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Chapter 6, "Forbearance"

- 135 If one does not let go of self one cannot let go of suffering, as one who does not let go of fire cannot let go of burning.
- 136 Therefore, in order to allay my own suffering and to allay the suffering of others, I devote myself to others and accept them as myself.
- 137 Hey Mind, make the resolve, 'I am bound to others'! From now on you must have no other concern than the welfare of all beings.
- 106 Beggars are easy to find in this world but those who will cause harm are not, because, if I do no wrong, no one wrongs me.
- 107 Therefore, since he helps me on the path to Awakening, I should long for an enemy like a treasure discovered in the home, acquired without effort.

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ŚĀNTIDEVA

The Bodhicaryāvatāra

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With a General Introduction by
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Oxford New York
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shantideva Ch. 8, "Meditation"

- 90 At first one should meditate intently on the equality of oneself and others as follows: 'All equally experience suffering and happiness. I should look after them as I do myself.'
- 91 Just as the body, with its many parts from division into hands and other limbs, should be protected as a single entity, so too should this entire world which is divided, but undivided in its nature to suffer and be happy.
- 92 Even though suffering in me does not cause distress in the bodies of others, I should nevertheless find their suffering intolerable because of the affection I have for myself,
- 93 In the same way that, though I cannot experience another's suffering in myself, his suffering is hard for him to bear because of his affection for himself.
- 94 I should dispel the suffering of others because it is suffering like my own suffering. I should help others too because of their nature as beings, which is like my own being.
- 95 When happiness is liked by me and others equally, what is so special about me that I strive after happiness only for myself?
- 96 When fear and suffering are disliked by me and others equally, what is so special about me that I protect myself and not the other?
- 102 Without exception, no sufferings belong to anyone. They must be warded off simply because they are suffering. Why is any limitation put on this?
- 103 If one asks why suffering should be prevented, no one disputes that! If it must be prevented, then all of it must be. If not, then this goes for oneself as for everyone.
- 104 You may argue: compassion causes us so much suffering, why force it to arise? Yet when one sees how much the world suffers, how can this suffering from compassion be considered great?
- 105 If the suffering of one ends the suffering of many, then one who has compassion for others and himself must cause that suffering to arise.
- 106 That is why Supuspacandra, though undergoing torture at the hands of the king, did nothing to prevent his own suffering out of sacrifice for many sufferers.
- 107 Those who have developed the continuum of their mind in this way, to whom the suffering of others is as important as the things they themselves hold dear, plunge down into the Avīci hell as geese into a cluster of lotus blossoms.

- 110 Therefore, just as I protect myself to the last against criticism, let me develop in this way an attitude of protectiveness and of generosity towards others as well.
- 111 Through habituation there is the understanding of 'I' regarding the drops of sperm and blood of two other people, even though there is in fact no such thing.
- 112 Why can I not also accept another's body as my self in the same way, since the otherness of my own body has been settled and is not hard to accept?
- 113 One should acknowledge oneself as having faults and others as oceans of virtues. Then one should meditate on renouncing one's own self-identity and accepting other people.
- 114 In the same way that the hands and other limbs are loved because they form part of the body, why are embodied creatures not likewise loved because they form part of the universe?
- 115 In the same way that, with practice, the idea of a self arose towards this, one's own body, though it is without a self, with practice will not the same idea of a self develop towards others too?
- 116 Though acting like this for the good of others, there is neither intoxication nor dismay. Even after giving oneself as food, there arises no hope for reward.
- 117 Therefore, in the same way that one desires to protect oneself from affliction, grief, and the like, so an attitude of protectiveness and of compassion should be practised towards the world.
- 118 That is why the Protector, Avalokita, empowered even his own name to drive away even such fear as the shyness people have in front of an audience.
- 119 One should not turn away from difficulty, because by the power of practice the very thing one once feared to hear becomes something without which one has no delight.

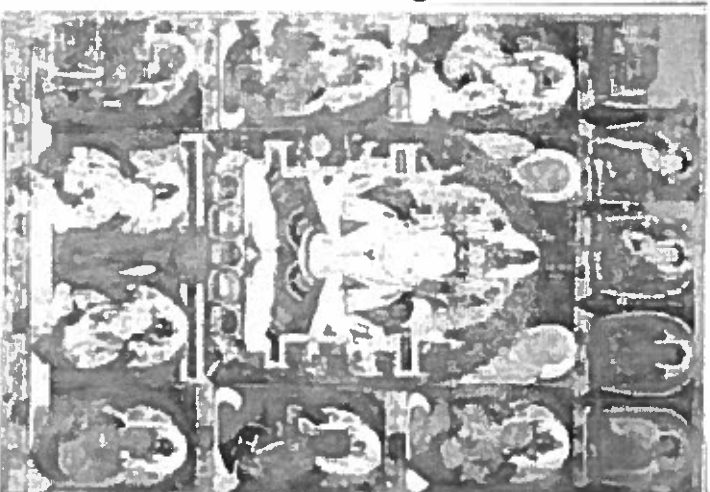
<http://www.dalailama.com/teachings/training-the-mind>

Training the Mind: Verse 1

*With a determination to achieve the highest aim
For the benefit of all sentient beings
Which surpasses even the wish-fulfilling gem,
May I hold them dear at all times.*

These four lines are about cultivating a sense of holding dear all other sentient beings. The main point this verse emphasizes is to develop an attitude that enables you to regard other sentient beings as precious, much in the manner of precious jewels. The question could be raised, "Why do we need to cultivate the thought that other sentient beings are precious and valuable?"

In one sense, we can say that other sentient beings are really the principal source of all our experiences of joy, happiness, and prosperity, and not only in terms of our day-to-day dealings with people. We can see that all the desirable experiences that we cherish or aspire to attain are dependent upon cooperation and interaction with other



sentient beings. It is an obvious fact. Similarly, from the point of view of a practitioner on the path, many of the high levels of realization that you gain and the progress you make on your spiritual journey are dependent upon cooperation and interaction with other sentient beings. Furthermore, at the resultant state of buddhahood, the truly compassionate activities of a buddha can come about spontaneously without any effort only in relation to sentient beings, because they are the recipients and beneficiaries of those enlightened activities. So one can see that other sentient beings are, in a sense, the true source of our joy, prosperity, and happiness. Basic joys and comforts of life such as food, shelter, clothing, and companionship are all dependent upon other sentient beings, as is fame and renown. Our feelings of comfort and sense of security are dependent upon other people's perceptions of us and their affection for us. It is almost as if human affection is the very basis of our existence. Our life cannot start without affection, and our sustenance, proper growth, and so on all depend on it. In order to achieve a calm mind, the more you have a sense of caring for others, the deeper your satisfaction will be. I think that the very moment you develop a

sense of caring, others appear more positive. This is because of your own attitude. On the other hand, if you reject others, they will appear to you in a negative way. Another thing that is quite clear to me is that the moment you think only of yourself, the focus of your whole mind narrows, and because of this narrow focus uncomfortable things can appear huge and bring you fear and discomfort and a sense of feeling overwhelmed by misery. The moment you think of others with a sense of caring, however, your mind widens. Within that wider angle, your own problems appear to be of no significance, and this makes a big difference. If you have a sense of caring for others, you will manifest a kind of inner strength in spite of your own difficult situations and problems. With this strength, your problems will seem less significant and bothersome. By going beyond your own problems and taking care of others, you gain inner strength, self-confidence, courage, and a greater sense of calm. This is a clear example of how one's way of thinking can really make a difference.

The Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life (Bodhicaryavatara) says that there is a phenomenological difference between the pain that you experience when you take someone else's pain upon yourself and the pain that comes directly from your own pain and suffering. In the former, there is an element of discomfort because you are sharing the other's pain; however, as Shantideva points out, there is also a certain amount of stability because, in a sense, you are voluntarily accepting that pain. In the voluntary participation in other's suffering there is strength and a sense of confidence. But in the latter case, when you are undergoing your own pain and suffering, there is an element of involuntariness, and because of the lack of control on your part, you feel weak and completely overwhelmed. In the Buddhist teachings on altruism and compassion, certain expressions are used such as "One should disregard one's own well-being and cherish other's well-being." It is important to understand these statements regarding the practice of voluntarily sharing someone else's pain and suffering in their proper context. The fundamental point is that if you do not have the capacity to love yourself, then there is simply no basis on which to build a sense of caring toward others. Love for yourself does not mean that you are indebted to yourself. Rather, the capacity to love oneself or be kind to oneself should be based on a very fundamental fact of human existence: that we all have a natural tendency to desire happiness and avoid suffering. Once this basis exists in relation to oneself, one can extend it to other sentient beings. Therefore, when we find statements in the teachings such as "Disregard your own well-being and cherish the well-being of others," we should understand them in the context of training yourself according to the ideal of compassion. This is important if we are not to indulge in self-centered ways of thinking that disregard the impact of our actions on other sentient beings. As I said earlier, we can develop an attitude of considering other sentient beings as precious in the recognition of the part their kindness plays in our own experience of joy, happiness, and success. This is the first consideration. The second consideration is as follows: through analysis and contemplation you will come to see that much of our misery, suffering, and pain

really result from a self-centered attitude that cherishes one's own well-being at the expense of others, whereas much of the joy, happiness, and sense of security in our lives arise from thoughts and emotions that cherish the well-being of other sentient beings. Contrasting these two forms of thought and emotion convinces us of the need to regard other's well-being as precious.

There is another fact concerning the cultivation of thoughts and emotions that cherish the well-being of others: one's own self-interest and wishes are fulfilled as a by-product of actually working for other sentient beings. As Je Tsong Khapa points out in his Great Exposition of the Path to Enlightenment (Lamrim Chenmo), "the more the practitioner engages in activities and thoughts that are focused and directed toward the fulfillment of others' well-being, the fulfillment or realization of his or her own aspiration will come as a by-product without having to make a separate effort." Some of you may have actually heard the remark, which I make quite often, that in some sense the bodhisattvas, the compassionate practitioners of the Buddhist path, are wisely selfish people, whereas people like ourselves are the foolishly selfish. We think of ourselves and disregard others, and the result is that we always remain unhappy and have a miserable time. The time has come to think more wisely, hasn't it? This is my belief. At some point the question comes up, "Can we really change our attitude?"

My answer on the basis of my little experience is, without hesitation, "Yes!" This is quite clear to me. The thing that we call "mind" is quite peculiar. Sometimes it is very stubborn and very difficult to change. But with continuous effort and with conviction based on reason, our minds are sometimes quite honest. When we really feel that there is some need to change, then our minds can change. Wishing and praying alone will not transform your mind, but with conviction and reason, reason based ultimately on your own experience, you can transform your mind. Time is quite an important factor here, and with time our mental attitudes can certainly change. One point I should make here is that some people, especially those who see themselves as very realistic and practical, are too realistic and obsessed with practicality. They may think, "This idea of wishing for the happiness of all sentient beings and this idea of cultivating thoughts of cherishing the well-being of all sentient beings are unrealistic and too idealistic. They don't contribute in any way to the transformation of one's mind or to attaining some kind of mental discipline because they are completely unachievable." Some people may think in these terms and feel that perhaps a more effective approach would be to begin with a close circle of people with whom one has direct interaction. They think that later one can expand and increase the parameters. They feel there is simply no point in thinking about all sentient beings since there is an infinite number of them. They may conceivably feel some kind of connection with their fellow human beings on this planet, but they feel that the infinite sentient beings in the multiple world systems and universes have nothing to do with their own experience as an individual. They

may ask, "What point is there in trying to cultivate the mind that tries to include within its sphere every living being?" In a way that may be a valid objection, but what is important here is to understand the impact of cultivating such altruistic sentiments.

The point is to try to develop the scope of one's empathy in such a way that it can extend to any form of life that has the capacity to feel pain and experience happiness. It is a matter of defining a living organism as a sentient being. This kind of sentiment is very powerful, and there is no need to be able to identify, in specific terms, with every single living being in order for it to be effective. Take, for example, the universal nature of impermanence. When we cultivate the thought that things and events are impermanent, we do not need to consider every single thing that exists in the universe in order for us to be convinced of impermanence. That is not how the mind works. So it is important to appreciate this point.

