

**Attitude-Training Like the Rays of the Sun - His Holiness the Fo**

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# Day One: Introductory Discussion

## Setting the Motivation

To differentiate from the non-Buddhists, there is the taking of refuge or safe direction, and to differentiate from the Hinayana path, there is the taking of the Mahayana refuge. We look to the Buddha Shakyamuni as our main example of a source of safe direction. The most kind and compassionate Guru Shakyamuni came to this world 2500 years ago. He enacted the various deeds of an enlightened person and gave full indications of all the methods of Dharma. The many followers of the Buddha put them together and followed the practice of the three higher trainings in ethical discipline, concentration, and discriminating awareness or wisdom. These methods spread widely in India and were brought to Tibet. There, they flourished during an earlier and a later period of translation, so that now we have all the well-preserved teachings of the Buddha and of the upholders of his teachings who followed.

Although it seems I might not have all the qualifications; nevertheless, as a holder of these teachings of the Buddha and because of my wish to benefit people, my awareness of my responsibility sometimes gives me great courage; while at other times I have a feeling of trepidation. But, if I can benefit others, then I try my hardest to practice these teachings and try to give them to others.

This, of course, all depends on the motivation, the reasons for what we do. In my case, although I don't have all the great abilities, I try to approach all this in a down-to-earth and practical manner. Let's take the example of an army. If it is weak, it can't afford to miss an opportunity to attack; whereas if it is very strong, it can stand back and relax and let an opportunity slip by. In the same vein, if we have a lot of expensive material things, we don't have to get upset if we lose something. So here, if we compare ourselves to this example, we have an opportunity. We need to use it.

If we have accumulated a lot of material objects, but don't use them and just hang on to them, we are considering them very important although they are of no benefit. Take, for example, things we have inherited from our parents. If they have no practical use now, we need to let them go. That is the nature of things. Just like the example of hair and nails from our bodies, we don't hang on to them; we just let them go. Similarly, we need to be very practical and look at the situation in the world and the actual situation that confronts us, and accord all our practices and ways of explaining with that. We must not hang on to old customs and outworn ways that have no practical application to the actual situation now. That is pointless.

Going back to taking safe direction, when we do prostration, reciting the verses is the prostration of the speech, and remembering the meaning is the prostration of the mind. If we fold our hands, that is the prostration of the body. I try to follow the tradition of Kuntu Lama Rinpoche and recite verses of prostration and praise to the Buddha Shakyamuni at the beginning of the teachings.

As the guru has tremendous importance, particularly in tantra, when we take safe direction (go for refuge), we first say, "I take safe direction from the gurus," then to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. It is not that there is a fourth source of safe direction. The gurus incorporate all the qualities of the Three Jewels of Refuge.

This is a text for cleansing and training our attitudes (mind-training), called: *Attitude-Training Like the Rays of the Sun*, by an actual direct disciple of Tsongkhapa: Namka-pelzang, sometimes called simply Namkapel. I received these teachings from Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and also from an Amdo Lama. I've received them several times.

Some people have a very coarse and rough attitude, so that even their parents and friends want to be apart from them. But we can develop a kind and warm heart, and then gradually we will see day by day that our good qualities increase and our ability to bring happiness to others increases also, and of course, we ourselves will be happier. If we're good and kind people, then all the things that we need in life will come to us. We will eventually be able to gain all the good qualities and things that we need both on the ultimate level and the relative level. If we are very coarse and rough people, and always act in a mean way, then we will never get any of the things that we wish for.

As with physical training, to develop new, different attitudes we need to do various exercises to train our minds and hearts day by day and month by month over a long period of time with sustained effort to be able. A good heart and a good mind don't come just by wishing for them, but from training and building them up. The teachings of the Buddha do not accept a creator. They say that everything dependently arises. So whatever happens comes about in a rational and orderly manner, by means of cause and effect. It is not that there is some creator that just wills things to happen. Everything comes about by causes and circumstances and if we try to identify the causes, we would have to say that things come from karma. Karma, in turn, comes about in terms of various people's minds and the various things that they do, particularly how they benefit or harm others.

The root of all this is whether our minds are tamed or not. If they are untamed, we commit various destructive actions, and in keeping with those destructive actions, disasters, unhappiness and so forth come about. If our minds are well tamed, then these things won't happen. So if misfortunes occur, we can't point our finger at the Buddha, nor can we put the blame on somebody else. Similarly, we can't say that our happiness came from someone else. All these things arise depending on whether our minds are tamed. When our minds are tamed, we engage in constructive actions, build up positive force (merit), and happiness comes as a result of that. If we want to get rid of our problems, of our sufferings, then we have to work on our attitudes and tame our minds well.

Similarly, happiness and the absence of problems and suffering aren't going to come from just praying to the Buddha to give them to us. They come from our own efforts in terms of whether we have cleansed our minds of negative attitudes and trained them to have positive ones. In other words, it all depends on whether or not our minds are tamed. If we want happiness, we have to tame our minds; if we want to get rid of problems, we have to tame our minds. So the main point when considering how to bring about happiness and get rid of problems and suffering is whether or not we train and purify our minds.

So we don't explain that there is some god who gives us happiness through his blessings and grace, but rather that the power of individual people and the power of the Buddha are equal. Although we can gain inspiration from the Buddhas, the basic thing we have to do is tame our minds. This is why we have this type of teaching, of attitude-training (*lojong*). Everybody has to work on their own minds, work on their own hearts, on their own attitudes. This is what will bring about happiness.

No matter what the situation is, whatever we do, it is very important to have the proper motivation. With the proper motivation, whatever we do can become constructive activity. To think that we are doing something positive, such as listening to these teachings, just in order to be free of sickness, to get rid of this relatively little type of thing - that is a big mistake. We need to avoid thinking of small purposes, just wanting to benefit this life, or get rid of sicknesses, or gain more happiness for ourselves in the future. Even listening to these teachings just to gain liberation from samsara is a big mistake. Rather, we need to develop a bodhichitta aim, thinking: "I'm listening to this to bring me closer to enlightenment so that I can be of best help to everybody" - this is the type of motivation we need to have.

## **The Procedures for Listening to Teachings**

There are teachings about how the disciple needs to listen, using the analogy of a vessel. To hold anything, a vessel must not be upside-down, have a hole in its bottom, or be dirty inside. Thus, we need to be very open and retain what we hear, and not mix it with prejudices.

We need to listen in order to learn things we've never learned before, and whatever we learn from them, we need to put them into immediate practice. This is how the training of the mind comes about. We don't strain doing hard work at home and then rush to get up here to the temple and when we arrive, take this as just a place to sit around and relax. When we have this rare opportunity to listen to teachings, we cannot be lax. We need to make good use of every moment to benefit our own minds.

Be mindful of what it means to receive an oral transmission: it's not just letting sounds go in. Things are being explained here and we need to try to digest them, not just sit there. Further, we don't just think, "Yeah, yeah, that's right," and then do nothing about it to change our behavior. That's a big mistake. Whatever we hear, we must not be satisfied just with the fact that it makes sense. We need to actually put it into practice. If we're listening to the teachings and it makes sense at that moment, and we think, "Well, I'm going to put it into practice here," and it only stays with us a few hours at the discourse, and when we leave it's finished, that also is incorrect. If we were studying for an exam at school, we would try to understand very thoroughly and try to understand the full scope, and all of that would be merely to get a degree for the benefit of this life! So here, we need to do the same with even greater dedication and enthusiasm.

When we study the Dharma, it's important that things be explained very properly and that people listen very properly. We need to follow procedures like in regular schools. We need careful checks to see whether there are any mistakes and whether we understand things correctly. If listening to the Dharma is the sort of exercise in which a lama gets up and explains things, and the people sit there and listen and try merely to get inspiration from it, well, we might get blessings. But that's not likely to leave any significant imprint on our minds. When lamas teach, it need not be restricted to giving long-life initiations and blessings. It needs to be actually trying to educate people.

## **Recapitulation of Setting the Proper Motivation**

We really have to act very carefully, and put all our effort into sharpening our minds. Studying the Dharma is really a process of education in the fullest sense; it is not just a matter of receiving blessings. The benefit of following a discourse, of listening to the Dharma, is not for the Buddha, nor for the lama. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche often said, "It is not for my benefit

that you are following the Dharma. If you think it is good for you, then follow it." This is the essence. When practicing the Dharma, there's no need to boast of it to others. We are not doing it for the benefit of the Buddha, we are doing it for our own benefit, to improve ourselves. If it is for the benefit of some higher beings, it is a great mistake in attitude toward the practice of the Dharma,

It doesn't matter where we are, in China or in Tibet, among the Indians or in the West where there is great material progress. Whatever happiness there is in a situation, it comes from whether the mind is tamed. No matter what the external situation is, if the mind isn't tamed, we're not happy. Everything comes from our attitude of mind.

If we look at a small insect, even a tiny bug tries to separate itself from problems and difficulties and to improve its own situation. Everybody has the intention and wish to be happy, of wanting to get rid of their problems, and on that basis and according to their own ideas of what the actual method is, they go about trying to achieve it. Some think that they are going to get this happiness from hurting people and taking advantage of them so that they can get some profit. Even if they act like that, we can see that the root of their actions is this basic wish that all beings have, which is to be happy and to be parted from their problems. Now, whether they are successful depends on whether their minds are well-trained, well-tamed, and whether they follow the proper methods that actually bring about happiness.

Everything really depends on our attitudes. If we're sick, for instance, and on top of being sick we feel very sorry for ourselves, then we just cause ourselves more unhappiness in addition to the physical pain that we have. If I take myself as an example, I have extreme confidence and faith in this whole process of the exchange of self for others; this is really the basis of happiness. This is something that I try from the depths of my heart always to put into practice. Working with that kind of attitude, no matter what situations come up in life, of course there's going to be suffering, of course there is going to be problems. What do we expect? Buddha himself pointed that out when he spoke about the true sufferings that exist in this world. But, by changing our attitudes and thinking of others instead of ourselves, happiness comes as a bonus on top of this basic situation of problems and suffering that we all have. If we only think in terms of trying to benefit ourselves in this lifetime, then our thinking is too small. If we think only of our future lifetimes, again it is too small. If we think just in terms of gaining liberation ourselves, that is also too small a scope. If we think in terms of working to benefit everybody, if we think in terms of becoming a Buddha, then this is something far more extensive. Then of course, on the way, we'll be happy in this life too, and in the future as well.

So now we think, "I am going to listen to this teaching in order to benefit all beings, to develop myself to the point where I can benefit all beings." While listening to this, we try to have a happy and joyful state of mind, and to feel enthusiastic. Really want to be able to benefit everybody and be happy and feel positive about this! As much as we can, we need to examine our attitude, our motivation, and make it a good one.

## The Title and Preface

The name of this text is *Attitude-Training Like the Rays of the Sun*. I've already explained what the training of our attitudes means. "The rays of the sun" signify that this teaching has the ability to remove the various stains from the mind, so that the mind becomes bright like the sun.

First are the homage verses, together with praises, and then the promise to compose. The author first pays homage, makes prostration and takes safe direction from his root guru. Then he pays homage and praises the Buddha, who has developed love - wishing others to be happy - and compassion - wishing others to be free from their sufferings. This is the root for developing a bodhichitta aim to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all and for following the practices of the six far-reaching attitudes (perfections) and the four ways of gathering disciples. Practicing them is the way to remove all stains, develop all good qualities and become a Buddha. Namkapel makes prostration to the Buddha as the great navigator of the ship that will bring everyone across the ocean of samsara. The main emphasis here is on the bodhichitta aim, having as its root love and compassion.

The author then makes prostration to and praises the great masters of the profound and the extensive lineages that passed from Buddha. The extensive lineage came through the bodhisattva Maitreya to his human disciples: Asanga, Vasubandu and his disciple Sthiramati. The lineage of profound view came from the bodhisattva Manjushri to Nagarjuna and passed down through Chandrakirti and so forth. Namkapel also makes homage to the third lineage, coming through Shantideva, which is the lineage of the great waves of practice. These are the various teachings on practices such as exchanging self and others, coming from *The Precious Garland* (*Rin-chen 'phreng-ba*, Skt. *Ratnavali*) of Nagarjuna and the teachings that Shantideva received from Manjushri.

These three lineages passed through various lamas to Serlingpa and it is from this great master that Atisha received them. Atisha transmitted them to Dromtonpa of the Kadam lineage, who was a nomad from the same place as I come from, and then to the three Kadam brothers and on to Langri-tangpa and so on.

Namkapel undoubtedly received this teaching from many lamas, the main one being Tsongkhapa himself, who was guided by Manjushri. In the text there is a verse of praise to Tsongkhapa and his qualities. If we read his eighteen volumes of teachings, we will see how great his qualities were. He did not write merely ritual texts; he wrote detailed, clear explanations. There is nothing amazing about the number of volumes he wrote; it is their content and clarity that is really extraordinary.

After the verses of praise comes the promise to compose. The author says he will explain, as best as he can, the way to develop bodhichitta, as his gurus taught him. Then he encourages us to read this text very carefully. The main source is Manjushri, who gave these teachings to Shantideva, who then wrote the *Compendium of Trainings* (*bsLab-btus*, Skt. *Shikshasamuccaya*) and *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior* (*sPyod-'jug*, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*). Especially the latter text explains the basic teachings found here and specifically it explains changing our attitudes by exchanging self and others.

[See: *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, chapter 8 {1}.]

So this text derives from the quintessence teachings on bodhichitta. Tsongkhapa himself points out very clearly that quintessence teachings and lineages passed from mouth to ear are not something separate from the great texts. They simply make things easier to understand that are not found explained explicitly in the great texts. They are the actual keys enabling us to understand what is really in the great texts, and thus they derive totally from the great texts themselves and are not to be thought of as something separate from them. This text gives the guidelines for the bodhichitta teachings, coming from Shantideva.



The basic text of the tradition of attitude-training that it belongs to is Geshe Chaykawa's *Seven-Point Attitude-Training (Blo-sbyong don-bdun-ma)*. For this, there is a root text and then many, many commentaries. The way that Tsongkhapa versified it in his version is different from the way it appears in the root text.

[Namkapel follows Tsongkhapa's versification. Namkapel's text itself has several different commentaries. His Holiness is explaining from just one of them, which unfortunately the present translator did not get the name of.]

Similarly, in the collection called *A Hundred Attitude-Trainings (Blo-sbyong rgya-rtsa)*, compiled by the Sakya master Muchen Konchog-gyeltsen, slightly after Tsongkhapa, we find some versions that accord with the original root text and others that differ slightly and have different ways of commenting on it.

[For example, Namkapel and Pabongka begin the root text with the line: "This essence of nectar of quintessence teaching is in lineage from Serlingpa." In the much earlier Togmey-zangpo edition, this line appears at the end of the root text.]

[See: *Seven-Point Attitude-Training (Togmey-zangpo edition)* {2}, *Seven-Point Attitude-Training (Pabongka edition)* {3}, and *Seven-Point Attitude-Training* {4} {5} (Namkapel edition) {4} {5}.]

In all these versions, Geshe Chaykawa teaches the various methods to eliminate the unawareness (ignorance) that conceives of things to truly exist in an impossible manner and the various methods for attaining a state of liberation, or nirvana - it is called by many different names. It is not enough, however, just to have liberation or nirvana - that is, to be rid of the grasping at truly established existence, the cause of all our problems and suffering. To benefit everybody, we need to know the actual situation of all that exists. There is nothing that cannot be included in these two topics: how things exist and the extent of what exists.

To teach us how to achieve liberation, Buddha turned the Dharma wheel of Hinayana, the modest-minded vehicle - in other words, he transmitted the round of Hinayana teachings. To teach how to achieve the omniscient state of a Buddha, he transmitted the Mahayana teachings. Within Mahayana, there are two divisions: sutra and tantra. Mahayana is the vast-minded vehicle with the motivation of bodhichitta to benefit all beings and is the one involved here.

## Working on the Mind

Those of us who are from Tibet can think in terms of three classes of people. One that accepts religion or spirituality, whichever type it might be, one that thinks religion is the cause of all problems, and one that is indifferent, which does not say that religion is good or bad, but just feels, "Forget about it." Most people have this type of thought.

Now, religion is something that is supposed to bring us happiness. So, if it doesn't bring happiness, there is no use in keeping it. We can just throw it away. But the people who have given up the Dharma or who don't accept it, thinking it is the opiate of the masses - they haven't found happiness, have they? They live in constant fear, tension and competition. So, if we evaluate those who drop religion and those who follow it, and ask which are happier, it is definitely those who keep and practice religion. This is because the true point of religion is to tame the mind and make it more peaceful. So those who follow religion are more peaceful and

happier.

The introduction of communism in Tibet was to be for the benefit of the people. But if it is forced on them, there can be no individual or collective benefit. The wish to work for society is not something that can be pushed onto people from the outside. It has to develop from within, from people's own minds and their own feelings. You can't force social consciousness on people; it just doesn't work.

The exercise of class struggle to bring about changes in the whole social system of Tibet is a process based on anger, hatred, and resentment. It doesn't work at all. But if it were based on the Mahayana attitude of intense concern for other people and really wanting to benefit them, then it could be beneficial in helping people to improve. But being based on hatred, it is disastrous.

Buddhism originated in India and Buddha Shakyamuni spoke out of the need that arose from its multi-caste social system. That system created suffering on many levels, as well as many kinds of disturbances and problems within secular society. So Buddha sought the means to eliminate these kinds of deep differences and discrimination. He spoke of the path of the Buddhas as something that does not attach any importance to the caste system. The Buddha's original teachings say not to make differences of class or caste in terms of people having big noses or a particular occupation or things like this. That it is absurd. People don't have this type of class or division innate in them when they are born.

Because of this, the people in India who are interested in Buddhism now are the people of low caste. Why are they interested in Buddhism? It is not because of the attitude of compassion, or the possibility of benefiting future lives. It is not because of the view of voidness that is found in Buddhism. It's because we don't have the differentiation of castes in Buddhism.

## **Buddhism in Comparison with Other Religions**

In disclaiming the caste system, Buddha was not criticizing another religion. As in the other religions, Buddha taught genuine respect for other religious traditions. They all teach positive qualities for the benefit of mankind. Islam, for example, has sects that base their religious practice on compassion. There are mullahs in Iran who receive donations from the rich and distribute them freely to the poor and underprivileged. This shows that even in countries like Iran where there are great difficulties and suffering at present, such as from the war with Iraq, which have arisen even in the name of religion, they still have, as shown by this example of generosity, an attitude based on compassion.

If we look at the various religions that assert the existence of God, all of them say that basically we need to be good persons. We need to make requests to God and what happens is in God's hands. But, nevertheless, we still need to act in a decent and religious manner and that will be beneficial. In the teachings of Buddhism, it appears even more strongly that improvement in things is not going to come simply from making requests to a god, but that we ourselves need to put our emphasis on our own efforts, on our own work.

So there are religions that put the emphasis on God and although in Buddhism, we don't have such an emphasis, nevertheless we do have different types of deities. We do make requests to them and we do receive various "blessings" and inspiration from them. But that is only one aspect of the methods; it's not the entire source of how things come about. In the theistic religions, it seems as though we don't really have any power over things. We can make

requests to God and, just in the same way as God creates the universe, God creates our happiness and unhappiness. Based on the prayers that we say, we may perhaps receive some blessings and become happy, but we really don't have the ultimate power. Whereas in Buddhist teachings, although we can make requests and prayers to receive the "blessings" and inspiration of the Buddhas and so forth, we ourselves have to do what the Buddhas did. We have to employ the many methods that Buddha taught for achieving happiness. Hence, all the power depends on us.

The protection and refuge in theistic religions comes from outside: everything comes from above down to us. In the Buddhist religion, the actual refuge and protection comes from within, by developing ourselves to reach the state of a Buddha. Rather than coming from on high down to us, everything works from our efforts down here going up. Just to sit back and pray to Buddha, "May I be happy; may I be liberated" is not going to be of great help. As we ourselves need to develop, we make prayers and requests to the Buddha, "May I be able to develop myself to achieve the state of a Buddha."

To achieve this, we need to work on the mind, not just on the body. This is because, while being physically happy, it is still possible to be very miserable mentally. But, if our minds are very happy, then even if the body is uncomfortable, we're not going to be upset. For instance, if our minds are very unhappy, we're likely to develop hypertension and high blood pressure, we're likely to become nervous. All these things will cause us physical discomfort and suffering; whereas if our minds are happy, it will affect the way that we feel in a positive manner.

What is the highest state and aim described in Christianity? It is something similar, but not quite the same as our pure lands - in other words, being born in heaven, in a celestial paradise. The best that you can achieve by all your requests is being reborn in heaven, where you will be very happy. In contrast, when we speak of liberation, the ultimate point of Buddhist practice, it is not merely rebirth in a nice heaven. Rather, it is getting rid of all the various delusions and negative emotions that disturb our minds and getting rid of the karmic impulses that come up and cause us to act in an unruly fashion, which in turn brings us unhappiness. The actual way to achieve liberation is not just to pray to be reborn in a heaven, but to actually work to tame the mind, to remove the various disturbances in the mind and the impulses that come up and cause unhappiness. And it's not based on just training and improving the body; Buddhism is based on training and improving the mind.

To improve the mind, we have to be very deeply aware of what reality is. It is true that if we use the various physical means such as prostrating, doing the fasting practice, saying the mantras and practice of the speech, we can build up positive force (positive potential, merit). This is very useful. But the main basis for achieving liberation is working on the mind. It is the mind that is in the nature of what the actual results will be.

If we are going to make some object out of metal, for instance, if the final product is made out of iron, then the cause is also going to be made out of iron. We simply work on the causal material, shaping it, bending it and making it into the object we want. Likewise, whether we think of the final product as enlightenment or liberation, we need to purify and shape the mind to the point where it is operating fully in accord with its basic nature. That's the material we have to work with, the mind.

The mind has various stains, but these are fleeting, they are not part of the basic nature of the mind. So, we have to understand what the basic nature of the mind, the primary minds, the

mental factors, and so on is, and work with that. We need to have in mind the final product that we wish to achieve, that we want to mold. Then we can work with the materials that each of us actually has, molding them into the shape that we would like the product to have, just as if we were working with iron to make an iron product.

For this, it is important to know which are the valid and which are the invalid states of mind within us. The invalid minds are distorted ways of knowing, indecisive wavering or doubt, and presumptive understanding. But, on the other hand, we have the valid minds of inferential understanding and bare perception. These are different ways in which we might be aware of things, and we can work to improve the mind and bring it to a stage where it can understand things exclusively in valid ways. For training the mind, it is very important to know how it operates, how the mind knows things, as we have to actually work with our minds. We need to train our minds to achieve the actual final products: the state of a Buddha, enlightenment, which is also produced from the mind; it's a shaping of the mind.

## Review of the Main Points

As I was saying, there are three groups: those who are interested in religion, those who are very much against it, and those who are indifferent. Within the category of those who are religious, there are those who are theistic: they believe in a creator god. They explain that happiness will come from just making requests and prayers to an almighty god who will grant it to you. Buddhism is within another division of religions, those that don't assert an almighty creator god, but which just say that happiness comes from our own karma, from the tendencies, seeds and habits built up on our mental continuums. This is why Buddhists call themselves "insiders" - happiness and the power to affect our futures lie within. The focus is on "inside."

Buddhists think in terms of previous lives. So do some other religions. Some talk of a concrete self, a concrete soul that comes from previous lives, which incarnates in this life and goes on to future lives. Others say that although there is rebirth, there is no concrete self or soul that goes on from one lifetime to the next. Within these two categories, Buddhism asserts that we do not have concrete, unchanging selves or souls that go from past lives to future lives and that are the basis for liberation.

Thus there are many various types of religions. We, as Buddhists, do not assert a god as a creator or as a source of happiness. Also, we say that there is no concrete self or soul that goes on to liberation. Within Buddhism, the mode of conduct is one that is based on compassion, and the view of reality is one that is based on dependent arising, cause and effect. On that foundation, the Mahayana teachings put the main emphasis on compassion and developing a bodhichitta aim.

Within Mahayana, there is the division into sutra and tantra, and here we are speaking in the sutra manner. Within sutra, there are three lineages: one from Asanga, one from Nagarjuna, and one from Shantideva. The one from Nagarjuna, especially from his text, *The Precious Garland*, speaks of taking the loss upon ourselves and giving the victory to others.

What are the differences here among these lineages? We could say that the Asanga lineage talks about the seven-part cause and effect way of developing bodhichitta, while the one coming from Shantideva uses the exchange of self and others. But that latter one is in Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland* as well. I wonder how we could explain the difference between Nagarjuna's and Shantideva's presentations? I guess we could say that Nagarjuna speaks

primarily about the profound view of voidness, and it is only incidentally that he mentions developing a bodhichitta aim through exchange of self and others. Shantideva, on the other hand, explains this method primarily by putting all the emphasis on bodhichitta.

## Historical Account of the Teachings

This first section of the text, an historical account of the teachings, initially discusses the importance of developing bodhichitta. It says that in Hinayana, the emphasis is on the three higher trainings. While it is definitely possible, on the basis of these three higher trainings, to achieve liberation and eliminate the various things that we need to rid ourselves of; yet, in order to rid ourselves of everything that has to be got rid of, we also need to develop bodhichitta.

The text continues with an account of its history, referring to Atisha and Dromtonpa, and mentions commentaries on attitude-training teachings written at Radreng, the monastery that the pair founded in Tibet. Among all the disciples who lived at Radreng, the most distinguished were the three brothers of the Kadam tradition, particularly the great Geshe Potowa, who was skilled in the complete teachings, both sutra and tantra. Of the three Kadam lineages coming from Dromtonpa, one is the tradition of the great classics, another is lam-rim (the graded stages of the path), and the third is the quintessence teachings. I've read in one attitude-training text that the Gelug tradition comes primarily from the Kadam great classics tradition. The Kadam lam-rim tradition passed primarily into Kagyu, which had come through Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, and Milarepa. Its explanation of tantra came from the presentation of the view of reality in the mahamudra teachings and, in the teachings of Gampopa, those were combined with the lam-rim tradition of the Kadam.

Now among the various disciples of Geshe Potowa, such as Sharawa and so forth, each had his own specialty. Geshe Chaykawa was the specialist in bodhichitta. He had heard a discourse on the *Eight-Verse Attitude-Training (Blo-sbyong tshig-brgyad-ma)* by Geshe Langri-tangpa and had developed great interest in it.

[See: *Eight-Verse Attitude-Training* {6}.]

To hear further about these teachings, he went to the great teacher Geshe Sharawa, at a time when Geshe Sharawa was giving a teaching on *The Shravaka (Listener) Stages of Mind (Nyan-sa, Skt. Shravakabhumi)*. He wondered whether this Geshe Sharawa, who undoubtedly had the lineage of these teachings on attitude-training, was a specialist in them. Geshe Chaykawa didn't know for sure, but thought it was worthwhile asking him. After the teaching, as Geshe Sharawa was circumambulating a stupa, Geshe Chaykawa approached the older lama and addressed him, "Gen-la." Geshe Sharawa asked, "What is it that you didn't understand from the discourse today? I cleared everything up. What is there left that you didn't understand?" Geshe Chaykawa answered, "I have heard this verse of attitude-training, that one needs to give the victory to others and take the loss upon oneself. I heard this line and it struck my mind so much that I thought it would be of great benefit to learn more about it and to put it into practice. So I want to ask if you know more about this, how to actually develop this attitude, and I'd like to know the source of these teachings, what text they come from, and whether it is appropriate to put them into practice."

Geshe Sharawa answered, "It is not a matter of whether or not it is something for you to practice; the point is that if it is practiced, it will definitely bring you enlightenment." Geshe Chaykawa realized that undoubtedly Geshe Sharawa had insight into all of this; otherwise he

would not have been able to reply so cleverly and so he asked him, "What is the scriptural source of this teaching?" Geshe Sharawa told him that it came from *The Precious Garland* of Nagarjuna, to which Geshe Chaykawa said, "Of course, Nagarjuna is the second Buddha after Buddha Shakyamuni, and anything he says obviously has great scriptural authority." Suddenly, everything fell into place for Geshe Chaykawa and he made up his mind decisively, saying, "This is what I have to put all my efforts into!"

He asked for the teachings and Geshe Sharawa said, "We'll see when the time might come for me to give them to you as we go along with what I've been teaching. I was explaining *The Shravaka Stages of Mind* and if I were to give these other teachings here that you asked for, I really wonder if anybody would be interested or would actually practice them." At this, Geshe Chaykawa became very happy that eventually he would be able to receive these great teachings on attitude training from such a great master as Geshe Sharawa. Meanwhile, he practiced reaffirming and strengthening his bodhichitta aim on the basis of exchanging self and others.

## The Benefits of the Teachings

Next, the great benefits of the teachings are explained, how bodhichitta is like the sun, like a precious jewel and like medicine. Jewels eliminate the unhappiness of the poor. Similarly, because bodhichitta eliminates the poverty that is a lack of realizations, it is like a diamond. If we had a huge diamond, it could eliminate an enormous amount of poverty. But even if we had just a small diamond, it would eliminate our own poverty. Similarly, even if we have just a small aspect of a bodhichitta aim, it will be of great benefit. So it is like a diamond.

It is like the sun, for just as the rays of the sun eliminate darkness, so, if we develop bodhichitta, it will eliminate the darkness of disturbing actions and delusions within us and within all beings. Even if there are just a few rays of the sun coming from behind a cloud, they will eliminate darkness. Similarly, even if we have only a little bodhichitta shining through the clouds of our disturbances and delusions, that will also cause a light to shine within our minds.

