

2. AROUSING BODHICITTA, THE ROOT OF THE MAHAYANA

HOMAGE

Patrul Rinpoche again begins with paying homage to his guru Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu by explaining his guru's superior qualities.

*Through great wisdom, he realized nirvana;
Through great compassion, he accepted samsara.
Through skill in methods, he realized their inseparability.
At the feet of my peerless guru, I bow down.*

The root of the Mahayana path is the union of emptiness and compassion. Generally, the lower vehicles of the sravakas and the pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness alone and compassion alone, but not their unity. As a result, when achieving the fruition of the practice, these practitioners remain in the state of peace and liberation. They experience meditative absorption in the uncompounded essence of peace and liberation. Mind and the source of mind are completely absorbed in one-pointed meditative concentration. From the perspective of the practitioner, he is liberated from all the suffering of the world, but he cannot benefit other beings. The emptiness he has realized is not joined with compassion for others. By realizing only emptiness, he simply remains in meditative concentration, and this does not benefit others.

The Mahayana path unites emptiness and compassion. The fruit of practicing this union is called the great peace and liberation that does not remain within the two limits. The two limits are worldly cyclic existence, and peace and liberation, in other words samsara and nirvana. Great peace and liberation beyond these two limits is achieved. The power of compassion and emptiness keeps Mahayana practitioners from falling within the two limits. While training on the path, their practice involves both meditative concentration and benefitting others. Ultimately, when they actualize the fruit, the meditative concentration of the dharmadhatu is realized for themselves, and they continue working effortlessly for the benefit of others until samsara has been completely emptied, for as long as space remains.

Without realizing great wisdom, meaning the wisdom of emptiness, ego-clinging – the root cause of cyclic existence – can never be overcome. Having realized emptiness, sravakas and pratyekabuddhas remain in the

peaceful state of meditative concentration, a state that is liberated from samsara. Traditionally, at the beginning of the path bodhisattvas practice mainly meditative concentration until they attain the level of the noble ones. After arousing the wisdom of the noble ones, their main practice will be benefitting others. They will not remain in solitude, in a state of one-pointed meditation. They practice meditation, but their primary focus is on benefitting others, because they have great compassion. During the time of training they remain in samsara, mainly benefitting samsaric beings. After the final result, for as long as space remains and for as long as samsara has not been emptied, they spontaneously benefit others. This is not like the sravakas and prakryetabuddhas who discontinue benefitting others.

The Mahayana path, the union of emptiness and compassion, is also called the path of skillful method. It may be called the extraordinary path of the Great Vehicle. Through practicing this vehicle, disciples can actualize the indivisibility of samsara and nirvana. There is no peace and liberation outside of samsara; there is no samsara other than peace and liberation. No impurity can be found from the very beginning.

Jigme Gyalwai Nyugu, Patrul Rinpoche's root guru, had actualized the quality of the indivisibility of samsara and nirvana and all the other qualities described. By paying homage to his guru through praising him, Patrul Rinpoche accumulated vast quantities of merit. Accumulating such quantities of merit fulfills all wishes without difficulty. Patrul Rinpoche's inner intention is to benefit others. To do this, he begins by paying homage to his root guru.

THE MAIN PRACTICE

Arousing bodhicitta is the main aspect of the Mahayana path. Without bodhicitta, regardless of what is practiced of the view, meditation, and conduct, it cannot be considered Mahayana. We can differentiate the greater from the lesser vehicles on the basis of bodhicitta. Whatever we practice within Mahayana – whether Sutra or Tantra, development or completion stage – the foundation is taking refuge and arousing bodhicitta.

We begin by explaining how to develop bodhicitta in those who have not yet aroused it. Unless all the conducive causes and auspicious conditions are complete, bodhicitta cannot arise. First we must train our

minds (*blo sbyong*). There are different ways to train on this path. Following Shantideva's "Way of the Bodhisattva," first we should train in recognizing that we and others are the same. Next, we train in exchanging ourselves for others. The next stage is to learn to give greater importance to others than to ourselves. First we train in this way, and then later bodhicitta will arise on its own.

Jowo Atisa taught the seven pith instructions on path and fruition. For example: understand that all beings have been your mothers; remember the great kindness they showed you when they were your mothers; repay the kindness of such loving mothers, their benevolent love and ultimate compassion. Training in these instructions one by one, bodhicitta will eventually arise.

Patrul Rinpoche explains the four boundless qualities. Training repeatedly in these four instructions develops bodhicitta. We should train ourselves according to Patrul Rinpoche's instructions. When these four boundless qualities automatically arise in our minds, without contrivance, the thought of bodhicitta will also arise. When all conducive conditions are complete, the fruit will come automatically. That is natural. Training in these four boundless qualities brings forth the fruit of bodhicitta in our minds.

Two traditions of taking bodhicitta vows are taught. One is Nagarjuna's tradition of the chariot of the profound view, and the other is Asanga's tradition of the chariot of the vast conduct. We must take vows in either one of these traditions. Taking the vows and training the mind so that bodhicitta automatically arises in our mindstreams are the two aspects of arousing bodhicitta. After receiving vows and training in bodhicitta, we must guard our vows well. There are the aspects of what to avoid, and of what to adopt. We must learn them both.

Bodhicitta is of two types: bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. We train in these separately. We can also classify the practice into three parts: mind training, arousing bodhicitta, and training in what to adopt and what to avoid. These can be called the preliminary practice, the main practice, and the concluding practice. The preliminary practice is training in the four boundless qualities. The main practice is arousing bodhicitta and taking vows. The concluding practice is training in what to adopt and guarding without fail against what to avoid.

Training in the four boundless qualities

In general, the four boundless qualities are listed in the following sequence: boundless love, boundless compassion, boundless rejoicing, and boundless impartiality. “Boundless” means that we visualize infinite beings. Based on this vast visualization we practice boundless love, boundless compassion, boundless rejoicing, and boundless impartiality. This practice accumulates boundless merit.

Boundless impartiality

When practicing, however, we begin with boundless impartiality. If you can accomplish boundless impartiality, then boundless love, boundless compassion, and boundless rejoicing will automatically arise in your mindstream. Without impartiality, practicing love, compassion, and rejoicing become partial and one-sided. Partial and one-sided means that although we have love in our mindstream, this love arises only for family and relations. It is not impartial, and is not boundless love. The same is true for the other boundless qualities of compassion and rejoicing. Without mastering the practice of boundless impartiality, the compassion that desires beings to be free from suffering will not arise for those whom we consider to be enemies. None of the four boundless qualities will be pure in that situation. Impartiality means maintaining a balanced perspective, recognizing the equality of all beings.

Our present mind does not automatically feel love, compassion, or rejoicing toward those we do not like, those whom we consider to be enemies. We feel hatred toward them. Toward our family and friends, we automatically feel love, compassion, and rejoicing. We do not consider those who harm us to be the same as our parents who give us our lives. We consider that one is higher and the other is lower. If we cannot make them equal, however, then whatever practice we do on love, compassion, and rejoicing will be partial.

For this reason we must see as equal those who harm us – our enemies – and those who gave birth to us – our parents – feeling neither attachment nor hatred toward either of them. We do not differentiate between the love we feel toward our mother and the love we feel toward our father, being more attached to one than the other. Neither do we feel any hatred toward them. We feel that our parents are the same. Having the same feelings toward our enemies as we have toward our parents is called impartiality. We must avoid hatred toward our enemies and attachment toward our parents, and learn to

feel the same affection for our enemies as we feel for our parents.

Considering the benefits they bring, our enemies benefit us to the same degree as our parents do. Considering the many problems they bring, our parents cause the same amount of difficulty as our enemies do. Nevertheless, we feel that our parents bring us great benefit, and our enemies bring us great difficulty. Reflecting upon this deeply, however, we will understand that our enemies benefit us in the same way our parents do. If we feel love and affection toward those who benefit us, we must also feel love and affection for our enemies. If we feel anger and hatred toward those who harm us, we must also feel anger and hatred for our parents, who harm us.

We fail to identify the ways in which our parents cause us harm. The harm that comes to our mindstream from attachment is not the same as the harm that results from hatred. Attachment causes us great harm, but we fail to recognize this. We are delighted with those to whom we are attached. This is like being attached to those who deceive us with pleasant words and kind behavior. When hatred arises, both mind and body experience pain and suffering. This is actual harm, like being injured by a physical weapon, and we identify it immediately. Attachment also harms us, but we do not identify the harm quickly. In reality, both harm our mindstreams.

We fail to recognize the actual harm our parents and relatives cause us while we identify the harm an enemy causes by his angry words or his weapons. In fact, there is no difference between them. One kind of harm we see, and the other we cannot see. Otherwise they are the same. This makes the attachment we feel toward our parents and the aversion we feel toward our enemies totally meaningless. When we consider the benefits our parents have brought to our lives, we should realize that our enemies have benefitted us in the same way. The only difference is in the timing. With this understanding we reflect that differentiating between our parents and our enemies is our own mistake. The benefit and harm that they bring us are the same, and we must consider them in exactly the same light.

These thoughts are not the actual boundless impartiality, but are the preliminary practice. Actually feeling neither attachment nor hatred toward any sentient being is boundless impartiality. To arouse this feeling, we recognize that the kind parents who gave us life have greatly benefitted us in this life and the enemies who harmed us in this life have also greatly benefitted us in our past lives. There is no difference between them in terms of their benefit and kindness. Experiencing this is boundless impartiality.

At present, we feel great attachment toward our parents, relatives, and

friends while harboring great hatred for our enemies. We make this mistake through a failure of investigation. In addition, we think “enemy” refers only to humans, not considering that gods and demons can also be enemies. In reality, non-human beings are also enemies. But we do not think about these kinds of formless entities when we practice mind training. If we have the power, we may think we should subjugate them through mental concentration and mantra, or through entrapping them in the ground. We feel that harming them is a Dharma activity, whereas we understand that harming human beings is negativity, and not Dharma. Our understanding is not correct.

Whether we call them “parents” or “enemies,” both have harmed us and both have benefitted us at different times in the past. The enemies who cause us trouble in this life were our parents in the past. At that time they loved us, gave us whatever they had, raised us and benefitted us exactly as our present parents have done. They took care of us extremely well, and were most kind. They are enemies only in this life. In the past, they were our parents. Our present parents might have been our enemies and caused us a great deal of trouble in past lives. As has already been quoted from the noble Katyayana:

*Eating his father's flesh, he beats his mother
And holds on his lap an enemy that he killed.
A wife chews upon her husband's bones.
I laugh to see samsara's show.*

Katyayana was an arhat who had clairvoyance. Coming across a man cuddling a baby in his lap while eating a fish and beating a female dog, he sought the karmic reason for these actions. He saw that the child was an enemy from the man's previous life. Due to karmic repayment, he was reborn as his son. The fish he was eating had been his past life father. The female dog was his past life mother, who was chewing on her own husband's bones. This is a teaching on the indeterminate nature of samsaric relationships. No certainty can be found regarding enemies and relatives. Therefore samsaric relationships are a reason for laughing.

The story of King Trisong Detsen's daughter Princess Pema Sal is a similar example. Pema Sal was a Dzogchen disciple of Guru Rinpoche who passed away at the age of seventeen. The king asked Guru Rinpoche how such a thing could happen.

“I thought my daughter probably had pure karma, and for that reason

was born as the daughter of myself, King Trisong Detsen. She met you translators and scholars, who are actual buddhas. Why then has she had such a short life?"

The teacher replied, "She was not born as your daughter as a result of pure past actions."

This indicates that her rebirth resulted from the karmic repayment of negativity. If we harm someone, the action of causing harm leads to a karmic debt. Until this debt has been completely paid, that person will continue to take birth as our offspring, and continue harming us. This is called the cycle of negativity. Princess Pema Sal's story is an example of this.

In the past, I Padmasambhava, you the great king, and the great bodhisattva¹ were born as three low caste boys. When we were building the great stupa of Jarung Khashor, the princess had been born as an insect that stung you on the neck. Knocking it off with your hand, you innocently killed it. The debt incurred in taking that life caused the insect to be reborn as your daughter.

Princess Pema Sal had taken birth as an insect only to show an example to ordinary people of the undeceiving character of cause and effect of karma. In reality, she was Guru Rinpoche's disciple, on whom he conferred the entire cycle of Dzogchen Khandro Nyingtig.

King Trisong Detsen was Manjushri in person. If he had a child due to a karmic debt, then what can we say about other people?

At present we have a close connection with our parents and children, feeling great love and affection and having inconceivable hopes for them. When they suffer or when undesirable things happen to them, we are more unhappy than if it had happened to ourselves. This is just the karmic retribution for harm we did each other in past lives.

Parents suffer greatly, physically as well as mentally, because of their children. The cause of this suffering is the karmic debt the parents owe the child. This debt of negativity is not exhausted. It is also possible that the child takes birth due to a karmic debt. If a pure sublime being or a noble one is born as a child, the child and the parents will both be liberated. This is a different situation. Other than this, children bring extreme suffering to their parents. The parents may wish to practice the holy Dharma, but be unable to do so because of their children. Contemplating this, we find that all such suffering results from a karmic debt not having been paid. Because of the suffering it brings, the relationship is definitely not the result of a

1 The abbot Shantaraksita.

good karmic connection.

Of all our current enemies, there is not one who has not been our parent in a past life. Even now, those we consider to be enemies are not certain to be harming us. Some whom we take as enemies may not, from their side, consider us as opponents; even if they do they may be incapable of causing us harm. Some might be causing immediate harm, but this could lead to fame in this life or to our meeting the sublime Dharma and experiencing ultimate benefit and happiness. Others, if we use skillful means to adapt to their minds, and gentle and pleasing language until we come into agreement, could easily become friends.

Likewise, even among those who are now considered close, there are children who cheat or even kill their parents. Sometimes children take the side of those opposed to their parents to steal their wealth and quarrel with them.

When we are in harmony with our children, we suffer more from their unhappiness and the problems that arise for them than from our own. For the sake of our relatives, children, and others who are close to us, we commit great nonvirtue that will drop us into the hells in our next life. When we want to practice Dharma perfectly, they keep us from it. Unable to let go of our parents and children, we put off our Dharma practice until later, and never find time for it. Compared to our enemies they do us more harm.

Considering the obstacles children and relatives create to Dharma practice, they are worse than other enemies.

Similarly, those we now consider our enemies may be born as our children in future lives, and those we are close to could be born as enemies. There is no certainty about this.

Because of taking these momentary appearances of enemy and friend to be real, we accumulate nonvirtue through attachment and anger. Why keep doing things that will anchor us to the hell realms? Therefore, rest firmly in seeing all the infinite sentient beings as your parents and children. Follow the life stories of great beings of the past and treat friends and enemies as the same.

Sublime beings never distinguish between those close to them and enemies. They consider the great kindness of their present parents and try to benefit them as much as possible. They equally benefit their enemies, seeing them as kind parents from past lives. We nowhere find them caring

for some and harming others. We must act like they do, and consider our parents and our enemies as equal.

At the beginning, considering those you do not like at all, those who make you angry and whom you seriously dislike, you should train your mind in various ways so that your anger and hatred for them no longer arise.

Wanting to benefit our friends and relations is easy; we always feel this way. Desiring to benefit our enemies, on the other hand, is difficult at first. By training our minds, we can gradually develop the wish to care for our enemies just as we care for those dear to us. We feel hatred and anger toward our enemies because we think that they have harmed us. Reflecting deeply, we see they haven't really harmed us and in fact have helped us. What we initially considered harmful is actually not. As we gradually develop this understanding, our anger ceases to arise.

Think of your enemies as though they were people to whom you feel neutral, those who do you neither harm nor good. Consider that the uncountable beings toward whom you feel neutral have at some time during your beginningless past lives been your parents.

At first, considering your enemies as the same as your father and mother is difficult, even though they have actually been your parents. Initially you must learn to consider them as neutral individuals. After developing the feeling that they are neutral, then gradually you can develop the feeling that they are really your parents.

When they were your parents in the past, they were extremely kind to you, so you must develop sincere love for them, the same as you feel for your parents from this life. When your present parents are suffering, you automatically wish to free them from their pain. You train your mind to realize that enemies and neutral persons are the same as your parents, so that when they suffer you also desire to free them. Meditate until this compassionate feeling arises automatically, just as it does for your actual parents.

The practice of "taking as equal" means there is no difference in our attitude toward our parents, neutral persons and enemies. The same compassionate feelings we have for our present parents will arise for all sentient beings. This is boundless impartiality. Merely having no compassion or attachment toward your parents, no hatred toward your enemies, and feeling neutral toward people to whom you are indifferent is not the practice of boundless impartiality. This is called "ignorant indifference" that brings

neither benefit nor harm.

An example for boundless impartiality is a feast given by a great sage. When sages offer feasts they invite everyone, making no distinction between high or low, powerful or weak, good or bad, superior or mediocre. We should hold all sentient beings pervading space equally as objects of our vast compassion. We train until achieving this.

Right now, when we see the misery of someone we dislike or feel indifferent toward, we do not question their suffering. When we automatically wish for all beings to be free from suffering, with the same feeling we have for our parents, we have reached the state of boundless impartiality. Then we will have no difficulty in developing boundless love, compassion, and rejoicing without jealousy or envy. Thus, we must first train well in boundless impartiality.

Boundless love

Once we have developed boundless impartiality toward all sentient beings, we can easily develop boundless love for them. Sentient beings pervading space are equal in not living in ultimate happiness, but in suffering. The desire to establish them in happiness is love. Beings in the higher realms experience circumstantial happiness, but such happiness is compounded and easily lost. Beings in the lower realms do not even have this circumstantial, compounded happiness. We take all beings as the object of our boundless love.

Due to attachment, we now feel love for our friends and families, but this love is not impartial. However, since all beings suffer equally from not abiding in the final peace and happiness of nirvana, we must train in wishing to establish all of them in this state. When this feeling comes automatically, we have achieved boundless love.

The difference between love and compassion is as follows. The desire to establish all beings in happiness is called love; and the desire that they be free from suffering is called compassion. These feelings should not be limited in any way, but should be impartial, covering all beings like the sky.

By meditating on boundless impartiality, we come to see all sentient beings of the three realms as equal objects of great love. The example is the way parents care for their small children. Ignoring the children's ingratitude and their own difficulties, they strive with body, speech, and mind to make the children comfortable, happy,

and relaxed. In the same way, we should endeavor with the best efforts of body, speech and mind for the happiness of sentient beings, in this and future lives.

From the point of view of worldly concerns, parents experience great love for their children, so they always desire happiness for their children. With the full effort of their three doors, they strive to protect their children from all difficulties such as illness. Not understanding or appreciating these efforts, the children may actually resist or even cause pain to their parents. Nevertheless, due to their great love, the parents ignore this and continue to work for their children's happiness and comfort. Day and night, parents bear considerable hardship for their children's wellbeing, accepting all kinds of trouble. In the same way we should exert ourselves in methods to bring happiness and comfort to all sentient beings, regardless of the difficulties that must be faced. When this feeling is developed, we can consider it boundless love.

All these beings think of their own happiness and comfort; they strive only for this. None want to be unhappy or to suffer. But they do not know that virtuous action is the cause of happiness and they indulge in the ten nonvirtues. Their deepest wishes and how they act are opposed. Desiring to find happiness, what comes to them is only suffering.

Again and again meditate with the thought of how good it would be if all beings could have the individual happiness and comfort they desire. Meditate until finally there is no difference between the happiness you want for yourself and the happiness you want for others.

All beings want happiness and comfort, but they do not know the methods for bringing these about. Beings kill animals in search of happiness and comfort. They steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie, speak divisively, and so on, engaging continuously in nonvirtuous actions of body, speech, and mind, all in an effort to find happiness and comfort. They never commit these acts in search of unhappiness and suffering. Although they are seeking happiness, their actions are contrary to this, bringing about only misery. Looking only at their actions, we might think they were seeking unhappiness since the cause for suffering is negativity and nonvirtuous action. Beings exert themselves in nonvirtue day and night. They desire happiness and comfort but the methods they use are all wrong. Their wishes and their actions contradict each other. Think about this carefully; we also act in the same way. We want both present and ultimate happiness, but our

methods are wrong. Whether we think of ourselves or of others, everyone's activities contravene their wishes.

We cannot practice from the beginning wishing to establish all beings in the ultimate state of happiness and comfort, so initially we must focus on those who are close to us. Next we move on to those who are neutral, neither enemies nor friends. Finally, we focus on our enemies, those who actually cause us trouble. In this way, the mental capacity for love should expand.

During our meditation sessions we begin by concentrating on an individual and expand from there. During post-meditation as well we try to develop love for all categories of beings. Gradually boundless love will develop in our mindstreams, and finally it will become habitual and arise automatically. Until this occurs, mind training is crucial.

A desire for our own happiness and comfort automatically arises as soon as we wake up in the morning. We need no mind training for this. It is habitual. When training in boundless love, we should meditate until this same feeling comes automatically for all sentient beings.

The sutras as well mention "loving actions of body, loving actions of speech, and loving actions of mind." Whatever you say with your mouth, whatever you do with your hands, should do no harm to other sentient beings, but should be straightforward and loving.

When you want to speak to any being, your manner of talking should not harm them and should be honest, without any deceit. All speech should incorporate a feeling of love. The same is true of activities of the hands. In "The Way of the Bodhisattva," Shantideva writes:

*Whenever you look at a sentient being
Look in an honest and loving manner.*

When you look at someone, your deep motivation should be honest and loving. Gazing upon others with compassion and love, they will experience comfort and happiness. Staring at them with hatred and anger, they will feel uneasy. Compassion and love should be expressed even when simply looking at others. You must actually put into action what you are practicing during your meditation sessions. Compassion and love will then arise automatically and continuously both during meditation and post-meditation.

If you practice love and compassion only when meditating, and then when your session is finished speak harshly to others, harm them physically, or even look at them angrily, it makes no difference whether or not you are

meditating on love during your sessions. The reason we meditate is to bring our actions in post meditation in line with our meditative contemplation.

Even when you look at someone look with a smile in a way that eases the mind. Don't look with hatred or angry eyes.

Great negativity can result from looking at others with hatred or angry eyes. Patrul Rinpoche mentions a story about this:

There was once a powerful leader who always looked at others angrily. He was reborn as a hungry ghost living on left-over food kept under the stove. In particular, it is also taught that someone who looks angrily at a noble one will be born in a hell realm.

The noble ones are the ground of special qualities. Looking at them angrily accumulates unmeasurable negativity and results in suffering in the hell realms. Likewise, parents and elderly people are the ground of benefit, and giving them angry looks also accumulates great negativity and leads to the hell realms.

All actions of your body should be gentle, and pleasing to the mind. Strive to bring no harm to others, and to benefit them. With your speech, do not utter a single word of contempt, irritation or criticism. Speak truthfully and pleasantly. With your mind as well, help others without wishing for anything in return.

Have no hope for future return or the future ripening of beneficial karma from helping others. Simply act to benefit them. Do not hope for respect or a higher status from speaking kindly.

Do not try to have others see you as a bodhisattva because of your pleasant behavior and speech. Do not act as a hypocrite. From the depths of your heart aspire to benefit others. Consider nothing but their happiness. Make the following prayer again and again: "In birth after birth, and life after life, throughout all my lives, may I not harm even a single hair of another being, and may I always help them."

You must think about this and make fervent aspirations to act accordingly, not only for this life but for however many lives you may have in samsara. "Throughout all of these lifetimes, may I act only to benefit others and not harm even a single hair of their heads." Think about benefitting others at all times and in all situations. Maintain this aspiration in your mind, pray with your speech, and behave properly. Supplicate the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions to fulfill this aspiration, and do whatever you can.

In particular, do not make anyone under your control suffer by beating them, or working them too hard and so on. Do not treat with contempt, beat, overwork or make miserable your servants, domestic animals or even your watchdogs. At all times and in all situations, act with loving-kindness through body, speech and mind. Being born as a servant or a watchdog and being despised and beaten by others is the ripening result and repayment for acting with contempt toward beings in past rebirths as individuals in positions of power.

If you now scorn others due to your position and wealth, in a future life you will be born as a servant as repayment of the karmic debt. You should treat especially kindly those in lower positions than yourself.

In particular, whatever you do with body, speech and mind to help your parents and those suffering from long illnesses will bring inconceivable benefit.

Our parents, who gave us our bodies, are the ground of great kindness. Acting to benefit them accumulates great merit. Similarly, people suffering from lingering illnesses constitute the ground of suffering. Helping them accumulates more merit than benefitting others.

Lord Atisa taught:

Acting kindly to travelers from far away, to those who have been ill for a long time, and to our aged parents is the same as meditating on emptiness, the heart of which is compassion.

Parents treat their children with immense love and kindness, so that if the children upset them in their old age, this is a serious negative action. In order to repay her kindness, Lord Buddha went to the Heaven of the Thirty-three to teach his mother the Dharma. It is said that even if a son were to reverently carry his parents around the entire world on his shoulders this would not repay their great kindness, but we can repay them by introducing them to the Dharma. Thus, we should always care for our parents respectfully with body, speech, and mind, and should endeavor in methods to turn their minds toward the Dharma.

The great Orgyen has said:

Do not cause old people unhappiness; care for them with respect.

With body and speech, act kindly toward all who are older than you

are, and do what you can to please them.

These days some people say there is no way to accomplish worldly activities without harming sentient beings, but there is a way.

Once in the past, two novice monks from Khotan were doing the practice of noble Manjushri when he appeared to them and said, "There is no karmic link between me and the two of you. Noble Avalokitesvara is the deity with whom you have been connected in your past lives. He is presently living in Tibet as the king.² You should go there to see him."

When the two novices reached Tibet and went to the walls of Lhasa they saw that many people had been executed or imprisoned. They asked who they were.

"The king has ordered these punishments," was the answer.

"He could not be Avalokitesvara," they thought. "We might also be punished, so we should flee."

Knowing they were leaving, the king sent a messenger to bring them into his presence. "You two need not fear. Tibet is a wild place, difficult to tame. I have created the illusion of punishing people by executing and dismembering them, and so on. In fact, I have not brought harm to a single hair of any sentient being."

The king ruled all of Tibet, the Land of Snow, and he had brought kings from all four directions under his control. He defeated all invading armies and maintained the security of the borders. Even though he had to subdue enemies and protect those close to him on such a vast scale, he harmed not even a single hair of any being.

