer all gain and victory to the lords, all sentient beings.
- I take all loss and defeat for myself.

From Gyal-se Tokme's teachings:

- While all the suffering and evil of all sentient beings ripens in me,
- May all my happiness and virtue ripen in them.

When practicing unconditional acceptance, start with yourself.

Begin The Sequence Of Exchange With Yourself - JK

In order to be able to take on the sufferings of others, begin the sequence of exchange with yourself. Right now, take on mentally all the suffering that will ripen for you in the future. When that has been cleared away, take up all the sufferings of others.

3- Using Adversity to Wake Up

“By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I see whatever adverse events and sufferings (3) befall me as tricks of the evil spirit of ego clinging and use them as the path of Bodhicitta. ”

-- Atisha

THREE - TRANSFORMING ADVERSE CONDITIONS INTO THE PATH:

When the container and its contents are filled with evil, change this adverse circumstance into the path to full awakening. Utilize every immediate circumstance for meditation. Possess the four preparations, the highest of means.

-- Geshe Chekawa

III - To Transform all Unfavourable Circumstances into Path of the Buddha

To transform the unfavorable conditions, we must first be aware of karma, the law of cause and effect. We make use of the unfavorable conditions or obstacles as the object of meditation (bodhicitta relative) in the same way that we did it with the thoughts of the mind (bodhicitta ultimate). We can thus transform all the negative circumstances into something positive.

Generate the relative bodhicitta when you encounter difficulties. First of all, recognize that the difficulties are not caused by the fault of others, that they are created by your own ego. If you have no ego clinging, then no difficulty will have any negative effect on you. When you face physical problems such as diseases, or when somebody tries to harm you, recognize that they are created by your own karma. By letting them ripen in this life, you will not have to experience them hereafter where they

would pose greater karmic effects. This transformation relies on a solid foundation of bodhicitta and will facilitate the exhaustion of all negative karma through the forbearance of small nuisances in this life. For example, just prior to enlightenment, an Arhat often suffers from headaches or stomachaches. Indeed, the power of his meditation has completely transformed the negative effects of his former karma into smaller troubles thereby putting an end to them all. If you practice the sending and taking each time you encounter difficulties, by thinking that you are taking the sufferings of others and letting them dissolve into your own experience, then they will really be purified when supported by pure motivation. It is this pure motivation that can create an energy ever more grand than that of an Arhat.

The transformation based on ultimate bodhicitta means to make use of the realization that you have obtained from the practice and apply it to your difficulties. Face each difficulty by trying to recognize that its essence is not related to the thoughts that it generates. Try to realize that the essence of the suffering is completely independent from the feeling of suffering.

There is another method specific to transforming all unfavorable conditions into the path of the Buddha. It comprises of four stages:

- 1 - Each time you are confronted with difficulties, realize that they are produced by the negative karma that you have created before, and this will cause you to accumulate more positive karma.
- 2 - Feeling the suffering makes you recognize the need for purifying your negative karma, otherwise, there will be more bad effects in the future.
- 3 - The human life is more precious than any other forms of life. Therefore if you still have difficulties even in this good life, it means that you will have even more troubles in the future if your negative actions are not purified now. You must do practices of purification like Dorjé Sempa.
- 4 - Pray fervently to all the Buddhas to receive their blessing so you can ripen all the negative karma of all living beings, all the difficulties that will face them. Each day, in your practice, pray like this, "May all the suffering of the living beings come into me." Do not hesitate to take onto yourself the suffering of others. Accustom yourselves to this wish.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

When everything goes wrong, treat disaster as a way to wake up.

(When the container and its contents are filled with evil, change this adverse circumstance into the path to full awakening.)

When The Environment And Its Inhabitants Are Enslaved By Evil, Turn Unfavorable Circumstances Into The Path Of Awakening - AW

When Sechibuwa finished his notes on Chekawa's discourses, he commented that the environment of his own day and age really fit the bill: an evil time when unwholesome thoughts and deeds were rampant. He was writing in the twelfth century in Tibet, but his words are equally pertinent to our experience in the twentieth century.

But those who have truly entered the door of dharma will begin to respond actively to unfavorable circumstances in a way that transforms them. How? By cultivating the attitude that whatever misfortune may arise is a blessing of the spiritual mentor and the Triple Gem of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This is not to say that your teacher is throwing you curve balls in an effort to mess up your life, or that the Buddhas are out to get you. Buddhism does not attribute the vicissitudes of life to the whims of an ultimate being.

Instead, bear in mind that this teaching assumes that we have begun to cultivate ultimate bodhicitta, and to understand the lack of intrinsic identity of phenomena. Misfortunes and obstacles to practice do not exist intrinsically. For something to be a misfortune for me, I must identify it as such. If I refuse to identify something as an obstacle but say instead, "I accept this illness as a blessing of my spiritual guide and of the Buddha," then it becomes so. It takes much courage and knowledge of dharma to say that, to mean it, and to act accordingly, but it is extremely potent. We can then rebound from these calamities with courage and understanding, instead of wilting under their pressure; and this is necessary for a deep and fruitful practice.

When Evil Fills The World And Its Inhabitants, Change Adverse Conditions Into The Path Of Awakening - JK

When your world is full of the pain and suffering that are the fruition of evil - when prosperity and wealth are diminishing, troublesome people create difficulties, and so on - you must change the adverse conditions in which you find yourself into the path of awakening. There are three ways to make this transformation: by relying on relative bodhicitta ('Drive All Blames into One', 'Be Grateful to Everyone'), on ultimate bodhicitta ('To See Confusion as the Four Kayas, the Protection of Emptiness in Unsurpassable'), and on special practices ('The Four Practices are the Best Method').

Take all the blame yourself.

(Banish the one object of every blame)

Blame Everything On One Thing - AW

The next verse instructs us to blame everything bad that happens to us, from tragedy to ingrown toenails, on one thing alone: self-centeredness. This is a very powerful antidote to a very natural tendency. When we experience misfortune, we almost invariably look outward and say, "Who did this to me?" If we identify a perpetrator, myriad mental distortions arise in response. Another person may well have acted as a cooperative condition contributing to our unhappiness, but that person is not the real cause.

On the deepest level, taking karma into account, we are ultimately responsible for our present circumstances, and for the future we are creating right now with each action of body, speech, and mind. But we are responsible on another level also which can be helpful to consider. Imagine, for example, that someone drives into my car and puts a dent in it. In this particular instance I am blameless; my car was stationary. I can target the person who did it, and that person seems truly to blame for my suffering - the dent in my nice new car. But remember how our enemies first appeared when we approached them in the practice of taking and sending. I have isolated this person. It's a sure bet that I am looking at the person who dented my car as an intrinsic, autonomous entity, and in this way I feed the fires of my indignation and self-righteousness.

What is the real issue here? Was I at fault in this particular context? Both the law and my insurance company would say that I was not. Someone has damaged a possession of mine and I have no freedom to choose whether or not I experience this particular circumstance. On a deep level I have stacked the cards to experience this through my own previous actions. But here lies the freedom: How do I respond? The dent in the car has no power to cause me any suffering unless I yield to it. The dent is only an external catalyst, a contributing circumstance, but by itself it is not sufficient to cause me suffering. The suffering actually arises from the stuff of my own mind. If I were mindless there would be no suffering, but that is not an option. I cannot decide to reject my mind. Instead I must

apply my intelligence: What element of my mind was responsible for my suffering?

The real source of my suffering is self-centeredness: my car, my possession, my well-being. Without the self-centeredness, the suffering would not arise. What would happen instead? It is important to imagine this fully and to focus on examples of your own. Think of some misfortune that makes you want to lash out, that gives rise to anger or misery. Then imagine how you might respond without suffering. Recognize that we need not experience the misery, let alone the anger, resentment, and hostility. The choice is ours.

Let's continue with the previous example. You see that there is a dent in the car. What needs to be done? Get the other driver's license number, notify the police, contact the insurance agency, deal with all the details. Simply do it and accept it. Accept it gladly as a way to strengthen your mind further, to develop patience and the armor of forbearance. There is no way to become a Buddha and remain a vulnerable wimp. Patience does not suddenly appear as a bonus after full enlightenment. Part of the whole process of awakening is to develop greater forbearance and equanimity in adversity. Shantideva, in the sixth chapter of his *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, eloquently points out that there is no way to develop patience without encountering adversity, and patience is indispensable for our own growth on the path to awakening.

So think of your own example. Recognize that anger or resentment is superfluous mental garbage, and that clutter and distortion serve no useful purpose in our minds. Suffering is not even necessary. Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey once made the comment that, once bodhicitta has been developed to the point of arising spontaneously, one becomes a Bodhisattva and no longer experiences the common sorts of mental suffering. Although a Bodhisattva may experience suffering in sympathy for others, the kind of self-oriented suffering we normally experience simply does not happen, because a Bodhisattva is free of self-centeredness.

Blame everything on one thing. It simplifies life incredibly, and yet it truly is not simplistic. If we believe from our hearts that all of our misfortunes can be attributed to self-centeredness, this must radically transform our lives.

Do we have reservations? Isn't there some part of the mind that says, "Self-centeredness is not such a bad idea. It got me my job, a good salary, my house and car. How can this be my enemy?" On the surface self-centeredness may seem like an aide who looks after our interests. There is one powerful answer to this: insofar as self-centeredness dominates our lives, it brings us into conflict with virtually everyone else. Because most people are dominated by self-centeredness, their interests are at odds with our own. There is bound to be conflict, and conflict gives rise to suffering.

Imagine what life would be like without self-centeredness. Would we give away all our possessions, waste away from malnutrition, and die prematurely of disease? No. This would be a partial lack of self-centeredness combined with a large part of stupidity. If we are to serve others effectively, we must take care of ourselves. A Bodhisattva has no self-centeredness, but there have been people in all stations of life, including kings, who are Bodhisattvas. If we free ourselves of self-centeredness and really concern ourselves with the cherishing of others, then our own welfare comes as a kind of echo.

There are an infinite number of ways to serve the well-being of others. The motivation of cherishing others can engage the energies of a doctor, a teacher, a carpenter, or agence: What element of my mind was responsible for my suffering?

The real source of my suffering is self-centeredness: my car, my possession, my well-being. Without the self-centeredness, the suffering would not arise. What would happen instead? It is important to imagine this fully and to focus on examples of your own. Think of some misfortune that makes you want to lash out, that gives rise to anger or misery. Then imagine how you might respond without suffering. Recognize that we need not experords.

We work so hard at our own well-being, striving to the point of exhaustion. The Tibetan Buddhist teachers under whom I studied have frequently commented that if we gave nearly as much intelligent effort to authentic spiritual practice as we give to simply making a living, we probably would be highly advanced Bodhisattvas by now, if not Buddhas.

Drive All Blame Into One - JK

Whether you are physically ill, troubled in your mind, insulted by others, or bothered by enemies and disputes, in short, whatever annoyance, major or minor, comes up in your life or affairs, do not lay the blame on anything else, thinking that such-and-such caused this or that problem. Rather, you should consider:

This mind grasps at a self where there is no self. From time without beginning until now, it has, in following its own whims in samsara, perpetrated various nonvirtuous actions. All the sufferings I now experience are the results of those actions. No one else is to blame; this ego-cherishing attitude is to blame. I shall do whatever I can to subdue it.

Skillfully and vigorously direct all dharma at ego-clinging. As Shantideva writes in *Entering the Way of Awakening*:

What troubles there are in the world, How much fear and suffering there is. If all of these arise from ego-clinging, What will this great demon do to me?

and

For hundreds of lives in samsara He has caused me trouble. Now I recollect all my grudges And shall destroy you, you selfish mind.

Be grateful to everyone.

(Meditate on the great kindness of all)

Meditate On Great Kindness Toward Everyone - AW

Having engaged in this Mind Training, we can recognize that a person who has harmed us thereby kicks us out of our complacency and pushes us into practice. If we are surrounded by friends, our mental distortions may rarely be triggered and we can easily exaggerate our sense of the progress we have made in our practice. But when hostility triggers animosity, it is like a bucket full of cold water in the face, making it very clear that we have something here to work on.

When someone harms us or otherwise repels us, we can simply say, "This will pass," and distract ourselves with happier thoughts, turning our minds away. But this leaves us no less vulnerable the next time around. Suppose, for example, that Joe is a particularly arrogant person who rubs us the wrong way. We avoid having anything to do with him. After a while he changes jobs, or moves away, and we have no more contact with him. Joe gradually fades from our mind and no longer triggers our hostility. Now Jack appears and he is just as arrogant. Exactly the same thing happens, because nothing has been learned.

What Joe and Jack are doing is offering us an opportunity for self-knowledge, and at the same time providing an impetus for putting this training into practice. We can meditate authentically on the kindness of the very person who harms us and cultivate our awareness of this.

The kindness of a service rendered, or a gift, large or small, is a limited kindness. It may ease our suffering temporarily, but it does not render our minds less vulnerable to suffering. The greatest kindness another person can show us is to help transform our minds so that contentment arises more readily from the nature of the mind itself, without pleasant stimuli. A dharma teacher or a spiritual friend can do that. Our enemies can as well. They show us the truest, innermost kindness, and without them the teachings of books and spiritual friends are insufficient for our spiritual growth. We need these people. They serve an indispensable role in our lives. And what do they get out of it? Nothing, at best. They receive no benefit from the act of giving us harm, and if they are doing something

really unwholesome, they get nothing but misfortune. There is ground here for both gratitude and compassion.

Sechibuwa then makes an even more emphatic statement. Inasmuch as the inflictors of harm are truly aiding our practice, they are great friends and helpers in our spiritual growth, and in this sense, we can regard them gladly and from our hearts as emanations of our spiritual mentor or of the Buddha.

Be Grateful To Everyone - JK

Work on taking and sending with these considerations in mind:

In general, all methods for attaining Buddhahood rely on sentient beings. Therefore, to the individual who wishes to awaken, sentient beings are as worthy of gratitude as Buddhas. Specifically, all sentient beings are worthy of gratitude since there is not one who has not been my parent. In particular, all those who hurt me are worthy of gratitude since they are my companions and helpers for gathering the accumulations of merit and pristine wisdom and for clearing away the obscurations of disturbing emotions and conceptual knowledge.

Do not be angry, not even at a dog or an insect. Strive to give whatever actual help you can. If you cannot help, then think and say:

May this sentient being (or troublemaker) quickly be rid of pain and enjoy happiness. May he come to attain Buddhahood.

Arouse bodhicitta:

From now on, all the virtuous acts I do shall be for his welfare.

When a god or a demon troubles you, think:

This trouble now occurs because I, from time without beginning, have made trouble for him. Now I shall give him my flesh and blood in recompense.

Imagine the one who troubles you to be present in front of you and mentally give him your body as you say:

Here, revel in my flesh and blood and whatever else you want.

Meditate with complete conviction that this troublemaker enjoys your flesh and blood, and is filled with pure happiness, and arouse the two kinds of bodhicitta in your mind. Or:

Because I had let mindfulness and other remedies lapse, disturbing emotions arose without my noticing them. Since this troublemaker has now warned me of this, he is certainly an expression of my guru or a Buddha. I'm very grateful to him because he has stimulated me to train in bodhicitta.

Or, when illness or suffering comes, think with complete sincerity:

If this hadn't happened, I would have been distracted by materialistic involvements and would not have maintained mindfulness of dharma. Since this has brought dharma to my attention again, it is the guru's or the jewels' activity, and I am very grateful.

To sum up, whoever thinks and acts out of a concern to achieve his or her own well-being is a worldly person; whoever thinks and acts out of a concern to achieve the well-being of others is a dharma person. Langri-tangpa has said:

I open to you as deep a teaching as there is. Pay attention! All faults are our own. All good qualities Are the lords', sentient beings. The point here is: give gain and victory to others, take loss and defeat for ourselves. Other than this, there is nothing to understand.

Don't worry- there's nothing real about your confusion.

(Remember this by repeated recollection)

Meditation On The Deceptive Appearances Of The Four Bodies Is Unsurpassed In Guarding Emptiness - AW

Sechibuwa begins by focusing on the idea that the entire cycle of existence, all causes and effects, every being who is harmed and each one that inflicts harm, all phenomena both inner and environmental, are nothing more than appearances of our own mind.

The point is that these phenomena are merely appearances, but have no ultimate existence whatsoever. In this sense they are like pure, unblemished space. We ourselves, as well as the inflictor of harm and the person who is harmed, are all empty of intrinsic existence.

Sechibuwa's explanation of the "Four Bodies" presents an unusual interpretation of these terms. The first, dharmakaya, is sometimes translated as the Truth Body. In this particular context, dharmakaya is understood as the absence of intrinsic birth and existence of all phenomena: that phenomena neither arise nor exist autonomously of their own accord. Whatever has no intrinsic birth or existence can have no intrinsic cessation. This lack of intrinsic cessation is called sambhogakaya, roughly translated as the Enjoyment Body of the Buddha. If phenomena are empty of intrinsic arising and intrinsic cessation, there can be no intermediate period of abiding in existence, and that very lack of abiding or dwelling, is called here Nirmanakaya, or the Emanation Body. Such phenomena then are not real: not intrinsically existent in the past, present, or future. This lack of inherent reality is called svabhavikaya, or the Nature Body.

Thus, nothing has any existence apart from the Four Bodies: neither illness, nor one's own mind, nor any inflictor of harm, nor any cause, nor any effect. In this way we can regard all phenomena, including every thought that arises, as the Four Bodies. Granted, it takes considerable background to practice this with understanding rather than simply as if following a formula.

To See Confusion As The Four Kayas, The Protection Of Emptiness Is Unsurpassable - JK

In general all appearances, and particularly adverse conditions, are like the distress experienced when you dream of being burnt in a fire or swept away by a flood. The confused appearances of mind are invested with a reality that they do not have. It is rigorously established that, although these appearances arise, there is not even a particle of true existence in them. When you rest in a state in which appearances simply arise but there is no clinging to them, the dharmakaya aspect is that they are empty in nature, the Nirmanakaya aspect is they appear with clarity, the sambhogakaya aspect is that this emptiness and clarity occur together, and the svabhavikn orderaya aspect is that these are inseparable. This key instruction, to rest evenly without grasping at origin, location, or cessation, points out the four kayas. It is the armor of view, the protection circle of emptiness, and the supreme instruction that cuts off confusion.

When something unexpected happens, in that very moment, treat it as a meditation.

(Utilize every immediate circumstance for meditation.)

Whatever You Encounter, Immediately Apply It To Meditation - AW

Sechibuwa comments that the preceding verses are the actual teachings of the third point on transforming unfavorable circumstances into the path. This final verse of the third point is a contemplative practice to be implemented between formal sessions, as we are out and about in daily life.

Whatever misfortune, calamity, or suffering arises, whether you are mugged or robbed or thrown in jail, immediately apply it to the Mind Training. Recall that there are countless sentient beings who are experiencing similar misfortune, and practice taking the misfortune of others upon yourself and into your own self-centeredness. Likewise, when you see others in misfortune, imagine in your minds eye taking this upon yourself. Whenever a strong mental affliction such as attachment or anger arises, practice in the same way: think of the innumerable sentient beings who are subject to the same affliction and take it upon yourself.

We can see that the transformation of unfavorable circumstances is intimately tied to attenuating and finally ending these mental afflictions. Until we stop these perpetual hopes and anxieties over momentary shifts in fortune, we cannot possibly transform unfavorable circumstances into the path. On the other hand, once we really do transcend these temporal polarities of fear and hope, we will have made a crooked stick into a straight one.

**In Order To Take Unexpected Conditions As The Path,
Immediately Join Whatever You Meet With Meditation - JK**

When illness, demons, interruptions, or disturbing emotions come unexpectedly, or if you see someone else troubled by some unpleasant situation, think, "I shall just practice taking and sending." In all your virtuous thoughts and actions think:

May all sentient beings come to. engage naturally in much greater dharma activity than this.

Do the same when you are happy and comfortable. If you have some evil thought or are forced to engage in some form of evil activity, think:

May every evil thought and action of every sentient being be gathered in this one.

In summary, maintain the motivation to help others whatever you are doing: eating, sleeping, walking, or sitting. As soon as you encounter a situation, good or bad, work at this practice of mind training.

4- Life and Death

(How to integrate all our daily practices)

“By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I condense my lifetime's practice (4) into a single essence. By applying throughout my life the five powers of pure determination, pure practice, accumulation of merit, purification of obscurations, and prayers of aspiration. ”

-- Atisha

FOUR – INTEGRATION:

**Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice.
Blend the practice of one life with the five forces.
The instruction for the great vehicle transmigration of consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the perfect position.
All dharma collects into one intention.
Retain the two witnesses of foremost importance.**

-- Geshe Chekawa

Work with the Five Forces. The Five Forces are:

1. Be intense, be committed.
 2. Familiarization - get used to doing and being what you want to do and to be.
 3. Cultivate the white seeds, not the black ones.
 4. Turn totally away from all your ego trips.
 5. Dedicate all the merits of what you do for the benefit of others.
- Practice these Five Forces and you are ready for death at any moment.