Bodhichitta is like medicine, for while all the parts of a medicinal tree, the roots, the bark, the fruit, the branches and the leaves are of benefit, even if we have only one part it will still have medicinal value. Similarly, if we have fully developed a bodhichitta aim, it is of great benefit; but even if we have only a small part of it, it will still be beneficial. This is true not only in terms of general bodhichitta, but also in terms of attitude training.

Further advantages are that bodhichitta causes everybody to rejoice; it eliminates jealousy and so forth. This is especially important these days, when the delusions and disturbing emotions and attitudes of people are on the increase. Even here in India, in our situation as refugees, although we don't have great material progress, we do have some. We've been able to build schools, some small businesses, such things as that. But they can also be the basis of jealousy and competition. So it is not enough to have material progress; spiritual progress is needed at the same time. Developing a bodhichitta aim eliminates all these jealousies and delusions, and that is very important and relevant now when there is the danger that even though we have a little bit of progress here in India, we might think that external circumstances are going to solve all our problems. That is a real delusion. I've seen people in situations of great material comfort and, often, they are absolutely miserable, with disastrous consequences. So it is important to work both externally and internally.

[The lines in the root text that His Holiness is explaining here are: "Understanding that the significance of this text is like a vajra diamond, a sun and a medicinal tree, transform into a path to enlightenment this (time when) the five deteriorations are rampant." They appear both in Namkapel's and Pabongka's editions. In Togmey-zangpo's edition, from "Understanding" to "medicinal tree" does not appear at all, and from "transform" to "rampant" appear at the end of the text, before rather than after the line, "This essence of nectar of quintessence teachings is in lineage from Serlingpa."]

We can see how if people don't work on their attitudes to make them more altruistic and just work for material progress instead, they can cause a great deal of suffering to everybody. Take, for example, the many areas where they carry out a lot of construction work and industrial activities. These cause a lot of problems as a by-product: smoke, soot and pollution, which ruin the air and cause environmental damage. This occurs in situations where there is a great deal of material progress. Of course, material progress is some-thing important. But people need to think, "What are the consequences? What is going to happen in a few years, in 200 years, in 1000 years from now?" The same goes for nuclear fuel and reactors: How are you going to get rid of these things? What are you going to do with them in the future? Some nations are building up armaments, and this is an additional cause of suffering, like hitting your head with your own stick, and will cause further unhappiness in the world.

When the Chinese invaded Tibet and Tibet lost its independence, the local spirits seemed to have also lost their influence and the power of protection, due to the degeneration of the positive force (merit) of the Tibetans. There's a story that a certain spirit in Amdo claims to have stayed in prison. Even the spirit had to stay in prison in China before coming to stay in India for ten years. When, after his stay in India, the spirit went back to Amdo, he was offered freshly killed meat again but he refused, saying that he had pledged before me not to accept any more animal sacrifices. I don't know whether this is true or not, but when I travel in the Himalayan regions, I tell people there it is wrong to make animal sacrifices. So maybe there is some connection. The spirit couldn't accept animal sacrifices any more, because in the places where I gave the Kalachakra initiation, I said it would be advisable not to sacrifice animals any more. Maybe the spirit was there at one of these empowerments.

If we have properly trained minds, there is no need to seek physically blissful states of rebirth. If we train the mind fully, then we carry within us all the blissful states. We have Sukhavati pure land within us.

Another advantage of developing bodhichitta is that not only do we have happiness when the various causes and circumstances of happiness come about; even circumstances that would normally cause problems and unhappiness will become circumstances for gaining happiness. These are the great benefits and advantages of having a bodhichitta aim.

For all those of you who have come on a visit from Tibet, it is very important while you are here to say a lot of *manis* (the mantra *Om mani padme hum*), pray "may I develop a kind heart," and think a lot of the Buddha Shakyamuni.

# Day Two: The Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind to the Dharma

## Reaffirming the Motivation

We need to have a proper motivation for listening to the teachings; otherwise we will miss an opportunity to build up a great deal of positive force and to incorporate this teaching in our mental continuum. We try not to be motivated by wanting things to improve in this lifetime, or to improve our future lifetimes, or even by wanting to gain liberation just for ourselves. Rather, we try to have the full motivation of the bodhichitta aim, wishing to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Think, "I'm not listening to this just for my own sake or for my own liberation. I'm opening my heart to all beings out of a wish to benefit them and to achieve enlightenment for their sakes." And, "I'm definitely going to try to integrate all these teachings with my mental continuum and to recognize all the untamed states of mind that I have. Gradually, I'm going to correct all of these as much as is possible."

If we think of these teachings as merely theoretical, they're not going to be of much benefit. Instead, if we compare them to our states of mind and attitudes, and think, "I'm definitely going to improve myself; I'm really going to try to recognize where my deficiencies lie and apply myself to correcting them," this will definitely be of much greater benefit and a much deeper experience.

## Basic Structure of the Text

The training of our attitudes is in seven points, the first of which concerns the preliminary practices. In Tibetan, we have the terms "supporting structure" and "things supported by it." It is like a house and the furnishings and people inside. Likewise, in a mandala, the mandala palace is the supporting structure and the figures inside are what are supported by it. Here, the preliminaries are like the mandala palace and the main teachings are like the deity figures supported by them. So don't think that the preliminaries are just something at the beginning, which we can then forget about later. They are the foundation that supports all the rest of the actual teachings and always remain there. Here, the main actual teaching is the development of bodhichitta. This is the second of the seven points.

There are conventional bodhichitta (relative bodhichitta) and deepest bodhichitta (ultimate bodhichitta). Conventional bodhichitta is a mind or heart aimed at the conventional (relative, superficial, surface, apparent) truth of all beings and enlightenment; while deepest bodhichitta is a mind aimed at their deepest truth, their voidness or total absence of impossible ways of existing. These are the two mental states and attitudes toward life that we are definitely going to develop on our mental continuums.

As we are going to practice these two bodhichittas throughout our lives, we will meet with different circumstances, sometimes conducive, sometimes not. If we don't have courage, then when we meet with circumstances that are not conducive, we might get discouraged and think of just giving up. At that time, it is necessary to have very firm and stable minds and hearts, so that we can cope with the situation. We need to think and feel, "Well, such bad circumstances as these happen in life. What to expect of samsara? But I can handle them. They are no big deal, no big danger." If our minds are stable like that, we can handle any difficult circumstances that may come up. We never get daunted. If we can take all these negative and



nonconducive circumstances and turn them into a pathway, they become part of our spiritual path. Then, of course, there is no danger from them; they can't harm us and we become very stable in our practice. This is an extremely beneficial and extensive method.

The other five of the seven points are:

- transforming adverse circumstances into a path to enlightenment,
- condensation of the practice in one lifetime,
- the measure of having trained our attitudes,
- the close-bonding practices for attitude-training,
- the points to train in for attitude-training.

With this, we arrive at the root text of the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training*. As a basic structure for these attitude-training teachings, and as part of the preliminaries, we will first deal with the precious human rebirth, then death and impermanence, behavioral cause and effect, and then the problems and suffering of samsara. These are the four points of the preliminaries that form the supporting basis for training our attitudes. They are commonly known as the "four thoughts that turn the mind to the Dharma."

One attitude-training text by Panchen Yeshey-gyeltsen presents the preliminaries in the Kadam style, discussing the suffering of the worse rebirth states and then, having thought about them, taking a safe direction in life. In this style, safe direction is taken as part of the discussion of the various states of rebirth. By various methods such as this, we can include all the lam-rim teachings on the graded stages of the path within the outline of these four preliminaries.

There are several different presentations and ways to order the points of the lam-rim. I think it all depends on the varied dispositions of the disciples. For instance, in *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path (Lam-gtso rnam-gsum)*, Tsongkhapa presents two levels of renunciation: definitely turning away from complete involvement with this life and then definitely turning away from complete involvement with benefiting future lives. In his greater lam-rim texts, however, Tsongkhapa presents three levels of motivation, one of which is renunciation, and does not speak of two levels of renunciation.

[See: *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path* {7}.]

Thus, although in some of the lam-rims thinking of the suffering of the worse rebirth states brings us immediately to taking safe direction, here when we think of the different points, we are brought directly to bodhichitta. We think of the precious human rebirth and that leads us straight to bodhichitta. Then we think of death and impermanence and that too takes us straight to the development of bodhichitta. The presentation of all the various sufferings in general and the specific sufferings of the different realms can also bring us to the realization of bodhichitta. This is a special way of presenting the various lam-rim points in attitude-training texts.

The outline refers to practice during the meditation session and between sessions. This means that we don't engage in Dharma practice only when we are sitting cross-legged and reciting various prayers and then the rest of the time forget about it and throw it away. We do sustained practice both during our formal sitting and in-between.

It's like charging a battery. When actually sitting in our sessions, we make our minds, hearts, and attitudes clearer and stronger so that we can use them later on, just as we charge a battery so that we can use it later. And just as there is the time when we charge the battery and the time later when we use its electric energy, there is the time when we do our actual meditation sessions, building up our charge of energy, and then the time when we use it during our daily lives. It's not that we are religious during our meditation sessions and then act totally irreligiously in between; we need to be consistent. We need to try to bring our minds, on all different levels, to behave in accord with the teachings.

Everybody, of course, wants to be happy and everybody tries to follow different methods to bring about that happiness. And of course, everybody needs the various necessities of life. But, when we try to bring about this happiness through methods that are unruly and that will hurt others, or we try to take advantage of others, these are the very things we are trying to stop and get rid of. We need to think about the various things we are doing. If we are being very arrogant and exploiting people, and deceiving people in order to gain some profit for ourselves, we need to think, "Well, what is really the benefit of this in the long run? Is it going to bring me the happiness that I want? If I gain this profit by cheating and deceiving others, is it really going to help me in the long run?" In this way become convinced: "If I use dishonest methods like these, it's going to work against me. This is because if people act very arrogantly, trying to take advantage of others, everybody is going to consider them very vulgar types of persons. Nobody is going to want to be on their side or will agree with what they're doing." This is quite clear, isn't it? So, we can see the disadvantages there are in being a cheating, deceitful person.

After we've finished our sessions and we go out and meet people, we might have an urge to act arrogantly or deceitfully. Then we need to be mindful of what we have been thinking about during our sessions, and think "Oh, no! If I act in a deceitful way toward this person and try to cheat him, I've been seeing in my meditation sessions that this is no good. It's of no benefit to anybody," and so we restrain ourselves. At that time, we restrain ourselves from acting in a negative or destructive way: that is what the actual practice is in between sessions. That is when we actually use the good habits we've been building up during our meditation sessions. If we act very carefully and integrate the meditation and in-between sessions well with each other, then we will find that the meditation will serve to improve our behavior between sessions, and our in-between sessions' activities will contribute to improving our meditations. Day by day, we'll find some improvement.

We need to examine our behavior. If we drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, we need to try to improve ourselves and get rid of these negative activities that are so self-destructive. Whenever we see a cigarette, if we think of its disadvantages, we will put it aside. We will decide to cut down to only one or two cigarettes a day and eventually reach a point when, from smoking less and less, we become disgusted even by the smell of cigarette smoke. If we think about it, smoking is a great waste of time and money. All the money we spend on it and the time wasted talking about it or, when we meet somebody who's smoking, lighting up with the person and gossiping - think what a waste. At all levels, the habit of smoking is pointless.

The same goes for drinking alcohol, as well as for all sorts of obnoxious personality traits that we might have, such as being overbearing, arrogant, or deceitful. Try to decrease them as much as possible and eventually get rid of them by seeing them as negative habits.

## **The Procedures before Starting a Meditation Session**

At the beginning of the actual meditation session it is very important to examine our motivation of why we are meditating. We need to reaffirm the safe direction we are taking in our lives, as indicated by the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and we need to reaffirm our bodhichitta aim. We do this while visualizing the objects of safe direction and so forth, in accordance with the lineage of Lama Serlingpa. So first we examine and reaffirm our motivations, and then, in a proper place for meditation, we prepare our meditation seat.

### **Cleaning the Place for Meditation**

First, we need to clean the place where we'll be meditating. This makes a big difference in the clarity of our minds, the level of respect we feel and show to the objects of our meditation, and also it affects our health. It is very important to keep our homes and our rooms clean, and to set up some sort of offering arrangement. As we sweep and clean, various thoughts can help, such as, "While I'm cleaning this floor, I'm cleaning my mind." We need not think that we are just making it nice for ourselves, but we are doing it to show respect for the objects of refuge and the practice.

### **Setting Up an Altar and Arranging Offerings**

When we set up our altars and offerings, we are not doing it to impress others, but to help in the process of improving ourselves in order to benefit all sentient beings, meaning all limited beings. We need to have humble altars, with representations of the body, speech and mind of the Buddhas. If we have gold and silver offering bowls, then half our minds will be on the value of these precious objects and only half of it on the practice.

There is a famous story of Geshe Benkungyel, who lived in a cave doing meditation. Once when his teacher was coming to visit, he put up very special offerings. Then he examined his motivation and saw that he was only doing this so everybody would say what a great practitioner he was. Realizing this, he threw ashes all over his offerings. When his teacher came, he said that Geshe Benkungyel had thrown ashes in the face of the eight transitory things in life and had made a very pure offering.

[See: [Dispelling Discomfort at the Eight Transitory Things in Life](#) {8}.]

Before becoming a great Dharma practitioner, Geshe Benkungyel was a notorious thief. After he had become a practitioner, he went one day to the house of a patron who had set up some offerings and then gone outside. Because of his instincts as a thief, Geshe Benkungyel found his hand reaching out to steal the objects. He immediately grabbed his hand and called out, "Come quickly, I've caught a thief."

This is exactly how we need to practice the Dharma. When we catch ourselves yielding to a negative tendency, we need to catch ourselves and stop acting in that way. The main point of Dharma is taking preventive measures and as soon as we see ourselves starting to do something we know is improper, we stop ourselves from doing it. So if you can remember, "His Holiness has said during this discourse not to do something like this," then when you catch yourself doing it, you can stop yourself.

It's like the example of drinking, which is the root and cause of so much trouble, although of course it's very delicious. If we think, "I couldn't care less," we'll become callused and build up a habit of doing negative things and being insensitive. This is because when we get drunk, we act in such a way that we are not even aware of what we're doing. Then later, when people say, "Oh, when you were drunk, you spoke so badly, told outrageous lies, and acted in such an outrageous manner, and now you don't even remember any of that," it's extremely embarrassing. We make an absolute fool of ourselves when we're drunk.

The main point of Dharma is taking preventive measures and as soon as we see ourselves starting to do something wrong or improper, we need to stop or prevent ourselves from doing it. We need to apply everything we know, like the very relevant example of Geshe Benkungyel. His Dharma practice was very clear and obvious: he would immediately and quite dramatically stop himself from acting in any negative ways.

The main point in the Dharma is always to work on improving internal qualities, not on external improvement. So, concerning the offerings we make, they needn't be externally so impressive that we develop pride over them. Milarepa made the best offerings: he didn't have anything external to give, but he gave his heart totally to Dharma practice.

We needn't go out of our way to make our altars ostentatious by buying very expensive images; that's completely missing the point. Dharma is to improve our minds, not to put on a big external show. If we acquire various images naturally through gifts and so forth, of course we can set them out. The nicer the offering is, the more beneficial it is. But we don't go out of our way to make a big ostentatious show just to impress people - especially with Tibetan thangka paintings, just getting them as souvenirs to impress people. If we do buy thangkas, however, try to get only those that have the proper proportions and standard features. If we buy something that does not accord with tradition, then if somebody looks at it and says, "This Buddha image is very bad," then we are building up negative force and potential because of being the cause for such words. So we need to be very particular to have thangkas and images that are correct and traditional. But we don't just get them to impress people. If our preparations and arrangements are very simple, we can just put up a picture of our spiritual mentor. That will make our minds feel very happy and we'll be showing respect.

## **Sitting with the Proper Posture**

We then need to sit on proper seats, in the proper posture. If we can sit in the full lotus or vajra position, this is best. But if this is uncomfortable, we can just sit cross-legged, the usual way that most of us sit. If that's uncomfortable too, we can sit in a chair. The main point is to work on our minds, not necessarily on our bodies. But if we can sit cross-legged, that's much better.

Don't rock back and forth or lean right and left; but rather sit up straight and solidly. Of course, if we're not feeling well, there are exceptions; but basically we need to sit straight and not fidget around. Especially when we are doing our practices, we need to sit up very straight and not move. If we're moving, rocking back and forth while trying to concentrate, the rocking motion will cause a rocking motion in our minds and we'll have more mental wandering. Often we find that when we're reciting texts from memory, we rock back and forth. Most of us Tibetans do this, but it's not exclusive to us. We find that many Muslims do this as well when they recite from the Koran. When foreigners come and see Tibetans reciting things, they find it very strange, because some are rocking forwards and backwards, while some are going from side to side.

About fifteen years ago there was a geshe who was a great yogi and had lived in the mountains of Tibet. When he came out to India, he requested me to give some initiations. I was terribly impressed: he didn't move even a bit during the entire empowerment. If we have the ability, we need to have this kind of posture. It comes from the strength of absorbed concentration.

If we wear glasses, we can examine for ourselves whether it makes any difference to wear them or not during meditation. If I wear my glasses, I have greater clarity; but when my glasses are off, I have greater stability and placement of my mind. Look into this and see what difference it makes.

## **Taking Safe Direction and Reaffirming Our Motivation**

Next, we examine our states of mind and, from a particularly positive state of mind, take strong safe direction and reaffirm our bodhichitta aim. Think, "I'm giving a strong, safe direction to my life, with refuge. I'm dedicating my heart to the bodhichitta aim, to enlightenment, to helping all beings, and I'm going to do this practice to build up strong positive force to reach that goal."

As it's helpful to have some sort of visual aid, we visualize the objects of safe direction, which can be either a very elaborate, bountiful field, or just simply a figure of the Buddha, and imagine that we are getting waves of inspiration from them. A visual aid to make receiving the inspiration graphic helps to create a stronger feeling.

The actual safe direction is indicated by the true stoppings (true cessations) and the true pathways of mind (true paths) on the mental continuums of aryas, highly realized beings. Whether or not we are able to visualize clearly the bountiful field, we need to keep in mind what are the main things that provide a safe direction in life: true stoppings and true pathway minds. We can visualize various types of fields for building up positive force (fields of merit), but the main thing is to have is a very strong feeling of having a safe direction that we are going in; not just to say the words, but to have strong confident belief in what is fact. The facts are that the Three Precious and Rare Gems indicate the safest direction to take in life and we fully intend to continue going in that direction.

In Tibet, we follow a combination of Hinayana, Sutra Mahayana, and Tantrayana. In terms of tantra, when we take safe direction, we need to think that we are also receiving all the empowerments from the objects of safe direction. That is why we start the refuge formula with: "I take safe direction from the Lamas, from the Gurus." This because we imagine we are receiving empowerment from them. Our spiritual teachers are the ones who actually take us by the hand, hold us up, and take us along the path in the safe and sound direction indicated by the Triple Gem. So, we start with the spiritual mentor with whom we actually have a personal involvement and who shows us the safe direction of refuge, and then take safe direction from the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Then to distinguish our practice as Mahayana, we reaffirm our bodhichitta aim.

## **Offering the Seven-Limb Prayer**

So we start with safe direction, next the bodhichitta aim, and then visualize the bountiful field and offer the seven-limb prayer: prostrations, offerings, and so forth. There are many different ways of doing this prayer in connection with sutra practice and in connection with tantra practice. We can also offer the seven-limb prayer in connection with the various types of

guru-yoga and the various Buddha-figures (deities, yidams). The Gelug tradition, for example, offers them in the context of *Hundreds of Deities of Tushita* (*dGa'-ldan lha rgya-ma*), in which the main figure visualized is Tsongkhapa.

[See: *Seven-Limb Prayer* {9} and *Hundreds of Deities of Tushita* {10}.]

Alternatively, we can visualize simply our own spiritual mentor or the Buddha, or we can do the practice in the context of one of the six-session yogas: there are many ways of doing it. Some of the verses used in the seven-limb offering come from sutras dealing with bodhisattva behavior, particularly from *The Flower Garland Sutra* (*mDo Phal-cher*, Skt. *Avatamsaka Sutra*). Whichever seven-limb prayer we use, we need to set our minds clearly on the different points and on what they mean, and then conclude with a dedication prayer. These are the procedures that Lama Serlingpa, the teacher of Atisha, taught.

We then make various requests to be able to turn our minds to the Dharma, to be able to turn everything into a pathway of Dharma, and that we will actually be able to put this all into practice.

## Offering a Mandala

Regarding the presentation of the world that we offer as a mandala, it traditionally consists of Mount Meru, the four continents and so forth, as in the Hindu scriptures. I remember once during a pilgrimage in India I came across a Hindu temple. I don't remember exactly where it was, but it had a mural of Mount Meru and the four continents, quite similar to what we have. So we offer the objects arranged before us, and imagine things such as Mount Meru, the continents and so forth, and offer them too: it's not necessary to have a very elaborate mandala plate. The visualization doesn't have to be completely the way it is in the abhidharma texts, however. It could be like the actual world is.

We can't deny the world is round. This is something we can see ourselves: we can actually see the curvature of the earth. The way the world is described in modern times is confirmed by our perception; it is actually seen by the eyes. If we were to deny that and insist on the world being exactly as it says in *A Treasure-House of Special Topics of Knowledge* (*mDzod*, Skt. *Abhidharmakosha*), that would be really absurd, wouldn't it? So what we're concerned with here is not so much the refutation of the scientific presentation or the refutation of the presentation of the world in *A Treasure-House of Special Topics of Knowledge*. The point is to offer the world in its most splendid and beautiful aspect, to offer something very pleasing, to build up some positive force and a constructive state of mind. We need to keep that attitude in mind when offering up a world system as a mandala. Since our spiritual mentor and the thousands and millions of Buddhas are known as the greatest or especially distinguished bountiful field for building up positive force, we offer the mandala to them.

## A Healthy Relation with a Spiritual Mentor

This brings us to a healthy relation and whole-hearted commitment to our spiritual mentor (guru-devotion), the advantages of such a commitment, and the disadvantages of going against it.

In this very life, if we want to learn how to sew or to paint Buddha-figures, we need to learn from someone whom we can watch doing it so that we can follow that example and try to do it

ourselves. We need a teacher. This is also true of spiritual training. It's extremely important to rely on a teacher, a spiritual mentor, in a healthy manner, with a whole-hearted commitment to him or her. To do this, we need to meditate deeply in order to develop extremely strong belief and trust in our spiritual mentor. Developing that trusting belief can be in relation to either the method or the wisdom side of our practice. If we develop it in relation to the wisdom side, the side of discriminating awareness, then we need to examine the various reasons for the necessity to develop confident trust and belief in him or her.

If we have confident trust and belief in a spiritual mentor, we will be able to gain inspiration from him or her. If we don't, no matter how much emphasis we put on discriminating awareness, we are not going to gain any inspiration to develop it. Whatever the good qualities and qualification a spiritual mentor may have, if we don't have firm and trusting conviction that he or she in fact has them, we won't get any inspiration from the person. It doesn't matter how many offerings we might make or prayers we might address to him or her, our hearts won't be uplifted or moved.

So first we need to know the points involved in having a healthy, whole-hearted commitment to a spiritual mentor. What are the requirements? In his lam-rim texts, Tsongkhapa sets out the qualities and qualifications of a spiritual mentor, the qualities and qualifications of the disciple, the measure and benefits of relying on such a master in a healthy manner, and the disadvantages of not doing so.

First are the qualifications of a spiritual mentor. We need to know these very well in order to check for them. What are his qualities of body, speech and mind, his accomplishments, is he learned? What does he practice? Spiritual mentors do not just rise up by themselves. To think that spiritual mentors are self-begotten is wrong. None of them are learned from birth.

An incarnation (*tulku*) is not necessarily a lama, and a lama is not necessarily an incarnation. There is no logical pervasion between the two. "La (*bla*)," the first syllable of "lama," the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit word *guru*, a spiritual mentor, means "high," "superior," or "grand," as in the expression "lana-meypa (*bla-na med-pa*)," meaning "nothing higher" or "nothing grander." It connotes someone who has very high and grand realizations, a superior teacher, someone with great qualities, not just somebody fat who is grand in weight! A lama is someone with great skills and qualities, not just someone with a grand name or title.

The qualifications of the spiritual mentor need to be complete, both in terms of his or her scriptural knowledge and of his or her actual realization. A qualified master needs to have both, and must not be someone prone to anger, even if he or she knows the texts very well. We need someone who has all the good qualities and knowledge, who lives according to the teachings, and who can explain them clearly to others.

The lam-rim says, "A spiritual mentor is someone who is disciplined, with a calm, settled mind and deep insight, has superior qualities, is enthusiastic, knows many teachings, fully understands voidness, is skilled in explaining it, is loving, and persevering." Likewise, the disciples need to have a sincere interest in learning and a sincere interest in improving themselves. The texts say not to teach Dharma to those who aren't sincerely interested or who have just intellectual curiosity.

We try to accomplish guru-yoga. "Yoga" here means to integrate with the real thing. In other words, we want to integrate our bodies, speech and minds with the good qualities of the body, speech, and mind of our spiritual mentor and of his or her lineage of spiritual masters, which

are "the real thing." We make requests to be able to develop the same type of realizations, insights and actualizations as our spiritual mentor. That is what guru-yoga is, integrating ourselves with the real thing as represented by the guru.

In order to enter fully into this practice, we need reflect on the benefits of relying on a qualified spiritual mentor in a healthy manner, with trust and commitment, and the disadvantages of not having it or of losing or dropping it.

Then we need to think about what might be the actual ways of relating to and relying on a spiritual mentor in a healthy manner, with a whole-hearted commitment? This would be in terms of our minds or attitudes toward him or her, and our way of behaving, our actions. In terms of the minds or attitudes, we need to have confident belief that the spiritual mentor is a Buddha, while knowing what that actually means, and then remain mindful of his or her kindness, with deep appreciation and gratitude. In terms of our actions, the basic one is to put into practice exactly what our spiritual mentor advises; and then to show respect and help him or her. As Milarepa said, "I have no material objects to offer to my spiritual mentor, but I can show my appreciation for his kindness by committing myself to practicing exactly what he says." A Mahayana master is someone who is not interested in being offered something material, but in being offered sincere practice by the disciple.

[See: *Relating to a Spiritual Teacher: Building a Healthy Relationship*, chapter 9 {11}.]

When we speak of practicing exactly as our spiritual mentor advises, we are speaking of a mentor who has absolute, total, full qualifications. But it's going to be difficult to find somebody who has absolute, total, full qualifications; so, as it says in the teachings, don't look at the person; look at what he or she says. The spiritual mentor might be someone with not so many realizations or not such high ones; but we need to examine what he or she says, and see if it is meaningful.

We need to check the mentor's teachings and test his or her qualities and qualifications. It's not good to accept a spiritual teacher as our mentor, and then to find that he or she has faults and make mistakes, so that we later turn away from the person because of these faults. That's a very painful and unfortunate situation. We need to examine very carefully from the start, as it says in the teachings before committing ourselves to someone.

## **Beginningless Mind**

After these preliminaries, then during our meditation sessions the text says that we need to reflect that, from beginningless time, we have been under the power and influence of our minds and our minds have been under the power and influence of disturbing emotions and attitudes.

When various teachings say "from beginningless time," what do they mean by that? Other systems that speak of the creation of the world present a beginning, the creation. Here, things are not presented as having an absolute beginning. So "from beginningless time" means from infinite previous rebirths.

There's a little three-year old girl in the Punjab who remembers very precisely many details of her previous life: her family, what happened, and so on. There are many other cases like that of children having clear recollection or recognition of things and people from their past lives. So there is some evidence of the existence of past lifetimes.



When we speak of beginningless lives, we are speaking of beginningless mind, the mental continuum. Mind is defined as mere clarity and awareness. Just to know the definition, however, is not enough. It is important actually to be able to recognize and identify this function of making things clear, in the sense of giving rise to appearances or mental representations of things, and being aware of things, in the sense of cognitively engaging with them. Mind is also something that has no beginning. It's important to establish its existence and its relation with the physical body. It's not something physical, but it is related to the physical body; it's not a substance, nor a physical product. Also, there are different levels of mind, from gross to very subtle. It is the continuum of its subtlest level that reaches back over countless lifetimes, without a beginning.

Buddha said that if mind were something that could be newly created, or was a fleeting phenomenon that just came and went, or was created by a god, it would be very difficult to tame and control it. On the other hand, if we think of mind coming from beginningless time, and experiences coming from karmic impulses, based on previous actions, then we can apply various methods to tame the mind.

We need to examine the actual processes of how we acquire information, how we come to know things. It seems as though information comes in from outside, from something our eyes see, our ears hear, or something like that. Like now, I'm sitting here and looking at this white-haired old monk in front of me. It seems as though there is some sort of consciousness that is looking, making the connection with visual information, and ascertaining the specific object seen. That's because while I am looking at that object, I can see things about it that are in my full, clear vision. But my mind will not perceive the object with certainty if it is thinking about something that happened to me in the morning. Although everything appears all around me, my mind will not be directed at it. So information seems to come in from the various senses and there also seems to be a certain factor of paying attention, which obviously involves a mental process.