Why should it then be impossible for us to avoid harm to others when we protect our own poor property, no larger than an insect's nest? Harming sentient beings brings harm to us in return, causing endless suffering in this and future lives. Even for this life, it brings no good. No one gets rich by depending on murder, theft and so on, but they must pay the penalty, and end up losing their wealth and possessions.

Boundless love is like the love of a mother bird for her chicks. At first she makes a soft, comfortable nest, and then she covers the chicks with her wings so they are warm. With behavior that is completely gentle she protects the chicks until they are able to fly away. In this

2 This was King Songtsen Gampo, Tibet's first Buddhist king, who is considered an incarnation of Avalokitesvara.

way, we should learn to act lovingly with body, speech and mind toward all sentient beings in the three realms.

Focus on these thoughts of boundless love for the purpose of mind training. By concentrating one-pointedly on a single object, your mind will become exhausted. Without one-pointed concentration, randomly thinking of many things does not lead to mental exhaustion. When the mind is exhausted thoughts will no longer arise, just as when the body is exhausted it can no longer function. At that time you will neither become caught up in thoughts of the past, nor will you follow thoughts of the future, and you will remain without any thoughts of the present. If you are experienced with the actual main point of meditation, you should continue with your practice, but otherwise you should remain without thought. The experience of calm abiding will arise, and will bring forth the special wisdom realization, which is the main practice of meditation. Continue in whatever way you can, without becoming caught up in discursive thought.

After a while thought will again begin to move. Do not allow your thoughts to proliferate, and concentrate wholly on loving-kindness. In both meditation and post-meditation focus on the object of the meditation and act accordingly. Bring your actions and your speech into accord with your mind of loving-kindness. You then retain the thought of loving-kindness both during meditation and post-meditation.

The practices of impartiality, love, compassion and rejoicing can be internally classified into three aspects: the four boundless qualities focusing on beings, the four boundless qualities focusing on phenomena, and the four boundless qualities with no object of focus.

When practicing the four boundless qualities with a focus on phenomena, we must realize the impermanent nature of all sentient beings. All beings are compounded. Compounded phenomena are impermanent, so therefore all the infinite sentient beings are impermanent. With this understanding the aspiration that all beings should be free from suffering is compassion, and the aspiration that they should remain in happiness is love. Practicing with the understanding that all beings are impermanent is practicing the four boundless qualities with a focus on phenomena.

Practicing the four boundless qualities with no object of focus is understanding that all beings are without a self-nature, that they appear but have no self-nature. With this understanding, once again the aspiration that all beings should be free from suffering is compassion, and the aspiration that they should remain in happiness is love.

At our level, we may not be able to effectively practice in this way with the focus on phenomena, or with no object of focus. At the beginning, we must practice simply focusing on beings. We may not understand the impermanent nature of beings or that they have no self-nature and simply appear as do magical apparitions and dreams, but we do understand that they are beings, and we wish for them to be free from suffering and to remain in happiness. Practicing like this at first is fine. Patrul Rinpoche is here teaching how to practice the four boundless qualities with a focus on beings.

Boundless compassion

For practicing boundless compassion, the focus is on sentient beings who are as many as space is vast. At present we automatically wish for our family and friends to be free from suffering, but we do not feel the same toward beings we are indifferent to nor toward those whom we consider to be enemies. During the practice of boundless compassion, we must focus on all beings, because not a single one is free from suffering. Many types of suffering are found in the lower realms, such as the heat and cold of the hell realms and the hunger and thirst of the hungry ghosts. The suffering in the upper realms is not as extreme, but nonetheless the beings suffer.

All beings are suffering, and our aspiration is that they should all be free from both the causes and the results of suffering. When this feeling arises automatically, boundless compassion is present in our mindstreams. We begin the practice of boundless compassion by focusing on a particular being who is suffering. The text explains that we must focus at first on beings undergoing great suffering – those who are gravely ill and in great distress, or those who are dying – and make the wish that they could be free from their suffering and the causes of their suffering. Compassion will arise easily in this way.

As we gradually become habituated to this practice, the degree of suffering will no longer matter. If there is a being, there will be suffering. All beings suffer; not a single one is free from negativity. So the thought that beings should be free from the causes and results of suffering should always arise. We should practice until our compassion extends to all beings, without exception.

Patrul Rinpoche quotes the following example:

Think of a being in extreme torment, such as a criminal thrown into jail, who is finally about to be executed, or an animal in front of the

butcher, about to be slaughtered. Feel the same love toward that being as you would for your own mother or child. Thus it is taught.

At first we visualize like this. Imagine that this being is someone very close to you and the wish that they could be free from their suffering will easily arise. Next, imagine someone toward whom you feel neutral, who is neither an enemy nor someone close to you and make the same wish. Finally, imagine your enemy. By gradually practicing in this way, you will eventually develop compassion toward all.

At present, if you see a criminal about to be executed, or an animal about to be slaughtered, you may feel rather indifferent, without much compassion. But recognize that they are your parents, the only difference being time, whether they were your parents earlier or will be your parents later. Realize that you are their child. Compassion will then arise automatically. Imagine the compassion you would feel upon seeing your present parents facing the executioner, or feeling the butcher's knife after being bound up for killing. All beings would experience compassion on seeing their parents in such situations. Without recognizing the beings who are suffering as your parents, however, automatic compassion will not arise. You can also put yourself in these situations. Imagine you are the criminal about to be executed, the animal about to be slaughtered. This will also bring forth compassion automatically. You will realize how much fear you would experience, and how severely you would suffer. All beings have the same experience.

Patrul Rinpoche elaborates:

Imagine a prisoner the king is sending to death, or a sheep the butcher has caught and tied up. Give up the thought that it is some other being. Think, "If that were me, what would I do?" Imagine you are that suffering being. What can you do? You have no place to run to, no place to hide, no refuge and no protector. You cannot escape. You don't know how to fly. You have no force or army to fight back. Right now, in an instant, the appearances of this life are about to cease. You must even leave behind your dear body that you have cared for and set out on the great path to the next life. How appalling! Train your mind by taking the suffering of that prisoner upon yourself.

Look at a sheep being taken to the slaughterhouse. Give up the thought that it is just a sheep. Think, "If this were my aged mother, what would I do?" From the bottom of your heart, meditate that this is your aged mother. "My mother has done no one any harm, and now others are about to kill her. What can I do?" From the

core of your heart, imagine the suffering she is going through, and take that suffering into your own mind. When you have aroused intense feelings of love and compassion and a strong desire to free your mother from the immediate suffering of being killed by the butcher, you should reflect, “Although this suffering creature is not my present parent, it was certainly my parent in a past life, and cared for me with the same kindness as my present parents, so there is no difference. What a pity my poor parents are being tormented by such intense suffering! If only they could quickly be freed from this misery, right now, immediately!” Thinking like this, meditate with unbearable compassion until you burst into tears.

When you have developed such compassion, recall that the suffering experienced now is the result of negative actions committed in the past, and that those who are committing negative actions now will definitely suffer in the future. Take pity on them. Meditate with compassion for all beings who by taking life and other nonvirtuous actions are creating the causes of suffering.

We must consider that all this great suffering results from past negative action. Beings who are committing negative actions now will suffer in the future, and we should think of them with compassion. We meditate in two ways. We practice compassion for those who are actually suffering now, and also with compassion for those who will be suffering in the future, those who are killing, stealing, lying and so on.

Those suffering now are experiencing the ripening of the causes of misery. Just as we arouse compassion for them, we should arouse compassion for those who will suffer in the future. Everyone, from the highest level of a king to the lowest level of a beggar, is involved in negativity. Even though they might feel happiness and comfort at present, in the future they will suffer as a result of their present actions. There is no doubt about their future suffering, and we must practice compassion for them. However, we begin by arousing compassion for those who are actually suffering now. This is easy to do. Later we practice compassion for those who are engaged in nonvirtue.

Next focus on beings born in the realms of hell beings and hungry ghosts. Imagine that they are you yourself, or your father and mother and exert yourself in meditating with compassion.

Finally, reflect on all beings of the form, formless and desire realms. Sentient beings pervade space, and wherever there are beings there are negative actions and suffering. What a pity that beings are

involved only in negativity and misery! Think how wonderful it would be if all beings of the six classes could be free from the particular perceptions caused by their past actions, from their suffering and habitual tendencies, and attain the permanent happiness of perfect buddhahood. Meditate like this with heartfelt compassion.

This practice is the same as boundless love. First you must practice with beings who are close to you. When compassion arises naturally, begin to practice with those toward whom you feel indifferent and finally practice with your enemies. In the end, you will naturally feel the desire to free all beings, as many as space is vast, from their suffering. Beyond the desire to free all beings from their present suffering is the wish to establish them in the final happiness of permanent freedom from suffering, in other words to place them in the state of final enlightenment.

Bodhicitta means the unification of compassion and wisdom. With the help of the compassion that wishes to benefit others, the wisdom that brings about the state of perfect enlightenment will arise. If pure compassion arises, there will be no difficulty in developing bodhicitta.

When first meditating on compassion, focus one by one on individual beings who are overwhelmed by suffering. Then gradually train your mind until you can meditate on all beings pervading space. Otherwise your compassion will be too vague and not as it should be.

If you begin by thinking of all sentient beings pervading space, it is difficult to arouse compassion for specific individual beings. You must have compassion for particular beings. Starting with those dear to you, and then focusing on those who are neutral and antagonistic, you finally have equal compassion for all infinite beings. In post meditation, you must put into action the compassion on which you are meditating. Having aroused compassion for all suffering beings, you should seek methods to free them from their misery and act on these methods. Unless you try to put your compassion into action during your post meditation periods, whether you meditate upon compassion during your sessions or not makes no difference.

In particular, look at the misery and hardships of your own cattle, sheep, packhorses and other animals and meditate on compassion. We make these animals suffer torments like those of the hell realms, piercing their noses, castrating them, pulling out their hair and bleeding them while alive. We do not think at all that they might be suffering. If we reflect on this, the reason is that our cultivation of compassion is at fault.

Taking ourselves, for example, we cannot bear the pain of a small spark touching our skin, but we inflict the pain listed above without thinking about it. We don't consider these animals to be sentient beings; we think of them as non-living things, like earth or stones. Actually, in many situations, other beings feel the same amount of fear and suffering as we do.

Consider this well. If a single strand of your hair were pulled out, you would cry "ouch," unable to bear the pain. But in the same way we twist out all the belly hair of our yaks,³ leaving behind red blotches of flesh with drops of blood falling from where the hair was pulled. The animal groans from the unbearable pain, but we do not think it is suffering.

We cannot stand to have a blister on our hands. Likewise, when our backsides ache from travelling by horseback, we cannot remain in the saddle and must sit sideways. But we give not the slightest thought to the exhaustion or suffering of the horse. When it cannot go on and stumbles, panting for breath, we think it has a bad disposition and is refusing to move. Becoming angry, we beat it, with not a trace of sympathy.

When a sheep is to be butchered, it first experiences inconceivable terror at being taken from the rest of the flock. A blood blister forms where it was seized. Next, thrown on its back so that earth and sky change places, its limbs are bound with braided leather, and its mouth is tied with a cord, stopping its breath. Even when the sheep is experiencing the agony of death, if it is a little slow in dying, most unfortunate butchers – men of evil work – become angry, shouting, "This one doesn't want to die," and beating it.

As soon as it dies, it is skinned and its entrails removed. At the same time, another sheep is being bled until it staggers. The blood of the living and dead animals is mixed together and cooked, and prepared as sausages in the entrails of the one already butchered. One who can eat this is a true cannibal.

Reflect on this carefully, observing the suffering of these animals. Imagine that you are one of them. What is this like? Cover your mouth with your hand and stop your breathing. Remain for a while and experience their pain and fear. Observe this well, and take pity on all those beings who are constantly undergoing this intense torment. Meditate again and again, thinking how wonderful it would be if you were able to give them refuge from these many kinds of suffering.

3

This soft hair is pulled out, rather than sheared, and is used for wool.

Lamas and monks in particular should be lords of compassion, but these days they have none at all, and are worse than householders at causing pain to beings. This shows that the time of the Buddha's teachings is nearing its end. Flesh-eating demons are objects of veneration. In the past our teacher Shakyamuni abandoned the kingdom of a universal monarch like a drop of spit, becoming a renunciate. With his arhat followers, all carrying begging bowls and walking sticks, he traveled on foot and begged for alms. Not only did they have no pack horses or mules, even Lord Buddha had no horse to ride. He felt it was not the Buddhist teaching to make sentient beings suffer. It is not that the Buddha had no way to find an old horse.

These days, when our monks set out for village ceremonies, they push a rough cord of yak hair through the deep hole pierced through their yak's nose. Once mounted on the yak, they pull hard on the rope with both hands, so that it digs into the old animal's nostrils, causing unbearable pain. The yak thrashes about, and the rider whips it with great strength. The great pain on its side makes it run and it is again pulled by the nose. When it stops from the unbearable pain in its nose, it is whipped again. Pulled from the front, whipped behind, the journey continues until the yak's body is transformed by fatigue and suffering. Each hair drips sweat, its tongue hangs out, its breath pants, and it can no longer move.

"Now why isn't it behaving itself," the monk wonders. Becoming angry he hits the yak on its back with the whip handle, hitting it so hard the handle breaks in two. Stuffing the broken pieces in his belt, he picks up a sharp stone and, turning in the saddle, beats the old yak's rump. This is all because he has no compassion at all in his mindstream.

Now imagine you are the old yak. On your back is a big load too heavy to carry. Pulled by a rope through your nose, your sides beaten by a whip, your ribs bruised by the large stirrups – in front, behind and on both sides you are in pain. With not a moment to rest, you climb up hills and down steep slopes; you cross large rivers and great plains. Without time to eat even a bite of food, you are forced against your will to walk from early dawn until the red glow of evening has ended. Think about the hardship and misery, how much pain, hunger and thirst you would suffer and take this torment upon yourself. You will definitely develop intense, unbearable compassion.

When we eat meat, we enjoy the good taste and good smell. Our

attachment for meat grows. But if we think about how this meat is obtained, it almost all comes from an animal being caught and killed by a butcher. Only rarely is meat obtained by an animal's natural death. Imagine the pain and suffering of an animal being slaughtered. If we really thought of their pain we would feel such aversion that we could not eat meat even if someone forced us. Without reflecting like this, and eating meat just for pleasure, our desire for meat increases. The distaste for meat will never come.

These days people mostly ride in automobiles and no longer need animals like horses and yaks for transport, but when people do use pack animals, no one thinks of their suffering. They are considered no different from stone or earth. They are whipped and beaten with iron rods, and their noses are pierced. Put yourself in their position, and imagine how much you would suffer from carrying their loads. If you really thought of their suffering, you could not avoid feeling compassion for them. When you practice compassion, you must take the suffering of others onto your own body. Using your body as an example, intense compassion will arise.

Normally those called lamas and monks should be impartial in granting refuge, protection and final relief to all beings. In fact, they take the side of the patrons who make offerings to them and give them food and drink. They pray, "Protect and guard them!" and bestow on them empowerments and blessings. They consider as enemies hungry ghosts and evil spirits whose negative births result from their past negativity.

Actually lamas should have greater compassion for the spirits with negative rebirths than for the patrons. The patrons have acquired human bodies in the upper realms. The hungry ghosts and harmful spirits that are causing them trouble have less fortunate bodies and suffer greatly. Nonetheless the lamas consider them as enemies of their patrons.

The lamas who perform such ceremonies generate hatred and shout "kill, kill" and "strike, strike," making gestures of beating. The minds of those who take harmful spirits as something to be beaten and killed are under the power of attachment and hatred, and they have not developed great impartial compassion.

The lamas take the side of the patrons who make offerings to them. Attached to the patrons, they oppose the spirits who harm them. They hate them. They feel this attachment and hatred because they have fallen under the control of the strong afflictive emotions of attachment and hatred in their mindstreams. Not having developed the compassion that considers

all beings to be equal, they protect some and harm others.

If we think about this carefully, the evil spirits need compassion far more than the patrons. They have become harmful gods and demons because of their negative karma. Born as hungry ghosts, with ghastly bodies, their pain and fear are immeasurable. They experience only constant hunger, thirst and exhaustion. All appearance arises as something threatening. Because of the great anger and aggression in their minds, many go to the hell realms as soon as they die. Who deserves compassion more than they?

Even though the patrons may be ill and in misery, they are exhausting their negative karma, not creating more. The evil spirits are harming others with their negative intentions, and because of their actions will be thrown to the bottom of the lower realms.

The Victorious One, skilled in methods and filled with compassion, taught wrathful and fierce action to terrify and expel these spirits out of compassion for them, like a mother who will hit a disobedient child. He also allowed those who can cut the continuity of evil actions by beings who do only harm, and who can then transfer their consciousnesses to a pure realm, to practice the activity of liberation and the like.

Practice like this requires the greatest compassion. When gods and demons are being killed or buried underground, we need even more than compassion. We need to liberate them to the pure buddhafiels. If we kill and bury them without compassion and without the power of liberating them into pure buddhafiels, and if the action is done with anger and hatred, the activity becomes negative itself. It will never be considered a skillful method of Secret Mantrayana, and a virtuous action.

Generally, Lord Buddha explained wrathful action as being done out great compassion for the harmful spirits. Before undertaking the wrathful action, we should generate compassion. This is like a mother spanking a disobedient child out of great love and compassion. The mother has no intention to harm the child.

Holding with attachment those patrons and monks we consider to be on our side while treating with anger the gods, demons and evil doers we consider the other side – under the power of attachment and anger protecting one while attacking the other – could the Victorious One have taught such methods? If we are moved by a mind full of attachment and hatred, even if we try to expel or attack these beings who have only mental bodies, they will not obey us and

will do us more harm. Not just to mention attachment and hatred, if we simply believe these spirits really exist and feel happy that they are leaving, we will never tame them.

If the yogi performing the ritual has sufficient power due to his practice of Secret Mantrayana, he may be able to kill and bury the spirits even with feelings of hatred and anger. Lacking such power, he will fail, and the gods and demons can do him harm. The spirits have clairvoyance to see whether the yogi is acting with compassion or not. If he is not acting with compassion and a desire to benefit, they will not listen to him, will become more angry themselves, and will hurt him. This is similar to a worldly situation in which someone seeks to harm a more powerful person. If he fails, the one he sought to harm will cause more difficulties than before. On the other hand, most spirits will not harm a yogi who is acting with compassion, and will help him.

Another point to mention is that, even if we have no hatred toward them, we can never subdue these spirits as long as we believe that they truly exist outside of us. Patrul Rinpoche provides an example of this from the life of Jetsun Milarepa.

When Jetsun Mila was staying in the Garuda Fortress Cave in Chong Valley, Vinayaka – king of the obstructing forces – created a magical illusion of five *atsaras*⁴ with eyes like saucers inside his cave. Supplicating his guru and yidam deity had no effect. He practiced the development stage of his yidam and recited wrathful mantras, but they still would not leave.

After this he thought, “Marpa of Lhodrak identified all of appearance and existence as the mind, and pointed out that mind’s nature is luminous and empty. Taking these obstacle-makers as external to myself and hoping for them to leave is meaningless.” Arousing intense confidence in the view that understands gods and demons to be one’s personal perceptions, he walked back inside. Rolling their eyes in fear, the *atsaras* vanished.

Many gods and demons achieve this form through the practice of mantra recitation. They cannot easily be dispersed through generating deities, reciting wrathful mantras, and rituals that seek to remove them because their power of mantra may be greater than the yogis who seek to expel them.

Moreover, regardless of the power of mantra recitation, the gods and

demons cannot be controlled without the true view that recognizes all spirits as manifestations of the nature of mind. Those who understand that all phenomena that appear and exist are manifestations of the nature of our own mind, and not external, have the strength of the true view. The gods and demons do not have this kind of view, and can be controlled by yogis who realize this. That is why Patrul Rinpoche includes Jetsun Milarepa's story at this point. He continues with the song sung to Milarepa by the Ogress of the Rock.

*The demon of habitual tendencies emerges from the mind.
If you don't understand your mind's nature,
I won't leave just because you tell me, "Go!"
Not understanding your mind as empty,
There are uncountable demons in addition to me.
If you do recognize the nature of your mind,
Adverse circumstances will arise as friends
And I, the Ogress of the Rock, will be your servant.*

The demons of the habitual tendencies arise from within our own minds. There are no other gods and demons than this. Without such recognition, believing that these spirits are something other and ordering them to leave by giving them tormas and performing various rituals will not succeed. If you actually realize the nature of mind as it is, no gods and demons exist. Otherwise, the gods and demons cover the entire sky. There are not only one or two. If you realize that the nature of mind is emptiness, all appearances become your allies and do not harm you. Patrul Rinpoche concludes:

Without confidence in the view that recognizes the gods and demons your own mind, how can you tame them through anger?

Patrul Rinpoche next teaches based on how such rituals were performed in Tibet.

When invited by their patrons for village rituals, the lamas have no hesitation in eating however many sheep have been killed and are served to them.

The patrons are making an innocent mistake, because they do not understand the negativity of killing animals. Their intention is to treat their lamas with respect. They do this is by serving them meat. Thinking that the lama is their object of offering for the Dharma, they want to serve the best that they can. They think they will accumulate merit in that way.

The lamas, however, should realize that many beings have been killed, and should not want to eat the meat. In fact, according to Patrul Rinpoche, they eat the meat happily.

When performing special rituals to make offerings to the protectors, they say that clean meat is a required ingredient. This means meat that has just been killed, including the fat and blood. They use this to decorate all the tormas and offering articles. Such frightening practice is like that of the primitive Bon or the heretics, but is not Buddhist. In the Buddhist tradition, after taking refuge in the Dharma we must give up harming others. If wherever we go we harm a sentient being by having it killed and enjoying its flesh and blood, does this not violate our refuge vows?

Particularly, in the bodhisattva tradition of the Mahayana, we should be the refuge and protector of all infinite sentient beings. Yet we feel no compassion at all for those beings with negative karma that we are supposed to be protecting. Beings to be protected are killed, their flesh and blood cooked and put before their protector, the bodhisattva, who happily eats it, loudly smacking his lips. What negative action could be heavier than that?

The texts of the Secret Mantra Vajrayana say:

*However we have displeased the singha and tramen⁵
By not collecting the offerings of flesh and blood according to the
texts,
We beg forgiveness from the dakinis of the sacred places.*

“Collecting the offerings of flesh and blood according to the texts” means we must collect them in accordance with the tantric texts of Secret Mantra. According to these texts:

*The five kinds of meat and the five kinds of nectar
Are the food and drink of the outer feast gathering.*

The five meats that are suitable samaya substances for Secret Mantra are the flesh of humans, horses, dogs, and so on.⁶ This meat is undefiled by harmful action since it was not killed for food. Setting out these five meats as the samaya substances for the feast offering is the flesh and blood offering collected according to the texts.

This is the opposite of being caught up in the dualistic concepts of

5 Symbolic deities of the mandala.

6 The flesh of elephants and cows are the other two.

clean and unclean where the flesh of humans and dogs is held to be unclean and inferior, and the tasty, fatty meat of an animal killed for food is held to be clean. Such attitudes are known as:

*Seeing the five samaya substances to be accepted
As clean and unclean, or consuming them carelessly...*

Having this view of clean and unclean violates the samaya of accepting. Even these five kinds of acceptable meat are to be used only when you have the power to transform whatever you eat into nectar and are practicing to achieve certain accomplishments in a solitary place. Eating them carelessly in villages, simply because you crave the taste, is called “careless consumption contrary to the samayas of accepting” and is a violation.

Generally, Tibetans consider the meat of cows and yaks to be clean while human flesh, dog flesh, and horse flesh are considered unclean. The meat of animals that have died naturally, that have fallen off cliffs or have otherwise died from their own karma and not been killed for their meat, can be eaten without any negativity.

We can only accept the five meats and five nectars by going beyond the dualistic concept of pure and impure. Consuming them while holding dualistic concepts violates our samaya. The Mantrayana practice of accepting the five meats and five nectars means having the power to transform them into the five Buddha families and the five wisdoms. The transformation must be done through mantra, concentration and mudra, and requires solitude in connection with sadhana practice. Simply visiting villages and carelessly eating meat violates samaya and accumulates negativity.

“Clean meat” is not meat that is killed for the purpose of food, but meat from an animal that died from its own karmic action, either exhausting its lifespan from old age, sickness or other causes.

In contrast to that, the peerless Dagpo Rinpoche has taught that if the still warm flesh and blood of an animal that was just slaughtered is placed on the mandala, all of the wisdom deities would faint. It is also said that inviting the wisdom deities and offering them the flesh and blood of a slaughtered animal is like killing a child in front of its mother. If you invited a mother to a feast and offered her the flesh of her murdered child, would she be happy or not? The buddhas and bodhisattvas consider all the beings of the three realms with the same love as a mother for her only child. Killing a heedless animal that is overpowered by its own negative actions and offering them its

flesh and blood is no way to please the victorious ones.

Bodhisattva Shantideva says:

*Just as one whose entire body is burning
Will take no comfort from any pleasure,
Causing harm to beings
Is no way to please those of great compassion.*

When performing offering rituals to the protectors, if only the flesh and blood of slaughtered animals is used for offerings of flesh and offerings of blood, the wisdom deities and the protectors who guard the Buddhist doctrine – who are bodhisattvas after all – will clearly not accept such offerings, which are like meat from a butcher. They will not even be able to approach.

However, evil gods and demons of great power who delight in the warm flesh and blood of slaughtered animals, and who always strive to harm sentient beings, will gather to enjoy those offerings. For a short while, they may follow the one making these red offerings and bring about some minor benefits. But because they are always engaged in harming beings, they may bring on illness and sudden obstacles. Once more the practitioner of red offering rituals will come and make his offerings of flesh and blood, and again some benefit will result.

These two – the practitioners and the evil spirits – become friends who help each other and are always together. Like carnivorous animals, they want only to eat, to chew, and to find more. The mindstreams of the practitioners of red offerings become possessed by evil spirits, and all the qualities they had before of renunciation and disillusionment with samsara, faith, pure perception, and interest in Dharma diminish. Seeing the Buddha fly in the sky, they would have no faith; seeing an animal with its insides falling out, they would have no compassion. Like cannibal demons setting off for war, their faces flushed, shaking with rage, minds rough and coarse, they are always hoping to cause pain. They take pride in the power and blessings of their speech, a result of their companionship with the evil spirits.