In the first verse, there is an explicit reference to the agent "I": "May I always consider others precious." Perhaps a brief discussion on the Buddhist understanding of what this "I" is referring to might be helpful at this stage. Generally speaking, no one disputes that people--you, me, and others--exist. We do not question the existence of someone who undergoes the experience of pain. We say, "I see such-and-such" and "I hear such-and-such," and we constantly use the first-person pronoun in our speech. There is no disputing the existence of the conventional level of "self" that we all experience in our day-to-day life. Questions arise, however, when we try to understand what that "self" or "I" really is. In probing these questions we may try to extend the analysis a bit beyond day-to-day life--we may, for example, recollect ourselves in our youth. When you have a recollection of something from your youth, you have a close sense of identification with the state of the body and your sense of "self" at that age. When you were young, there was a "self." When you get older there is a "self." There is also a "self" that pervades both stages. An individual can recollect his or her experiences of youth. An individual can think about his or her experiences of old age, and so on. We can see a close identification with our bodily states and sense of "self," our "I" consciousness. Many philosophers and, particularly, religious thinkers have sought to understand the nature of the individual, that "self" or "I," which maintains its continuity across time. This has been especially important within the Indian tradition. The non-Buddhist Indian schools talk about atman, which is roughly translated as "self" or "soul"; and in other non-Indian religious traditions we hear discussion about the "soul" of the being and so on. In the Indian context, atman has the distinct meaning of an agent that is independent of the empirical facts of the individual. In the Hindu tradition, for example, there is a belief in reincarnation, which has inspired a lot of debate. I have also found references to certain forms of mystical practice in which a consciousness or soul assumes the body of a newly dead person. If we are to make sense of reincarnation, if we are to make sense of a soul assuming

another body, then some kind of independent agent that is independent of the empirical facts of the individual must be posited. On the whole, non-Buddhist Indian schools have more or less come to the conclusion that the "self" really refers to this independent agent or atman. It refers to what is independent of our body and mind. Buddhist traditions on the whole have rejected the temptation to posit a "self," an atman, or a soul that is independent of our body and mind. Among Buddhist schools there is consensus on the point that "self" or "I" must be understood in terms of the aggregation of body and mind. But as to what, exactly, we are referring when we say "I" or "self," there has been divergence of opinion even among Buddhist thinkers. Many Buddhist schools maintain that in the final analysis we must identify the "self" with the consciousness of the person. Through analysis, we can show how our body is a kind of contingent fact and that what continues across time is really a being's consciousness.

Of course, other Buddhist thinkers have rejected the move to identify "self" with consciousness. Buddhist thinkers such as Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti have rejected the urge to seek some kind of eternal, abiding, or enduring "self." They have argued that following that kind of reasoning is, in a sense, succumbing to the ingrained need to grasp at something. An analysis of the nature of "self" along these lines will yield nothing because the quest involved here is metaphysical: it is a quest for a metaphysical self in which, Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti argue, we are going beyond the domain of the understanding of everyday language and everyday experience. Therefore "self," person, and agent must be understood purely in terms of how we experience our sense of "self." We should not go beyond the level of the conventional understanding of "self" and person. We should develop an understanding of our existence in terms of our bodily and mental existence so that "self" and person are in some sense understood as designations dependent upon mind and body. Chandrakirti used the example of a chariot in his Guide to the Middle Way (Madhyamakavatara). When you subject the concept of chariot to analysis, you are never going to find some kind of metaphysically or substantially real chariot that is independent of the parts that constitute the chariot. But this does not mean the chariot does not exist. Similarly, when we subject "self," the nature of "self," to such analysis, we cannot find a "self" independent of the mind and body that constitutes the existence of the individual or the being. This understanding of the "self" as a dependently originated being must also be extended to our understanding of other sentient beings. Other sentient beings are, once again, designations that are dependent upon bodily and mental existence. Bodily and mental existence is based on the aggregates, which are the psychophysical constituents of beings.



WISDOM OF THE
KADAM MASTERS

Translated, edited, and introduced by

Thupten Jinpa



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

1. The Sayings of Master Atiśa

ONCE WHEN the great master Atiśa, the sole lord, visited central Tibet, his three disciples Khutön, Ngok, and Dromtönpa¹⁰ asked the following question: "Atiśa, in order for a practitioner to attain liberation and the state of omniscience, which is the more important of the two—the sutras and their commentarial treatises or the teachers' essential instructions?"

Atiśa replied, "Essential instructions are more important than the treatises."

When asked, "Why?" he replied, "Even if one can recite the three baskets of scripture by heart and is versed in the definitions of all phenomena, at the time of actual meditative practice, if one lacks the application of the [essential instruction of the] teaching, the teaching and the person will remain separate from each other."

They then reported, "If one were to thoroughly condense the way to apply the essential instructions of the teachers, it appears to be abiding in the three vows and striving in the virtues through one's three doors. Is this not so?"

Atiśa responded: "Even if you abide in accord with the three vows and remain pure, as long as your mind is not disenchanted with the three realms of cyclic existence, you will create the conditions for turning the wheel again. Also, even if you strive through your three doors in the virtues both day and night, if you lack the knowledge of how to dedicate them toward full awakening, they will be eroded through some distorted conceptualization. Even if you are a learned scholar, a disciplined

practitioner, a teacher, or a meditator, if you fail to turn your thoughts away from the eight mundane concerns, whatever you do will be directed toward the goals of this life, and you will fail to find the path toward the future."



Again, Khutön, Ngok, and Dromtönpa asked Atiśa, "Of all the teachings of the path, which is the best?" The master replied:

- The best learning is realizing the truth of no-self.
- The best discipline is taming your mindstream.
- The best excellence is to have great altruism.
- The best instruction is the constant observation of your mind.
- The best antidote is the recognition that everything is devoid of intrinsic existence.
- The best conduct is that which is at odds with the mundane world.
- The best higher attainment is the lessening of your mental afflictions.
- The best sign of higher attainment is a decrease in your attachment.
- The best giving is the absence of possessiveness.
- The best morality is a tranquil mind.
- The best forbearance is to uphold humility.
- The best joyful perseverance is to be able to let go of the endeavor.
- The best concentration is the uncontrived mind.
- The best wisdom is to make no identification of "I am" with anything.
- The best spiritual teacher is to challenge your weaknesses.
- The best instruction is to strike at your very own shortcomings.

- The best friends are mindfulness and introspective awareness.
- The best motivating factors are your enemies, obstacles, illnesses, and sufferings.
- The best skillful means is to be free of second guesses.
- The best beneficial deed is to help someone enter the Dharma.
- The best help given is to turn someone's thoughts to the Dharma.



Dromtönpa asked, "What is the most final among all teachings?"

"The most final among all teachings is the emptiness that is endowed with the essence of compassion," Atiśa replied.

He continued, "For example, in the world there is a medicine called 'the powerful single remedy' that counteracts all illnesses. In the same manner, like the powerful single-remedy medicine, if you realize the truth of emptiness, which is the nature of reality, this becomes an antidote against all affliction."

When asked, "If this is true, why have all those who claim to have realized emptiness failed to minimize their attachment and anger?" Atiśa replied:

"These people have arrived at mere, empty words, for if you have genuinely realized the truth of emptiness, then your body, speech, and mind are like a cotton cloth that has been [softened by] pressing down under the feet or like barley soup into which butter has been thrown for seasoning. Master Āryadeva states that even if you develop a mere doubt as to whether the ultimate mode of being of things is empty, this will shred cyclic existence to pieces." Therefore, if you have realized the truth of emptiness without error, this is like [finding] the powerful single-remedy medicine. Thus, all the teachings of the path are encompassed within it."

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“How is that all the teachings of the path are encompassed within the realization of emptiness?” asked Dromtönpa.

Atiśa replied: “All the teachings of the path are embodied in the six perfections. And if practitioners realize the truth of emptiness without error, they will be free of deep desire and grasping attachment; hence, there is the uninterrupted perfection of giving. Since those who are free of grasping and attachment are not soiled by the stains of nonvirtue, there is the uninterrupted perfection of ethical discipline. Since they are devoid of anger from grasping at ‘I am’ and ‘mine,’ there is the uninterrupted perfection of forbearance. Since they are endowed with joy at the truth that has been realized, there is the uninterrupted perfection of joyful perseverance. Since they are free of distractions grasping at phenomena as substantially real, there is the uninterrupted perfection of concentration. Since they are free of conceiving anything in terms of the three spheres,¹² there is the uninterrupted perfection of wisdom.”

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“If this is so, for one who has realized the truth, is it through the view of emptiness and its meditation alone that one becomes fully enlightened?” asked Dromtönpa.

The master replied, “There is nothing in this world of appearance and everyday convention that does not come into being except from one’s own mind. The mind, too, is an empty awareness, and recognition of it [i.e., the empty mind] as the non-duality of awareness and emptiness is the *view*. Abiding in this continuously with mindfulness, free of distraction, is *meditation*. Gathering the two accumulations in an illusion-like manner from within such a state is *action*. When one can accomplish

this in one’s immediate experience through one’s practice, it will become possible in dreams as well. When this becomes possible during dreams, it will then be possible at the time of death. When this becomes possible at the point of death, it will then become possible during the intermediate state as well. And when this happens during the intermediate state, one is certain to achieve the supreme attainment.”

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Once when Master Atiśa was residing at Nyethang, the three teachers Shang Nachung Tönpa, Gyura Tönpa, and Lhetsang Tönpa asked him about the tenets of the epistemological schools.

Atiśa said: “There are many philosophical systems of both non-Buddhist and Buddhist schools, all of which are but garlands of conceptualization. Conceptualizations are beyond calculation and they have no use. As there is no time to spare in life, now is the time to seek what is most essential.”

Shang Nachung Tönpa then asked, “How does one seek what is most essential?”

Atiśa replied: “Train your mind to cultivate loving-kindness and compassion toward all sentient beings, who equal the expanse of space. For their sake, strive to gather the two accumulations and dedicate all roots of virtue that arise from this toward the full enlightenment of all sentient beings. Make sure that you recognize the nature of all of these as empty and their characteristics as like dreams and illusions.”

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When Master Atiśa first visited Ngari, he lived there for two years. There he gave many essential instructions to those headed by Lha Jangchup Ö.¹³ He was intending to return to India, and

as he was about to take to the road, Lha Jangchup Ö once again requested personal advice. When Atiśa responded that what had already been given in the past should suffice, Lha persisted with his plea. The master then gave the following instruction:

Emaho!

O friend, you whose knowledge is high and whose mind is utterly clear,
though it is inappropriate for me, one of low intelligence and lacking in accomplishments, to offer any advice,
as you, my excellent friend who is so dear to my heart, have exhorted me,
I, a childlike one with small intelligence, offer this suggestion to your heart, my friend.

As one requires a teacher until the attainment of enlightenment, rely on a sublime teacher, O friend.

As one requires learning until the ultimate mode of being is realized, listen to your teacher's essential instructions.

As the mere knowledge of the teachings does not lead to full enlightenment, put it into practice, for knowing alone is inadequate.

Distance yourself from those objects that afflict your mind, and always reside in places that increase virtue.

As distractions cause harm, until one has attained stability, seek solitary forests.

Forsake friends who give rise to affliction, seek those who enhance virtue, and respect their wishes.

As there is no end to mundane chores, discard them and abide with natural ease.

Throughout day and night dedicate your virtues and always guard your mind.

As you've received essential instructions, whatever you do, meditation or otherwise, do so according to your teacher's words.

If you pursue this with great respect, you will reap its fruits before long.

If you act in accord with the Dharma from your heart, both provisions and support will be attained as byproducts.

O friends, sensual desires are insatiable, like drinking salt water; therefore cultivate contentment.