We mustn't just leave it, however, as the texts describe it. We need to examine things from our own experience and also take into consideration the modern scientific explanation of things, in terms of the presentation of the brain, how it works through the senses, how different parts of the brain are involved with different mental functions, and so on. We need to try to understand how the mind works in terms of our own experience as well as in terms of the scientific explanation. This will definitely require a great deal of investigation.

It is definitely possible to gain an ascertainment of how this whole process works that will accord with both Buddha's explanation and also with the scientific presentation of the brain and the rest. The same is true regarding how memory works and the relationship between mind and matter. With us Tibetans, for instance, if we hear the two words *China* and *India*, although the first syllable in both these words is the same ("*Gyanag*" and "*Gyagar*"), the second syllable is different. There isn't really anything physical in there that would affect our response; but immediately, just merely hearing the word *China*, we get uptight, and hearing the word *India*, our minds feel a bit more relaxed. Similarly, if you hear the words *Tenzin Gyatso*, immediately your minds feel happy and you think, "Great." If you hear the words *Mao Zedong*, you think, "That bastard." In each case, there isn't anything physical there except just sounds of consonants and vowels, but there is some sort of relation with how our feelings work and previous distinctions we have made and concepts we hold.

It is extremely important to investigate such things, including visual images and how they appear to us. It is similar to what occurs when hearing the name "Tenzin Gyatso" and the

feelings that accompany it. Investigate scientifically and see how it all happens. Even if it is not actually presented this way in the Buddhist teachings, see what process is going on in the brain, as it seems the brain is very involved in all of this. Different parts are involved with visual and auditory perception. See what is going on with dreaming. These aspects involving brain functions are all things that we can't deny, because they are all established through science. Like when someone is asleep, if you make a small sound they don't hear it: but if you make a loud sound then there is some physical reaction even if the person is asleep. Here again, we can't deny this. We need to investigate and see clearly how everything actually works based on the findings of science and then how they would fit into the teachings.

The brain is also definitely involved with memory. And the same must be true with extrasensory perception, such as perceiving what might happen in the future, which comes from gaining absorbed concentration (*samadhi*). Such things are explained in the scriptures and there are actually people who develop it. A mental continuum that has experienced something that has happened previously is able to have some warnings of what will occur later, but only if that continuum has some interdependent relationship with the two events. It is possible to develop clairvoyance and give certain predictions of the future; but if there is no relationship of a future event with the continuity of consciousness, then one is not able to guess even a hint of the future. Clairvoyance doesn't arise from nowhere; it is based on the various causes and circumstances in the actual mental continuum of the individual who has it.

## Evolution

When we investigate the different levels of consciousness, it is good not to leave it only on the sutra level, but to investigate the tantra level as well. The tantras describe the subtlest level of mind and it is this level that comes from previous lifetimes and goes on to others. Connected with it is the subtlest level of body, which is the subtlest energy wind that always accompanies that level of mind. The "me" is something that can be labeled on these two as its basis for labeling, and it is this combination that travels from past lifetimes to the present and on into future lifetimes.

In each lifetime, the subtlest mind and body, through a process of evolution, become progressively grosser as they start to connect with the elements of gross matter. In terms of general evolution within the context of this world age, the scriptures describe how, in the beginning, the original beings lived just on absorbed concentration and didn't need to eat. Eventually, however, they ate rougher and rougher food and acquired progressively grosser bodies. Now we need to investigate whether this refers to absolutely everybody when life begins to emerge in a world age or just to certain beings at that time.

Look at Tibet. We think of ourselves as descending from various deities who mated with monkeys and that people evolved from that. Science speaks of simpler life forms evolving into more complicated ones and that was how humans evolved. I myself have confidence in both these theories of evolution. As for the dates of the first people in Tibet, there is scientific evidence that people were there before the time of the Buddha Shakyamuni. Archeological digs have found human bones and other remains in Chamdo and Kongbo, dating three thousand years ago. In contrast, Buddha predicted that two hundred years after his passing, a new generation of beings would live in the Land of Snows. How to reconcile the two?

It is also very clear that there once was a lake in the Lhasa region, because in 1956 a geological survey team found fossils of plant life there. They show the leaves of a tree that fell into the lake, and which was preserved in the mud at the bottom. So there obviously was a

lake there, with a forest at its edge. The lake gradually shrank and eventually dried up, and the Tsuglagkang Temple was built on the final vestiges of that lake. Buddha's prediction didn't say that there wouldn't be any people existing beyond the bounds of the lake. It just indicated that a new generation of people would come to the region and live on the dry land that would emerge from the center of the lake. This doesn't contradict the scientific evidence of prehistoric men in Chamdo and various other places in Tibet before that time. Like this, we need to investigate the meaning of these things in the scriptures and in science.

As for the theory of evolution, which teaches the progressive development of complex life forms from simpler ones, Shakyamuni Buddha came to teach how to attain a lasting blissful state of mind. He did not come to teach whether the world was round, square, or triangular. Within the body of the teachings of the Buddha, there are certain comments about the origins of specific peoples and places, but this is not the main topic. The principal points deal with karma and human consciousness and how to generate lasting happiness within that stream of mind. A Buddha always teaches in terms of what is going to accord with the disposition of the people and their way of thinking. If it fits their way of thinking, he may teach that things do have permanent existence, whereas to others he will teach that they don't.

Previously in the West, people killed each other over the proper concept of the world that they held. Nobody would believe that the world was round. They believed it was flat and they killed each other over such things. The point of Buddha's teaching is not about generating a mind that believes the world is flat or round. That's missing the point. The whole point of his teachings about beginningless time is that mind is beginningless. If he were not talking about the beginninglessness of mind, there would not be much point in his discussing beginninglessness in general. It's on the basis of beginningless mind that we get the discussion of the relation of mind to the body in terms of karma. Within the overall continuity of beginningless mind, various types of bodies come and go, both on an individual and a world level. The discussion of beginningless lifetimes and beginningless mind must be based on logic and reasoning, and it is something that can definitely be established in that way. So it is important to put a great deal of effort into investigating these points with logic.

## **Absorbing the Mind in Positive States**

Since we each have an individual, beginningless mental continuum, in what direction is it going? What are the factors that influence the contents of its experience? We find that, from beginningless time, we've been under the influence of attachment, hostility, and naivety. This is what is meant by the expression "other-powered" or "being under the influence of other factors." In other words, the mind is not under our control, it is controlled by these other factors: various disturbing emotions, delusions, unawareness (ignorance), and so forth. Because our minds are not tamed, we perform all sorts of destructive actions and they build up the various types of karmic aftermath, which perpetuate these patterns of behavior and bring us more problems. We experience unhappiness and suffering as what ripens from the negative karmic force that has come as the aftermath of our destructive actions. We acted in those ways because of the destructive karmic impulses that arose in our minds. And where did they come from? They came from our minds not being under our control. So it is necessary to bring our minds under control, and not let them go under the influence of disturbing emotions and attitudes. We need to have them under the control of constructive, positive emotions and attitudes.

To be able to apply our minds to constructive aims, we need to make them flexible and serviceable, so that we can apply them at will to whatever we wish. To make them

serviceable, we need to employ the various procedures of training the mind through meditation. Through repetition and familiarization, meditation builds up as a habit certain positive states of mind. These states make our minds flexible so that we can apply them to further constructive states. If we want to do this, however, our minds need to be stable. No matter what object or mental state we take as our object of focus, if our minds cannot stay focused on it with stability, we will be unable to familiarize them with this state and integrate it as part of our minds.

For example, if we are trying to develop a habit of compassion, our minds have to actually stay focused, with stability, in that state. If the mind is totally immersed into an emotion, attitude, or state of mind in general, it builds up great force to stay in that direction. When we are trying, through meditation, to make compassion a very strong habit, if thoughts of impermanence or of suffering and problems arise, although such thoughts theoretically can be a help, at the particular time of trying to build up concentration on compassion, they are hindrances. We need to immerse our minds and absorb our concentration totally, single-pointedly, in the object of the meditation.

Before we will be able to immerse and absorb our minds in the state that we want to build up as a positive habit, we need first to ascertain the actual nature of that state of mind. We need to know what it is, correctly and with certitude. Only on the basis of this strong recognition and ascertainment of this state can we feel confident to immerse our minds in it. Likewise, we need to have strong confidence in the necessity for developing that state of mind. Consider the example of compassion. With discerning (analytical) meditation, we need to think beforehand, "Compassion is something I definitely need to develop for this and that reason." When we go through all the reasons for developing it, we develop a very strong, confident belief in compassion. Only then can we absorb our minds completely in it during concentrated meditation and know it is very helpful.

The text discusses the benefits of doing three sessions of meditation during the day and three at night. It is also necessary to be in an isolated and quiet place during the meditation sessions and the periods in between them. If we hear loud and disturbing noises and have disturbing types of thoughts, our minds will be upset and we won't be able to concentrate properly. Also, as I tell the monks and nuns, we need to take care about the state of our minds in general. Regarding this, the text also says that another circumstance conducive for meditating is not to eat at night. Of course, if we find that our bodies are not getting enough nutrition and feel very weak from not eating after lunch, then that is a different situation. We have to take the physical realities of our bodies into consideration. However, if we're able, then it is more conducive to meditation if we don't eat at night. More detailed explanations on this can be found in the two lam-rim texts of Tsongkhapa.

## **The Preliminaries: The Precious Human Rebirth**

The first of the seven points for training the mind is the preliminaries, which are the supporting basis. These are thinking about:

- the precious human rebirth,
- death and impermanence,
- behavioral cause and effect, or karma,
- the sufferings or problems of uncontrollably recurring existence, samsara.

The text now speaks about the first preliminary, the precious human rebirth. First we need to recognize the eight respites and the ten enrichments. Respites, or leisure, are temporary states of freedom from the eight situations of no leisure.

[From among the eight situations with no leisure that prevent Dharma practice, the four nonhuman situations are rebirth as

- a trapped being in a joyless realm (hell-creature),
- a desperately clutching ghost (hungry ghost),
- a creeping creature (animal),
- a long-lived divine being (god).

The four human situations of no leisure are rebirth as

- a barbarian in a savage border region,
- in a land where the Dharma is unavailable,
- with severe learning disabilities,
- instinctively holding a distorted outlook on life, denying what is true.

From among the ten enriching situations that enable Dharma practice (the ten endowments), the five personal situations are rebirth as

- a human,
- in a central Buddhist region,
- with complete faculties,
- not still experiencing the repercussions from having committed the most extreme destructive actions,
- with instinctive belief in what is true.

The five social situations that enable Dharma practice are rebirth

- where and when a Buddha has come,
- has taught the Dharma,
- the Dharma is still maintained,
- with a monastic community following the Buddha's example,
- with others compassionately supporting the monastic community.]

The first of these situations of no leisure is to have distorted antagonistic thinking. Those who say antagonistically that clairvoyance is impossible - or do not even see the possibility of being reborn into a situation in which the teachings of the Buddha are available - are quite incapable of pursuing the practice of the Dharma, and sometimes get desperate to the point of committing suicide.

Fortunately we are not like that. We are healthy, with a sound body and sound intelligence to understand. For example, there are some Westerners here with us; in Tibetan we call them "yellow-haired people," but some are dark-haired, some red-haired, and some even bald! And people born in China may have no opportunity to practice Dharma. Yet the foreigners here, although born in a country where the Dharma isn't present yet, have heard about it and its advantages, and they have come here to learn.

There is a point of debate here as to whether those who come from America are coming from the Northern Continent. If they are, the karmic obstacles are very heavy, but it's in question. According to the sutras, the people from the Northern Continent have no ownership and no possessions - and in America, people are very possessive about their wealth and material status! There also seems to be a great deal of interest in Buddhism in the USA, because they have many immigrants from places like China, Japan and Vietnam whose parents' heritage is Buddhist. There are also many Americans who have come into contact with Tibetan Buddhism and an interest has arisen there.

This is all part of the discussion of one of the situations of no leisure that the precious human body is free of. Rebirth with such a body is hard to achieve and, even if reborn as a human, the possibilities of meeting the Dharma are few. Even if we have met the Dharma, if we are deficient in terms of being severely handicapped and learning disabled, the opportunity is lost. And even if we are not severely disabled, it is still possible that we were born with an extremely distorted, antagonistic attitude, and that would really hinder our possibility of developing.

It is helpful if we look at each of these different situations of no leisure, and think: "How easily I could have been born in such a state, and how fortunate I am to be free from that." When we think very strongly of this situation we have of freedom from a condition of no leisure, then we develop the great sense of happiness and relief that is a part of this meditation.

Among the ten enrichments, being born as a human, in a central area and so forth, are the enrichments from our own personal side. There are also enrichments from the side of society, such as being born at a time when a Buddha has come, when the teachings are flourishing, and when there are patrons supporting and people practicing them.

Now, we all have these eight situations of leisure. While it might be difficult to meet all the qualifications of the ten enrichments, the most important are the eight situations of leisure, or respites, that we have. That is why, in various texts, they often speak of this body of great leisure, this body of respites, because these are the ones that all of us do have. The point of all this is that, if we have this great opportunity, this precious human life, we cannot let it go to waste; we need to make good use of it.

How do we actually take advantage of this precious human body? The people from the Northern Continent are excluded from this leisure and freedom - just those from the other three continents. Thinking of the importance of this precious working basis that we have, we can achieve with it all the purified states of *bodhi*: namely the purified states of an arhat or liberated being of either the shravaka or pratyekabuddha class, or the purified state of a Buddha. This precious human body is the basis upon which can actually achieve any of these great spiritual goals. Outside of the precious human body, there is no other basis from which we can develop a strong bodhichitta aim. This precious human body is something absolutely essential in order to practice the tantric paths, as the great master Nagabodhi, a disciple of Nagarjuna, explains in his presentation of the stages.

The precious human life we have on this continent is a body of actions. We live in this land of actions, which means that, based on various actions, we are able to have either a shorter life or a longer life, and we can achieve various things within this lifetime. Since we were born in the land of actions - this Southern Continent - it is possible by our actions to achieve something in this lifetime. So, this precious human life is something extremely powerful. In addition to this, if our precious human life has the eight ripened good qualities, then when we think of the

individual causes and nature of these eight, we will increase our capacity to achieve all our goals. To have such potential and just throw it away is a real waste isn't it? It is as if we had a precious heirloom made of gold to use as the financial basis for supporting our lives; but, instead, we just wasted it. That would be a sad situation.

[The eight ripened good qualities (*rnam-smin-gyi yon-tan brgyad*) for a precious human rebirth are:

- to have a long life,
- a pleasing physical appearance,
- an excellent family background or caste,
- wealth,
- credible speech,
- power and influence,
- a strong physical body, great stamina, and a strong mind or great willpower,
- to be masculine, which in a traditional society meant having more opportunities.]

[See: General Introduction to the Initial Scope Teachings of the Graded Path (Lam-rim), Day Two {12}.]

When we have the realization that to waste this precious human body, even for a moment, would be an extreme loss, this is the recognition of our precious human rebirth. The scriptures refer to the great advantages of the precious human rebirth as the seed for growing all kinds of qualities, and a great jewel that brings us all the attainments. In *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, Shantideva says, "So if, having found a respite such as this, I don't make being constructive a habit, there's nothing more self-deceptive than this; there's nothing more stupid than this....) Having found, somehow, a beneficial rebirth, so hard to find, if (now), while able to discriminate, I drag myself down once more to a joyless realm, it amounts to not having had a mind while here, like having been stupefied by a mantra spell. If I don't know what's causing me to be so stupid, well, what is it there inside my (head)?"

This quote from Shantideva is similar to what Aryashura said: "Once we have this precious opportunity, we must not throw it away because, if we were to fall to some unbearable state, like that of a trapped being in a joyless hell realm, we would have no opportunity to improve our condition." So we need to think how fortunate we are, that we are in a situation in which we can actually do something about what happens to us.

If this precious human body, with its eight respites and ten enrichments, were something easy to acquire again and again, it wouldn't be so sad. Like a child, we might think, "If I don't get it today or tomorrow, I'll be able to get it soon anyway." If this were so, it would be a different story. But the reality is that a precious human life is extremely rare and difficult to achieve. To understand this, we need to look first at cause and effect - if the causes were not rare, neither would be the results. But the causes themselves are very rare.

The basic philosophy and outlook of Buddhism is that everything arises dependently on something else: all things come from causes. A precious human rebirth isn't something that comes about out of thin air, but as a result of causes. Living human beings come from the sperm and eggs of their parents, who came from previous sperm and eggs, and so it goes, all the way back through the process of evolution. Beings developed within an environment incipient in an emerging universe that, in turn, came about from a previous period when such a universe was not yet existent. Going thusly through cycles advancing from even earlier

cycles, all these outcomes resulted from various causes, concordant with the diverse karma of those various beings. Just as the diverse life forms in the universe come from causes, the same applies to our own individual mental continuums and the life forms that they take on. Actions that we took in the past brought about, as an effect of those actions, the births we have had. And what we do in this lifetime will determine our future rebirths.

Our mental continuum doesn't always remain the same. It is different as a layperson and as a monk or nun with vows. Monks and nuns have a special interest in devoting their entire lives to the Dharma. And what makes a monk or a nun? It is the effect of the vows on their mental continuum, the various trainings, restraints and so forth, which come from the Buddhas. This comes about through a process of causes. For instance, a monk may think, "Although as a monk I follow certain disciplines, if my mind becomes deluded by disturbing attitudes, I will waste this opportunity I have." So we need to make proper use of the time and opportunities that we have. As soon as we awake in the morning, we do our various prayers and recitations. If our mind starts to wander, we try to bring it back. We cannot lose the opportunity - even if we need to slap our face to come back to the point of the meditation!

Something we particularly want to safeguard against is getting angry. If we become angry with others, as Shantideva says in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, it devastates all the positive force we have built up on our mental continuum. Shantideva also tells us that the causes for anger are many, because not only do we get angry at people who irritate us, we even become impatient with birds singing loudly! We get unnecessarily upset so easily that we have to take care to be aware of this tendency toward anger. We see something inauspicious and we get upset! The dogs keep us awake at night and we get angry with them for not letting us sleep! Yet compared to the Chinese communists, who try to justify killing, torturing and causing suffering to people, we are not so bad. At least we make an attempt to be religious, to do good things, and to be on the right path.

We may have studied and then feel great pride, thinking, "I know the texts very well, I'm a great teacher, and everything can fall on my shoulders - I'm going to teach everybody." If we have that type of proud mind, and especially if our motivation to teach is to make a lot of money and become very famous, this is a complete waste of our learning. All of it will have been pointless. People who don't follow the spiritual path correctly are like an exhausted donkey that stops along the path and cannot move or make any more progress.

The Chinese, who don't assert any religion and criticize each other back and forth, are not as bad as some of us here in robes who are supposed to be doing various religious practices, yet instead spend time criticizing that monk to the left who did this or that, and that monk on the right who did the other. To act in this way creates far more negative potential than the Chinese, who do the same without asserting any religion.

If we don't build up the causes in this lifetime to gain a precious human rebirth in the future, such a rebirth is going to be very hard to achieve. We can examine its rarity in terms of both its nature and its numbers, such as the fact that there are many more insects than humans, for example. Even if we don't take into account the trapped beings in the joyless realms (hell beings) and the clutching ghosts (hungry ghosts), since we can't actually see them, still we couldn't accurately count the number of animals and insects in this world. So, from the point of view of the actual number of individuals in each life form, we can see that the number of those who have a precious human life form is very small.



The estimated global human population is 4.8 billion. How many in this number have a fully qualified precious human rebirth, both in terms of statistics and causes? We need to ask ourselves whether we actually have the complete conditions and causes within us to attain a precious human birth. When we think in this way, we can appreciate the challenge of how few precious human births there are, and how hard it is to accumulate the causes for achieving one.

As for the establishment of the Dharma, it was created not for the benefit of the Buddhas themselves, but for the benefit of those who want happiness and don't want suffering - beings such as us. And it was taught to enable us to control and tame our minds. What are the circumstances conducive to this? If we have the external circumstance of having a spiritual mentor who is fully qualified and the internal circumstance of a precious human rebirth, we have the ability to make progress and achieve these goals. If we think even further, from a deeper level, in terms of Buddha-nature, we indeed do have all the essential factors that will allow us to fully evolve into Buddhas. With all the bases, causes and circumstances in place, there is no reason why we can't achieve our goals. The admonition not to waste this time is something we must heed right now, not "next year," or in some vague future. We cannot waste this moment! This is because life can be quite short, and the best way to take advantage of our precious human rebirth is to develop a bodhichitta aim.

So, let us reflect, deeply, on how rare and short a precious human life can be. Let us resolve, decisively, to use it in the best possible way, making prayers and requests to do this by developing a bodhichitta aim. This completes the first preliminary.

# Day Three: The Preliminaries, Continued

## General Introduction and Review

The various Tibetan traditions coming from the Buddha - Kadam, Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma - all follow a presentation of ways to train our attitudes that comes from a common source: Shantideva's *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*. Shantideva's presentation, in turn, encompasses all the points found in the lam-rim teachings of the graded path, meaning all the graded pathway minds leading to enlightenment. There is nothing in these graded paths that couldn't be considered training of our attitudes. Still, the particular points that we're discussing apply to a specific line of teachings called "lojong," "attitude-training." They are condensed into *The Seven-Point Attitude-Training*, as presented in the text by Geshe Chaykawa, and in the commentary called *The Rays of the Sun*, by Namkapel, a disciple of Tsongkhapa.

The seven points for attitude-training are:

- the preliminaries,
- the method of training in the two bodhichittas - relative and deepest,
- transforming adverse circumstances into a path to enlightenment,
- condensation of the practice in one lifetime,
- the measure of having trained our attitudes,
- the close-bonding practices for attitude-training,
- the points to train in for attitude-training.

## Death and Impermanence

Now that we have all achieved the working basis of a precious human body, we all wish to be happy; none of us wishes to have any suffering or problems. The happiness that we wish for doesn't come from out of nowhere - it comes from causes. So we need to think very deeply about the causes that bring about our happiness and eliminate our problems. In order to be able to pursue the spiritual path, we must take advantage of the precious human life that we have. Of course, in order to live we need to earn a living and do the various things that are necessary for our daily life. But we cannot place the main emphasis on acquiring money and material objects. Furthermore, money and material objects are not the sole cause for happiness. Not everybody who is wealthy is happy. When we are aware that there are a lot of wealthy people with many material possessions, who are miserable and have severe mental suffering, we can't say that the sole cause of happiness is material possessions.

In order for our happiness to come about, it must have some prior cause. Happiness depends primarily on the state of mind. If a person's mind is happy, then whatever his or her external circumstances may be, this person continues to be happy. If someone is basically a happy person, polite, considerate to others - a cultivated, good type of person - then whether or not they actually believe in religion or Dharma doesn't make any difference. If we are refined and considerate of others, we build up positive force (merit) in any case. If, on top of that, we were to study and practice, training in the various methods of Dharma, there would be an even stronger benefit and building up of positive force from being a kind and helpful person. That will benefit not only this life, but also future lives as well.

So, this is a very worthwhile pursuit as regards making the best use of the working basis that

we have. We need to realize that this precious human body will not last forever, that however perfect our circumstances may be, this life is something that will pass. This is because everybody is subject to impermanence and death. The main point is not to waste our time. Therefore, it is extremely important to think about impermanence and how all situations pass.

There are various ways of presenting impermanence. There is a discussion of it in the context of it being one of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths, for instance, or we can speak of it in terms of general impermanence and its levels: gross and subtle. Here, we are speaking in terms of the grosser aspect of impermanence, the type that is seen by anyone who dies.

[See: The Sixteen Aspects and Sixteen Distorted Ways of Embracing the Four Noble Truths {13}.]

## **The Disadvantages of Not Being Mindful of Death and Impermanence**

We would do well to consider the benefits of meditating on and building up an awareness of impermanence, and the disadvantages of not being aware of it. The text speaks first of these disadvantages and then of the extreme importance of remaining aware of impermanence and death. It is important because, whether we believe in it or not, there are future rebirths: we may fall to one of the worse states or one of the better ones. So, it is most important to be aware of our negative potentials that may lead to a worse rebirth, and in turn take care in our actions and the things we do now, since they will affect our future.

If we aren't really mindful of death all the time - even if we practice the Dharma - we won't involve ourselves fully in the Dharma or fully take it seriously. If we are truly aware of death and impermanence, and of how what occurs in the future depends on what we do now, it is unnecessary to have police keeping check on us. Our own awareness of cause and effect will act as guards and keep us from acting inappropriately.

Whoever we are, looking at things in light of the fact that we all are going to die will make us realize there is no point in fooling others or acting in an uncaring manner. At least we'll see that it is absurd to fool ourselves by acting self-destructively, since in the future we will have to face the consequences of what we have done. So it is extremely important to be aware of impermanence and death all the time.

How do we train to gain that awareness of death and impermanence? We do this first by being aware of the fact that none of our possessions, our friends, relatives and so forth, will be of any help at the time of death. Then, we need to reflect on all the circumstances that will occur at the time of death, that all the objects we have acquired - perhaps through deceit, or cheating, or going to a lot of trouble to do so - are not going to be helpful at all when we die. But we are going to have to endure the consequences of any deceptive means that we may have used.

It is certain that we are all going to die because we all are under the influence of the disturbing attitudes and the various impulses of karma on our mental continuum. Even kings must die, and some are even executed. If we spend our time totally ignoring this fact, fooling ourselves, lying, doing all sorts of deceitful things, we are in for a surprise at the time of death: a great deal of regret and remorse. If we were mindful and aware of the fact that we will die, we would act in a much better way while we are alive, and wouldn't have to die with regret and remorse.

Although it is impossible to prevent ourselves from dying, we can prepare so that at the time of death we don't have to die in a state of terror. It is only a matter of time until death comes, so it is worthwhile for us to prepare for it now

These points are presented in the text as follows:

- death is definite,
- the time of our death is uncertain,
- except for the Dharma, there is nothing of help at the time of death.

These are the three points to consider.

## The Certainty of Death

With respect to the fact that death is certain, it is said that if even the innumerable Buddhas and arhats have to die, what can be said about ordinary people such as us? No matter who we are, once we are born, it is one hundred percent sure that we will die. There's nobody who doesn't have to die, so there is no question of our avoiding it. And if we look at the various Buddhas who, before becoming enlightened, had achieved the state of an illusory body and subsequently attained enlightenment in that state without actually passing away, there are very few. Most have demonstrated passing away into *parinirvana*. If we take examples in history - kings and emperors, and so forth - we cannot find anyone who has actually achieved immortality.

There is no place we can go to escape death and, although we may have a very strong body, there is no body strong enough to resist death. Just like being in a place surrounded by mountains on all sides, trapped with no way to escape, likewise, when it comes to death, there is nowhere we can run to escape it.

Imagining things that might happen from which there would be no way to escape, like a nuclear war, does us no good. In any case, death is inescapable. We cannot put the blame on external things that might cause our death, always living in fear of things such as nuclear war. The causes for death are accumulated within our mental continuum - the disturbing attitudes, karma and so forth are the internal causes that will bring about our death, together with external contributing circumstances. The main point is, having been born in a body with disturbing attitudes and karma on our mental continuum, it is certain we are going to die. This is because the moment the body is actualized, at the same time are actualized the causes for death.

Speaking of impermanence and the suffering of all beings, which will be discussed more extensively later, one of the sufferings we can all see is old age. As we get older, for instance, we start losing the power of our senses, an indication of the certainty of death coming.

There are reasons why death will come for certain. First, there are various things that can happen to us, causes within us: we get old and everything degenerates, the power of medicine to cure us weakens, and we die. Second, there's no addition coming to our lifespan, it is constantly decreasing. Of course, there are prayers and certain long-life pujas and practices like that, but to increase the actual lifespan is difficult.

The basic lifespan that we have comes from the positive force, karma and so forth that we have built up in previous lifetimes. Just as the days are constantly passing, if last year we had

one hundred years left of our lifespan, this year there would only be ninety-nine. And no matter what length lifespan we might imagine, we can see that between this morning and now, part of that has passed. Our lifespan passes away with each breath, with each moment. The time is constantly passing. It is not going to wait. We cannot sit back and stop our lifespan, even for a moment. There's no place we can go, nothing we can do, to avoid the constant running out of time we have left to live.

There are many metaphors for life passing away. For instance, like the water in a waterfall, once it starts to go over the edge there is no way it can stop, it must continue falling down. Or, like a stream, constantly flowing past, think how quickly life passes. Like a flash of lightning blazing through the sky, it doesn't stop for a moment. It just passes by.

As to the next point, out of a lifetime of, say, a hundred years, half of that is probably spent sleeping, especially if we consider how much we slept this year. Of course, the case of an insomniac is different, but generally most of us use up a tremendous amount of time sleeping. If we take a period of sixty years for this life, the first twenty are sort of wasted fooling around. Think of the time one is actually able to divert, to put to any use: if we add all the time spent in these sixty years sleeping and eating and being sick, if we discount all that time, there is probably a period of only about six years left. Actually think about how much time during the course of a day is wasted in all sorts of trivial activities taking care of our body.

One great lama said in his biography, "I spent my first twenty years never getting down to really doing my practice, the next twenty years saying, 'Well, I'm going to get to it any day,' and I've spent the last ten years saying, 'Oh! I wish I could have gotten to my practices earlier!' That is how I have wasted a perfect human life."