Immediately on dying, they will be thrown like stones into hell, or if their burden of negative karma is not quite full, they will be born into the retinue of some evil spirit harming the life force of beings, or they will be born as hawks, wolves and other predators.

In the past, during Dharma King Trisong Detsen's reign, Bon

practitioners made offerings of flesh and blood for the king's benefit. Seeing this, the Second Buddha of Orgyen, the great pandita Vimalamitra, the great Bodhisattva Abbot, and the other scholars were all extremely upset. They said:

*A single teaching cannot have two teachers;
A single religious tradition cannot have two different ways of
practice.
The practice of this Bon does not accord with the laws of
Dharma;
It is not like common, ordinary wrongdoing.
If you allow such practice, we will return to our own countries.*

All the panditas felt the same, without any discussion. When the king asked them to teach the Dharma, they refused to teach. When he offered them food, they refused to eat.

Claiming to be followers of these scholars, masters, and bodhisattvas of the past, if we now carry out the profound Secret Mantra rituals as though they were Bon and cause harm to beings, this will lower the superior doctrine, shame the Three Jewels, and drive us and others into the hell realms.

Avoiding meat is the best choice, but if you must consume meat, eat it with the understanding that this action accumulates negative karma. Many people consume meat, blood, and alcohol thinking that this is the Mantrayana ritual. They not only accumulate negativity themselves, but slander the Secret Mantrayana. In this way, they accumulate double negativity.

Patrul Rinpoche continues by saying, "Always take the lowest seat." We should never act in the opposite way, proudly claiming to have great power and great blessings, or claiming to be a scholar and highly accomplished. He says we should wear "tattered clothes", meaning old clothes. He goes on to discuss the importance of maintaining a compassionate attitude.

Benefit all sentient beings as much as possible. Strive only to develop love and compassion until they are definitely born in your mindstream. This will be enough even if you do not engage in more obvious types of practice such as reciting prayers, performing virtuous acts or working for the welfare of beings. The "Sutra that Perfectly Summarizes the Dharma" states:

One who desires to attain Buddhahood need not train in many

*Dharmas.
 He should train in only one.
 If you ask which, it is great compassion.
 Whoever has great compassion has all the Buddha's teachings as
 though in the palm of his hand.*

Once in the past, a monk disciple of the Three Brothers and Khampa Lungpa⁷ went to see Geshe Tonpa. “What is Putowa doing,” he asked.

“He is teaching Dharma to many hundreds of sangha members.”

“Wonderful! That is something. What about Geshe Puchungwa?”

“Using a lot of his own and others’ wealth, he is solely engaged in constructing representations of Buddha’s body, speech, and mind.”⁸

“Great! That is also something. What is Gonpawa doing?”

“He only meditates.”

“Wonderful! What is Khampa Lungpa doing?”

“He stays alone, with his head covered, doing nothing but weep.”

Geshe Tonpa took off his hat, joined his palms at his heart, and shed many tears. “That is most wonderful. He is really practicing what is called Dharma. I could tell you about his many qualities, but if I talk about this now, he won’t like it.”

When Khampa Lungpa covered his head and wept, he was thinking of the suffering of beings tormented by samsara, and meditating only on compassion for them.

Likewise, once when Chengawa was teaching on the many reasons love and compassion are so important Langri Thangpa made prostrations, saying, “From now on I will practice only love and compassion.” The teacher took off his hat and three times said, “What excellent news!” Nothing is better than love and compassion for cleansing our minds of negativity and obscurations.

Contemplating compassion is more powerful than teaching many disciples; constructing representations of enlightened body, speech, and mind; or meditation. Contemplating compassion means wishing that

⁷ The Three Brothers – Putowa, Chengawa and Puchungwa – and Khampa Lungpa were Drom Tonpa’s main disciples.

⁸ Statues and paintings represent Buddha’s body, scriptures represent his speech, and stupas represent his mind.

beings could be free from the causes and results of suffering. I taught before that simply accumulating virtue cannot become an antidote to negativity without the four supports and dedication of merit. However, arousing compassion and love for sentient beings who are suffering because of the causes and results of their actions automatically becomes the antidote to negativity, with no need to dedicate this or make aspirations for negativity to be purified. When compassion, bodhicitta, or the extraordinary view are aroused in your mindstream, they immediately become an antidote to negativity. Nothing is more effective for purifying negative actions and obscurations. Patrul Rinpoche provides examples of this.

Long ago in India the Abhidharma was challenged three times and was disappearing. A brahmin nun named Prakasasila had an idea. "Since I was born a woman, an inferior birth, I don't have the power to make the teachings flourish. But I will make connections with men and bear sons who can spread the sublime Abhidharma."

From her relationship with a man of the royal family, the noble Asanga was born, and from her relationship with a brahmin, Vasubhandu was born. As the two sons grew up they asked about their fathers' work. "You two were not born to follow your fathers but in order to spread the Buddhist teaching. You must study the Dharma and teach the Abhidharma doctrine."

Vasubhandu went to Kashmir to study Abhidharma with Sanghabhadra, and Asanga went to Kukkutapada Mountain, hoping to see a vision Buddha Maitreya and request oral instructions from him. He did the practice of Maitreya for six years, and although he bore great hardship in his meditation, he did not have even an auspicious dream.

After that Asanga thought, "I'm not having any success, so I should leave." He went away discouraged. On the road he met a man who was wiping a large iron pole with a piece of soft cloth. "What are you doing, wiping like that?" he asked.

"I don't have a needle," the man replied. "By wearing away this iron pole, I'm hoping to make a needle."

Asanga thought there would never be enough time to make a needle by rubbing the iron with soft cloth. "Even if it could be done in a hundred years, will he live that long? Seeing worldly people make such strenuous efforts for so little reason, I realize I have not been at all persistent in my Dharma practice." So he returned and practiced for three more years, without a single sign of progress.

“Now I know I’ll never succeed,” he thought, and again left. On the way he met a man in front of a huge pinnacle of rock that seemed to touch the sky. He was flicking it with a feather he dipped in water. Asanga asked the man what he was doing.

“This rock is too high, and blocks the sunlight from my house, which is to the west of it. I’m going to wear it away and make it disappear.”

Asanga had the same kind of thoughts as before and again he returned and practiced for three years. But he still had not even a single good dream. Completely depressed, he said, “Whatever I try, I can’t do anything,” and again he left.

On the road was a bitch with both hind legs crippled and her hindquarters completely covered with maggots. Still aggressive toward others, she pulled herself with her forelegs and tried to bite him, while dragging her hindquarters along behind her. Developing strong, unbearable compassion, he cut off a piece of his flesh and gave it to the dog. He wanted to clear away the maggots from her hindquarters, but feared he might kill them if he used his hands. He realized he would have to use his tongue to remove them, but seeing the rotting body full of pus, he simply could not touch it with his tongue. He shut his eyes and stretched out his tongue, but instead of touching the body of the dog, it touched the ground.

Opening his eyes, he saw that the dog had vanished and Lord Maitreya was sitting in a circle of light. “How little compassion you have that you didn’t show me your face before!” cried Asanga.

“It’s not that I didn’t show you my face,” answered Maitreya. “You and I have never been apart. Because of your strong negativity and obscuration, you couldn’t see me. Your twelve years of practice decreased this a little so you could see the dog. The great compassion you developed just now completely purified your obscuration, leaving nothing behind, so now you can actually see me. If you don’t believe this, carry me on your shoulder and show me to everyone.”

Asanga put Maitreya on his right shoulder and went to the marketplace where he asked everyone what was on his shoulder. They all said nothing was there except for one old woman whose habitual patterns were thinner. She said, “You are carrying the rotting corpse of a dog.”

After that, Lord Maitreya took Asanga to the Tushita heaven and taught him the Five Teachings of Maitreya and other instructions.

When he returned to the world of humans, Asanga widely spread the teachings of the Mahayana.

No practice is better than compassion for purifying our negativity. Compassion is also the unmistakable cause for the birth of extraordinary bodhicitta in our mindstreams. Thus we must strive in many ways to meditate upon compassion. The meditation upon compassion should involve feeling like a mother with no arms whose child is being carried off by a river. Because of her love for her child, the mother will feel unbearable intense anguish. "I have no arms, so I can't go into the river to save him. What can I do now?" She can think only of finding some method. Her heart cannot tolerate it, and she rushes along, calling for help.

Just like this, all beings in the three realms are carried away by the river of suffering. Despite the unbearable compassion we feel for those who are drowning in the ocean of samsara, we have no ability to protect them from their misery. Think to yourself, "What can I do now?" From deep within your heart, supplicate the lama and the Three Jewels, and meditate on compassion.

During the practice of arousing bodhicitta, we continuously contemplate compassion, and not only recite prayers. We must constantly reflect on the suffering of samsaric beings. Compassion should be aroused such that we mentally cannot bear their misery. At present, like the mother without arms whose child is being swept away, all we can do is have the aspiration to help others. We cannot be like a hero who is able to protect his child even in the midst of a battle. Such a hero has both skillful methods and the power to protect his child, but we are not like that.

Knowing that we lack the power to liberate beings, we pray to our guru and the Three Jewels to develop this capacity. "May I become able to free the infinite beings from all their suffering!" This is how we practice boundless compassion.

Boundless rejoicing

Imagine someone who is well-born, with strength, wealth, power, and so on, and who lives happily and comfortably in the higher realms enjoying a long life, many attendants, and prosperity.

During the meditation on boundless rejoicing, we particularly bring to mind those sentient beings who have the three perfections of grace, glory and wealth. We should rejoice for them from the bottom of our hearts. To

arouse such happiness for others in our mindstreams, we must eliminate all jealousy. With a jealous mind, boundless rejoicing can never be aroused.

We automatically rejoice in our parents, relatives, and friends who enjoy good health, long life, happiness and comfort, people to care for them, wealth and so on. We feel jealous of enemies and those who are neutral to us if they have these qualities. Instead of rejoicing, our jealousy makes us uncomfortable. Rejoicing only for those close to us is not boundless rejoicing. “Boundless” means rejoicing for all beings.

Our rejoicing is boundless only if we are rejoicing from the bottom of our hearts for all who have the qualities of higher realms, including our enemies and people we are indifferent to. Not only should we rejoice in what they have, but we should hope that their lives will improve even more. This boundless rejoicing is the antidote to jealousy, and it should arise automatically.

Have no feeling of rivalry or jealousy toward them. Even more than this, make the wish that they enjoy even greater glory and wealth of the higher realms, be free of all danger, develop more intelligence and many kinds of excellent qualities. Over and over meditate on the thought that it would be wonderful if other sentient beings could also achieve this kind of level.

“Other sentient beings” refers to beings without these advantages, those who are in the lower realms. We wish that they too can attain such a lifestyle.

At first, to easily develop this attitude, focus on those close to you who are happy and content and who have many positive qualities. Rejoice for them. Next arouse the same feeling for those to whom you are indifferent, and finally for those who have harmed you, your enemies, and particularly beings toward whom you feel jealous. Root out the negative feeling that it is intolerable for others to enjoy perfect fortune, and bring forth a particular happiness for each kind of comfort they experience. Conclude by remaining in the non-conceptual state.

We must train our minds sequentially, beginning with those close to us, then neutral persons, enemies, and finally all beings as numerous as the sky is vast. Rejoicing means not only feeling no jealousy towards others, but actually experiencing sincere joy for all those who have the qualities of the higher realms, the perfections of glory, grace, wealth and so on. Automatically rejoicing like this for all sentient beings is boundless rejoicing.

The meditations on boundless impartiality, boundless love, boundless compassion, and boundless rejoicing are all the same. When training the mind, we should focus on a single thought so that the mind becomes tired. Allowing any random thought to arise does not exhaust us, but the mind cannot remain focused for a long time on one point and will become worn out. When we physically work on one task until we become tired, we will be unable to work any longer. Likewise, when the mind is exhausted, we cannot think any more. At that time we should remain in the non-conceptual state.

Practitioners who have received the explanation and introduction to the main practice of the non-conceptual state should practice as they have been taught. Others should simply allow the mind to remain without thought, in a state of peace, like a small child. Try to rest in this state as long as possible. The breathing – the movement of the wind – should calm down and become gentle. Train in slowing the breath. Thoughts arise along with the breath, or wind energy. They will not come up if they do not meet with the conditioning factor of the wind, the breath. Otherwise, the movement of thought is said to be like a blind rider on a blind horse, moving everywhere, totally without control. When your breath becomes slow, thoughts also slow down.

During Trekchod or Tegal practice, we train in slowing the movement of the wind energy. We practice holding our breath, particularly the out breath, and remain without inhaling for as long as possible. By training like this, not only will thought decrease, but clear awareness (*rigpa*) will arise in your mindstream. Without training to slow the wind energy, you cannot carry out the pure main Trekchod and Tegal practices. If you do not begin practicing now, it will be difficult to train later. From right now, train in slowing your breath as much as you can. Train your mind as well to remain without thinking, in the unfabricated and natural state (*rang babs*). By training now, you will not face problems with the main practice, and will be able to abide in that practice. This is how the tradition is taught.

Since rejoicing occurs in a mind without jealousy, you must endeavor in various methods of mind training to keep negative jealous thoughts from arising. In particular, the bodhisattvas, heirs of the victorious ones, are arousing bodhicitta for the benefit of all beings, seeking to establish them in the permanent happiness of perfect buddhahood, and temporarily in the happiness of the realms of gods and humans. So how could they not be delighted when beings achieve some minor benefits or wealth through the force of their own previous actions?

Those like us who are practicing the Mahayana have aroused bodhicitta by taking vows through a ritual. At all times and in all circumstances, we should try to arouse bodhicitta. Whatever virtue is accumulated should contain the motivation of bodhicitta. Practitioners on this path are in the line of bodhisattvas, and have taken the responsibility to place beings both in the temporary happiness of the upper realms, and in the permanent happiness of the state of perfect buddhahood.

Since we have this responsibility, we should rejoice whenever beings achieve any small beneficial qualities as a result of their previous virtuous actions. Why shouldn't we rejoice in this? If we were jealous we would never become bodhisattvas. Jealousy means not being able to bear the abundance and prosperity of others. People with jealous minds clearly cannot have bodhicitta. Bodhicitta – the thought of benefitting others – and jealousy are absolutely contradictory. On one hand a mind contaminated by jealousy cannot see the good qualities of others, and if they are seen, the mind becomes unhappy. This is the result of jealousy. Such jealousy leads to the accumulation of great nonvirtue.

Jealousy or unhappiness at the abundance and good things that others possess does not diminish nor harm what they have, but it accumulates great nonvirtue in the mind of the one who experiences it. Jealousy can arise automatically and leads to unhappiness. It has no beneficial qualities at all. We must continuously check our minds for jealousy, and eliminate it so we can sincerely rejoice in the prosperity and positive qualities of others. This does not increase their good fortune, but we can accumulate great merit in this way. Whatever others enjoy comes from their own accumulated merit.

In the past, when Jetsun Milarepa's merit and enlightened action were increasing, a logic teacher named Tarlo developed great jealousy and began opposing him. No matter what clairvoyance or miracles the Jetsun demonstrated, Tarlo did not believe in them continued his wrong views and criticism, only to be later reborn as a great demon.

Likewise, a logician named Geshe Tsakpuwa tried to poison the Jetsun, and other examples also show what can happen from the power of jealousy alone.

Even if the Buddha were actually present, he could not guide a jealous person because a mind full of jealousy cannot see the good qualities of others. Without seeing these qualities, not a hair tip of faith can arise. Lacking faith, one is not a suitable recipient for compassion

and blessings.

A jealous person will always think that whatever qualities he has are better than those of others, even if the others are far superior. His jealousy prevents him from seeing the positive, so that faith in others can never arise, and he cannot receive their compassion and blessings. All buddhas have equal compassion, power and blessing to benefit all beings, but one who lacks faith can never receive anything from them. Jealous people can never become vessels of the buddhas' blessing. Patrul Rinpoche gives examples here.

Even though Devadatta and Sunaksatra were cousins of the Buddha, their minds were disturbed by jealousy and they had no wish to develop the slightest faith in him. Although they spent their lives with him, he had no way to influence them.

What is more, even if no actual harm is done, simply having evil thoughts about others is a very heavy nonvirtue for the thinker. In the past two well-known geshe were rivals. One heard that the other had a mistress. He asked his attendant to prepare special tea, saying that he had some good news. After preparing and serving the tea, the attendant asked what the news was. "People say that our rival has a mistress," he was told. When Kunpang Trakgyal heard about this, his face darkened and he asked which geshe committed the worse nonvirtue.

Always focusing on jealousy and competitiveness neither benefits us nor harms others. It simply accumulates pointless negativity. Abandon such bad attitudes. Always rejoice deeply in whatever positive qualities or favorable conditions other people have, whether this is their favorable birth, their physical form, their wealth, their learning or anything else.

"I am truly happy they have such excellent qualities. How wonderful it would be if they could become even better – stronger, wealthier, more learned! May they perfect their luck and good fortune!" Cultivate this thought wholeheartedly.

Boundless joy is considered to be like a mother camel finding her lost baby. Camels are said to have even more love for their children than other animals so the misery of losing her child is extremely intense. Finding the child again brings forth unimaginable joy. Train like that.

We should not rejoice in a simple way, but hugely, from deep within the

heart.

The four boundless qualities are the unmistakable cause for authentic bodhicitta to develop in our mindstream. Therefore we must meditate upon them until these qualities are born within us.

After repeatedly training in these four boundless qualities, bodhicitta will automatically arise within you, even if you try to deny that you need it. Failing to practice, when you want to arouse bodhicitta, it will never come. The causes for the development of the precious bodhicitta are the four boundless qualities. So you must train well.

For easy understanding, the four boundless qualities can be condensed into the phrase “a good heart.” Train yourself to have a good heart all times and in all situations.

Once when his hand was hurting, Lord Atisa placed it in Drom Tonpa’s lap and requested, “Please bless my hand, you who have a good heart.” Emphasizing good-heartedness, Atisa would ask people, “Has your heart been good?” instead of “How are you?” His main advice to all was, “Be good at heart.”

The power of a good or bad intention determines whether an action is positive or negative, strong or weak.

Having a good heart is more important than meditating on deities during development stage practice. Without a good heart, even actions of body and speech which seem to be virtuous can turn into nonvirtue. Likewise, seemingly nonvirtuous actions of body and speech become virtuous.

With a good intention, all actions of body and speech become virtuous, as was shown in the previous story of the man who put the leather shoe sole on the tsa-tsa. With a bad intention, even an action that looks virtuous will be negative. Thus, you must train in always having good intentions, in all situations. It is said:

If the intention is good, the levels and paths are good;

If the intention is bad, the levels and paths are bad.

Everything depends upon intentions

So always strive to make them positive.

If you have a good heart, the ten excellent levels and five excellent paths to peace and nirvana develop gradually in your mindstream and transform into the permanent happiness of perfect buddhahood. Khenpo Ngaga clarifies in his “Notes to Kunzang Lama’i Zhalung” that these are the ten bodhisattva levels and the five paths. If you have a bad heart, you will

enter into the nine bad levels⁹ of the form, formless and desire realms, and the negative paths of the six realms of samsara, and you will never escape from them. You will suffer greatly within samsara. Therefore, at all times and all circumstances, endeavor to train in having a good heart. Good heart means thinking of greatly benefitting others. Thoughts of love, compassion, rejoicing, and impartiality are all aspects of a good heart.

How is it that good intentions lead to good levels and paths?

Once an old woman and her daughter, holding hands, were crossing a wide river and were swept away. The mother thought, "If my daughter is saved, I don't care if I am lost," and the daughter thought, "If my mother is saved, I don't care if I am lost." Both drowned in the water, but because of the good wishes each had for the other, they were reborn in the heaven of Brahma.

Another time six monks and a messenger boarded the ferry crossing the Jasako river. After leaving the shore and travelling about a quarter of the way across, the ferryman said, "The boat is too heavy. If someone can swim, he should jump. Otherwise I will jump into the water and one of you can take the oars."

No one knew how to swim or how to hold the oars. Shouting, "Instead of everyone dying, I will die alone!" the messenger plunged into the water. Immediately a rainbow appeared, and a rain of flowers fell. Although he couldn't swim, he reached the river's other shore without drowning. He had never before practiced Dharma at all. This was the immediate benefit of generating a single virtuous thought.

How is it that bad intentions lead to bad levels and paths?

Once a beggar was lying by the gate of a palace when he had the evil thought, "If the king had his head cut off and died, I could become king." Again and again this came into his mind. In the morning he fell asleep. While he was sleeping the king came out in his carriage and one of the wheels ran over the beggar's neck, cutting off his head.

Always maintain mindfulness and conscientiousness about the purpose of your study of the Dharma. If you do not examine your mindstream, strong feelings of attachment and anger can pointlessly lead to severe negative effects. This happens easily. What the old beggar wanted could never happen, but the results of his thoughts

9 There are four levels in the form realm, four levels in the formless realm, and one level in the desire realm.

ripened immediately. The king was within the palace, comfortably sleeping on his precious bed. There was no reason for his head to be cut off. Even if he were beheaded and died, wouldn't the royal prince take the kingdom? Wouldn't the ministers, who were like tigers, leopards and bears, hold the power? Why would a wrinkled, gray old beggar be placed on the royal seat?

Without analyzing the mindstream carefully, such meaningless negative thoughts can come into being.

The reason for studying the teachings is to merge them with our minds at all times. We must check our own actions and thoughts to see whether they are in accord with the Dharma. If they are not, we should try to bring them in line. Without acting like this, there is no benefit even from memorizing the entire body of the Buddha's doctrine. Our negative minds will remain the same whether we memorize or not. Practicing Dharma is to discipline our minds. Mingling the meaning of the Dharma with the mindstream disciplines it automatically. Otherwise, you might study many sutras and tantras and understand their meaning, but if you fail to actually bring them into your mind and examine whether your actions and thoughts accord with the Dharma, numerous negative thoughts will arise. Great negativity can be accumulated in this way. As in the story of the beggar who wished for the king's death, these thoughts have no reason to arise and no meaning, but they appear automatically in the mindstream. Therefore, keeping watch on our minds is very important. Patrul Rinpoche continues with another example.

As Geshe Shawopa teaches, "Do not rule an imaginary kingdom of many expanding possibilities."

Once in the past, the Buddha and his monks were invited to a patron's home to receive alms. Two beggars were also there, one a young member of the royal lineage – a *ksatriya* – and the other a young brahmin. The brahmin went to beg before the Buddha and his retinue had taken their offerings, and he received nothing. The *ksatriya* went after they had been served and received a lot of good food from what was left over in their begging bowls.

In the afternoon they chatted on the road. The *ksatriya* said, "If I had wealth and property, I would offer food and alms to the Buddha and his monks for as long as I live. I would revere them by offering all my possessions."

The brahmin said, "If I had the power of a king, I would cut the head

off that bald ascetic along with all his monks.”

From there the ksatriya went to another land where he stayed under the shadow of a large tree. While the shadows of the other trees moved, the shadow of the young man's tree did not change. The king of this country had died without an heir so the people were searching for a highly meritorious and powerful person to become king. They saw the young ksatriya still sleeping in the shade although it was past midday, and they established him as their king. Later, as he had wished, he paid his respects to the Buddha and his monks.

As for the young brahmin, there is a story that a chariot wheel rolled over his neck and cut off his head when he was sleeping by a road.

Thus, if you learn to always have only good intentions, all of your wishes for this life will be fulfilled. You will be protected by the benevolent gods and blessed by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Whatever you do will be virtuous and you won't suffer at the moment of death. In future lives you will be born in the realms of gods and humans and finally you will actually achieve the level of perfect buddhahood.

Without examining your mind, do not hurry to make a pretense of vast virtue by performing prostrations and circumambulations, reciting prayers and mantras and so on. It is crucial to always look into your mindstream and train in having good thoughts.

If you fail to examine your mind and think you are accumulating great merit from outwardly performing various Dharma activities while you are full of negative thoughts, all these actions will turn into nonvirtue. Before beginning any action of body or speech, check your mind carefully. If you find that your mindstream is characterized by positive thoughts, then whatever you do becomes virtuous. If your mind is negative, avoid the actions. They may appear to be positive, but will actually become negative. Always check your mindstream, and if positive thoughts have not arisen, try to develop positive thinking.

ACTUALLY AROUSING BODHICITTA

Classifying based on three degrees of courage

Arousing bodhicitta means generating the thought of benefitting others. This thought is classified into three different levels of strength: the strongest, the medium and the least. What are these?

Kings must first subdue all who oppose them, support their allies and then declare themselves king. Only after that do they wish to protect their subjects. In the same way, wishing to first achieve the level of enlightenment for oneself and then to establish other beings on that level is the king's way of arousing bodhicitta.

A boatman wishes to cross to the other side of the river along with all the passengers in the boat. Desiring to attain the level of perfect enlightenment at the same time as all other sentient beings is the boatman's way of arousing bodhicitta.

Shepherds drive their animals ahead of them to find them grass and water and so they won't be harmed by wolves, jackals or other carnivores. They follow after. In the same way, following along behind and wishing to establish all beings in the three realms in the state of perfect enlightenment before becoming enlightened oneself is the shepherd's way of arousing bodhicitta.

The courage of a king is the least strong, that of the boatman is stronger, and the shepherd-like courage is the strongest. The benefit increases in the same way, with the benefits of the shepherd-like courage being the greatest. Having shepherd-like courage is the quickest way to achieve buddhahood, requiring not more than three incalculable eons. Boatman-like courage and king-like courage are said take seven and thirty-three incalculable eons, respectively. Whatever thought of benefitting others is stronger, it has more merit and leads more quickly to the achievement of buddhahood.

Of these three, the king's way is called "arousing bodhicitta with the great wish," and is the least courageous. The boatman's way is called "arousing bodhicitta with sublime wisdom," and is more courageous. Lord Maitreya is said to have aroused bodhicitta in this way. The shepherd's way is called "arousing bodhicitta beyond compare," and is the greatest kind of courage. It is taught that Lord Manjushri aroused bodhicitta in this way.