IV - Condensed Practice of Mind training in Five Points

- 1 - Very firmly promise to commit you to Bodhicitta until enlightenment is attained.
- 2 - Engage yourself in bodhicitta on all occasions.
- 3 - Since the greatest obstacle to bodhicitta is ego clinging, as soon as you see it, recognize it, and fight it until it is destroyed.
- 4 - Pray that you will succeed in developing bodhicitta. Think and rethink, again and again, the suffering of others to develop the compassion so that it appears automatically.
- 5 - Neutralize the influence of the ego and develop the bodhicitta.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

The Five Forces

To Synthesize The Essence Of This Practical Guidance, Apply Yourself To The Five Powers - AW

1. the power of resolution.

Looking forward with determination, we resolve not to be parted from the cultivation of the two bodhicittas, relative and ultimate, until our full awakening. We resolve not to abandon this practice for as long as we live; not for this entire day, not for this entire month, not for this entire year. We can establish this continuity of mind most earnestly when we appreciate the depth and magnificence of these two qualities of mind: ultimate bodhicitta that probes into the nature of reality with such depth, and relative bodhicitta, born of loving kindness and compassion, that aspires to full awakening for the benefit of all creatures. Until these two are brought to culmination, we resolve never to be parted from the practice of cultivating them.

2. the power of familiarization.

Looking to the present rather than the future, the author encourages us never to be distracted from the cultivation of ultimate and relative bodhicitta. Profound spiritual transformation occurs only with persistent practice, for it is through familiarizing ourselves with fresh ways of viewing reality and fresh ways of responding to situations that old, harmful patterns are broken up. Sudden breakthroughs, such as a vivid insight, are certainly meaningful experiences on the spiritual path, but unless they are sustained through the power of familiarization, their long-term influence on our lives is bound to be quite limited.

3. the power of the white seed.

Imagine our present practice as a seed for spiritual growth, white in its virtue and wholesomeness, which when mature will transform into the tree of awakening. Cultivate this seed by welcoming any opportunity to transform unfavorable circumstances into spiritual growth. We can cultivate it by engaging in wholesome actions and accumulating merit,

and especially by using our body and possessions to do whatever brings the greatest blessing. With so many options presented, we need to seek out what is most meaningful for the cultivation of these bodhicittas and then strive in that.

4. the power of abandonment.

In this practice what is being abandoned is self-grasping. We are reminded again that since beginningless time beyond all imagination, self-grasping has lain at the very core of all mental distortions and afflictions. It has brought us to unfavorable rebirths and is responsible for all the undesirable circumstances that we encounter. It is self-centeredness that obstructs realization and prevents us from deriving the full benefit from our spiritual practice. Recognize when self-grasping manifests in daily life. It is important to notice it especially at times of passion, when we are aroused or irritated, and try not to succumb to it for even a moment.

I mentioned before that self-centeredness can be overcome only gradually because it is so deeply ingrained in our minds and behavior. But it is also true that if we focus right in the moment and recognize self-centeredness, it is often not so difficult to reject. To be free of self-centeredness continuously for a whole year may be difficult, but a moment is easy. Not only in negative terms but positively, we can be sensitive right in the present to the needs of others, sensitive to things that make others happy, be it a small gift, an act of service, or simply a friendly gaze. For a moment we can become a very brief but good facsimile of a Bodhisattva. And the more of these moments we can saturate with the cherishing of others, the more we are molding ourselves into the Bodhisattvas that we will become.

5. the power of prayer.

Like the dedication of merit, this is a directing of the spiritual momentum of merit that we have accumulated by engaging in wholesome behavior. One prayer that is strongly encouraged here is to dedicate the fruits of our practice for all future lives, so that ultimate and relative bodhicitta may continually increase. For all our lifetimes until our full awakening, pray that we may never be separated from these two bodhicittas.

In essence, the prayer is that we will be intelligent and skillful enough to bring any unfavorable circumstance into our spiritual practice. It is easy to pray that we avoid misfortune, grief, or calamity, but to pray for the skill and fortitude to bring these circumstances onto the path is very courageous. This and future lifetimes are not likely to be completely free of calamity, nor would this be optimal for our spiritual growth. So we can pray, "May I have the wisdom to recognize the situation and, be it ever so unfortunate or miserable, apply to it my wisdom and my enthusiasm for dharma, for my own welfare and for others."

Along with this prayer, we are encouraged to make offerings to our spiritual mentor, to the Buddha, dharma, and Sangha, to our meditation deities, and to the Dharmapalas, or Dharma protectors. And we can pray to these beings also,

"May I never be separated from the two bodhicittas."

The next prayer that Sechibuwa mentions is especially poignant: "May I always encounter holy spiritual mentors who teach this dharma." I am moved when I look at the lives of people who have no apparent spiritual orientation or practice, but are simply focused on just getting by, taking vacations, making money or a reputation. I am also saddened to meet people who have recognized their spiritual need but have not found an authentic guide. They may follow a guru who has little to offer, or pick up books indiscriminately, without distinguishing between the mediocre and a text that represents years of experience by a highly realized being. But any teacher or teaching that can authentically show the means of cultivating ultimate and relative bodhicitta represents the essence of the Buddhadharma. If the teaching emphasizes refinement since beginningless time beyond all imagination, self-grasping has lain at the very core of all mental distortions and afflictions. It has brought us to unfavorable rebirths

and is responsible for all the undesirable circumstances that we encounter. It is self-centeredness that obstructs realization and prevents us from deriving the full benefit from our spiritual practice. Recognize when self-grasping manifests in daily life. It is important to notice it especially at times of passion, when we are aron implement specific practices to influence the transfer of consciousness from this life to the next. The Tibetans have preserved a number of such practices, called phowa, working with energies associated with the transfer of consciousness. These practices are taught in the context of Buddhist tantra, and they are often explained in relation to the Bardo (the period following death and before the next life), as set forth, for instance, in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. But not many people are fully qualified to practice tantra. Many of these practices require a high degree of spiritual maturity; before we can authentically engage in tantric practices such as phowa, we should already have made considerable progress in developing mental and emotional stability, and ultimate and relative bodhicitta.

The phowa practice based on the five powers presented here in the Mahayana context of the Mind Training is a non-tantric Bodhisattva practice, which is more accessible for most people. We can keep this very practical and precious teaching in mind not only for ourselves, but also for loved ones who are not Buddhists, let alone advanced tantric practitioners. Reading the Tibetan Book of the Dead to a dying friend who is not interested in Buddhism will not likely be very helpful; sharing this practice may well be useful.

This method of transferring consciousness into favorable circumstances in the very next life entails five powers that go by the same names as the five powers mentioned in the preceding verse, but here they have different meanings.

1. THE POWER OF THE WHITE SEED. Once again, we are cultivating a white seed of virtue, which is interpreted here as release from attachment to our body and possessions. The Tibetan contemplative Gen Lamrimpa was once teaching this and chuckling as he spoke of how people acquire things, use them for a short time, then die and are reborn completely naked; then spend another life acquiring possessions only to die again, dead broke. On the threshold of death, if we are so fortunate as to anticipate its approach, it is very important to loosen our attachment to possessions: not only to give them away, but to really release them from

our minds. We can give them as offerings to our spiritual mentor, to the Sangha, to our fellow dharma practitioners, or to the poor. It hardly needs to be said that we should not leave the dregs of our belongings to those who have been kind to us. For our own welfare, we should release these attachments as we face death, and be free of them. They are no longer ours to use.

When death comes, we have used up even our body; it is time to release it and not to cling.

We can start practicing this now. The very strong attachment that we generally have to the body is what makes us so vulnerable to its suffering. After freeing attachment, the author continues, generate the mind of fearlessness. We ourselves create much of the fear that surrounds death through our attachment to what we have to leave: our loved ones, our children, our possessions, our homeland, all the familiar things we are accustomed to. See if, during the course of life, we can enjoy these things but release the clinging to them. If we can really set aside the attachment, especially just before death, we allow ourselves the freedom to dispense with a lot of fear, and more so if our lives have been devoted to dharma to the best of our ability. We then have very little reason to be afraid.

2. THE POWER OF PRAYER. If we regret any unwholesome actions when we are about to die, this is the time to disclose or confess them and apply the four remedial powers explained under the third point. After purifying the mind, take refuge. Recognize that there is a source on which we can rely: the Buddha, the dharma, the Sangha, the spiritual mentor. We are encouraged to make offerings in our mind's eye to the Triple Gem and to the dharma protectors, praying: "May I remember and practice the two bodhicittas in the intermediate period between death and the next rebirth. May there be continuity, that I may meet in the next life with a holy spiritual mentor who teaches dharma. I place my hope in you; make my way to joy a straight and clear one." Prayer is extremely important at this time, and will strongly influence the nature of one's death, the Bardo, and the next life.

3. THE POWER OF ABANDONMENT. Recognize the self-grasping that clings to the body and to the self. Recognize that this fundamental distortion of the mind is responsible for the suffering that surrounds death, and as long as we remain subject to this self-grasping there is no true joy.

Reject this clinging to the body and self for the remainder of this lifetime and in the coming Bardo.

4. THE POWER OF RESOLUTION. This is not merely a prayer but a firm resolve to recollect the two bodhicittas during the approaching Bardo: to recollect, on the one hand, the illusory nature of the experiences to come—that they are deceptive appearances of the mind and not intrinsically existent—and, on the other hand, to recollect and practice relative bodhicitta in this time. Just prior to death, bring this to mind again and again with firm resolve.

5. THE POWER OF FAMILIARIZATION. Sechibuwa points out here that the most important thing is to familiarize ourselves with the cultivation of the two bodhicittas without interruption throughout this life. Now, as this life draws to a close, he explains the most favorable posture in which to die. Lie on your right side, with your right hand under the right cheek, your little finger closing off the right nostril, and breathe through the left nostril. Because of its influence on the subtle energies coursing through the body, this is an excellent posture for engaging in the other meditations prior to death. In this posture, engage in the practice of taking and sending conjoined with the breath. Inhaling through the left nostril, draw the suffering and the sources of suffering of all sentient beings into your heart, vanquishing self-centeredness. As you exhale, send out white light of purity and loving kindness to all sentient beings and imagine it bringing them whatever they require: food, clothing, wealth, or spiritual teaching. Imagine them receiving all that they need and want.

The author also speaks of a meditation in the same posture for the cultivation of ultimate bodhicitta just before death, which he encourages us to practice alternately with the taking and sending. This is a crucial time to recognize that all of existence, be it samsara or nirvana consists of appearances to the mind that are not intrinsically existent. Recall that your own Buddha nature is not ultimately different from the mind of the Buddha and recognize the essentially divine nature of your own mind. Allow your mind to relax in this sphere of ultimate reality and, holding this awareness right to the point of death, recognize that for this ultimate nature there is no transference of consciousness; there is no motion.

A Summary Of The Essential Instructions: Train In The Five Forces - JK

The five forces summarize the crucial points of practice and, in a single phrase, contain numerous profound key instructions for the practice of the holy dharma. First is the force of impetus, to give a strong impetus to the mind by thinking:

From this moment until enlightenment, at least from now until I die, and especially for the next year and the next month, and definitely from today until tomorrow, the two aspects of bodhicitta will never be absent from my mind.

The second is the force of familiarization. Whatever occupation or activity you are engaged in-virtuous, nonvirtuous, or indeterminate-maintain mindfulness and awareness strictly and train again and again in keeping the two aspects of bodhicitta ever in mind. In a word, study and train in bodhicitta as your principal form of virtuous activity.

The third is the force of virtuous seeds. Always concentrate your full energy - physical, verbal, and mental - on virtuous activity. Never be content with your efforts to arouse and strengthen bodhicitta.

The fourth is the force of repudiation. Whenever ego-cherishing thoughts come up, abandon them completely by thinking:

Previously, for time without beginning, you have made me wander in samsara and experience different kinds of suffering. In addition, all the suffering and evil that occur in this life are brought on by you. There is no happiness in your company, so I shall now do everything I can to subdue and destroy you.

The fifth is the force of aspiration. At the end of any virtuous activity, pray sincerely and dedicate all virtue to these objectives:

May I, on my own, guide all sentient beings to Buddhahood. In particular, from now until I attain enlightenment, may I never forget the two aspects of precious bodhicitta, even when I am dreaming. May the two aspects of bodhicitta grow stronger and stronger. Whatever adverse conditions I encounter, may I take them as aids to bodhicitta.

What to Do at Death

Second, what are the instructions for the moment of death in this tradition of teaching?

The Mahayana instructions for how to die are the five forces. How you act is important.

When a person who has trained in this teaching is stricken by terminal illness, he or she should practice the five forces. First, the force of virtuous seeds means to give away all possessions without a trace of attachment, clinging, or concern. In general, they can be given to one's gurus or to the jewels. In particular, they can be given wherever the person thinks they will be most helpful. The force of aspiration means to make enlightenment the single focus of aspiration by practicing the seven-branch prayer if possible or, if not possible, by praying:

Through the power of whatever virtuous seeds I have gathered in the three times, may I never forget but train and strengthen precious bodhicitta in all future experiences in existence. May I meet the pure gurus who reveal this teaching. I pray that these aspirations be realized through the blessing of my gurus and the jewels.

The force of repudiation is to think:

This ego-cherishing has led me to suffer for countless existences, and now I experience the suffering of dying. Ultimately, there is nothing that dies, since neither self nor mind have true existence. I'll do whatever I must to destroy you, ego-clinging, who constantly think in terms of "I'm ill, I'm dying."

The force of impetus is to think:

I will never be without the two kinds of precious bodhicitta, not at death, nor in the intermediate state, nor in any future existence.

The force of familiarization is to bring clearly to mind the two bodhicittas that have been practiced previously.

While the main point is to practice these forces single-mindedly, the accompanying actions are also important. Physically, one should sit in the seven-point posture or, if unable to do that, lie down on the right side and rest the cheek on the right hand while blocking the right nostril with the little finger. While breathing through the left nostril, one should begin by meditating on love and compassion and then train in sending and taking,

in conjunction with the coming and going of the breath. Then, without clinging mentally to anything, one should rest evenly in a state of knowing that birth and death, samsara and nirvana, and so on, are all projections of mind, and that mind itself does not exist as anything. In this state, one should continue to breathe as well as one can.

There are many highly regarded instructions on how to die, but none, it is said, is more wonderful than this one.

An instruction for death that employs a salve states: Apply to the crown of the head an ointment compounded of wild honey, ash from burning unspoiled seashells, and filings from an iron magnet.

5- Yardsticks

“By the gracious Lama's blessings, when everything arises as the antidote to ego clinging and my mind finds freedom with happiness and confidence, may I take all adverse circumstances as the path (measure of success: 5). ”

-- Atisha

FIVE - MEASUREMENT OF SUCCESS:

**One is always accompanied by only joyful thoughts.
A reversed attitude indicates a transformation.
One is trained if one is capable, although distracted.**

-- Geshe Chekawa

V - Measurement of Mind Training

In your daily activities, be aware of the disadvantages of ego clinging and the need for practicing compassion towards all living beings. When you meditate, examine the way in which emotional thought patterns arise in your mind. Look at their essence and let them dissolve into the emptiness of their essential reality. Use these two methods alternately; they are like skilful means and wisdom. You will know by yourself the extent of your own training. In examining it, you will say, "yes, a little pride". One indication of how you are doing is when someone says something unpleasant to you, you don't get angry. If you are praised, you don't feel proud. These are signs of a good training. Continue until it is like that.

What are the advantages of a good training? Each time the emotions arise, you will overcome them and therefore you will not fall deeper into the cyclic existence. You will be free. You will no longer fall victim to the imperfections of samsara or of the negative emotions. The obstacles cannot block your progress towards enlightenment. When a snake is coiled up, it can uncoil itself. In the same way, as soon as an emotion arises, you will be able to spontaneously release yourself of it. Then the mind is really happy, because neither the impairment of the disturbing emotions, nor the suffering they cause would ever be harmful again. When the mind is naturally untouched and happy, it is a sign of success of the mind training. The mind is continuously peaceful, calm and happy. It is not a state produced by something, but a natural and spontaneous happiness which does not know any suffering. Such is the true measure of successful mind training.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

All teachings have the same goal.

All Dharma Is Included In One Purpose - AW

Many of us have by now encountered a wide range of practices - breath awareness, mindfulness, loving kindness, the Lam Rim practices, meditation on emptiness, meditative quiescence, and even tantric practices. All these practices, all the teachings of the Buddha, all the commentaries, serve one purpose: to subdue self-grasping.

We are now challenged to investigate ... the level of our self-grasping. We may find that the practice is in fact enhancing the so-called eight mundane concerns-pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame, honor and dishonor. If our practice does not diminish self-grasping, or perhaps even enhances it, then no matter how austere and determined we are, no matter how many hours a day we devote to learning, reflection, and meditation, our spiritual practice is in vain.

A close derivative of self-grasping is the feeling of self-importance. Such arrogance or pride is a very dangerous pitfall for people practicing dharma, but if these are the results of the practice, then something has gone awry.

Although we all try to engage in spiritual practice according to our own abilities, it is very helpful to have some criterion by which we can estimate our progress. Here is the crucial test: how has our sense of personal identity been influenced? The stronger our self-grasping, the more easily it gives rise to irritation, anger, and resentment. It gives rise also to attachment, and actually forms the basis of self-centeredness. We can check the level of our own self-grasping by checking on the derivative mental distortions and obscurations that arise from its root.

On a more optimistic note, if we find that our practice results in decreased self-grasping, we can recognize its authenticity. This too distinguishes a true dharma practitioner from one who is merely practicing a facsimile.

All Dharma Has A Single Purpose - JK

Since the purpose of all dharma, both Mahayana and hinayana, is simply to tame ego-clinging, as you practice dharma or work at mind training,

ego-clinging should decrease. If your efforts in dharma do not counteract ego-clinging, your practice is meaningless. Since this is the one criterion that determines whether dharma practice is effective or not, it is said to be the yardstick by which a dharma person is measured.

Follow the inner witness rather than the outer ones.

Maintain The Chief Of The Two Witnesses - AW

The two witnesses are others and oneself, and both have some value. It is worthwhile to heed other people's estimation of us, but, as Sechibuwa swiftly points out, it is not the chief of the two witnesses. We can pull the wool over other people's eyes, either intentionally or unintentionally by showing our best side regardless of what is going on inside. Others are to be taken into account, but the chief witness is our own internal awareness. With careful, honest introspection we can judge the quality not only of our physical and verbal behavior, but also of our own private mental activity. We ourselves are the principal witness of whether our Mind Training is authentic and working properly.

Of The Two Judges, Rely On The Principal One - JK

For other people to see you as a dharma person is one judge, but ordinary people do not know what is hidden in your mind and may just be taking joy in certain improvements in the way you act. One sign of proficiency in mind training is that there is never any shame or embarrassment about your state of mind. Consequently, do not be attached to the judgment of others, but rely principally on the judge of mind itself.

Always have the support of a joyful mind.

Rely Continually On Mental Happiness Alone - AW

We can judge whether our practice is fruitful and the Mind Training is succeeding if, regardless of whatever unfavorable circumstances occur, we respond with the antidote of cultivating the two bodhicittas, and satisfied with that, we do not become discouraged or depressed, nor respond with unwholesome action. In other words, we are encouraged to measure how constantly we reside in a state of cheerful equanimity.

Other paths that are aimed at "sudden awakening" lead one on an unmapped journey that may offer no clear indications of progress. In contrast, in this practice we have definite signposts along the way. Look at your mental distortions and see how they are doing. After practicing for a month, a year, six years, are the mental distortions somewhat diminished? Do wholesome qualities arise more readily, more frequently, more deeply? At the very root of the mental distortions, is the self-grasping attenuated? Is there less self-centeredness and greater humility? Is there more loving concern for the welfare of others? All of these are causes that lead either to well-being or to misery.

Another sure sign comes from ourselves, our chief witness. How do we feel? Are we more contented people now than before we began the practice? This is especially useful if we can look back over a couple of years or so. Is our mind more cheerful, more serene? If we can answer yes, then the practice is working. Its purpose is to give us greater happiness and to lead us to awakening so that we can be of greater service to others. Indeed, the fruit of the practice is happiness and good cheer, not in some longed-for day in the future, but right during the practice itself. Although at times it is difficult, because the circumstances are difficult, the practice itself should not generally be arduous. The sign of a fruitful spiritual practice is the attenuation of mental distress.

Always Have The Support Of A Joyful Mind - JK

When there is never any fear or despair no matter what adversity or suffering is encountered, when difficulty is taken as an aid to mind training and you always have the help of a joyful mind, then you have acquired proficiency in mind training. When adverse conditions come, meditate joyfully and, in addition, learn to take joyfully all the adversity others experience.

Practicing even when distracted is good training.

You Are Proficient If You Can Practice Even When Distracted - JK

A skilled horseman does not fall from his horse, even when he is distracted. In the same way, if you are able to take adverse conditions that suddenly develop as aids to mind training even without expressly directing your attention to do so, then you are proficient in mind training. The two bodhicittas arise clearly and effortlessly along with everything that appears-enemies, friends, troublemakers, happiness, or suffering.

These four lines describe signs that your training in bodhicitta has been effective and that proficiency has developed. They are not signs that you need not train further. Until Buddhahood is attained, you should train to strengthen bodhicitta.