Of course there are exceptions, people who from early childhood are interested in studying and improving themselves. But most of us don't feel that as a child and, in the first twenty years, we hardly ever get down to any serious work on self-improvement. The next twenty years of our life we're involved in setting ourselves up, making a living and then we're always procrastinating, saying, "Well, first I have to establish myself and do all these various things." So, ten years pass, then thirty, then forty. Then we start thinking, "Now I'm getting old, I can't do anything. I can't see so well anymore, so I can't strain my eyes. And I can't hear very well and have to listen too hard to understand anything someone is saying." We give up our aspirations to learn.

This shows how difficult it is to actually realize a spiritual life. It is much easier to simply live a worldly one. So if we're really going to lead a spiritual life, we cannot always put it off or put it off until we're older. We'll find that we won't be able to do what we had hoped and have only a great deal of remorse, wishing we had trained ourselves earlier. If we're going to lead a spiritual life, a religious life, this is something we have to do with great resolve and determination from this moment on, right now.

We need to think, "In this life I've met with the teachings of both Hinayana and Mahayana and, within Mahayana, I've met with both sutra and tantra." We need to see that the responsibility lies in each of us. The Buddha has shown us what to do, what path to follow. We can't put the responsibility on anybody else. Whether we follow it or not is completely up to each and every one of us.

The nature of life is instability, changing from moment to moment. The force of life is quite weak and cannot be relied upon. So, as wandering beings whose lifespan is continuously

passing and disintegrating, when we realize our situation, we realize that we're on the verge of just falling off, right out of this lifetime. If we live out our lives completely ignoring this reality, that is truly pathetic.

All this points to the fact that death will come, for sure. If we take all the people in this world, no matter how many billions there may be, none of them will be around a few centuries from now, even though the population of the earth might greatly increase. And if we consider the people here, in this audience, a hundred years from now, maybe a few of the babies might still be around, but the rest of us will definitely have passed away by then! If we think what will happen to this building and the rest of the buildings around here a few centuries from now, they will probably be gone as well. Take the example of a tree: a deciduous tree might be full of leaves, but when winter comes they fall to the ground. The world is constantly moving on. If we wake up very early in the morning just before dawn, it is very fresh. Then the sun rises and travels through the sky without stopping for a moment. Our life is just like that: day and night continue to pass without ever stopping.

## **The Lack of Certainty of the Time of Death**

In history, there are legends of immortals in the far-distant past. They lived immeasurable life spans, but these days we certainly don't have anyone like that anymore. If we ask - since we're all going to pass away - when death will come, there's no certainty about the time, and that's the second point. It's very clear that, no matter where we go in the world, there's no certainty as to when exactly our life will end. We're not referring here to other continents, as presented in *A Treasure-House of Special Topics of Knowledge*. Right here on this earth, the reality is that there is no definite lifespan.

If we look at many people in this world, they are not willing to face the reality of death. There are a lot of places where retired old people are completely unwilling to accept the fact that they are going to die. They spend all their time as tourists traveling around the world, dressing up very fancily, wearing a lot of make-up and trying to look young, in an attempt to run away from the reality of their lives. But they need to prepare their minds in terms of when and where death will come.

Once, after a medical examination, the doctor told me, "There's a hundred percent sure guarantee that you'll live to the age of sixty." But I gave the guarantee back. What is sure is that nobody can ever guarantee what will or won't happen in a fixed period of time.

An important point is that many more circumstances bring about death than those that sustain life, many sicknesses, and so on. We don't actually have to look outside for the causes of death: they are all collected within our mental continuum. Even circumstances that would ordinarily sustain life can cause death. For instance, we eat in order to live, but eating can cause us to have difficulties with our stomach, digestion, liver and so forth. By eating something to sustain our life, we could cause our death.

The next point is how weak the body is, how extremely fragile, how it could break at any moment. Our body is not strong, or tough, or capable of resisting all things. If we consider various structures made of the different elements - buildings, mountains, and so forth - although they seem very strong to us, they pass away. Wind and water wear them away, so there is no need to mention that our body wears out and passes away. The heart is beating all the time, but if it were to stop for a minute, we would just die. The skeleton covered with skin looks beautiful, but inside the skin it is very delicate and fragile. If we look at the delicacy and

the intricacy of the human body, and really get into that, it is quite understandable to think it is so incredible that only God could have made it. But if we really look at the human body, it is something so fragile and easily breakable. Since life can pass so quickly - and it definitely will - we need to apply ourselves to the practice of the Dharma.

## **Nothing Is of Use at the Time of Death Except for the Dharma**

The next point in the outline is that nothing will be of use at the time of death, except the Dharma. We need to be very clear that at the time of death, nothing is of help except the spiritual training in the Dharma. None of the material objects and various things we may have collected will be of any help at the time of death. We'll just have to leave it all behind. Had we been the wealthiest person in the world, no matter how much money we may have had in the bank or in investments, at the time of death we certainly couldn't carry it with us. There's absolutely no hope whatsoever.

The same goes for relatives and friends, who can't be of any help at the time of death. There are people who seem so devoted, they are willing to give up their lives for us, but they can't actually do that. If everyone has to die, what is the use of these people anyway? When the end of life comes, if I say, "I'm a monk" or "I'm the Dalai Lama," that will not keep death away from me. And I have to face my own death myself, alone. Because of having been born, there's nothing else for everyone here but to be leaving, alone, at the time of death. With all the people that Mao Zedong had around him, the enormous army that he amassed, all the power he had, at the time of his death not one of his soldiers was able to help him, or go with him, and he had to face his death completely alone.

This body that each of us has been so intimately connected with, experiencing heat, cold, hunger and thirst, will eventually have to split apart from the mind. We consider our body so important, yet it is just going to turn into a corpse. A corpse usually makes us feel quite nauseated. We consider it to be filthy and contaminating, but where does a corpse come from? It comes from our own body. Where do you think the filth of a corpse comes from? The body that turns into a corpse will not be of any help to us at the time of our death. So in this way, it is very clear that the body, wealth, friends and relatives, none of these things are going to be any help at all the time of death.

People, without thinking of death, go on accumulating and saving things, putting them in empty plastic boxes, then in wooden boxes. When they see a beautiful empty tin they collect it, and go on collecting, just for nothing, just to leave it all behind.

We've established that our mental continuum continues from past into future lifetimes, and it is on this basis that we have labeled the "me" and so forth. So the mental continuum is something that continues on, unable to carry any type of material objects. All that can go on that mental continuum are the various potentialities built up in this lifetime. If we build up constructive potentialities, various types of positive force, this is going to benefit future lifetimes. Potentials are something that we can build up through Dharma practice.

Let us consider various circumstances that can occur at the time of death. We might have some sickness and go to various doctors who say, "There is nothing that can be done about this now, it is going to be a long sickness." Think how uncomfortable we may become, how everything becomes more and more desperate as we realize we are going to die. On the last day of our life we just lie in bed, terrified, as the signs gather, watching life ebbing away. There is nothing we can do: we have no control over the process. We eat our last meal and

medicine has no ability to help us at all. Everything just gets more and more pathetic. We want to speak but we can't, our lips are all dried out. Our ability to see, hear and smell pass, then our ability to breathe passes and we just pass away. Whatever nice name we may have had during life, it now turns into the late Tashi, or the late Kunzang, or whatever.

So, if we think of the circumstances of our impending death and how it is going to happen, we need to have the firm conviction that only some type of spiritual practice can be of any help when death comes. The most effective spiritual practice is developing the two bodhichittas: relative and deepest. So, thinking how death and impermanence will come, we need to resolve very strongly that we are going to develop bodhichitta.

## **Karma: Behavioral Cause and Effect**

The next point in the preliminaries is the discussion of karma: behavioral cause and effect. After we die, there are only two directions we can go, up or down - to either better states of rebirth or to worse ones. Because the mental continuum has continuity, it is definitely going to take rebirth, and under what power will it do so? This is going to take place under the influence of karma; in other words, the causes that have been built up.

### **The Laws of Karma**

There are various quotes from Nagarjuna's *Precious Garland* about the certainty of karma. If we have built up positive force having done constructive acts, the only result that can come from that is happiness. If we have done destructive acts and built up negative force, the only possibility that can come from that is unhappiness and problems. This is something that is definite and for sure. Whatever type of karmic force we have built up, the results will be in accordance with that.

The next point is the increase of karmic effects. From just a small action, we can get a tremendous result. From positive acts can come great results on the positive side, and from destructive acts can come extremely negative results. It is quite possible that, from a very small negative action, a great disaster will follow. We've seen this in the various textual accounts, where somebody called a monk a bad name like monkey or jackass, and as a result for hundreds of lifetimes he was reborn as the type of animal he had called the monk. These are all examples of the increase factor.

Take the example of the actual seeds of plants. If it is the seed of a medicinal tree or plant, the seed itself will have those medicinal qualities. If it is the seed of a poisonous plant, the seed itself will be poisonous. Thus, from a seed of poison comes a plant of poison, and from a seed of medicine comes a plant of medicine. Likewise, something large, like an oak, comes out of a small seed like an acorn. These are apt examples for the characteristics of karma.

As Shantideva says in *Compendium of Trainings*, "If something is helpful in the long run but harmful in the immediate circumstances, it is worth doing. This is because we need to think in terms of long-term effects. But if something is only helpful in the short run but harmful in the long run, then it is something we may not do." Of course, there's no need to mention it if something is harmful both in the long and in the short run.

Think of the example of killing either an animal out of desire for its meat or an enemy out of anger. In the short run, we'll feel relief and might get a fleeting rush of happiness. But in the



long run, we may have to face the consequences of murder. So it will definitely bring a great deal of unhappiness and suffering. On the other hand, if we protect and save the life of some creature that is going to be killed, this only brings happiness as a result - in the long and in the short term. From a small seed a large tree grows, and likewise, from a small action great results can come. So it is very true that great happiness or suffering can come from small causes.

Here is a quote showing how karma and various potentials go with us: "Like a bird's shadow accompanies it wherever it goes, although it may fly very high, and its shadow may not be clear on the ground, it always goes with the bird. When the bird lands, its shadow becomes clear." Likewise, the potentials of karma we have built up come and go with us wherever we may go, over the continuity of our lives. Although it may not be clear now how they ripen; nonetheless, at some time, as we go along, those potentials will become clear again.

Let us consider various types of actions we might take - let's say calling somebody a bad name - that cause others to become unhappy. Nobody likes being called a bad name, so it causes unhappiness. This builds up in us negative potential for further destructive action. This won't just disappear. The point is that karma is not wasted: it is just a matter of time until it ripens.

There are several opponent forces that we can apply, and different methods to avoid having to experience the negative consequences of our actions. We can do constructive acts as opponents. These are things that we build up gradually, not just spectacular actions of giving our body away and things like that. As it says in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, we have to start in a low-key fashion and build up to more extensive acts. So we needn't get discouraged when we read about the acts of the great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas who gave their bodies away and so forth. We can think how they started out, just like us, by doing small types of positive actions. The same thing goes for giving up our destructive actions and distorted habits. We start out small and work up to it by ridding ourselves of bad habits, slowly. This concludes our point on how results increase relative to our actions.

The next point is, if we have done a certain action, we will meet with the result, and if we haven't done a certain action, we will not meet with the result. If we haven't done an action, we will not meet with the consequences, no matter if the result may be happiness or unhappiness. Unless we have collected the causes, we will not experience the result. And, if we have taken an action, it will not have been in vain. Whether it is a positive or a negative potential that we have built up, it will not ripen until we meet with circumstances that will cause it to ripen, and in the interim it will not just disappear. It is just a matter of time until it ripens.

The next point tells us how, if we have built up positive potential from constructive actions and then gotten very angry, it will devastate and extremely weaken the power of that positive force. So, unless something happens to completely devastate the force of what we've built up, when the circumstances are around and gathered, the potential we have accumulated will ripen, as we have collected it.

The present external circumstances of the Tibetans losing their country correspond to inner causes. A long accumulation of destructive actions has caused us to lose our country, live in exile and experience hardships. Take the situation in Africa, with the tremendous drought and famine that has been going on, or millions of people infected with and dying from a virus. This has to do with worldwide karmic patterns, which come from the various forces in the mental continuums of various humans. Of course, we could include animals, but primarily it

all rests on potentials in human mental continuums that belong in the category of shared karma, or general karma. These bring about changes in world karma and cause events like the tremendous drought and famine in Africa.

Even in such situations, where there is a large-scale disaster, we find that there are some individuals who survive and don't have a tremendous amount of difficulty, and that this comes from their own individual potentials and karma. So, when we experience terrible situations, we need to think how this is coming as a result of things we have done in the past, potentials that we have built up. When we think this way, our mind can be a little more relaxed, less uptight and disturbed by the difficult situation we might find ourselves in.

## **Developing Inner Discipline**

We can then reflect, "Just as now in the present I want happiness and don't want suffering and problems, also in the future I'm going to continue to have that same nature - I'm not going to want problems. I'm going to want happiness in the future as well; therefore I had better do something about it now." With this way of thinking, we will not need jails, civil laws and police to keep us from being unruly people. We will find that our own sense of responsibility, knowing that we're going to have to suffer the consequences of our actions, will hold us back from robbing and cheating and killing, and taking the types of actions that will only bring us great suffering in the future.

If we have inner discipline, outside restrictions are not necessary. There are still many places in India where people do not need to lock their doors, and if there is a theft, they feel it is a disgrace to the whole community because their inner discipline of restraining from such unlawful activities means so much to them. The best way is to have our own self-discipline without having to depend on someone else to check our actions. If we look at places in the West, with sophisticated police forces with walkie-talkies and all sorts of electronic equipment, we find that it seems as though the stronger the police force is in such places, the higher is the crime rate. People lacking inner discipline aren't prevented from committing crimes. So it is clear that external restrictions and force don't prevent one from committing crimes, but that it is internal forces that cause antisocial actions.

The Chinese have really had to depend on reinforcing laws and checking on people's activities. However, without enthusiasm and inner cooperation, it is very difficult to bring law and order into a society. It appears that trying to bring about control through police forces and the like becomes a cause for more abuses of the system. This is because the police and the jailers themselves commit more crimes. So, it is extremely important to put the emphasis on our own inner sense of responsibility for our actions, as well as the eventual results of those actions.

## **Divisions of Karma: The Ten Destructive Actions**

In *A Treasure-House of Special Topics of Knowledge*, there are various divisions of karma: karma built up from actions of body, speech and mind; actions the results of which there is certainty of experiencing and those without such certainty. There are results that are certain to be experienced in this lifetime, or in our next lifetime, or the one after that, or in lifetime beyond that. These are some of the many divisions in the presentation of karma.

Although there are many types of karmic actions relative to the infinite types of beings, they can all be condensed into the ten major ones. These include three of the body, four of speech

and three of the mind. When we look at these ten from the standpoint of negative actions, there are ten destructive actions, and restraining ourselves from committing them would be the ten constructive actions. It is extremely important to have confident belief in the laws of behavioral cause and effect and the process that follows, in terms of constructive and destructive actions. This is one of the major points in the Buddhist teachings.

Let us take the destructive action of killing. It breaks down into the intention; the recognition of the object; the disturbing attitude involved, such as desire or anger; and the completing action. To take a life is one of the heaviest things that we can ever do. Even a tiny insect cherishes its life more than anything else. Most Tibetans, even in early childhood, say that to kill a small insect is something very bad and negative. Even though small children may not know what these words mean, nevertheless from childhood they know the phrase, "To kill a small insect is a bad thing to do." So, tiny children saying things like that is a very good thing.

As for killing animals for meat, we need to certainly avoid eating the meat referred to in the three recognitions. We don't order animals to be slaughtered for us, on purpose. In a place where there is a tremendous amount of meat available then it is one thing, but if we are in a place where meat is not readily available, or if we think it might be killed for our particular benefit, we can try to decrease our meat intake as much as possible. As for myself, in 1965, for two years I stopped eating meat completely. But I developed difficulties with hepatitis and wasn't able to keep up the restraint from eating meat. But if it doesn't affect our health, to stop eating meat is best.

Stealing is also very negative, as is improper sexual conduct, such as having sexual relations with someone else's partner. This is extremely destructive, especially if children come out of it, causing a lot of complications. We need to avoid engaging in these types of relations other than with our own partner.

Then we have the negative actions of speech, which are lying, speaking divisive language, abusive language, and idle chatter such as gossip. This last one doesn't seem so bad, but it ruins reputations and is a tremendous waste of time. And then come the negative actions of mind, which include being covetous, having malicious thoughts, and distorted antagonistic thinking.

With regard to coveting, it is very difficult to control. One person's neighbor had a beautiful radio and tape recorder. He asked, "Oh, let me just see it for a while," and then developed a tremendous craving to own it. Thinking with ill-will toward others is malicious thought, such as if we dislike somebody, and as he goes by, generating the wish that he would stumble and fall. Antagonistic distorted views are those that repudiate what actually exists in reality and embrace those that make up what doesn't exist.

For instance, the Chinese don't accept various things that actually do exist and have a completely materialistic outlook. Some people don't accept consciousness, and even if they do accept it, they don't accept that consciousness has continuity in former and future lifetimes. On the basis of that, they deny the value of positive actions and deny the existence of liberation and so forth.

As for constructive actions, for example, when the actual situation arises in which we are about to kill, and at that time we think about the disadvantages and restrain ourselves from actually doing it, that is the actual constructive action of refraining from killing. The constructive action of stopping oneself from killing doesn't occur just in general when there is

no situation in which we might kill. It has to be at a time when we could actually kill something and the thought arises that stops us from doing it. The ten constructive actions are such types of acts.

With respect to slander and lying, there are some people who always like to tell lies or just add a few words. But even if we don't care about the practice of the Dharma, we need to take care of our own reputation. In addition, it is important not to deceive others, so it is very negative to develop the habit of lying. In that case, no matter what we do, it is extremely important to be careful about our behavior, to be restrained and calm, to be someone who is kind and helpful to others. Look at the example of ants and bees, in English they are referred to as "social insects" because they live in large communities. We have to say that humans are social animals as well. We live in society, and therefore it is necessary to be considerate toward other people.

Social animals and insects, when faced with an external enemy, defend themselves. They have few quarrels among themselves, and when they do, they resolve it right away. We need to try to practice tolerance from within, and then expand this to other communities. When we all have to work and live together, to cheat and fool each other is of no help, is it? If we were totally independent, if we could live like mountain goats that don't have to depend on each other for survival, then that would be an excellent thing to do. But, as long as we must depend on other human beings for help and kindness, we will have to learn how to live with them. We need to learn the means of peaceful coexistence.

As we live in society and everybody wants happiness, the only way that we are going to get happiness is for everybody to cooperate, so that there are close bonds and harmony between everyone. Where that doesn't exist, even within a family, when there isn't a close bond and harmony, it just doesn't work. It causes a great deal of unhappiness and discord. If everybody is harmonious, then there is a good possibility of happiness coming to the entire group.

This is the worst mistake that the Chinese communists have made in spreading doubt and suspicion between relatives, between children and parents, between people. This is where they have failed to spread the ideal goals of socialism and communism. The Chinese are really quite pitiful. They deny religion; they deny other things entirely out of ignorance and don't know what they are doing. There is nobody in this world that doesn't care for and cherish oneself. But when communist governments try to bring socialism at the point of a gun or a club, it shows they don't have any respect or regard for the individual and little sincere concern for others. So how can they achieve their goals?

It is important to really make a careful study and investigation of behavioral cause and effect. There are many learned people here, geshe and others, who are involved with this. They can have great interest and investigate what is the connection between outer elements and inner elements, outer processes of cause and effect and inner processes of cause and effect. All of these have to be investigated very carefully. This completes our discussion of behavioral cause and effect.

## **The Shortcomings of Samsara**

Now, the fourth preliminary is about the sufferings or problems of samsara, uncontrollably recurring rebirth. Of the two types of suffering, that of the individual classes of life-forms and general suffering, this refers to the general experience of suffering. It can be divided into six types of suffering and problems.

The first point is that there is no certainty in samsara. Our status can always change. We've had infinite lifetimes and so friends from previous lives will turn out to be enemies in this life, and enemies from past lives will be friends in this one. We can see the same thing happening within one lifetime as well. So we need to think about those who are nice and those who are nasty toward us, and look at how we label them as friends and enemies on that basis. There is no certainty that someone will act nicely or nastily toward us - it can change. This is very easy to see when someone we call our dearest friend says something to us and, on the basis of that, our feelings about that person change quite quickly. First, we have doubts about what their feelings really are, and then we start to have all sorts of prejudices about that person. Very quickly, this person turns into an enemy that we may hate. So we need to realize that nobody is an absolute friend or an absolute enemy who will always stay in that category.

The next point is that there is no satisfaction in samsara. One of the most wonderful fruits that we could have is satisfaction or contentment. But that is very rare. Someone could have enormous sums of money or material wealth, but if in their mind they are not content with that, they experience the same type of suffering as if they were poor. It doesn't matter how much they have, in their mind they are poor and they suffer.

We also need to think about all the various lives and bodies we have had. Think if we had had human lives all the time, from the time of the Buddha until now, how many bodies would we have taken? When we think about it, we are born, we try to accumulate a tremendous amount of possessions, we die; then we are born again, we accumulate more things, we die again; we are born, accumulate more things, die yet again. It just goes on and on and on. If we think of all the milk we have drunk, the ocean isn't big enough to hold it all. If we were fifty years old, try to imagine all the food we would have eaten in those fifty years - probably enough to fill this temple. And it has all gone out as feces. How much feces have you released in this lifetime as well?

If we haven't been able to take advantage of this existence, then it is like wasting our energy and our teeth, and we have unnecessarily caused a lot of pain to our jaws, chewing things. So you see, it is quite important to try to see the actual reality of the situation in which we live, because when we are not aware of the reality it causes a lot of problems. If we are born into this life as a pig, what good qualities do they have? They say pigs were born to be slaughtered, and this seems quite true. Even if it is not slaughtered, there could be a point in just keeping it to have some pleasure, but what to do with the pigs, or the piglets? There's no beauty in their shape, they are so dirty, and it is just pathetic and very pitiful. When people see a little puppy or a kitten, they say, "Oh, how cute!" But when they see little pigs eating garbage and feces, they don't say, "How cute!" They just hold their nose. So if we've made no use of our life, and have just spent our lifetime eating a tremendous amount of garbage like a pig, food or whatever, what was the point of all we've done? And we've been doing this for beginningless lifetimes.

Look at all the times the Tibetans have warred with the Chinese. Sometimes the Tibetans would catch Chinese, tie them together by the hair, and sit on them. They used many other brutal ways of torture too. This is in the history books. If we look at some accounts of the past, we can find some amazing and horrifying things that occurred.

In the collected works of the Fifth Dalai Lama, we find the account of a particular attendant of the First Dalai Lama who was reborn as a bird. If we can believe some accounts, this person was later born again as the very great guru Suchicho through different rebirths. So, from this type of example we can see that we have been born here and then there, in all types of

situations, just as in a children's game, landing in different places on a board. Or, as in gambling with dice, different throws come up and we're constantly taking births by the force of our delusions and our karma.

If this situation were just like a plant or a tree in a field - we cut it and it grows, we cut it and it grows - there's no point. There's nothing that the tree can possibly do, except constantly to grow and be cut down, grow and be cut down. Whereas here in our case, something can be done about it because our changing rebirth situations are under the influence of our mental continuum and the mental continuum is under the influence of various impulses and karmic potentials that are built up in it. So we can actually do something about changing the potential in order to break the pattern. We're not just puppets.

We've taken many different types of rebirth, but how many times have we actually been able to take the essence of a meaningful rebirth and made it worth having; and how many lives have we just wasted? The millions and billions of rebirths that we've had without taking advantage of any of them - this is really pathetic. We need to think how we have taken countless bodies, yet up to now we have never taken real advantage of them, and in this way we need to develop a feeling of disgust with ourselves.

Being born over and over, with no respite, taking countless bodies, good and bad, again and again - trying to fathom this endless round of births, contemplating it, can be a basis for developing renunciation, a determination to be free from the uncontrollably recurring cycle of birth and death.

The next point concerns how people can lose their status and go from high to low, or low to high. Beings born as human can be great rulers, high officials and so forth. Then, because of circumstances, they fall to being slaves. Or beings born as gods can fall to the worse realms. We can see very clearly from the examples of people around us how one can fall from high to low, or can rise from low to high. So we need to look at ourselves and consider our situation: we have a working basis of a body with a higher status rebirth, and out of the higher status rebirths of being either a human or a god, we have a human rebirth, which is best.

# Day Four: Completion of Preliminaries and the Two Types of Bodhichitta

## General Introduction and Overview

The teachings are infinite in their extent and are addressed to beings of infinite types of dispositions. They can all be included within three vehicles of mind: Hinayana, Mahayana sutra, and Mahayana tantra. All of these vehicles of mind and the teachings concerning them were preserved in Tibet. And within the lineages as they were transmitted in Tibet, we can distinguish between the old and the new translation traditions: Nyingma and Sarma. Within Sarma or the new translation traditions, there are Sakya, Kagyu and Kadam. This latter one, Kadam, coming from Atisha, later became the Gelug tradition.

The Kadam tradition was strongly influenced by the various bodhichitta teachings. The Gelug tradition has specialized in transmitting all the extensive teachings on this topic, coming directly from the line of the great Nagarjuna and his spiritual offspring from India.

As we have said, it is extremely important that our minds and everything within us be totally consistent with the teachings. Holding the teachings must not only be on our lips. They need to be integrated with our minds, in harmony with the disposition of each practitioner. It's very important not to fall to extremes of partisanship, feeling that only one of the Buddhist traditions has the true teachings. As the great First Panchen Lama, Lozang-chokyi-gyeltsen has said in *A Root Text for Mahamudra (Phyag-chen rtsa-ba)*, "From the point of view of individually ascribed names, there are numerous traditions... Nevertheless, when scrutinized by a yogi, learned in scripture and logic and experienced (in meditation), their definitive meanings are all seen to come to the same intended point." So it is extremely important to approach the teachings in an impartial, unbiased manner.

[See: *A Root Text for the Precious Gelug-Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra* {14}.]

We have been working with a text by Namkapel, a disciple of the great Tsongkhapa, called *Attitude-Training Like the Rays of the Sun*, a commentary on the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training* by Geshe Chaykawa. The seven points are:

- the preliminaries,
- the method of training in the two bodhichittas,
- transforming adverse circumstances into a path to enlightenment,
- condensation of the practice in one lifetime,
- the measure of having trained our attitudes,
- the close-bonding practices for attitude-training,
- the points to train in for attitude-training.

## Completion of the Preliminaries

So far, we have been addressing the preliminaries. With a whole-hearted commitment to a spiritual mentor, as explained before, we train in the various points of the graded path. Thinking in terms of the precious human life, we need to recognize all the aspects of the liberties or respites that we have, and all the enrichments that we have. Once we recognize them, we can actually take advantage of them. This is because once we appreciate what we

have, we will naturally want to take advantage of it.

Thinking about how easily we can lose this opportunity makes us mindful of death and impermanence. We become aware that except for the Dharma and the various preventive measures that we have built up on our mental continuum, nothing is going to help at the time of death. In order to really integrate the various spiritual measures and practices into our minds, we must have this mindfulness of death. Otherwise our efforts will not be fully serious. We can look to all the great masters of the past in Tibet and all the great masters of India. Now as well, there are a great many practitioners who truly devote their entire lives to the practice - some in Mysore, some up in the caves here in Dharamsala, some in Ladakh, and in other places here in India - but none have gained immortality; none will live forever.

No matter what kind of situation we're in, it is extremely important to plan how to make the best use of it for making the greatest spiritual progress. We can think of the various communities we might be able to join, in terms of the Sangha and so forth, but no matter the level to which we commit ourselves, it is important to turn our entire minds and hearts to the teachings. It is extremely important that lay persons as well be refined and well trained. We can see this is true from any viewpoint we take to examine it. Someone who is arrogant and puffed-up, someone who exploits and takes advantage of others, just causes reactions of contempt and discomfort in everybody. Even if we are not particularly religious, it's extremely important to cultivate ourselves as a good person. If we then actually become a spiritual person, we won't think exclusively in terms of this lifetime, but of all future lifetimes and how we can benefit them.

At whatever level we are working - whether just for this lifetime or for future lifetimes - we need to put all our efforts into improving ourselves, working on ourselves, growing, becoming a better and kinder person. In this way, our lives will become happier and the society in which we live will be happier. If we have worked all this life on becoming a better person and have developed various positive potentials, then at the time of death we won't die with a great feeling of regret that we have wasted our life. It is quite important to work on this in order not to feel regret when we die, and the best way to die with peace of mind is to build up positive potentials on our mental continuum during this lifetime. If we have built up strong positive potentials in this life, then in future lifetimes we will meet with pleasant situations, things will continue to improve, and we will be able to continue with our spiritual growth and progress.

Whether or not we have actually been able to realize any of the spiritual pathways of mind in this lifetime, such as the five pathway minds, from having built up positive potential in this life, we will be able to die with the hope that in future lives we will actually realize one of them and become a highly realized being, an *arya*.

[See: [The Five Pathway Minds \(Five Paths\) - Basic Presentation](#) {15}.]

## Renunciation

In the text, we have reached the point in the preliminaries at which the topic of renunciation - or the determination to be free of our problems - is discussed. If we don't think about all the problems and sufferings of all the uncontrollably recurring situations in samsara, then we will not develop this determination to be free of all them, this renunciation. So it is extremely important to think about all these situations, to develop full disgust with them, and the strong determination from the depths of our hearts to be free.