Our Buddha Shakyamuni also aroused bodhicitta in the manner of the shepherd.

Classifying based on the bodhisattva levels

The ways of arousing bodhicitta can also be classified according to the bodhisattva levels. Arousing bodhicitta on the paths of accumulating and joining is called "arousing bodhicitta by practicing with aspiration" because a person on these paths only understands the meaning of emptiness, but

does not experience emptiness.

From the first to the seventh bodhisattva levels, it is called “arousing bodhicitta through the superior and perfectly pure intention.” The thought of benefitting others arises more than previously. Self-centered thoughts still remain on these levels and disturbing emotions have not been abandoned yet, but the thought of benefitting others is greater than on the paths of accumulating and joining.

On the three pure levels, it is called “arousing fully ripened bodhicitta.” This refers to attaining sovereignty in the pure realm, and also the ripening of many of the fruits of the path.

At the level of buddhahood it is called “arousing bodhicitta with all obscurations eliminated” because at this level no obscurations remain.

Classifying based on the nature of bodhicitta

Bodhicitta is of two types: relative and absolute. Our dualistic mind is called the relative mind. Benefitting others with the relative mind is called relative bodhicitta. Absolute bodhicitta means arousing bodhicitta as the wisdom which is beyond the dualistic mind. This wisdom also contains the thought of benefitting others.

Relative Bodhicitta

Relative bodhicitta can be classified into two: bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application. The bodhicitta of aspiration is simply the thought or intention, while bodhicitta of application is actually putting the thought into action. Shantideva explained these in “The Way of the Bodhisattva:”

*The wish to go and actually going,
The difference is understood like that.
The learned should know that the difference between these two
Is in order and successive.*

For example, if someone is going to Lhasa, he or she must first think, “I am going to Lhasa.” The initial thought, “I am going to establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect buddhahood,” is like the wish to go, and is arousing the bodhicitta of aspiration.

Actually travelling to Lhasa involves preparing the necessary supplies and horses and setting off on the road. Likewise, you decide, “In order to establish all sentient beings on the level of perfect buddhahood,

I will practice generosity, guard my discipline, train in patience, apply diligence, remain in meditative stability, and train my mind in wisdom,” and you actually train in the six transcendent perfections. Actually beginning to travel is the bodhicitta of application. Both bodhicitta of aspiration and bodhicitta of application are aspects of relative bodhicitta.

Bodhicitta of aspiration and application are both aroused with a dualistic mind.

Absolute Bodhicitta

Through long training in relative bodhicitta on the paths of accumulating and joining, you come to the path of seeing. The paths of accumulating and joining do not go beyond the dualistic mind. “Long training” means training for one incalculable eon. As a result of the training you enter into the path of seeing, and experience the primordial wisdom beyond thought. This is called absolute bodhicitta.

On the path of seeing, you actually experience the natural state of all things, thusness, the wisdom beyond all elaborations, the truth of emptiness. This is the experience of absolute bodhicitta.

Taking the vow of bodhicitta

Fully qualified absolute bodhicitta is attained through the meditation on emptiness, not through a ritual. For generating relative bodhicitta, however, beginners – those on the path of accumulating and joining – need some ritual of taking vows. There are two traditions: Nagarjuna’s chariot of the profound view and Asanga’s chariot of the vast conduct. Vows should be taken through one of these. We take vows in the presence of a lama as a witness in order to have a sense of shame if the vow is broken. The vows of individual liberation, novice vows or fully ordained vows can only be taken one time, and must be kept carefully. Once broken, they cannot be retaken. However, bodhicitta vows can be taken three times during the day, and three times during the night, again and again. The merit of the vows continues to increase, and so they should be taken over and over.

At first, the vows should be taken before a teacher. Later, you visualize buddhas and bodhisattvas in front of you and accumulate merit by offering the seven branches of worship. Initially you supplicate and take refuge three times. Next, you take the vows of aspiration bodhicitta and application bodhicitta. Finally, you rejoice for yourself and others. By repeatedly taking

the vows in this way, the benefit keeps increasing.

In the sky in front of you, visualize all the buddhas, bodhisattvas and others just as assembled for the refuge practice. Take them as witnesses to your generation of bodhicitta. Think as follows:

“Of all the sentient beings pervading space, there is not a single one who has not been my parent during my beginningless succession of lives. When they were my parents, they definitely protected and cared for me in many ways with great kindness, just as my present parents have done, giving me the best of their food and clothing and nurturing me with extreme love.

“Right now all of these kind parents are sunk in the waves of the ocean of samsara’s suffering. Obscured by the dense darkness of ignorance they don’t know what is the proper path and what is not, what behavior to adopt and what to avoid. They have no spiritual friend to teach them the perfectly pure path. With no refuge or protector, no leader or friend, no hope and confidence, and nowhere to turn, they are like blind people wandering friendless on an empty plain. How could I attain liberation for myself alone while leaving all my old mothers here in samsara?

“Thus, I will arouse the supreme bodhicitta for the sake of all beings. Training in the powerful conduct of the bodhisattvas of the past, I will strive diligently until not a single being remains behind in samsara.”

The conduct of the bodhisattvas is inconceivable. If we try to classify it into different types it includes the Six Paramitas, the Four Ways of Gathering Disciples, the Four Boundless Qualities, and so on. We can condense these all into the Six Paramitas. Since we cannot practice everything immediately, we should determine to train gradually. Make this mental commitment and actually begin training. This is the correct motivation. Recite the prayer with this thought in mind. We recite the words in order to remember and reflect upon the meaning. Recite as many times as possible.

*HO! The myriad false appearances, which are like the moon in water,
Lead beings to wander through the endless chain of samsara.
So that they may rest in the sphere of self-cognizant luminosity,
I arouse bodhicitta through the four boundless qualities.*

“Myriad appearances” means the appearances of samsara. These appearances have no true existence. Like the reflection of the moon in

water, they appear without actually existing. Not understanding this, we take them as truth, which leads us to accumulate negative karma and disturbing emotions, and causes us to remain continually in samsara.

The realization that samsaric appearances have no true existence from the very beginning comes from self-cognizant luminosity (*rang rig od gsal*). Self-cognizant luminosity realizes the ultimate nature of phenomena, primordially free from all elaborations. When this luminosity arises in our minds and we remain in that space, all of samsara's deluded appearances, negative karma, and all aspects of suffering will cease. This is like sheltering from strong sunlight in the shade of a tree; free from the suffering of heat we can enjoy the comfort of the cool shade. In fact our minds are primordially unstained by samsara's deluded appearances, negative karma, and all aspects of suffering.

We arouse bodhicitta through the four boundless qualities while resting in the state of self-cognizant luminosity. Without moving from this state, we recite and accumulate the recitations. Reciting and counting recitations while the mind is wandering elsewhere cannot be considered arousing bodhicitta. I have already explained that during the practice of bodhicitta, the most important thing is mind training, not the number of recitations. The words clarify the meaning and are a reminder. We recite the words verbally while understanding their meaning and training our minds. This is how to practice bodhicitta.

Recite this many times. At the conclusion, visualize that due to your deep devotion to the deities of the field of merit, the entire assembly gradually melts into light, beginning from the outer edges, and finally dissolves into the guru in the center, the embodiment of the three refuges. The guru then melts into light and dissolves into you, causing the absolute bodhicitta that abides in the mindstreams of the refuge deities to vividly arise in your mind.

The text explains Guru Rinpoche as the lama, but our actual lama is the person who gives empowerments, explains the tantra, and gives the pith instructions. Guru Rinpoche is generally considered the destined guru for all Tibetans, as Chenresig is considered the destined yidam deity. Here, we should visualize as the guru the person who bestowed empowerment and so on, in other words the lama with whom we have a direct connection to the Dharma through teaching. We cannot consider Guru Rinpoche, Chenresig or Manjushri as our personal guru. Nevertheless, we see our guru as a form of Guru Rinpoche and others in order to generate the faith of seeing him or

her as a real buddha, not as an ordinary person.

In this practice, while reciting the bodhicitta prayer, we focus on relative bodhicitta, but for the conclusion we focus on absolute bodhicitta. Those who have the main pith instruction on resting in the absolute nature of the mind should remain in that state. Others should remain in the thought-free state, which will help develop the understanding of the nature of mind. In both cases, remain in this state as long as you can. When thoughts arise you should recite the following aspiration and dedication prayers:

*Oh sublime and precious bodhicitta,
May it arise in those in whom it has not arisen;
Where it has arisen, may it never decline,
But go on increasing further and further!*

*As is the wisdom of Manjushri
So is that of Samantabhadra.
Following in their footsteps so that I may learn,
I utterly dedicate all this supreme virtue.*

Arousing bodhicitta is the innermost core of all the eighty-four thousand teachings the Victorious One taught. If you have this instruction, it alone is sufficient. Without it, any method is futile. It is the medicine for one hundred illnesses, the “white all-curing panacea.” All other ways of practicing Dharma, such as gathering the accumulations, purifying negativity, meditating on deities, and reciting mantras are only methods to generate the wish-fulfilling jewel of bodhicitta within the mindstream.

The essence of the Mahayana is bodhicitta. If the mind is imbued with bodhicitta, the practice of Dharma to attain buddhahood can be fulfilled; without bodhicitta this cannot happen. No matter what other qualities may be in the mind, without bodhicitta they will not bring about buddhahood. Sutra and Tantra provide extensive explanation on visualizing deities, reciting mantras, purifying negativity, and gathering the accumulations. These are all taught in order to generate bodhicitta. When bodhicitta has been aroused in our minds, the essence of the Mahayana is rooted within us.

Without relying on bodhicitta, none of these methods on its own has the power to lead to the state of perfect enlightenment. When bodhicitta has been aroused in the mind, whatever Dharma you practice will lead to the state of perfect enlightenment. At all times

and on all occasions, train in using different methods to develop even small amounts of bodhicitta in your mindstream.

The lama who gives you the pith instructions on bodhicitta is the one who establishes you on the Mahayana path, so his kindness is greater than those who give other instructions.

When Lord Atisa spoke his teachers' names, he would join his palms at his heart, but when he said the name of Lord Suvarnavidpa, he joined his hands over his head and he wept. His students asked about the reason for the difference. "Is there a difference in the enlightened qualities of these teachers' minds, or in the degree of their kindness?" they asked.

Atisa answered, "All of my teachers are none other than accomplished masters, with no difference in their qualities. But there is a difference in their kindness. Whatever small drop of bodhicitta I have in my mindstream I obtained from the kindness of Lord Suvarnavidpa, and thus his kindness is greater."

Among all gurus, the master who bestows the bodhicitta vows is the one who shows us the most kindness.

Concerning the development of bodhicitta, it is said that arousing the supreme mind is not the most important point. Most important is that it actually arises. The love and compassion that are bodhicitta must definitely be born within our minds. Without bringing the meaning into the mind, even reciting the prayer of arousing bodhicitta many hundreds of thousands of times will not have even a sesame seed's worth of benefit.

Taking the bodhicitta vow in the presence of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and then not keeping it accordingly is deceiving them, and there is no evil greater than this. Abandon deceiving sentient beings as well. Always strive to arouse bodhicitta in your mindstream.

By taking the bodhicitta vows, we promise to benefit all beings, with the buddhas and bodhisattvas as our witness. If we are not actually putting this commitment into action, it seems that we are deceiving them, but actually they cannot be deceived.

TRAINING IN THE BODHICITTA PRECEPTS

The bodhicitta of aspiration has three stages of training: considering others as equal to oneself, exchanging oneself and others, and treating

others as more important than oneself. The bodhicitta of application is practicing the six transcendent perfections, the paramitas.

After receiving the vows of the bodhicitta of aspiration we should train in the bodhicitta of aspiration. Similarly, after receiving the vows of the bodhicitta of application, we train in the bodhicitta of application.

Training in the precepts of the bodhicitta of aspiration

For the bodhicitta of aspiration, we begin by focusing on the thought of considering others as equal to ourselves. After that, we focus on exchanging ourselves for others. Finally, we focus on treating others as more important than ourselves. When we practice these, the bodhicitta of aspiration will automatically arise in our minds.

Initially we train in the four boundless qualities; secondly, we ritually take the vows of the bodhicitta of aspiration; after receiving the vows we practice the three precepts listed above. At that point, we can say that we have the bodhicitta of aspiration. This will now be explained in detail.

We need to train to consider others as equal to ourselves, because at present we attach more importance to ourselves than to others. Bodhicitta will never arise in our minds as long as this is the case. We must abandon this attitude. At first we practice seeing others as equal to ourselves, without any idea of more or less importance. After habituating ourselves to this, we practice exchanging ourselves for others. This means giving to others our comfort and happiness, and the causes for this comfort and happiness, while taking on ourselves the suffering and unhappiness of others, along with the causes for this suffering and unhappiness. Practicing this again and again, we learn to exchange ourselves and others. The third precept, giving more importance to others than ourselves, will then arise. Training in these thoughts is training in the bodhicitta of aspiration. One who practices like this will develop uncontrived bodhicitta.

Patrul Rinpoche's teaching is according to Shantideva's "Entering the Way of the Bodhisattva," which explains this kind of training.

The meditation on considering others as equal to oneself

From time without beginning we have been wandering in the great ocean of samsaric suffering because of our attachment to "I" and "self" where there is no I, and because we feel affection for that self alone.

We have been wandering and suffering in samsara from beginningless time. The reason for this is our holding onto an “I” where there is no I. Actually, “I” is never established, but we believe it is. The text speaks of “I” (*nga*) and “self” (*bdag*), but these two mean the same thing. Examining this carefully, neither I nor self can ever be established. Nevertheless, we hold the wrong view of I and self.

At first, we have this feeling of “I” or “self” even though it is incorrect. We then constantly consider our own self as more important than others. This thinking has led us to wander in samsara, experiencing greater or lesser suffering. The two root causes are the feeling of “I” and giving more importance to ourselves than others. We must examine this.

At present, we want to be happy at all times and in all situations, and never want to experience any suffering.

This is true. Because of clinging to a non-existent I, we feel we need happiness and freedom from suffering. We don’t have that same thought about other beings, but solely for ourselves. The feeling of wanting happiness and freedom from suffering for oneself comes automatically. We cannot bear serious suffering, and even a pinprick or small burn from a spark makes us cry out.

Bitten on the back by a louse we immediately become furious and try to catch it. Putting it on one thumbnail, we forcefully crush it with the other. Even after the louse is dead, the power of our anger keeps us rubbing our nails together. These days most people don’t even consider that killing a louse is a negative action. Since it is always done with anger, however, killing a louse is an unfailing cause for birth in the Hell of Gathering and Crushing. It is shameful that we find such small discomfort unbearable and in return cause so much harm and suffering to another being.

All sentient beings of the three realms desire happiness for themselves and dislike suffering of any kind, just as we do.

In their ignorance, samsaric beings do not realize that harming others is a negative action, and do not consider killing a louse nonvirtue, thinking it is the same as smashing something nonliving, like earth or stone. But, just as we wish to be free from the smallest harm and to experience all kinds of happiness, all other beings feel the same way. Large beings like ourselves and small beings like lice all have minds, and thus experience happiness and suffering. The feeling of happiness and suffering is the same for all beings; we all want to be happy and free from suffering.

Although they desire happiness and do not wish for suffering, they do not know that the cause of happiness is practicing the ten virtuous actions, and instead engage only in nonvirtue, the cause of suffering. Their desires and their actions are at odds, and they always suffer. Among all these beings, there is not a single one who has not at some point since beginningless time been our parent.

We have now been accepted as disciples by an authentic guru; we are following the Dharma and know the difference between what is beneficial and what is harmful. We should lovingly take care of all sentient beings, our old mothers who are under the power of confusion, without making any distinction between ourselves and them. Being patient with their ingratitude and partiality, we should meditate on the lack of difference between our friends and our enemies. Thinking like this, we train repeatedly.

Right now, we give priority first to ourselves and then to those close to us. We always feel that we need happiness for ourselves, our family and friends. Similarly, we don't want ourselves or our dear ones to suffer. These feelings do not extend to neutral beings or enemies. This attitude must change. Understanding that all beings have been our parents, and have been equally kind to us, we must consider them all equally. Recognizing that all beings want happiness just like we do, we develop the attitude that we must establish all beings in happiness, both temporary and ultimate. Just as we don't want to suffer, other beings don't want to suffer, so we wish for all beings to be free from suffering. We put this into practice this as well. We should put the same effort into seeking happiness for all beings as we put into seeking happiness for ourselves.

Other people always desire things that bring them benefit and happiness as much as we do. As much diligent effort as we put into accomplishing our own happiness, we should put into bringing about the happiness of others. Just as we try to avoid even the slightest suffering for ourselves, we should try to keep others from the slightest suffering. Just as we rejoice in our own happiness and prosperity, we should whole-heartedly rejoice in the happiness and prosperity of others. In short, seeing no difference between ourselves and all beings throughout the three realms of existence, we must take responsibility for finding methods to bring about their happiness, both temporary and permanent.

Trungpa Singachen asked Je Dampa Sangye for an oral instruction that would be complete in a single sentence. He replied, "Whatever

you want, all others also want, so act accordingly.”

Cut from the root the negative mindset of attachment and aversion that cares for oneself and feels animosity toward others. Consider yourself and others to be completely equal.

The bodhicitta of exchanging oneself and others

Next we move on to the practice of exchanging oneself and others in order to develop the attitude that gives more importance to others than ourselves. This is the attitude of the bodhisattvas.

Look at someone actually tormented by sickness, hunger, thirst or another kind of misery. If you cannot, imagine a suffering being in front of you.

During the meditation on exchanging oneself for others, we need to concentrate on and visualize a being who is actually undergoing severe suffering. We should be able to actually see that being. When in retreat, you cannot actually see anyone, but you must imagine that someone is really present in front of you. You begin the practice with the breathing.

Breathing out, imagine that you are giving that being all your happiness (and causes of happiness¹⁰), and the best of your body, wealth and roots of merit, as though you were removing your clothing and covering him or her. Breathing in, imagine that you are taking all that being's suffering (and causes of suffering), whatever they may be, into yourself, and that he or she simultaneously becomes happy and free of suffering.

Begin this meditation on giving and taking, the intention to give beings happiness and to free them from suffering, with one individual and gradually extend it to all sentient beings.

When you are actually experiencing something undesirable or painful, generate great compassion for all the many beings in the three realms of samsara who are undergoing the same kind of misery. Meditate on the heartfelt wish, “May their entire load of suffering ripen on me, and may they be freed from their torment and be happy.”

Whenever you are suffering intensely you should contemplate that innumerable beings are experiencing this same kind of suffering. Make the wish that through your misery, all other beings will be free from suffering. “May my suffering be able to free all beings from their torment.” Thinking

10 Khen Rinpoche added the “causes of happiness” and “causes of suffering” to Patrul Rinpoche’s text.

like this your unhappiness will become a support for the practice of exchanging oneself and others.

When you are experiencing comfort and happiness, generate the wish that your happiness could become happiness for all beings.

Have the thought, "Why shouldn't all beings experience this same happiness?"

For everyone on the path of Mahayana Dharma, this bodhicitta practice of exchanging oneself and others is the ultimate and unfailing quintessential meditation. If this is experienced even once in your mindstream, many eons of negativity and obscurations will be purified and a vast accumulation of merit and wisdom will be perfected. It can save you from the lower realms or from rebirths that could send you to them.

In the past our Teacher, Lord Buddha, was born in a hell realm where wagons had to be pulled. He and his friend Kamarupa were pulling a hell wagon together, but they were too weak and couldn't move it. The guards in hell stabbed and beat them with blazing hot weapons, causing grave suffering.

The future Buddha thought, "Even together we cannot move this wagon, and we are both suffering equally. I can pull it and suffer alone, letting Kamarupa rest at ease."

He asked the guards to put Kumarupa's rope across his shoulders, saying he would pull the wagon on his own. But the guards became angry, and said, "Who can do anything to keep a being from experiencing the effects of his own negative actions?" They beat him on the head with clubs.

Through the power of that good thought, the Buddha passed from that hell into the god realms. This is taught to be the first time the Buddha tried to benefit others.

In another story, the Buddha was born as the child of the sea captain Vallabha, and was freed from the misery of the lower realms as soon as the thought of exchanging himself for others was born in his mind.

Vallabha was a householder whose sons had all died. Another son was born and in hopes of keeping him alive, he named him Daughter. Vallabha went to sea to acquire some jewels, but his ship sank and he died.

Growing up, the son asked his mother which caste his father had belonged to. Afraid he might go to sea if she told him, the mother

said he had been of the grain dealers' caste. He began selling grain, and supported his mother with the four *karsha* he earned every day. Then the other grain merchants told him he was not of the grain merchant caste and should not deal in grain so he had to stop.

Once more he asked his mother what caste his father had been. His mother said he had been of the incense sellers' caste. He began selling incense, and cared for his mother with the eight *karsha* he earned every day. Again the incense sellers stopped him, and he was told he was of the clothing dealers' caste. Selling clothes, he earned sixteen *karsha* every day, and gave it to his mother. Once more the other clothing dealers made him stop.

This time he was told he belonged to the jewelers' caste, so he began selling jewels. He earned thirty-two *karsha* every day, and gave it to his mother. At this point the other jewelers told him he was of the caste that gathered jewels from ocean voyages, and that he should do the work of that caste.

Daughter went home and said to his mother, "Since I am from the caste that searches for jewels, I am going to seek jewels across the vast ocean."

His mother answered, "Yes, you are from the caste that searches for jewels, but your father and all your ancestors went to sea looking for jewels and died. If you go you will also die. Please don't go. Stay here and become a trader."

He could not obey her and made everything ready for his voyage to the ocean. As he was leaving, his mother could not let him go. She hung on to the edge of his coat and wept. Daughter became furious. "You're bringing me bad luck as I'm setting out for the ocean," he shouted and kicked her in the head before leaving.

His ship was wrecked at sea and everyone was thrown into the water. Most drowned, but Daughter held on to a plank and landed on an island. He reached a town called Joy and went to a beautiful house of jewels and precious things. Four beautiful goddesses appeared and arranged a pile of silk cushions for him to sit on. They offered him the three white foods and the three sweet foods.¹¹ As he was about to leave, they warned him not to go south, saying a great misfortune would occur if he did. He did not listen, and left.

He arrived at a town called Joyous, even more beautiful than the

11 Milk, yoghurt and butter; and honey, molasses and sugar.

previous one. Eight beautiful women served him as before and again warned him not to travel south, because of the danger. Once more, he did not listen, and left.

He reached a town called Intoxication, even more perfect, where sixteen beautiful goddesses took care of him and warned him against going south, but again he left. He came to a white castle whose top reached the sky. It was called Guru Brahma's Castle and here thirty-two extremely beautiful goddesses welcomed him, piled up many silken cushions as a seat, and offered him the three whites and the three sweets. They asked him to stay, but he desired to go on. As he was about to leave, they said to him, "Wherever you go, do not go south. You will meet disaster!" Nevertheless, he felt a strong urge to travel south, and he left.

At the entrance to an iron fortress that reached to the sky, Daughter saw a black man with frightening red eyes who was holding a long iron bar in his hand. He asked what was inside the fortress, but the man said nothing. Moving closer, he saw many more like him. Terrified, Daughter's hair stood on end. "Misfortune of misfortunes! This is the disaster they warned of." Thinking this, he went inside.

He saw a man whose ashy-colored brains were being crushed and scattered about by a steel wheel spinning on his head. "What did you do?" Daughter asked.

"I'm feeling the fully ripened result of kicking my mother in the head," he answered. "Why didn't you stay and enjoy the comfort and happiness of Guru Brahma's Castle? Why did you come seeking suffering here?"

"I must also have been pushed here by my karma," thought Daughter.

Just then came a voice from the sky, "Whoever is bound should be freed; whoever is free should be bound!" With this sound the wheel began spinning on top of Daughter's head. Like the previous man's, his brain was crushed and scattered, and he felt intense unbearable pain and agony. Because of this, acute compassion arose within him for all beings suffering like he was.

"Throughout samsara are many beings like myself in agony for having kicked their mothers in the head," he thought. "May all of their suffering ripen in me, and may I alone experience it. May none of the others suffer like this in any of their future lives."

With this, the wheel immediately rose into the sky, Daughter was freed from his misery, and he rose to a height of seven palm trees where he remained serene and blissful.

In this way, the bodhicitta of exchanging oneself for others is the indispensable and ultimate practice to achieve enlightenment. In the past the Kadampa teachers made it the core of their practice. One time, Geshe Chekawa – who was learned in many scriptures of the Old and New Schools, as well as in logic – went to visit Geshe Chakshingwa. On his pillow was a small text. Opening it, he saw this inside:

*Give gain and victory to others;
Take loss and defeat for yourself.*

“What a wonderful teaching,” he thought, and asked what it was called.

Geshe Chakshingwa told him it was “The Eight Verses of Langri Thangpa.”

“Who has the oral instructions?” Geshe Chekawa asked.

“Geshe Langri Thangpa,” was the answer.

Intending to request the teachings, Chekawa went to Lhasa. He stayed for a few days making circumambulations.

One evening a leper from Langthang told him that Langri Thangpa had died. He asked who his successor was, and the man said there were two possibilities – Shangshungpa and Dodepa – but they could not agree on who should be the successor. They were not disagreeing out of a sense of loss and gain. Shangshungpa told Dodepa he should be the successor since he was older, and Shangshungpa promised to serve him no differently than he served Langri Thangpa himself. But Dodepa said that Shangshungpa should be the successor because he had greater positive qualities.

Although they had pure perception toward each other, Chekawa thought their disagreement over their teacher’s successor was a fault. Because of how they were arguing, he didn’t think either held the teaching. He inquired into who had the best understanding of the teaching and everyone said that Sharawa was the best.

Sharawa was then explaining many volumes of scripture to several thousand Sangha members. Chekawa went to listen to him teach, but Sharawa didn’t say a word about the teaching he wanted. “It

seems Sharawa doesn't know this teaching either," Chekawa thought, but I will ask him if he has it or not. If he has it, I will stay; if not I will leave."

Sharawa was circumambulating a stupa when Chekawa approached him. Spreading out a cloth, Chekawa said, "Please sit down for a moment. I want to ask you something."