Despise all thoughts of haughtiness, conceit, and arrogance; be tranquil and tamed.

As distracting pursuits referred to as "merit" are obstacles to Dharma practice, relinquish them.

As offerings and honor are Māra's¹⁴ lasso, measure them carefully like the weights of a scale.

As words of praise and fame are tricksters, expel them like spit or snot.

Though today happiness, good fortune, and friends may have converged, since this is only momentary, leave them behind.

Since the future is longer than the present, hide well your resources in treasure as provisions for the future.

As you must depart by leaving everything behind, there is no use for anything, so cling to nothing.

Cultivate compassion toward the weak; abandon mocking and disparaging them.

Have no prejudice of clinging to or recoiling from the classes of friends and enemies.

Have no jealousy toward the learned ones, but respect them and receive knowledge from them.

Wisdom of the Kadam Masters

Do not scrutinize others' faults, but probe your own and discard them like poisoned blood.
Think not of your virtues but of others'; like a servant, show respect for all.

Cultivate recognition of all beings as your parents and love them as if they were your own children.

With a smiling face and loving heart, always speak what is true without hostility.

Since excessive pointless conversation causes confusion, engage in appropriate measures of speech.

Since excessive pointless chores disrupt your virtuous deeds, discard non-Dharma pursuits.

Do not strive too much in meaningless pursuits, for this is wasteful hardship.

Come what may, do not die with attachment; since the other shore is born of karma, it is better to rest your mind at ease.

Alas! If you become despised by the sublime beings, you are as good as dead; so be honest, not deceitful.

Since the sufferings of this life arise from past karma, do not blame others.

Since all happiness is the teachers' blessings, repay their kindness.

Since you cannot tame others' minds while your own mind remains untamed, first discipline your own mind.

Since you cannot help enhance others if you lack superior cognition, strive well in your meditative practice.

Since you are certain to leave your accumulated wealth behind when you depart, commit no negative act for its sake.

The Sayings of Master Atiśa

Since this wealth of distractions is without essence, give charity graced with gifts.

Since it beautifies this life and leads to happiness in the future, always observe pure ethical discipline.

Since hatred proliferates in the degenerate age, don the armor of forbearance free of anger.

Since in indolence you might be left behind, ignite the flame of joyful perseverance like a blazing fire.

Since it is on the road of distraction that one exhausts one's lifespan, the time has now come to endeavor in concentration.

Since it is due to wrong views that one fails to realize the ultimate mode of being, inspect well the perfect truth.

O friends, there is no joy in this mire of samsara, so depart to liberation's dry shores.

Practice well the teachers' instructions and drain the lake of samsara's suffering.

Keep this advice well in your hearts and listen to this suggestion, for this is not mere mouthing of words.

If you do this, I'll be happy, and both you and others will enjoy happiness.

Listen well, dear friend, to these words of advice from an ignorant man.

Thus the master Atiśa, the sole lord, advised Lhatsün Jangchup Ö.



Once when Atiśa was residing in the rocky mountains of Yerpa, he gave the following instruction to Ölgöpa Yeshé Bar:¹⁵

Homage to blessed Ārya Tārā! Homage to the sublime teachers! O noble son, reflect well on these words of mine.

In general, the lifespan of human beings in this degenerate age is short, and there are a great many fields of knowledge one could pursue. As you have no certainty how long you will live, seek to accomplish swiftly your greatest aspirations.

Do not say "I am a fully ordained monk" while busying yourself with activities of mundane livelihood, such as acquiring possessions.

Do not say "I am a hermit monk" while nursing the pain of having your mundane pursuits undermined—or the fear of this happening—even though you are residing in the wilderness.

Do not say "I am a hermit monk" while your mind remains engrossed in admiration of this life's sensual pleasures and in harmful intentions.

Do not say "I am a hermit monk" while not relinquishing association with the worldly even though you are residing in the wilderness, or while continuing to pass time in frivolous chatter, or in conversations related to a householder's life, with whoever happens to be around.

Do not say "I am a bodhisattva monk" while being incapable of tolerating even the slightest of harms to yourself or rendering the slightest of benefits to others.

If you continue to say as much, despite such actions, you are telling a great lie to the world. You might be able to make such claims to the world, but you cannot deceive those who possess the divine eye, unobstructed at all times. Second, you should not make such claims because the law of karma and its effects follows after you. Third, you should not do so to beings who possess the eye of the Dharma. Furthermore, you must recall your pledges in the presence of the meditation deities and the teachers when you generated the awakening mind.

When you encounter things that try your patience, do not become despondent or exclaim, "O this is so difficult!" and fail

to practice forbearance. Remember: though this may be difficult, you have no choice but to face it. Hesitation born of wondering whether something is too difficult is relevant only to the period prior to taking the vows and making the pledge. After you have taken the vows and made the pledge, if you undermine them, this constitutes deceiving the meditation deities and teachers. Therefore, even when it is difficult, remember the only choice is to practice forbearance.

Also, the point of residing in the wilderness is to forsake association with the worldly and to stop clinging to friends and family. Relinquishing these ensures the cessation of all causes and conditions for distraction and conceptualization, such as yearning for sensual objects. You look only at the precious mind of awakening and never, even for a single instant, pursue the thought that worries about mundane pursuits.

Mundane conceptions arise frequently and remain powerful because of failing to engage correctly in the practice of Dharma in the past and because of a weak mental habit for such practice. Therefore, if you fail to apply special antidotes against them, residing in the wilderness will be pointless, for then you will only be like the birds and wild animals that live there. Do not think that since it is too difficult at present you will engage in the practice later on; if a blind person loses hold of a precious jewel, he will not find it again.

When you undertake the practice, do not measure in terms of years and months; rather, analyzing your mind, assess your level of realization by how deeply you are habituated to the practice. Ask whether your afflictions are diminished. Constantly watch your mind. Do not inflict suffering upon yourself; do not deceive yourself; do not deceive the meditation deities and the teachers; and do not do things that spell doom for both self and others.

Even if the mundane goals of this life are undermined, [this is good, for] that which must be undermined is becoming so. Say

you are faced with a pile of waste that you have to sweep up and throw away. If someone were there to help you, wouldn't you be delighted? In the same way, whatever conceptualizations you have about the affairs of this life must be relinquished with all available antidotes, and if your teachers and special friends help you do this, aren't you delighted?

Having pledged in the presence of your meditation deities and teachers, do not discriminate among the objects of your giving. Although differences do exist among the objects, as far as training in the awakening mind is concerned, there is no difference among them.

Do not be angry toward those who inflict harm, for if you get angry with those who cause harm, when will you practice forbearance? Whenever afflictions arise you must remember their antidotes. What point is a Dharma practice that allows afflictions to roam free? So when looking at the precious awakening mind, do it without giving a single opening to loss of mindfulness. For when a gap is opened due to lapsed mindfulness, the māras of affliction will enter, and if they do they will create obstacles for the awakening mind. When this happens remember that it will undermine others' welfare, and there will be no choice for you either but birth in the lower realms. Though you may have the thought, "But I have practiced Dharma," this will mean nothing, and you will go empty-handed.

O noble son, when at last you die, be sure you do not cause your teachers and special friends sorrow and disappointment. Do not cause laypeople who respect the Dharma to become disappointed and doubt-ridden.

If you do not examine again and again by comparing your own mind with the sacred scriptures, though you might feel, "I have practiced Dharma," the practice and the person will remain far apart. And if, when you die, instead of experiencing the signs of having trained your mind in the awakening mind, you experience the signs of the lower realms, others will have no option but

to feel disappointment and sorrow. Therefore, giving up entirely practice tainted with the vain thought "I have spent my entire life in Dharma practice," ensure that you do not enter death's door empty-handed.

In brief, even if you reside in the wilderness, if you have not let go of mundane pursuits and do not avert your mind from yearning for sensual objects, then the Dharma has failed to benefit you. This is called "not having accomplished one's task." If you hope to conduct yourself in such a way that both this life and future lives are not undermined, then Dharma practice has become a mere hobby for you. Such a hobby will remain nothing but a Dharma practice of words, food, and pretense.

Therefore, rely on special friends; do not associate with negative companions; do not reside in fixed locations; and do not stay at one place and hoard contaminated possessions. Whatever you do, do so by relating it to the Dharma. Ensure that whatever you do becomes an antidote to the afflictions. When you conduct yourself in this manner, it becomes perfect Dharma practice, so put effort into this. If higher qualities arise in you, do not become inflated with conceit, for you will fall prey to Māra.

While residing in places on the margins of town, ensure that you yourself are pacified and tamed. Be modest in desires and learn to be content. Do not focus on your own good qualities or seek out others' shortcomings. Do not be afraid and apprehensive. Do not have too many preconceptions. Cultivate a good heart. Do not be distracted by misguided ways but contemplate the Dharma on a regular basis. Adopt humility, accept losses, give up trumpeting your good deeds, let go of deep desires, cultivate affection, and have moderation in all things. Be easy to please and easy to nurture. Run away from the worldly like a wild animal.

If you do not relinquish mundane norms, you are not a Dharma practitioner. If you do not relinquish the four pursuits, such as farming, you are not a monk.¹⁶ If you do not discard

sensual objects, you are not a fully ordained monk. If you lack loving-kindness and the awakening mind, you are not a bodhisattva. If you do not let go of mundane pursuits, you are not a meditating yogi.

Be not a servant to sensual desires. In brief, while residing in the wilderness, have few chores and undertake only the practice of Dharma. In this way ensure that when death approaches you will have no regrets.

Again, Atiśa said:

Now in this age of degeneration is not the time for bravado;
it is the time to lay bare the bones of your heart.¹⁷

Now is not the time to claim the high ground; it is the
time to stake the ground of humility.

Now is not the time to seek an entourage and servants;
it is the time to seek solitude.

Now is not the time to measure your students; it is
the time to measure yourself.

Now is not the time to cling to words; it is the time to
contemplate their meaning.

Now is not the time to travel around; it is the time
to remain settled in one place.

2. The Sayings of Dromtönpa

(Atiśa's student)

Known also simply as Drom, Dromtönpa's personal name is Gyalwai Jungné. He is considered a cofounder of the Kadam tradition along with Atiśa, of whom he is the spiritual heir. When he was young, Drom met a master from eastern Tibet named Setsün, who was on his way to Nepal and India. Following Setsün's return to Tibet, Dromtönpa became his student and studied various Buddhist texts and practices under him. Around this time Dromtönpa also began a serious study of Sanskrit with an Indian paṇḍita, possibly the famed Smṛti Jñānakīrti. Thus by the time Dromtönpa met with Atiśa, he was already an accomplished scholar with a good command of Sanskrit.

Of course Dromtönpa's meeting with Master Atiśa marked the turning point of his spiritual career. The success of Atiśa's mission, especially in central Tibet, was due in large part to Dromtönpa. It was Drom who first gathered together the great and greatest in the Tibetan Buddhist world of the time to meet the Indian master. It was Drom who largely dictated the style of teachings given by Atiśa in central Tibet—placing emphasis on such basics as the law of karma; stressing the maintenance of sound ethical discipline; developing a systematic, graduated approach to the path to enlightenment; and, most of all, unwaveringly advocating the cultivation of an altruistic awakening mind rooted in universal compassion—all of which became hallmarks of the Kadam tradition. It was also Drom who, through the founding of Radreng Monastery, ensured the long-term continuation of Master Atiśa's legacy in Tibet. It was Drom who preserved a detailed timeline of Atiśa's years in Tibet, thus providing the basis for all subsequent biographies of the master. Finally, Drom collaborated

with Atiśa on various projects, translating important Sanskrit Buddhist texts into Tibetan.