The *Vinaya* texts say, "The end result of going high is falling low. The end result of coming together is dispersion, falling apart." That is the actual nature of reality. We need not mention that over beginningless lifetimes, all the various beings that have been together with us have parted, and that this has also happened within this lifetime. No matter what type of splendor we might enjoy in worldly existence, in the end it will all disintegrate and fall apart. When we think about beginningless lives into which we were repeatedly born and then died, the points that have consistently recurred are birth and death - and it seems that we always experience these totally alone. When we keep this in mind, it becomes obvious that the important thing is for us to build up the various positive potentials, by trying to develop the far-reaching attitudes or perfections, such as ethical discipline, generosity, and so forth.

We need to realize that no matter what perishable things we may have, none of them are reliable. We can't rely on our body - there's no stability in it. Nor can we rely on our position or on our wealth and possessions. These things are unsuitable for gaining security. Nagarjuna, in his *Letter to a Friend* (*bShes-phreng*), brings up the topic of the different types of sufferings or problems that we experience, such as sickness, aging, death, not getting what we want, getting what we don't want, and so forth.

[See: *Letter to a Friend* {16}.]

These points are discussed in great detail in Tsongkhapa's *Grand Presentation of the Graded Stages of the Path* (*Lam-rim chen-mo*), in terms of the six types of sufferings, the eight types of sufferings, and the three types of suffering - there are many ways of presenting it. In short, once we are born under the influence of karma and delusions, compulsive impulses and disturbing attitudes, nothing but problems and suffering will come. We have all the causes collected within us that are going to bring about problems and suffering. The external circumstances may certainly help these causes to ripen, but the causes themselves are already inside us. So we experience suffering, for instance the problems of actual suffering: our body gets sick; we get hurt; we experience pain and so forth.

When we think of the human body, it is something that comes from the substances of the parents, nauseating things like the sperm and blood of the parents. There is nothing about it, when we take a close objective look, that would be really pleasing or attractive to the mind. In particular, if we think of the human body and take off the outer covering of skin, there is nothing at all attractive about it. Nobody will find the inside of the body especially attractive.

This nature of the human body as something unclean and unattractive does not come from outside: it comes from its actual nature. If we found a puddle of sperm and blood on the floor, we wouldn't find it terribly attractive or pretty. Everyone would find it rather nauseating and disgusting, but those are the actual causes or substances out of which the body is made. So there is nothing attractive from its actual nature. But this judgment of the body as so attractive - this incorrect way of considering the body - acts as a circumstance for all the various disturbing attitudes and impulses that we have on our mental continuum to flare up, such as attachment, hostility, and naivety. All these arise from grasping at this mass of unclean substances, grasping it as "me," "my body," and so forth. This identification acts as the basis for all kinds of disturbing attitudes.

If we don't make constructive use of the body, then from the side of the body itself, what does it actually do? First, it caused discomfort to our mother carrying it in her womb and then pain to her in giving birth to it. Then it caused problems and suffering for everyone involved in supporting it. It caused and continues to cause a great deal of trouble and bother taking care of

it, so if we don't make anything constructive out of it, then it is just a troublemaker. And we've been taking this type of body since beginningless time.

Take the example that is always used, the ocean of samsara. An ocean is something fathomless: we can't measure its depth. Likewise it is the same when we think of all the human bodies that we have taken and all the problems that have arisen, all the suffering associated with getting old. No matter what business or activity we have been associated with, we're going to engage in it with diminished vigor, our mind will become more depressed and weak, our senses will diminish, our body will start to weaken and fall apart. This is something that everybody experiences, isn't that true? It's very painful to grow old. And everyone knows all the suffering associated with sickness. We have to undergo all kinds of medical treatments that are usually very expensive and extremely uncomfortable. If we think about it from all these different points of view, the body really is quite a troublemaker because it gets sick; it grows old, and so forth. No matter how much we've built up our body, whether we are fit or not, eventually our body is going to break down. So we need to think about all these problems associated with growing old and how we can't keep fit forever.

## The Four Noble Truths

With reference to the attainment of liberation, it is definitely something to be attained. But if we just think, "If I could just attain liberation, then I could have a nice rest!" that will not bring it about.

Every one wants a true stopping, a true cessation of all these problems and troubles, but we can't just sit back and expect them to disappear by wishing them to vanish. We have to look at the causes of our trouble: all the uncontrollably recurring aggregate factors that make up each moment of our experience. These aggregate factors arise from our disturbing attitudes and impulses, because our mind is untamed. It is untamed because of our unawareness (ignorance) and our grasping at truly established existence. Such grasping is due to our distorted outlook on reality.

If we consider the various types of outlook on reality we can have, some are disturbing and some are valid. Since the disturbing attitudes are based on incorrect and distorted views of reality, then if we have a correct and valid outlook on reality, the very root of the cause of these disturbing attitudes is eliminated. As the correct view of reality becomes stronger in our minds - as we get completely familiar with always looking at things from the correct point of view of reality - our distorted views, which are completely based on unreality, will become weaker and weaker.

When we achieve a complete cessation, or stopping, of grasping at things to exist in a truly established, impossible manner, we rid ourselves of the stains that obscure us from seeing the nature of the mind. These stains are fleeting; they are not the basic nature of the mind. There are progressive stages of true stoppings of grasping at truly established existence. Proceeding through and achieving the stages of these true stoppings, we can eliminate all the fleeting stains and realize the true nature of the mind. If there were nothing that could be done about this situation, then there would be no point in working so hard. But since it is possible to get rid of the stains that cause us so much suffering and problems, it is really quite relevant to think about the uncontrollably recurring problems of samsara. In this way, we develop a strong determination to be free and actually work to attain the true stopping and ridding of problems.

Let us look at the different types of problems and sufferings: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and all-pervasively affecting suffering. This third type is the suffering of having the all-pervasively aggregate factors that affect each moment of our experience. It is the very nature of the body, together with the aggregate factors of our experience, to simply bring problems. The aggregate factors of our experience come about due to the force of impulses - or karma - and the various disturbing attitudes that come with it. If we could just rid ourselves of those, we could get rid of these difficult problems resulting from the aggregates. So it is the third type of suffering, the aggregate factors coming with disturbing attitudes and impulses, that are the basic troublemakers. They constitute samsara, so we must be sure to think about the drawbacks of samsara from many, many different points of view. If we think that, once we're ordained, we are free from samsara, whereas if we have a family and children we are in samsara, this is a completely mistaken attitude.

The second noble truth - the true origin or causes of all problems - is the disturbing attitudes and impulses, or karma. Let us consider whether or not it is possible to get rid of these. We will discover that it is in fact possible to get rid of them forever; it is possible to have true cessations or stoppings of them and, in order to achieve this, we need to develop true pathways of mind. These are the most profound points.

The most profound way to actually gain freedom from all problems and suffering is to develop a bodhichitta aim. There are various ways in which we can be led to developing this aim. Here, we are speaking of developing it only within the context of turning away from compulsive involvement with this lifetime and turning our interest toward future lives. We're not talking about limiting our attention to liberation and turning away from involvement with future lives. In this text, whatever realization we have relative to this life, we immediately turn to the desire to develop bodhichitta. This is the way it is explained in this text.

## Developing the Two Types of Bodhichitta

### The Importance and Benefits of Developing Bodhichitta

We have now completed the preliminaries. The second of the seven points is how to develop actual bodhichitta. We need to develop two types of bodhichitta aim: relative and deepest. Conventional bodhichitta is aimed at the conventional (relative, superficial, surface, apparent) truth of everyone and everything; while deepest bodhichitta is aimed at their deepest truth, their voidness. In this text, we develop conventional bodhichitta first, and then go on to deepest bodhichitta. In *A Filigree of Realizations (mNgon-rtogs rgyan, Skt. Abhisamayalamkara)*, Maitreya tells us that a person of very sharp wits would first develop an actual understanding of reality and, on the basis of that, then develop conventional bodhichitta. Sometimes it is more effective to develop or generate deepest bodhichitta first. This is because when we realize that it is possible to attain a true stopping through generating deepest bodhichitta and that we therefore have the possibility of attaining liberation from samsara and beyond that to enlightenment - when we see that this is a realistic goal, then we can truly become interested in reaching enlightenment for others.

[In Togmey-zangpo's edition of Geshe Chaykawa's root text, deepest bodhichitta is presented before conventional bodhichitta, with the verse: "Ponder that phenomena are like a dream. Discern the basic nature of awareness that has no arising. The opponent itself liberates itself in its own place. The essential nature of the path is to settle within a state of the all-encompassing basis. Between sessions, act like an illusory person." In Pabongka's edition,

this verse on deepest bodhichitta, preceded by the additional line, "What is hidden is to be shown after attaining stability (in this)," immediately follows the verses on conventional bodhichitta. This additional line does not appear at all in the Togmey-zangpo edition. In Namkapel's edition, this verse, together with the above additional line preceding it, appears at the very end of the text.]

Mahayana is divided into the sutra and tantra paths, and regardless of which one we may take, the advantage of developing conventional bodhichitta is that it is the gateway for entering the Mahayana vehicle. No matter what other qualities we may have - even the understanding of voidness - if we don't have a bodhichitta aim on our mental continuum, we cannot be considered a Mahayanist, someone having a vast vehicle of mind. But, if we do have a bodhichitta aim, then even if we have no other qualities, we can be considered a spiritual child of the Buddhas, a Mahayanist having a vast vehicle of mind. The actual distinguishing factor for being a Mahayanist, then, is whether we have a bodhichitta aim. We find this in both the sutra and tantra texts. In *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, Shantideva tells us that bodhichitta is the only gateway for entering Mahayana. In *The Tantra of Vajrapani* it also says that if we have bodhichitta, we are qualified to enter into the mandala and receive empowerment (initiation). But, if we do not have bodhichitta, we are not qualified or permitted to receive empowerment.

All these different quotations tell us that bodhichitta is the source of all good qualities. And really, when we look at it, the benefits of developing a bodhichitta aim are infinite. They are discussed very well in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*. When we reflect on the Buddha Shakyamuni and why he is such a precious and important person, it is because he had developed a kind and warm heart and, based on that, he developed a bodhichitta aim to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all.

[See: *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, chapter 1 {17}.]

When we consider the advantages of having a kind and warm heart - of being a good person - we can see them even with animals. If we have a cat that just sits around nicely and purrs, we will give it food and be very nice toward it. But if the cat is always jumping around and acting wildly, scratching and biting and the like, no one is going to be pleased with such an animal and it may have problems getting fed. As for human beings, if we are kind and warm, everything comes our way. But if we are very crude and mean, no one will want to be with us.

It is extremely important to work on developing all these positive states of mind: the love that wishes everyone happiness, the compassion that wishes everyone freedom from suffering, and the heartwarming type of love for all others. If, on the basis of these, we have developed a bodhichitta aim on our mental continuum, then just on the basis of that, we will build up bountiful stores or networks of various types of positive force. So, bodhichitta in itself will build up various potencies to protect us and rid us of hindrances.

Just to say the word *bodhichitta* or to hear it spoken is profoundly positive and instructive. This is the first part of this section, the benefits of developing bodhichitta.

The second part explains how to actually train first in conventional bodhichitta and then in deepest bodhichitta. Conventional bodhichitta is aimed at all limited beings, with the intention to help liberate them from samsara, and at enlightenment, with the aim to achieve it. When we speak about benefiting all others, it is a matter of changing our attitude about self and others. So we need to keep in mind that bodhichitta is a heart that has a such strong intention to

benefit all others that it is expanding out infinitely to all of them, and also such a strong intention to attain enlightenment that it is expanding out fully toward that.

## **The Two Methods for Developing Conventional Bodhichitta**

The actual methods for developing conventional bodhichitta are equalizing and exchanging our attitudes about self and others and the seven-part cause and effect meditation. Both of these methods have as their basis developing a heartwarming state of love for others. Heartwarming love is an automatic feeling of closeness and warmth whenever we meet anyone: we cherish and are deeply concerned about them and would feel badly if anything went wrong for them. According to the seven-part cause and effect method, to develop this heartwarming type of love, we first need to develop an equal attitude - or equanimity - toward others, with which we feel neither attachment, aversion, nor neglect of anyone. We recognize everyone as having been our mothers, acknowledge and remain mindful of their kindness and, being grateful and wishing to repay it, we develop this heartwarming love for them.

Exchanging our attitude toward self and others comes from Shantideva's tradition. We don't have to belabor the point of everyone having been our mother, but simply think in general how we all want to be happy, how nobody wants suffering or problems, exactly like ourselves. In this regard, we're all equal on that level. We see how cherishing ourselves is the root of all problems, while cherishing others is the root of all good qualities. We need to think, "Since I do not want unhappiness and I do want happiness, I must give up self-cherishing and develop the attitude of cherishing others." So, on the basis of realizing the equality of self and others, we develop this heartwarming love for others and we change our attitude with respect to them. This is a very extensive method. Both ways of developing a bodhichitta aim - exchanging our attitude toward self and others and the seven-part cause and effect method - get us to this point of the heartwarming love for others.

Depending on a person's disposition, developing the attitude of recognizing everybody as "my mother" can sometimes involve problems. We might develop it in terms of considering ourselves very important: "I'm really someone very important, and because I'm important, my mother is also very important." And so we develop this feeling that, "I want to help my mother because she is my mother," and we want to develop and help all beings because "they have all been my mother." There is great emphasis placed on "me" and "my" in this way of developing bodhichitta. That point is the danger in this instruction.

If, on the other hand, we think of exchanging our attitude about self and others, wanting to help others not simply because they've been "my own mother," but because "they don't want problems and they want happiness, just as I do," there's far less danger. We are no longer involved with considerations of "me" and "mine," and so it becomes a far more extensive way of reaching out to all others and developing a bodhichitta aim. We don't just think of the kindness of others when they have been our mother, but we think of the kindness of everybody, how they have always been kind to us in all ways. So this is basically a discussion of how we work out both methods together, the seven-part cause and effect training and the equalizing and exchanging of self and others.

## **The Disadvantages of Self-Cherishing**

[In Namkapel's text, the line from Togmey-zangpo's edition of Geshe Chaykawa's text, "Banish one thing as (bearing) all blame," is moved here and the disadvantages of self-cherishing are given as commentary to the line. Pabongka follows this order.]

In regard to exchanging our attitudes about self and others, the text explains how all our problems and difficulties come from cherishing ourselves, while all our benefits and happiness come from cherishing others. The fact that shravakas and pratyekabuddhas are not capable of achieving the highest spiritual level, the highest spiritual goal, is due to their self-cherishing. So, from there on down, the blame for every disadvantage, every drawback that can be experienced can be placed on the self-cherishing attitude: in other words, selfishness. Very often, when people are unhappy, they want to point an accusing finger at others: "I am unhappy because this other person has done this or that." In fact, all our unhappiness comes from self-centeredness, by which we consider ourselves so big and important that we point the finger at others as responsible for our unhappiness. In truth, all our problems and unhappiness come from the destructive impulses that arise from our own minds - in other words, karma and the disturbing attitudes.

We have two things here: the self-cherishing attitude and grasping for a truly existent self. If we gained an understanding of reality - that there is no such thing as a truly established identity - then we would get rid of both the grasping for a truly existent self and also self-cherishing. Here, we are making a distinction, saying that the problem comes from self-cherishing. But in fact, we have to think about these two together: self-cherishing and grasping for a truly established, truly existent self.

The disadvantages of self-cherishing, or the selfish attitude, are discussed in various parts of *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*. Referring to both self-cherishing and grasping for a truly established self, Shantideva says, "Whatever violence there is in the world, and as much fear and suffering as there is, all of it arises from grasping at a self: so what use is that terrible demon to me?" Elsewhere in the text, Shantideva points out that our self-cherishing comes from our own minds and the unawareness in it of grasping for a truly existent "me." This is our real enemy. He writes, "These longtime, continuing enemies like this are the sole causes for masses of harm to increase ever more. How can I be joyful and not terrified in samsara, if I set a secure place (for them) in my heart?"

In other words, we think strongly "me, me, me," and then we think "I have to become happy; I have to get rid of my problems. Forget about everybody else. It doesn't matter what I do with others in order to gain my own happiness." It is under the sway of this ignorance that we exploit others and do whatever we can just to get happiness. All complications and troubles and problems that come about from this type of behavior can be traced to this self-cherishing attitude and grasping for truly established existence.

The Buddha and we are the same from the point of view that our mental continuums have existed from beginningless time. But what has the Buddha accomplished in that time? Having rid himself of his self-cherishing attitude, based on his concern for others, he has been able to achieve enlightenment, whereas we are still completely involved in being selfish and so we are still miserable and full of troubles and problems. The cause for this difference, since both the Buddha and we have been going on for the same amount of time, is the factor of whether or not we have a self-cherishing attitude, whether or not we are selfish and grasp for ourselves. So this ties in very well with the disadvantages of samsara. All of the uncontrollably recurring problems of samsara stem from this same root. Whenever we have coveted all the various splendors of samsara, it has also arisen from selfishness, and we've fooled and deceived ourselves.

It is the self-grasping and the self-cherishing attitudes that give us the courage to go to war, and do all such kinds of things for our own benefit. Then, if anything goes wrong, we put the

blame on our own gurus, or on our parents and so on. We need to apply that same courage to overcoming our self-cherishing attitude.

These quotes in the text are all saying, basically, that all harm comes from self-cherishing. If we were to point the finger at whoever is responsible for all the bad things that come to us, we would have to point it at our own selfishness, our self-cherishing attitude. Therefore, now is the time to rid ourselves of self-cherishing, our real enemy. As Shantideva writes, "That time before was different, when I was being ruined by you. But (now) I see you; so where can you go? I'm going to knock all the arrogance out of you. Throw away, now, any hope, 'I still have my own self-interest.' I've sold you to others, so don't think of your weariness; I've offered your energies (to them). If, because of not caring, I don't hand you over to limited beings, then, for sure, you'll hand me over to the guards of the joyless realms. I've been handed over, like that, many times by you and long tormented; but now, recalling those grudges, I shall smash you, you creature of self-interest." All the faults of selfishness are discussed very thoroughly in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior* and also in *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters, The Guru Puja (Bla-ma mchod-pa, Lama chop)*.

[See: *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters* {18}.]

One of the Kadampa Geshes used to recommend then when chopping our brick tea, we should think, "I smash down on the head of self-cherishing and grasping at self." Those people who are always totally preoccupied with self, or who feel terrible self-pity when they are sick, need to examine where all their problems come from. They need to realize that they come from always being concerned with their selfish preoccupation, "I have to be happy; I have to get rid of all my problems." This type of person is never content, no matter what the situation is. Everything is always too hot or too cold; nothing is ever right. The basic root of their problem is their selfish preoccupation. If they could give that up, they could relax. They are always uptight, never able to relax, because they are always preoccupied with themselves.

We can study and sit in puja ceremonies as much as we wish, but if we always nurture the self-cherishing attitude within us, we are completely wasting our time. If we were not preoccupied with ourselves all the time, with selfish concern, but instead opened our hearts out to others, we would truly be able to have the vast vehicle of heart and mind of Mahayana. But because our hearts are too narrow and too concerned for self, they can't be that vast vehicle. If we are preoccupied with ourselves, even if we claim to follow the Mahayana vast vehicle of mind, it just turns into an occasion for us to become more proud and arrogant.

That completes the discussion of the disadvantages of self-cherishing.

## The Advantages of Cherishing Others

The next point concerns the advantages of cherishing others. [Namkapel explains this point by inserting here the line from Togmey-zangpo's edition of Geshe Chaykawa's text, "Meditate with great kindness toward everyone." Pabongka does the same in his edition.]

It says in *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters* that cherishing others is the gateway of all good qualities, and so it is. This is discussed in Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nagarjuna's "Root Stanzas on) the Middle Way"* (*dBu-ma-la 'jug-pa, Skt. Madhyamakavatara*), where it says that the source of the great attainments of the Buddhas is their compassion. Where does this compassion come from? It comes from cherishing and having intense concern for others. So the root of all happiness and qualities comes from

cherishing others. Cherishing others brings us to develop love and compassion, which bring us to develop a bodhichitta aim, and a bodhichitta aim brings us to enlightenment. All these vast-minded Mahayana states of mind - love, compassion, exceptional resolve and bodhichitta - are aimed at other beings. So the root of all the good qualities that come from all these states of mind is cherishing others.

As for how these qualities continuously improve and don't degenerate, this is also due to being focused on others and cherishing them. Likewise, the attainment of the result, namely Buddhahood, comes from this sustained concern for others. Thus, the generation, continuation and attainment of the result of these positive states of mind all come from cherishing others. Even the strength of the enlightening influence of the Buddhas, that too comes about because of others, out of concern for and cherishing them.

In order to achieve enlightenment, as explained in these quotations, we need both the enlightening influence of the Buddhas and the bountiful field of all limited beings. It is on the basis of both of these that we actually achieve enlightenment. Its attainment cannot occur independently of others, but has to be based on our aim of benefiting them as much as is possible. So, it is not enough just to have respect for the Buddhas; it is necessary to have respect for all limited beings as well, since our achievement of enlightenment comes equally dependent on the side of the Buddhas and on the side of all limited beings. In that sense, the Buddhas and all limited beings are equal in kindness.

All the good qualities of the path and the results of the Mahayana vehicle of mind spring from cherishing others. A quotation states that all achievements of the better states of rebirth come from helping others, whereas worse states of rebirth come from harming others. This shows us that the experience of happiness comes from kindness. For those who follow the Hinayana modest vehicle of mind, it is due to their lack of this intense cherishing of others that they are unable to achieve the highest attainment. Whereas the bodhisattvas have this intense concern for others, and because of that they are able to achieve the highest enlightenment.

One quotation here speaks about how we hurt others. On our side, our minds are filled with the habit of self-cherishing. On the side of other beings, they have untamed minds, which from the force of their unawareness or ignorance, are filled with disturbing emotions. Their disturbing emotions lead them into all kinds of situations that we find disturbing and then our self-cherishing attitude and selfishness cause us to want to harm them. We can see this with the example of the Chinese. We can see self-cherishing at work on both sides, causing harm. This has been the result of the past build up of negative karmic force on both sides, and we are now building up further negative karmic force from our impulsive destructive actions. These actions will only cause further situations to arise in the future, from which more harm will happen to us as their result.

## Patience

To get rid of all these things that harm us, the text instructs us to develop the two bodhichittas and the six far-reaching attitudes (the six perfections, the six *paramitas*). To develop bodhichitta, we must have genuine concern for others and great tolerance. To develop tolerance, it is necessary to have enemies. If there were no obnoxious people - no enemies - there would be no way for us to develop patience and tolerance.

When we look at what will bring us to enlightenment - namely, true stoppings and true pathways of mind - neither of them has an attitude of wishing to either benefit or harm us.



True stoppings are static phenomena, so they don't have any attitude. True pathways of mind are simply states of mind, and they have no particular motivation or wish to help bring us to enlightenment. Now, look at various enemies, friends and so forth: these are what actually bring us happiness or unhappiness, but not simply in terms of actual physical pain. We have doctors who give us injections and perform operations and the like, and although they cause us pain, we wouldn't call them our enemies. This is because they have an attitude of wishing to benefit, not harm us. So, enemies are called enemies not on the basis of whether they have knives or guns in their hands, but rather based on their attitude of wishing us harm. So, if we wish to develop patience and tolerance, it is necessary to be faced with someone who has this harmful intention. On the basis of our tolerance, we can develop ourselves and achieve enlightenment.

In an account of the previous lives of the Buddha, there was the story of Minag Dumdum, the oarsman of a boat in which there were five hundred merchants, who was going to kill everyone else on the boat. The ship's captain, who was a previous incarnation of the Buddha, thought that allowing this person to kill everybody wouldn't do. To tell him not to kill everyone was useless, as he wouldn't listen. So he thought, "If I kill this one person, of course it is a destructive action that will build up negative force on my mental continuum from having killed one person. But if I don't kill him because I cherish myself and don't want to build up any negative potential for myself, he's going to build up the much greater negative force of killing five hundred people and all those people will lose their lives." So, out of compassion and concern for both the five hundred people on the boat as well as for the oarsman, Buddha killed Minag Dumdum. A relevant example is the mercy killings that doctors and veterinarians might perform to help some creature in a situation of unbearable pain, by giving them an injection of chemicals to kill them. They don't have an attitude of anger when taking that life, but take on the consequences of the negative action just to help the other being.

Any such type of forceful action needs to be performed not with an attitude of anger or wishing to harm, but with an attitude of compassion, wishing to help. In certain situations, we have to take forceful action to stop people from taking advantage of us. If we're practicing bodhichitta, it doesn't mean we have to let everybody step on us.

So we have to take appropriate action out of a compassionate, pure motivation not to let others take advantage of the situation. We must not engage in actions while we are angry, while we are completely drunk while the delusion of anger. The things we do in anger are bound to be full of mistakes and will cause us embarrassment and trouble afterwards.

There was a story often told to me by Kyabje Ling Rinpoche about a Chinese man who was very prone to anger and who, when aroused, would break his favorite things. Then, in a moment, his anger would subside and he would pick up the pieces and cry.

The point is that using forceful methods to cause harm - such as the Buddha's previous incarnation killing one person who intended to kill five hundred people - is not supported by hatred but, rather, by compassion. And it is not done in a fit of anger, when we do crazy things that we later regret. As we said earlier, it is done with the attitude of being willing to take on the negative potential arising from this harmful action. There are many quotes from *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior* to illustrate patience, tolerance and mental stability regarding enemies. Our enemies help us develop tolerance, love, compassion, and so forth.

There are certain practices to aid in developing an equal feeling or equanimity toward others. The main trouble point is the enemy, the one who really gets us angry and uptight, someone who is really obnoxious and makes us really work hard not to get disturbed. So we have to turn to someone who is really our enemy, somebody we hate, and try to develop the attitude of loving this person. We need to find concern and sympathy for this person, who only wants to be happy, and try to develop real heartwarming love for someone whom we previously hated. If we can do that, it is something that is extremely extensive and extremely powerful. So *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior* is really quite an amazing teaching, because it provides such an extensive method. If we can develop such a heartwarming feeling of love and concern for someone that we previously hated and considered our enemy, we are really developing a very powerful tool of the mind and heart.

## **Contrasting the Benefits of Cherishing Others with the Drawbacks of Self-Cherishing**

In short, there's little more to say about the respective advantages and disadvantages of self-cherishing and of cherishing others, except that *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters* says that the difference between the Buddhas and ourselves is that they always cherish others, whereas we only cherish ourselves.

Let's look at where we are, in terms of history, or in terms of our friends, people that we know. The people whom everyone admires are those who had great concern for others. The point of this is to exchange our attitudes so that this business of "I have to be happy," feeling sorry for myself - all this self-concern and cherishing - are applied to another object. Instead of "I have to be happy," we need to think, "Other people need to be happy." And instead of "I'm feeling unhappy" and thinking, "I have to get rid of that," we need to change the object and think that others have to get rid of their problems. That is changing the point of view, exchanging our attitudes about self and others. Doing this involves giving happiness to others, really having love and concern for them, and taking on others' suffering with compassion. In some texts, we have compassion taking on the suffering of others first, and then giving them happiness. In this text, we have giving happiness first, then taking on their suffering. It doesn't really matter which we do first, but as the text says, we alternate the two.

[The line commented upon here reads, "Train in both giving and taking in alternation."]

If someone hurts or harms us, instead of thinking how to retaliate, how to hurt back - thinking about what kind of poison to use isn't going to help anybody - we need to think that we're seeking enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, which certainly include this particular being over here. We're trying to develop and improve ourselves in order to be of ultimate benefit, and that includes the good of that person.

## **Giving Happiness to Others**

As for giving to others, there's giving our body, giving our wealth, giving the roots of our positive potentials so that they will ripen on others. The source of this is *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*. As a practice of giving away our body, we first pray for inspiration, then we think of the beings in various joyless realms, such as the reviving hells, or others in the hot hells and so forth, and we think of changing our body into cooling rain, for instance. Basically we think of whatever those beings need to relieve their suffering: for the thirsty, we change into something to slake their thirst; for the hungry, something to satisfy their hunger.

We change our body into whatever is needed by the beings in the joyless realms and take on the suffering of their disastrous situation. To stabilize this, we change our body into all the various positive qualities they will need to reach enlightenment, such as the seven arya gems.

[See: *A Bodhisattva's Garland of Gems* {19}.]

For the realm of the clutching ghosts, we relieve them of all their problems and suffering and give them all the realizations they need to bring them to enlightenment. Then we do this as well for the animals and for the human beings who have no situations of leisure to practice the Dharma. We transform our body into all the opportunities and teachings that they need. Then we do the same for the divine gods and the would-be divine demigods. In general, we give housing and clothing to those who need it. Likewise, for those who have a modest vehicle of mind of Hinayana, we transform our body into realizations so that they will be able to achieve enlightenment.

Next we transform our body into various kinds of environment to help others. The text describes all sorts of images from the pure lands, trees of jewels, and so forth. If we haven't seen this kind of thing, it might be a little difficult to picture, but we just think of the most gorgeous place we could possibly conceive and imagine giving that to all beings. The giving of our body includes giving all the possessions and things we make use of. We transform them into their most appealing form and imagine giving them to others in need. When it comes to giving away our positive potentials, we are giving away all those that we have built up in the past, those that we are building up at present, and whatever ones we may build up in the future. We give all of these potentials to others, wishing that the beneficial results may ripen on them.