"Jowo, what problem needs to be resolved? As for me, I find all my answers on my meditation cushion," Sharawa replied.

Chekawa said, "I saw this Dharma teaching: 'Give gain and victory to others; Take loss and defeat for yourself.' This appeals to me. Is it a profound teaching or not?"

"Jowo, whether this teaching appeals to you or not, you cannot do without it unless you do not wish to achieve enlightenment. If you do desire enlightenment, there is no way to do so without this teaching."

"Guru, do you hold this teaching?"

"It is my main practice," Sharawa answered.

"Then, can you please give me these oral instructions?" Chekawa begged.

Sharawa replied, "Can you stay with me for a long time? If you can, I will bestow them on you."

Chekawa remained for six years, completing a course of instruction in mind training according to his personal experience. Through his practice, he completely eliminated all selfishness.

No instruction is superior to this bodhicitta meditation on exchanging oneself and others for pacifying the illness and suffering of this life, and for taming the negative gods, demons and obstructing forces. At all times and in all circumstances, abandon like poison the negative thinking of attachment to your own self, and strive diligently in the practice of exchanging yourself for others.

Meditation on giving more importance to others than oneself

"I could be in samsara, I could be born in hell, I could be sick or in pain, but no matter what misfortune arises, I will bear it. May the suffering of other sentient beings ripen upon me. May my happiness and the fruition of my virtue be perfected for them." Think like this from the bottom of your heart and actually practice accordingly.

At present, when we are not engaged in mind training, we do not care about other beings, whether they are ill, hot, or cold, regardless of whatever suffering they are undergoing. We don't feel responsible for them, and can tolerate witnessing their misery. After training in exchanging ourselves for others, and giving more importance to others than to ourselves, we cannot bear the suffering of others.

We should develop the conviction that we will be able to bear whatever difficulties we face, whether we are wandering in samsara, suffering in the hell realms, feeling ill or in pain, or experiencing any other misfortune. On top of that, we wish to take upon ourselves all the suffering of all sentient beings while we hope that all our merit and causes of merit will ripen on others.

Through this practice we abandon the thought of our own importance and automatically develop the thought that others are more important than we are. If we practice in this way while meditating in retreat, but find that our minds are still the same as before when retreat is finished, that we are again attaching more importance to ourselves and less to others, the meditation has not brought any benefit. For this reason, during post meditation, body, speech, and mind should be put into action according to the meditation. Patrul Rinpoche provides many examples:

The examples to follow are Lord Atisa's teachers, Maitriyogi and Dharmaraksita, and our teacher Buddha Shakyamuni when he was born as King Padma, as a tortoise, and as King Manicuda.

One time when Atisa's teacher Maitriyogi was teaching the Dharma, a man threw a stone at a dog. The lama shouted in pain and fell off his throne. Nothing happened to the dog and the other people thought he was putting on an act. Maitriyogi knew this, and showed them his back where they could see the bruise from the stone thrown at the dog. Everyone was then convinced that he had actually taken the pain on himself.

Dharmaraksita was originally a pandita of the Vaibhasika school of the sravakas. Although he hadn't heard the teachings of the Mahayana in the early part of his life, he was naturally inclined toward the Mahayana and effortlessly possessed great compassion. A man living near him came down with a serious illness and the doctor said only the flesh of a living human being could cure him.

"If it helps, I'll give him some," said Dharmaraksita. He cut flesh from his thigh and gave it to the sick man, who ate it and recovered.

Dharmaraksita had not realized emptiness and he felt terrible pain, but because of his great compassion, he had no regrets. He asked the patient whether he was feeling better.

“My illness is cured, but I’ve caused you much hardship,” he answered.

“If it brought you comfort, I could even bear death,” Dharmaraksita replied.

He couldn’t sleep because of his great pain, but towards dawn he slept a bit and dreamed. A white man appeared and said to him, “If you want to attain enlightenment you must experience this kind of hardship. Very good! Very good!” He put some saliva on the wound, rubbed it with his hand and the wound disappeared.

When Dharmaraksita woke up, this had actually happened, and the man was the Great Compassionate One, Avalokitesvara. He realized the natural state exactly as it is and he began ceaselessly reciting the words of Arya Nagarjuna’s “Treatises on Logic.”

In the past, when the Buddha was born as a king named Padma, a serious epidemic broke out among his subjects and many people died. The king summoned all the doctors and asked what would cure the disease. “This disease can be cured by the flesh of the rohita fish. We don’t know any other cure because the obscuration of the disease has made us dull,” they said.

On the morning of an auspicious day, the king bathed, dressed in new clothes and performed a ceremony for mending vows and purification. He made vast offerings to the Three Jewels and supplicated intensely. “As soon as I die, may I be reborn as a rohita fish in the river valley of Dog-je.”

After making this aspiration, he jumped from the top of his palace, which was one thousand cubits high, and was immediately reborn as a fish in the river. In human words he shouted, “I am a rohita fish. Take my flesh and eat it!”

Everyone took some flesh. When the flesh on one side was finished, the fish turned over. While this flesh was being cut, the flesh on the first side grew back. Eating each side alternately, all who were sick recovered. Then the fish spoke to everyone.

“I am your King Padma. In order to save all of you from the illness I took my life and was reborn as a rohita fish. To show your gratitude to me, abandon all evildoing and accomplish whatever virtue you

can.” The people followed his orders and from that time forward they did not fall into lower rebirths.

On another occasion, when Buddha had been born as a huge tortoise, five hundred merchants were crossing the ocean when their ship wrecked. They were about to die but the tortoise called to them in human words, “Ride on me! I will save all of you.”

He carried all the merchants to safety and then fell asleep on the shore. Eighty thousand keta flies began sucking his blood. Waking up and seeing the multitude of flies, he worried that if he returned to the water or rolled on the ground in pain the flies would be killed. So he simply stayed there and gave up his life.

When the tortoise became the Buddha, the flies became the eighty thousand gods who listened to his teachings and saw the truth.

Again, the Buddha was reborn in a country called Saketa as the son of King Golden Crest and Queen Joyous Beauty. On the top of his head was a precious jewel that produced nectar with the power to turn iron into gold on contact. Because of this he was named Manicuda, “Jewel Crest.” A rain of many kinds of precious things showered down at his birth. He owned a supreme elephant called “Excellent Mountain.” As king, he took care of worldly matters according to the Dharma, and always practiced great generosity, so that poverty and begging were eliminated.

A sage named Brighu had a daughter who was born from a lotus and possessed the auspicious signs. He offered her to the king as his queen, and they had a son named Lotus Crown, who was just like his father.

One day the king wanted to hold a large offering ritual. Many people gathered, including the sage Brighu and a king called Hard-to-Bear. In order to examine King Jewel Crest’s intentions, Indra transformed himself into a raksasa cannibal demon and appeared out of the sacred offering fire. He went before the king and demanded refreshment. The king offered him many things to eat and drink but he did not want any of them. With a little laugh, he said, “All I need is some freshly killed flesh and blood, still warm.”

The king became a bit upset. “Without harming someone I can’t obtain such a thing, and even if he kills me I won’t hurt anybody. But if I don’t give it to him, his hopes will be shattered. What should I do?” Thinking that the time had come to offer his own flesh and blood, he said, “I’ll give you my own flesh and blood.”

The entire assembly panicked and tried to stop him, but they could not change his mind. Opening the vein at his neck, the king let the demon drink his blood. The demon drank until he was full. Then the king cut his flesh, and the demon ate down to the bone. Everyone was overwhelmed with grief, especially the queen, who fainted and fell to the ground. The king's mental faculties were unaffected, however. Indra was extremely pleased.

"I am Indra," he said. "I am not seeking flesh and blood, so please stop your act of generosity." With these words, he applied some divine nectar to the king's wounds, bringing him back to his original health.

After this, the king gave his elephant Excellent Mountain to a minister named Chariot of Brahma.

A disciple of the sage Maruci who was accomplished in meditative concentration arrived. Receiving him respectfully, the king asked what he wanted. "My teacher taught me the Vedas. Now he is old and has no servant. I want to offer him one and have come to ask for your queen and your son." The king granted this request, so the disciple took them and offered them to his teacher.

King Hard-to-Bear, who craved King Jewel Crest's elephant, returned to his own country and sent a message saying the elephant had to be given to him. Told that the elephant had already been bestowed upon a brahmin, he didn't listen. He threatened war if he didn't receive it. When his large army was on its way, King Jewel Crest became extremely depressed. "How terrible! The power of desire can turn a good friend into a major enemy in a single instant. I could win if I prepared for battle, but many beings would be harmed." He decided to flee.

Four pratyekabuddhas approached him. "Great king, the time has come for you to go into the forest," they said. He magically left for the deep woods.

At that time his ministers went to the sage Maruci to ask for the return of the prince who had been given him, and he was returned. With an army of his friends and attendants, the prince fought and defeated Hard-to-Bear, who then retreated to his kingdom.

Because of his evil actions and intentions, disease and famine came to Hard-to-Bear's country. He asked his brahmins what could be done to solve these problems. "If we had the jewel from the top of King Jewel Crest's head, this would provide the remedy," they

answered. "You must ask for it."

"He won't give it," said King Hard-to-Bear.

"He is well-known for giving whatever anyone asks of him," the brahmins replied. "He will give the jewel." A brahmin was sent to make the request.

At that time, King Jewel Crest was visiting different places in the forest. He came to the area where Maruci stayed just as his queen – who was gathering roots and leaves nearby – encountered a hunter who threatened her.

"King Jewel Crest, please save me!" she cried.

The king heard her wailing from far off and wondered what it was. He went to find out, and the hunter saw him coming at a distance. Thinking it was the sage and fearing his curse, the hunter ran away.

When the king saw the great suffering of his queen, who had before enjoyed great comfort and luxury in his kingdom, his heart sank. "What a pity! No compounded phenomena whatsoever can be relied upon," he thought.

Just then the brahmin sent by Hard-to-Bear reached King Jewel Crest and told his story, begging for the jewel on the top of his head.

"Cut it out yourself and take it," said the king. The brahmin cut out the jewel and left. All disease and famine in Hard-to-Bear's kingdom came to an end.

The pain caused by cutting out the jewel from his head aroused in King Jewel Crest great compassion for the beings in the hot hells. Then he fainted and fell to the ground.

Impelled by the excellent omens resulting from this compassionate thought, many gods and members of the king's retinue arrived. They asked the king what had happened.

The king sat up and wiped away some of the blood from his face. "Hard-to-Bear asked for the jewel on the top of my head, and I gave it to him," he explained.

"What do you wish for in return for that gift?" they asked.

"I only wanted to save Hard-to-Bear's kingdom from disease and famine. I desire nothing for myself. However, I do always have one great wish," he replied.

"What is that?"

“The wish to protect all sentient beings,” he answered.

“You mean you have no regret?” they asked.

“No regret.”

“Judging by how you are suffering, that’s hard to believe,” they said.

The king answered, “If I feel no regret for giving the jewel on my head to Hard-to-Bear and his people, may my body return to its former state.”

This is what happened. All of the king’s followers asked him to return to his palace, but he refused. The four pratyekabuddhas then arrived, and asked, “Since you can create such benefit for your enemies, why not also help your friends?” With this question, they urged him to return.

So King Jewel Crest went back to his palace and established his followers in well-being and happiness.

Training in the precepts of the bodhicitta of application: the six transcendent perfections

After receiving the vows of the bodhicitta of application, you should actually put this into action. This is done through practicing the six transcendent perfections, the four means of gathering disciples, the four boundless qualities, and so on, innumerable practices. They can all be condensed into the six transcendent perfections. Everything is included in them. Nothing is left out.

We have already received the vows of the bodhicitta of application, and have committed that we will actually exert ourselves in the activities of bodhicitta. So we must strive to practice the bodhisattva path. As beginners we cannot practice the entire path at once, so we practice in a gradual manner, according to our capacity. The six transcendent perfections are the condensed form of the practice of bodhicitta, and are what we must endeavor to practice.

Among the six perfections, the five of generosity, discipline, patience, diligence and concentration are aspects of method and behavior, and are mainly practices for the accumulation of merit. The sixth perfection is wisdom, leading to the accumulation of primordial wisdom. It is especially the practice of view and meditation.

“Transcendent” means gone beyond ocean-like samsara to peace and nirvana. To practice authentic transcendence, we must actualize emptiness,

which occurs only on the arya level. This perfected aspect can only be practiced after attaining the level of the noble ones, the aryas. This is true for all the perfections. Bodhisattvas on the arya levels realize the true reality of the natural state, and overcome holding on to the concepts of the three spheres: subject, object and action. Practice done beyond the three spheres is the authentic transcendent practice. This is also true for dedication. We cannot make an authentic dedication until reaching the arya level.

On the paths of accumulation and preparation we can practice in a way that is similar to the arya level. This requires incorporating bodhicitta and pure dedication into our practice of generosity, discipline and all the other perfections. They become close to transcendent. Sravakas and pratyekabuddhas practice generosity, but not transcendent generosity. Likewise, they practice discipline, but not transcendent discipline. The transcendent practices are the extraordinary path of the bodhisattvas.

Transcendent generosity

Generosity comes from our minds, and is the attitude of giving. The essence of generosity is offering whatever we have to others. Generosity is classified into three types: material giving, giving Dharma, and giving protection from fear.

Material giving

Material giving includes giving wealth and prosperity, and one's body, with the actual intention to give. There are three kinds of material giving: ordinary giving, great giving, and exceptionally great giving.

Ordinary giving includes giving others anything material, even the smallest things, like a bit of tea, a cup of barley, a mouthful of food, and so on. The giving should be done with a pure intention, regardless of the amount that is given. The practice of the perfections depends upon mind. The accumulation of merit does not depend on the amount, but on whether the internal intention is pure or not.

The *Confession of Downfalls* speaks of "the merit of giving even a mouthful of food to a being born in the animal realm."

If we give a mouthful of food to an animal with a pure intention, we can accumulate inconceivable merit. That merit should be dedicated to others.

The Conquerors, sovereigns of skillful means and great compassion,

can benefit as many hungry ghosts as there are grains of sand in the valley of the Ganges with one drop of water or grain of barley by using the power of dharanis,¹² mantras and other techniques. So it is taught.

There is a tradition of giving hungry ghosts offerings of water and milk along with torma made from barley, and accompanying the offerings with dharanis, mantras, mudras, and concentration. Hungry ghosts are said to be as numerous as the grains of sand of the Ganges river, not a small number. This offering brings immense benefit to the huge multitude of hungry ghosts through the great power of the dharanis and other methods. Thus, the offering of water and torma carries vast merit.

Other kinds of offerings like white and red fire offerings also rely on dharanis, mantras, mudras, and concentration. These offerings are given especially to hungry ghosts who move through space, and benefit them greatly. Such water, torma and fire offerings are not expensive or difficult to perform, but they bring inconceivable benefit. There is a long tradition of making water and torma offerings in the morning, and white and red fire offerings in the evening.

The smell of the burnt food offering temporarily satisfies non-human spirits that feed on the lives of sentient beings. Their minds are liberated by the gift of the Dharma.

Hungry ghosts that move through space live on the lives of others, but when the fire offerings are made to them, they will be satisfied for a while, so they need not rely on the lives of others. Not only are they satisfied, but they are also prevented from accumulating the negativity of killing others. Following the fire offerings, the gift of Dharma teaching is made through this prayer:

*Abandon all evil doing.
Practice virtue perfectly.
Totally tame your mind.
This is the Buddha's teaching.*

Both material giving and the giving of Dharma are thus complete. In addition, the spirits no longer harm others, so that many beings are protected from fear. This covers the giving of protection from fear. This tradition of offering covers all three aspects of generosity: material giving, giving dharma and giving protection from fear. We should endeavor in this practice.

12 Dharanis are mantras blessed by buddhas or bodhisattvas which have the power to help beings. Many are found in the sutras, and some are quite long.

Water tormas and burnt offerings are both easy to perform and bring many results, so they should be practiced all the time without a break. Offering one hundred thousand water tormas every year is important.

Making these offerings is not expensive, and the practice is easy to perform, unlike other complicated Mantrayana rituals. The visualization, mantra, and mudra are not difficult to understand and are simple to carry out, not like the visualizations of development and completion stage. The practice nonetheless accumulates huge merit. Whether in retreat or not, performing these offerings is very important. This practice is effective for completing the transcendent perfection of generosity.

Acquiring a little wealth or property, people hold it with a death grip, using it neither for this nor future lives. Regardless of how much they have, they believe they have nothing, and groan as though starving. They already experience hungry ghost realm now, through the effect similar to the cause.

Because it doesn't involve much cost, we don't feel stingy when offering water tormas and making burnt offerings. Lacking wealth is one thing, but even if we are prosperous, we may feel miserly about offering anything to others. Some people feel such great attachment that they cannot give up their property even at death. This keeps them from using their wealth for this life or the next. No matter how much they have, they think they don't have enough. There are many such people, even those who claim to be Dharma practitioners or lamas. If we think about it, they become like hungry ghosts in this very life.

The effect similar to the cause of birth as a hungry ghost takes two forms: the actions similar to the cause, and the experiences similar to the cause. The feeling of stinginess in the mindstream prevents one from giving wealth, and this completes the action similar to the cause. The experience similar to the cause is that even if someone has wealth and prosperity, his stinginess prevents him from using them, to the point where he may even feel he is starving. Both are then complete, and even in this present life the signs of birth as a hungry ghost can be seen.

Not acting in this way, we should offer whatever small resources we have to the Three Jewels, and give to those in difficult circumstances, like beggars and others. There are many methods to accumulate merit through using our wealth.

Jetsun Milarepa says:

Take food from your mouth and give it as alms.

Otherwise, if you are controlled by selfish attachment, all the wealth and property in the world would still not seem enough for one person.

If we are in the grip of great attachment, our grasping will keep on increasing, so that even all the wealth in the world would not be enough. Attachment grows along with wealth, so we are never content. For this reason, we should spend whatever resources we have for the Dharma, and be free from attachment.

Unwilling to use what you already have, you will feel that whatever you are going to offer upward to the Three Jewels or downward to the poor must still be found from elsewhere.

In general, the Buddha taught about giving material wealth and other practices involving physical possessions mainly for lay bodhisattvas.

There are both lay and ordained bodhisattvas. Many ordained bodhisattvas are free from attachment to wealth, and live in remote areas. They don't have great wealth and prosperity to offer the Three Jewels, or give to the poor. Some lay bodhisattvas are quite prosperous and the accumulation of merit through material offerings is mainly taught for them.

Monks and nuns should learn to reduce their desires and be content with what they have. For them it is crucial to practice the threefold training of the higher path in mountain retreats and hermitages, courageously accepting all hardships.

Monks and nuns, and some lay practitioners as well, lack the wealth and prosperity to accumulate merit through making many offerings. They need not gather wealth in order to accumulate merit. What they have should be spent for Dharma activities, but they should not endeavor to earn money. They should train in superior discipline, superior meditative concentration, and superior wisdom. Practicing these three is more meritorious than generosity.

Some people give up spiritual practice for business, agriculture and other occupations, and gather wealth through deceit and nonvirtue. They claim to be practicing Dharma through the offerings and charitable gifts they make with their earnings.

Thinking that they have nothing to offer the Three Jewels or give

to the poor, some people abandon their training in discipline, meditative concentration and wisdom. They give up retreat and look for ways to earn wealth through deceit and nonvirtue. Making money through virtuous action is very difficult. Those who have accumulated merit in the past can obtain wealth and prosperity without effort, but people without such merit must strive in business and so on to earn money, through nonvirtuous activity. Even if they offer their earnings to the Three Jewels and are generous to the poor, this is not a pure way to accumulate merit, and is a cause for birth in the lower realms.

Of such people it is said:

*Not following the Dharma according to the Dharma,
Dharma itself can become a cause for the lower realms.*

This approach is completely meaningless. Most important is being satisfied with what you have at all times and in all situations.

Do not act like this. The weight of accumulating nonvirtue is greater than accumulating virtue, so such a choice leads to lower realms and not upper realms. Be satisfied with or without wealth. For those without wealth, practicing discipline, meditative concentration, and wisdom is more powerful than practicing generosity. In the sequence of practicing the perfections, the higher are more powerful than the lower ones. The merit of practicing discipline is greater than generosity, and the merit of practicing concentration and wisdom is more than practicing discipline. We must strive for the greater merit, not give up the greater merit to pursue the lesser. Seeking wealth in order to practice generosity may appear to be virtuous, but actually it is not, and such activity should be abandoned.

Great giving means giving to others that which you consider the most important, abandoning the things to which you are most attached.

Giving others your personal horse or elephant, or your own son or daughter, things that are rare or very precious to you personally, is called “great giving.”

Exceptionally great giving

This is making a gift of your own body, life or limbs. Examples include Prince Great Courage, who gave his body to a tigress; the teacher Nagarjuna, who gave his head to King Surabhibhadra’s son; and Princess Mandabhadri, who also gave her body to a tigress.

Such extraordinary generosity is a particular practice of the noble

bodhisattvas, such as Prince Great Courage, who was one of the earlier lives of Buddha Shakyamuni. They are able to give up their heads, parts of their bodies, or their lives. The level of the noble ones, the aryas, must be attained first. As it is said:

*Abandoning nonvirtue, there will be no suffering;
Because of learning, there is no unhappiness.*

When the arya bodhisattvas give their heads and bodies, they experience no physical or mental suffering. It is like cutting the branch of a tree. Reaching this level, they can offer the generosity of their heads and bodies. Other bodhisattvas can also practice this, but only for an extremely important purpose. Otherwise, they are prohibited.

Ordinary beings are incapable of this practice. For now, mentally dedicate your body, life and possessions for others' wellbeing, with no attachment. Make an aspiration that you will one day be able to actually give them away.

At this time we must train our minds, dedicating and practicing this mentally, not actually. We pray that on attaining the arya level, we will actually be able to give everything to others. We should recite the following verse:

*Body, and likewise wealth and prosperity,
Merit accumulated throughout the three times –
Without keeping any, I give it all
For the benefit of all beings.*

Giving Dharma

This means giving empowerments, explaining the Dharma, transmitting texts and using other methods to bring virtue into the minds of others. However, until one's own selfish desires have been completely uprooted, to work for the good of others is nothing but a show.

Jowo Atisa's disciples asked when they should nurture disciples, benefit others or perform the transference of consciousness for those who had died. He replied as follows:

*The time to nurture disciples is when you have realized emptiness
and have developed clairvoyance.
The time to work for the good of others is when work for your
own benefit is completed.*

The time to perform the transference of consciousness for the dead is when you have attained the path of seeing.

He also said:

The time of degeneration is not a time for showing off, but a time for perseverance.

It is not a time for holding a high position, but a time to take a humble place.

It is not a time for having followers and attendants, but a time to live in solitude.

It is not a time for taking care of disciples, but a time to take care of yourself.

It is not a time for analyzing words, but a time to contemplate their meaning.

It is not a time for going here and there, but a time to stay in one place.

The Three Brothers asked Geshe Tonpa whether it was better to practice in solitude or to benefit others through the Dharma. He answered as follows:

“A beginner who has no experience or realization cannot help others through the Dharma, even if he tries. Like pouring blessings from an empty container, no blessings will come from him. His instructions lack flavor or substance, like barley beer made without pressing the grain.

“One at the aspiration stage who has achieved warmth, but not firm stability, cannot accomplish the benefit of beings. Like pouring blessings from a vase, when he fills another he becomes empty himself. His instructions are like a lamp passed from hand to hand; giving light to another, he remains in the dark.”

“Warmth” refers to experience and realization. Warmth occurs on the path of joining. The realization of the path of joining has the following four stages: warmth, peak, patience, and supreme mundane qualities. Those who have only the quality of warmth have no stability. They are still ordinary persons, and can only make aspirations. With only this quality, even if they bestow empowerments and give pith instructions, they cannot greatly benefit others. They may benefit others in a small way, but their own realization will be diminished.

For this reason, it is said that in the past qualified gurus did not give pith instructions openly, but only on rare occasions so as not to decrease their own realization. Once the arya level is attained, this is another case. A noble one's qualities will not be diminished, whatever empowerments, instructions and explanations they give.

Explaining the teachings to others is not easy. Patrul Rinpoche is quoting Geshe Tonpa on this point and Khen Rinpoche Jigme Phuntsog said the same thing from his own experience. He said that when he taught the Dharma, he could benefit others a little, but that he felt his own realization declining.

In this degenerate time, we cannot say that all gurus have attained the arya level, but if they do not give empowerments, pith instructions and explanations, the continuity of the teachings may be broken. Without taking themselves as important, but giving more importance to others, they bestow empowerments and teach for the benefit of beings.

“One who attains the bodhisattva level can work to benefit beings who are less advanced. His blessings are like the spiritual power of an excellent vase. Even if he brings all other sentient beings to maturity, he will never become empty himself. His instructions are like the main butter lamp which can light all others without becoming dim itself.

“Therefore, this current degenerate age is a time when ordinary beings should live in solitude and train their minds in the love and compassion of bodhicitta. It is not a time for actually benefitting beings, but for guarding one's own mind from negative emotions. When a tree that produces great medicine is still a sapling, it should not be cut, but should be protected.”

Patrul Rinpoche continues:

Actually making the gift of Dharma to other beings is thus somewhat difficult. Explaining to others a teaching one has not experienced oneself will not benefit them at all. As for relying on Dharma teaching for offerings and to gather wealth, Padampa Sangye called this “making money by using Dharma as merchandise.”

Until you have exhausted all your own selfish desires, do not hastily try to help others. Make the wish that minds of gods and demons who are attracted to virtue may be liberated through your actions of recitation, chanting mantras, and reading the scriptures out loud. Consider it sufficient to recite the prayers for giving the Dharma

found at the end of the ritual texts for giving water tormas and offering the body, such as:

*Abandon all evil doing.
Practice virtue perfectly.
Totally tame your mind.
This is the Buddha's teaching*

When your own selfish desires are exhausted, it will be the time to solely act for the benefit of others, without relaxing in peace and comfort for even a moment.

Giving protection from fear

We should do everything we can to help beings who are in trouble. We should give refuge to beings who do not have a refuge from suffering. We should protect and help those who have no protection or benefactor. We should be a companion for those who do not have any companion. These are all ways of giving protection from fear. Lord Buddha said that among all the relative virtues, saving the lives of beings is the most beneficial.