The portrait of Drom that emerges from his various biographies is of a deeply humble and truly compassionate man. On a personal level Drom chose to remain a lay practitioner, not taking the full monastic ordination so that he would have one less ground for status-related self-importance. He also advised his disciples, "Even if you are being honored by others with their heads bowed to you, on your part you should remain humble." Drom was particularly struck by the suffering of people afflicted with the debilitating illness of leprosy, which seems to have been not uncommon in certain regions of central Tibet during his time. It is said that at one point Drom actually helped nurse some lepers himself. Thanks largely to the influence of the *Book of Kadam*, the core of which is attributed to Master Atiśa, Dromtönpa over time came to be closely identified with Avalokiteśvara, the buddha of compassion believed by Tibetans to have a special destiny with the Land of Snows. Drom's disciples included, among others, the three Kadam brothers—Potowa, Chengawa, and Phuchungwa—Master Gönpawa, and Khamlungpa.¹⁸

The three brothers, disciples of the spiritual mentor Dromtönpa, requested of him a method to condense the essential points of all the aspects of the path to omniscience.

Dromtönpa stated: "For an individual practitioner to attain the buddhahood of omniscience, an inconceivable number of precepts can be entries to the path. As for what is to be cultivated within, however, there is only one thing. What is this single point? It is emptiness endowed with the essence of compassion.

"To specify its aspects further, *empty* refers to the ultimate awakening mind; it is the ultimate mode of being of all phenomena realized as primordially unborn. *Compassion* is the conventional awakening mind, which is the generation of great

compassion toward those sentient beings who have failed to realize this [unborn nature]. Therefore Mahayana practitioners for whom the two awakening minds have not yet arisen should first strive to generate them. In the middle, while training in the two awakening minds that have already arisen in their mental continua, they gain certainty that they will actualize their ultimate results—the Buddha's truth body and form body.

"Although there are many methods for generating the awakening mind where it has not yet arisen, when summarized for practice there are only three root methods and their nine principal branches. First, the three roots are subsumed into (1) training the mind, (2) gathering the accumulations, and (3) seeking the meditative absorptions.

"Their nine principal branches are: First, although there exist numerous methods for training the mind, the three principal ones are: (1) meditation on impermanence, (2) cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion, and (3) meditation on the two selflessnesses. Among the methods for training the mind, these three are the greatest, and these three, moreover, encompass all other methods.

"Although there are numerous methods for gathering the accumulations, the three principal ones are: (1) making offerings of material things and service to the teachers, (2) making offerings to the Three Jewels, and (3) making offerings of material things and service to the spiritual community. Among the methods of accumulating merit, these three are the greatest, and they also encompass all other methods.

"Although there are numerous ways of seeking meditative absorption, the three principal ones are: (1) observing pure ethical discipline, (2) making supplications to the lineage teachers, and (3) seeking both physical and mental solitude. These three alone are the greatest, and they encompass the methods for seeking the meditative absorptions of tranquil abiding (*samatha*) and insight (*vipāśyanā*).

“Thus, as a result of practicing these nine points in an integrated way, the two awakening minds arise in your mental continuum with spontaneous force. The moment the ultimate awakening mind arises, the realization of all external and internal phenomena as free of dualistic elaborations—as empty and unborn—will spontaneously arise as well. At that time you will have found within yourself a joyful state of mind. The moment the conventional awakening mind arises, feelings especially of loving-kindness and compassion toward the sentient beings who have failed to recognize this [truth of emptiness] will arise. Your sole task in life will become working for the welfare of sentient beings. At that point whatever activities you engage in will become beneficial to other sentient beings.

“You will thus combine these two awakening minds into a union so that at the very moment [when the realization of] emptiness [is present], compassion for sentient beings especially will grow, while at the very moment of compassion, you will not observe a substantial reality of oneself and other sentient beings. Thus by recognizing all appearances as empty and like illusions, when these two minds arise in union, you have entered the unmistakable path of the Great Vehicle. As you become trained in this union, and when your habituation to it becomes perfected, you will attain the perfect truth body and the perfect form body. From the ultimate awakening mind you attain the truth body, while from the conventional awakening mind—i.e., compassion—you attain the form body. And from mastery of the indivisible union of these two you attain the indivisible nature of the truth and form bodies.”

Again, the three brothers asked Dromtönpa, “Of the two—view and action—which is more important for the perfection of one’s own interests and others’ welfare?”

Dromtönpa replied, “In order to perfect the welfare of self and others after entering the door of the Great Vehicle, you need to combine perfect view and perfect action. One in isolation from the other cannot accomplish this aim.”

“What then constitutes perfect view and perfect action?” they asked.

Dromtönpa responded: “*Perfect view* refers to the recognition that all phenomena are, from the point of view of their ultimate nature, devoid of existing in any substantial mode of reality and free of all extremes of eternalism and nihilism, and the recognition that all external and internal phenomena are, from the conventional perspective, like dreams, illusions, and apparitions. You recognize them simply as expressions of your own mind, and you thus never place your trust in anything or chase after any objects.

“*Perfect action* refers to respecting the law of karma and its effects—understanding that on the dream-like, illusion-like level of conventional truth, the positive and negative karmas do not fail to give rise to their effects. Out of great compassion you strive for the welfare of the sentient beings who fail to recognize this truth.

“Such perfect view and perfect action arise naturally for someone in whom the two awakening minds have arisen.”

“If this is so, what flaws arise when view and action are in isolation from each other?” they asked.

Dromtönpa replied, “If you do not respect the law of karma and its effects and let your behavior become degraded, you will be incapable of working for the welfare of both self and others, so your view will also become misguided. If you possess perfect action but fail to realize the ultimate mode of being, you will be incapable of working for the welfare of both self and others, so your conduct will become misguided. Therefore, if you do not combine view and action, you will fall into error; you must train in their union.”



Again, the three brothers asked Dromtönpa, "Of the two—practicing in solitude and benefiting other sentient beings through teaching—which has a greater impact?"

Dromtönpa replied: "If a beginner without the slightest experience of realization within his or her mental continuum were to help others through teaching, it would have no benefit. It would be like pouring blessings from an empty container: there will be no blessings to pour out. The essential instructions [of such a teacher] would be like beer made of fermented grains that have not been crushed well: such essential instructions will have no taste or vitality.

"A person who has attained the stage of 'heat'" but not its stability will not be able to bring about the welfare of other sentient beings, for it would be like pouring blessings from a full container: when the other container becomes full, it itself would become empty. The essential instructions of such a person would be like passing a torch from one hand to another: when the other hand is illuminated, one's own would become darkened.

"Once one has attained the bodhisattva levels, one should engage in the activities of bringing about the welfare of sentient beings as much as possible. Here the blessings are like the higher attainments flowing from an excellent vase: even when all others are enhanced, it never becomes empty. The essential instructions of such a person resemble a source lamp: even when all other lamps are lighted, the source lamp itself does not become obscured.

"Therefore, during this age of degeneration is the time for ordinary beings to familiarize their minds with loving-kindness and compassion in solitude. It is not the time to actually benefit sentient beings. It is the time to guard against the afflictions

within your mind. This is analogous to the period when it is more appropriate to guard the fledgling shoot of a medicinal tree than to cut it."



Once a teacher from Kham asked Dromtönpa about the meaning of the two selflessnesses.

Dromtönpa replied, "If you were to probe with your mind and search from the top of your crown aperture to the bottom of the soles of your feet, not a single entity would you find that is called the 'self.' That nonfinding is the selflessness of persons. Recognizing that the searching mind, too, is devoid of intrinsic existence is the selflessness of phenomena."



A woman named Salo Tsomo of Drom from the Tré region of Phenpo made an offering of forty bags of barley [to Dromtönpa] and asked the following question: "My brother Dromtsik sent me to give you a message, O spiritual mentor. All the monks here have gathered in order to attain the omniscient state of buddhahood. We two siblings seek the same attainment. Spiritual mentor, since you possess the essential instructions of Master Atiśa, the sole lord, as if poured from one full vase into another, today we request that you confer on us, keeping nothing hidden, the essential instructions for attaining buddhahood."

The spiritual mentor Dromtönpa replied, "First extensively contemplate death and impermanence and the law of karma and its effects, and guard the purity of all the vows that you have pledged to observe. Cultivate loving-kindness and compassion extensively and stabilize the awakening mind. To this end, gather the two accumulations by means

of various methods. Purify negative karmas through various means. While maintaining the nonobjectification of the three spheres²⁰ with regard to all phenomena, dedicate all your roots of virtue toward the attainment of full enlightenment by all sentient beings. If you conduct yourself in this way, you need feel no sorrow for not having met Atiśa. There is no greater teaching than this for becoming fully awakened. In the future none need feel saddened for not having met me, the old man of Drom, for there is no greater teachings than this.”



Once a lay practitioner asked the spiritual mentor Dromtönpa, “If one remains undivorced from loving-kindness, compassion, and the awakening mind, is this not always the cause, directly or indirectly, for the fulfillment of others’ welfare?”

Dromtönpa replied: “Without question this is the cause for the perfect realization of others’ welfare. This will become the cause for the perfect realization of your own welfare as well, for if you remain undivorced from loving-kindness, compassion, and the awakening mind, it is impossible to be reborn in the three lower realms of existence. Starting right now you can become an ‘irreversible’ person. If, however, due to past grave negative karmas and powerful adverse current conditions, you were to take birth in the lower realms, a mere single instance of recollecting loving-kindness, compassion, and the awakening mind would, that very instant, free you from that lower-realm birth. You would be certain to achieve the status of an extraordinary human or celestial existence. For example, the *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* states:

Whatever suffering is in the world
arises from wishing for one’s own happiness;

whatever happiness is in the world
arises from wishing for others’ happiness.

What need is there to say more?
The childish pursue their own interests,
while the buddhas act for the welfare of others;
observe the difference between these two.²¹

“Therefore, it has been taught that loving-kindness, compassion, and the awakening mind are the causes for accomplishing the great purposes of both oneself and others.”



Again, an elder was once circumambulating the outer perimeter at Radreng Monastery. Dromtönpa asked him, “O elder, performing circumambulation may be satisfying, but wouldn’t it be better if you practiced the Dharma?”

The elder felt that, instead of performing circumambulations, perhaps it would be more effective if he were to read Mahayana sutras, so he began to read sutras on the temple veranda. Dromtönpa then asked him, “Reading sutras might also be satisfying, but wouldn’t it be better if you practiced the Dharma?”

The elder took this as a sign that, when contrasted with reading sutras, engaging in meditative absorption is more profitable, so he abandoned reading sutras and sat down with his eyes closed. Again, Dromtönpa asked, “Meditating might also be satisfying, but wouldn’t it be better to practice the Dharma instead?”

Failing to think of any other method, the elder asked, “O spiritual mentor, then what kind of Dharma practice would you have me undertake?”

Wisdom of the Kadam Masters

It is said that Drom replied, "O elder, give up this life; give up this life."

In this way Dromtönpa stated that so long as we fail to forsake attachment to this life, whatever we undertake does not become Dharma practice, for such an act remains within the bounds of the eight mundane concerns. By contrast, if we let go of attachment to this life, we will remain untainted by the eight mundane concerns. Only then will whatever we do become a path to liberation.



Once Potowa asked the spiritual mentor Dromtönpa, "What is the demarcation between Dharma and non-Dharma?"

Dromtönpa replied, "If it is a remedy against affliction, it is Dharma; if not, it is not Dharma. If it is at variance with all worldly people, it is Dharma; if it is in accord with the worldly, it is not Dharma. If its trace is positive, it is Dharma; if not, it is not Dharma."



ESSENTIAL MIND TRAINING

Tibetan Wisdom for Daily Life

Translated, edited, and introduced by

Thupten Jinpa



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

with the emergence of *lojong*, the Tibetan mind training teaching, and is undeniably the basis for Chekawa's famed *Seven-Point Mind Training*.

One of the beautiful things about Atiśa's two seminal texts is that, like many of world's great spiritual works, the sentiments, values, and contemplative practices presented in them have universal relevance and appeal, despite their origin in a very specific context of Mahayana Buddhism. Except for some specific elements, such as the pursuit of enlightenment as defined in a very particular way, not only can the key teachings be adopted by spiritual aspirants of different religious faiths, they can also be easily embraced and put into practice by people of no particular faith. In essence, the central message of these texts has a certain timeless quality.

1. Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland

Atiśa

Sanskrit title: *Bodhisattvamañeṅgalī*
Homage to great compassion.
Homage to the teachers.
Homage to the faith divinities.

1

Discard all lingering doubts,
and strive with dedication in your practice.
Thoroughly relinquish sloth, mental dullness,
and laziness,
and strive always with joyful perseverance.

2

With mindfulness, awareness, and heedfulness,
constantly guard the gateways of your senses.
Again and again, three times both day and night,
examine the flow of your thoughts.

3

Reveal your own shortcomings,
but do not seek out others' errors.
Conceal your own good qualities,
but proclaim those of others.

4
Forsake wealth and ministrations;
at all times relinquish gain and fame.
Have modest desires, be easily satisfied,
and reciprocate kindness.

5
Cultivate love and compassion,
and stabilize your awakening mind.
Relinquish the ten negative actions,
and always reinforce your faith.¹⁸

6
Destroy anger and conceit,
and be endowed with humility.
Relinquish wrong livelihood,
and be sustained by ethical livelihood.

7
Forsake material possessions,
embellish yourself with the wealth of the noble ones.
Avoid all trifling distractions,
and reside in the solitude of wilderness.

8
Abandon frivolous words;
constantly guard your speech.
When you see your teachers and preceptors,¹⁹
reverently generate the wish to serve.

9
Toward wise beings with Dharma eyes
and toward beginners on the path as well,

recognize them as your spiritual teachers.
[In fact] when you see any sentient being,
view that one as your parent, your child, or your grandchild.

10
Renounce negative friendships,
and rely on a spiritual friend.
Dispel hostile and unhappy mental states,
and venture forth to where happiness lies.

11
Abandon attachment to all things
and abide free of desire.
Attachment fails to bring even the higher realms;
in fact, it kills the life of true liberation.

12
When you see the factors of happiness,
there always persevere.
Whichever task you take up first,
address this task primarily.
In this way, you ensure the success of both tasks,
where otherwise you accomplish neither.

13
Since you take no pleasure in negative deeds,
when a thought of self-importance arises,
at that instant deflate your pride
and recall your teacher's instructions.

14
When discouraged thoughts arise,
uplift your mind and meditate on the emptiness of both.²⁰

Essential Mind Training

When objects of attraction or aversion appear,
view them as you would illusions or apparitions.

15

When you hear unpleasant words,
view them as [mere] echoes.

When injuries afflict your body,
see them as [the fruits of] past deeds.

16

Dwell utterly in solitude, beyond town limits.
Like the carcass of a wild animal,
hide yourself away [in the forest]
and live free of attachment.

17

Always remain firm in your commitment.
When a hint of procrastination and laziness arises,
at that instant enumerate your flaws
and recall the essence of [spiritual] conduct.

18

However, if you do encounter others,
speak peacefully and truthfully.
Do not grimace or frown,
but always maintain a smile.

19

In general when you see others,
be free of miserliness and delight in giving;
relinquish all thoughts of envy.

Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland

20

To help guard others' minds,
forsake all disputation
and always be endowed with forbearance.

21

Be free of flattery and fickleness in friendship,
be steadfast and reliable at all times.
Do not disparage others,
but always abide with respectful demeanor.

22

When giving advice,
maintain compassion and altruism.
Never defame the teachings.
Whatever practices you admire,
with aspiration and the ten spiritual deeds,²¹
strive diligently, dividing day and night.

23

Whatever virtues you gather though the three times,
dedicate them toward the unexcelled great awakening.
Distribute your merit to all sentient beings,
and utter the peerless aspiration prayers
of the seven limbs at all times.²²

24

If you proceed thus, you'll swiftly perfect merit and wisdom
and eliminate the two defilements.²³
Since your human existence will be meaningful,
you'll attain the unexcelled enlightenment.

Essential Mind Training

25

The wealth of faith, the wealth of morality,
the wealth of giving, the wealth of learning,
the wealth of conscience, the wealth of shame,
and the wealth of insight—these are the seven riches.

26

These precious and excellent jewels
are the seven inexhaustible riches.
Do not speak of these to those not human.
Among others guard your speech;
when alone guard your mind.

This concludes the *Bodhisattva's Jewel Garland* composed by
the Indian abbot Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna.

This section is from a famous text called the "Seven Point Mind Training" by 12th C. Geshe Chekawa. The bold lines are his original text, and the rest is commentary by a later Tibetan monk. The italics are the commentator's headings for sections in the text.

III. Taking adverse conditions onto the path of enlightenment

The third, taking adverse conditions onto the path of enlightenment, is presented by the following:

When the world and its inhabitants boil with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of enlightenment.

A Commentary on the "Seven-Point Mind Training"

Whatever misfortunes befall you, whether caused by living beings or by the elements, are fruits of your own past negative actions. Misfortunes are viewed as adversities and obstacles by those unfamiliar with Dharma. But for someone who has entered the gateway of Dharma, the master said, they are exactly like what Chengawa explained to Shawo Gangpa: "If someone has mind training, all of this—physical illness and mental suffering—becomes a skillful means through which you receive the blessings and higher attainments of the teachers and the Three Jewels." Therefore, transform every circumstance into a factor that instills in you the awakening mind.

This has two parts: (A) training in the two awakening minds (the extraordinary thoughts) and (B) striving in the dual practice of accumulation and purification (the extraordinary activities).

A. Training in the two awakening minds, the extraordinary thoughts

1. Taking adverse conditions onto the path of enlightenment by means of training in the conventional awakening mind

Taking adverse conditions onto the path by means of the conventional awakening mind is taught first. So how do you take these onto the path?

Reflect: "Since beginningless time I have failed to distinguish properly between enemies and friends; I have failed to recognize what is to be relinquished and what is to be adopted. I have erred, for whatever spiritual practices I have pursued have all been expressions of self-grasping. I have become no more intimate with liberation and [the Buddha's] omniscience. Today, therefore, I will properly distinguish enemies from friends and ensure the success of my Dharma practice. From now on, my own self is the enemy, and sentient beings are the

friends. Beyond viewing my self as my enemy and relinquishing myself and viewing others as friends and cherishing them, nothing else is to be done."

a. Recognizing your own self as the enemy

The reason why your own self is the enemy is presented by the next line:

Banish all blames to the single source.

This line presents seeing your self as the enemy. Whatever befalls you, without blaming others, think, "This is due to my own self-grasping." In this way, cast out all the resentments you hold inside. It has been taught:

Whatever harms are in the world,
whatever dangers and sufferings are in the world—
all of these arise from grasping at self;
what good is this great demon for me?

Also:

If there is "self," recognition of "others" arises;
on this division into self and others, grasping and
anger arise;
and in relation to these two emotions,
all calamities come into being.⁴⁸

Also:

Recognizing myself as flawed
and others as an ocean of higher qualities,
I will thoroughly discard grasping at self
and practice embracing others.⁴⁹

Reflect, "All my shortcomings and defects come from grasping at selfhood. From beginningless time, I have held on to a self when there was none. Wherever I was born, though there was no self, I have grasped my body as [the basis of my] selfhood. Taking its side, I have resorted to rejection and affirmation depending on whether I deemed something desirable or undesirable. In this way I have committed all three—deception, duplicity, and deviousness—toward others and, as a consequence, have accumulated afflictions and negative karma again and again. This has compelled me, since beginningless time, to endure the incalculable sufferings of cyclic existence in general and the unfathomable sufferings of the three lower realms in particular. Still, as stated in the following:

Although countless eons have passed
with such great hardships,
you have sought only suffering.⁵⁰

"As long as I fail to view this self as the enemy, I will continue to seek its well-being. As a result, I will accumulate negative karma compelling me to wander further in this infinite cycle of existence, where I will suffer more and longer than before. So this cherishing of self brings all the sufferings of the three times. Since this self has been my executioner and enemy from beginningless time, then in my every death in the beginningless cycle of existence, no one else has done the killing. Rather I have slain myself!" As if biting your lower lip,⁵¹ firmly hold your own self as the enemy.

Where is this enemy? It is in your own heart. Śāntideva illustrates this, for example:

If this ancient enemy long settled,
the sole cause of steadily increasing hosts of harms,

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has found its home within my very heart,
how can there be joy for me within this cyclic existence?⁵²

Think that this kind of behavior—living on the head yet denying victory to the eyes—is most inappropriate.⁵³ Thus the focus or the site of this self-grasping, which is the source of all defects, is the very body you are born into. Since beginningless lifetimes you have held on to an “I” when there was none and have held on to a self when there was none. Self-grasping is fraught with defects and is the source of all sufferings. So to cherish, look at, and protect this discolored human corpse—a lump of pus and blood and a sack of mucus—is like carrying a bag of thorns on your back while naked! Happiness would result if you let go, but instead you believe that pursuing self-interest will bring happiness, and you thus sink ever deeper into suffering as though you craved it. Śāntideva, too, states:

Whatever suffering is in the world
comes from seeking your own happiness,
while whatever happiness is in the world
comes from the wish for the happiness of others.

What need is there to say more?
The childish pursue their own interests,
while the buddhas act for the welfare of others:
observe the difference between the two.⁵⁴

Among all the afflictions that have harmed you since beginningless time, this self-grasping is the worst. This jealous, evil-ridden force that causes beings to commit negative acts against all other beings, from high spiritual teachers to lice, resides right here within. It blocks the attainment of freedom from cyclic existence and ties beings further into bondage. This force

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welcomes all human and nonhuman agents of harm. This owl-headed betrayer⁵⁵ is the very mind that grasps on to “I” or “self” and seeks only its own selfish ends. Thinking in this manner, recognize the enemy as the enemy. Śāntideva states:

In all the hundreds of world systems
of cyclic existence, this has harmed me.
Rouse your vengeance thus
and destroy thoughts of self-interest.⁵⁶

If you still feel unable to eradicate this self-grasping, then cultivate the following thought: “This time it is different. Today I have sought a spiritual teacher, I have read the sutras, and as a result I have now recognized the enemy!” It has been stated:

The old days when you could
ruin me at will are now gone;
I can see you now, so where are you off to?
I will tear down your arrogance.⁵⁷

Reflect along these lines, and whenever any self-centered thought arises, the master said, be vigilant and strike the snout of this boar with a cane. This is why it is said that all the teachings of the Great Vehicle contain only the two themes: (1) totally letting go of self-grasping and (2) upholding sentient beings with deep concern and, on this basis, crippling this self-grasping and nurturing sentient beings as much you can.

Furthermore, since all the sacred scriptures and treatises were taught to subdue the afflictions, it is the afflictions they must subdue. In general there are 84,000 afflictions, which can be subsumed into 212 classes.⁵⁸ They can be further subsumed into the six root and twenty derivative afflictions. These, too, can be further subsumed into the five or three poisons, and

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when subsumed further still, they are reduced to a single affliction, namely self-grasping alone. Whosoever has subdued it to the highest degree enjoys the highest degree of happiness; to a medium degree, a medium degree of happiness; and to a minimal degree, a minimal degree of happiness. He who has not subdued it at all will enjoy no happiness at all. So the root of suffering is self-grasping; and since all faults and defects are contingent upon it, you must abandon from now on any clinging to your body and mind and regard these instead as your enemies. Most importantly you must abandon your clinging to the body. On this point Śāntideva states:

If I am attached to my body,
fear arises from even slight dangers.
This body that brings so much fear—
who would not detest it like an enemy?"

Reflect, "Although I have striven hard since beginningless time to benefit this body, it is in the nature of a material object and thus feels no joy or pain in relation to any benefit or harm. As for the mind, it is devoid of substantial reality and empty. Since what appears conventionally right now comes into being from causes and conditions, it is devoid of intrinsic identity. Furthermore, since the causes and effects cease every moment, nothing is established following its origination. Therefore think, "Until now I have been preoccupied with worthless, ruinous pursuits. Starting now I will regard my own self as the enemy and call upon all eight classes of worldly gods, demigods, and demons, and all eighty thousand families of obstructive forces to withdraw their defense of this self." Train with the thought "Be my ally and help vanquish this self-grasping; help make my five aggregates appear devoid of substantial reality and empty."