6- Commitments

“By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I keep my promises, be free of hypocrisy, have no partiality, and little outward show. Protecting the commitments (6) of the mind training as I would my own life. ” -- Atisha

SIX – COMMITMENTS:

**Always practice the three general points.
Change your attitude while remaining natural.
Speak not of the shortcomings of others.
Think not about whatever is seen in others.**

**Purify first whichever affliction is heaviest.
Give up all hope of reward.
Abandon poisonous food.
Do not serve the central object leniently.**

**Be indifferent towards malicious jokes.
Do not lie in ambush.
Never strike at the heart.
Do not load an ox with the load of a dzo.**

**Do not compete by a last-minute sprint.
Do not be treacherous.
Do not bring a god down to a devil.
Do not inflict misery for possession of happiness.**

-- Geshe Chekawa

VI - Engagement of Mind Training

Engagement means to exert yourself in everyday life until your character is completely imbued with the right attitudes. In general, it means to convert your aspirations. In the moment when you wish to do something basically negative, you exhort yourself, "I must improve." When this transformation takes place, you can treat the suffering of others. Once the mind is firmly transformed, there is no longer a need to prove it. The actions of your body, and your speech must necessarily be beneficial for others, little by little. You do not emphasize your contribution, you do not care to show it, nor do you wish to be recognized by others. Here are some examples of the engagements of mind training.

"Do not criticize the faults of others while being unaware of your own."

"Examine your own mind and make use of the strongest emotion as material for mind training."

"Do not practice the mind training to become a famous Bodhisattva, or a famous siddha, or a Buddha...this motivation is impure; you will not become a pure Bodhisattva."

"When you are wounded, bear no resentment."

"Do not employ malicious means to take advantage of others. For example, if a group has some goods, do not use various means and ways to divert them into your own possession."

To observe these engagements is not the same thing as in observing a law. It could be said that to do the opposite of the stated engagements is to go against the practice of mind training - the practice is then spoiled. The essence of each engagement is to help develop the mind training so that one does not transgress from the training itself. It is easy for you to realize by yourself. For example, it is said, do not practice mind training for your own growth or to gain the respect of others. If you follow the guideline of the engagements, wouldn't you find real meaning of the practice of mind training? Yes, of course. It follows from the engagement of avoidance.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

Always observe these three points:

1. Regularity of practice.
2. Not wasting time on the inessential.
3. Not rationalizing our mistakes.

Always Practice The Three Principles - AW

1. not to contravene any commitments we have already made in our spiritual practice:

If we are following the Buddhist path for spiritual growth, we make commitments as a consequence of taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the Sangha. Many of us have taken the five lay precepts, and possibly Bodhisattva and tantric precepts as well, if we have received tantric initiation. There are also the ten wholesome actions to be followed and ten unwholesome actions to be avoided. The author here emphasizes that, even if the Mind Training becomes the central core of our practice, it does not substitute for other commitments that we have taken upon ourselves, or allow us to ignore them.

Essentially this concerns ethics and morality, which are said to be the basis on which all spiritual practice is founded. Without a morally wholesome way of life, nothing we do can lead to awakening - not yoga, or pranayama, or samadhi, or high tantric practice. Let's not try to build a house on sand. Whatever commitments we make, let us keep them for our own sake and for that of others.

2. not to allow our mind training to become ostentatious:

As we develop greater courage in this practice and become skilled at transforming unfavorable circumstances, we may as a result become overconfident, ostentatiously seeking out dangerous situations. Is it the power of our compassion that leads us to risk contagious disease in order to be of service, for example, or is it the desire to show off the superiority of our attainment? Avoid this false sense of invulnerability.

3. not to let the mind training become lopsided:

Imagine a very strong dharma practitioner who, when strangers insult her, cheat her, or harm her in any way, practices the essence of the Mind Training very well. She easily transforms these unfavorable circumstances by cultivating patience, loving kindness, and compassion. On the other hand, she has less inclination to practice dharma with those with whom she comes into frequent contact. For her husband, children, and immediate relatives, she has less tolerance, feeling, "I am in charge here and I won't take any nonsense." Alternatively, one may practice very well within a supportive environment, surrounded by dharma friends or a spouse who is also a practitioner, but fall apart in the company of others who have no interest in dharma.

Some of us may find it easy to train our minds with regard to harm from non-human sources, but more difficult where people are concerned. If lightning strikes, if a tile comes through the roof, if you stumble and sprain an ankle, there is no culprit to point a finger at. We may be able to integrate a thunderstorm calmly into our practice as we meditate on mental stabilization, but a truck goes rumbling by and we think, "This is terrible! What a lousy retreat facility!" If the wind whistles through the house, there is no problem; but if a person walks by whistling, the thought arises, "Doesn't this guy know that I'm meditating? This is private property. Why can't he be more sensitive when I'm trying to develop bodhicitta?" Our conceptual conditioning is at work here.

Others may have patience for the harm brought on by human beings, but not for animals. We can handle a child's noise, for instance, but a mouse gnawing on tin foil makes us really uptight. An insect bites a person: slap! One sentient being has been mashed. We may feel certain we would never kill a deer or a cat, or even kick a dog. But if there is a rat in the house, out comes the trap.

Or we may draw boundaries arbitrarily in terms of basic ethics. Though we avoid harming human beings physically, we might be less scrupulous about harming them verbally. We might feel quite free to slander people behind their backs, in ways that would seem terrible to their faces. These actions are no less harmful.

These are only a few of the many ways that our practice can be unbalanced. And practice that is lopsided with bias or prejudice does not form a suitable foundation for deep spiritual growth.

Always Practice The Three General Principles - JK

Of the three general principles, the first is not to break the promises you have made in mind training, that is, not to be tarnished by any fault or failing in any vow you have taken, including even the most minor precepts of individual liberation, Bodhisattva, or Vajrayana ordinations.

The second principle is not to act scandalously, that is, to refrain from scandalous acts such as destroying shrines, disturbing trees and other plants, polluting streams or rivers, associating with lepers and beggars, and other ways you might behave in the hope that others will think that you have no ego-clinging. Instead, make your way of life and practice utterly pure and faultless.

The third principle is to avoid being one-sided. For instance, although you may be patient with the trouble people cause, you may not be patient with the trouble caused by gods or demons, or vice versa. Or you may be able to handle those situations but be impatient with such sufferings as illness or disease. Maybe you can be patient in all sorts of difficult situations but let your practice of dharma lapse when you are happy and comfortable. The commitment is to avoid any bias or one-sidedness in mind training, so always practice that.

Change your attitude, but stay natural.

Transform Your Desires, But Remain As You Are - AW

This refers especially to transforming self-centeredness into cherishing others. If we have been selfish, egocentric, or indifferent to others, these are indeed afflictions of the mind that should be transformed. But stay the same, the author also says.

The point is very subtle, as Geshe Rabten brought out when he discussed this point of practice: Indeed transform your mind, but make no obvious transformation of your external behavior or speech. This is not to say that we should leave all our external behavior unchanged. If our speech tends toward exaggeration, slander, or deviousness, if our physical habits are clearly unwholesome, we should definitely abandon such actions. There are many cases when overt wholesome action is appropriate, but the advice here is to be discreet about it, without calling attention to ourselves.

Why? Because we are gratified when people notice how much we have changed, it is very easy for our spiritual practice to become tainted by the eight mundane concerns. Even though we start out with pure motivation, we may still wind up concerned with our reputation. Will people like us more if we practice? Will they praise us behind our backs? Will they give us nice things that we want, or perhaps special advantages? It is very easy to feel superior when we see actual transformations in our being. Showing off our virtue to others feeds this, and this should not be where the priority lies.

Many of these practices are concerned with the refinement of actions that are already wholesome. On doing something kind for another person, we have a natural inclination to say, as if waiting for gratitude, "By the way, did you notice how clean your windows are? Did you notice what's in the refrigerator?" The motivation is self-centered and impure. This is not to say that the act is evil; but let's fine-tune it to see if we can simply be satisfied with the act itself, discreetly, instead of looking for a dividend in others' gratification, or expecting a kindness in return. This point-staying where you are while you transform your aspirations-is worthy of serious consideration.

Change Your Attitude, But Remain Natural - JK

To change and reverse your previous attitude of concern with your own welfare and lack of concern for the welfare of others, take only the welfare of others as being important. Since all mind training should be practiced with little fanfare but great effectiveness, remain as natural as possible, keeping your manners and conduct like those of your friends and associates in dharma. Work at maturing your own experience without making others aware of your efforts.

Do not discuss defects.

Speak Not Of Degenerate Qualities - AW

Strangely, it is often true that we yearn to speak about the mundane or degenerate characteristics of other people. Perhaps we feel uplifted by observing the faults of others, as if putting others down elevates our own sense of self-worth. Whether someone is untidy, or slothful, or bad at sports, the faults of others seem to place us in a more exalted light.

Within the context of dharma, this inclination is stimulated as we receive teachings and begin to develop ideals about the transformation of our lives. Conversely, we may see ourselves lacking in terms of these same ideals, and this aggravates dissatisfaction. If we are prone to self-contempt or lack self-love - and I don't mean self-centeredness, but simply an affectionate acceptance of ourselves-this may be exacerbated in the early stages of spiritual practice. As we become more aware of faults, we find more grounds for self-deprecation and disdain, which becomes an uncomfortable burden we carry around like a big bag of rocks. To be rid of even one rock would be a psychological relief.

We may try to unload some weight by directing awareness - our own and others'-away from our own faults. So we pick out the faults of others and talk about them: "Did you notice how Jack fidgets around when he is meditating? He can't sit still. His mind must be a whirlpool of confusion." Perhaps the most odious tendency is to compare ourselves favorably to others: "Did you notice how stingy Joe is? I have my problems too, but I have never acted like that."

Sechibuwa gives the blunt advice, "Don't speak of the mundane faults of others, nor of the faults of their spiritual practice." There may conceivably be very rare occasions when it is appropriate, provided that kindness is the motivation. Even more rarely would it be appropriate to speak of Joe's faults when Joe is not present. But how often when we speak of the faults of others is it really motivated by constructive kindness, by a yearning that the person may be free of this affliction? Perhaps not so often.

Do Not Talk About Weak Points - JK

Don't discuss unpleasant subjects: other people's faults in worldly matters (such as physical or mental disabilities) or their faults in spiritual matters (violations of ordination, for instance). Talk cheerfully about pleasant topics in a gentle and friendly manner.

Don't worry about other people.

Think Nothing About The Other Side - AW

This next pledge takes the preceding text a step further, moving to an even more subtle level of practice. What does it mean not to think about the other side? We are encouraged here not to dwell mentally on the faults of sentient beings in general, and more specifically, not to dwell upon the faults of those engaging in spiritual practice. Even more specifically, do not dwell on the faults of dharma friends.

As we enter into spiritual practice and become more sensitive to our own faults, it is probably inevitable that we also become more sensitive to the faults of others. As many of us have experienced, this can be quite an unpleasant phase of practice. We simply seem to be slogging through our own and other people's shortcomings. We set ourselves ideals and we see how we fail to live up to them, and also how other people fail—at least in our own eyes. Now we are being told not to even think of anyone's faults, and particularly not those of dharma practitioners and our own companions on the path. It is tremendously refreshing for the mind to simply drop this habit.

When we do observe a fault, what should we do? Regardless of whether we are hunting for faults, they can simply present themselves, as if from the other person's side. An intelligent response is immediately to check the extent to which we are projecting our own faults and past conditioning onto the other person. This is especially effective if we are imputing some mental fault, such as pride, arrogance, or thoughtlessness, upon this person.

When we see faults in others, especially mental faults, let us first simply acknowledge that we are making an assumption rather than a necessary inference. It may be accurate, and it may not. Even such ostensibly unwholesome actions as slander, lying, or harming others physically may in fact be appropriate if the motivation is compassion. A parent, for example, may need to punish an unruly child in order to teach a lesson that will prevent the child from coming to grief later on. The word here is caution. Stand back from judgment, and certainly do not dwell on the faults of others. Doing so is a very unpleasant affliction of our own minds.

This applies also to our relationship with a spiritual mentor. The great scriptures of the Bodhisattva path encourage us to look upon our teacher as if he or she were a Buddha. Note the precise phrasing, which underlines the difference between this sutra practice and tantra: Look upon the spiritual mentor as if he or she were a Buddha. A Buddha has no faults, no obscurations, no distortions, no afflictions. In practice, this means that whenever we see a fault in our spiritual mentor, we should be willing to consider that what we see may actually be a projection of our own mind.

To realize this is a tremendous boon requiring continual practice, and we should apply it to ourselves as well as others. When we start to belittle ourselves for our own faults, recognize that they are simply afflictions obscuring our own essential purity and our capacity for full awakening. These temporary distortions are not who we are, and we do have the means for overcoming them. This is what Buddhadharma is all about: the dispelling of distortions and obscurations. If we can develop a sympathy and gentleness towards ourselves - not complacency but self-love in the best sense of the term - then, when we see faults in others we can transfer to them the wisdom we have acquired internally. Even if a fault seems quite blatant, instead of responding with agitation and intolerance, we can recognize it sympathetically as an affliction similar to those we suffer ourselves. Rather than disparaging the sufferer, the yearning can then easily arise out of kindness: "May that person be free of this fault, which so evidently brings unhappiness to them and to those around them."

Don't Think About The Affairs Of Others - JK

Do not think about other people's affairs: in general, the faults of any sentient being, but in particular, the faults of anyone who has entered the practice of dharma. Rather, think:

Seeing this fault is due to the impurity in my own outlook. Such a fault is not in this person. I am like those people who saw faults in Buddha, the enlightened one.

Thus, terminate this faulty attitude in your own mind.

Work on your greatest imperfection first.

Work On The Stronger Disturbing Emotions First - JK

Examine your personality to determine which disturbing emotions are strongest. Concentrate all dharma practice on them in the beginning, and subdue and clear them away.

Abandon all hope of results.

Abandon All Hope For Results - AW

We can dispense first with some very mundane hopes that are not worth nurturing at all: the hope, for example, that others might esteem us more highly as a result of our practice, or offer us service or devotion. Geshe Chekawa identifies other hopes that should not be cultivated: the hope of being invulnerable to harm, or the self-centered hope of attaining a fortunate rebirth, or liberation, or even Buddhahood, as a result of practice. Most important, we are encouraged not to cultivate hopes for great or swift benefits as the result of practice.

There is a natural tendency, when our practice starts to go well, to get excited at the prospect of attaining wonderful results very quickly. This excitement is believed to attract maras, malignant entities who create obstacles for us. It is like turning on a neon sign in our thoughts that says, "I am on the verge of a great breakthrough! Hey maras, come and get it!" Avoid this, because experience teaches us that this kind of excitement over hopes of great and swift results, rather than enhancing the practice, simply creates problems in our meditation.

The question of hope and anxiety is important in spiritual practice, especially when we enter into sustained and earnest meditative practice. Meditative quiescence is a prime example. If we are dealing with a limited time span, as we all are, we naturally hope to attain it in a year, or three months... "And then I can go on and develop bodhicitta in three months and realization of emptiness in another three months, and then tantra and. . . Not that it is impossible, but beating this drum primes us for anxiety, especially when we bracket our hopes in terms of a specific time, a specific place, and a specific technique. We set up a situation of subtle, internal panic as we wonder unconsciously, "Am I on schedule? Will I meet the deadline?"

In the beginning stages of a practice, self-centeredness is a useful incentive. Instead of simply abandoning it, we gradually strain it out. As Shantideva says in his Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life, if you don't think of developing bodhicitta for your own sake, how can you ever aspire to develop it for others? And his first chapter is devoted exclusively to the benefits of developing bodhicitta. Whether the practice is Mind

Training, meditative quiescence, bodhicitta, or the realization of emptiness, an awareness of the benefits as well as the potential problems and their antidotes provides us with a clear understanding of how to engage correctly in the practice. The results will come from correct practice done with earnestness, a proper level of intensity, and continuity over a long period of time. They will not come faster by anticipating or longing for them.

Give Up All Hope For Results - JK

Give up the hope of subduing gods and demons by meditating on mind training, or the hope that you will be considered a good person when you try to help someone who has hurt you. These are hypocritical attitudes. In a word, give up all hope for any result that concerns your own welfare, such as the desire for fame, respect, happiness, and comfort in this life, the happiness experienced in the human or god realms in future lives, or the attainment of nirvana for yourself.

Give up poisonous food.

ABANDON POISONOUS FOOD - AW

The next verse does not refer to dietary restrictions, but is a continuation of the same theme. Engaging in spiritual practice is very much like eating. The whole point of eating is to benefit ourselves: to nourish the body, to gain strength and vitality, and to rid ourselves of hunger pangs. Poisonous food defeats the purpose of eating.

As we engage in spiritual practice, we pollute our spiritual food with poison by remaining unaware of self-grasping and the egotism and self-centeredness that derive from it. If we do not discard these as enemies that afflict us but instead simply accept them, our practice is like eating poisoned food. There is no question that one can meditate assiduously, translate books and become a great scholar, or even an articulate teacher, and still have self-centeredness at the very core of one's involvement in dharma. Whether our practice is as profound as Kalacakra, Mahamudra, or Dzogchen, or as straightforward as breath awareness and loving kindness, if we approach it with a mind that is grasping onto the inherent existence of phenomena, it acts as cause for further cycling in samsara. We may be trying to do something of benefit, but self-grasping pollutes the spiritual practice like a poison. It acts as a cause of further suffering and therefore should be abandoned.

Give Up Poisonous Food - JK

Since all virtuous thoughts and actions motivated by clinging to a concrete reality or to a self-cherishing attitude are like poisonous food, give them up. Learn not to cling, but to know the phantomlike nature of experience.

Don't be consistent.

Do Not Devote Yourself Kindly To The Central Object - AW

This pledge also seems obscure at first. The Tibetan word translated here as central object refers to a central pillar or support, and is interpreted here as our own mental distortions. In other words, we should not bear a gentle, lenient attitude towards our own mental distortions. If we find ourselves responding with resentment to another person's disagreeable or unkind action, we should not treat our own distortion casually, saying, "What's a little bit of hostility or arrogance now and then?" This genial attitude to our own afflictions is to be abandoned, because it nurtures the distortion and prolongs it for days, years, and even decades, causing suffering for ourselves and others.

Don't Rely On Consistency - JK

A person who is consistent in his affairs doesn't forget the people who concern him, no matter where he is or how much time has gone by. When someone causes you trouble and has made you angry, you might never let go of that resentment. Stop it. Take a helpful attitude or action in response to someone who causes trouble.

Don't indulge in malicious gossip.**Do Not Laugh At Malicious Jokes - AW**

The commentary here says more than the verse itself. Do not make bad jokes. The author is not advising us to avoid bad puns, but is referring to malicious sarcasm. Don't make fun of other people in ways that would bring pain to their hearts. The temptation is especially strong when it entails the double satisfaction of disparaging another person and exalting ourselves at the same time by showing off our cleverness. Those of us prone to this type of humor need to address this by changing the conditioning of our speech. All types of harsh speech should be abandoned to avoid harming ourselves and others as well.

Don't Be Excited By Cutting Remarks - JK

In general, don't take joy in disparaging others. In particular, when another person says something bad about you, don't respond by talking maliciously about him to others. In fact, even if some injury has resulted, strive always to praise the good qualities of others without blaming this or that person.

Don't wait in ambush.**Do Not Wait At The Narrow Passageway - AW**

Picture a scene from a western, or from the highlands of Tibet: bandits waiting in ambush at a narrow pass, where the victim has no chance of escape. To really damage someone, one waits till one's intended victim is most vulnerable. What we are told to avoid here is biding our time to be especially hurtful, lashing back at someone maybe weeks or months after they have injured us, whether physically or verbally.

On first hearing verses such as this we may assume they do not apply to us. Obviously, this is meant for malicious people, and we are not among the bad guys. Perhaps this initial response is honest; some of us may hold no grudges. If so, we need not be concerned with this right now; we have certainly practiced well in the past, either in this or previous lifetimes. Let us focus instead on problems that are relevant.

But our initial response may not be very insightful. In meditating on this pledge as well as the others, the point is to examine our past experience and try to recall: Have I done this kind of thing before? What was the context? What prodded me to do it? What were the results? Do I still have this tendency? And in the present, any resentment still active should be brought to light. Am I anticipating revenge? There are ways of getting back at others more subtle than standing at the ready with a shotgun. We need to check for ourselves whether each pledge is pertinent for our present situation, but they are all worthy of clear-minded, honest introspection that does not rely on the initial response, "Who, me?" Maybe, after more reflection, we may say, "Well, yes, at times." This does not mean that we are evil and vulgar, but simply that we have some work to do.

Don't Wait In Ambush - JK

When someone has caused you trouble, the tendency is to fix it in mind and never forget it though many years go by. When there is an opportunity to ambush the person and to return the injury, revenge is taken. Give up this approach and be as helpful as you can in your response to troublesome situations. For the kind of trouble caused by demons, don't cling to the problem, but work only on love and compassion.

Don't strike at the heart.**Don't Make Things Painful - JK**

Don't speak in a way that causes pain for others, either by making pointed remarks and exposing their faults or, in the case of nonhuman beings, by using mantras that drain their life.

Don't put the yak's load on the cow.**Do Not Load The Burden Of A Dzo On An Ox - AW**

A dzo is a cross between an ox and a yak - a very strong beast of burden. So the message is: don't take the burden of a dzo and place it upon an ox, which is a weaker animal. This rustic metaphor refers to issues of ability and responsibility. Each of us is endowed with certain talents, whether we were born with them or earned them in this life. We also have our responsibilities, some of which we may not be inclined to fulfill. If this text were originally written in America, it would probably say here: Don't pass the buck. Recognize what your role is and what you are here to contribute. What are your special abilities and responsibilities? At times these will be enjoyable and rewarding; at other times they may be grunt work. But having identified the grunt work, don't shift it onto other people's shoulders. They may not be as capable as you are for the task.