Now, when we speak of these meditations, we might think they don't actually, practically, help anybody - that we're only imagining giving away all our wealth and roots of our positive potentials to others. If we ask whether it is actually going to have some practical use, the answer is that if we don't build this up as a beneficial habit of mind, it is not going to actually happen in the future that we really will be in a position to give away our body and possessions to others. So it is by building the potentials and the good habits of mind now that the karmic force builds up on our mental continuum that will ripen in the future into our actual ability to give everything to others.

The commentary tells us that when we have a family tradition over seven generations of doing a certain thing, it adds force to the continuation of that tradition. Likewise, if we build up a certain tradition now, like giving to others, then after some time - such as after seven lifetimes in the future - it will build up a strong force, as in a family tradition. So the practice of giving away to others is out of love and a concern for others to be happy. Since they are poor and in need of something, then out of our concern and caring for them we use whatever we have to relieve them of their poverty of happiness or their lack of whatever else they are missing. We need to give to everyone, including the gurus and the Buddhas. But when it comes to taking on suffering, we don't need to take any on from the Buddhas and the spiritual mentors. This is because they don't have any faults and sufferings to be taken on by us.

## **With Compassion, Taking on the Sufferings of Others**

The second point here is having compassion for others. If we have compassion for others, all good qualities and things will come to us, even if we don't pray for them. Conversely, if we lack a compassionate and sympathetic heart, even if we pray for things, we won't get them. If

we get discouraged, we can think of taking on all the future sufferings of all others onto ourselves. To help gain familiarity with this, we think of our own problems and sufferings in this lifetime and the future. We can start by thinking, "It's better for me to experience them now, when it's easier for me to deal with them; otherwise, I will have to experience them later, when I may be much less able to handle them." In this way, we gain familiarity that will help us to take on the problems of others as well. We train in stages, taking on tomorrow's problems, next year's problems, and so forth, so we can develop the courage to take on problems and suffering from others.

The whole point is to get rid of the selfishness in our hearts, and we do that by opening up to deal with and take on the problems of others. The text continues explaining how we take on the problems of others who are on various spiritual paths and levels, all the way up to, but not including the Buddhas and the spiritual mentors.

Having gained familiarity with this process, we can then combine our breathing with taking on others' problems. We breathe in, taking in problems, then breathe out, sending out happiness.

[This explanation and what follows is in commentary to the lines in the root text, "As for the order of taking, start from myself, mounting those two on the breath. (With regard to) the three objects, (taking) the three poisonous attitudes and (giving) the three roots of what's constructive, the guideline instructions for after absorption are, in brief, to incite staying mindful of this by training with words in all paths of behavior." In Togmey-zangpo's edition, the line, "As for the order of taking, start from myself," follows "training with words in all paths of behavior." Pabongka's edition follows Namkapel's order, as above.]

The text speaks of dealing with the three objects and the three poisonous attitudes. The three objects are the pleasant, unpleasant and neutral objects that cause us to develop the three poisonous attitudes of attachment, aversion, or indifference. Further, we think how all other beings also develop attachment, aversion or indifference and say, "May all their attachment, aversion and indifference come onto me. I'll deal with it and get rid of it for them. May they be completely free of all attachment, aversion and indifference," and we give them back all these insights.

So, as it says in *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters*, "Therefore, compassionate, ennobling, impeccable gurus, inspire me that all the negative forces, obstacles, and sufferings of wandering beings, my mothers, ripen upon me right now, and that I may impart my happiness and positive forces to others and thereby secure all wanderers in bliss." This is also the way to train in words: we repeat these prayers, "May their sufferings ripen on me; may my goodness ripen onto others."

The point here is that we need to train in trying to develop kind thoughts, such that all beings may be happy, and this includes the Chinese. If we have a situation in which others place all their hope in us that we will be able to help them, even if on our side we want to, we may not have the actual ability to do so. This is very difficult. So we need to realize that the only way we can truly help all other beings is to become Buddhas ourselves.

We might think, "What is going on here? There have been all these Buddhas in the past and all became enlightened. They are able to benefit all beings, so why must I? Why does it depend on me to become enlightened, since there are all these other ones who have become enlightened already?" This might cause us to get discouraged. But rather than take that line of thinking, we would do well to consider that there are a lot of beings who have a special karmic

bond with us, who didn't have a particularly close karmic relationship with the Buddhas of the past, so they were not able to be directly liberated by them at that time. So we must think of all beings who have a special connection with us, then we will develop more courage to actually become enlightened ourselves in order to help them. We have to build up more and more positive connections with those beings with whom we have a relationship.

# Day Five: Relative Bodhichitta and Deepest Bodhichitta

## Conventional Bodhichitta, Continued

### Developing Love and Compassion

Even in the material world, we can't put all of our efforts into one strong move and expect to get immediate results. Instead, we need to work progressively in stages. This is true in terms of working on our mind and working on our attitudes. To improve our attitudes, we have to work gradually through stages. For instance, if we have a great deal of anger, we first have to learn to recognize our anger and then try to see all the drawbacks of getting angry, realizing that, from whatever point of view we take, anger is disadvantageous.

If we have a great deal of anger and have not trained ourselves properly, then when we try to apply the four opponent forces too strongly, we are not able to handle it. As Western psychologists and psychiatrists say, if we try to suppress our anger, it will cause a great deal of frustrated energy and harm. Instead, they suggest we try to release that anger in a more relaxed fashion to avoid the problems of having pent-up anger inside us.

To a certain extent, I think they have a point, because in certain circumstances we need to vent our anger in a peaceful manner if we are not yet ready to apply the opponents to get rid of it. However, we need to differentiate two distinct cases of feeling anger or arrogance. One situation is simply that if we don't vent the anger and let out the energy, we end up with a lot of problems. Then there are other situations where venting just builds up the bad habit of indulging ourselves and always allowing ourselves to get angry. I think we have to distinguish the circumstances for each of these, and of course it is always best to control our anger or our arrogance. We need to learn not to have to let it out at all, but to take care of it internally without creating further problems for ourselves.

One of the main methods to use is to think of the opposite feeling to the one that is giving trouble. For instance, if we have anger, the opposite of that is love for others. So if we find ourselves getting angry with someone, we can try to feel loving, sincere concern for him or her. And more and more, we realize the advantages of having a loving attitude and the disadvantages of being angry, and in this way we are able to apply this opponent.

Even if we are unable to apply the opponent feeling in the situation - in this case, love - the more we familiarize ourselves with the disadvantages and drawbacks of anger, we will find that when a situation arises in which we start to get angry, the force of it gradually becomes less and less. In this way, we go through different stages of being able to handle and get rid of anger.

The same is true for developing compassion for others. Before we can have compassion for others and the wish for them to be free of their problems, we need to think about our own problems first, how we don't want them, and how we would like to get rid of them. Then we'll be able to develop sympathy and compassion for others based on our own feelings, coming from our own experience. All these positive states of mind are things that we work up to gradually, by stages.

If we say that we wish someone else to be free from problems and sufferings, and we ourselves don't actually recognize the difficulties of our own problems and sufferings, how can we possibly develop a sincere wish for others to be free of their problems? If we observe somebody who is happy and content, it is rather difficult to develop a feeling of compassion for them, the wish for them to be free from problems. Yet, if we see somebody who is obviously experiencing difficulty, it is much easier to develop sympathy and this wish toward them. This, of course, is based on our own understanding of what a problem is, based on our own experience of them.

Compassion for someone is actually a type of attitude that can be seen in two ways. If it is aimed toward someone else, it is sympathy and compassion; if it is directed toward ourselves, it is what we call "determination to be free from our problems" or "renunciation." It is the wish to be parted from suffering and problems, directed either toward ourselves, which is renunciation, or toward others, which is compassion.

When we think of suffering, such as being reborn in some of the worse states of rebirth - the joyless realms and so forth - we cannot assume that this is something far removed, something far-fetched that has no relation to us, or that there is no need to deal with it. We need to realize that the causes for being reborn in the worse states - all the various types of negative potentials - are built up and stored in our own mental continuums. Depending on the negative potentials in our own minds, it is very possible that at any point we could fall to one of the worse rebirth states. So it is very important to think in terms of behavioral cause and effect.

We need to reflect upon how fortunate we all are to have a precious human rebirth, a precious human life with abundant freedom and leisure to develop ourselves spiritually. Having this golden opportunity, it is very important not to waste it. So we think first about our precious human life, how difficult it is to attain and how easy it is to lose. This brings us to the thought of death and impermanence, since we can die at any time and don't know when. We therefore remain strongly aware of the four noble truths: the nature of true sufferings, their true origins, the possibility of gaining a true stopping of these sufferings, and the true pathways of mind that we can develop to achieve that. This is how we take advantages of this precious life, by training in and building up all these states of mind.

## Resume

The reason why this text is called *Seven-Point Attitude-Training* is that we train ourselves to build up attitudes. Its seven points are:

- first, the preliminaries,
- second, the method of training in the two bodhichittas - conventional and deepest,
- third, transforming adverse circumstances into a path to enlightenment,
- fourth, condensation of the practice in one lifetime,
- fifth, the measure of having trained our attitudes,
- sixth, the close-bonding practices for attitude-training,
- seventh, the points to train in for attitude-training.

We've covered the preliminaries and now we're talking about the actual development of bodhichitta. To summarize yesterday's points, until now we've been under the strong influence of selfishness, cherishing only ourselves. This selfish concern, which also involves grasping for a truly established self, has also caused us all the problems that we've experienced since beginningless time. All of them have been brought about by our own selfishness. Considering

others, if a person is extremely selfish, it doesn't matter how much time and energy they put into religious activities, they will still be considered a selfish person and they won't be able to make any spiritual progress. When a person who has been very selfish dies, everybody else will feel relief that this person has left us, because he or she was such a terribly selfish person. So even if we think in terms of this lifetime, if we are a selfish person, then everybody will consider us crass and nobody will care for us, whereas if we are selfless, always caring for others, we will be thought of as a fine person.

If we have fallen to a worse state of rebirth, we can only point the finger at selfish concern that caused such a fall - being reborn as an animal and so forth. Any difficult situation that exists can ultimately always be traced to selfish concern and self-cherishing as the cause, all the way up to highly realized beings who are not able to actually achieve enlightenment due to selfish concern. All beneficial and constructive potential comes from attaining a human or a heavenly type of rebirth - all the way up to gaining liberation and enlightenment. And all of that comes from having concern for others.

Even if we look at this lifetime, all good things can be traced to having a kind and warm heart. If we are a considerate person, who sincerely cares about others, things work out for us in this lifetime as well. So it is important, in any situation we may find ourselves, not to be preoccupied with self-concern, but always to think of everybody. This is mentioned in the text: concern for others is the basis and foundation of all good qualities.

To review the main points: by reflecting on the drawbacks of self-cherishing and selfishness and the advantages of concern for others, we aim to develop the heartwarming love with which we cherish all others and feel deeply for their wellbeing. Based on that, we train in giving away our happiness to others with loving concern that they be happy, and take on the problems and suffering of others with a compassionate heart of sympathy. While it is very difficult to actually take on and remove people's problems from them, if we develop these attitudes with visualizations combined with the breath, eventually we will build up the potential so that we are actually able to take on and cure other people's problems. This is the practice called "giving and taking," "*tonglen*" - taking other people's problems and giving them happiness.

## **Transforming Adverse Circumstances into a Path to Enlightenment**

We all have difficult circumstances that arise, both externally and internally. For example, we Tibetans have certainly had many difficult circumstances. This is now particularly true for those of us inside Tibet, as there is always the danger and fear hanging over them that they can be arrested and executed at any moment.

The first point tells us that in situations such as these, when we have attitudes of hostility or attachment, or even when we simply close off and become closed-minded, we need to develop attitudes that will enable us to transform the circumstances into opportunities for spiritual progress. One way is to take on others' hostility, attachment and closed-minded naivety onto ourselves, deal with it, and get rid of it for everyone. In this way, we turn adverse circumstances into positive ones.

[Namkapel's explanation here is in commentary only to the line from the line in the Togmey-zangpo edition, "When the environment and its dwellers are full of negative forces,



transform adverse conditions into a path to enlightenment." Namkapel moved the second part of the line in the Togmey-zangpo edition, "By banishing one thing as (bearing) all blame and meditating with great kindness toward everyone," to the previous section concerning the disadvantages of self-cherishing and advantages of cherishing others. The Pabongka edition follows that of Namkapel.]

No matter what type of trouble we might have, whether physical or mental, it is helpful to try to take on everyone's trouble in that particular category and think, "May this be enough for everyone; through my sufferings, may no one else have to suffer this again." We can look upon the difficulties that happen to us as being the result of our own negative potentials that we ourselves have built up in the past, not as coming from some external source. Now that they are ripening, we can be happy because we are getting rid of them, and wish that everyone else's negative potentials also ripen on us. Thus, everyone will be rid of the possible danger of experiencing that suffering as a result of negative potential.

When we experience happy conditions and circumstances, we can see that these are the result of positive potentials we have built up in the past and rejoice in that, thinking, "I must build up even more positive potentials so that in the future there will be even more conducive circumstances for myself and for others." It is important not to fall into pride or arrogance, or to boast when things are going well for us. Instead, it can encourage us to build up even more positive potential so that we won't deplete our store. This is how to change negative conditions to positive ones with our thoughts.

[Namkapel's text omits the next line from the Togmey-zangpo edition concerning how to transform adverse circumstances with our thoughts concerning our view, "Voidness, from meditating on deceptive appearances as the four Buddha-bodies, is the peerless protector." Pabongka likewise omits this line. Instead, Namkapel, as well as Pabongka, attach the line, "and instantly apply to meditation whatever I might happen to meet," to the end of the discussion of "When the environment and its dwellers are full of negative forces, transform adverse conditions into a path to enlightenment." In the Togmey-zangpo edition, that line, "and instantly apply to meditation whatever I might happen to meet," follows the next one in the Namkapel and Pabongka editions, "the supreme method entails four actions to use."]

The second point shows us how to transform adverse circumstances into positive ones with four types of actions to use:

- The first action is to build up further positive force. No matter what difficult negative circumstances arise, this inspires us to build up more positive potentials so that neither we nor anyone else will have to experience such difficult circumstances. We make offerings upward, toward the Buddhas and the enlightened beings, and downward, toward all limited beings - giving to them to whatever extent we are capable. In this way, we build up further positive force. So this first action for transforming negative circumstances into positive ones is to have them inspire us to do something positive.
- The second action is to purify ourselves of negative potential. We do this by openly admitting the wrongs that we have done and by applying various opponent forces, primarily feelings of great remorse and regret. Even if we have built up enormous negative potential, as Milarepa had done, if we feel great regret and remorse about this, if we openly admit that what we did was mistaken and apply the appropriate opponents, we are able to purify ourselves from these negative potentials.
- The third action is to make offerings to the harmful spirits. If harm is coming to us and we think it is coming from harmful spirits, we would give them offerings of love and

compassion. Sometimes it is possible that our problems are coming from these harmful spirits. We take all the problems of these harmful spirits onto ourselves, because they are certainly in a very miserable situation. In this way we turn a negative situation into a positive one.

- The fourth action is to request the enlightening influence of the Dharma protectors. We realize that various problems that arise are just the nature of samsara. So we ask the various protectors for their enlightening influence, to be able to handle those situations and turn them into positive ones for our spiritual growth. We make sincere requests to them from our heart, that they inspire us to be able to increase our efforts in training our attitudes.

In short, no matter what type of negative circumstances we encounter, whether internal or external, if we apply these various methods, we are able to turn them into positive circumstances for our growth.

These points may also be found in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*. They come implicitly in the prayer at the end of the text, where we pray, "For as long as space remains and for as long as wandering beings remain, may I too remain for that long, dispelling the sufferings of wandering beings."

## Condensation of the Practice in One Lifetime: The Five Forces

[Next is the line, "In brief, the essence of the quintessence teachings is applying the five forces." It also appears next in both the Togmey-zangpo and Pabongka editions.]

There are five forces for condensing the practice in one lifetime, namely this lifetime. The first force is the intention that we throw ahead of us. We wish, "May I always be able to develop a bodhichitta aim; may I always be able to practice attitude-training; may I always be able to develop the good qualities that will truly enable me to benefit all others." Throwing ahead the force of our intention is like making a preparation to fulfill these wishes. So, we throw ahead the intention: "I am going to develop in this good direction. Now that I have this opportunity to practice these vast vehicle Mahayana practices, I am going to apply all my force and all my active energies in this direction."

To do this every day, in the morning we say as we wake up, "Today it is so fortunate that I've woken up. I'm alive! I have a precious human life. I'm not going to waste it, but will use all the energies of this precious life today to develop a bodhichitta aim to achieve enlightenment in order to benefit others as much as is possible. So, I am going to have kind thoughts toward all others. I am not going to be angry or have bad thoughts. As much as I can, I will use all my energies to help others, to be of benefit to others."

It is very important to have this very practical setting of our intention in the morning. Likewise at night, we can examine our actions: "What have I done today? What type of person have I been today: did I help others or did I just use others for my own selfish purposes? Did I get angry; did I develop attachment?" We need to examine our day honestly as to how we actually behaved and what types of attitudes we developed during the day. If we find that during the day we in fact were a kind and warm person, we can rejoice in that, feeling happy and encouraged. But if we acted in a very disturbing manner, we need to feel regret about that, admit we did wrongly, and set a very strong intention: "Tomorrow, I'm not going to act again

in such a negative manner."

If we do this each day, we will gradually improve and learn to sustain it by resolving to "act well" for the next day, month and year. We can also build ourselves up, for instance, by coming to teachings like these. A strong intention can be set by thinking, "Now I am going to listen to the teachings on attitude-training and I am going to put them into practice as much as I can."

The second is the force of the white seed, which we create with this prayer: "May I achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings." This reaffirms our dedication to our own enlightenment and to that of all others.

The third is the force of eliminating all at once, which means to give up completely, all at once, what we have set our minds on giving up: our selfishness, our disturbing attitudes, our self-preoccupation, our grasping for a truly established self, and so forth. Deciding that we are not going to let ourselves come under the influence of these attitudes, we say, "I am not going to let myself become proud, arrogant, or selfish; and if the situation arises in which I find myself acting that way, I'm immediately going to apply the opponent forces."

The fourth is the force of prayer. We pray, "May I always be able to develop a bodhichitta aim and, if I have already developed it, may I expand it ever further." We know there is a difference between an aspirational prayer and a dedication prayer. An aspirational prayer is when we simply wish for something, which is what is involved here; and a dedication prayer is when we use some material object as the basis and dedicate the positive force from offering that toward achieving the goal.

The fifth is the force of habituation. We need to build up, as much as possible, the habit of always thinking in these positive ways. It is extremely important when we approach any type of spiritual training that we try to build it up as a beneficial habit. Things don't happen just at once; it is a matter of building up increasing familiarity, so that gradually we find our minds and hearts going in a positive direction. It is important to sustain our effort over extremely long periods of time, not to think in terms of just weeks or months of intensive practice; it doesn't work like that. Instead, we must think of lifetime after lifetime, to build up these positive habits over a significant period of time and, in this way, gradually improve. Because, since beginningless time, we've acted under the influence of disturbing attitudes, and we've acted in an unruly manner without any self-control, it is not going to be easy to eliminate these negative habits. It will require long, sustained effort to gradually reverse the tide of how our minds and hearts work and to get them to go in a positive direction. And so it is necessary to be patient, to think in the long term in order to habituate our hearts and minds to positive habits.

If we concentrate our efforts over only one week or one month of intensive practice, when we don't make progress we'll get very discouraged. This will be very damaging in the long run to our development from lifetime to lifetime. On the other hand, if we think in a more practical manner of improving from lifetime to lifetime, we won't get discouraged or have unreasonable expectations, and thus we'll develop in a more sustainable manner.

As Geshe Chaykawa said, "This mind that is full of faults has one great good quality: however it is trained, it becomes like that." In other words, it is possible to train our mind so that we can change our habits and become a better person. This is the great quality of the mind.

## Applying the Five Forces at the Time of Death

The next point explains how we apply the five forces at the time of death.

[This is in commentary to the lines, "The quintessence teaching for the Mahayana transference of mind is the five forces themselves, while giving importance to my path of deportment."]

Here the order is slightly different. With the important note that we must relinquish attachment to our body, first is the force of the white seed. This refers to thinking at the time of death, "Now at the time of my death, I purify myself of all the negative things that I've done during my lifetime; I admit to all the mistakes and wrong things I have done; and I give away all my possessions."

The text has a quote from *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior* about the horrors of facing death if we must die with a great deal of remorse and regret that we haven't taken care of our affairs. Since it is possible that we will experience a great deal of fear at the time of death, the first point is the white seed: to try to have mindfulness at the time of death and to apply all the opponent forces to purify the negative potentials we have built up. If we were involved in the practice of tantra, we take self-initiation and renew our vows. We take care of all of our possessions by giving them away, with generosity, and we do this without attachment, in a very clean manner. That is the force of the white seed.

The next force is the force of our intention. As we are dying, we think, "No matter how many moments I might have left, I'm going to make full use of them and prepare myself fully for death, so that it may go better in the future."

The next is the force of eliminating all at once, which is to give up building up in future lives any more negative karmic force and to resolve that in all future lives we'll follow only positive ways.

The next force, the force of prayer, is to pray that in the future we'll be able to continue with this practice of attitude-training.

The force of habituation is to reinforce, as we're passing away, our habitual thinking with a bodhichitta aim. In addition, concerning how we deport ourselves at the time of our deaths, we need to try to die in the manner of the Buddha. When Buddha passed away in Kushinagar, he did so while lying on his right side, in the posture of the lion. We generate firm conviction and great admiration for bodhichitta as we die, and we think, "In all my lives, may I always develop a bodhichitta aim to reach enlightenment for the benefit of all" and always throw this intention ahead for all our future lives as we die.

Visualizing taking on others' sufferings and giving away all our happiness in conjunction with our breathing is the best way to pass away. Referring to *powa* or transference of consciousness, Geshe Chaykawa said, "There are many greatly glorified quintessence teachings for transference of consciousness, but out of all of them, there are none more greatly wondrous than this (practice of taking and giving)."

It is extremely important to die with a constructive and positive state of mind. Some of us may have a great deal of pain at that time and take painkilling drugs, which cause the mind to be unclear. If we can avoid that, it is much better to die with a clear state of mind. If we can't avoid it, that is another matter, but it is best not to die with a drugged mind.

## The Measure of Having Trained Our Attitudes

[In the Namkapel and Pabongka editions, this section appears as, "I gather all Dharma into one intention; from the two witnesses, I take (myself as) the main; and I continually rely on mental happiness alone. But the (actual) measure of being trained is (my attitude) being reversed. There are five great signs of having become trained; so if I'm able, even when distracted, then I've become trained." The first three lines are taken to be signs that we have trained our attitudes. In the earlier Togmey-zangpo edition, the lines, "But the (actual) measure of being trained is (my attitude) being reversed. There are five great signs of having become trained," do not appear, and the first three lines and last line are all included as the measure of having trained our attitudes. ]

The commentary to the text says that if we have trained our attitudes toward life with thoughts of impermanence, then no matter what we see throughout life, we will see that it is impermanent, that it will pass. Likewise, if we have trained our mind to think about the disadvantages of selfishness, the sign of having done this is that in any text that we read, in any activity that we come upon in which we see the various faults described, we will identify with these faults and feel that they all have arisen due to our selfishness. If we are always able to recognize the negatives we see as arising from our own selfishness, it is a sign that we have been successful in training our mind with these methods.

As the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training* tells us, we need to take ourselves as the main witness. We are the best witnesses as to how our minds are working, not others who witness and judge what we are doing. If other people must serve as witnesses to attest to the spiritual and religious things we do, there is the great danger that we are just putting on a grand show in order to have others think that we are such a wonderful spiritual practitioner. Rather, the whole point is that we do all these trainings internally; we are the main witness as to whether or not we are becoming a kinder and better person.

We may add here some further quotes, mainly from the Kadam geshe: "When we see any fault, see it as being our own." "If we see any negative circumstance that we meet with as having arisen from our selfishness, this is a sign that we have successfully trained our attitude." "The main point is always to be mindful, to think of the advantages of cherishing others and the disadvantages of selfish concern."

The real measure of having trained our attitude is that, before, we were always ignoring others and thinking only of ourselves; but if now we find that this has been completely reversed, that we always ignore our selfish purposes while thinking of others, this is the real sign that we have been successful.

There are five types of "great being" that we need to witness that we have become:

- *a great hearted being* - someone who puts all his or her efforts into always thinking of others and developing bodhichitta,
- *a great being trained in constructive behavior* - someone who always puts his or her efforts into the ten far-reaching attitudes and into constructive behavior,
- *a great being able to endure difficulties* - someone who is able to endure all difficulties to win the battle against his or her various disturbing attitudes and emotions,
- *a great holder of discipline* - someone who keeps all vowed restraints in relation to training his or her attitudes,
- *a great yogi* - someone who is yoked to the actual thing: namely, bodhichitta.

[The ten far-reaching attitudes or perfections are: generosity, ethical self-discipline, patience, joyful perseverance, mental stability (concentration), discriminating awareness (wisdom), skill in means, aspirational prayer, strengthening, deep awareness.]

[See: The Ten Far-Reaching Attitudes in Theravada, Mahayana and Bon {20}.]

If we wish to test whether we have actually trained our attitudes, we cannot restrict having great love for others to those times when we are actually sitting and meditating on these points. Rather, during our daily life when someone comes along and criticizes us, or does something that may hurt us and so forth, then if we observe how we react, we can truly test what progress we have actually made.

## Close-Bonding Practices for Training Our Attitudes

There are different traditions of how this sixth of the seven points is presented. This version I am using of Namkapel's text has sixteen close-bonding practices, although some other versions have up to eighteen.

[In the commentarial tradition of Namkapel's text that His Holiness is following, if the first close-bonding practice, "train always in the three general points," is counted as three practices, then this listing also has eighteen practices. This listing, as explained by His Holiness, follows the list of eighteen close-bonding practices found in both the Togmey-zangpo and Pabongka editions of Geshe Chaykawa's text.

In some other editions of Namkapel's text listing eighteen practices, however, the following variants occur:

This first practice is counted as only one practice.

One close-bonding practice is omitted from this list, but added to the version explained by His Holiness as points to train in for cleansing our attitudes:

- Cleanse myself first of whichever disturbing emotion is my greatest. In that list of points to train in, this is called "cleanse myself first of whichever is the coarsest."

One close-bonding practice is omitted completely:

- Don't reverse the amulet.

Two other close-bonding practices are added, which, in this version explained by His Holiness, are listed as points to train in for cleansing our attitudes:

- Always train regarding those set aside.
- Don't be dependent on other conditions.

Two close-bonding practices are added that do not appear in the other versions as either a close-bonding practice or a point to train in:

- Be forceful in ridding myself (of disturbing attitudes and emotions) and taking on (positive ones) by means of subduing (my disturbing attitudes) with force.
- Devastate all reasons (for attachment and aversion to arise toward others).]

(1) **Train always in the three general points.** The first general point is "*Don't contradict what I've promised regarding training my attitudes.*" We do this by following ethical self-discipline, refraining from the ten destructive actions and so on. Such behavior would contradict our training of our attitudes. From the beginning of the practice all the way up to the great *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, we are not going to throw away any of these practices, as that would be contradicting the commitment we have promised.

[The second of the three general points is: "*Don't get into outrageous behavior when training my attitudes,*" such as harming the environment. The third is: "*Don't fall to partiality in training my attitudes,*" but rather practice equally toward everyone, including animals and insects.]

(2) **Transform my intentions, but remain normal.** In other words, we remain normal in our appearance and how we act in terms of fitting into society, but change all our attitudes. In other words, we need not have strange ideas about ourselves. For instance, if we are training our attitudes, doing this kind of practice, we don't go out and just do whatever we want. As it is always said, internally we must follow all the spiritual practices, but on the outside act in a manner consistent and harmonious with the environment and the society in which we live. We cannot act in an outrageous manner. Many people have said this, including the great lamas, Tsongkhapa and Gungtangzang.

(3) **Don't speak of (others') deficient or deteriorated sides.** In other words, we don't go around criticizing others and being concerned about other people's levels of attainment. We're normally unable to see any good qualities in other people, yet if they have a slight fault, we see it like a hawk. That is the point about not speaking about others' deficiencies.

(4) **Don't think anything about others' (faults).** We need to put aside dwelling in our minds or thinking and reflecting about others' faults.

In regard to these first points, it is useful to train in them especially with respect to the five types of persons set aside and singled out for being especially careful with:

- *Those who have been most kind to us.* It is crucial not to develop anger toward those who have been most kind to us and who are most worthy of respect: the Three Gems, our spiritual mentors, our parents, and so forth, as this would be very grave.
- *Members of our household and those with whom we daily associate.* This refers to being particularly careful about our family and those with whom we live. Very often, we say, "May all sentient beings be happy; may I work for the benefit of all limited beings." Yet we tend to think of these beings as being very distant from us, and when it comes down to those we actually live with - family, close associates - we are unable to apply this altruistic aspiration practically. This is completely wrong. We need to fully apply our energies not only to theoretically vague "sentient beings," but also to the people with whom we have daily contact, including our neighbors and those we might find rather obnoxious. Our prayers need to be extremely practical, at a down-to-earth level of handling the trying situations around us. "All sentient beings" are not distant concepts; we need to be directly involved.
- *Those who compete with us, whether lay or ordained.* We need to put special effort into dealing with those who compete with and are jealous of us, since there is a great danger that we will develop hostility toward them and self-cherishing toward ourselves. So it is important to make special efforts to train our attitudes regarding them.