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By engaging in these practices to the best of your ability, the master entreated, strive to subdue this self-grasping demon during your brief life.

Shawo Gangpa states: "If we fail to see our own self as the enemy, no one, not even our teachers, can save us. If we see it as the enemy, benefits will ensue."⁶⁰

So if you view your own self as the enemy, even when harms brought on by hosts of nonhumans and malevolent elemental spirits befall you, these become harms perpetrated against the enemy. They become allies in your battle against self-grasping. Since they are a powerful army on your side, it is inappropriate to generate anger toward these agents of harm; look on them instead with joy. At some point in your future, the master said, a true spiritual practice will emerge that can free you from the narrow ravines of adverse conditions. At that point you should train in [the recognition of others as] friends. In this way, train now to view self and others, respectively, as enemy and friends.

Occasionally, you should train your mind also by drawing a distinction between enemy and friend even within yourself. You can give your lay name to your thoughts and actions concerned with the pursuit of your own welfare and your ordination name to your thoughts and actions concerned with the pursuit of others' welfare. Then, following the example of the spiritual mentor Ben, correlate your arms, right and left, to avoidance of nonvirtue and adoption of virtuous acts. The spiritual mentor Ben states: "My only task is to stand guard with a short spear of antidote at the entrance of my mind. When the afflictions are vigilant, I too am vigilant; when they are relaxed, I too am relaxed."⁶¹ Also, "Be vigilant and strike the snout of each boar with a cane and chase it." All the sutras and commentarial treatises demonstrate that there is no other task besides eliminating self-grasping.

These, then, present the perception of one's own self as the

enemy and the elimination of self-grasping. It is because of Shawopa's teachings we have the expression "the practice for smashing the demon's head."

b. Recognizing sentient beings as friends and cherishing them

Second, viewing sentient beings as friends and cherishing them is presented by the line:

Toward all beings contemplate their great kindness.

Shawopa calls this "the spiritual practice of carrying the flesh and carrying the blood." It is called "the practice of accepting all ill omens as chārms." Here you deliberately focus on the perpetrators of harm and cultivate loving-kindness and compassion and then train in giving and taking.

First is the meditation on loving-kindness. Reflect, "These humans and nonhumans, who inflict harm upon me, have been related to me so many times as my parents, siblings, and friends—the frequency of which is greater than the number of *kolāsita* nuts [required to cover the face of the earth].⁶² They have constantly looked at me with eyes of love, perpetually sustained me with affectionate hearts, and constantly guarded me from harm and unhelpful situations. They have granted me all kinds of advantages and happiness and are thus embodiments of true kindness." Reflecting thus, develop deep and earnest empathy for them; feel as though, were you able to place them deep within your heart, you would still not be content. View them as pieces of your own heart. Atiśa refers to beings as "my divinities" and "my spiritual teachers."

The meditation on compassion is as follows. Reflect, "They harm me today not willfully but out of a deluded mind. I have

pursued my own self-interest since beginningless time, without regard to negative karma, suffering, or disrepute, and I have thus accumulated afflictions and negative karma. Because of this I have wandered in this infinite cycle of existence, embracing misery as practice. The blame for all of this lies in the self. Even at present, in my quest for enlightenment for the benefit of self and others, as I uncontrollably exploit and create obstacles for my dear mothers because of my negative karma, I am causing obstacles to the happiness of all sentient beings. So the blame for their departing to the hells in their future lives lies also in me. This is most sad indeed!" Cultivate compassion as intense as a hot coal on your bare flesh. In this manner, cultivate loving-kindness and compassion focused specially on the perpetrators of harm.

If you cultivate loving-kindness and compassion in this manner, because nonhumans have some karmically acquired clairvoyance, the moment you recognize them as your mothers, they will recognize you as their child. When this mother-child attitude emerges, how can they inflict harm? It is a law of nature that when I relate to someone as my mother, she will in turn relate to me as her child. This alone can alleviate your suffering. *The Condensed Perfection of Wisdom* states:

The world of humans is replete with elemental spirits
and diseases,
but these are pacified with power of truth by those
who care and have compassion.⁶³

When you cultivate loving-kindness and compassion toward the perpetrators of harm, you arrive at the following realization: "Since beginningless time, they have only benefited me, yet I have given only harm in return. Therefore, from now on, I shall help them and protect them from harm." With this

thought, combine the two practices of giving and taking and train your mind. Take upon yourself all leprosy and sickness in the world.⁶⁴ Heap upon your present sickness all the negative karma within your own life, all that you are likely to reap in the remainder of your life or in your future life, and rejoice.

Again, train as follows. Invite the malevolent nonhuman spirits to the space before you and declare: "The number of times you have been my mother is beyond count. Also, if I were to pile together the number of times I ate your flesh, drank your blood, chewed your bones, wore your skin, and sucked your milk, even the entire trichilocosmic universe would be too small to contain it all. I have also killed you, assaulted you, and robbed you countless times. Today you have merely come to collect the debt. Today please take as payment all these kind acts and offerings. It is appropriate that you own me, for you have been most kind indeed."

Reflecting thus, declare: "Devour my flesh if you like flesh! Drink my blood if you like blood! Chew my bones if you like bones! Peel away my skin and wear it if you like skin! Eat me raw if you are in haste, and if not, then eat me cooked!" Potowa is reported to have expressed:

I offer ritual cakes in the four directions
to all beings of the six realms
How much I yearn for the time
when I'm devoured and carried away by insects!

Then imagine that the nonhuman spirit rises up instantly and devours you from head to heels, smearing his mouth with your blood. His body now full, his harmful intentions disappear, and he becomes endowed with altruistic thoughts. Imagine that, as a byproduct, your negative karma becomes cleansed. Imagine that a moment later, your body rematerializes and is again

devoured. Visualize this over and over. Imagine that your body is cut into a hundred or a thousand pieces, and these are then offered everywhere. In particular, share this body and mind in places of special sensitivity [such as cemeteries]. Then, with the thought "This body of mine belongs to him," undertake all virtuous practices for [the nonhuman spirit's] sake. Even the concluding dedication should be done on his behalf. In particular, where such nonhuman forces reside, mentally discard your body, and cutting it open right there, with blood soaking everything, offer it with the thought "Now eat!" Then let go of cherishing your body as stated:

I have already given this body
to all beings to do with as they please.
Let them do with it whatever they wish, such as
beating it;
why should I be concerned?⁶⁵

These lines present the practice of regarding sentient beings as friends and cherishing them. Thus it is necessary to train your mind by distinguishing between the two classes—enemy and friend.

Shawopa states: "Search for the enemy in oneself; search for a god in the demons; search for virtues in nonvirtues; and search for happiness in suffering."

Langri Thangpa, too, says: "No matter what profound scriptures I open, I find none that do not suggest that all faults are your own, and that all higher qualities belong to brother and sister sentient beings. Because of this, you must offer all gain and victory to others and accept all loss and defeat for yourself. I have found no other meaning."

Shawopa states: "If someone finds a meaning other than this, it is an error." In brief, the master said, no other intent can be

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found in all the scriptural collections. With this, the taking of adverse conditions onto the path of enlightenment by means of conventional awakening mind has now been presented.

2. Taking adverse conditions onto the path by means of training in ultimate awakening mind

Following this, the second, taking adverse conditions on to the path of enlightenment by means of training in ultimate awakening mind, is presented in the following:

**With the three views and treasury of space,
the yoga of protection is unexcelled.
By meditating on illusions as the four buddha bodies,
emptiness is protection unsurpassed.⁶⁶**

Conclude decisively that everything in this world of appearance, both the external environment and the beings within—for example, the victim and the perpetrator—are only deluded perceptions of your own mind. As mere deceptive, deluded appearances, both sides will cease within moments, with no time either to injure or to engage in any negation or affirmation. Even conventionally, nothing exists as an object or agent of harm. On the ultimate level no phenomenon is primordially established. Like the center of a spotless sky, phenomena are all one.

Since self is an instance of awareness that is devoid of substantial reality, and the agent of harm is an instance of awareness devoid of substantial reality as well, neither exists as the victim or the perpetrator. Everything is empty, and emptiness cannot be attacked by emptiness. Just as the eastern part of the sky cannot cause harm to the western part, they [the harmed and the harmer] cannot injure each other. Therefore, since your

6. A Commentary on
“Eight Verses on Mind Training”

Chekawa Yeshé Dorjé

HEREIN IS *Eight Verses on Mind Training* together with the story of its origin.

I pay homage to the sublime teachers!

Geshe Chekawa once remarked, “My admiration for the Kadampas first arose when I heard the eight verses from Chakshingwa.⁸⁷ Thereafter I studied the verses and meticulously memorized the words, repeating them until I arrived at Lungshö Gegong, yet I failed to realize their meaning in my heart. For if these verses had entered my heart, things would have been quite different by then. Nonetheless, whenever the fear of being attacked [by bandits and such] appeared in my mind during my journey, I reflected upon these verses and this helped. Also I was often in situations where I had to seek shelter with strangers when my mind turned wild and untamed. During times when I was confronted with seemingly unbearable situations, such as failing to secure a suitable shelter, or when I became the target of others’ disparagement, these verses helped me.”

What verses are these? They are the following eight verses:

**With the wish to achieve the highest aim,
which surpasses even a wish-fulfilling gem,**

I will train myself to at all times
cherish every sentient being as supreme.

In general, in order to train yourself to view each sentient being as a wish-fulfilling gem, recall two similarities shared by sentient beings and the precious gem. First if you submerge the wish-fulfilling gem in a muddy mire, the gem cannot cleanse itself of the mud; however, if you wash it with scented water on a full-moon day, adorn the tip of a victory banner with it, and make offerings to it, the gem can then become a source of all earthly wishes. In the same way, sentient beings afflicted with the various defects of cyclic existence cannot free themselves from the mire of this unenlightened state, nor can they wash away their sufferings and the origins of these sufferings. However, with our help, all the benefits, both immediate and ultimate, can issue from them. Without sentient beings, how would you obtain even the immediate benefits—these would cease immediately; even ultimate happiness arises in relation to sentient beings. It is on the basis of sentient beings that you attain the unsurpassable state of buddhahood.

Second, in particular:

Whenever I interact with others,
I will view myself as inferior to all,
and I will train myself
to hold others as superior from the depths of my heart.

As stated here, wherever we are and whomever we interact with, we should train to view ourselves, in all possible ways, as lower and to respect others from the depths of our heart. "Others" encompasses those who are higher than us, such as our spiritual teachers; those who are equal to us, such as our fellow monks; and those who are inferior to us, such as beggars. "In all re-

spects" refers to our family ancestry, cognitive ability, and similar factors. We should reflect upon our own shortcomings in relation to these factors and avoid becoming proud. Thinking, "They all belong to the lowly class of butchers," we tend to generate pride on the basis of our physical appearance and walk as if we possess a skin akin to the color of rusted gold. So we are not even worthy of a sentient being's gaze!

With respect to our cognitive abilities, if we feel proud despite our commonplace lack of distinction, reflect, "I am ignorant of every one of the five fields of knowledge. Even in those fields where I have listened with care and attention, I fail to discern when I miss certain words and their explanations. In my behavior, too, though I am known to be a monk, there are hardly any negative deeds I have not committed. Even at this very moment, my thoughts embody the three poisons, and my actions of body, speech, and mind remain mostly impure. Therefore, in the future, it will be difficult to attain birth in the higher realms, let alone liberation."

Sāntideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life states:

By this type of behavior,
even the human form will not be obtained;
if I fail to achieve human existence,
there is only evil and no virtue.¹⁸

In this manner we should contemplate all our shortcomings and reflect, "Nothing falls beneath me but this river," and diminish our conceit and learn to respect others. This suggests that whenever we perceive positive qualities in others, or perceive qualities pertaining to family ancestry, physical appearance, material resources, or spiritual realizations such as the six perfections, we should think, "How wondrous indeed that they possess these qualities despite their flawed natures!" If, instead,

they lack these qualities, we should reflect, "Who knows what higher qualities they may actually possess?" Here the story of the ugly mendicant is told.⁸⁹

"From the depths" or the very bone "of my heart" indicates that our thoughts should not remain in our mouth as mere words. Instead, if we have the intention "I will regard all beings as my family without discriminating on the basis of their family background," even the noble Avalokiteśvara will applaud us with the statement, "O child of noble family, this is excellent!" Just as, when the earth is leveled, oceans form upon it and draw forth the waters, the supramundane qualities flourish in the hearts of those free of pride. Therefore the *Condensed Perfection of Wisdom* states:

Abide as if you were a servant of all beings.⁹⁰

In essence, the three scriptural collections are a means to vanquish conceit. When we think we are exceptional, we are unable to live in harmony with others even in this present life. As for its detrimental consequences in the next life, it is said:

Some ignorant ones, due to the force of their conceit,
take birth in the lower realms and in places bereft of
leisure;
they take birth as paupers or among the lowly castes;
and they become blind, weak, or possessed of a vile
demeanor.

[Because of conceit] our tendency for afflictions will deepen, and we will generate intense afflictions relative to those we deem below us. There is even a consequence more serious than this: we will fail to attain enlightenment. For it is written:

The bodhisattva who is conceited
remains far away from enlightenment.⁹¹

So all the states of inferiority, degeneration, and suffering within the bounds of mundane existence arise from grasping at our own self as most precious. In contrast, all the joys—both mundane and supramundane—originate from sentient beings. We should therefore perceive all sentient beings as embodiments of higher qualities and vanquish our pride.

Third, since the afflictions impede us from proceeding in the above manner, eliminate them as follows:

In all my activities I will probe my mind,
and as soon as an affliction arises—
since it endangers myself and others—
I will train myself to confront it directly and avert it.

Training ourselves to examine our mental continuum in all our activities and averting the afflictions as soon as they arise is as follows: Whichever of the four everyday activities we engage in,⁹² with mindfulness and vigilance, we should analyze whether thoughts such as attachment arise in our mind. With the thought "I will relinquish them the instant they arise," we should level them flat by observing them in this manner. Instead, if we act like an elderly couple being robbed by a thief, we procrastinate and then nothing happens. If afflictions proliferate in our mental continuum, emotions like anger will also increase exponentially. A sutra states:

Likewise, those who place their faith in sleep
will procrastinate and fall further into slumber.
This is true also of those who are lustful
and those who crave intoxicants.

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Our tendency for afflictions will deepen, and we will experience intense afflictions toward all we deem below us. A more serious consequence is that we ourselves will experience acute suffering. If we relinquish the afflictions, their propensities too will become lighter. The past propensities will weaken, and only subtle propensities will be created anew toward desirable objects. Since the law of cause and effect is subtle, the effects will definitely be realized in our experience. So we should view the afflictions as our enemies and enhance the power of their antidotes.

Śāntideva states:

I may be slain or burned alive;
likewise I may be decapitated;
under no circumstance will I
bow before my enemy, the afflictions.⁹³

As stated here, the conventional enemy can harm us only in this world and not beyond, but the enemy that is our afflictions can injure us throughout all our lives. As it is said:

This enemy of mine, the afflictions,
is long-lived, with neither beginning nor end;
no other enemies can endure
in this manner for so long.⁹⁴

Furthermore, when we surrender to our conventional enemies, they no longer harm us and may actually benefit us. If we give in to the afflictions in the same manner, however, they become even more destructive. As it is said:

If you relate to your enemies with friendship and gifts,
these bring benefit and happiness.

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However, if you appease the afflictions,
it brings ever more suffering and injury.⁹⁵

Furthermore, conventional enemies harm only our body, life, and wealth, whereas the afflictions create immeasurable suffering in this cycle of existence. As it is said:

Even were all the gods and demigods
to rise up against me as my enemies,
they could not drag me and cast me
into the blazing fire of the eternal hells.

Yet this powerful enemy, my afflictions,
can fling me instantly
where even mighty Mount Meru
would be crushed to dust on contact.⁹⁶

So view the afflictions as our enemy and discard them. While conventional enemies can return and cause harm even after they have been banished, the afflictions enemy cannot resurface once it has been eradicated. It is like burnt seeds. The method for eliminating them is through conduct, meditation, and view.⁹⁷

For beginners, given the weakness of their antidotes and their difficulty in countering afflictions that have already arisen, they must relinquish them first through their conduct. As for meditation, it is said that each affliction has a corresponding antidote. Since whatever meditative practice we undertake from among the three scopes becomes a remedy against all the afflictions, it is appropriate to engage in this practice. As our mental level advances, since afflictions are devoid of objects, it is sufficient simply to recognize that this is so. Thus there remains nothing to eliminate. Śāntideva states:

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Afflictions! Afflictions! Relinquish them with your eyes of insight.⁹⁹

Fourth, training ourselves to regard beings of unpleasant character and those oppressed by powerful negative karma and suffering with special care and as something rarely found is presented in the following:

When I encounter beings of unpleasant character
and those oppressed by intense negative karma and
suffering,
as though finding a treasure of precious jewels,
I will train myself to cherish them, for they are so
rarely found.

"Beings of unpleasant character" refers to those like the king Asaṅga,⁹⁹ who, not having accumulated merit in the past, experience the arising of afflictions without even a trace of control. It also refers to beings such as the person who, while crossing a mountain pass, was given a plate of meat stew: When the food burned his lips, he tossed the full plate away along with the pan and bellowed, "You dare burn me!" "Intense negative karma" refers to the five heinous crimes, degeneration of the vows, and misappropriation of offerings made to the Three Jewels. "Those oppressed by intense . . . suffering" refers to those who are afflicted by leprosy, other serious illnesses, and so on.

We should not treat them as our enemies, saying, "We cannot even look at them, and we must never allow them to come near us." Rather we should feel compassion toward them, as though they were being led away by the king's executioners. Even if some among them are morally degenerate, we should feel, "What can I do to help them?" until our tears flow freely. This means that we should first console them with words, and if this

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proves ineffective, we should provide for their material needs and render help to cure their illness. If this, too, is unsuccessful, we should sustain them in our thoughts, and in action we should protect them even with shelter. Some people, thinking, "This will not benefit the other, but it could harm me," cover their noses and walk away from those oppressed by acute suffering. Even so, there is no certainty that such suffering will never befall us. Therefore, in our actions, we should provide others with food, medicine, and the like, while with our thoughts we should contemplate the following and train the mind:

Whatever sufferings beings have,
may they all ripen upon me.¹⁰⁰

The line "I will train myself to cherish them, for they are so rarely found" is explained as follows. Since it is rare to find a precious gem, we do not discard it but rather keep it and cherish it. In the same way, beings of unpleasant character are not so easy to find; yet in dependence upon them compassion arises, and in dependence upon them the awakening mind arises. Without making deliberate efforts, it is rare to encounter such objects as these that allow us to develop the Mahayana paths. Why? Because the noble ones and those with worldly excellence do not arouse our compassion, so they cannot help us enhance the awakening mind. They cannot therefore lead us to the attainment of buddhahood. This is stated in the following:

Except for the awakening mind,
the buddhas do not uphold any means.¹⁰¹

Fifth, training ourselves to accept the defeat without resentment, even when faced with slander and other injustices, is presented in the following:

When others out of jealousy
treat me wrongly with abuse and slander,
I will train to take upon myself the defeat
and offer to others the victory.

Whether or not we are at fault, if others slander us or malign us out of jealousy or other motives, instead of harboring resentment, we should respond with a gentle mind. Free of resentment, we should refrain from claiming, for instance, "I am innocent. Others are to blame." Like Langri Thangpa, we should take the defeat upon ourselves. It is said that whenever misfortunes befell another, he would say, "I too am in him." When we engage in charity and ethical discipline at present, we do so to purify our negative karma and accumulate merit. If we recognize those who slander us as sources of kindness, although this is not a substitute for the aforementioned two activities, it nevertheless cleanses us of resentment and purifies our negative karma, the master said. Taking the defeat upon ourselves prevents us from adding to our negative karma.¹⁰²

Langri Thangpa states, "When it comes to purifying negative karma and accumulating merit, it is more effective to recognize those who baselessly slander you as great sources of kindness than it is to offer buttery delicacies to every monk in Phenyül." *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* states:

Since it is in dependence upon
his malign intention that forbearance arises,
it's really he who is the cause of forbearance;
like the true Dharma, he is worthy of veneration.¹⁰³

To substantiate this assertion, Śāntideva states in the following that forbearance is more powerful than ethical discipline:

There is no negativity like anger,
and there is no virtue like forbearance. . . .¹⁰⁴

This presents the forbearance of being unperturbed by harms.¹⁰⁵

Sixth is the forbearance of voluntarily accepting suffering. When someone to whom we have rendered help in the past, or in whom we have placed great hope, betrays or slanders us, we should contemplate him as our teacher with a sense of gratitude. This is presented in the following:

Even if someone I have helped
or in whom I have placed great hope
gravely mistreats me in hurtful ways,
I will train myself to view him as my sublime teacher.

As for expectation, Dromtönpa once remarked, "In Kham, I went to visit the teacher Sherap Bar, a spiritual friend close to my heart. I went knowing he had not invited me, and he took offense at this and sent me away from his presence. He ordered others to remove all my belongings, and had me locked in a dark room. That was when it became clear whether I had trained my mind in loving-kindness and compassion, and whether the lines 'May these sufferings ripen upon me, / and may all my happiness ripen upon them'¹⁰⁶ had remained a lie for me." So we must never retaliate with resentment.

Furthermore, relating this to our own situation, were it not for sordid karma, such events would not befall us. As it has been said:

Previously I caused harms
such as these to other sentient beings,
so it is right that today such injuries befall me,
I who have harmed others.¹⁰⁷

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We should think that we ourselves are to blame [for whatever befalls us]; and in this manner, by maintaining a warm heart, we remain happy. And because we do not transfer the blame to others, they too remain happy. We should reflect, "This is due to my own karma. It is established that no one harms the noble ones who have eliminated their negative karma." Even from the other's perspective, it is our own negative karma that caused them to injure us. Reflect, "Because of me, he will have to go to the lower realms. I am to blame for this." It has been said:

Impelled by my own karma,
others have brought this harm upon me;
because of this they'll fall to the pits of hell.
So is it not I who has destroyed them?¹⁰⁸

Thus it is appropriate to protect these beings from their suffering. Again, it is said:

Those who falsely accuse me,
And others who cause me harm,
Likewise those who insult me:
May they all share in enlightenment.¹⁰⁹

Also:

Even if others return kindness with harm,
I will practice responding with great compassion;
the most excellent beings of this world
answer injury with benevolence.¹¹⁰

"To view them as spiritual teachers while thinking of their great kindness" refers to the following: Our spiritual teachers are

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embodiments of great kindness, for they bestow on us the vows, provide us with the methods of meditative practice, and reveal to us the path to liberation. Of course, if we fail to contemplate this and fail to guard this contemplation, we will not tread the path. So reflect, "What this being has given me helps purify my negative karma and accomplish my accumulations. He has therefore benefited me. So I must view him as my spiritual teacher, no different from the one who has conferred on me the oral transmissions of the meditative practices." In this respect, *Songs of Bliss*¹¹¹ states:

Whether someone is foe or friend—
these objects that give rise to afflictions—
he who sees them as spiritual teachers
will be joyful wherever he resides.

When such thoughts arise spontaneously, our mind is trained; then, even if we have no other practice, whatever acts we engage in turn into the path to enlightenment. This is like the saying, "One cannot find excrement in a land of gold."