Don't Put The Horse's Load On A Pony - JK

To give someone else an unpleasant job that is your responsibility or, by resorting to trickery, to shift a problem you have encountered to someone else is like putting a horse's load on a pony. Don't do this.

Remember - this is not a competition.**Do Not Direct Yourself To The Summit Of The Ascent - AW**

This next verse is difficult to understand as the words are not clear, and various possible spellings for the text change the meaning radically. However we translate the text, the commentary remains straightforward. When you are working with other people, sharing in any kind of project, don't stand up to claim credit for the work. In other words, don't seek out the limelight. This needs no further elaboration.

Some of these precepts are bound to be more useful than others, but it is worthwhile giving each of them a chance. Examine whether we tend to seek out the limelight, to pass the buck, to be sarcastic, and so forth. Such tendencies as we have, we can counteract, and this will be to our own benefit. The purpose of the training is not to set down laws and regulations, but simply to derive benefit.

Don't Aim To Win - JK

In a horse race, the aim is to be the fastest. Among dharma people there are often hopes of receiving more attention or being more highly regarded than others, and little schemes are made up to find ways to acquire possessions. Give these up. Have no concern about receiving or not receiving recognition or prestige.

Don't be sneaky.**Do Not Be Devious - AW**

This is also very straightforward. The commentary gives as an example the pretense that you are accepting a loss from someone else while in fact you stand to benefit. Again, not much elaboration is needed. Being devious, cunning, or sly has no place in a life that is oriented towards dharma.

Don't Revert To Magic - JK

If you accept a setback for the time being out of a desire for future benefits for yourself or if you practice mind training expecting to cure illness and mental disturbances and ward off adverse situations, your practice is mistaken, like someone contriving magical rituals. Don't act this way. Whatever happiness or sorrow comes, meditate without arrogance, hesitation, fear, or hope. Gyal-se Tokme has said:

Mind training done with that kind of attitude should be considered a method for helping demons and disturbances. If you practice that way, it's no different from evil. Dharma work must counteract discursive thought and disturbing emotions.

With this example, consider the topic of mistaken dharma practice. Mistaken outlooks are outlooks based on eternalism or nihilism; mistaken meditation is meditation that clings to some sublime state; mistaken conduct is conduct that is not consistent with the three ordinations. Mistaken dharma denotes anything that is contradictory to the ethics or outlook authoritatively taught in the holy dharma, regardless of whom it comes from, you or someone else, the very best or the very least. It will propel you into samsara and the lower realms. It's like taking the wrong medicine for an illness or applying the wrong disciplinary measures.

There are individuals who call certain composed and revealed works "mistaken dharma" without examining the words or thoughts in a single chapter to see whether they are pure or mistaken. It would appear that they issue their pronouncements out of attachment to their own systems or from personal differences. It is said that no one but a Buddha is able to evaluate the worth of an individual. So, even though you may not like a person who has arrived at a proper outlook and ethics, your dislike doesn't make the dharma mistaken. For example, a merchant may sell gold or glitter, but it doesn't make him a better or worse merchant. Buddha said over and over again:

Don't rely on individuals; rely on the dharma.

I make this digression here because it is so important to understand this point.

Don't abuse your divine power for selfish reasons.

Do Not Let The Gods Descend To The Devil - AW

The commentary speaks first of Devas, gods like those of the Hindu or Greek pantheons. Many accounts suggest that these non-human beings can be rather fickle. If you honor and worship them, they may help you. If you don't, they may turn around and injure you, in which case the god descends to a devil, an inflictor of harm.

What does it really mean for the divine to descend to the diabolical? The point of the Mind Training is to subdue our own mind: to gradually vanquish self-grasping and the mental afflictions that arise from it. No matter how intensely, earnestly, and diligently we practice, we may still inflate ourselves with a sense of superiority, using our spiritual practice as an unfortunate source of conceit. This distortion of the practice is the descent from a Deva to a demon, from a god to a devil.

Why do we engage in any spiritual practice? The answer that Buddhism emphasizes is our own vulnerability to suffering, whether blatant or as an undercurrent of anxiety. If we are deeply aware that we need help and recognize that without dharma our minds are dysfunctionally creating misery, it becomes ridiculous to hold a supercilious attitude. It is hard to be pompous when the reason for practicing is a desire to be free of our own mental distortions. The Four Noble Truths - the existence of suffering, the source of suffering, freedom from suffering and its source, and the means of achieving such freedom - are very sobering in this regard.

Don't Reduce A God To A Demon - JK

If, as you meditate on mind training, your personality becomes stiff with pride and arrogance, it's as though you have reduced a god to a demon; dharma has become non-dharma. The more you meditate on mind training and dharma, the more supple your personality should become. Act as the lowest servant to everyone.

Don't expect to profit from other people's misfortune.

Do Not Seek Another's Misery As A Way To Your Own Happiness - AW

This final precept may be pertinent for many of us. The commentator provides several examples, one of which concerns inheritance. Anticipating the death of a relative or rich friend in hopes of benefiting is certainly a case of seeking another's misery for the sake of your own happiness. Another major example concerns people whom we cannot stand. We may be gladdened at the prospect of an enemy dying, or falling into disgrace, or getting hit by a truck. Our imagination can become very fertile here, but such thoughts are to be abandoned.

Sechibuwa also gives as example a meditator or dharma teacher vying for reputation with others in the same region, thinking that the illness or death of a peer would result in greater respect or more offerings for oneself. This brings to mind contemporary examples from business or academia, where people compete for their own happiness to the detriment of their colleagues. The arena of sex provides other examples: breaking up a harmonious relationship because of lust for one of the people involved. The envy and selfishness of such actions are tragic.

Whether an enemy meets with misfortune, sickness, or death, is a matter of his or her own karma. Our own history and past actions determine the fortune or misfortune presented to each of us. Wishing misfortune on someone does not cause that misfortune to happen. Instead, because the yearning for another person's suffering is itself an unwholesome mental action, it immediately places unwholesome imprints upon our own mind and guarantees our own future suffering if those imprints are not purified.

Don't Seek Pain As A Component Of Happiness - JK

Don't think: "If that patron or person should become ill or die, I would receive a lot of food and money" or "If this fellow monk or these dharma companions were to die, I would obtain their images and books" or "If my colleagues were to die, all the merit would come to me alone" or "Wouldn't it be wonderful if all my enemies were to die!"

In a word, you must refrain from hoping for suffering to come to others as a way of extending your own comfort and happiness.

7- Guidelines

“In essence, by the gracious Lama's blessings, may I genuinely train my mind according to all the precepts (7) which further the two aspects of Bodhicitta and attain realization of the Supreme Vehicle within this very lifetime.”

-- Atisha

SEVEN – PRECEPTS:

Practice all yogas (or activities) by one.
Practice every suppression of interference by one.
There are two duties: at the beginning and the end.
Endure whichever situation arises, either (good or bad).

Guard both points more preciously than your life.
Practice the three hardships.
Attain the three principal causes.
Meditate on the three undeclining attitudes.

Possess the three inseparables.
Always practice with pure impartiality on all objects.
Cherish the in-depth and broad application of all skills.
Always meditate on those closely related.

Depend not upon other circumstances.
Exert yourself, especially at this time.
Do not follow inverted deeds.
Do not be erratic.

Do not underestimate your ability.
Be liberated by two: examination and analysis.
Do not be boastful.
Do not retaliate.

Do not be fickle.
Do not wish for gratitude.

-- Geshe Chekawa

VII - Precepts of Mind Training

You must think of the importance of benefiting others and develop a motivation that will sprout forth spontaneously. All living beings in all the universes created all the problems that they now have by themselves. They are the results of their egoistic fixations and of their negative emotions. Develop compassion for all these beings. Be ever aware that all the sensory pleasures and material comforts are illusory and are the same in nature as dreams. They are completely without meaning and impermanent. Realize that to attach even to a tiny part of it is insane. Start by being aware of the ideas or negative emotions which appear in your mind as soon as they arise. Eventually, you will be able to give them up; then finally, you will be able to neutralize them if they appear again.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

In all your activities, have a single purpose.

Practice All Yogas By Means Of One - AW

Thousands upon thousands of practices are presented within the context of Buddhism. Aside from the practices intended while sitting cross-legged in meditation, there are specific practices for eating, sleeping, and manifold situations, each with individual actions. But Sechibuwa points out that those of us who have entered the door of this dharma can practice the essence of all those yogas, or spiritual practices, by means of the Mind Training. This training, which essentially is the cultivation of the two bodhicittas, can transform any other type of activity, particularly for those of us leading very active lives where the demands of the practice may struggle against the demands that life circumstances make on our time. This tension between the longing for more time for spiritual practice, and the needs of family, job, and bills to pay, is not necessarily a negative thing. What we do with it is the critical point.

One possible response is to conclude that spiritual growth is the very core of the meaning of human existence and everything else takes a back seat to it. In this case we forget the struggle and devote our life to spiritual practice, even at the sacrifice of things that would otherwise lie within grasp, such as wealth, fame, reputation, and luxury. Another response assumes spiritual practice to be impractically difficult and unrealistic, in which case we leave it to others, or maybe for later when we have more time, perhaps after retirement. We focus on more important things like making money to pay the bills, and the spiritual practice is pushed into the background, at zero magnitude or just minimum maintenance.

Consider a third possible response. As adults living in contemporary society with obligations to others such as our children, we recognize that it would be irresponsible to walk out, regardless of how much we are drawn to the spiritual life. It is simply not appropriate. Remember the Buddha's life in this context. If you are confident that you will attain enlightenment within a short period as the Buddha did, then I would recommend that you walk out today. The Buddha was able to return with such blessings for his family that the grief they felt on his leaving was outshone, as the stars are outshone by the sun when it rises in the

morning. If you have that confidence, then even the needs of a family must be abandoned.

But unless you have that confidence, their demands on your time are legitimate. So, recognizing that we have certain obligations, and recognizing at the same time that spiritual practice is the core of a meaningful life, what do we do? There really is an answer. It is not easy, but it is tremendously fruitful, and it keeps on opening and opening further: transform those actions that are already obligations by applying dharma to them.

Take eating, for instance. We have to do it two or three times a day, but we don't have to wolf down the food. There is no one who cannot sit and pause first for thirty seconds. Even fast-food is worth the thirty seconds it takes to recognize the immense number of beings who have provided us with this food. Pausing like this ties us into the community of life, at least on planet earth, as we recognize that we are indebted to others. We have received, and as we take the food, let us do it with the aspiration, "May this be returned. May I use my abilities to the fullest to serve those who have served me." And that includes everyone, directly or indirectly. The service may occur on a very mundane level, but insofar as we mature spiritually, our responsibility increases according to our abilities. Not because someone tells us, "Now you have to do this," but simply as we gain insight into the nature and sources of suffering and of contentment, then we have something all the more valuable to offer others.

Eating, taking care of the body, going on vacations, can all be a part of spiritual practice. All of us need time to relax, but it need not be a break in spiritual practice if we recognize this too as a way to refresh ourselves, restoring vitality, good cheer, and balance so that we can serve again with creativity and intelligence.

With this one yoga we can transform everything we do. All of our actions can be employed in the cultivation of ultimate and relative bodhicitta. For those of us with many demands on our time, this is an utterly priceless system of practice. It can ease the tension between the mundane demands of the world and those of the spirit by transforming worldly activity

into a source of spiritual nourishment for ourselves and others.

All Active Meditation Is Done In One Way - JK

Continue practice into everyday life with a single meditation, always keeping in mind the intention to help others in all activities, eating, dressing, sleeping, walking, or sitting.

Solve all problems by accepting the bad energy and sending out the good.

Counteract All Withdrawal By Means Of One - AW

The root text for the second practice instructs us to use one attitude to counteract all withdrawal. Entering into a spiritual practice, we may occasionally come to the morose conclusion that we were better off before we started. We may feel that our own mental distortions are stronger, that we are more uptight, or that people seem to get angry at us more often. Perhaps our family disapproves of our practicing Buddhism. We may feel that the emphasis on service in the cultivation of bodhicitta demands a kind of spiritual suicide: giving up everything, never thinking of ourselves. We become dejected and withdraw, thinking that the project ahead of us is hopelessly overwhelming: there is just so much housecleaning to do in this mind of ours. Procrastination becomes a wonderful crutch here. Maybe when we are older, or better yet in the next lifetime, then it will be easier. We put our practice in the back seat or throw it out the window altogether. What to do?

First of all, when we become discouraged and begin to withdraw, recognize what is happening: "I am disillusioned with the practice. I thought I would progress more quickly than I have." Then recognize also that in this world there are so many, many beings who, like ourselves, are striving for happiness and wishing to be free of suffering, and who are engaging in ineffective means for accomplishing these ends. Sechibuwa suggests that we counteract dejection by reaching out to all sentient beings around us. Offer them our body, our virtues, and our prayers that they may meet with effective means for finding true happiness and freeing themselves of suffering.

All Corrections Are Made In One Way - JK

Analysis itself is used to correct mistakes in analysis. If, when you are meditating on mind training, adverse conditions develop, people criticize and insult you, demons, devils, enemies, and disputes trouble you, your disturbing emotions become stronger, or you have no desire to meditate, think:

In the whole universe, there are many sentient beings who have problems like mine; my compassion goes out to all of them,

and:

In addition to this unwanted situation, may all the unwanted circumstances and suffering of all sentient beings be collected here,

and use the single corrective of exchanging yourself for others.

Renew your commitment when you get up and before you go to sleep.

There Are Two Actions On Two Occasions, At The Beginning And End - AW

The third of the practices listed here is one very frequently quoted by Tibetan lamas, and extremely important. The beginning occasion for each day is getting up in the morning. What is our first thought on waking up? We can all afford a couple of minutes in bed to prepare quietly for the day before jumping up and brushing our teeth. Sechibuwa suggests that an earnest practitioner of the Mind Training should at this point be setting motivation, resolving not be polluted by self-centeredness for the course of the day. It is important to understand exactly what is meant by self-centeredness, so that it is clearly demarcated when it arises in the mind during the day: "I recognize this; I was looking at something similar just this morning." And then the teaching of the Mind Training can come flooding in.

Again, don't be lenient with self-centeredness. Recognize this quality of mind that has brought us misery, discontent, anxiety, and frustration, year after every year of this lifetime, not to speak of lifetimes before this since time out of mind. Each morning, look at the day that is yet to unfold and really set up the aspiration not to succumb to the self-centeredness, not to value our own welfare as the priority in our daily activities. This is a perfectly feasible transformation of the mind. Anticipate responding to others with concern and sensitivity for their well-being, go into the day with this stance, and then be aware and introspectively alert in dealing with people during the day. Be aware of the quality of your mind as you work, drive, shop, take care of the children, watch TV. In other words, having set the resolve, carry through; not because the karmic results will injure us if we don't, but because we yearn to live a meaningful and contented life that opens up to greater and greater happiness for ourselves and others. Cherish that thought and motivation throughout the course of the day.

If we cannot cultivate introspective alertness, even during our busiest days, then we might as well discard that way of life, because it is guaranteed to be meaningless. Get rid of it and do something different.

Obviously, I am not recommending suicide, but a change of lifestyle. Our children, spouse, and friends are not benefiting from it, and we certainly are not ourselves. What are we actually offering to our children in such a situation? The most emphatic lesson that children learn is not the words we say, but the substantial example that we demonstrate in the quality of our life. Those of us who claim to have no time for any kind of dharma practice, whether teachings, meditation, or transforming daily actions into dharma, have set for our children the poorest possible example; and unless they rebel, they will waste their own lives as we have encouraged them.

Employment in service, as a nurse, teacher, doctor, or monk, may sometimes substitute for living a truly meaningful life. There is still a karmic benefit: healing others is wholesome. But if the motivation is chiefly to earn a good living, the benefits are limited. We may enjoy the fruit of good health in a future life, for example, or meet with skilled doctors when we are sick ourselves, but meanwhile we remain mentally imbalanced and miserable. There is no substitute for internal spiritual practice.

At the end of the day, when we lie down ready to sleep, then again it is worth taking at least a few moments to look back and examine the events of the day. Remember the original resolve and recognize the occasions when self-centeredness and mental distortions arose and dominated our thoughts and perhaps our physical actions. Guilt has no place in this recognition. (Interestingly, guilt has no translation in Tibetan, although remorse does.) Simply recognize that we have engaged in actions motivated by self-centeredness that bring us harm, squandering the wonderful potential of this human life, damaging ourselves and others. And with that recognition, recall how to counteract the self-centeredness and mental distortion. There is no way to snap our fingers and be free of such unwholesome behavior, but we do know the antidotes. So look to the future and say, "This is something to avoid, for everyone's welfare."

This is not simply a matter of scrutinizing the unwholesome events like a judge. Recognize also the victories, the delights of implementing the spiritual practice, and the times when we acted with real cherishing of others. Look back and rejoice at the acts of service that were not calculated to elicit a reward or even gratitude. These acts are answers to the question of how we can make life meaningful. Recognize occasions of

insight, when we have seen ourselves or others without the reification of an autonomous, intrinsic identity. Rejoice in this cultivation of wisdom, because this also is a way to make life meaningful.

Other commentaries on this verse frequently refer to cultivating the motivation before beginning any endeavor: "May this act as a cause for my full awakening for the benefit of all creatures." In other words, allow the relative bodhicitta to enter and provide the incentive for engaging in that endeavor, which tremendously enriches it. Then, at the conclusion of a wholesome action, or at the end of the day, look back and once again dedicate its merit to full awakening for the benefit of all beings, and to anything else that seems of great worth, such as peace on this planet. We can offer this merit, or spiritual power, and we can keep on offering it: the more we offer, the more we have.

At The Beginning And The End, Two Things To Be Done - JK

At the beginning, as soon as you wake up in the morning, generate very strongly the impetus:

Today, I shall keep the two bodhicittas with me.

During the day, maintain them with continuous mindfulness. At the end, when you go to sleep in the evening, examine your thoughts and actions of the day. If there were infringements of bodhicitta, enumerate the instances and acknowledge them, and make a commitment that such will not occur in the future. If there have been no infringements, meditate joyfully and pray that you and all other beings may be able to engage in bodhicitta even more effectively in the future. Practice these two activities regularly. Take the same approach to any infringements or violations of ordination.

Accept good and bad fortune with an equal mind.

Whichever Of The Opposites Occurs, Be Patient - AW

The polarities referred to in this fourth practice are good fortune and misfortune. When we meet with good fortune, we tend to respond with attachment to the situation. Getting a raise or a promotion, being praised or coming into wealth, all commonly produce a sense of self-inflation. A more beneficial response to good fortune is not allowing our mind to come under the domination of the eight worldly concerns of momentary pleasure and pain, gain and loss, praise and blame, good and bad reputation.

The point is to respond with a greater sense of inner stability and equanimity. Of course, we enjoy the good fortune. Being a Buddhist does not require being a spoil-sport with a glum face. But avoiding attachment, conceit, or a sense of superiority does require patience in the face of good fortune. Patience in this context sounds odd in English, but it entails the same clarity and calmness of mind that helps us to avoid getting flustered in the face of adversity.

Likewise for the opposite polarity. It is easy when we meet with misfortune, poverty, loss of reputation or status in our job, or a calamity such as the loss of a loved one, to lose enthusiasm for dharma in the depths of our disillusionment. But instead of succumbing to despair in the face of adversity, seek to cultivate that inner strength which is really what patience is about: inner courage as ballast for your vessel of life.

Related to this is the tendency to judge our dharma practice superficially, on the basis of external circumstances. When life is treating us well, we feel that dharma is good. We might give it half an hour every day religiously, and think that the job is done because the rest of our waking day is going well. A dharma practitioner should view the pleasures of a good job, a healthy family situation, comfortable living circumstances, and a sound economy, with suitable delight, as we would look at a very pleasant painting balanced upon a structure of match sticks. This is happiness due to pleasant external stimuli, which by and large are beyond our control. A Buddhist response is not in any way to begrudge these mundane pleasures, but at the same time not to use them as a substitute

for dharma practice. This is not so obvious during the good times, but it becomes very apparent maybe a little too late, during the bad times.

Whichever Of The Two Occurs, Be Patient - JK

If you become utterly destitute and are suffering greatly, consider your previous karma. Without being resentful or depressed, take up all the sufferings and evil of others and work hard at ways to clear away evil actions and obscurations. If you find yourself very happy and comfortable, surrounded by great wealth and servants, don't succumb to carelessness or indifference. Use the wealth for virtuous projects, use your power constructively, and pray for all sentient beings to have the same comfort and happiness. In short, whichever occurs, happiness or suffering, be patient.

Keep your vows even at the risk of your life.

Guard The Two At The Cost Of Your Life - AW

The "two" referred to here are, first, any precepts we have taken on ourselves in general in our dharma practice, and second, the specific pledges, precepts, and practices of this Mind Training. Guard these, Geshe Chekawa says, even at the cost of our life. This is a demanding statement, and very earnestly meant. There are some things more precious than one's life. Several lamas have commented to me that there is no value in a long life if it is dominated by unwholesome actions of body, speech, and mind. Obviously, in such a life one is simply polluting one's stream of consciousness, sowing seeds year after year for the repercussions of further suffering and misery. What is it that brings value and benefit to the very core of a life? It is our dharma practice. Rather than sacrifice our spiritual practice, it is better to sacrifice a life.