Remaining in the natural state is the uncompounded, ultimate virtue. Other than this, the virtuous acts of circumambulation, making offerings, mantra recitation, reciting prayers, and so on are considered relative virtue. Among all of these, the best is to save the lives of sentient beings.

Those with the power to do so should prohibit hunting and fishing. Others can ransom sheep bound for slaughter, and save the lives of fish, insects, flies and so on that are near death. Through various methods we should take responsibility for actually benefitting beings.

These different kinds of generosity are a crucial point of the commitments of Secret Mantra. "Holding the Vows of the Five Families" states:

*As the samaya of the Jewel Family
Always practice the four kinds of generosity.*

Since we have received empowerment we have taken the samaya vows of Secret Mantrayana, and they remain in our minds. We must protect these commitments. The generosity of giving is one of the main ways of maintaining our vows.

Transcendent discipline

Transcendent discipline has three divisions: the discipline of avoiding negative actions, the discipline of undertaking virtuous actions, and the discipline of bringing benefit to sentient beings.

Avoiding negative actions

Discipline takes place within the mind, and is not primarily verbal or physical. The mind should avoid all nonvirtuous actions.

All the ten nonvirtuous actions of body, speech and mind that are not directed toward the benefit of others should be avoided like poison.

A bodhisattva who is benefitting others can undertake the seven nonvirtues of body and speech, because the action is actually virtuous although it appears to be nonvirtue. The nonvirtuous action becomes an action that benefits beings. Nonvirtuous actions of body and speech that are not benefitting others must be avoided like poison.

Undertaking positive actions

This means always, under all circumstances, gathering as many roots of virtue as possible, by undertaking whatever positive activities you can, including even the smallest.

A common worldly saying is, "Virtue can come while talking or working; nonvirtue while we move around or sit." Unless we always examine ourselves with great mindfulness, introspection and care, and try to adopt positive actions and abandon negative actions, we can commit many serious nonvirtues, even while simply playing.

We must examine body, speech and mind with mindfulness (*dren pa*), introspection (*shes bzin*), and care (*bag yod*). Mindfulness means not forgetting the aspects of what to adopt and what to avoid. Care means being careful about adopting and avoiding. Introspection means being aware of or watching to see whether we are actually engaged in adopting and avoiding. We should always examine the activities of our body, speech and mind in these three ways. If we fail to examine ourselves in this way, we can easily accumulate great negativity.

*Even the smallest negativity should not be belittled
With the thought it is not harmful;
Even the smallest spark of fire
Can burn down a mountain of hay.*

Practice like this all the time, maintaining mindfulness and introspection, and you can gather an inconceivable amount of virtue as you go about your life. When you come across a pile of carved mani stones by the path, simply acting respectfully, taking off your hat and circling it while keeping it to your right, and applying the three excellent methods, can be an unmistakable cause for perfect enlightenment.

*Even the smallest virtuous action should not be belittled
With the thought that it will not help;
By collecting individual drops of water
Large vessels gradually become filled up.*

Stories from the past tell of a pig chased around a stupa by a dog, and of seven caterpillars who fell from a leaf into a stream and floated with the current seven times around a stupa. These events became the cause for their liberation.

Thus, in all times and all situations, avoid even the slightest negative action and carry out even the smallest act of virtue. Dedicate the merit for the benefit of all sentient beings. All the instructions and vows of bodhicitta are condensed in this.

Benefitting others

As was explained earlier, when your own selfish desires are totally uprooted, it is the time to use the four ways of attracting others to strive to actually accomplish the benefit of sentient beings.

To benefit others, you must first gather them around you. The ways of gathering them are offering what they need, if you can, and always speaking in a gentle and pleasing manner. No one dislikes generosity and pleasant words, and so people will gather around you. After bringing others under your influence you should teach the Dharma, and see that they put it into action.

A guru must practice the Dharma correctly, acting upon what he teaches. A teacher who does not practice, but only tells his disciples what to do, will not be listened to. Keeping the meaning of the Dharma in one's mind and putting it into action are methods for gathering disciples.

As a beginner, you benefit others by dedicating all your practice of training in adopting virtue and avoiding negativity to the benefit of

all beings while applying the three excellent methods.

Beginners have not overcome selfishness, and do not have a vast or profound knowledge of the Dharma. Until we can actually benefit others greatly, we must make aspiration prayers and dedicate whatever merit we have to them. This serves as the discipline of benefitting others.

Transcendent patience

Transcendent patience has three aspects: patience when wronged by others, patience to bear hardships for the Dharma, and patience to face the profound truth without fear. The essence of patience is to have an undisturbed mind.

Patience when wronged by others includes being harmed by evil spirits, being harmed by beings whom we have previously benefitted, and so on. Patience to bear hardships for the Dharma refers to the many difficulties we must face when hearing, contemplating and meditating on the profound Dharma. Not being discouraged by these problems, but having the strength even to give up one's life and body while striving for the Dharma is called the patience to bear hardships for the Dharma.

Patience to face the profound truth without fear particularly concerns practitioners of the lower vehicle. When some people are taught on the meaning of emptiness they do not become happy, but instead experience great fear. They are not able to practice this profound Dharma. On the other hand, when those with the proper capacity first hear about emptiness their minds become very clear, the hair on their bodies stands on end and tears spring to their eyes. They can practice and realize the meaning of the profound Dharma with no discomfort at all.

Patience when wronged by others

When other people attack, rob or defeat you, use foul language or speak ill of you behind your back, do not react with anger and hostility, but arouse your loving-kindness and compassion and try to help them. This is practicing patience when wronged by others. If you do not act in this way, but fall under the power of anger, a moment of fury can destroy merit accumulated over a thousand kalpas.

Loving-kindness is wishing that those who harm you abide in happiness, and compassion is wishing that they are free from suffering. Instead of seeking to harm them, you should benefit them through love and compassion. Otherwise, abandoning patience and returning harm with harm, your mind

will be stained by anger. You will not only fail to remove the harm that others have done, but the merit you have accumulated over many thousands of kalpas will be diminished. However, if the roots of your merit have already been offered with a perfect dedication, anger may not destroy them.

Without perfect dedication, whatever merit has been accumulated will be lost through anger. There are four causes for losing merit. The first is anger. Second is the pride of thinking of all the good things you have done. Third is remorse for the actions which accumulated merit. Fourth is the failure to dedicate the merit. This is why anger is such a major fault. As it states in the “Way of the Bodhisattva:”

*Good deeds accumulated for a thousand kalpas
Like generosity or offerings to those gone to bliss –
No matter what they are –
Will all be shattered by a single moment of anger.*

And also:

*There is no evil like hatred,
No austerity like patience.
Strive earnestly for patience,
Using all methods to meditate upon it.*

Harming others with anger accumulates inconceivable negativity. Conversely, being patient with others and avoiding anger, as well as being able to bear hardship, accumulates inconceivable positive merit. Patience is one of the greatest ways of accumulating merit.

Remembering all the misfortune that anger brings, strive to cultivate patience at all times and in all circumstances. Padampa Sangye says:

*Hating enemies is a delusion caused by karma.
Drop your poisonous thoughts of hatred, people of Tingri.*

The harm our enemies cause is actually a result of our past negative actions, and is a delusion caused by karma. In past lives we accumulated negative karma by harming others. As a result they’re now harming us. We should not give in to anger again and cause more harm, but we should rid ourselves of this anger.

Atisa says:

Do not become angry with those who harm you.

*If you feel hatred toward those who do you harm
When can you cultivate patience?*

Being harmed by others is the positive circumstance for practicing patience. To practice patience, someone must harm you. You cannot practice in comfortable situations. Don't think about the harm being done, but about the benefit of practicing patience.

If someone insults, hurts or wrongly blames you, and you avoid anger and holding a grudge, this consumes much negativity and obscurity. Since relying on patience accumulates vast merit, consider those who harm you to be your teachers.

Our teachers support our purification of negativity and accumulation of merit, showing the way to immediate benefit and ultimate happiness. We also purify negativity and accumulate great merit by practicing patience with those who harm us. Considered like this, we find no difference between our root guru and the enemies who harm us. Thus, we should respect both our enemies and our lamas.

As it is said, "If you had no one who roused your anger, with whom could you practice patience?"

Lacking wealth, how can you practice generosity? Wealth is the positive circumstance for practicing the generosity of material giving. In the same way, how can you practice patience unless you have someone who harms you?

Nowadays people comment that some lama or monk is quite good but has a terrible temper. Since anger is the worst fault in the world, how could someone with terrible temper at the same time be so good?

Worldly people who believe that a good lama or monk is one who has no connections with women may think like this. But being a good lama is not simply a matter of keeping celibacy or being learned. Someone with a mind full of anger is not a good practitioner. Anger can destroy merit accumulated over thousands of kalpas. A good practitioner is one who avoids anger and attachment and practices patience, one who has bodhicitta, compassion and loving-kindness.

Padampa Sangye says: "Worse than a hundred actions arising from desire is a moment's action arising from anger. This you don't understand."

When the Dharma has developed in someone's mindstream, he or

she should be very gentle and mild with body, speech and mind, like walking on cotton wool or adding butter to tsampa soup. It could be otherwise, however, and doing even a small virtuous act or keeping a single vow could lead him to think he is something special, so his mind is always filled with pride. Or he could be sensitive to everything that others say, whether it is good or bad, becoming furious if he thinks he has been put down or slandered. This is a sign that mind and the Dharma have parted company, and that the Dharma has not improved the person's mind at all.

A mind without anger is called a soft mind, and an angry mind is considered a hard mind. Dharma practice should soften the mind. When all anger and pride are gone, this is a sign of practicing according to the Dharma. Otherwise, people could stay in retreat for years, but if they are still angry or proud, or if these emotions have increased, their practice is not correct. As Geshe Chengawa says:

While we are studying, contemplating and meditating, if our sense of self grows, and our patience becomes weaker than a new layer of skin so that we are more irritable than the demon Tsang Tsen, these are signs that our study, contemplation and meditation have gone the wrong way.

The actions of body, speech and mind should be soft, peaceful and tamed. If your study, contemplation and meditation are correct and mingle with your mind, your pride, anger, attachment, and ego-clinging will diminish, and you will become free from disturbing emotions. This is the sign of proper practice. If, on the contrary, the more you study, contemplate and meditate, the more your disturbing emotions increase, this shows you are not mingling the practice with your mind.

Patrul Rinpoche next gives some specific pieces of advice on how to behave. "Always take a lower seat," means to practice humility in all situations. No matter how long you study, contemplate and meditate, practice recitation or remain in retreat, you should consider yourself to be someone in a lower position, full of faults, with your positive qualities declining. Taking a lower seat means avoiding all aspects of pride. It does not simply mean sitting at the end of the row.

"Wear tattered clothes" means wearing old clothes. In particular, novice monks are supposed to wear robes that have been discarded, and that are then dyed in the appropriate colors of red, yellow or blue. This is called robes that are "blessed with three specific characteristics."

“Whether they are good, bad or mediocre, treat everyone respectfully.” This means paying homage to everyone. Most of us think that others have fewer positive qualities than we do, and that if we prostrate to them our roots of merit will decline. Thus, we do not want to prostrate or pay homage to others. However, prostrating to others is a sign of lacking pride, and acts as an antidote to pride. Prostrating to others, even if their qualities are low, will benefit us, not harm us. By paying respect to all, regardless of their qualities, our pride will be diminished. If the person we prostrate to has lesser qualities than we do, he will be harmed by the prostration, and his merit will decline. If he has higher qualities, greater power, or greater merit he can receive the prostration without harm.

With love, compassion and bodhicitta as your foundation, tame your mind with the Dharma. This is the unmistakable key point of all practices, and is better than a thousand “extra sublime” views or “extra profound” meditations that do not improve the mind.

This is the unmistakable practice of Dharma. With love, compassion and bodhicitta you can master your mind. The view must benefit our mindstream by being mixed with it. Simply saying, “I have realized the most profound Dzogchen view” brings no benefit. This does not mean that Dzogchen is not the highest view, but without actually mingling with the practitioner’s mind, it does not help. Saying, “I am meditating on the most profound practices of Trekchod and Tegal,” makes no difference unless there is real benefit to the mind.

The highest view and most profound meditation are not easy to cultivate. It is said that Dzogchen can be practiced only by those whose faculties are “the sharpest of the sharp,” and who have a past connection with the practice, the most fortunate individuals. Not everyone is able to practice Dzogchen. Developing the view in the mindstream is very difficult. Practicing authentic Dzogchen meditation is very difficult. The view and meditation help each other develop and must be practiced together in order to truly benefit the mindstream.

Otherwise it is better to meditate on loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. Whether you keep them in your mind or not, the meaning is easy to understand. Love is the thought of wishing others to have happiness; compassion is the thought of wishing others to be free from suffering. Bodhicitta is the strong intention to benefit others. It is better to meditate on these than to try and practice a view and meditation that are beyond your capacity.

Patience to bear hardships for the Dharma

In order to practice the sublime Dharma you should ignore heat, cold and all other difficulties.

Practicing Dharma is not easy. Worldly people think that people who cannot succeed in worldly activities like business and agriculture practice Dharma instead. However, practicing Dharma is thousands of times more difficult than worldly activities. The Dharma requires great diligence and intelligence, as we see from the examples of Omniscient Longchenpa and Jetsun Milarepa. Someone who cannot manage worldly activities will find authentic Dharma practice very difficult, although people do not realize this. Worldly people may think that simply eating and sleeping are the Dharma, but this is not the case. One must bear many hardships to practice Dharma.

Buddha Shakyamuni practiced austerities for six years at the banks of the Nairanjana River. Omniscient Longchenpa and Jetsun Milarepa practiced diligence and bore much suffering. Every individual who attained the actual accomplishments has practiced with great diligence and difficulty. No examples are found of people attaining accomplishment with only joy and comfort. All hardships must be tolerated and ignored in the practice of Dharma. Patrul Rinpoche quotes the tantras to say that even if you have to walk over a mass of fire or cross an ocean of razor blades, you should search for the Dharma until you reach the next life. This is the commitment which must be made mentally and put into action as well.

The ancient Kadampas had four goals: “Base your mind on the Dharma,” means always thinking only about the Dharma. “Base your Dharma on a humble life.” Humble means being free from attachment to wealth. “Base your humble life on the thought of death.” Humble people do not think of many things, but only think of death. “Base your death on an empty, barren hollow.” An empty barren hollow means an isolated place of only rocks and forest.

At present, we think that without needing to undergo hardship or have strong determination for the Dharma, our Dharma practice can accompany our worldly activities and we can continue to enjoy comfort, happiness and praise. Claiming that others do this, we say, “He is a good lama. He knows how to combine Dharma and worldly life.”

This thought is becoming stronger these days. People say they are practicing Dharma while they are building houses like palaces. Sitting in

their house, enjoying comfort, happiness and praise, they think they are practicing, but authentic Dharma can never be practiced like that. This is true not only for people who already have favorable conditions, but also for those who are seeking a better life, better clothing, food and so on.

People practice like this themselves, and also tell others to do so. They think a lama is good because he has wealth and prosperity, comfort and popularity, and can manage both Dharma and worldly activities. People say, "He has studied, contemplated and meditated and thus can handle both worldly and Dharma affairs." But Patrul Rinpoche asks,

How can there be a means to combine Dharma with a worldly life?
Those who claim to be joining Dharma and worldly affairs are likely to be leading a good worldly life, but are certainly not practicing pure Dharma.

These can never be combined. Such people can engage in worldly activities because they have wealth, many attendants, well-being and renown. They do well in their worldly activities, but they actually never practice Dharma. We cannot consider that they are practitioners.

Claiming to be practicing Dharma and worldly life together is like saying that you can sew with a double-pointed needle, put fire and water in the same container or ride two horses in opposite directions. There is no way to do this.

It is impossible for any ordinary person to surpass our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni. Yet even he found no way to practice the Dharma and worldly life at the same time. Abandoning his kingdom like spit in the dust, he lived for six years by the River Nairanjana, practicing asceticism with great determination, consuming only a single drop of water and a single grain of barley every year.

This is also like Jetsun Milarepa. When he was practicing, he had nothing to eat and no clothing for his back. Eating only nettles, his entire body became like a skeleton covered in greenish hair. When other people saw him, they couldn't tell if he was a man or a demon. That he practiced with such austerity and determination proves it is impossible to practice Dharma together with worldly life. How could it be from stupidity that Milarepa didn't know how to combine them?

Likewise, the great master Melong Dorje, eating only the bark of the *lakhe* tree, practiced for nine years and achieved accomplishment. The Omniscient Dharma King Longchen Rabjam lived for many

months on twenty-one mercury pills.¹³ When it snowed, he got into a sack that he used for both clothing and bedding. They bore these austerities for the sake of the Dharma.

All the great masters of the past achieved accomplishment by turning their backs on all the activities of worldly life, and undergoing hardships with great determination. None of them attained accomplishment while engaged in worldly activities, accompanied by comfort, happiness and fame.

According to Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, “Once you make arrangements for abundant food, warm clothes, a pleasant place to live and a good benefactor, the demon is already established before the Dharma can be practiced.”

And Geshe Shawopa says, “To whole-heartedly practice the Dharma, the goal of your life should be poverty. Finally, in poverty you will be able to enter into death. If you develop a mind like this, neither gods, demons nor humans will cause you trouble.”

Jetsun Milarepa also sang:

*No one asking whether I'm ill;
No one mourning if I die.
Able to die in mountain retreat,
A yogi's intention is fully complete.*

*No trace of humans at my door;
No sign of blood within.
Able to die in mountain retreat,
A yogi's intention is fully complete.*

*No one asking where I've gone;
No special place to go.
Able to die in mountain retreat,
A yogi's intention is fully complete.*

*Worms can eat my rotting corpse;
Flies suck my veins and muscle.
Able to die in mountain retreat,
A yogi's intention is fully complete.*

13 These special pills are called *bcud len*, “extracting the essence.” Highly developed practitioners can live on them without needing to eat other food.

Thus, tossing to the winds all the cravings of worldly life and taking on to yourself all hardship, heat and cold is crucial to the practice of Dharma.

Facing difficulty for the sake of practicing Dharma is beneficial because it purifies great negativity and accumulates immense merit. You shouldn't think that you cannot bear illness, heat or cold, and cannot listen to or study the Dharma because of such difficulties, that you cannot contemplate the meaning, or cannot meditate. Failing to practice because of these small problems separates you from Dharma and you will lose the fortune to practice. Make the firm intention that whatever occurs – cold, heat, hunger, thirst, illness or even death – you will never abandon your practice. Strive to face any kind of suffering and you will be able to practice authentic Dharma. The patience of bearing hardships for the Dharma brings about huge benefit.

Patience to face the profound truth without fear

If you hear the teachings on the natural state of profound emptiness, in particular on the key points of the mode of abiding of the Natural Great Perfection beyond activity and effort, or on the Twelve Vajra Laughs beyond the effects of good and bad actions, or on the Eight Great Marvellous Verses, endeavor to grasp their meaning unmistakably and without developing any wrong views.

Profound emptiness refers to the view and meditation beyond activity and effort. Someone who has realized the rigpa awareness of Dzogchen is beyond activity and effort, beyond elaboration. The profound meaning is beyond virtue and nonvirtue. Remaining in that view of the natural state, the view of Trekchod, one is from the beginning beyond virtue and nonvirtue, beyond activity and effort, and beyond cause and effect, and is never stained by them. This is explained by the teacher of the tantra, Samantabhadra, in the teaching on the Twelve Vajra Laughs and the Eight Great Marvellous Verses.

As already mentioned, some people experience clarity of mind and mental happiness on simply hearing the name Dzogpa Chenpo, without understanding the true meaning. Their hair stands on end, and tears spring to their eyes. These are signs that they are qualified to practice Dzogchen. They are never afraid of the most profound view and meditation of Dzogchen. Not only do they not fear it, they will realize this view and meditation. We must explain the meaning of the profound ultimate truth to people with

these qualities. Palden Dawa Tragpa explained in “Entering the Middle Way:”

*Ordinary beings who on hearing about emptiness
Feel again and again extremely joyful from within,
Who weep from this joy and whose hair stands on end,
Have the seed of the perfect Buddha’s mind.
They are the vessels to whom the ultimate meaning is shown.
Explain to them the meaning of the ultimate truth.*

On the contrary, there is no greater nonvirtue than abandoning or rejecting the Dharma. It is worse even than killing one’s parents.

Developing wrong views about these teachings or criticizing them is called “the negative act of abandoning the Dharma,” and is a cause that can keep one in the depths of hell for uncountable kalpas.

The Aspiration Prayer for Sukhavati (Dechen Monlam) includes this line:

*I confess all the times I have rejected the Dharma,
An act even worse than the five sins with immediate retribution.*

On one occasion two Indian monks who had the twelve qualities of full training came to see Jowo Atisa. When he taught that the ego lacks intrinsic existence, they rejoiced, but when he taught that phenomena also lack intrinsic existence, they became terrified and shouted, “Don’t say that!” When they heard the recitation of the Heart Sutra, they blocked their ears.

Disheartened, Atisa told them, “Without training your mind in the love and compassion of bodhicitta, and then gaining confidence in the profound teachings, pure vows by themselves will not lead anywhere.”

When Lord Buddha was alive as well, many highly conceited monks vomited blood and died, and were reborn in hell realms on hearing him teach on the meaning of profound emptiness. There are other similar stories.

“Highly conceited monks” refers to those who do not understand the true meaning of emptiness but who claim to understand it.

Have faith and respect for the profound teachings and for the individuals who teach them from the very core of your heart. Even if the negative circumstance of your limited mind keeps interest from

developing, it is crucial to give up criticizing them.

We must have confidence both in the Dharma and in the teacher of the Dharma. Most people consider the Dharma to be superior to the teacher. They think that once they receive a teaching from a lama, they will be diligent in their practice of the Dharma. Ignoring the teacher after receiving the teaching is treating the teacher as a musk deer, and the Dharma as musk, as has already been explained. In contrast to this, with confidence in the Dharma, you should have greater and greater confidence in the guru.

In the unmistakable practice of Dzogchen, with confidence and joy in the practice, you gradually come to see your guru as an actual buddha. Confidence and joy in practice go together with this perception. The level of confidence is the same toward both the Dharma and the guru. Feeling confidence only in the Dharma and ignoring the guru is not authentic practice.

Transcendent diligence

The essence of diligence is an internal joyful feeling about practicing virtue. It is not external. Diligence is classified into three types: armor-like diligence, diligence in action, and diligence that is never satisfied.

First of all, making a mental commitment is armor-like diligence. Actually putting your commitment into action is diligence in action. Never being satisfied with how you are putting virtue into action through study, contemplation and meditation is the diligence that is never satisfied. Never feel that your accumulation of virtue is sufficient, like the ocean never feels that it has enough the water. Until you reach buddhahood, you should never be satisfied, no matter how much teaching you hear or how much meditation you practice.

Armor-like diligence

When hearing the biographies of the great masters of the past, the Buddha and the bodhisattvas, and the stories of their activities and the difficulties they faced for the Dharma, do not think that they did these things only because they were already buddhas and bodhisattvas and that you don't have that capacity. They reached accomplishment because of their actions. Remember that you are their follower and must act as they did, even though you might not do better.

If they needed such austerity and determination, how could people

like us who are loaded down with negative actions and who have not trained in Dharma from beginningless time, not also need these qualities?

Right now you have obtained the freedoms and advantages of a human body, have met an authentic lama, and received the profound instructions. At this time you have the opportunity to correctly practice the perfectly pure Dharma. Thinking thus, you should vow wholeheartedly to do so, accepting difficulties, bearing any burden, risking your body and life force, and giving up concern for your flesh and blood. This is armor-like diligence.

Diligence in action

Even though you intend to study and practice the Dharma, while you put it off until tomorrow or the next day, the days of your human life are used up. You must give up wasting your human life while wanting to practice.

Dharma practice is for the sake of our future lives, not for having better food, clothes and living conditions in this life. We should consider our present circumstances to be satisfactory. The time period of our future lives is longer than this life, so we must seek to improve our future conditions. Practicing authentic Dharma is the only method for doing this. Accumulating wealth, achieving higher status, gathering a large retinue in this life – none of this will benefit us in future lives. Our present life is limited, maybe up to eighty or ninety years. The future is life after life, a limitless period which cannot be counted in months and years.

We realize we must practice for the future, but find ourselves distracted by worldly activities. To accomplish our worldly tasks, we put off our Dharma practice until tomorrow. Again, when tomorrow comes, we think we have no time and postpone for another day. Not this year, but next year, and in this way we put off practicing Dharma, until our lives are lost. We must avoid this. Druk Pema Karpo said:

*Human life is like an being animal at the slaughterhouse;
With every passing second death approaches nearer.
Easily postponing from today until tomorrow,
Alas! Such lamentation upon your final bed.*

In a slaughterhouse, when one animal is killed, the others come closer to death. Death approaches moment by moment. This is true for us as well. As each day passes, we are nearer to death. One day, one month, one year,

we always come closer to death. Do not put off your practice from one day to the next or you will end up crying on your deathbed. If you think about practicing today, practice today.

Do not put off your Dharma for even a moment. Be like a coward with a snake in his lap or a beautiful woman with her hair on fire. Letting go of all worldly activities, strive in Dharma practice immediately. Otherwise you will never find the time. Worldly activities never end; one follows another like ripples on water. They will finish only when you definitely decide to stop them. Omniscient Longchenpa says:

*Worldly activity does not end until we die,
But it ends when we drop it. Its nature is thus.*

And also:

*Activities are like children's games.
They don't end by doing them; they end by dropping them.*

Thus, when you have the desire to practice Dharma, encourage yourself with the thought of impermanence and do not fall under the power of laziness or procrastination for even a moment. Begin to practice immediately. This is diligence in action.

Diligence that is never satisfied

When you have done some retreat, a bit of approach and accomplishment practice, said a few prayers or carried out some virtuous actions, do not be satisfied with just this. Vow to practice throughout your lifetime. Until you reach the level of perfect buddhahood, diligence must be prolonged and forceful, like the flow of a great river.