- *Those who malign us, although we have done nothing toward them to warrant it.* This refers to people who, instead of showing any appreciation when we have done something nice for them, malign and say nasty things about us. Normally, we get very annoyed and expect them to act appreciatively toward us. That is when we need to make special efforts not to be angry and to continue with training our attitudes.
- *Those whom, at the mere sight of them or at the mere sound of their names, we dislike or feel antipathy toward.* We need to be particularly careful about people toward whom we feel great antipathy and, we may include here as well, great attraction. For example, we occasionally come across those toward whom we immediately feel either strong repulsion or strong attraction. In those situations it is important to be very mindful not to come under the influence of longing desire, hostility or aversion.

[This explanation of the five types of persons set aside is the usual interpretation of the twelfth point to train in for cleansing our attitudes, "always train regarding those set aside," in the list given in this version of the text that His Holiness is following.]

Some of us, when things are going well, act like religious people. But, when things aren't going well, we revert to worldly ways. As you know, it is our custom to do circumambulations, carrying a mala rosary or a prayer wheel. Once, someone was circumambulating, carrying a prayer wheel, when another came up and asked, "What are you doing?" The man said, "I'm practicing Dharma." When asked, "What specifically are you doing?" he replied, "I'm building up the habit of patience." The other person exclaimed, "Eat shit!" and the one who was supposed to be meditating on patience became furious! He was just putting on a show of being religious, circumambulating. In his heart, he hadn't made any change.

**(5) Cleanse myself first of whichever disturbing emotion is my greatest.** We need to deal with our most disturbing attitudes, but not to be partial toward dealing with some and not others. When dealing with our disturbing attitudes, we need to rid ourselves of all emotional obstacles preventing liberation. In order to do that, it means ridding ourselves of all the disturbing attitudes, not just some of them.

As it says in the text, we have to force ourselves to get rid of our disturbing attitudes and bad habits, and always be concerned with others. We do this through hearing, thinking and meditating about these measures, and building up positive habits of the mind. And we have to force ourselves to give up grasping for and cherishing our "self," and not be discouraged. So we really need to set our minds very strongly: not to allow ourselves to come under the influence of the disturbing attitudes that we have been under in the past and not to let any circumstance draw us away from this intention.

**(6) Rid myself of hopes for fruits.** We are not training our minds and changing our attitudes so that everyone will love us. Nor are we seeking to gain some sort of fame or reward for being such a great religious spiritual person. Rather, we are going to change our attitudes solely for the purpose of being able to help others. We wish to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of others, not for our own sake.

**(7) Give up poisoned food.** This means that we easily poison our practice with thoughts of selfishness and self-cherishing. We do various practices, say prayers, do meditations, read and study texts, but although we say we are doing this for the benefit of all limited beings, it is possible to poison this entire practice by doing it, say, to become famous as a great scholar. Using it for gains in this lifetime, freedom from sickness, long life, and so on - things done



solely to benefit ourselves, not others - this won't do. It is like eating poisoned food: it causes us only to increase self-cherishing.

(8) **Don't rely (on my disturbing thoughts) as my excellent mainstay.** This has two different interpretations. In some commentaries it means not to allow the major road in our minds to lead in the direction of disturbing attitudes. According to other commentaries, this means that when we see someone, our minds generally go straight to that person, as if on a major thoroughfare. This second interpretation, as explained in these commentaries, is that, for instance, when someone upsets us, we must not let our minds go straight to that person with thoughts of holding a grudge. I think the first interpretation is probably a little bit easier to understand, that we need to avoid letting the main direction of our mind lead toward disturbing attitudes.

(9) **Don't fly off into bad play.** This would be to retaliate, call people bad names when they call us names, or strike others back.

(10) **Don't lie in ambush.** As bandits might lie in wait on the side of the road to ambush a caravan, likewise we need to not lie in wait for someone to make a mistake or act improperly, in order to pounce on them or accuse them. If we are a good person, it is easy to be good with those who are nice people, but it is the difficult ones that are the real test.

(11) **Don't put (someone) down about a sensitive point.** This reminds us not to point out people's faults in front of others.

(12) **Don't shift the load of a dzo on to an ox.** A dzo is a very large animal - a cross between a yak and a cow - so in other words, we must not put the blame on others for things that we might have done ourselves. Rather than place the burden on someone who is less capable of carrying it, we ourselves can take full responsibility.

(13) **Don't make a race.** This means that we need not always push ourselves ahead or try to take credit for all the good things that have taken place.

(14) **Don't reverse the amulet.** When we hold up an amulet, or talisman, to ward off spirits, we would hold it facing away. Likewise, when we train our minds, it is to cherish others. But if we do it just to get self-importance, it is like holding the amulet backwards.

(15) **Don't make a god fall to a demon.** This means to do things just to please our self-cherishing. For instance, sometimes people will criticize each other just to get praise or to get ahead. To do this is particularly going in the wrong direction.

(16) **Don't seek suffering (for others) as an adjunct for (my) happiness.** In short, it is very important to have the proper intention before doing anything - to be sure that it is for the benefit of all others. This is why, at the beginning of our recitations and prayers, we always set the intention and at the end we dedicate the positive force.

## Points To Train In for Cleansing Our Attitudes

This is the final point of the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training*.

[In the commentarial tradition of Namkapel's text that His Holiness is explaining, there are twenty-two points to train in. The same list of twenty-two appears in both the Togmey-zangpo

and Pabongka editions of Geshe Chaykawa's root text.

Some other versions of Namkapel's text list twenty-four points to train in. There, the following variants occur:

One point to train in is omitted from this list, but included in the version explained by His Holiness as a point to train in:

- Do all quashing of what is distorted with one.

Two points to train in are omitted from this list, but added to the version explained by His Holiness as close-bonding practices for cleansing our attitudes:

- Always train regarding those set aside.
- Don't be dependent on other conditions.

Five points to train are added that do not appear in the other versions as either a close-bonding practice or a point to train in:

- Train with easier practices.
- Transform everything into a Mahayana pathway mind.
- Practice that which is more effective - such as ethical discipline over generosity, or bodhichitta in all circumstances.
- If I turn away (from training my attitudes), meditate on that itself as the antidote - in other words, meditate that my turning away is an interference caused by harmful spirits and practice giving and taking (tonglen) toward others similarly affected.
- In the future, always armor myself (with bodhichitta).

One point, "act purely, without partiality toward objects," is incorporated as part of another, "cherish (applying) wide and deep training in everything."]

(1) **Do all yogas with one.** This point advises us that we need to do all our activities with the intention of benefiting everyone.

(2) **Do all the quashing of what is distorted with one.** In other words, we need to try to get rid of our disturbing attitudes and emotions with one practice - giving and taking.

(3) **At the beginning and the end, have the two actions.** This refers to what we have discussed before. It means (a) to create a strong intention at the beginning of each day and (b) to dedicate the positive force at the end.

This is the type of thing that I myself practice daily, setting a strong intention that everything I do might benefit all beings. More specifically, for the Tibetans in Tibet, our country, who are suffering so many difficulties, I dedicate myself fully to them. Then, at the end of the day, I dedicate whatever positive force has been built up by my actions toward the fulfillment of that prayer.

(4) **Whichever of the two occurs, act patiently** applies to (a) giving our happiness to others when things go well with us and (b) taking on their suffering when things go poorly, without getting discouraged. It is important to have great courage in these practices of giving away our happiness and taking on the problems of others. If we are happy, we can think, "This is the

result of positive potentials that I have built up in the past." We can't just think, "How wonderful I am!" when experiencing this happiness; but, rather, send out prayers that everybody may attain the happiness that we have; that everybody may enjoy this good situation that we are in.

It is extremely important to put special effort into being able to tolerate difficult situations. As Shantideva says in *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, particularly when we are ill or in situations that are extremely difficult or painful, we need to put special effort into being able to tolerate that and transform it into a path. Also, in situations when we are very successful and things are going almost too well, it is especially important to be very careful not to develop pride.

(5) **Safeguard the two at the cost of my life.** These two are (a) the instructions of Dharma practice in general and, specifically, (b) the close-bonding practices for training our attitudes.

(6) **Train in the three difficult things** refers to (a) being mindful of what the opponent forces are to counter the disturbing attitudes, (b) being mindful to apply these opponents, and (c) remaining mindful to maintain them. So, as soon as disturbing attitudes or emotions arise, we need to remember what the opponent forces are for reversing them. But we must not only remember what these opponents are, we need to apply them immediately and then remain mindful of applying them so as to cut the continuity of the disturbing attitude.

As explained in the words of Dromtonpa, another way to train when something difficult happens is to feel that we have gotten off lightly and been very lucky - something worse could have happened. If someone calls us a bad name, we feel we've gotten off lightly - we have exhausted the karma that a crowd might have criticized us. If we suffer an illness, we've been lucky, as we could have had a much more serious accident or disaster. The same goes if we are put in jail or punished in some way - we are getting off easily from having to endure something much worse, such as a fall to a worse rebirth.

We needn't think of these things as something we do only during meditation sessions when everything is going nicely and we have no irritants. We need to apply all these trainings of our attitudes to more difficult situations. If we put effort into dedicating our heart to others, all beings, through developing a bodhichitta aim, taking on the bodhisattva vows, and so forth, then no matter what we do, whether eating, sleeping or drinking, the positive force of always safeguarding our bodhichitta aim will increase. Training in this way, we are turning everything into causes for making further progress in helping others.

One of the Kadam Geshe, Geshe Chaykawa, became very unhappy as he was about to die and asked his disciples to set up special offerings. The disciples were curious and asked him, "You've practiced well all your lifetime, why are you sad now that you are about to die?" He replied, "I'm sad because all my life I've made extensive prayers to be reborn in the joyless realms in order to be able to take on all the sufferings of beings, and now at the moment of death I can see the signs that instead of being reborn in a hell as has been my wish and prayer, I'm going to be reborn in a divine pure realm. That is why I am so sad at the time of my death."

(7) **Take the three major causes.** These are (a) to meet with a spiritual teacher, (b) to practice his or her teaching, and (c) to obtain the favorable circumstances of being satisfied with modest housing, food and sustenance so we can devote all our energies to the practice. We set up wishes and prayers that we may be able to obtain these three major causes for success in

our spiritual practice.

[In some other versions of Namkapel's text, the three major causes are given slightly differently as: having a precious human body as the inner condition for successful Dharma practice, having a qualified spiritual mentor as the external condition, and having access to food and clothing in moderation.]

(8) **Meditate on the three undeclining things.** That is to have (a) undeclining confident belief in our spiritual mentor and appreciation of his or her kindness, (b) undeclining willingness to practice what he or she advises, and (3) undeclining commitment to all the different trainings. Our confident trust and appreciation must not be just on our lips; they need to be strong and sincere, and come from our hearts. We need to have great admiration and trust in the spiritual mentor who teaches us, in the actual training of our attitudes, and in the actual points by which we can accomplish that.

[In some other versions of Namkapel's text, the three undeclining things are explained as (a) undeclining confident belief in our spiritual mentor and appreciation of his or her kindness, (b) undeclining safeguard not to let our attention to ethical training waver, and (c) undeclining safeguard not to let our joy in training our attitudes weaken.]

(9) **Possess the three inseparables.** These three are to have our (a) body, (b) speech, and (c) mind be inseparable from the practices. We need to be sincere on all levels concerning the way we act, speak, and think. We need to do everything in accordance with the training of the mind.

(10) **Act purely, without partiality to objects.** It is important to train with all limited beings, not just with our friends, and to avoid the poisons of attraction, repulsion and indifference.

(11) **Cherish wide and deep training toward everything.** We need to train ourselves extensively and deeply with regard to both animate beings and inanimate objects. In other words, our practice of training our attitudes needs to be far-reaching, all-encompassing, and totally sincere. For instance, when we encounter problems, we can think, "If I didn't have these problems, I wouldn't develop renunciation; and if I didn't have the determination to be free from my own problems, I wouldn't develop the compassion to free others from theirs. I wouldn't fully be able to develop a bodhichitta aim." We can turn around any difficult situation by appreciating the value of having it.

[These last two points do not appear in the Togmey-zangpo edition of Chaykawa's text.]

(12) **Always meditate toward those set aside.** For instance, with a small insect, instead of thinking how superior we are compared to this little bug on the floor, we can think, "How unfortunate this being is, having been born in this form without the ability to benefit and improve itself." In the same way, any time we feel jealousy toward others, we can think how, if we applied all our efforts, we could also achieve what this other person has accomplished. Thus, we need not let ourselves come under the influence of disturbing attitudes. If we have an illness and don't want to experience its discomforts, we would immediately take some medicine. Likewise, when disturbing attitudes arise in our minds we need to apply opponents - like taking medicine when we are sick.

[In fuller explanations, those set aside refer to the five types of persons set aside and singled out for being especially careful with, which His Holiness discussed in his presentation of the

close-bonding practices for training our attitudes.]

(13) **Don't be dependent on other conditions.** It may happen that while we are working to train our attitudes, we might get sick or various things might not go well. We must not become discouraged and say, "I've been trying to be a good person and train my attitudes, but all I'm getting are difficulties. If only the conditions for practice were different!" Rather, we need to continue applying all the points and methods explained in the teachings, no matter what conditions arise. We need to see the negative circumstances that arise as situations ripening from the past, so that we don't get discouraged. When various difficult circumstances and situations arise, we need to feel happy that they are coming to the surface and that now we can be rid of them.

(14) **Practice primarily now.** We have a precious human body and life, with all its precious opportunities, freedom and leisure to actually train our attitudes to become a better person. If we don't do it now, when will we? When are we going to have a better opportunity?

(15) **Don't have reversed understandings.** There are six types of reversed understandings:

- *Reversed compassion* - namely for poor practitioners, but not for rich worldly persons. This is the wrong way round. It is like an example from the biography of Milarepa, who was lying like a beggar by the side of the road when three rich sisters came by and felt sorry for him. Milarepa said, "Don't feel sorry for me, I'm the one who has actual compassion for you - you're in a much worse state than I am."
- *Reversed intention* - instead of having the intention to put the preventive measures of Dharma into practice in order to attain enlightenment and benefit all limited beings, we have the strong intention to get ahead in worldly affairs.
- *Reversed interest* - instead of causing others to be interested in spiritual matters, we cause them to be interested in worldly affairs. [In other versions of Namkapel's text, reversed interest is explained as involving ourselves with the property and affairs of the Triple Gem in general and specifically of the Sangha community in order to win friends, rather than in bringing all beings to the state of a Buddha.]
- *Reversed rejoicing* - instead of rejoicing in all the good qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we rejoice when people we don't like meet difficult circumstances. Or our enemy falls down and we say, "Good, he deserved it!"
- *Reversed patience* Rather than for spiritual matters, we have patience for negative activities. We're willing to put up with difficulties to get ahead in some negative way, but we don't have the patience to handle the difficulties that come up in spiritual training. [In other versions of Namkapel's text, reversed interest is explained more specifically as patience for our disturbing attitudes and emotions, rather than for those who become angry toward us.]
- *Reversed taste* - instead of wishing for a taste of the Dharma teachings, we want to taste all sorts of worldly things that have a perishable basis and don't last at all.

(16) **Don't be intermittent.** To practice one day, give up the next, and then go back again, not only is something we need to avoid when training our attitudes. Even on a worldly level, if we are intermittent and don't have sustained effort, we are not going to accomplish anything.

(17) **Train resolutely.** We need to get straight to the heart of the matter of training our attitudes and not go off on tangents or go half-heartedly into the practice. We have to go straightforwardly into working on our attitudes and improving them. In attitude training, we mustn't hesitate to go into it fully.

(18) **Free myself through both investigation and scrutiny.** We free ourselves by applying the major opponents to our disturbing attitudes as they arise. The actual opponent, for instance, if we are very attached to someone or something, is to see the object of our attachment as ugly and not having good qualities. If we are angry, we apply love; if we are naive, we think of dependent arising. And if we have pride - let's say we are very learned and those next to us aren't able to understand things - rather than think how wonderful we are, we can think, "These people haven't been able to apply all their efforts and don't have the circumstances to be able to use their full potential!" In this way, instead of being subject to our own disturbing attitudes, we free ourselves through compassion for the other.

(19) **Don't meditate with a sense of a loss.** This tells us that when difficulties come about or others want something from us, we need not feel a sense of loss.

(20) **Don't restrict myself with hypersensitivity.** We must not be oversensitive when things go wrong or get angry at the slightest provocation.

(21) **Don't act for merely a short while** tells us we are mistaken to set limits on how far we go in working on our attitudes or in helping others. Rather than putting tremendous effort in at the beginning and not sustaining it, we need to be steady in our effort.

(22) **Don't wish for (any) thanks** says we cannot expect anything in return for the help that we give. If we give help or charity and expect to get "merit" from it, it is just the same as a business transaction. We must not do positive acts just to get something in return, whether material or "merit."

## **Generating Deepest Bodhichitta: Proper Vessels To Be Taught about Voidness**

We have completed the discussion of generating conventional bodhichitta, expanding our heart out to enlightenment and others in terms of their conventional truth. The next point concerns expanding our heart out toward their deepest truth - in other words, generating deepest bodhichitta. Deepest bodhichitta here is just given in a brief verse, to be supplemented by the chapters on vipashyana, an exceptionally perceptive state of mind, from Tsongkhapa's *Great and Small Presentations of the Graded Stages of the Path*. It is to be understood from that.

The discussion here is in two parts: who are the proper vessels to be taught about voidness; and what are the actual teachings on it. If we don't teach to proper vessels, many people will misunderstand. There are some people, for instance, who think that the discussion of voidness in Buddhism is just a discussion of nothingness. They think it is nihilism and that Buddhism does not assert anything. This is dangerous because, based on that, they think nothing matters - it doesn't matter what you do because everything is nothing. That type of person is an improper vessel. They are not ready to understand voidness.

A proper understanding of voidness would impel us to act in a positive manner. Someone who is able to understand in this way is a proper vessel. Rather than have the teachings of voidness provide them with an excuse to act in any manner whatsoever, because they misunderstand and think that nothing matters, they understand voidness to mean the absence of impossible ways of existing. They see the actual way in which things exist, in terms of cause and effect, and they implement this in their behavior. They are even more confident, acting in a proper

way according to the laws of what brings about positive results.

If we understand the teachings on voidness to mean that impossible ways of existing don't refer to anything real, and so therefore everything functions in terms of dependent arising, this is a correct understanding. A person who is capable of this is a proper vessel.

### **The Verse Explaining the Actual Training in Deepest Bodhichitta**

For some people who are most receptive, it is helpful to train in deepest bodhichitta first. Once they understand reality, it increases their capacity to actually work to achieve enlightenment and help all others. For most people, however, it is the opposite. They train in conventional bodhichitta first and when that is stable, they then train in deepest bodhichitta concerning what is more obscure or hidden, namely voidness.

[Based on this way in which most people train, Namkapel explains the verse, "Ponder that all phenomena are like a dream; discern the basic nature of awareness that has no arising; the opponent itself liberates itself in its own place; the essential nature of the path is to settle within a state of the all-encompassing basis; between sessions, act like an illusory person," at the end of the other seven points for attitude-training and precedes it with the line, "What is hidden is to be shown after attaining stability (in this)."

Pabongka places this verse, preceded by the line "What is hidden is to be shown after attaining stability (in this)" directly after the verse for developing conventional bodhichitta, which appears in the root text regarding the second of the seven points for attitude training, training in the two bodhichittas. In Togmey-zangpo's edition, this verse precedes the verse for developing conventional bodhichitta; while the line, "What is hidden is to be shown after attaining stability (in this)," does not appear at all.]

Let us briefly comment on the actual four-line verse in the root text of the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training*.

**Ponder that all phenomena are like a dream.** All things are like a dream in the sense that they lack truly established existence - in other words, existence established as true or "true existence" - just as in a dream it is quite obvious that things don't exist in a true manner.

**Discern the basic nature of awareness that has no arising.** This speaks of analyzing both consciousness and the object of that consciousness, and discerning that neither one nor the other has truly established existence. This is reminiscent of the Yogachara Svatantrika Madhyamaka approach, which speaks of the refutation of external phenomena. It asserts that external phenomena don't exist independently of the mind. This seems to be the way it is phrased here, relating to the non-truly established existence of the consciousness as well as the objects of the consciousness.

**The opponent itself liberates itself in its own place.** This refers to the fact that voidness itself is devoid of truly established existence. That point can be found in the listing of the various types of voidness - the sixteen voidnesses and so forth, which include the "voidness of voidness itself." In addition, reflexive awareness (*rang-rig*), which refers here to the awareness of voidness, is also devoid of truly established existence.

**The essential nature of the pathway minds is to settle within a state of the all-encompassing basis.** [This line can also be translated and understood as: "*Settle the*

*essential nature of the pathway minds into a state of the all-encompassing basis" or as "Settle into a state of the all-encompassing basis, the essential nature of the pathway minds."]* Having cut off both extremes of nihilism and eternalism (the assertion of truly established existence), all things we encounter must be placed within the context of the mind that understands voidness. In other words, we apply that mind that understands voidness to every encounter, with all objects and in all situations.

There are two ways of explaining the term *all-encompassing basis* (*kun-gzhi*, Skt. *alaya*; foundation of all) in this line. For both, "pathway minds" refers to the pathway minds of an *arya*, a highly realized being, and the "all-encompassing basis" refers to an unspecified phenomenon - one that Buddha did not specify as being either constructive or destructive.

- One way of explaining this line is that an *arya* mind settles in the state whereby it is completely non-artificial, referring to the state in which the mind is not stained by any of the fleeting stains. So one option of explaining the "all-encompassing basis" being an unspecified phenomenon is that it refers to the uncontrived state of the unstained mind.
- Another way of explaining it is that "foundation of all" refers to voidness. So we need to settle not only our minds, but all our realizations into the context of the understanding of voidness.

In the tradition of Tibetan commentaries, there are various ways of discussing the deepest truth about everything. One is to take it as an object - the object being voidness, the void nature of all phenomena. Alternatively, from a tantric point of view, deepest truth refers to the mind that takes voidness as an object. This refers to the finest level of consciousness that understands voidness, as explained in terms of tantra. Thus, there's a deepest truth from the point of view of the object, voidness, or from the point of view of the mind that takes voidness as its object.

In the Sakya tradition, for instance, we find the teaching of "the inseparability of samsara and nirvana." This refers to the primordial, simultaneously arising mind and how this primordial mind is the foundation or basis for both samsara and nirvana, since the appearances of all phenomena are the play of that mind. Similarly, the Nyingma tradition explains how all things are pure from the top and how their functional nature is that they spontaneously establish all appearances. "Spontaneously established" refers to all appearances being established by the primordial mind of clear light. Similarly, the Kagyu tradition of mahamudra talks about everything being of one taste: "In the sphere of simultaneously arising clear light, everything has one taste." This is one of the main points we find in the Kagyu mahamudra teachings.

Whether it is in the Nyingma system of the old translation period, which speaks of the primordial mind, pure from the top, that spontaneously establishes all appearances or, in the new translation period, the Sakya tradition of "inseparable voidness and bliss" or the Kagyu tradition of mahamudra - all of them are talking about the deepest truth, the actual nature of everything from the point of view of the consciousness that take voidness as its object. In the Gelug tradition of Tsongkhapa and others, there is a similar presentation, such as in Tsongkhapa's commentaries on the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, in which he speaks about the simultaneously arising state of great blissful awareness that takes voidness as its object. That directly corresponds to the discussion here in the other three Tibetan traditions. When we talk about the actual nature of everything or voidness from the point of view of this verse, it refers to getting to the object, voidness, and how to remove the stains from the consciousness that would understand voidness.



The commentary to the text that I am following refers us to the larger and smaller versions of the section on vipashyana, an exceptionally perceptive state of mind, in the lam-rim graded path texts of Tsongkhapa, which follow the tradition of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva. This implies not taking as the primary point the actual meditative experiences of the Tibetan lamas' tantric practices; but rather taking as the main source the scriptural texts and the logical discussions that come from the great Indian pandits. The main feature of Tsongkhapa's tradition is that he goes back to the Indian sources and derives his interpretations from them. But whether we derive our understanding from the Indian sources and their logical discussions, or from the actual experiences of the meditation practitioners, if we examine them both, they both ultimately come to the same intended point.

[In Namkapel's text, the line, "Ponder that all phenomena are like a dream," is explained as referring to the voidness of all objects of cognition that are taken by the mind. "Discern the basic nature of awareness that has no arising" refers to the voidness of all minds that cognitively take objects. "The opponent itself liberates itself in its own place" refers to the voidness of the person meditating on voidness. "The essential nature of the pathway minds is to settle within a state of the all-encompassing basis" refers to how to meditate during total absorption on voidness. The last line here, "Between sessions, act like an illusory person," refers to how to train during subsequent attainment periods following total absorption on voidness. The commentary His Holiness is explaining follows Namkapel in expanding on this last line after the full discussion of voidness.]

## Recognizing the Unawareness That Is the Root of Samsara

The presentation of deepest bodhichitta in this text is divided into three parts:

- recognizing the unawareness that is the root of samsara,
- the necessity for ascertaining the lack of a truly established identity or "soul" as the way to reverse this unawareness,
- the actual methods to ascertain this.

Unawareness or ignorance is the exact opposite of awareness or correct knowing of something. Here, we are speaking in terms of being aware of the actual nature of reality or being unaware of it in the sense of being aware of it in a distorted manner. It is because we are unaware of the actual nature of reality that we take things or grasp at things to exist in ways that do not accord with reality. We are obscured about the way in which things actually exist. That is what we mean by unawareness or ignorance.

The result of being obscured about reality and taking it in a wrong way is that we grasp at things as having a truly established identity or "soul," which means grasping at things as having their existence established from their own side. When we speak about this lack of a truly established identity, we are speaking within the context of everybody wanting happiness and nobody wanting unhappiness. We are examining who actually experiences happiness or unhappiness, and what actually is it that they want to have and that they want to eliminate. In other words, we are analyzing the person who experience things and the actual things that a person experiences. We discover that each of these two has an identity or existence, but not a truly established one. This is because there is no such thing as a truly established identity of anyone or anything.

When we want to eliminate the mind that misapprehends reality and grasps at things to exist in a distorted, impossible way, we need to distinguish and recognize the actual implied object of that mind's distorted way of knowing. That is what needs to be refuted in order to eliminate the mind that grasps at things to exist in a truly established way. The implied object of this grasping mind would be things actually existing in a truly established manner. In other words, self-established existence is the object to be refuted.

In terms of this discussion, we need to understand the subtleties involved in avoiding the extremes of over-refuting or under-refuting the object to be refuted.

- If we over-refute it, we say that the object to be refuted is over-pervasive. This means that our refutation is negating not only truly established existence, but is negating all manners of existence. In this case, the object to be refuted is too pervasive - it pervades or includes too much.
- If we under-refute, making the object to be refuted under-pervasive, we refute too little. Our refutation doesn't refute existence truly established by the power of something findable on the side of the object. It only refutes some, but not all levels of impossible ways of existing.

These are the dangers in over- or under-refuting the object to be refuted. Tsongkhapa's emphasis on recognizing these dangers underlines the importance of correctly understanding and identifying the object to be refuted.

Furthermore, it is necessary to have a union of both method and wisdom - in other words, method and discriminating awareness - when we're engaged in trying to understand reality such that, at every level, we are dealing with both aspects together. For example, if we assume that, as a result of our understanding of voidness, everything is totally non-existent and absurd, then everything is like "rabbits' horns" and we won't have any true understanding of the method side, concerning cause and effect. We won't be able to realize how happiness comes from constructive actions and unhappiness from destructive actions. Due to this misapprehension of reality, we won't engage in the practices that will benefit others.

Thus it is necessary to have a full comprehension of the harmonious relationship between the deepest and the conventional truths about everything. This means that our understanding of the actual nature of reality needs to reinforce our understanding of dependent arising. An example of the latter would be, for instance, our understanding that based on this cause and from this reasoning, we obtain this result. The correct understanding of reality will then reinforce our constructive actions, which in turn will build up a positive force that will bring happiness to us as well as to all others and, ultimately, our attainment of enlightenment as a result.

If we can gain a correct ascertainment of the two truths about everything and how they fit together, we'll be able to build up the two bountiful stores or networks of positive force and deep awareness simultaneously, and in that way we'll be able to achieve a simultaneous attainment of a Dharmakaya and a Rupakaya - in other words, the mind and body of a Buddha together. So on all levels, from the beginning to the end, it is necessary to have the two truths together. If we don't have a proper understanding, it won't be complete - and that is a big mistake. Method in connection with the conventional truth of things and wisdom or discriminating awareness in connection with the deepest truth of things: we need both. We can't just achieve the mind of a Buddha without also achieving a Buddha's body.