Observe These Two, Even At The Risk Of Your Life - JK

Since all present and future happiness comes from carefully observing the general precepts of dharma contained in the three ordinations and the particular precepts of mind training with their corresponding commitments, observe both these sets of precepts even at the risk of your life. Moreover, whatever you do, observe them not from a concern and consideration for your own welfare but only with the intention of being helpful to others.

Recognize your neurotic tendencies, overcome them, then transcend them.

Practice The Three Austerities - AW

Austerity refers to something difficult and arduous. What are these three things that are so difficult to do? The first is bearing in mind the antidotes to mental distortions; the second is turning away from the mental distortions; the third is cutting their continuum.

The first austerity is simply to be aware from hour to hour, from moment to moment, of the quality of thoughts that arise in our mind. It is pleasant to savor a mind that is relatively undistorted, with a sense of balance that does not hinge upon external stimuli or even on sucking the conceptual thumb of a pleasant thought. As you become aware, you can ascertain these wholesome states of mind, despite the subtle currents of self-grasping that remain. Then, when this wholesome state becomes distorted, try to remain aware. This takes some practice. The mental distortions that arise may shape themselves as anger or resentment dwelling on some abuse or thoughtlessness received, or as anxiety focused on attachment. Whatever form they take, they disrupt the internal harmony of the mind, its poise and clarity. Recognizing these mental distortions as they arise, recollect their antidotes. Shantideva, especially in the sixth chapter of his Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, offers a whole repertoire of very accessible practices. We need not be saints or profound contemplatives to practice these effective antidotes for specific mental distortions, although they can be difficult.

The easiest thing to do when a mental distortion arises is to ride with it like a hitchhiker. We are sticking our thumb out in a neutral or wholesome state of mind, and then some guy comes along in a black vehicle of mental distortions, picks us up and carries us away. When a mental distortion arises, we naturally identify with it and go with it. The mind is not aware of the mental distortion but is focused instead on the subject of the distortion: the enemy or the thing we are grasping after. This is the conditioning we have to overcome.

The second austerity, after awareness of the antidotes, is to turn away from the mental distortion. Point a finger and say, "Alright anger,

resentment, attachment, jealousy, I see you. I know what you are doing to me and I am not going along for the ride. Your time is up." It may be a crude response, but it is better than riding with it as a passive victim. Recognize the distortion, recall the specific antidote, apply the antidote, and pull out. Like a jet going into a nose dive, it may be hard to pull against the momentum, but with effort it can be done.

The third austerity is cutting the continuum of the mental distortions. This is the hardest of all, but we can start by cultivating a resolve, once we have recognized the mental distortion and turned away from it, not to succumb to this kind of distortion in the future. The final antidote, of course, is direct realization of the nature of ultimate truth. From a Buddhist perspective this is the only effective means for ultimately cutting the mental distortions forever, so that they can never afflict us again. The misconstruing of reality through confusion and ignorance lies at the very root of all other mental distortions. To cut that root we need to saturate the mind with the experience, and not simply the concept, of the nature of ultimate reality.

Learn The Three Difficult Points - JK

At first, it is difficult to recognize disturbing emotions. Then, it is difficult to overcome them. In the end, it is difficult to cut their continuity. Therefore, you should train in these three points. First, recognize disturbing emotions for what they are as soon as they arise. Then, stop them by taking corrective measures. Finally, be decisive in your attitude that such disturbances will never arise again.

Find a teacher, tame the roving mind, choose a lifestyle that allows you to practice.

Acquire The Three Principal Causes - AW

The three principal causes here refer to the causes leading to spiritual growth or awakening. The first cause is developing a relationship with a spiritual mentor who is well trained in practical guidance through a lineage of teachers, and is also endowed with insight.

We can save a lot of time and unnecessary suffering by seeking out the first of the three principal causes, a qualified spiritual mentor. But no guru is a substitute for our own intuitive wisdom. Each of us is endowed with the innate potential for insight that is our Buddha nature, and the external teacher is there to unveil this intuitive wisdom. Keep in mind also that many people who claim to be spiritual teachers or enlightened gurus are unqualified from the Buddhist perspective. Simply be very cautious; we can derive far more benefit by patiently seeking out someone who has true depth and substance.

The second principal cause is devoting ourselves to realization: applying ourselves to gaining realization of such truths expressed in Buddhism as the preciousness of human life, right up to the realization of ultimate truth. Regardless of the quality of our spiritual mentor or the amount of learning we have acquired, none of this will transform our lives unless we apply ourselves to earnest practice.

The third principal cause entails creating favorable circumstances for our dharma practice. Some of these are internal, such as faith, intelligence, and enthusiasm. Each of these internal conditions necessary for a beneficial practice is malleable. We are not simply given a fixed amount of intelligence, for example. Intelligence is flexible. It diminishes if not used or if used in a stupid fashion, and it can also be enhanced. The monastic universities of Tibet spent two to three years training the students' intelligence before applying the intelligence to such things as the Perfection of Wisdom teachings, logic, epistemology, ontology, ethics, phenomenology, and so forth. Like intelligence, faith certainly is a prerequisite for any kind of major endeavor, whether in business, philosophy, science, or dharma. If you don't have faith in what you are

doing, you're not going to get anywhere. The same is true of enthusiasm. In addition to these necessary internal conditions for a fruitful dharma practice, there are, of course, the external situations. Without sufficient food, clothing, and shelter, for example, we cannot proceed.

If, on reviewing our present situation, we find that we are already endowed with the three principal causes, then rejoice. If we do not have the three, then we should certainly seek to acquire them. But in the meantime we can again transform the unfavorable situation, as we have done before, by recollecting how so many sentient beings are also bereft of these three principal causes. Cultivate compassion for them by taking their misfortune into your heart. Practice the taking and the sending, offering your own merit with the prayer: "May each sentient being be endowed with the necessary causes for his or her spiritual growth and happiness."

Take Up The Three Primary Resources - JK

The primary resources for working at dharma are a good guru, the proper practice of dharma with a workable mind, and suitable conditions for dharma practice - food, clothing, and so on. If these three are all available to you, take joy in that and pray that they be available to others, too. If they are not all available, meditate on compassion for others and take on yourself the deficiencies that all sentient beings experience in these primary resources. Pray that you and all others may have them.

Love your teacher, enjoy your practice, keep your vows.

Cultivate The Absence Of Three Degenerations - AW

This concerns the three elements of spiritual practice that can degenerate, and how to prevent them from doing so. The first is the faith in one's spiritual mentor. Sechibuwa writes that all virtue on the Mahayana path depends on such faith and reverence. In the Bodhisattva aspect of the practice, this is achieved by looking upon the spiritual mentor as if he or she were a fully awakened Buddha. The purpose of this reverence is a quality of awareness that is extremely fertile for wholesome change, realization, and enthusiasm. Some texts even say that faith is the mother of all realizations.

The second element is not allowing our enthusiasm for the Mind Training to wane. Enthusiasm is indispensable to a fruitful spiritual practice. If the practice simply becomes a grind that we perform out of a sense of responsibility, it is not likely to last long or produce much good fruit.

The third element is not allowing our sense of conscience with respect to these practices to degenerate. Conscience here implies an inwardly directed alertness. If I do something in the privacy of my own room that is incompatible with dharma, I feel it. Insofar as we can maintain this quality of awareness when we engage in inappropriate actions of body, speech, or mind, this inner attentiveness responds quickly, saying, "This is an indulgence I don't want to pursue."

The counterpart to conscience is regard for others. If we demonstrate some crude behavior in the company of others, then our awareness steps in to remind us that this is not how we want to demonstrate our life to the world; this behavior is incompatible with our ideals. Although the awareness is publicly oriented, the bottom line is our own principles. Do not confuse this with getting hung up on what other people think. If I spend time in meditation, will they think I am a flake? If I pick up a caterpillar off the sidewalk and put it in a safe place, will they think I am strange? Such consideration for the opinion of others is misguided because in fact these actions are wholesome.

Don't Allow Three Things To Weaken - JK

Learn not to let these three things weaken. Faith and respect for your guru must not weaken since all the fine qualities of Mahayana dharma depend on him. Enthusiasm for meditation on mind training must not weaken since mind training is the very core of the Mahayana. Observation of the precepts of the three ordinations must not weaken either.

Focus your body, mind, and spirit on the path.

Be Endowed With The Three Inseparables - AW

The inseparables are three things from which we should not be separated: spiritual practice in body, speech, and mind. As examples of spiritual practice in body, the text mentions service to one's spiritual mentor, offerings to the Triple Gem, and devotional practices such as Circumambulation around sacred reliquaries. We can elaborate on these to include any type of physical service or wholesome action that is chiefly of the body.

Verbal spiritual practice consists of reciting the verses of taking refuge or praying for the benefit of the world, and includes any type of wholesome speech. A word of kindness is verbal spiritual action. Thirdly, spiritual practice of the mind focuses especially on the cultivation of relative and ultimate bodhicitta.

It is important to understand the meaning of spiritual practice broadly, and not confine it to sitting cross-legged in meditation, or reciting verses, or doing prostrations. In an active working life, it is truly possible to have our spiritual practice permeate many activities that would otherwise be totally mundane. The crucial point here is the wholesome motivation for these actions. If during daily life we maintain an attentiveness to the practices we have adopted, this itself becomes spiritual practice.

It is important also not to ritualize our practice too much. Formality sets up an unnecessary dichotomy between spiritual practice and daily life. Guilt is unnecessary, and there is no need for internal conflict between dharma practice and the enjoyment of having friends over for an evening, going for a vacation, or a walk in the park. By telling ourselves, "If I were really a dharma practitioner, I would not go skiing," we set up internal strife. It is far more fruitful to integrate our spiritual practice with our daily life. Eventually, through the natural process of transforming our minds, we may find ourselves less inclined to turn for our enjoyment to areas that most people find necessary, or at least attractive. Allowing this process to unfold naturally avoids a lot of unnecessary painful struggle.

Make The Three Inseparable - JK

Make the three faculties-body, speech, and mind -always inseparable from virtuous actions, and refrain from evil.

Exclude nothing from your acceptance practice: train with a whole heart.

Train In All Areas Without Partiality. Overall Deep And Pervasive Proficiency Is Important - JK

Without partiality for certain areas, mind training by itself should pervade everything, good or bad, which arises as an object of experience: other sentient beings, the four elements, or nonhuman beings. Deeply trained proficiency, not just lip service, is important.

Always meditate on whatever you resent.

Always Meditate On Those Who Make You Boil - AW

The text of the tenth practice is obscure. In trying to make sense of the Tibetan, I remember a comment Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey made while teaching a classical text by Atisha. He said that a very learned lama would be able to give ten or fifteen justifiable interpretations of the same text, depending on the person whom he was teaching. It is helpful to keep in mind that there may not be just one meaning intended here; the challenge for practitioners, including teachers, is to draw as much meaning from it as possible.

One interpretation, suggested in the commentary and very rich in meaning, is continually to meditate on people with whom we come into frequent and intimate contact. We tend to let our dharma practice slide a bit with people we see constantly, whereas we practice much more earnestly with strangers or in other contexts. Sechibuwa encourages us here to pay special attention to people who may be resentful towards us. The work place provides clear examples, where people we meet all the time may be competing with us in the eyes of our employer. Hold these people especially in mind in the context of practice.

Sechibuwa provides three other examples in a different vein: our spiritual mentor, our parents, and Bodhisattvas. Concerning beings such as these, he says, any evil we do them has very severe karmic results. For this reason, we owe a special conscientiousness toward these beings.

Always Meditate On Volatile Points - JK

Meditate by skillfully bringing out extra love and compassion for subjects that present difficulties in mind training: aggressive enemies, troublesome obstacles, particularly those who act perversely and respond to your help by making trouble, people who compete with you, casual friends, people who are troublesome even though there is no bad feeling, or those with whom you just don't get along. In particular, avoid anything that will cause trouble with people with whom you have a close relationship-your guru or your parents, for instance.

Don't depend on how the rest of the world is.

Do Not Rely On Other Conditions - AW

The eleventh practice is especially rich. The commentator points out that we may need very specific conditions or external circumstances for other dharma practices. A paradigmatic example is the cultivation of meditative quiescence. Living in downtown New York, in an apartment full of kids and traffic noise, it is very, very hard to develop meditative quiescence. If we are living an active life, or in poor health, or very discouraged, it is difficult to reach meditative quiescence. Many causes and conditions, internal and external, must be brought together in order effectively to develop mental stabilization, and this is true of other practices as well.

But not the Mind Training. This practice comes into its own under precisely such unfavorable conditions. The point, of course, is the transformation of unfavorable circumstances into the path, so that they become aids to our spiritual practice. We don't need to save up our money for a one-year retreat to do the Mind Training. We don't need a special retreat facility. We don't need a teacher on hand at all times. We don't even need good health, let alone abundant food, lovely surroundings, and companions. All these things help, but we can implement the Mind Training in the broadest spectrum of circumstances, without waiting. There is no ground for procrastination in this practice, no way to ever say, "I really want to practice Mind Training, but first of all I have to. . . ." All circumstances nurture this practice.

Don't Depend On External Conditions - JK

Have no regard for conducive or adverse conditions, strong or weak health, wealth or poverty, good or bad reputation, troubles or absence of troubles. If conducive conditions come about, train the mind right then. If conducive conditions are not present, then work on the two bodhicittas right then. In a word, don't be concerned with your situation or other factors; never let go of your practice of mind training.

In this life, concentrate on achieving what is most meaningful.

Now Practice What Is Most Important - AW

According to Buddhist understanding, our streams of consciousness have no beginning. We have had previous lives, and lives still previous to those. In many lifetimes we were not even human beings, and many of our human lifetimes were not conducive to spiritual practice. We lacked spiritual teachers, or inclination, or opportunity. We made a living, or we died prematurely, or whatever: we just got by. We could not devote ourselves to eradicating the true sources of suffering and cultivating awakening. Now, in this present lifetime, we have the extremely rare circumstance of a fully endowed human life. It is within our reach to attain full awakening, and whatever we neglect to do in terms of spiritual growth in this lifetime is not because of lack of opportunity but simply because of an inadequacy from our own side.

So now Geshe Chekawa encourages us to practice what is most important. Having encountered something of unutterable value, it would be a staggering loss to shunt it aside and devote our lives to other things as if we had not found such an opportunity. Rather than simply devoting ourselves to mundane happiness that ripens only in this lifetime, let us take into account our well the future lives we are now creating.

The author encourages us to emphasize practice, above all the cultivation of bodhicitta, rather than book learning. As a contemplative himself, he recommends meditation as the most important of all the many ways of cultivating bodhicitta. Finally, rather than relying chiefly on textual information, he encourages us to look to the quintessential guidance of our spiritual mentor.

He makes another point also. Instead of abandoning a certain region as an unsuitable place for practice and going somewhere else, we should apply the antidotes for our own mental distortions wherever we find ourselves. Inner practice is far more important than the outer environment. Having said this in this beautiful region of the eastern Sierras, I would add that where a choice exists, choose the environment that is most conducive to practice.

This Time, Practice The Important Points - JK

From time without beginning, you have taken existence in innumerable forms, in all of which nothing meaningful has been done. A similar coincidence of the conducive conditions in this life will not come about in the future. Now that you have obtained a human existence and met the pure dharma, you should put the main points into practice in order to realize objectives of permanent significance. So aims for future lives are more important than aims for this life. For the future, freedom is more important than samsara. The welfare of others is more important than your own. Of practicing and teaching the dharma, practicing is the more important. Training in bodhicitta is more important than other practices. Further, intensive meditation on your guru's instructions is more important than analytical meditation based on texts. Sitting on your mat and training are more important than other forms of activity.

Don't let your emotions distract you, but bring them to your practice.

Do Not Be Contrary - AW

Sechibuwa gives six examples of different types of contrariness to be avoided.

The first is contrary patience, where we have no patience for any type of discomfort or frustration that comes in the course of our dharma practice, but plenty of grit and forbearance for protecting our friends and putting down enemies.

The second example is contrary aspiration: not aspiring to purify the unwholesome imprints from our mind stream, or to collect merit, or to cultivate wisdom, or to transform the mind and heart, but instead aspiring for the so-called bounties of samsara, totally mundane pleasures that are fleeting and essentially unsatisfactory.

The third is contrary experience, where we seek a wide variety of experiences of a totally mundane nature, but do not seek deeper experience in the spiritual domain.

The fourth is contrary compassion, where we feel no sympathy for those who are dominated by the inner sources of suffering, but instead pity those who encounter hardships in their dharma practice. To put this in context, consider the case of a yogi who has lived in a cave above Dharamsala in northern India for years, practicing very earnestly and with perseverance. When he visited Massachusetts recently, he shared with us some of the experiences he had gone through. He mentioned that for six years in the mountains he had suffered one hardship after another. Hearing this we might be tempted to think, "This poor fellow, living on a bag of rice and beans all year, snowed into a cave for the winter with very poor clothing, and on top of all this, tormented by malignant spirits. If he could only enjoy life like us." But the yogi told us also that after six years he experienced a number of breakthroughs and, as a result, he is now in a continuous state of inexpressible well-being. He had meditated so deeply, he said, that there is virtually no distinction now between his meditation and his post-meditation period.

As long as there are so many beings in the world who are suffering and who, as Shantideva says, are chasing the sources of suffering while destroying the sources of their own happiness, then our compassion is misplaced when we pity a meditator who encounters difficulties while striving to rend the fabric of samsara. Rather let the compassion go to those beings who are not devoting themselves to effective means to fulfill their own aspirations.

The fifth example of contrariness is contrary concern: concerning ourselves not with dharma practice, but simply with the acquisition of wealth, the protection of loved ones, overcoming our enemies-the affairs of this life that are significant for a day or a year, but have utterly no significance beyond the context of this lifetime.

The final example of contrariness is contrary rejoicing. Instead of rejoicing in the wholesome deeds of other sentient beings, and the virtue of fully enlightened beings, we rejoice in the misfortune that comes to our enemies.

Don't Make Mistakes - JK

Avoid six mistakes.

- To endure patiently the suffering of subduing enemies, protecting friends, and working to make money and not to endure patiently the difficulties of dharma practice is mistaken patience.
- To want wealth, happiness, and comfort in this life and to have no inclination to practice dharma thoroughly is mistaken inclination.
- To enjoy the taste of wealth and possessions and not to enjoy the taste of hearing, reflection, and meditation on the dharma is mistaken enjoyment.
- To have compassion for a person who puts up with hardship in order to practice dharma and not to have compassion for those who do evil is mistaken compassion.
- To engage people who look to you in bettering only their position in this life and not to engage them in dharma is mistaken care.
- To take joy in other people's unhappiness and in the sufferings of your enemies and not to take joy in virtue and happiness in nirvana or samsara is mistaken joy.

Avoid these six mistakes completely.

Don't let your practice become irregular.**Do Not Be Erratic - AW**

We may practice the Mind Training enthusiastically for a few weeks or months, and then find that we have not yet attained bodhicitta. Feeling that it is not working, we shift to some other kind of practice. When this fails to give us the satisfaction we are looking for, we turn to yet another technique. After doing that for a while, we are dissatisfied and once again give the Mind Training a whirl. After carrying on like this for a while we say, "Fiddlesticks, none of that stuff works; let's go to a movie and forget about the whole business." This type of erratic discontinuity of practice is ineffective. We may give it a lot of effort, but it yields little benefit. This erratic quality can be especially a problem for Western dharma practitioners: how earnest we can be, and how totally erratic as well! A Tibetan lama once commented that Western dharma practice is often like taking a shower, then going out all spice and span to roll in some mud, then recognizing how filthy we are, going back into the shower, then going out to roll in the mud again.... A lot of time and effort is expended with very little to show for it.

We may have a fantastic technique, and practice with gusto when we are in a conducive environment such as a meditation course. But if technique is all we have, our practice falls like a house of cards as soon as that supportive environment is missing. What can provide the continuous incentive for maintaining a dharma practice that is not erratic? More understanding. When dharma begins to saturate the way we view the world, our attitudes and values, it naturally provides an ongoing impetus for us to apply the techniques we have learned. This wealth of theoretical background for practice is one of the great strong points of Tibetan Buddhism.

Don't Fluctuate - JK

A person who sometimes practices and sometimes doesn't has not developed a definite understanding of dharma. Don't have a lot of projects on your mind, but do mind training single-mindedly.

Train wholeheartedly.**Practice Decisively - AW**

Before we engage in a practice, we should first of all consider whether we are up to it. Have we fulfilled any necessary prerequisites? Looking at the four preliminaries mentioned at the outset of this Mind Training, for example, we should examine whether we have some foundation there. If not, and if we aspire to this path, then we should work to become familiar with the preliminaries. After this foundation is established, reappraise the practice again. See whether it continues to hold promise, whether it could be effective in bringing about some transformation in our life. Only with this necessary preparation should we begin the practice, and then go into it full-mindedly and with whole heart. With this decisiveness we can carry through patiently and with courage for the long term, and spare ourselves from withdrawing halfway through, thinking we are not really up to this.