Great masters from the past have said that Dharma practice should be like a yak eating grass. A hungry yak, while chewing one tuft of grass, already has its eye on the next. Likewise, while engaged in one Dharma practice, plan in your mind for the practice that you will do when it is finished. Never letting your three doors become idle or apart from Dharma for even a moment, strive to make greater efforts in the Dharma every day.

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa says, "As one approaches closer to death, if one's determination to practice virtue grows, this is the sign of a practitioner who has not been carried off by the frost."¹⁴

Nowadays, people with a reputation as great meditators or good lamas are told by others, “You needn’t make prostrations, recite prayers, accumulate merit and wisdom, purify obscurations and so on any longer.”

Some come to believe that they are accomplished and do not need these practices. The unequalled Dagpo Rinpoche said, “Thinking that you do not need to practice is a sure sign that you do.”

The Indian master Dipamkara¹⁵ took the effort to make tsa-tsas every day, so his hands became covered in clay. His followers told him, “People are critical of a great lama like you working with clay, and it’s also difficult for you. Please let us make them for you.”

“What are you saying?” he answered. “Will you also eat my food for me?”

This story makes the point that to accumulate merit, Dharma practice must be done by oneself.

Until perfect buddhahood is achieved, you still have past negative actions and habitual tendencies to purify, and still need to attain more and more positive qualities. Don’t allow your Dharma practice to become something done at leisure and only occasionally. You must strive to practice Dharma wholeheartedly, without ever feeling satisfied.

In general, whether or not you attain buddhahood depends on your diligence alone. Endeavoring in the three kinds of diligence is absolutely crucial. Someone with the highest intelligence but inferior diligence will be an inferior practitioner. However, one of inferior intelligence but the highest degree of diligence will become an exceptional practitioner. If diligence is completely lacking, even having other positive qualities will be of no benefit. As the Omniscient Jigme Lingpa said:

*For a person lacking diligence,
Intelligence, power, wealth and strength
Cannot help at all.
He is like a boatman
Whose boat is lacking oars.*

At all times and in all situations, control what you eat, keep your sleep balanced, and maintain your awareness. Your diligence should fruit of Dharma practice.

15 Another name for Atisa.

be like a good bow, neither too tight nor too loose. Practicing Dharma only occasionally, when you have time, will get you nowhere.

Since from beginningless time we have accumulated negativity without resting, we need to also purify this negativity without resting. Great diligence is needed to purify this great negativity. We must practice continuously. We cannot achieve the fruits of buddhahood by practicing some days and resting on others. We must practice diligently with the steadiness of a flowing river.

Transcendent Concentration

The essence of concentration is remaining one-pointedly. Whether practicing development stage or completion stage, remaining one-pointedly focused on the object of the practice is concentration.

In particular, if the concentration is embraced by the supreme practice of the main part without focus, then it becomes authentic transcendent concentration. Even if not embraced by the non-conceptual main part, it should be embraced by the preparation part of the practice of arousing bodhicitta and the conclusion of dedication. This can also be called transcendent, but it is not the authentic transcendence.

As I explained earlier, truly authentic transcendence can only be practiced by those who have attained the arya level. For that kind of concentration to arise in our mindstreams, we must avoid the bustle of worldly activities and distractions. This means not being among many people, as this increases distraction. Distraction is the opposite of concentration. Unless and until you avoid such worldly excitement and distraction, concentration will never arise in your mindstream. The positive circumstance for developing concentration is solitude, isolation. Thus, you must rely on a solitary place, and the aspect of concentration will come automatically.

Giving up distractions

One's body should be isolated from the worldly clamor of many people and activities, and one's mind isolated from distraction. Distraction refers to involvement in, and thoughts about, the eight worldly concerns and worldly activities. In the desire realm distracted mind mainly arises from two sources. One is attachment to our relatives, and the other is attachment to the opposite sex, male or female. Understanding the true nature of relatives and members of the opposite sex, you must avoid being distracted by them. The text first explains how to avoid distraction from relatives.

“Whatever is gathered together will fall apart.” This is the essence of compounded phenomena. There are no compounded phenomena which will never separate. The separation of compounded phenomena is natural. For example, where there is fire, there is heat. There are no fires without heat. In the same way, there is no gathering without separation. This is natural. The separation comes from the gathering itself.

In this life we have strong attachment and love for our parents, siblings, spouses, friends and relatives. We do not want to part from them. This kind of strong attachment and love is a fault. Despite our attachment, we cannot remain together. Separation is inevitable, earlier or later. Not only will we be separated from our relatives; even the flesh and bones of the body we received at birth will separate at the time of death. Our body and bones arrived together when we were born, and will separate when we die. Our family and relatives came together at different time periods, and they will separate at different time periods. This is impermanence. We cannot remain together. We should not be attached to them. Being attached is our mistake.

Ask yourself what is the point of being attached to impermanent friends and relatives. Thinking like this, always remain alone.

Relatives, family and friends are negative circumstances for concentration. Repa Shiwa O says:

*Oneself alone is the state of buddhahood.
Harmonious Dharma friends support our practice, but
More than three or four cause attachment and hatred.
Therefore, I will stay in solitude.*

One or two people doing similar practice or holding a similar view to yours can be helpful as company for practicing Dharma. More than two are not beneficial, and lead to attachment and anger. This is the reason for not remaining with family or other practitioners. The true nature of family and friends brings inevitable separation. Living with them disturbs one's concentration, so it is better to remain in solitary retreat.

Likewise attachment to the objects of our five sense faculties – form, sound, smell, taste, and touch – is the source of much negativity. Sense pleasures, wealth and property bring much trouble in this life, and result in even more suffering for the next life. Whatever we have we are never satisfied. Attachment for these things increases without end, like drinking salt water never satisfies thirst.

Desire is the source of all wrongdoing. We are never satisfied with what we have; the more wealth and property we acquire the more our greed increases.

Often those without a lot of material wealth are able to offer it to the Three Jewels without being stingy, and freely give it to the poor. As wealth and property increase, people become more miserly, and cannot be generous to either the Three Jewels or the poor. Miserliness comes particularly from wealth and property. Without wealth, there is no miserliness.

As it is said, "Those with wealth are miserly." And also, "The more you have the more you need, like the rich," and "Without wealth, you are free from enemies."

As much food, money and property as you have, that much will you be harmed by enemies, thieves and so on. Because of this, you can be constantly involved in accumulating, protecting and increasing your wealth, wasting your human life and leading to suffering and negative actions.

At first, when you are gathering wealth, you must face many difficulties of both body and mind. Wealth cannot be accumulated without hardship. Once you have the wealth, you must protect it all the time. This is also suffering. Then, no matter how much you gain, you will never be satisfied, so you constantly need more and more, and experience trouble to increase it. Your entire life is then spent on gathering, protecting and increasing your property.

Acquiring wealth involves nothing but negative action such as deceit, business and agriculture. If you accumulated merit in a past life, you can acquire great wealth and property through that, but this is an extremely rare situation. Generally, negative actions are required. Sublime Nagarjuna said:

*Accumulating, guarding and increasing wealth will wear you out;
Understand riches as a source of endless destruction.*

In the present life great hardship goes into acquiring, protecting and increasing wealth. For the next life, due to the negativity accumulated by gathering the riches, you are born in a lower realm and suffer in many different ways. You must understand that wealth is the source of limitless suffering.

Even if one person owned all the sources of wealth and prosperity of the entire world, the fact is that he would still need nothing more

than enough food and clothing for one person. However, no matter how rich they are, people don't like to eat even a mouthful of food themselves, or to clothe their backs. Not caring at all about wrong actions, suffering or criticism, they risk their present lives, and throw the future to the winds. For the smallest amount of property, they forget about all embarrassment and shame, prudence and forethought, Dharma and their samaya commitments.

They pass their time seeking food, profit and gain, like spirits looking for tormas, and waste their entire human lives without experiencing a single day of freedom, leisure or happiness. In the end, after gathering so much wealth, they may pay with their lives, being stabbed to death for their money. All that they gained during a lifetime is then enjoyed by their enemies and others. It is simply squandered. The heap of wrongdoing as large as Mt. Meru that they amassed in gaining riches is theirs alone, however. They have the fortune of wandering endlessly through the unbearable depths of the lower realms. Right now use whatever small wealth you control in this life to store up good provisions for future lives. Be satisfied with little food, and clothing that just protects against the wind.

People who strive only for this life are called "childish friends." Even if you help them, they are ungrateful and may harm you in return. Whatever you do for them is never acceptable; they are difficult to please. If you have more than they do, they are jealous; if you have less, they despise you. As much as you befriend them, that much will your negative actions grow and your virtue become obscured. Stay far away from them.

Engaging in business, agriculture, manufacturing, and academic pursuits keeps you very busy with a lot of distracting work. It leads you astray. You are always working for minor purposes, and no matter how much effort you expend, there is no meaning to it. Both overcoming enemies and protecting those close to you are endless tasks.

Reject all these never-ending activities and distractions like spit in the dust. Turn your back on your fatherland, and adopt another country. Dwell at the base of a rockface with wild animals for companions. Settle mind and body at ease. Give up concern with food, clothing and conversation. Carry out your human life in an empty place where there are no people. So it is taught.

Jetsun Milarepa sang:

*In a rocky cave in a land without people
My sadness never ends.
Lama, Buddha of the three times,
Always do I yearn for you.*

By acting as he taught, you will find that, as people say, “In places of melancholy, concentration arises.” Disillusionment with samsara and the determination to renounce it, faith and pure perception, concentration and meditative absorption: all the qualities of the path arise on their own. Strive to live like that however you can.

Because of this, secluded forests are the places where the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the past discovered the peace of nirvana. There is nothing to be busy with, no distraction, no trade or agriculture. One is free of childish companions. Birds and wild animals are pleasant company. Water and leaves are suitable food for ascetic practice.

Awareness becomes naturally clear and concentration increases spontaneously. With neither enemies nor friends, you are liberated from the trap of attachment and hostility. Such places have very many good qualities.

In the past most buddhas and bodhisattvas attained the level of peace, nirvana and perfect buddhahood in solitary places. Later, many other people visit and gather there. Yangleshod in Parphing, Nepal,¹⁶ is where Guru Rinpoche attained the level of Mahamudra, achieving supreme accomplishment with the support of the mandala of Yangdag Heruka¹⁷ and Vajrakilaya. Many historical texts describe this event. At that time, this was an empty area, where Guru Rinpoche practiced in retreat. In such a solitary place, there is no worldly commotion, or other negative circumstances to concentration. Patrul Rinpoche continues:

Not needing to mention the benefits of actually going to live in solitary retreat, in the “Moon Lamp Sutra” and other sutras, Lord Buddha has said that having the intention to go live in solitude and taking seven steps in that direction is more beneficial than making offerings to all the buddhas of the ten directions for as many eons as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River. It is also said:

*In the supreme place of solitary mountain retreat
All one's behavior is virtuous.*

16 The place where these teachings were given.

17 Vishuddha Heruka. One of the Eight Sadhana Teachings. The wrathful deity of vajra mind.

When living in solitude, all of the actions of your body, speech and mind will be virtuous. Nonvirtue such as attachment, hatred or ignorance will not arise. Not to speak of the effects of endeavoring in virtue, even without effort thoughts of renunciation and the defects of samsara will come repeatedly into your mind. You will experience disillusionment with worldly life. Love, compassion and all the qualities of the path will arise spontaneously. All of your behavior will be nothing but virtuous.

Attachment, hatred and all the negative emotions that you cannot prevent even though you try in places full of commotion and distraction will decrease on their own simply because of being in a solitary place.

When you meet someone you dislike, you cannot control your anger even if you want to. Likewise, you automatically feel attachment when meeting your spouse, family and friends. You cannot avoid these disturbing emotions of anger and attachment, although you try to do so. In a place of solitude, however, you do not encounter these causes of attachment and anger, even if you wanted these emotions to arise. Developing all the qualities of the path comes easily.

These are the preliminary teachings on concentration, and are extremely important. There is no way to do without them.

If you are not practicing concentration it may not matter, but if you do want to practice concentration, with your body you should avoid busy places, and with your mind, you should avoid distraction. Live in a solitary place without other people.

Classifications of concentration

There are three kinds of concentration: the concentration practiced by childish beings, the concentration that investigates the meaning, and the excellent concentration of the Tathagatas.

Concentration practiced by childish beings

Ordinary beings practice the concentration of calm abiding, and as a result they naturally have experiences of bliss, clarity, and nonthought. When such experiences arise, childish beings become attached to them, and remain in the state of calm abiding. Non-Buddhist religions also practice this type of meditation. Meditation with attachment to these three experiences is the concentration of childish beings.

Concentration that investigates the meaning (don rab byed)

Being free from attachment to these meditative experiences, and no longer savoring the taste of concentration, but still clinging somewhat to emptiness as an antidote is called meditation that investigates the meaning.

“Investigating” refers to the aspect of emptiness, the nature of reality. Analyzing this in detail in meditation is the concentration that investigates the meaning. At this time there is no attachment to the experiences of bliss, clarity and nonthought. Emptiness is the antidote to this attachment, but some clinging to emptiness remains.

We must develop authentic calm abiding and insight that is free from attachment to the experiences of bliss, clarity and nonthought, and also free from clinging to emptiness.

Excellent concentration of the Tathagathas

When there is freedom from taking emptiness as an antidote, and concept-free concentration on the nature of reality, that is called the excellent concentration of the Tathagathas.

The power of remaining one-pointedly in concept-free concentration on the nature of reality leads to attaining the level of final buddhahood. This is the authentic union of calm abiding and insight.

At all times when practicing meditative concentration, the key point of body is the “seven point posture of Vairocana,” and the key point of the eyes is maintaining the appropriate gaze. This is important.

The seven points of posture are: legs crossed in the vajra posture, hands in the gesture of meditative equipoise, spine straight like a stack of golden coins, neck slightly bent forward, shoulders well apart, eyes focused on the tip of the nose, breath coming slowly through the mouth and teeth. These are the important aspects of the body. As for the eyes, you can look at your nose or straight into space. The spine must be straight. The reason is the following:

*When the body is straight, the channels are straight;
When the channels are straight, the wind energies are straight;
When the energies are straight, the mind is straight.*

The support for the channels is the body; the support for the wind energy is the channels, the support for the mind is the wind energy. When the wind remains calm, all thoughts of the mind will automatically calm

down.

Whenever you are engaged in meditative concentration, you must remain in the seven-point posture. You cannot practice concentration while lying down, leaning back with support and so on. You must sit upright.

Your mind must be free from thought. This means your thoughts must be calmed down. You must rest in equanimity in a state without grasping at anything. If there is an object there will be grasping. When you are remaining one-pointedly in the nature of reality, there is not any object or phenomena on which to focus. Abiding in the nature of reality, we cannot define the essence of this nature in any particular way.

Remaining in the state of non-grasping is the essence of transcendent concentration. This is not simply the state of calm abiding, but is the union of calm abiding and insight. Mind not thinking of anything is the aspect of calm abiding. Abiding in the state of non-grasping is the aspect of insight. This union of calm abiding and insight can be called the concentration of the Tathagatas. This is the concentration we must develop.

Transcendent wisdom

Transcendent wisdom has three categories: wisdom that comes through hearing, wisdom that comes through reflection, and wisdom that comes through meditation.

Wisdom (*shes rab*) is the most superior kind of all understanding and learning. It is the understanding that realizes the actual way that phenomena abide. This wisdom is first developed through hearing and study. We receive the teachings – especially from our supreme gurus – and in this way arouse in our minds what is called the wisdom of hearing. Reflecting again and again on the meaning of what we heard, we gain greater understanding than before. This is the wisdom that comes from reflection, and it is greater than the wisdom of hearing. Meditation brings more experience than hearing and reflecting. Wisdom that can be gained only through meditative experience is called the wisdom of meditation. This wisdom requires actual experience and does not come simply from hearing and reflection alone.

Each of these wisdoms is based on the previous one. Without the wisdom that comes through hearing and reflecting, the wisdom that comes through meditation cannot arise. The cause for the wisdom of meditation is the wisdom of hearing and reflecting. The cause for the wisdom of reflecting is the wisdom of hearing. The wisdom of reflection results from the wisdom of hearing, and the wisdom of meditation results from the wisdom of

reflecting.

As it is said, "Meditation without learning is like climbing a rock mountain without hands." Someone who has not studied the Dharma texts will have nothing to meditate upon because he does not understand the meaning of Dharma, just as someone without hands cannot climb a rock.

Even with the wisdom of hearing and reflection, lacking meditation experience is like a scholar who has the flower of the words, but does not obtain any fruit. When the wisdom gained through hearing and reflection remains as mere words, there is no benefit, and the true meaning will not arise in your mind. These wisdoms must be connected with one another.

Wisdom through hearing

The teacher explains the general and ultimate meaning of each word of the Dharma being taught, and we listen to the explanations and understand as he or she is speaking. Understanding the meaning of the words is the wisdom through hearing.

Wisdom through reflection

Merely listening to what the teacher has taught and understanding it brings no benefit to our mindstreams. We must repeatedly reflect on the teachings that we have heard and understood. We must mentally review the teachings and clearly establish the meaning through reflection, examination, and analysis. This brings out more meaning than simply listening. If there is something we do not understand, we should ask either the guru or a spiritual friend.

Do not be satisfied with merely thinking that you know or understand. Critically examine and make certain that when you are practicing alone in retreat you will not need to ask anyone about the key points of practice.

At the time of study and reflection, we must rely on a teacher, a spiritual friend. Without a teacher, we cannot study and reflect. We rely on the teacher until we gain full confidence that we will be able to meditate alone, with no doubts. Otherwise, when alone in retreat with no teacher to consult, we might experience a lot of doubt and find many questions coming up. Our practice will not be fully qualified.

In retreat, we begin with the preliminary practices of purification and accumulation. These are not easy practices. The practice of the external

preliminaries should arouse our feelings of renunciation and disillusionment with the world. This requires reflecting again and again on the difficulties of obtaining a precious human life, the impermanence of life, the defects of samsara, cause and effect, and many other topics. Otherwise the feelings of disenchantment and determination to free ourselves from samsara may not arise. Authentic practice of the external preliminaries requires a qualified guru.

The same is true for the extraordinary internal preliminary practices of taking refuge and arousing bodhicitta. These must be practiced properly. In the practice of refuge, you must understand the objects of refuge, their essence, and the refuge precepts. Merely reciting the prayer of refuge is not authentic practice. You must rely on the wisdom of hearing and reflection.

Likewise, arousing bodhicitta in our minds requires mind training. In particular, you must train in the four boundless qualities, equalizing yourself and others, exchanging yourself with others, and holding others as more important than yourself. We must train our minds initially by understanding the meaning of each point. How can we train our minds if we do not understand these teachings? Lacking mind training on the causes of bodhicitta, bodhicitta will never be aroused in our mind. Merely being able to recite the bodhicitta prayer does not qualify as the practice of arousing bodhicitta.

Later there is the time of purification, accumulating merit, practicing guru yoga. In each case you must understand what to adopt, what to avoid, and the actual mode of practice. If you practice strictly in accordance with the teachings, the practice will become qualified and authentic. The same is true when practicing the Three Roots. They must be practiced perfectly, along with the development and completion stages. Merely reading the ritual texts and following the instructions, beating drums and ringing bells, completing the number of mantra recitations, never qualifies as the practice of the Three Roots. Supreme and ordinary accomplishments will not develop from such practice.

Many things must be learned before entering retreat. If you think that you can learn all these practices during the retreat, you will not have time. All the mind training and learning must be completed in advance. By coming to understand the meaning before the retreat, then after the retreat you might – at best – achieve the supreme accomplishment. If not, you will receive ordinary accomplishment. And even if this does not result, your mind will be better than before you entered retreat. You should find your

hatred, attachment and ignorance reduced. If this does not happen, then the retreat is just a waste of time, bringing no benefit.

Never underestimate learning and reflection. Even if you cannot study many texts on logic, abhidharma, astrology, and other topics, you must at least learn the main points of the practice you are going to undertake.

Wisdom through meditation

Putting into practice what you have understood, the unmistakable realization of the natural state develops in your mindstream through your meditation. You arrive at certainty from within. Freed from being bound by “It is” and “It is not,” you see the face of the natural state.

When working with the wisdom of hearing and reflecting, we gain some confidence in the meaning of the natural state, the true nature of our own mind, the essence of mind. Practicing meditation, actual realization becomes much stronger. It is like the difference between trying to ascertain the shape and size of a particular form with our eyes closed and actually opening the eyes and seeing the form.

While engaged in hearing and reflecting, we are learning about the meaning of the natural state, without having any actual experience. When meditating we experience the nature of mind nakedly. After this actual experience, we gain such confidence that even hundreds of scholars and thousands of accomplished masters cannot teach us anything more. Confidence beyond any doubt arises from within. This special wisdom that comes through experience is called the wisdom through meditation.

First, through hearing and reflection you cut through doubts. Then, when practicing meditation, you see everything as insubstantial empty form, like the eight examples of illusion.

The outer objects manifesting to the five senses do not exist, but appear through delusion, as in a dream.

You must not internally feel that form, sound, smell and so on truly exist, while meditating on the thought that they do not, and that everything is like a dream or magic. That will be just deceiving yourself. You will have no actual confidence in the dream-like nature of appearances.

By studying teachings like the “Five Great Axioms of Madhyamaka,” which explain the nature of appearances, you must first come to the internal understanding that form and sound and the other sense appearances do

not actually exist. This confidence can be based on a conclusion reached through intellectual analysis. When examined intellectually, you cannot find any true existence in the objects of the five senses. The meditation on appearances as dreams and so on then becomes meaningful. You will begin to experience appearances as dreams and so on.

From the temporary gathering of causes, conditions and connections, different things appear, as in a magic show.

Things appear to exist while not existing, as with an optical illusion.

Things appear while lacking true existence, as in a mirage.

Without existing anywhere, either outside or inside, things can be perceived, as with an echo.

There is neither a support, nor anything supported, as in a city of gandharvas.¹⁸

Things appear while having no reality of their own, like the appearance of a reflection.

While nonexistent, appearances can arise as anything, as in a magically created city.

We cannot deny the appearance of external phenomena, but the problem is that we consider them as truly existent. Once we meditate on this, we experience that they appear without having true existence, like an apparition, or yesterday's dream.

You understand that the objects that appear are by nature false. Likewise, when investigating the intrinsic nature of the perceiving subject, the mind, objects do not stop appearing, but the thoughts that grasp on to them as objectively real relax.

The outer experiences of form, sound and so on are perceived by mind, the subject. If you look outwardly to these appearances, they do not truly exist. They are like dreams and magic. If you look inwardly at the nature of your mind, the outward appearances do not cease as they do for the blind or deaf, but appear clearly. However, there is no fixation on them. This lack of fixation is not due to the appearances ceasing, but is because you realize there is no object of form or sound on which to fixate. You realize that they only appear but do not exist in themselves, so there is no object of fixation arising.

To settle into the realization of the nature of reality, empty and clear

18 Gandharvas are spirits who live on scents.

like the sky, is transcendent wisdom.

If you have the pointing out instruction to the main part of the practice, when you look inwardly to your mind, you cannot find it, or define it as this or that. You will gain an inner confidence that from the beginning, its nature is emptiness and it is free from elaboration. There will be no fixation at all. With no fixation or clinging, there is no distraction. This is not like fainting or a state of sleep. You experience your own nature of mind nakedly, like a mute tasting sugar. You cannot express its nature. If you have experienced this, it is the authentic transcendent wisdom.

Conclusion to Transcendent Perfections

When describing the six transcendent perfections in detail, each is divided into three, making eighteen sections in total. The category of material generosity has three sections – ordinary giving, great giving, and extremely great giving – making twenty sections altogether.

In addition, there are transcendent means, making twenty-one; transcendent strength, making twenty-two; transcendent aspiration, making twenty-three; and transcendent primal wisdom, making twenty-four.

These four are all the internal classifications of transcendent wisdom. They can all be condensed into transcendent wisdom.

Going into more detail, each of the six transcendent perfections can be divided into six, making thirty-six sections. For example, transcendent generosity can be classified as follows: the generosity of generosity, the generosity of discipline, the generosity of patience, the generosity of diligence, the generosity of concentration, and the generosity of wisdom. The same kind of classification can be made for transcendent discipline: the discipline of generosity, the discipline of discipline and so on. We can see an example of this by examining the section on giving Dharma in transcendent generosity.

When the three factors of the teacher who teaches, the Dharma that is taught, and the student to whom it is taught come together, this Dharma teaching is transcendent generosity.

At the time of teaching, to have no desire for material gain or respect, and to not be stained by self-glorification, criticism of others, or any other negative emotion is transcendent discipline.

Repeating the meaning of individual words and phrases many times,

ignoring all hardship and fatigue is transcendent patience.

Teaching at the proper time without being affected by laziness or procrastination is transcendent diligence.

Not letting the mind become distracted from the words and meaning of whatever is being taught, avoiding mistakes, and not adding or omitting anything is transcendent concentration.

Embracing the teaching with the wisdom that is free of the concepts of the three spheres of subject, object and action is transcendent wisdom.

All six perfections are thus complete.

As an example, take the giving of material things, such as providing food and drink to a beggar. When the gift, the giver and the recipient come together, this is generosity. Not giving low quality or spoiled things, but food and drink that you would consume yourself, is discipline. Not becoming angry, even when asked for something again and again, is patience. Not thinking it is difficult or tiring, but giving things without delay, is diligence. Not being distracted by other thoughts is concentration. Recognizing that the three spheres of subject, object and action have no real existence is wisdom. Thus, all of the six transcendent perfections are included. Discipline and the other perfections can be treated in the same way.

Summarizing the six transcendent perfections, Jetsun Milarepa said:

*Perfectly abandon clinging to a self;
Generosity is nothing other than this.
Perfectly abandon deceit and hypocrisy;
Discipline is nothing other than this.
Perfectly abandon fear of the true meaning;
Patience is nothing other than this.
Perfectly remain inseparable from practice;
Diligence is nothing other than this.
Perfectly abide in the natural flow;
Concentration is nothing other than this.
Perfectly realize the natural state;
Wisdom is nothing other than this.
Perfectly do everything according to Dharma;
Skillful means are nothing other than this.
Perfectly defeat the four demons;¹⁹*

*Strength is nothing other than this.
 Perfectly accomplish the two benefits;
 Aspiration is nothing other than this.
 Recognize the source of negative emotions;
 Primordial wisdom is nothing other than this.*

Jetsun Milarepa explains the meaning of all ten transcendent paramitas as we practice them mentally. Transcendent generosity means avoiding fixating on a self and miserliness. There is no generosity other than this. Actually practicing true generosity is having a mind totally free from attachment to the idea of a self. Fixation on a self is the opposite of generosity, and no matter how much material giving you may engage in, this will not become true generosity.