Dharma is the transformation of your mind and not the transformation of the external world. For a trained person, even if the three worlds—of humans, celestial gods, and demons—were to rise up as his enemies, his mind would not be afflicted by nonvirtue and suffering. Since no one can vanquish him, he is called a *hero*.

Seventh, in brief, one must train to offer—both directly and indirectly—all the benefits and joys to our dear mother sentient beings and to take all their hurts and pains into the depths of our hearts. This is presented in the following:

In brief, I will train myself to offer benefit and joy
to all my mothers, both directly and indirectly,

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and respectfully take upon myself
all the hurts and pains of my mothers.

"In brief" refers to condensing all the preceding points. "Respectfully" suggests that we take these into the depths of our hearts while contemplating the kindness of our mothers. In other words, we should practice giving and taking not merely in words but from the depths of our hearts. In practice, if we give away such causes of well-being as food, medicine, and so on while taking upon ourselves all the hurts and pains of sentient beings, this is a cause for achieving birth in higher realms and attaining definitive goodness.¹¹² If, however, we are not yet able to actually practice this, we should instead perform the taking mentally by engaging in the meditation of giving and taking and dedicating all our joys of this life. When making aspiration prayers, we should utter from the depth of our hearts the following lines from *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*:

My own happiness and others' suffering—
If I do not thoroughly exchange them,
I will not become fully enlightened;
in this cyclic existence, too, I'll find no joy.¹¹³

Eighth, since in all these practices it is possible to become defiled, we should make sure that they remain untainted by even the slightest mundane consideration of this life, and with the awareness that recognizes all phenomena as illusion-like, we should train to be utterly free of attachment. This is presented in the following:

By ensuring that all this remains unsullied
by the stains of the eight mundane concerns,

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and by understanding all things as illusions,
I will train myself to be free of the bondage of clinging.

Thus the remedy—the method—is this. When tainted with mundane concerns such as the desire to be perceived by others as praiseworthy, we fall under the influence of the eight mundane concerns, and our pursuits become those of self-interest. When this occurs, then the sacred teachings have been turned into demons. If we understand these mundane concerns as akin to illusions, later we will relinquish them. Nothing within our present experience possesses substantial reality.

So among these empty phenomena,
what is there to gain or to lose?
Who provides you with what service?
And who subjects you to insults?

From whence do pleasure and pain arise?
What is there to be sad or joyful about?¹¹⁴

And further,

That all things are just like space,
I, for one, shall accept.¹¹⁵

As for supplicating all [objects of refuge] and reciting this as an aspiration, it is as follows: We should make mandala offering to the teachers and the Three Jewels and make the following supplication:

"If you—my teachers, the buddhas of the three times, and all the bodhisattvas—possess blessings and compassion; if you—the ten male and ten female wrathful deities—possess power and might; and if you—the wisdom *ḍākinīs*—possess strength

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and abilities, bless me so that the meaning of these eight verses will be realized in me. Bless me so that all the suffering and causes of suffering of all sentient beings ripens upon me and that all the fruits of my awakening mind ripen upon all beings." We thus train by relating in this way to the four truths.¹¹⁶

Whatever virtuous actions, such as these mind training practices, we may perform, afterward we should recite this aspiration prayer of the eight verses. Making such an aspiration creates propensities for the awakening mind. We should recite the following aspiration prayer: "To such activities of root virtue I will dedicate all my time—all my months and all my years. In the future, too, I will make sure to encounter spiritual teachers and to associate with virtuous companions." We should recite these prayers of aspiration regularly.

This commentary on the eight verses of the bodhisattva Langri Thangpa was composed by Chekawa Yeshé Dorjé. This commentary on the root verses constitutes a profound instruction on mind training. Please strive in this. May its realization arise in the hearts of all.



TRANSFORMING ADVERSITY

THE NEXT TWO texts address the mind training practice of taking adversities and afflictions into the path to awakening.

A Teaching on Taking Afflictions onto the Path presents the instruction of taking upon oneself all the afflictions, such as attachment and aversion, of other sentient beings and on this basis engaging in the cultivation of the two awakening minds, conventional and ultimate. We have no information about the author of this short text, nor do we have any knowledge of the transmission lineage of this particular instruction.

Mind Training Taking Joys and Pains onto the Path is a text, as the colophon of the text itself states, based on a well-known single-verse mind training composed by the Kashmiri pandit Śākyaśrībhadrā (1127–1225). This Kashmiri master came to Tibet at the beginning of the thirteenth century and, among other things, became a teacher of Sakya Paṇḍita. This fascinating short text on mind training employs the well-known Vajrayana meditation of taking death, intermediate state, and rebirth onto the path as the three buddha bodies. The text provides an instruction on how to apply this three-buddha-bodies meditation for the specifically mind training objective of taking everyday experience as a spiritual path.

II. A Teaching on Taking Afflictions onto the Path

Homage to the Precious Teachers!

IT IS SAID that the instruction for transforming intense mental states, such as attachment and aversion, into the path on the basis of the two awakening minds—how to take afflictions onto the path—is presented in the tantras. It is impossible, however, for the ordinary afflictions themselves to become the path. As far as taking afflictions onto the path by means of selecting them as your meditation focus and turning them away is concerned, this has been taught repeatedly in the sutras. The instruction for this sutra approach is as follows.

Take attachment, for instance. First, when you observe yourself experiencing attachment to either an internal experience or to a specific external object, contemplate the following: "This is the affliction of attachment. If not relinquished, not purified, and not conquered, it will give rise to immeasurable suffering, such as birth in the lower realms. If transformed and conquered, it can become a condition for full enlightenment. I will therefore conquer it so that it becomes a condition for buddhahood."

Thinking thus, take in to your mind your enemies' afflictions of attachment. Then, as you do when meditating on loving-

kindness, cultivate this toward a larger group. Finally, take upon yourself all the attachments, along with their propensities, existing in all beings. As you do this, imagine that your own attachment becomes so great as to be unfathomable. Imagine that all sentient beings become free of attachment and attain buddhahood. This is the [practice of taking afflictions upon yourself on the basis of the] conventional awakening mind.

Take upon yourself this attachment of yours, the size of Mount Meru, and heap others' attachment upon it as well. Then reflect, "Attachment is by nature mental; apart from the mind there is no attachment, not even an atom's breadth. So when the mind observes itself, past and future states become no more. The past has ceased to be, while the future is, though subject to cessation, yet to be, and the present is devoid of any identifiable characteristics, such as shape and color. Not existing in any manner, the mind abides like space. So what is called *attachment* is a mere name with no referent at all." Place your mind in this state as long as it abides. This is the practice of the ultimate awakening mind.

From these two, respectively, arise the form body (*rūpakāya*), the mere hearing of whose name gives rise to the enlightened activities that help pacify the afflictions, and the dharmakāya, which helps eliminate all afflictions and their propensities, which lead to more contaminated states. We should know how to extend this practice similarly to all afflictions, such as hatred, the master said.

This has been written on the basis of my teacher's words alone, with no omissions or additions. May the goodness of the content of this extremely profound instruction for taking afflictions onto the path equal the measure of space!

12. Mind Training Taking Joys and Pains onto the Path

Homage to the spiritual teachers!

FOR THIS INSTRUCTION on taking joys and pains onto the path, you should first generate the awakening mind. Then, when experiencing joy identify clearly what it is that experiences the joy—whether it is your body or your mind. Since your physical body is like a corpse, it cannot exist as the enjoyer of that happiness. Yet the mind is empty like the sky, and as such, it is devoid of itself, so it too cannot be the enjoyer of that joy. Therefore, since that which conceives of joy is devoid of itself, recognize what is empty as empty. Then place your mind—lucid, pure, relaxed, and settled—for as long as you can in this expanse of emptiness. This is the method for attaining the uncontrived, uncontaminated dharmakāya, the buddha body of reality.

While in this state, vividly conceive what you experience as joy to be in essence your meditation deity; and regardless of whether your mind is distracted, seal yourself inseparably with your meditation deity. This is the method for attaining the enjoyment body (sambhogakāya), which is the means for taming the pure trainees.¹⁴⁷

Not divorced from this identity, dedicate what you perceive

as joy for the benefit of all sentient beings and recite the following three times:

When happy, I will dedicate my virtues to all;
may benefit and happiness pervade all of space!¹⁴⁸

This is the method for attaining the emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*), which is the means for taming the impure trainees.¹⁴⁹

Now if you experience **pain** vividly identify what it is that experiences the suffering—whether it is your body or your mind. Since your physical body is like a corpse, it cannot exist as the subject of suffering. Yet the mind is empty like the sky; as such, it is devoid of itself, so it too cannot be the subject of that suffering. Then affirm the emptiness of that which conceives of suffering to be devoid of itself, and place your mind—lucid, pure, relaxed, and settled—for as long as you can in this expanse of emptiness. This is the method for attaining the uncontrived, uncontaminated dharmakāya.

While in this state, vividly contemplate what you conceive of as suffering to be in essence your meditation deity; and regardless of whether your mind is distracted, seal yourself inseparably with your meditation deity. This is the method for attaining the enjoyment body, which is the means for taming the pure trainees.

Not divorced from this identity, dedicate what you perceive as suffering for the benefit of sentient beings and recite the following three times:

When suffering, I will take on the pains of all beings;
may the ocean of suffering become dry!

This is the method for attaining the emanation body, which is the means for taming the impure trainees.

This, then, is the instruction for taking joy and suffering onto the path.

The lineage of this is as follows: Pañchen Śākyaśrī, Trophu Lotsāwa, Khenchen Lhodrakpa, Khenchen Dewa Jamchenpa, Rinchen Drakpa Shenyen, Chöjé Sönam Rinchen, and Shönu Gyalchok.

15. Mind Training Removing Obstacles

Homage to the greatly compassionate spiritual teachers!

DISPELLING OBSTACLES to Mahayana mind training, it has been taught, consists of (1) accepting ill omens as charms, (2) exterminating Māra at his very source, (3) bringing obstacles on to the path, and (4) capping your useless desires.

1. First [accepting all ill omens as charms] is as follows:

When worldly people encounter bad omens, such as hearing owls crying or foxes howling, they consult astrology, make divinations, and have rituals performed. You, on the other hand, should eagerly embrace ill omens and negative signs when they appear by cultivating the thought, "Since it is self-grasping that causes me to suffer, may all the suffering that exists in the world arising from the fear of encountering ill omens befall upon this self. May this help vanquish self-grasping."

2. Second [exterminating Māra at his very source] is as follows:

It is taught that self-grasping causes us to suffer. So when you experience pain or injury to your body, caused either by humans or by nonhumans, think, "It is this body that causes

me to suffer. If you want it, take it away this instant. O king of demons residing above, remove my head! Great indeed is your kindness in causing all the injuries to it. Since you are my ally in subduing the true enemy and my ally in subduing the ghost [of self-grasping], help me exterminate the very continuum of the worldly gods, humans, and ghosts, and help me vanquish this demon to the best of my ability." Cut self-grasping from its root with the thought, "It is not inconsistent [for a mind training practitioner] to relish doing so."

3. *Third [bringing obstacles onto the path] is as follows:*

Whatever unhelpful events, such as physical ailments, mental anxieties, and so on, occur, or when adversities afflict you, contemplate, "This comes from my own self-grasping. If today I do not discard this self-grasping, obstacles will continue to arise. So may all the adversities now in the world and those feared to come be realized upon me. May this help subdue the self and utterly destroy it." Contemplating thus, bring them onto the path.

4. *Fourth [capping your useless desires] is as follows:*

"What benefit has this desire brought me, if any? It has never distanced me from cyclic existence, so it must be destroyed. Then, at least, I will have derived some purpose from its utter uselessness. If I achieve this, it will be due to my teacher's blessing; it will be owing to his kindness. Pray help me so that in the future, too, I can heap upon this self-grasping all useless desires and vanquish them by subjugating them." Contemplating in this way, cap your useless desires.

Iti.