Train Wholeheartedly - JK

Without indulging any distraction, train yourself only in mind training, being completely involved with this one concern.

Free yourself by first watching, then analysing.**Free Yourself By Means Of Investigation And Analysis - AW**

In this sixteenth practice we are told to investigate and identify our most predominant mental distortion. Are we angry or aggressive? Do we tend to have a lot of attachment, or anxiety, or confusion, or perhaps sheer ignorance? Are jealousy or selfishness major problems? The task is to identify our major source of mental affliction.

The author then directs us to seek out the objects that trigger this mental distortion. Having done so, the opportunity to liberate ourselves from this affliction becomes fertile. When we find ourselves in the type of situation that stimulates our predominant mental distortion, we can be especially aware and very much in the present. We can come like a warrior onto the battle ground, prepared to apply all of our dharma wisdom to the attenuation and eventual eradication of that mental distortion. If the external situation is overwhelming, and our mental distortions will inevitably overpower our antidotes, it is better to withdraw than to be conquered. If defeat cannot be avoided, then avoid that situation.

Find Freedom Through Both Examination And Investigation - JK

You must find freedom from disturbing emotions and ego-clinging by constantly examining and investigating your course of experience. Therefore, turn your attention to an object that gives rise to disturbing emotions. Examine carefully whether they arise or not. If they do arise, apply remedies vigorously. Again, look at ego-clinging to see what it is like. If it appears that no ego-clinging is present, examine it again in reference to an object of attachment or aversion. If ego-cherishing then arises, immediately stop it with the remedy of exchanging yourself for others.

Don't feel sorry for yourself.

Do Not Be Boastful - AW

The examples that illustrate this seventeenth practice focus on drawing attention to our practice. We may point out some great kindness we have shown to others, of which they may have been unaware. Or we describe how our practice is going so well, the amazing insights we have reached during a retreat, how austere we have been, sleeping just three hours a night.... Even if we are accurate, this exaltation of our own greatness is not a sign of mental maturity, but instead pollutes our spiritual practice. Rather than serving as an antidote to mental distortions, this actually feeds our egotism and our sense of superior self-importance.

Don't Make A Fuss - JK

Don't make a big fuss even when you are kind to another person, because you are, in fact, just working at regarding others as more important than yourself. Since all the time and hardship you put into being well educated, moral, and practicing the dharma benefit you, there is no point in making a fuss about it to others. Don't trade boasts with others. In the counsels of Ra-treng, it says: "Don't expect much of people; pray to your yidam."

Don't be jealous

Do Not Bind Yourself With Hatred - AW

An alternative translation of this eighteenth practice is "Do not retaliate." When someone is insulting, hostile, or just thoughtless to us, this practice entails not retaliating, neither manifestly in actions of body or speech, nor even with our minds. As Shantideva says, there is no greater austerity than patience. A dharma practice certainly should be focused on developing this inner fortitude; insofar as we can bear the brunt of others' hostility and aggression, our dharma practice is acting as an antidote for our self-grasping. Anything that helps us to measure the present level of our self-grasping is to our benefit, and one such measure consists in noting how easily we are insulted. Being easily affronted by others' hostility indicates a strong sense of self-grasping, that surfaces as self-importance or indignation. When a vicious word produces just the slightest flutter but no contorted fist in our hearts, it is a very good sign indeed.

Don't Be Caught Up In Irritations

Don't take a jealous attitude toward others. When others disparage you in public or cause trouble for you, don't react or let your mind and feelings be disturbed. Potowa said:

Because all of us, though we are dharma persons, have not made dharma a remedy for ego-clinging, we are more sensitive than a newly healed wound. We are more caught up by irritations than Tsang-tsen. This is not effective dharma. Dharma, to be effective, must remedy ego-clinging.

Stay focused.**Do Not Be Fickle - AW**

This nineteenth practice does not need much commentary. It especially concerns our relationship with other people. Presenting ourselves to others as a trustworthy friend and then letting them down is being fickle. And being fickle is incompatible with the aspiration of entering into the Bodhisattva's way of life.

Don't Be Temperamental - JK

Don't trouble the minds of your companions by showing your pleasure or displeasure on every little matter.

Don't expect any applause.**Do Not Desire Gratitude - AW**

The final practice is also self-explanatory. When we render a service to others we may not hope for a reward as gross as money, or a favor in return, or a state of indebtedness; but we may still linger after the deed is done, as if we have one thread attached, wanting some acknowledgment, some show of gratitude. This is hardly a malignant attitude, and it certainly is very human. But we can do even better. Let the act of kindness be so pure that we derive full satisfaction from the engagement of the deed. And not just eighty percent satisfaction with twenty percent lingering in hopes of gratitude! Pure service simply reaches out without expecting return.

Don't Expect Thanks - JK

Don't hope that others will express their gratitude in words of thanks for your own practice of dharma, your helping others, or your practicing virtue. In a word, get rid of any expectation of fame or prestige.

All these points of advice are means that will strengthen mind training and prevent it from weakening. In summary, Gyal-se Rinpoche said:

Throughout our lives we should train well in the two kinds of bodhicitta, using both meditation and post-meditation practices, and acquire the confidence of proficiency.

Make an effort to follow this instruction.

Conclusion

“By the merit of this heart-felt aspiration to practice the Seven Point Mind Training, essence of the minds of the peerless Lord and his disciples, may all beings accomplish enlightenment!”

-- Atisha

CONCLUSION:

**Before practicing I examined my expanding actions;
(then) because of many of my wishes,
having undergone suffering, insults and criticism,
I requested the instruction for taming self-grasping.
Now if I die, I have no regrets.**

-- Geshe Chekawa

**Translated by Brian Beresford for Wisdom Publications,
London.**

Enjoy the necessary training to become virtuous. Be happy to practice virtuous actions. Be happy about the need to create conditions that favors the accomplishment of virtuous actions. You now know how to use this precious human existence, so don't think that life has no meaning.

In brief, the substance of the practice of mind training is to rejoice each time that something beneficial for another being is accomplished or fulfilled, and to feel sadness when someone abandons that which is beneficial to him.

These explanations are a condensed version on the practice of mind training. More elaborate commentaries exist, but this is the essence. Whether or not you obtain the fruit does not depend on a more detailed explanation but on the practice that you do.

-- HH Shamar Rinpoche

Verses on Lojong

Atisha

Seven Point Mind Training Prayer, Atisha

I bow to the Spiritual Friends of the Supreme Vehicle,
Source of everything good in Samsara and Nirvana.
By the gracious Lama's blessings, may my mind be purified
with the three kinds of faith.

By the gracious Lama's blessings, knowing how hard to
obtain and how easily destroyed is this precious human life.
In all my actions according to their karmic effect, may I try to
do what is right and avoid what is wrong and develop a
genuine determination to be free from Samsara, as I train in
the preliminaries (1).

By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I purify the untruth of
duality into the space of voidness and practice the profound
exchange of my own and others' happiness and suffering,
meditating continually on the two aspects of Bodhicitta (2).

By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I see whatever
adverse events and sufferings (3) befall me as tricks of the
evil spirit of ego clinging and use them as the path of
Bodhicitta.

By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I condense my
lifetime's practice (4) into a single essence. By applying
throughout my life the five powers of pure determination, pure
practice, accumulation of merit, purification of obscurations,
and prayers of aspiration.

By the gracious Lama's blessings, when everything arises as
the antidote to ego clinging and my mind finds freedom with
happiness and confidence, may I take all adverse
circumstances as the path (measure of success: 5).

By the gracious Lama's blessings, may I keep my promises,
be free of hypocrisy, have no partiality, and little outward
show. Protecting the commitments (6) of the mind training as I
would my own life.

In essence, by the gracious Lama's blessings, may I genuinely
train my mind according to all the precepts (7) which further
the two aspects of Bodhicitta and attain realization of the
Supreme Vehicle within this very lifetime.

By the merit of this heart-felt aspiration to practice the Seven
Point Mind Training, essence of the minds of the peerless
Lord and his disciples, may all beings accomplish
enlightenment!



<http://www.rinpoche.com/svnpnts.html>

Praise of Arya Tara

Homage to the Venerable Arya Tara!

1. Gods and asuras with their crowns bow down to
Your lotus feet;
Liberator from all problems,
[Mother] Tara - homage to You!
2. On those Avici's fire torments, filling them with a blazing net,
Your compassion rains down nectar -
Tara, further homage to You!
3. To those tired of clinging long, again and again, among the six
Destinies, You grant the rest, supremely pleasant, of Great Bliss.
4. Goddess who works the weal of others!
Just to think of You dispels problems!
You, endowed with love and compassion, liberate from samsara's bonds.
5. Goddess who at all times is impartial towards sentient beings,
On the whole crop of migrators
You rain incessantly - homage to You!
6. Like the sun and moon, dispeller of distress of darkness for
All migrating sentient beings,
Supreme Goddess - homage to You!
7. On a lotus and moon seat
Immaculate as an utpala,
Your body blue-green coloured, graceful,
You hold an utpala - homage to You!
8. Three countless eons You've gather Merits and Wisdom,
Cast off all the hindering obscurations,
And with the four Means of Attraction attracted migrators,
O compassionate Mother - homage to You!
9. Bodily faults gone, You have the Marks and Signs;

Faults of speech gone, like kalavinka's strains;
Faults of mind gone, You know all knowable things.
Blaze of fortune and glory - homage to You!

10. Like the water-cleaning gem,
Goddess, You forever clear
The mud of sentient beings' mind and strive for their welfare - homage to
You!

11. Those who do retain Your name, praise You, and do practice You,
Always do You make fruitful,
Unforgetful One - homage to You!

Geshe Chekawa

The Seven Point Thought Transformation, Geshe Chekawa

Om Svasti: Homage to great compassion.
The essence of this nectar of advice is in continuity from Serlingpa.

1.
First train in all the preliminary practices.
2.
Having gained stability, receive the secret (teaching).
Consider all phenomena as a dream.
Examine the nature of unborn awareness.
The remedy itself is released in its own place.
Place (your meditation) on the nature of the foundation of all:
the essence (of the path).
In the meditation break be a creator of illusion.
It is like a diamond, the sun and the healing tree.
When the five degenerations flourish, transform them into the
path to full awakening.
Banish the one object of every blame.
Meditate on the great kindness of all.
Practice a combination of both giving and taking.
Commence taking progressively from your own side.
Place these two astride the breath.
There are three objects, three poisons, and three sources of
virtue.
Remember this by repeated recollection.
Practice every activity by these words.

3.
When the container and its contents are filled with evil,
change this adverse circumstance into the path to full
awakening.
Utilize every immediate circumstance for meditation.
Possess the four preparations, the highest of means.
4.
Gather together the abridged quintessence of this advice.
Blend the practice of one life with the five forces.
The instruction for the great vehicle transmigration of
consciousness is to apply those very five forces, lying in the
perfect position.
All dharma collects into one intention.
Retain the two witnesses of foremost importance.
Work with the Five Forces. The Five Forces are:
Be intense, be committed.
Familiarization - get used to doing and being what you want to
do and to be.
Cultivate the white seeds, not the black ones.
Turn totally away from all your ego trips.
Dedicate all the merits of what you do for the benefit of others.
Practice these Five Forces and you are ready for death at any
moment.
5.
One is always accompanied by only joyful thoughts.
A reversed attitude indicates a transformation.
One is trained if one is capable, although distracted.

6.

Always practice the three general points.
Change your attitude while remaining natural.
Speak not of the shortcomings of others.
Think not about whatever is seen in others.
Purify first whichever affliction is heaviest.
Give up all hope of reward.
Abandon poisonous food.
Do not serve the central object leniently.
Be indifferent towards malicious jokes.
Do not lie in ambush.
Never strike at the heart.
Do not load an ox with the load of a dzo.
Do not compete by a last-minute sprint.
Do not be treacherous.
Do not bring a god down to a devil.
Do not inflict misery for possession of happiness.

7.

Practice all yogas (or activities) by one.
Practice every suppression of interference by one.
There are two duties: at the beginning and the end.
Endure whichever situation arises, either (good or bad).
Guard both points more preciously than your life.
Practice the three hardships.
Attain the three principal causes.
Meditate on the three undeclining attitudes.
Possess the three inseparables.
Always practice with pure impartiality on all objects.
Cherish the in-depth and broad application of all skills.
Always meditate on those closely related.
Depend not upon other circumstances.
Exert yourself, especially at this time.
Do not follow inverted deeds.
Do not be erratic.
Do not underestimate your ability.
Be liberated by two: examination and analysis.
Do not be boastful.
Do not retaliate.
Do not be fickle.
Do not wish for gratitude.

Before practicing I examined my expanding actions;
(then) because of many of my wishes,
having undergone suffering, insults and criticism,
I requested the instruction for taming self-grasping.
Now if I die, I have no regrets.

Translated by Brian Beresford for Wisdom Publications,
London.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Ithaca/4886/7point.htm>

L'entraînement de l'Esprit en Sept Points de Guéché Tchékawa

LA LIGNÉE DE L'ENTRAÎNEMENT DE L'ESPRIT

Hommage à la grande compassion.
Ces instructions, comparables à l'essence d'ambroisie,
Nous ont été transmises par Serlingpa.

Elles sont comme un diamant, comme le soleil, comme un
arbre médicinal.

Le sens de ce texte doit être bien compris.
Les cinq impuretés de nos temps
Deviendront alors la voie de l'éveil.

* * *

1. LES PRATIQUES PRÉLIMINAIRES DE L'ENTRAÎNEMENT DE L'ESPRIT

D'abord apprenez les préliminaires.

* * *

2. LA PRATIQUE PRINCIPALE

A. LA CULTURE DE LA BODHITCHITTA ORDINAIRE

a) Méditation sur la mise à égalité de soi et d'autrui

Tout d'abord, je dois m'efforcer de méditer
Sur la mise à égalité de moi-même et d'autrui.
je dois veiller sur tous les êtres vivants comme sur moi-même
Car, identiquement, nous souhaitons le plaisir
Et répugnons à souffrir.

b) Contemplation des inconvénients de l'auto-préoccupation

Accusez un seul de tout.

c) Contemplation des avantages de l'amour d'autrui

Méditez sur la grande bonté de tous.

d) Méditation sur l'échange de soi contre autrui

e) Méditation sur la prise et le don

**Entraînez-vous alternativement à donner et à prendre.
Commencez par prendre de votre côté.
Montez les deux sur la respiration.**

f) Méditation sur la bodhitchitta

Pratique entre les périodes de méditation

**Les trois objets, les trois poisons et les trois racines du bien
Sont, en bref, les instructions conduisant aux réalisations qui
suivent.**

Pour vous souvenir de cela

Entraînez-vous dans chaque activité à l'aide de mots.

B. LA CULTURE DE LA BODHITCHITTA ULTIME

Révélez le secret à celui qui est bien établi.

Considérez tous les phénomènes comme des rêves.

Analysez la nature non née de la cognition.

L'adversaire lui-même est sans réalité propre.

Placez la voie même sur la base de tout.

**Entre méditations, considérez tous les phénomènes comme
illusoires**

* * *

3. FAIRE DE L'ADVERSITÉ LA VOIE DE L'ÉVEIL TOTAL

a) EN ADOPTANT UNE CERTAINE FAÇON DE PENSER

Lorsque contenant et contenu sont pleins de mal,

**Faites de l'adversité la voie de l'éveil.
Appliquez la méditation à toutes les circonstances de la vie.**

b) AU MOYEN DES PRÉPARATIONS

L'application des quatre préparations est la méthode suprême.

* * *

4. COMMENT INTÉGRER TOUTES NOS PRATIQUES QUOTIDIENNES

**Ces brèves instructions essentielles
Sont à appliquer avec les cinq forces.
Les cinq forces sont la pratique la plus importante
Des instructions sur le transfert dans le Mahayana.**

* * *

5. COMMENT MESURER L'EFFICACITÉ DE L'ENTRAÎNEMENT DE L'ESPRIT

**Tout le Dharma n'a qu'un seul objet.
Tenez-vous en au principal des deux témoins.
Faites confiance toujours et uniquement à l'esprit heureux.
L'esprit entraîné se reconnaît au retournement.
Celui qui est entraîné possède les cinq grandeurs.
Celui qui es entraîné peut pratiquer même dans les distractions.**

* * *

6. LES 18 ENGAGEMENTS DE L'ENTRAÎNEMENT DE L'ESPRIT

Observez toujours, dans l'entraînement, les trois points généraux.

- Ne permettez pas à votre entraînement de l'esprit de causer des comportements mal avisés.

**- Ne permettez pas à l'entraînement de l'esprit d'aller à l'encontre de vos vœux.
- Ne pratiquez pas l'entraînement de l'esprit avec partialité.
Restez naturel tandis que changent vos aspirations.
Ne parlez pas d'infirmités.
Ne pensez jamais aux défauts d'autrui.
Purifiez en premier lieu votre plus forte perturbation mentale.
Abandonnez tout espoir de résultats.
Renoncez aux nourritures empoisonnées.
Ne cédez pas aux perturbations mentales.
Ne répondez pas aux insultes.
Ne posez pas de traquenards.
N'offensez pas autrui.
Ne chargez pas autrui de vos défauts et fardeaux.
Ne faites pas mauvais usage du Dharma.
Ne cherchez pas à arriver le premier pour prendre la meilleure part.
Ne faites pas un démon d'un dieu.
Ne cherchez pas le bonheur au prix du malheur des autres**

* * *

7. LES 22 PRÉCEPTES DE L'ENTRAÎNEMENT DE L'ESPRIT

**Accomplissez tous vos yogas dans une seule intention.
Remédiez à toutes les interférences de la même façon.
Il y a deux activités : la première et la dernière.
Acceptez l'un et l'autre comme ils se présentent.
Préservez les deux comme votre vie.
Entraînez-vous aux trois difficultés.
Cultivez les trois causes principales.
Apprenez à connaître les trois-dégénération.
Possédez les trois inséparables.
Entraînez-vous sans partialité à l'égard des objets.
Il est important de s'entraîner profondément et de tout embrasser.
Méditez toujours sur les cas particuliers.
Ne dépendez pas d'autres conditions.
Appliquez la pratique principale maintenant.**

**N'interprétez pas à tort.
Appliquez-vous régulièrement.
Entraînez-vous avec certitude.
Soyez libéré par ces deux : l'investigation et l'analyse.
Ne vous vantez pas.
Ne vous laissez pas aller à la colère.
Ne soyez pas instable.
Ne cherchez pas la gratitude.**

* * *

CONCLUSION

**A cause de mes nombreux souhaits,
Ayant toléré souffrance et mauvaises réputations,
J'ai reçu les instructions sur la maîtrise de la saisie d'un soi
Maintenant, si je meurs, je n'aurai pas de regrets.**

http://www.tharpa.org/Livres_2.html#cu



Geshe Langri Tangpa

The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation (lojong) by Geshe Langri Tangpa

Each of the eight verses of this thought-transformation text highlights a different way in which we can transform our thoughts from being uncompassionate and self-centered, to being more compassionate and concerned about others. This is because the main obstacle to developing compassion is self-centeredness, also called "the self-cherishing attitude". We can overcome selfishness and become more caring and compassionate. It is just a question of gradually training our mind, learning to transform our thoughts so that we are less concerned with me - what I want, what I need, what makes me happy -- and more concerned about others -- what they want and need, what makes them happy.

1. The Preciousness Of All Living Beings

Determined to accomplish all success, I shall always **practice holding dear all sentient beings**, who are **more precious than wish-fulfilling gems**. (from HHDL article)

or:

With the thought of attaining enlightenment
For the welfare of all beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I will constantly practice holding them dear. (from Amitbha Buddhist Center)

So one way in which other sentient beings are **precious** is that **they enable us to create the merit we need** to experience happiness in our present and future lives. Another way sentient beings are precious to us is that they provide us with our needs. But the main reason other beings are precious is that **without them we would not be able to attain enlightenment**. To achieve this wonderful happiness of a Buddha, we need to develop positive states of mind, such as loving-kindness, compassion, generosity and patience. And to develop these qualities, we need other people, other living beings. So other sentient beings are extremely precious. **When we realize how precious others are, we practice "holding them dear", which means respecting them, cherishing them, caring for them, avoiding giving them any kind of harm and doing what we can to help them.**

2. Developing Humility And Respect

Wherever I go and whomever I accompany I shall practice seeing myself as the lowest of all and sincerely hold others dear and supreme.

or:

Whenever I am with others
I will practice seeing myself as the lowest of all,
And from the very depth of my heart
I will respectfully hold others as supreme.

Here, in the second verse, we go a step farther and try to see them as more important than ourselves. What it means is that we **need to overcome pride**. Pride and self-importance cause us to look down on others and even to disregard or mistreat them. This is a hindrance to our spiritual development. ... this does no good at all, and in fact only causes problems ... Since pride is not helpful and brings only problems, we need to put effort into **developing its antidotes of humility and respect for others**. One way of doing this is to **train ourselves to see the good qualities of others, rather than their faults**. That is what this verse is all about. It is not telling us to put ourselves down, but rather to stop putting others down and ourselves up. Instead of focusing on our own qualities and on other people's faults and mistakes, we should direct our attention to our own faults and focus on the good qualities of others. **If we take this verse to heart and practice it, we will become more humble, more respectful towards others and less critical**. As a result, our mind will be more happy, less negative, and our relationships with others will improve.