Transcendent discipline is totally avoiding deceit. The Tibetan word *gyo sgyu*, deceit, has two parts. *Gyo* means hiding one's own faults. *Sgyu* means pretending to have qualities you do not possess. Avoiding this kind of deceit through a sense of modesty will lead to a straightforward and truthful mind, and is the mental practice of transcendent discipline. Transcendent discipline never remains in a deceitful mindstream. Deceit and transcendent discipline contradict each other. There is no practice of transcendent discipline other than abandoning deceit.

Transcendent patience is not fearing the true meaning. This refers to not fearing the truth of nature of reality, and having a mental capability to bear this truth. For the lower vehicles, the main practice is not holding to the existence of an individual self. The greater vehicle recognizes the non-existence of the self of phenomena. The truth of the final vehicle of Dzogpa Chenpo is the rigpa awareness of Trekchod. When there is no fear of these truths of the nature of reality, the practice of transcendent patience is complete.

Transcendent diligence means practicing the Dharma without moving from the practice, always remaining in the practice. There is no other diligence than this.

Transcendent concentration means remaining one-pointedly, without demon of the aggregates refers to the psychophysical constituents that together give rise to the impression of an individual self. The demon of defilements refers to the afflictive emotions. The demon of death refers not only to death itself but to the momentary transience of all phenomena. The child-of-the-gods demon refers to distraction and mental wandering." From "White Lotus," Shambhala Publications, 2007 (p 105, footnote 107).

moving from the object of whatever practice is being done, whether it is development stage or completion stage, or whether one is practicing compassion, bodhicitta, or anything else.

Transcendent wisdom is to realize the true nature of phenomenal existence. The truth of the nature of reality and the true nature of phenomenal existence are the same. In discussing patience, the key point is not fearing the truth of the nature of reality. Transcendent wisdom goes beyond not fearing this true nature, and means that the nature itself should be aroused and realized within our minds. Realizing the nature of reality is called transcendent wisdom.

When we classify transcendent wisdom further, we have four additional transcendent qualities: transcendent means, transcendent strength, transcendent aspiration, and transcendent primal wisdom. Among these, transcendent means refers to all actions of body, speech and mind being done in accordance with the Dharma or in order to benefit other beings. There is no other transcendent means other than this.

From the very beginning, we have four demons in our mindstream. These demons prevent us from attaining the level of omniscience, or perfect buddhahood, and to decrease their power we need to perfect transcendent strength. When we have fully developed this strength in our mindstreams, we can completely defeat these negative forces.

Transcendent aspiration refers to completing the benefit for oneself and the benefit for others automatically.

Transcendent primordial wisdom is recognizing the source of negative emotions. We think that the negative emotions are true, and that they have control over us. In reality these emotions do not exist at all, but beings believe in their existence and are thus controlled by them. We must realize that these negative emotions have never been established as real. They are untrue, deceiving. The particular teaching of Secret Mantrayana is that the nature of the negative emotions is primordially the five wisdoms. There is no other transcendent wisdom than realizing this.

When Atisa's main disciples Khu, Ngog and Drom asked him what were the best of all the elements of the path, Atisa replied:

The best scholar is one who has realized the meaning of the nonexistence of the self.

The best of those with novice vows are those who have tamed their own minds.

The best novice monks and nuns are those who avoid any infractions of their vows, even small ones. This requires that their mindstreams must be completely tamed.

The best quality is the great intention to benefit others.

The great intention to benefit others is bodhicitta. In our practice of bodhicitta, we intend to benefit others by enabling them to attain the highest level of perfect buddhahood.

The best oral instruction is to always watch the mind.

The guru's instruction gives us the method to tame our mindstream. The main focus of this instruction concerns mind, not body or speech. We should always watch our minds, and not come under the control of negative emotions and karma, the results of past actions. In the best case, we should observe that the nature of mind is primordial wisdom awareness (*rigpa yeshes*). At the very least we should not be controlled by negative emotions and karma.

The best antidote is to know that nothing has any inherent existence.

“Nothing has any inherent existence” refers to the aspect of emptiness. If emptiness is realized, no further antidote of anything to avoid is needed.

The best way of acting is one that does not accord with the worldly.

This is acting in a manner that does not match worldly thinking. Worldly people are distracted by the eight worldly concerns, and work at defeating rivals, supporting those close to them, engaging in business and agriculture, deceiving and cheating others, and so on. The supreme behavior is contrary to these kinds of worldly attitudes.

The best accomplishment is a steady decrease of negative emotions.

The sign of achieving accomplishment is to gradually reduce our five negative emotions.

The best sign of attainment is a steady decrease of desire.

Decreasing attachment towards the desirable qualities of forms, sounds and so on is the best sign of attainment. “Attainment” means observable signs within body, speech and mind that result from practicing Dharma. In this context, even flying in the sky or passing through solid matter is not a sign of attainment. The actual sign of attainment is decreasing our desires.

The best generosity is to have no attachment.

If we have no attachment toward desirable objects, that is the supreme generosity.

The best discipline is to pacify the mind.

This means our mind should not be stained by negative emotions.

The best patience is to keep a humble position.

This does not mean taking the lowest seat. This means avoiding pride, not thinking that you are accomplished and wise. Such thoughts are pride. Humility means thinking that you do not have great qualities and accomplishment, that you are not learned and so on. Thinking that you have the least qualities is taking a humble position. People who think like this do not have any pride. Patience comes from avoiding pride.

The best diligence is to give up activities.

This refers to diligence in practicing virtuous actions only, and always maintaining the thought that takes joy in virtue.

The best concentration is not to modify the mind.

Concentration means having your mind remain single-pointedly, with all thoughts calmed down. If you are creating things in your mind, your thoughts will arise, and will not subside. If you keep your mind as it is, with no fabrication, all thoughts will automatically calm down themselves.

The best wisdom is not to take anything at all as being real.

This means not keeping a focus on the three spheres of subject, object, and action; or on subject and object; and having no fixation on anything. In this way, all fixation is pacified by itself, and no object of fixation is ever established. All fixation should be pacified by understanding the unborn nature of reality. Stopping the thoughts through other means is not the supreme wisdom.

Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa says:

In contentment does transcendent generosity rest;

Its essence is an attitude of giving.

Causing yourself no shame before the Three Jewels is discipline.

Faultless mindful awareness is supreme patience.

As a support to all the other perfections, diligence is required.

*Experiencing the appearances you cling to as deities is
concentration.*

*The self-liberation of grasping and clinging is wisdom;
In this is neither thought nor thinker.*

It is not ordinary, and is free from fixed beliefs.

Beyond suffering, it is supreme peace.

Do not tell this to everyone.

Keep it sacred in your mind.

Summarizing the entire vast path of the bodhisattva teachings, including the six transcendent perfections, it could all be condensed as “emptiness with compassion as its essence.”

The essence of compassion abides within emptiness. When we realize true emptiness, compassion arises automatically and no separate meditation on compassion is needed. All practices of the bodhisattva can thus be condensed into the realization of emptiness, which itself contains compassion.

Saraha says in his dohas:²⁰

*Without compassion, the view of emptiness
Will never lead to the supreme path.*

*Yet if you meditate on compassion alone,
You remain within samsara; so how can you be free?*

Without realizing emptiness, meditating only on boundless compassion with a fixating mind brings no achievement of liberation at all. Realization is the main factor for being freed from samsara.

*One who comes to possess both of these
Will remain neither in samsara nor nirvana.*

Someone who has realized emptiness, the essence of which is compassion, does not remain either in samsara or nirvana. Through realizing emptiness, he will not remain in samsara; through the power of compassion, he will not remain in the peace of nirvana. He will not remain within these two limits, but will attain the essence of the liberation of the Great Vehicle.

Abiding neither in samsara nor nirvana is the “non-abiding nirvana” of the level of total buddhahood. Lord Nagarjuna has said:

Emptiness with compassion as its essence

20 Songs of realization.

Is only for those who strive for enlightenment.

This means that emptiness with compassion as its essence is practiced only by Great Vehicle practitioners, not by all.

One time Drom Tonpa asked Jowo Atisa, “Of all teachings, which is the ultimate?”

Atisa replied, “The ultimate of all teachings is emptiness with compassion as its essence. It is like a very powerful medicine that acts as an antidote for all diseases. As in this example, realizing the truth of emptiness, the nature of reality, serves as the antidote to all disturbing emotions.”

“Well then,” continued Dron Tonpa, “why have people who say they’ve realized emptiness failed to reduce their attachment and hatred?”

Some people claim to have realized emptiness, or even more, to have realized the rigpa awareness of Dzogchen, but they still have strong attachment and anger. It may not increase, but it is also not decreasing. This is not correct. The antidote to attachment and anger, and the realization of emptiness are not separate. When emptiness and rigpa awareness are realized, attachment and anger should decline.

Atisa replied, “They are speaking empty words. If they genuinely understood the true meaning of emptiness, their body, speech and mind would be as soft as walking on cotton wool or as tsampa soup full of butter.”

What Jowo Atisa said was they had only understood emptiness, or rigpa awareness through words. They claimed to be accomplished ones, but had not actually realized these things and were not accomplished masters. When emptiness is actually realized, thoughts, words and actions become as soft as cotton wool, peaceful and gentle, and are not stained or controlled by karma and negative emotion. Atisa continued:

“Master Aryadeva said that even giving rise to doubt about whether or not the true nature of all things was empty would reduce samsara to tatters.”

What Aryadeva taught was:

Those with less merit

Do not even consider the possibility of Dharma (emptiness).

If they do have some uncertainty

Samsara will fall apart.

Clearly, for those who have realized emptiness, their attachment, anger and other disturbing emotions will be cut from the root. The unfortunate ones with less merit, those who are not ready for the practice of the Great Vehicle, do not even think about whether phenomena are empty or not. However, even without realizing emptiness, someone could have doubts about whether it might be true. Knowing that earlier learned and accomplished lamas explained that all phenomena are empty, they wonder whether this is the case. Due to the power of this doubt, they are about to escape from samsara, like worn out clothes easily tear. Their negative emotions lose their strength and are ready to collapse. Atisa concluded:

“The unmistakable realization of emptiness, therefore, is the most powerful medicine and includes all the teachings of the path.”

All the teachings of the path of the Great Vehicle are included in this realization of emptiness: compassion, love, bodhicitta, and the six transcendent perfections.

Drom Tonpa asked, “How can the realization of emptiness include all the teachings of the path?”

Lord Atisa replied, “All the teachings of the path are included in the six transcendent perfections. When you have an unmistakable realization of emptiness, you have no desire, grasping or attachment to anything, inner or outer, so your transcendent generosity is unbroken. As you are free from grasping and attachment, you are not stained by nonvirtue, so your transcendent discipline is unbroken. Having none of the anger that comes from concepts of “me” and “mine,” your transcendent patience is unbroken. Since realizing the meaning of emptiness brings true joy to the mind, your transcendent diligence is unbroken. Free from the distraction of grasping at things as solid, your transcendent concentration is unbroken. Free from conceptualizing anything in terms of the three spheres of subject, object and action, your transcendent wisdom is unbroken.”

When emptiness is realized, fixation on the three spheres falls apart. The subject is the one who carries out the action, and the object is the recipient of the action. When there is no fixation on subject, object, and action, this is called being beyond the concepts of the three spheres, and is transcendent wisdom.

Again, Drom Tonpa asked, “Are those who have realized the truth buddhas simply through the view of emptiness and meditation?”

Atisa answered, “Among all forms and sounds, there are none that do not arise from the mind. Realizing that the mind is awareness inseparable from emptiness is the view.”

The realization of the union of the clarity of the mind and the expanse of emptiness is the view. When the lama is pointing out the rigpa awareness of Trekchod, one tradition points out that the root of all external appearances of forms, sounds and so on, is the mind. We think that the mind exists, but in reality we cannot establish or find the mind. The mind is primordially unborn, the basic sphere of reality, beyond all limits and elaboration. The mind is pointed out as the natural sphere of emptiness. Nakedly experiencing this natural sphere of emptiness is called rigpa awareness. What one becomes aware of is the nature of mind, the sphere of reality, with confidence developed from within.

“Never being distracted from this realization, and always keeping it in mind is the meditation.”

What the lama points out is the view, and the meditation is to keep this view in mind at all times without distraction. Remaining in this practice, the recognition that external appearances are like dreams and illusions will automatically arise in the mind. Dreams and illusions have no essence. Their nature is emptiness. As you remain in the view and meditation, you experience that the internal mind and external objects are all primordially unborn. They are the great equality of the innate nature. You gain experience and confidence in this that is as certain as seeing things with your own eyes.

During the time of post meditation, you perceive all external appearances – forms, sound and so on – as like dreams and illusions. You never feel there is a difference between external experiences and dreams.

“Gathering the two accumulations as a magical illusion while within that state is the action.”

The accumulation of wisdom comes through remaining in meditative equipoise. In post meditation, the accumulation of merit is carried out as magical illusion. “Action” or behavior refers to post meditation. Lord Atisa concluded:

“By following through with this practice, it will continue in your dreams. If it arises in dreams, it will come at the moment of death. And if it arises at the moment of death, it will come in the intermediate state. If it arises in the intermediate state you are certain of attaining supreme accomplishment.”

As you continue with this practice during the daytime, you will have the same experience in your dreams. If this experience occurs at the moment of death, the mind is liberated in the Dharmakaya. If you are not liberated in the Dharmakaya at the time of death, you can be liberated in the Sambhogakaya when the appearances of the intermediate state arise. Patrul Rinpoche says that this brings about supreme accomplishment.

All of the eighty-four thousand entrances to the Dharma taught by the Victorious One are skillful means to arouse bodhicitta – emptiness with compassion as its essence – within our mindstreams. If they lack bodhicitta, no matter how profound the teachings on view and meditation seem to be, they will not help at all in achieving perfect buddhahood.

Secret Mantrayana practices such as development stage and completion stage can lead to the attainment of perfect buddhahood in one lifetime when embraced by bodhicitta, but if they are not connected with bodhicitta they are no different from the path of the heretics. Heretics also have practices of meditating on deities, reciting mantras, and training the channels and wind energies. They too engage in adopting and avoiding different behavior in accordance with the law of cause and effect. But because they do not take refuge or generate bodhicitta they cannot be liberated from the realms of samsara.

Geshe Kharak Gomchung has taught:

Even if you take all the vows, from those of refuge up to the vows of the Mantrayana, this will not help if you do not turn your mind away from worldly things.

Even if you continually teach the Dharma to others, this will not help if you do not pacify your own pride.

Even if you make progress, this will not help if your practice of taking refuge slips away.

Even if you endeavor in virtue day and night, this will not help if your practice is not embraced by bodhicitta.

Refuge is the foundation of the path, and arousing bodhicitta is the essence of the path of the Great Vehicle. On this basis we practice Sutra and Mantra, development stage and completion stage, Trekchod and Tegal. Patrul Rinpoche continues:

Without establishing the proper foundation of taking refuge and

arousing bodhicitta, no matter how extensive your learning the Dharma, contemplating and meditating upon it, this will be like constructing a nine-story building on thick ice in the wintertime, and plastering and painting it. In the end it will be totally meaningless.

Do not belittle the two practices of taking refuge and arousing bodhicitta, thinking they are inferior or just for beginners. You must fully perfect them within the framework of preparation, main part and conclusion that are part of all paths. Everyone – good or bad, high or low – must train in just these with special efforts.

In particular, lamas and monks who accept offerings from those with faith, who take donations for the sake of the dead, or who perform rituals to guide the dead onward, must have uncontrived bodhicitta in their mindstreams. This cannot be done without. If they do not have bodhicitta, their rituals, purification ceremonies and so on will be of no use, either to the living or the dead. Despite the appearance of benefitting others, ultimately this is mixed with selfish desire. Personally, they will be defiled by wrongfully using religious funds and will develop inexhaustible faults that inevitably lead to the lower realms in future lives.

Someone might be able to fly through the sky like a bird, burrow in the earth like a mouse, pass freely through rocks, have unobstructed clairvoyance, leave hand prints and foot prints on rocks and perform uncountable other miracles, but even so if such a person does not have bodhicitta within him, he must be either a heretic or possessed by a powerful demon. There is no other possibility. At first some people could be attracted by blind faith, and out of devotion make offerings, but in the end both he and they will be ruined.

In contrast, someone who possesses perfectly pure bodhicitta in his mindstream can benefit whomever he has a connection with, even if he does not have a single other quality.

Moreover, we cannot know where the bodhisattvas are. It is taught that, through the use of their skillful methods, many bodhisattvas are found among butchers, sex workers and the like. Knowing whether another person has bodhicitta within him or not is difficult. Lord Buddha has said, “Except for myself and those like me, no ordinary person can judge another.”

Thus, perceive as an actual buddha whoever arouses bodhicitta in your mindstream, whether this is a deity, a lama, a spiritual friend or anyone else.

When you feel that qualities indicating progress on the path have risen within you – qualities such as realizing the natural state, having clairvoyance, attaining meditative stabilization, seeing the face of the yidam deity and so on – you can determine that these are true qualities if because of them the unchanging love and compassion of bodhicitta are progressively increasing. But if as a result the love and compassion of bodhicitta are obscured, these apparent qualities of the path are without doubt either obstacles caused by a demon or the sign of taking a wrong path.

Specifically, when the unfabricated realization of the natural state is born within you, it is impossible not to experience extraordinary faith and pure perception toward those more accomplished than yourself, and extraordinary love and compassion toward those who are less so.

The unrivalled Dagpo Rinpoche once asked Jetsun Milarepa, “When should I begin to train disciples?”

The Jetsun answered, “Someday, you will see the essence of your mind extremely clearly, unlike how you see it now, and free from all doubts. At that time, in an extraordinary way, you will perceive me, your old father, as an actual Buddha, and you will definitely experience unfabricated love and compassion toward sentient beings. That is when to begin training others.”

Therefore, with the love and compassion of bodhicitta as the basis, you must engage in Dharma study, contemplation and meditation without separating them from each other. If you do not first cut through uncertainty through study, you cannot practice. As it is said:

*Meditation without study
Is like rock climbing without arms.*

Eliminating uncertainty through learning does not mean you must know all the vast and innumerable topics of study. This is not possible in the short lifetimes of this degenerate age. But for whatever practices you are going to undertake you must unmistakably know the proper way to do so in all aspects of the beginning, middle and end. Through contemplation on those teachings, you should clarify all doubts.

When Lord Atisa was at Nyethang, Shang Nachung Tonpa, Kyung Tonpa, and Lhangtsang Tonpa asked him about the systems of logic.

Atisa said, “The non-Buddhist heretics and the Buddhists both have many systems. They are all strings of conceptual thoughts. These concepts are uncountable, and are not necessary. Since one’s lifetime is short, it is time to condense them to the essential meaning.”

Shang Nachung Tonpa asked, “How do we condense them to the essential meaning?”

Master Atisa replied, “Train in the bodhicitta of love and compassion for all sentient beings equal to space. For the benefit of those beings, endeavor in gathering the two accumulations. Dedicate all the roots of future virtue that result from this to the perfect enlightenment of all sentient beings. Understand that all these things are empty by nature, with the characteristics of dreams and illusions.”

Without knowing how to condense any practice to the essential key points, even having a great deal of knowledge, understanding and intelligence will not benefit you at all.

When Lord Atisa went to Tibet, he visited the great translator Rinchen Zangpo. He asked the translator which teachings he knew, naming many, one after another. There were none that he did not know.

Atisa was delighted and said, “Wonderful! Since someone as learned as you is living in Tibet, I didn’t need to come. When sitting on your cushion, how do you practice all these teachings as one?”

Rinchen Zangpo answered, “I practice each one as explained according to its own text.”

Atisa was displeased. “Rotten translator! I did need to come to Tibet!”

“Well then, what should I do?” Rinchen Zangpo asked.

“You must condense all the teachings to a single common essential point and practice like that,” Lord Atisa replied.

It is absolutely necessary to find the essential point of the practice based on your lama’s pith instructions. Once you find it, you must practice. Otherwise it will not help. Jetsun Milarepa taught:

A hungry man is not satisfied by hearing about food. He must eat.

Likewise, just knowing about the Dharma doesn’t help; one must practice.

The purpose of practice is to serve as an antidote to the disturbing emotions and ego-clinging within the mindstream. Jetsun Milarepa also said:

*People say you can know if someone has eaten or not by how red his face is.
Likewise, you can determine if someone knows and practices the Dharma or not by whether or not it is serving as an antidote to his disturbing emotions and ego-clinging.*

In the same way, Putowa asked Geshe Tonpa, "What is the dividing line between what is Dharma and what is not Dharma?"

Geshe Tonpa answered:

*If it serves as an antidote to disturbing emotions, it is Dharma. If it does not, it is not Dharma.
If it does not match with all that is worldly, it is Dharma. If it does match, it is not Dharma.
If it is in accord with the scriptures and instructions, it is Dharma. If it is not in accord with them, it is not Dharma.
If it leaves a positive imprint, it is Dharma. If it leaves a negative imprint, it is not Dharma.*

The master Chegom said:

*Confidence in the cause and effect of action is the perfect view for those with ordinary faculties;
Realizing all inner and outer phenomena to be the union both of appearance and emptiness, and of awareness and emptiness is the perfect view for those with higher faculties;
Realizing the inseparability of the view, the viewer, and the realization is the perfect view for those with the highest faculties.*

*Remaining in one-pointed concentration on the meditation object is the perfect meditation for those with ordinary faculties;
Remaining in concentration on the four unions²¹ is the perfect meditation for those with higher faculties;
A non-conceptual state with no object of meditation, meditator, or meditative experience is the perfect meditation for those with*

21 These are the union of appearance and emptiness, awareness and emptiness, bliss and emptiness, and clarity and emptiness.

the highest faculties.

To be as careful about the cause and effect of actions as one is careful to guard one's eyes is the perfect behavior for those with ordinary faculties;

Acting while experiencing all phenomena as dream-like and illusory is the perfect behavior for those with higher faculties;

Not doing anything is the perfect behavior for those with the highest faculties.

The gradual decrease of ego-clinging, negative emotions, and thoughts is the perfect sign of warmth²² for practitioners with the three types of faculties: ordinary, higher and highest.

In "The Precious Supreme Path," the unequalled Dagpo gave similar teachings.

Thus, when studying the Dharma, you must know how to reach the essential key points.

We have to know how the practices of Sutra and Mantra, the lower and higher vehicles, are combined for a single individual. In explaining this text, the first preliminary practices of the four thoughts that change the mind constitute the path of the lower vehicle, and must be practiced by those engaged in Dzogchen. Mind training is done through the path of the lower vehicle. Next comes the practice of bodhicitta, which is the path of the higher vehicle. After that, we practice the development and completion stages, the highest Mantrayana path. Finally comes the practice of Dzogpa Chenpo, primordially pure Trekchod and spontaneously present Tegal. Through studying, each practitioner should know how to practice all three vehicles in a gradual manner.

The great omniscient Longchenpa teaches:

Things to be known are as many as stars in the sky;

Subjects of study are inexhaustible.

Right now, it is better to grasp the essential meaning of the

Dharmakaya,

The unchanging throne.

When reflecting on the Dharma, you should clear up any uncertainty.

22 An indication that the practice is working, not necessarily physical warmth.

Padampa Sangye says:

Seek out the lama's oral instructions as a mother hawk seeks food.

Listen to the Dharma as a deer listens to sound.

Meditate like a mute experiencing taste.

Contemplate like a northerner shearing sheep.

Reach fruition, like the sun and moon becoming free of clouds.

Studying, reflecting on and meditating on the Dharma should never be separated. From the unequalled Dagpo Rinpoche:

Churning together study, reflection and meditation on the Dharma is an unmistakable key point.

Thus, the fruition of study, reflection and meditation should be the progressive growth of the love and compassion of bodhicitta, and the progressive decline of ego-clinging and disturbing emotions.

This guidance on arousing bodhicitta is the ultimate essence of all Dharma, the core of all paths. It is an indispensable teaching. If you have it, this is definitely enough. If you lack it, other methods will not work. Do not leave it as mere 'understanding' or 'learning.' Practicing this from the depths of the heart is crucial.

Whatever practice of Sutra or Mantra you engage in will be authentic as long as you have bodhicitta. Buddhahood can be achieved by practicing bodhicitta alone. Without bodhicitta, any method is incomplete. Buddhahood can never be attained by practice not embraced by bodhicitta. At the beginning, bodhicitta must be practiced by training, and finally, bodhicitta should arise automatically, without being created.

I boast of arousing bodhicitta, but it has not yet arisen.

I train in the path of the six perfections, but remain self-centered.

May I and small-minded beings like myself

Be blessed to attain the supreme bodhicitta.

You recite the bodhicitta prayer in order to remember what it means to arouse bodhicitta. While reciting, you must always keep bodhicitta in mind. Thinking of your own goals while completing the accumulation of recitations does not qualify as actual bodhicitta practice. Primarily, you have to arouse compassion, and through this bodhicitta will come automatically. If compassion and bodhicitta already automatically arise in your mind, you need not recite the prayer even once. If compassion and bodhicitta do not

arise, even reciting this prayer hundreds of thousands of times is useless.

At the beginning, you mainly train in the four boundless qualities, initially arousing bodhicitta in a fabricated way. Whenever you are accumulating merit, you must do this consciously. Whatever meritorious action you undertake, you should think: “I am accumulating this merit for the benefit of sentient beings as vast as the sky. There is not a single being who has not been my parent in the past. When they were my parents, these beings were extremely kind to me. Temporarily, I wish that they enjoy the happiness of humans and gods, and ultimately that they achieve the state of perfect buddhahood.”

Carry out the main session of this bodhicitta practice on the foundation of this motivation. When the motivation arises habitually and automatically, it need not be artificially created. Eventually, the thought of benefitting others will arise by itself, but until that happens, you must strive with effort to bring it forth.