3. Cultivating Mindfulness

In all actions I shall examine my mind, and the moment an unsubdued thought arises, endangering myself and others, I shall face and avert it.

or:

In all actions I will examine my mind
And the moment a disturbing attitude arises,
Endangering myself and others,
I will firmly confront and avert it.

When we are mindful, it is easier to see disturbing attitudes arise, and to take action to prevent them from harming ourselves and others. There are several ways we can "confront and avert" our disturbing attitudes. One is to **apply an antidote**, something opposite to that particular disturbing emotion, such as meditating on compassion as an antidote to anger (footnote), or on joy as an antidote to jealousy (footnote). **Another way is simply to let it go**. Remind yourself that it is just an experience, a mental state that comes and goes in the mind, and see if you can let it go. Of course, there will be times when neither of these methods will work. In this case it is good to think about the faults of anger, its disadvantages. ... Anger, therefore, is like a mental illness, or a poison, which harms both ourselves and others. **Reminding ourselves of the drawbacks of anger and the other disturbing emotions** can help us to generate the wish to avoid them and instead turn our mind to more positive attitudes. ... Other times ... We may need to do something to keep calm, like taking a few deep breaths, counting to ten, saying a prayer or mantra, or leaving the room until we have cooled down. For the long term : is to sit down, **think back over what happened**, and try to understand why we got angry. By using clear, rational thinking, we may then be able to recognize mistakes we made ... **Learning from our mistakes**. The important thing is to not act on the disturbing thoughts when they arise since this just leads to problems both now and in the future.

4. Cherishing Those Who Are Difficult

Whenever I see a being of wicked nature, who is overwhelmed by heavy non-virtue and suffering, I shall hold him near, as if I had discovered a precious treasure, difficult to find.

or:

Whenever I meet a person of bad nature
Who is overwhelmed by negative energy and intense suffering,
I will hold such a rare one dear,
As if I had found a precious treasure.

Why is this ? Because difficult people **provide us with the opportunity to recognize that our patience and love have limits, and that we still have shortcomings like aversion and selfishness that need to be overcome**, they are very beneficial for our spiritual development. Realizing this, we will be able to hold them dear and cherish them, like "a precious treasure". One way to do this is to remind ourselves constantly when we are with others: "This person wants to be happy just as I do, and just like me does not want to experience any problems or suffering. The reason he or she is behaving in a disturbing way is because of strong delusions and negative imprints in the mind. This outer behavior and appearance is a reflection of the inner delusions and imprints obscuring the mind. But these are temporary, not permanent. Like everyone else, this person's real nature is pure and good and has the potential to attain enlightenment. One day he or she will be free from the delusions that are causing so many problems right now, and will attain the state of enlightenment." **It is important to separate a person from his or her delusions, and to attribute a person's bad behavior to the delusions, not the person.** It is also helpful to reflect that this person probably has more suffering than other people, and so is in greater need of kindness and compassion. Thinking in these ways can help us to overcome feelings of fear and anger. We may even feel motivated to extend a helping hand to those who are troubled and needy. However, we also need to use our wisdom.

5. Offering The Victory To Others

When out of jealousy others treat me badly with abuse, insult and the like, I shall practice accepting defeat and offering the victory to others.

or:

When others, out of jealousy,
Mistreat me with abuse, slander and so on,
I will practice accepting defeat
And offer the victory to them.

Anger never helps, it only brings problems like resentment and conflict, and plants the seeds for future suffering. As an alternative to anger and retaliation, this verse advises us to **patiently accept the situation** and to let the other person have the victory. How to develop this kind of attitude ? ... **one thing we can do is to check our mind, to question why we respond the way we do .. where is the illusion. We need to be realistic.** there is never any reason for us to get upset if we are criticized. We should look inside ourselves and check whether the criticism is true or not. If it is not true, then the other person's words are like empty, meaningless noise, and there is no need to get upset about them. But if we check and find that the criticism is true, then we can gratefully accept it as helpful advice for our spiritual development. It is often difficult to see ourselves objectively -- we tend to be blind to our faults and mistakes, so when others point them out it can be useful for us. Also ... "Why is winning so important to me?" .. Another method is to reflect on karma. If we check our response to the criticism, we may notice our mind saying things like: "This isn't fair. I haven't done anything to deserve this. This shouldn't be happening to me!" Think again. According to karma, or the law of cause and effect, whatever difficulties we experience now are the result of our previously-committed negative actions. **We might also try to cultivate compassion for the person who is criticizing us. Some other times we need to use wisdom. In most cases of being criticized, our response arises from our attachment to reputation -- wanting others to like and respect us.**

6. Learning From Those Who Harm Us

When someone I have benefited and in whom I have great hopes gives me terrible harm, I shall practice regarding him or her as my holy guru.

or:

When someone I have benefited
And in whom I have placed great trust
Hurts me very badly,
I will practice seeing that person as my supreme teacher.

why this person is such a valuable teacher. He has given us the opportunity to recognize the limits of our love. We discover that our love was not free from conditions, and was not strong enough to withstand hurt and betrayal. We may then decide that we need to work harder at developing pure, unconditional love. ... it is useful to regard the situation as a valuable lesson, and to regard the harm-giver as a teacher. He has given us the opportunity to understand ourselves better, to **see our limitations and to become aware of the areas we need to work on to perfect our love**. In fact, that person is a supreme teacher, because it is only through facing difficulties such as this, that we can develop real love, compassion and wisdom, and progress along the spiritual path. Difficult situations also give us an opportunity to learn about and **work on developing our patience**. Patience is a valuable asset, because it enables us to remain peaceful and joyful, no matter what happens.

7. The Practice Of Taking And Giving -- Tog-Len

In short, both directly and indirectly, I offer every benefit and happiness to all my mothers. Secretly, I shall practice taking all their harmful actions and suffering upon myself.

or:

In short, I will offer directly and indirectly
Every benefit and happiness to all beings, my mothers.
I will practice in secret taking upon myself
All their harmful actions and sufferings.

The practice of taking and giving is a very effective way gradually to overcome self-cherishing and to develop its opposite: the mind that cherishes others. Combining it with the breathing is an advanced level of practice.

8. The Illusory Nature Of Phenomena

With all these (practices) undefiled by the stains of the superstitions of the eight (worldly) dharmas, by perceiving all dharmas as illusory I shall practice, without grasping, to release (all sentient beings) from bondage.

or:

Without these practices being defiled by the stains of the eight worldly concerns,

By perceiving all phenomena as illusory,

I will practice without grasping to release all beings

From the bondage of the disturbing unsubdued mind and karma.

There are two very important Buddhist teachings contained in this verse. The first is **the need to keep our Dharma practice pure, free of the eight worldly concerns**. The second is the **understanding of the real nature of all phenomena -- that they are like an illusion**. Understanding the illusory nature of all phenomena will free us from disturbing emotions and karma, and then we can help others likewise to become free.

What are **the eight worldly concerns**? They are concern about gain and loss, pleasant and unpleasant experiences, praise and blame, and the wish to have a good reputation and not to have a bad one. When we have these eight attitudes, we feel happy when we receive or possess things, unhappy when we lose or are unable to get what we desire; happy when we have pleasant experiences, unhappy when we experience pain or anything unpleasant; happy when someone praises us, unhappy when we are blamed or criticized; happy when our reputation is good, unhappy when our reputation is bad or we are unknown.

All these eight concerns can be condensed into two attitudes:

- being attached to what is pleasant
- and having aversion or fear towards whatever is unpleasant

This is what the eight worldly concerns are all about: being overly concerned about the good and bad things that happen in our life. **The best**

remedy to the eight worldly concerns is to reflect on impermanence: the changing nature of all things.

The second teaching contained in this verse is that all phenomena are like an illusion. This refers to the Buddha's teaching on **emptiness**, also known as "selflessness". Emptiness is the actual, correct way in which everything exists: oneself, all other people and living beings, all inanimate phenomena. It is the ultimate, true nature of all things. "Why should I be concerned about this?" **We should be concerned because this tendency to perceive, believe in and grasp at things as truly existing or inherently existing lies at the root of all our problems.** Fear, worry, frustration, dissatisfaction, loneliness, grief, pain, and all the other myriad problems and sufferings of mind and body that we experience are caused by this attitude, which in Buddhism is known as "**self-grasping ignorance**". We all have the potential to enjoy ever-lasting peace, bliss, wisdom and freedom from all suffering -- the state of enlightenment or Buddhahood -- but we are unable to attain this as long as our mind is caught up in ignorance, and does not understand the true nature of things.

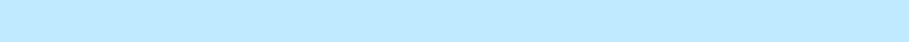
Self-grasping ignorance pervades our view of everything. We see ourselves as inherently existing -- we cling tightly to an illusory image of a permanent, independently existing I or self. We hold on to self-limiting concepts about ourselves, believing that mistakes made in the past have become permanent aspects of our personality. These "**permanent faults**" become the basis of low self-esteem and even self-hatred, obscuring our potential to be pure, perfect and free -- an enlightened being. All this arises from ignorant misperception.

Moreover, we tend to cherish our sense of self, as if it were the center of the universe. **Out of this strong self-centeredness, we develop desire and attachment** for people and things that make us happy and support our sense of I, we have aversion and fear towards people and things that disturb us or threaten our sense of I, and we are indifferent towards whoever or whatever neither helps nor harms us. **Believing all these people and objects to also exist in a real, permanent, independent way further intensifies our attitudes of attachment and aversion.** These attitudes disturb our mind and motivate us to create negative actions or karma, such as harming our enemies, and lying or stealing to benefit ourselves and our loved ones, and this karma is the cause of suffering and problems in the future. Self-

grasping ignorance is also the main factor that keeps us circling in samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth.

That is why we should be concerned about our tendency to see things as truly or inherently existent, and why **we should learn to perceive things in their correct way, as empty of inherent existence**, or, as it says in the verse, as "illusory".

Keeping in mind that all things are illusory, a bodhisattva engages in the practice of Dharma, the path leading to enlightenment, without grasping at anyone or anything as truly existing. In this way the bodhisattva frees him- or herself from disturbing states of mind and karma -- the causes of all suffering in the prison of samsara -- and works to help all other living beings to likewise become free.



Eight Verses For Training The Mind - by Geshe Langri Tangpa

1.
By thinking of all sentient beings
as even better than the wish-granting gem,
for accomplishing the highest aim,
may I always consider them precious.
2.
Wherever I go, with whomever I go,
may I see myself as less than all others,
and from the depth of my heart
may I consider them supremely precious.
3.
May I examine my mind in all actions
and as soon as a negative state occurs,
since it endangers myself and others,
may I firmly face and avert it.
4.
When I see beings of a negative disposition
or those oppressed by negativity or pain,
may I, as if finding a treasure, consider them precious,
for they are rarely met.
5.
Whenever others, due to their jealousy,
revile and treat me in unjust ways,
may I accept this defeat myself,
and offer the victory to others.
6.
When someone whom I have helped
or in whom I have placed great hope
harms me with great injustice,
may I see that one as a sacred friend.

7.
In short, may I offer, both directly and indirectly,
all joy and benefit to all beings, my mothers,
and may I myself secretly
take on all their hurt and suffering.

8.
May they not be defiled
by the concepts of the eight mundane concerns,
and aware that all things are illusory,
may they, ungrasping, be free from bondage.

<http://buddhism.kalachakranet.org/resources/texts.html>

THE EIGHT VERSES OF MIND TRAINING, BY GESHE LANGRI TANGPA

1.
Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit from all sentient beings, who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel, I shall at all times practice holding them most dear.
2.
When in the company of others, I shall at all times practice considering myself the lowest of all, while from the depths of my heart holding others dear and supreme.
3.
Vigilant, the moment a delusion appears in my mind, endangering myself and others, I shall at all times practice confronting and averting it without delay.
4.
Whenever I see beings wicked in nature and overwhelmed by violent negative actions and suffering, I shall at all times practice holding such rare, difficult-to-find ones dear, as if I had found a precious treasure.
5.
When, out of envy, others mistreat me with abuse, insult, or the like, I shall at all times practice accepting defeat and offering the victory to others.
6.
When someone whom I have benefited and in whom I have great hopes gives me terrible harm, I shall at all times practice regarding that person as my holy guru.
7.
In short, both directly and indirectly, do I offer every happiness and benefit to all my mothers. I shall at all times practice secretly taking upon myself all their harmful actions and suffering.

8.
Through my perceiving all dharmas as illusory, may all the above practices never be defiled by the stains of the superstitions of the eight worldly dharmas, and may I, free of clinging, be released from the bondage of attachment.

http://www.ganden.org/texts/eight_verses.html



Serlingpa

Leveling out all Conceptions, by the precious spiritual teacher Protector Serlingpa

A Commentary on the *"Leveling out all Conceptions"*

Seeking refuge, I pay homage to the precious spiritual teacher Protector Serlingpa, and to the entire lineage of this master and his disciples. Pray, bless me!

Embodiment of wisdom and great compassion, the protector Serlingpa once said to Atisha.

'O my son, if you wish to serve others in these degenerate times, you must distill the sacred words of all three collections of discourses, scriptures, and reasonings, as well as all the heartwood instructions of the spiritual teachers, and practice them in one sitting. To accomplish this you need the teachings I shall now give you, teachings that will make you invulnerable to sickness, harm, interference from obstructive forces, demons, or upholders of false teachings, and any other adverse conditions and impediments.'

Then, he taught the following:

***Level out all preconceptions,
Bring forth the force of all antidotes,
Cultivate the aspiration that embodies all wishes,
And seek the path where all paths converge.
These are the antidotes, the four enlightened factors.
They are essential to tame places that are far from dharma,
They are essential too in times of degeneration
To help bear negative samsara and its misguided ways.***

The meaning of these verses is as follows. It is essential to level out conceptions whenever they arise, to crush them at their very source. Examine them, reflecting, 'Where does this conception appear? To what sense faculties does it appear? In what shape and color does it appear?' Treat it like a venomous snake or rabid dog, not allowing it near you. Flatten it the moment it arises by applying its antidote. Never let yourself be influenced of laziness. It is stated in sutra,

O, attachment, I've now discerned your root:
You arise from great proliferation of conceptions.

Again [we read in sutra],

Preconception is the great ignorance
That casts you into the ocean of cyclic existence.

The Entering the Middle Way states,

Ordinary beings are chained by conceptions,
While the yogis free of conceptions become released.
That which reveals the conceptions to be false
Was taught by the learned as fruits of a thorough analysis.

All the sacred words and treaties of the Great Vehicle, like these here cited, state that conceptions are a great obstacle to the attainment of enlightenment. It is therefore vital to not let laziness overcome you. This means that if you harbor too many thoughts you will not reach the final goal. Therefore even in relation to the profound truth that will liberate you

remain without proliferation [of thoughts] and concentrate all your energies on this single objective, destroying the conceptions.

It has also been stated in sutra that all forms of mental engagement are the acts of negative forces. Therefore coordinate all your aspirations, relate all the grounds and paths, such as the paths of accumulation, seeing, and meditation, to the destruction of conceptions as they arise by applying their antidotes. Continue this until the attainment of full enlightenment and the state of omniscience.

In brief, ensure that every time a conception surfaces there too is its antidote, because you concentrate all your aspirations into [destroying the conceptions by means of their antidotes](#). In just this way, always walk any path treading and crushing conceptions.

These four factors, belonging to the class of enlightened phenomena, are to be adopted.

Then, Serlingpa taught the following:

***Adverse conditions are one's spiritual teacher,
Ghosts and possessor spirits, the Buddha's emanations.
Sickness is a broom clearing away negativity and
obstructions,
The sufferings are ornamentation of ultimate reality's
expanse.
These are [the four thoroughly unenlightened factors](#),
They are essential to tame places that are far from dharma,
They are essential too in times of degeneration
To help bear negative samsara and its misguided ways.***

The meaning of these lines is this. When undesirable and adverse conditions such as sickness and pain befall you, they should become an impetus for you to also take on the sickness and suffering of all sentient beings. You should take these on in your mind, without any reservation, and rejoice at having taken them upon yourself en masse. Similarly, give to [other] sentient beings whatever favorable conditions such as happiness and peace that you may enjoy, and rejoice at helping them accomplish their accumulations. Further, whatever the events that give rise to perception of forms, sounds, smells, tastes and so forth, when you search for them they are no where to be found. Therefore place your mind in the truth of their unfindability. Reflect 'These are a spiritual teacher to me, a catalyst [directing my thoughts] to the ultimate. These are favorable conditions for my attainment of enlightenment.' [Thinking this] rejoice!

When harm is caused by spirits of the dead, ogresses, regional spirits and so forth, make this a catalyst for wholeheartedly taking upon yourself whatever harms and suffering [other] sentient beings may experience. Rejoice, thinking 'I have certainly taken [these harms from them].' Give to perpetrators of harm whatever they desire from your body, such as flesh, blood and so forth, because from compassion, loving kindness and the altruistic mind aspiring for enlightenment, this giving turns into factors conducive to your attainment of enlightenment. This is how they assist you [on the path] to enlightenment. Therefore, all these malevolent forces are emanations of the Buddha, and you should cultivate an inconceivable degree of joy and respect towards them.

Again, when you are free of sickness, make this a catalyst for giving to [other] beings your happiness, together with its causes. [Reflect that] doing so helps all sentient beings accomplish the fulfillment of their wishes. Rejoice, thinking that your happiness and its causes have [therefore] served their right purpose. They are [like] brooms to sweep away your negativity and obstructions. This giving makes it impossible for negativity and obstructions to [leisurely] rest within you for even a single moment.

As many sufferings arise, there are as many ways to search for them. Since all these sufferings have never existed, there uncountable ways of not finding them [when you search]. Thus, all this is a great ostentatious display of reality's ultimate expanse for you take into your path of 'a hundred abandonments and a hundred realizations.' [In this way] meditate and rejoice!

These are the four thoroughly unenlightened factors, which are to be discarded.

Again, the following was taught:

***It is the great counterpoint to false happiness,
It is the great drawing to a close of miseries.
It is the charm that attracts misfortunes,
And it is the additional wish on top of those least useful.
These are the four antidotes of misguided ways,
They are required in places that are far from dharma.
They are essential too in times of degeneration,
To help bear negative samsara and its misguided ways.***

The meaning of these lines is this. The counterpoint to pleasures such as [those derived from] food, drink, wealth, fame, and so forth, obstacles to the pursuit of virtuous activity, is to be modest in your desires and practice inner contentment. [In fact] follow pain with pain. If your leg hurts, go for circumambulation; if your back hurts, do prostration. If you suffer from greed, give away to others. If you are attracted to distractions, enter into retreat. If you take delight in gossip, cut your speech [maintain silence]. If you suffer great misfortunes, which are most undesirable, such as becoming the target of a negative publicity, a [vicious] dispute, a magical spell, malicious gossip and so forth, make these means, taming the malevolent ghost of self-grasping. Welcome them as auspicious, like charms for attracting good fortune. Calling out for more, generate courage and feel that as a consequence of all these useless events that are now befalling you, you can tame this self, and never again be reborn into the cycle of existence. [In this way] add this wish [to all of this] and strive to achieve the strength to practice the three kinds of forbearance. These are [then] the four factors of misguided ways that are the objects of a thorough application of the antidotes.

Again, the following was taught:

**Self is the root of [all] negative actions;
It is the one thing to be discarded with decisiveness.
The other is a source of enlightenment;
It is the one thing to be embraced with enthusiasm.
These two teachings condense those to be relinquished
and their antidotes,
They are vital in places afar from dharma
They are essential too in times of degeneration,
To help bear negative samsara and its misguided ways.**

The meaning of these lines is this. As the self is both the source of all undesirable events and the root of all negative deeds, do not cherish it but discard it with total abandon. [Think this:] if enemies want it, they should have it. If ghosts want, they should have it. If they are not in haste, they should cook it and eat it; if in haste, they should take it away with them. In this way tear yourself into pieces and serve the wellbeing of all sentient beings, thereby casting aside your own self-interest and striving for other's wellbeing with vigor. As this is the unexcelled source of enlightenment nurture [other] sentient beings with compassion and take upon yourself [their] sufferings. These are the two teachings that bring to an end the [process of] relinquishment and [the application of] antidotes. For they are the distinctive adverse conditions of the great beings.

***Discard with decisiveness, and let go with abandon;
Dismantle with thoroughness, and let it be with tenderness.
These are the four seals of emptiness.
They are vital in places afar from dharma
They are essential too in times of degeneration,
To help bear negative samsara and its misguided ways.
If one practices in this way,
Beings will be released and free of bondage.***

The meaning of these lines is this. Throw far away all conceptions of object and subject. [Instead] place your mind at ease in that ultimate expanse which is free of conceptual elaboration, a mind vividly devoid of conceptualization and absent of any binding fetters. Do not chase after an earlier instance of cognition, do not anticipate future [instances of cognition], and let the present be as it is, free of clinging. Let it be at ease in its natural state, uncontrived and devoid of exaggeration and denigration. These are the four seals of emptiness. If you practice in this manner you will not be chained in the cyclic existence by karma but will attain liberation.

If you take on any practice other than this, hardened sentient beings in this degenerate age will not be tamed. Yet if you practice this you will be invulnerable to obstacles, and the wellbeing of [other] sentient beings will be easily achieved.

[The master Serlingpa] taught thus. I have presented [here] the teachings of peerless Serlingpa exactly in accordance with his words.

The Tantra of Amoghapasha states,

Wisdom is indicated by 'enlightenment,' while 'heroic being' refers to the skilful means. It is with these two the welfare of [other] sentient beings will be achieved.

Again, [we read in] the Drop of Liberation according to Guhyasamaja,

Then, with compassion alone as the ground,
Enlightened qualities will arise without exception.

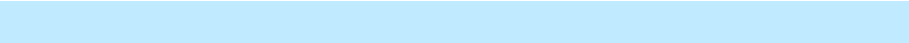
Again [we read],

If the root compassion is absent,
Bearing difficulties cannot be sustained.

The Sutra Perfectly Assimilating the Qualities of Avalokiteshvara states,

Who so ever aspires to swiftly attain full enlightenment should not train in many different spiritual disciplines. What is that sole discipline [that should be pursued]? It is great compassion. Whoever possesses great compassion possesses all teachings of the Buddha within his palm. He [or she] shall achieve [his goal] without effort and without exertion. In brief, the great compassion is the root of all teachings.

This instruction seems to have been given to Atisha, protector of [all] beings, by his spiritual teacher Serlingpa Chökyi Drakpa to help tame places that are far from the dharma.



The Peacock's Neutralizing of Poison by Dharmarakshita

I

The peacocks roam freely in the forests of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

When he was born as the prince Vessantara,
He gave away his son, his daughter and his kingdom.
So too must you give away entirely, with no feelings of possessiveness,
The objects of strong attachment, your wealth and your friends and family.

When he was born as the prince Mahasattva,
As he nourished the tigress with his own flesh.
So too must you joyfully give to the flesh-eating demons
This illusory body which you cherish such care.

When he was born as the king Maitribala,
He nourished the Yaksha with his own blood.
So too must you compassionately give to the blood drinkers
This pulsating, bloodied heart so hard to extract.

When he was born as the merchant Jalabahana (Kheu Chubep),*
He rescued the fish by uttering the name of the Buddhas.
So too must you give gifts of the sublime dharma
To all those impoverished of spiritual teachings.

When he was born as the prince Get'n Chenpo,
He bore the evil teacher Lokdrup with great compassion.
So too must you be especially kind towards those around you
Who create disturbances through negative character and conduct.

When he was born as the monkey Bodhisattva,
He rescued an evil person from drowning in a well.
So you must you save the evil doers with compassion

With no thought for reward or recognition for your good deed.

Alas! There is no one who hasn't been my parent.
There's no joy even for an instance in this forest of samsara.
To the evil class your retribution must be like a donkey's horn.

Now despite the heroic example of the great Sage,
Which I've respectfully embraced if I fail to cultivate the antidotes,
Engagements in the practice of the heroic way become impossible.
Therefore, you should embrace the penance even at the cost of your life.

After the Buddha's display of transcendence in the bliss,
Those who aspire to follow in his footsteps,
If you do not cultivate these practices within your heart,
The threat looms heavily that sentient beings' happiness will cease.

O the heroic ones, you must therefore give up the easy life;
Come what may, even at the cost of your life, you must embrace hardships.
This is the practice of the heroic way;
And the first chapter of Extracting the essence of poisons.

||

The peacocks roam freely in the forests of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

O the heroic ones with enthusiasm listen to this teaching.
In the forest of samsara the peacock is attractive.
At the feet of a poisonous tree of the five afflictions,
No one delights in a medicine nurtured by poisons.

Against the boiling poisonous liquid of attachment and karma,
If you do not counter with something akin [in force] to attachment,
The threat of being led astray by the lustful ones looms large.
Pray, destroy this poison of attachment!

Towards the blossoming poisonous flowers of anger,
If you do not display wrath as the Lord Yama does,
The threat of being impeded by the hostile ones looms large.
Defeat this enemy and obstacles of anger.

Towards the sticky poisonous mire of delusion,
If you do not refrain as if you would from a decomposing corpse,
The threat of engendering negativity by the evil ones looms large.
So as if caught amidst delusion contemplate on equanimity.

Towards the blossoming poisonous tree of envy,
If you fail to discriminate as one would in terms of 'I' and 'you',
The threat of the dharma being destroyed by heretics looms large.
So as if in envy uphold the sublime dharma.

Towards the blossoming poisonous tree of conceitedness,
If you do not react with hostility as if you're haughty,
The threat of being deceived by the demons looms large.
So defeat your adversaries when upholding the Buddha's teaching.

Thus I shall tie together in this one chain of self-centeredness,
All forces of poisons, without a single exception,

Within the illusion-like perception of non-substantiality,
And like a peacock, I shall consume all such poisons as nourishment.

Though one may display diverse perceptions to other's mind,
At depth one should not lose the secure ground of disciplined antidotes,
But guard the ethics of virtue versus non-virtue dearer even to your own life.
Thus even if you suffer you should embrace [the path of] enlightenment.

Even if I've expertise in all forms of knowledge,
If I do not forego my own joys and pleasure,
The danger still exists of being caught in attachment and hostility.
Therefore, I shall beat this self-centeredness as one might a [charging]
dog or a thief.

Even if I suffer throughout days and night,
If I do not contemplate the flaws of cyclic-existence in general,
The danger still exists of indulging in the causes of suffering.
Therefore, the thoughts of karma's ill consequences torment my heart.

Though this is so I shall apply all unwanted sufferings
As counter-forces to destroy the grasping at self.
Even if tens of millions rise up against me as the demon's army,
I shall abandon fear and the thoughts of 'I am.'

Even if I fall into unfortunate realms when working for others,
I shall joyfully embrace it with no feelings of regret.
Even if the executors of death came to rob me of life,
I shall not have beneficial rites performed for my sake.

Even if I have to carry the karmic burden of all beings,
As I'll be carrying a burden that is worthy of carrying I shall not complain.
Even if my body becomes afflicted by contagious diseases,
As it is my own doing I shall not seek to revert the situation.

Thus, if unwanted situations do not fall upon me,
How will I ever pursue the means of obtaining the wanted?
If the wise ones were to discern, all unwanted events are

Sources of all what we desire; so I'll [willingly] embrace them.

Thus if the heroic ones do not wear the armor
Willfully embracing all negative forces,
There will be no joy for the one who is within the cyclic-existence.
Therefore you should willingly embrace all things unwanted.

Such is the teaching to be practiced by the sublime,
From the example of the great Sage's life;
It is the entrance appropriate to the heroic ones;
And the second chapter of Extracting the essence of poisons.

III

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

The intelligent one who reflects on and examines
Six times day and night the flaws of cyclic-existence,
In general and in its specific forms, and is fearful because of this,
Will take and observe the precepts of individual liberation.

When they are thus endowed with precepts they've taken,
They will regard all beings as fathers and mothers,
Until they've attained perfect Buddha-hood.
And for their benefit, they'll take the precepts of aspiration and
engagement.

By thoughts of love and compassion when they possess the aspiration,
Even if they themselves suffer in the forest of cyclic-existence,
They will think of it no more and will encounter the hardships
Even at the risk of their life for the benefit of others.

At that instant, when infinite others with negative character
Engage in infinite acts of misguided behavior,
Like a dream, or like an illusion, they'll be divorced of life.
They will reflect on their nature and perceive them within the ultimate
expanse.

Thus when this non-substantial and non-appearing nature becomes
manifest,
An added confidence arises that frees you from fear,
Thus with no thoughts or any apprehension,
I shall endeavor solely to work for other's benefit.

When you carry such [precious] burden of spiritual practice,
And the forces of darkness become ever more intolerant
Creating thick cloud clusters of impediments,
I shall scatter them across the pure space with gales of mantras.

When I utter the wrathful mantras with thundering sounds of HUM,
As I may develop the pride of a ferocious wrathful deity,
I shall recognize the sounds as musical tunes of an apparition
Emerging from a body that resembles a city of illusions.

In whatever ways this mind of mine cannot be found amidst diverse forms,
Thus, like the mind of a person that is a mere emanation,
It has never existed so let it rest in its natural place
Release it within the truth as seen [by those who] perceive the ultimate spectrum.

In whatever way or whatever thing arises as an enemy or a demon,
I shall think nothing of this and shall not attempt to reverse this;
Thus shall I trample upon hostility and attachment, and divisions of self and others.
I shall view all memories and perceptions as [forms of] wrathful Yamas.

At that point, I shall draw forth all beings without exception,
As fathers and mothers with no trace of doubt and with full certainty;
I shall treasure them in the compassion circle, free of distance and nearness.
I shall nurture them by means of two truths, free of any discrimination.

If you cultivate yourself in this way, you follow the example of the Sage;
If you conduct yourself in this way, you'll bring smiles to the face of the [Three] Jewels.
To such a person, the dharma protectors naturally converge.
O the children of the Sage, be cognizant of these facts.

Thus I spit (tho les)* on the conduct that is bereft of conscience;
I feel revulsion at the conduct that is devoid of heedfulness.
This too is a practice that is appropriate of the heroic ones;
And this is the third chapter of Extracting the essence of poison.

IV

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

Even though, like Upali, you've reached the perfection of industry;
And, even though, like Ashvajita, your conscientiousness is highly commendable;
If you do not lead your parents on the path to enlightenment,
This is the way of a mere shepherd for you fulfil only your liberation and wellbeing.

Even though you achieve mastery of scholarship in the knowledge fields,
And that your reputation delights all those who are foolish,
If you do not uphold with your crown the great burden of the teachings,
All this is to be dismissed, like one would the performance of a mad man.

Even though you're held in high esteem by all as their spiritual teacher,
If you do not shoulder the great responsibility of the teaching as a whole,
In stead embrace and pursue your own self-centered objectives,
You deserve to be spit at by the Arya noble beings.

Even though other's take pride in your image of goodness;
The self-grasping thought roams restless in the forests of wrong views;
You should fear it as if you would to the tigress that devours its own cubs.
This is something to be destroyed by the oath-bound protectors.

Even though you're clad in saffron and have the countenance of tranquility,
If, like the cat [left among pigeons], you harbor ill wills,
This is indeed an irreparable conduct for someone in the noble guise.
You then deserve to be thrown into the mouth of the female demons (ma mo).*

Even though you sit at the head of ninety thousand [people],
If, like Vishnu, you remain untamed at heart,
And emit rays of attachment and hostility to all ten directions,

You then deserve to be thrown into the mouth of the Yamas.

Even though you may treat all with smiles and kindness,
You follow after the self and thus enhance inner pollutants.
Therefore the fame of being the chief amongst all the faithful ones
Is to be hidden deep in the nest where the mode of all beings converges.

Even though you've entered the dharma gateway and left behind the family,
Like a householder, you still possess infinite chores and tasks,
And you disregard all ethical norms of adoption and avoidance.
This is certainly to be despised by the accomplished sages.

Even though you wear robes you do not observe the precepts,
Your perceptions remain permeated by the various tasks of attachment;
And you criticize and denigrate the noble beings.
This is deserving of being exterminated by the Dakinis.

For sake of material gains you adopt the guise of a noble one;
Yet, like the dogs and pigs, you indulge in sexual acts [with no restraint];
Those who deceive others by professing to be practicing tantra,
Deserve to be thrown into a [burning] hearth by the realized Vajra holders.

In the name of Mahayana, one disregards the laws of karma and its effects;
In the name of emptiness, one betrays one's students and groups;
Like a possessing demon, one disguises as a deity's form;
This is to be subdued with mantras by those bound by solemn oaths.

With no benefit whatsoever to the teachings as a whole,
One displays pretense of tantra and some profound instructions,
These negative verses strung together by confused conceptions,
Are to be brought down as trivial by the noble persons.

If it definitely harms the teachings as a whole,
Even if brings some benefits for some at certain times,
Like giving rice beer to someone suffering from intense fever,
It is destructive and deserved to be cast away into the waters.

Those harmful 'mystics' who possess little learning,
When they see common feats they become supremely inflated with conceit;
Such people who lead others with no guidance through the stages of the path,
They deserved to be belittled and brought to shame by the learned ones.

When enemies of the dharma rise up with threats,
Displaying pretense of kindness through commitments to individual liberation,
And not taking the side of the well-spoken teachings,
The noble ones are appalled indeed by such behavior.

Let alone the [attainment] of individual liberation,
One is likely to depart to the greatly unfortunate realms,
Pray, do not save those who destroy the teachings;
Such obstructive enemies, who're degenerate, should be driven beyond the shores.

However, with no concern for the teachings and beings as a whole,
Those who, out of anger, drive to the other shores with mantras
The enemies who cause harm upon one's own self,
Such conduct is shocking whether or not one is degenerate in one's precepts.

In brief, that which is repulsive to the Buddhas -
- the pursuit of one's own selfish ends -, I shall shun at all times.
That which is commended by the Buddhas of ten directions,
Whatever it may be it is worthy of engagement.

Be cognizant of this, O the intelligent ones.
Engage in all the practices right from start to the end;
Avoid that which contradicts the dharma even it costs your life;
Never do anything harmful to all but help self and others as much as one can.

Though the foolish may not see these truths even after a passage of time,
They are evident and vivid to the learned ones.

This too is a gateway for the heroic ones;
And the fourth chapter of Extracting the essence of poison.

V

The peacocks roam freely in the forest of poison.

Homage to the venerable Lord Yama.

O appear before me, with no exception, all those of the dark side,
Who harbor ill will and are filled with hostility -
O you millions and billions of flesh-eaters and blood-drinkers,
Today appear before me, this corporeal being.

O appear before me, the assembly of gods, nagas and yakshas,
Odor-spirits, demigods, and belly-crawling demons,
The infinite numbers of hungry-ghosts who roam in space,
And hosts of the karmic debtors, the element spirits.

O stand before me, the spirits of the good conscience and the sages,
The obstructers, those who lead to the false ways, and the eighteen great
possessors,
The female demons, and all the guardians of activities,
The Three Jewels, and the assembly of arya noble beings.

O listen to me, I shall recount a story of great significance
Of the pledges I've taken without the slightest hesitation
In the presence of such witnesses who're gathered here
Encompassing in their entirety both samsara and its transcendence.

Owing to the good fortunes of the past
Today I've obtained the form endowed with ten opportunities.
As days and nights pass with feelings of wonder,
Why am I not embarking on the path of benefit and joy?

Because of the purity of aspirations I've gone beyond the household;
Discarding selfish ends, I wear as my clothes the aspiration and engaging
minds;
Finding the supreme mind, I carry the responsibility of other's welfare;
Entering the path, I eat as nourishment the supreme bliss.

Listen to this tale again, O you who've gathered here.
Such ferocity there is in the ill acts of the dark forces;
Such impoverished level is the merits of the unfortunate ones;
I do not yearn anymore to depart to the lands of bliss.

Infinite are the element spirits who're bereft of meritorious stores;
Acute indeed are the sufferings of the unfortunate realms;
So negative are the deeds of those of evil behavior;
I no longer find delight in seeking the state of tranquility.

The virtuous acts of the childish are easily reversed;
Powerful indeed are the thoughts and deeds of the demonic forces;
There is no pausing time within this transient life of ours;
I no longer find delight in abiding in places of solitude.

There exist many who're hostile and are enemies of this dharma teaching;
Thus those realized mystics who've gone to the secure grounds
Appear unbecoming in today's age of degeneration;
I no longer find delight in seeking the land of the sky-goers.

Now even if all the powerful ones of the entire world systems
Were to rise up as my sworn enemies,
I'll not be shaken - not even the hairs of my body shall move;
[Instead] I'll put on the armor while being in this samsaric realm.

Where contagious diseases afflict beings,
And when great epidemics threaten the entire world,
I shall put on the great, fierce armor,
By turning into the physicians or nurses.

As I nurture all beings without exception with acts of kindness,
If some vex me and cause distress with extremely negative acts,
Towards them, I'll especially generate thoughts of benefit and kindness,
Thus I shall put on the armor of the heroic ones.

When ferocious man-eating tigresses await in ambush,
And charge at people threatening their lives,
To save beings, I shall put on the armor

By going at the site with no hesitation or doubt.

All the varied misfortunes that afflict the world,
The most unwanted events pervading like clouds of darkness,
I shall evoke them as charms thus putting on an armor,
To destroy the enemy, the very negative character itself.

All that is definitely unnecessary in this universe,
Such as karma, afflictions and the turbulence of illusions,
I shall willfully embrace them thus put on an armor,
To forcibly divorce the self-grasping of its life.

PHAT YA HO YI, MARAYA to the lord of death;
JARAYA, to the life-essence of demon, the comfort seeking wish;
Split it open, split it open, the heads of laziness and procrastination;
Pray, sever utterly the ties to cyclic-existence.

As we undergo sufferings in this cycle of existence,
And search to the foundation stones of this state of affairs,
I see the king that is the thought 'I am'
Residing in the palace of my heart amidst conceptions.

When I thus place the blame on this and combat with it,
What can I say, for the self has penetrated since time with no beginning?
The self thoroughly permeates the outer, inner and the in between!
It is familiar to truth, lies, and the six classes of consciousness.

Who should one combat with for one is one's own enemy?
Who will save whom for one is one's own savior?
One is one's own witness for all omissions and transgressions.
One will thus be freed if one can tame one's own self.

When others tame others it leads to conflict and dispute;
Where conflict and dispute exist there negative beings certainly converge;
Those filled with attachment and anger have no chance of a release.
Therefore, the yogin who is devoid of any preconceptions,
Why should he utter A LA LA this is so?
MARAYA to the life-essence of that which grasps at existence;
JARAYA to the life-essence of that which grasps at nonexistence.

As the self-grasping king is the real culprit, destroy the chief!

If you fail to tame the principal mental consciousness,
The threat of being led by the self-grasping king looms large.
When you've tamed the principal mental consciousness,
The other chiefs such as the eyes and so on are subdued.

Therefore tame this mental consciousness.
As there is no form, no sound, no smell and so on,
The grasping at self and its belongings will be no more.
The king of preconceptions will thus be starved of conditions.

Thus, when you utter these to the king himself preconceptions are freed,
In their own natural place and recognized as the ultimate sphere;
The six classes [of consciousness] are unreal as elephants of illusion;
Subjects and objects are unreal as the deeds of an apparition.

In these ways destroy the preconceptions from their roots;
Transform into the sphere of self-view this absence of subject and object;
As no 'I' and 'you' [division] exist, attachment and anger are placed in
their innate state;
Like the horn of a rabbit there are no sharp minds and the blunted,
Thus rob the discrimination between the higher and middling capacities of
its life.
Like the offspring of the barren there are no cleverness and slow-witted,
Wrap the entire samsara and its transcendence into one equanimity.
Like the hair on a turtle's body there are no long and short things,
Awaken all births and deaths into the great middle way.
Like echoes all that is primordially empty
Wrap into one sublime truth all phenomena of conventional reality.

AH, AH, in this sphere of unborn space-like nature,
IH, IH, this transcendent body devoid of conceptual elaboration,
OM, OM, recognizing this as the ever-pure dharmakaya,
May I be nurtured by the kindness of KARUNIKA.

COLOPHON

This work entitled The Peacocks Roaming in the Forests of Poison has been composed by me, Dharmarakshita, being motivated by the great compassion that does not objectify sentient beings. This is a yogin who resides in the black mountain and who, after having trained his eyes of intelligence in the innumerable fields of knowledge, has attained the infallible power of the laws of karma and its effects.

-- <http://www.tibetanclassics.org/peacock.html>

Seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso

Using Illness To Train The Mind

Whenever a physical illness arises, we usually multiply our suffering by worrying and by pressing mental anxiety on top of it. One should understand that the human body is a composite of elements and agents that constantly are struggling with one another. When these elements and agents fall into disharmony or when external factors such as the many types of evil powers are affected, the various diseases naturally arise with intensity and for long period of time. Therefore one might as well face up to the fact that during the course of one's life a certain amount of disease is inevitable. When one does fall painfully ill, one should not be concerned with one's own situation. Instead consider the inconceivable sufferings of the hell denizens, the hungry ghosts, animals and so forth whose anguish is infinitely greater than one's own. Ask yourself, "If they must bear such immense pain, how can I not bear this suffering which by comparison is small? If I am so weakened by my suffering, how must they feel whose anguish is so much greater? May their afflictions be alleviated by this illness of mine."

Thinking in this way, visualize that you are surrounded by all sentient beings experiencing every type of suffering. As you inhale, visualize that all their negativities and obscurations, sickness and pain ripen upon you, freeing them from all misery, and as you exhale, visualize all good things going to them in the form of white nectar giving them happiness. Repeat this process again and again.

As the benefits of this contemplation surpass the effects of any virtuous actions, any illness should be seen as an excellent opportunity to practice Dharma. Think, "Even if I never recover, I can continue to practice the meditation of taking others' suffering upon myself and giving others peace - a powerful practice unsurpassed by all. Therefore I am perfectly happy to lie here with this illness."

If you can practice this advice from the depth of your heart, there is no doubt that you will be benefited in both this and future lives, hence keep it in mind.

Other Links

- [The Seven Points of Mind Training, Exchanging Self for Others](#)
- [The Seven Points of Mind Training of Atisha, by HH Shamar Rinpoche](#)
- [Training the Mind in Compassion - The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation](#)
- [Biography of the renowned Buddhist sage - Atisha](#)
- [The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama](#)

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