The text also tells us not to restrict this understanding of the lack of an impossible identity or "soul" to merely persons. We also need to apply it to the phenomena that persons experience. For instance, the Vaibhashika tradition of shravakas only refutes the lack of an impossible identity of a person and, even then, they don't address its profoundest level of what is impossible. They merely refute that persons exist with a static, monolithic, independently existing identity or "soul." We cannot leave the refutation of impossible modes of existence merely at that. Nor can we leave it at the Sautrantika level, which in relation to persons refutes as well persons being self-sufficiently knowable.

[See: [The Two Truths in Vaibhashika and Sautrantika](#) {21}.]

We also cannot leave the refutation of impossible modes of existence at the Chittamatra level, which in relation to persons also refutes only that persons exist as self-sufficiently knowable entities. Unlike the Hinayana schools of Vaibhashika and Sautrantika, however, Chittamatra goes on to assert the lack of an impossible identity or "soul" of all phenomena as well. But the Chittamatra way of asserting this lack is just to say that both consciousness and the objects of that consciousness lack existence established from different natal sources. They take this mode of existence as an impossible mode of existing of phenomena and refute that. All of these are under-refutations.

The Chittamatra school has two ways of presenting ultimate phenomena. It asserts that something is established as an ultimate phenomenon either if it is found by a valid cognition scrutinizing (analyzing) what is ultimate or if it can withstand the force of analysis by a valid cognition scrutinizing what is ultimate. Thus, Chittamatra asserts that if something cannot be found when subjected to ultimate analysis, it doesn't exist at all. This is the exact opposite of the Prasangika Madhyamaka view [[that nothing is findable on the side of an object when analyzed by valid cognition scrutinizing either deepest or conventional truth.](#)] This Chittamatra view, then, is asserting that things have self-established existence, standing in their own place as what can be found upon ultimate analysis. This is the Chittamatra "mind-only" view.

[See: [Basic Features of the Gelug-Chittamatra System, part 1](#) {22}.]

In refuting what cannot be found on scrutiny of what is ultimate, this Chittamatra school of tenets is refuting an incorrect object of refutation. They are saying that things that cannot be found on ultimate analysis do not exist at all. That is an incorrect object of refutation. And this seems to be a common assertion from the Svatantrika schools on downward - namely that upon scrutiny of what is ultimate, something can be found on the side of objects that establishes their existence. If we were actually to assert and believe these inverted tenets, then in fact we would be asserting things that exist in a totally imaginary, impossible manner. We would be grasping at something that is totally nonexistent - something findable on the side of objects upon ultimate analysis - and that would be a great state of unawareness.

Our own tradition, the Prasangika Madhyamaka, says that the actual cause of samsara is automatically arising unawareness. If we were to believe merely in accordance with the scope of the definition of unawareness asserted by the other Buddhist schools of tenets, then in refuting merely that scope of unawareness, we would be refuting only doctrinally based unawareness - unawareness that grasps at things to exist in a manner that is based on an incorrect doctrinal foundation. The actual root of samsara, however, is not this doctrinally based unawareness, but a naturally, automatically arising type of unawareness. This is the level of unawareness with which every being, from animals on up, grasps at the existence of

things to be established by something findable on the side of those things. We need to refute as the root of samsara a naturally arising occurrence that ordinarily accompanies every beings' consciousness and not just something that is based on some doctrine that we have been taught and come to believe, and which not everyone has even heard of.

This is part of the discussion of the Prasangika point of view that the existence of everything validly knowable can only be established in terms of mental labeling - in terms of that to which mental labels refer. If the existence of an object were actually to be established from the side of the referent object of the label or from the side of the basis for labeling that object, then that object would be findable. If it were findable, that would prove self-established existence (inherent existence), and that is what is being refuted here by Prasangika. That is the intention of Nagarjuna and Aryadeva.

A quote from Nagarjuna talks about how voidness needs to be understood in terms of dependent arising, and dependent arising needs to be understood in terms of voidness. If things were not devoid of impossible ways of existing, cause and effect could not work. Cause and effect work solely because all things are devoid of impossible ways of existing. This means that self-established existence or existence established from something's own side, findable upon analysis of the deepest truth about things - as discussed in reference to Chittamatra, above - is invalid. The quote says that to understand voidness in terms of dependent arising - nothing is more marvelous or incredible than that.

How does automatically arising unawareness grasp at things to exist? It imagines that the existence of things is not established merely by their being the referent objects of mental labels. It supposes that their existence is truly established from their own side, independently of mental labeling. This unawareness includes misunderstanding the lack of a truly established identity or "soul" of both persons and all phenomena. There isn't anything that has its existence established by the power of something findable on its own side, independently of the concepts, names, labels, and so forth for them. The total absence of this impossible mode of establishing the existence of something validly knowable is what is referred to as the voidness of that object.

The way it is presented here seems quite similar to the way it appears in the shorter lam-rim of Tsongkhapa and his commentary on Nagarjuna's *Root Stanzas on the Middle Way, Called "Discriminating Awareness"* (Skt. *Prajna-nama-Mulamadhyamakakarika*). Chandrakirti also tells us that if there were an object to which no concept can refer, then that object couldn't possibly exist; whereas, if there is a concept that refers to an object, the existence of that object can be established in terms of that concept. So things can only be established in terms of the concepts that refer to them; they cannot be established by anything from their own side [because they are devoid of anything findable on their own side that could establish their existence].

We may ask, do things just exist as they are in terms of my own individual concepts for them? No, it's not that way. That is a solipsistic way of looking at things. If a thing is generally accepted by society as white, our insisting that it exists as yellow is not going to make it yellow. So things don't exist in a solipsistic way merely according to how we label them. This is because if that were the case, it would apply also to constructive and destructive actions. If, by the power of our prejudiced way of thinking, the result of a particular action would be exactly the way that we would like it to be, that would make everything quite chaotic. That is certainly not the case. Rather, things are established by general convention, by how everybody validly cognizes things.

We will now look at a quote from *Totally Clarifying the Intentions (dGong-pa rab-gsal)*, Tsongkhapa's commentary to Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nagarjuna's "Root Stanzas on) the Middle Way" (Skt. Madhyamakavatara)*. This quote refers to the example of a snake - actually a coil of rope that is labeled as a "snake." There is no basis for the rope being validly labeled as a snake. That mistaken labeling is similar to regarding the aggregates as a truly existent "me." Let us not confuse this to mean that to refer to a vase and a pillar as a "vase" and a "pillar" would be incorrect.

Actually there are three ways of cognitively taking things. [We may take a rope to be a snake, a rope to be a truly existent rope, and a rope to be conventionally a rope.] To grasp at the aggregates as being a truly existent "me" would be the same as grasping at a coiled rope to be a snake. That would be an incorrect way of cognitively taking something. This type of unawareness or ignorance, then, is not the same as labeling a rope "a rope" or a vase "a vase."

Moreover, grasping at the existence of things to be established in an incorrect, impossible manner can be either doctrinally based on some incorrect view or automatically arising. What is referred to here as the main cause of samsara is the automatically arising grasping at the existence of things to be truly established from their own side. An automatically arising grasping at the aggregates to exist as a truly existent "me," then, would be like grasping at a coiled rope to exist like a snake. Such grasping is not one that is based on belief in some philosophical doctrine that we have learned, but is just an automatically arising grasping that naturally occurs with everyone. Such automatically arising grasping creates all kinds of disturbing emotions and attitudes, which cause us to build up various negative potentials, which in turn cause various impulses of karma to arise, which then perpetuate our immersion in samsara.

There is the "me" who wishes to be happy and the "me" that does not want any suffering, and of course there's the "me" that gets hungry and wants to drink a cup of tea or eat a piece of bread. That type of "me" is validly knowable as simply what the word "me" refers to, validly labeled on a basis for labeling. That type of "me" does indeed conventionally exist. But things don't appear to us that way. The "me" that experiences things and make use of things does not appear to us in the manner of just what the word "me" refers to. Instead, it appears to us as something with its existence established from its own side, on the side of the basis for labeling "me." Grasping that this deceptive mode of appearance refers to something that actually exists creates in us a very strong sense of a "me" that exists independently. Based on grasping for such a "me," we also grasp for things to exist from their own side as "mine." From those concepts of "mine," we then think in terms of "my enemy," "my friend," and so forth. Then, on the basis of that, we get attachment and aversion; and on the basis of those, we commit all sorts of destructive acts that build up negative karmic force. Thus, this way of grasping things as having their existence established from their own side - not simply as what the words for them refer to - is what causes all the problems that we have.

We can begin to see how the mind is actually interpolating here, adding to the reality of things something that doesn't actually exist. This is how we find someone very attractive. The mind interpolates onto that person an appearance that is absolutely beautiful - so attractive and sexually desirable, or whatever. Such interpolation projects a complete unreality on top of the person. On the basis of that, we feel great attachment and attraction. Or, conversely, our minds project onto someone we consider an enemy something extremely ugly or repulsive; and we react to the projection that we have placed on top of this person. On the basis of that, we become hostile, commit all sorts of destructive acts toward the person, and create negative karmic force. As a result of that negative potential and the destructive impulses that arise

based on it, we wander uncontrollably in samsara. If we can comprehend the absence of this impossible way of existing that we interpolate and project onto objects, we will be free from all the uncontrollably recurring problems of samsara.

Based on this strong grasping at a truly existent "me," we divide the world into "me" and "everybody else," and on that basis we build up all sorts of negative attitudes. Yet, if we became very angry with, say, someone named Tashi, we could actually stop to analyze, "Who is this Tashi that I am getting angry with? Is it his body? Is it his mind? If it is his body, is it his head, or his feet, or his arms, or his nose?" When we start to investigate like this, we are suddenly very surprised. We step back, because we discover that we can't actually find this Tashi that we're so angry with! So then we can ask ourselves what actually is it that we are so angry with? This is a very effective method, to investigate just why it is that we are so angry. So if we have the presence of mind to analyze like this in such situation, it can be very helpful.

## **The Necessity for Ascertaining the Lack of a Truly Established Identity or "Soul" as the Way to Reverse This Unawareness**

The text describes how, by being attached to ourselves as a "me," we are totally immersed in the selfish pursuit of happiness and continue to circle in samsara. The objects of all our attachment and aversion seem to us not to exist merely in terms of what the names or labels for them refer to. Because of that, we react with attachment and aversion to things that, we are convinced, actually are established as existing from their own side in the deceptive manner in which they appear to exist.

We have to identify this grasping at truly established existence very clearly, as it is the source of all our problems. It is imperative to get rid of it, to uproot it from our mental continuum, and to realize that the implied object that we are grasping at doesn't actually exist at all. The root of samara is the automatically arising unawareness with which we grasp at things to exist in a completely erroneous way. It is critical that we get rid of it and begin to think in exactly the opposite manner.

We grasp at things to have their existence established from their own side, but when we analyze the implied object of our grasping, is there anything really to which this grasping at truly established existence refers? Is there actually a truly existent object out there, with its existence established from its own side? We realize that this grasping at truly established existence is referring to something that doesn't exist at all; and so we eventually stop thinking in that way, realizing that it doesn't refer to anything real. In other words, the actual way in which things exist is that they cannot be found on ultimate analysis.

There is no backing support on the side of objects when our minds project and are aimed at things as if there were something on their side establishing their existence. Take the example of sitting here with the paranoid conception that there is ferocious tiger in the woods behind us. If we just sat back and tried not to think about it, it wouldn't eliminate the compelling conception we had of a tiger being there. What we would actually have to do is investigate whether the tiger is there or not. It is only by investigating whether the tiger is there or not that we would be able to rid ourselves of this obsessive thought. We would discover upon analysis that the tiger doesn't actually exist in the forest back there and, on the basis of that, we would be rid of the paranoid conception. If we did not investigate at all, if we sat back and tried to forget about it, the frightening thought would just sneak back into our consciousness at some

time. So it is very important to investigate whether or not there is something on the side of objects as the backing support when our minds are aimed at those objects as if they had self-established existence.

On the other hand, if we have the idea that all conceptual thoughts are totally incorrect, that they all project something impossible and therefore we must rid ourselves of all of them since they are all erroneous, then we fall to the incorrect position of the Chinese monk, Hoshang. The important thing is to recognize what the object of refutation is, and then to refute and get rid of it - not to get rid of all thought whatsoever. Although it is true that we need to have a nonconceptual understanding and cognition of reality; nevertheless, that nonconceptual understanding must be based on what we ascertain through the conceptual process of analysis. We are not going after a general, nonconceptual state, which would be very vague. First we have to look at the object that we are analyzing, and realize through an analytical process that the way we have been grasping it refers to something that doesn't exist at all. In this way, we refute the actual object that needs to be refuted here. On that basis, we gain a nonconceptual understanding, having first ascertained through a conceptual process.

## **The Way to Meditate on the Lack of a Truly Established Identity or "Soul"**

From the Prasangika point of view, there's no difference in the level of subtlety of the lack of a truly established identity or "soul" of persons and of phenomena. No differentiation is made about which of the two is more or less profound. But when we actually ascertain the correct outlook on reality, is there an order as to which one we ascertain first? Yes, there is. Although there is no difference in the actual lack of a truly established identity, there is a difference in terms of which is easier and which is more difficult to understand. First, we gain an understanding of the lack of a truly established identity of persons, as it is an easier basis of voidness to examine; then we go on to the lack of a truly established identity of all phenomena.

All this explains how to meditate on deepest bodhichitta, the mind that expands out to the deepest truth about everything. "Deepest" refers to the final or actual state of affairs - the understanding of the actual nature of reality in terms of action, the basis of action, the person doing the action, and so forth. For instance, if we look at a flower and analyze it, of course the flower came from seeds and required water and sunlight and so forth to grow. But if we just suddenly walked into a room and looked at the flower, it would seem that it had just been sitting there on its own, without having gone through all these processes. But when the flower faded and began to fall apart, this would be a clear demonstration that the existence of the flower had not been established from its own side at all, as it seemed, but in fact was the result of a process of causes and so forth upon which it depended to establish its existence. By that nature of its dependently arising, it had grown old, disintegrated and withered.

The flower's deepest nature is that it cannot be found from its own side as having its existence established in a certain way. In other words, the deepest truth is not the flower's superficial appearance, but the deepest fact of reality about it. When we speak of the conventional or superficial truth of something, the term is referring to the truth about something that nevertheless conceals something deeper. The conventional truth of things - the appearance of all the various beings and things involved with problems and so forth - is what conceals the deepest truth about them. When our hearts expand out to the conventional truth of all these so-called "conventionally existent things" or objects that conceal something deeper, this is

called "conventional bodhichitta." When our hearts expand out to the ultimate, which refers to the deepest truth of everything, this is called "deepest bodhichitta."

Likewise, if we expand our mind out to the Dharmakaya, a Corpus Encompassing Everything, which is the actual reality of all phenomena - and if we think of the Dharmakaya in that manner - we can remove all the stains that obscure the true nature of reality. By removing them, we get to the true Dharmakaya. Thus we have a combined practice of extending the mind out to the conventional and to the deepest - a combined practice of conventional and deepest bodhichitta. We have the mind aimed at all beings, and through the power that is built up by that, we remove the various stains and are able to see the actual nature of reality.



# Day Six: Deepest Bodhichitta, Continued

## The Great Compassion of Bodhichitta

When we think of the most kind and compassionate Buddha Shakyamuni, we think of his great qualities and his amazing deeds, and specifically of all the teachings he gave purely to benefit all others. Among all these teachings, when we think of his incredible kindness to teach us bodhichitta - the heart dedicated to enlightenment and to all others - it is extremely moving. In *Engaging in Bodhisattva Behavior*, the full teachings on how to develop a bodhichitta aim are extensively elaborated.

If we reflect on the best method of benefiting others, we can think of nothing other than bodhichitta. The greatest kindness of Buddha Shakyamuni was to teach us how to develop this dedicated heart of bodhichitta. We have to consider ourselves extremely fortunate now because we have a precious human body and we have come into contact with the Dharma, specifically with the Mahayana Dharma. Now that we have all these conducive conditions gathered together, and we're not hampered by negative or obstructive circumstances, it is absolutely imperative that we make use of this excellent opportunity, as a way of fulfilling the incredible kindness of the Buddha Shakyamuni in showing us how to dedicate our hearts to others and to achieving enlightenment.

Dignaga's *Compendium of Validities* (*Tshad-ma kun-btus*, Skt. *Pramanasamuccaya*) demonstrates that we can know that the Buddha is a valid person from his development of compassion. We refer to the Buddha as the Great Compassionate One. Why do we use the word *compassionate*? It is because his heart is entirely turned toward benefiting others. It was because of his intense concern for others that he was able to remove all his own shortcomings to reach a point at which he could fully benefit all limited beings. Being compassionate is beneficial, whether or not we are a religious person. Anybody, if they have a kind and warm heart, can be in a position to help others.

I often joke and say, "If you have to be selfish, at least be selfish with wisdom!" If we want happiness for ourselves at the expense of others, then of course others are going to ignore helping us. Therefore, if we want to bring ultimate benefit to ourselves, we need to take others into consideration - that is being selfish with wisdom. So if we really are concerned about ourselves, if we are wise about it, we will realize that the best way of benefiting and improving ourselves is through helping others.

In this world, if people have general concern for others and for society, most others, except perhaps for some negative types, will consider that they are good persons. They will be very upset when such people pass away because they will have been such great assets to society, always interested in helping others. The benefit that such people have contributed will be remembered years and years after they are gone. Whereas, in some of the communist countries, those who have engaged in power struggles and worked for their own benefit are forgotten as soon as their status diminishes, and their deeds and benefits are no longer remembered. Compare this to other leaders who were moved by the wish to help others, whose deeds are recalled with devotion and great love and fondness. If there is somebody in the world who has caused a great deal of harm and destruction on a mass level, then even non-religious people will regard that person as having been very evil, and nobody will be very happy about them; they will want to forget them as soon as they can. When there is someone with such a hard and cruel heart, even birds will not want to stay around.

We live in a society of human beings, so we all have to depend on each other. The whole structure only works in terms of the kindness of its members toward each other, their willingness to cooperate. An American friend of mine has told me that he thinks the nature of human beings is to be cruel. Joking with him, I said I wondered whether this is really so. This is because among animals, those that are cruel by nature, such as tigers, lions and other types of carnivores that kill other animals in order to live, also look very cruel, with fangs and claws and all that; whereas there are other types of animals that are very peaceful looking, that just eat plants and grass. Human beings aren't really like those cruel animals - they don't go around clawing and biting each other and they have beautiful short nails instead of claws! If we look at a cat, no matter how much its owner feeds it, by nature the cat will hunt and kill mice, even if only for fun. So I don't think the basic nature of human beings is to be cruel, like a carnivorous animal.

It is possible then to work and improve the qualities within ourselves as human beings, to expand our hearts out further and further toward others, with kindness. And since we all depend on each other, it is absolutely necessary to work to benefit and help each other. This is just in the nature of the way a society exists, as an interdependent group. For it to work, everybody has to be kind and helpful to each other. It is extremely important to generate this attitude of wishing to help other beings, and then to extend it out as far as possible, to an ever-expanding group.

Of course, we have to take into consideration that when the Buddha gave his teachings on types of discipline and how we need to behave, certain things were prohibited and others were allowed or recommended. When necessity overcomes the prohibition, when the circumstances call for something that is usually prohibited, then it can be done. We need to use our judgment, within the parameters of always intending to benefit others.

So we need to try to have kind thoughts and actions toward others and try never to hurt anybody. We first start to train with the people we have some relationship with and then try to extend it further to all the people in our area, then to all the people in our country, and then to all the people on the earth. We can then extend it farther and farther, to all beings in the universe. All beings are just like us and, just as we would like to have happiness and not to have problems, the same is true with absolutely everyone else that exists. This is how we need to think.

Of course, a mother has the wish for everything to go well for her children. This is something very powerful; but, on the other hand, this concern is very limited in its scope, as it applies only to her children. Whereas we need to try to develop extreme, intense concern for the benefit of others and extend it out to everyone, not just limiting it to a few beings.

In order to actually be able to benefit everyone, we need to actually achieve the state in which we are fully capable of doing this. That is, the full state of nirvana, enlightenment. When we speak of these two intentions, to help all others and to achieve enlightenment in order to be able to do that, this is what a bodhichitta aim entails. We find this in the texts and we can read it for ourselves. And now you have heard it from Dalai Lama! So now we can try to gain a confident belief that this is the very root of all happiness, of getting rid of all problems in the world: developing a kind and warm heart, an attitude of being able to benefit everyone. Resolve strongly that we are always going to have this attitude, the altruistic thought to always be able to benefit and help everybody, and that we will never let it degenerate or weaken. We must cherish this attitude more than any possession we have.

## The Unity of Method and Discriminating Awareness

The commentary to our text now continues with a quote from Chonyi Lama, "In order to achieve the state of a Buddha, you need a unified attainment of the body and mind of a Buddha." This means that we need to follow a path of unified method and wisdom or discriminating awareness, in which method is held by discriminating awareness and discriminating awareness is held by method. On the resultant stage, method and discriminating awareness are of one essential nature - in a sense, they come in one "package" - but they have different conceptual isolates.

The same is true in terms of the pathway stage. The path or pathway minds need also to be those in which method and discriminating awareness are of the same essential nature, coming in one "package." The same goes for the basis level, on which the two truths about anything always come together in one package, being of one essential nature. It is extremely important to see that the two truths always come together and are inseparable.

Of all the levels of explaining reality, the most clear and decisive one is the Prasangika, as espoused by Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti. These two Indian masters are extremely clear in their following Nagarjuna's intentions and refuting all possible wrong understandings. There were many great masters in Tibet who put great effort into understanding and expounding a correct outlook on reality, particularly the great Tsongkhapa. From early childhood, Tsongkhapa took a deep interest in this and put a great deal of effort into making clear the correct view of reality. In a previous lifetime, Tsongkhapa, in the presence of the Buddha, had made a strong resolution, with a sincere bodhichitta aim, praying that he might always be able to expound the Madhyamaka Middle Way view in connection with tantra. This was his particular dedication, that he may always be able to have that special combination of Madhyamaka and tantra. As a result of this, from his early childhood, Tsongkhapa had strong interest in this direction.

Out of his great regard for the correct view of voidness based on Chandrakirti, Tsongkhapa wrote many texts on voidness, in particular his presentation of the exceptionally perceptive mind of vipashyana in his long and short lam-rim graded stage texts, his commentary to Nagarjuna's *Root Verses on the Middle Way, Called "Discriminating Awareness"* (*dBu-ma rtsa-tik*), his commentary on Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nagarjuna's "Root Verses on) the Middle Way"* (*dBu-ma dgongs-pa rab-gsal*) and his *Essence of Excellent Explanation of Definitive and Interpretable Meanings* (*Drangs-nges legs-bshad snying-po*). If we look at these five texts by Tsongkhapa, we will see how clear his explanations are. The main point is, of course, to be able to understand the correct view of voidness, and for this it is necessary to build up a bountiful store or network of positive force from constructive actions. From that bountiful store and from relying on fully qualified spiritual mentors and the proper valid texts, we will be able to understand voidness correctly.

This present text by Tsongkhapa's disciple, Namkapel, was expounded in keeping with the *Seven-Point Attitude-Training* by Chaykawa. It contains elaborate explanations of the first two points: the preliminaries and the method of training in the two bodhichittas - relative and deepest; the other five points are explained sort of as an aside. Those were: transforming adverse circumstances into a path to enlightenment; condensation of the practice in one lifetime; the measure of having trained our attitudes; the close-bonding practices for attitude-training; and the points to train in for attitude-training. These points are covered briefly in the prayer at the end of *An Offering Ceremony to the Spiritual Masters, Lama-chopa*. Take, for example, the verse that says, "Inspire us that, if we have not completed

the points of the path at the time of our deaths, we pass on to pure lands, either by the drastic means of transference into the guru full state or through the instructions for properly applying the five forces." This verse is referring to the condensation of the practice in one lifetime, specifically the discussion of the application of the five forces at the time of death.

In Namkapel's text itself, we are at the point of ascertaining and recognizing the object to be refuted. We covered that yesterday, and today we will discuss the lack of truly established existence of persons, then of all phenomena, and finally seeing everything to exist like an illusion.

## The Lack of Truly Established Existence of the Person

Now let us examine the lack of truly established existence of persons. The object that the mind is aimed at in this meditation is the conventionally existent self or "me." There is a slight difference in tenets among the different Buddhist schools. Some say that the mind is aimed at all five aggregate factors in terms of their being the conventional "me" or at only some of the aggregates, particularly the consciousness. Others assert that the mind aims at the all-encompassing foundation consciousness or *alayavijnana* in terms of it being the conventional "me."

All these schools say that the existence of a "me" cannot be established merely as something totally imputed, but that it is necessary for there to be a basis having the findable defining characteristics of a "me" - that is, something findable by ultimate analysis. So they say that either the consciousness, or the foundation consciousness, is something that can be found upon ultimate analysis as having the findable defining characteristics of a "me." On the other hand, in our tradition, the Prasangika, it is not the case that we assert any basis having the findable defining characteristics of a "me."

In Prasangika, although we are aiming at the network of the five aggregate factors, we are not aiming at this network as the basis having the findable defining characteristics of a "me." Rather, we are aiming at this network as merely the basis for labeling a "me." The conventionally existent "me" is merely the referent object of the name "me" labeled on this basis for labeling. It is merely what the name "me" refers to on the basis of this network. More precisely, the basis for labeling "me" is either the network of the five aggregate factors of our experience or the continuity of those aggregate factors of our experience. These are the bases for labeling, dependent upon which we label a "me." On that basis, the conventional existence of "me" can only be established merely as what the name "me" refers to.

The basis for labeling "me" can be the five elements, the five aggregates, and so forth, but the "me" is not any of these individual factors, nor is it the collection or network of these factors. It cannot be found. When we say or think "me," what the name "me" refers to is something labeled on the basis of the body, mind, and so on; but the "me" is not the same as any of these bases for labeling, nor is it their collection or network.

When we try to analyze that, we ask if the "me" comes from the side of the body or does it come from the side of the clothes we are wearing or from the side of our mind? We cannot find a "me" or the defining characteristics of a "me" in any one of them. If we analyze, for instance, is Tenzin Gyatso his body? No he is not. Is he his mind? No, he is not specifically only his mind. Can he exist separately from his body? No. Can he exist separately from his mind? No. Now the person "Tenzin Gyatso" definitely exists; he is definitely a person; he is definitely a Tibetan; he is someone from Amdo; he is a monk; and, as a monk, he is a fully

ordained monk. All these things are true. But if we were to ask, who is this person? Who is this monk? It is not his body; it is not his mind. Of course he exists, but when we try to point at who he is, we find that there isn't actually anything for us to point to.

The same is true for flowers, and vases, and tables, and so forth. On the basis of all their parts and the continuity of their parts, we have the object that can be labeled. But we can't say that each of these items is actually the full collection of its parts or the individual parts either. It is on the basis of all of these that we can label what the item is - a flower, a vase, or a table - and establish its existence. When we say that there is nothing that we can point to as being the actual referent "thing" corresponding to the name, that doesn't mean that the object doesn't actually exist or doesn't exist at all.

When we say that its existence cannot be established at the place where we would imagine that it exists, what does that actually mean? It means that there are all sorts of circumstances, conditions and causes, and on the basis of all of these, the object dependently arises. But its existence is not established from its own side, as if the object were standing up all by itself, unbound from all these other factors upon which it is dependent. What the object especially arises dependently upon are the names and concepts that refer to it. Its existence can only be established in terms of merely being what can be mentally labeled by a valid mind.

All of these technical terms - existence not established from something's own side, existence established by something's self-nature, existence established by something's definable characteristics - all of these terms have the same meaning. When we analyze the shared meaning of these terms to try to understand that the existence of all things can only be established merely in terms of what mental labels refer to, it is much easier to understand it in terms of a "me." This is because it is quite obvious that the "me" is labeled on a network of aggregate factors. So a person is merely what can be labeled on a basis for labeling, but the existence of the referent object of that label cannot be established from the side of either that referent object or its basis for labeling. When we look at what the object of automatically arising unawareness is, then in this case it is a person or "me" that seems to just appear, to just pop up, as if its existence were self-established, all by itself from its own side. The same is true regarding vases, flowers, tables, and so forth. Their existence appears to be established in a manner completely divorced from being merely what names and mental labels refer to.

In order to see how this "me" to be refuted actually appears to us, we can look at times when we are in a strong emotional state and we are thinking "me" and "my" and so on. On those occasions, the "me" to be refuted appears to us as the basis for great attachment and hostility, and so we can more easily recognize it then.

The text goes on to refute a truly existent "me" from the point of view of a "me" that, if its existence were established independently from its own side, would have to be established as existing as either "one" or "many" with its basis for labeling [Being "one" means the "me" would be totally identical with its basis; the two - the basis for labeling and the referent object of the label - would have to be the same findable "thing." Being "many" means the "me" would be something totally different from its basis, so that the "me" and its basis would "many" totally different, unrelated findable "things."]

The text then presents various absurd conclusions that would follow in either case. If the "me" were one with its basis for labeling, the two would always have to be the same - they could never be separate. If it were different from or "many" with its basis of labeling, then since there are many different bases for labeling "me," there would have to be many different

"me's." We can find all these lines of reasoning in standard texts, such as Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nagarjuna's "Root Verses on) the Middle Way"*.

The "me" is also described in terms of what comes from many lives in the past. If the "me" had no relation to the continuity of the experiences of past lifetimes, then the whole process of cause and effect would not be able to work. The "me" in this lifetime would experience the results of actions committed by somebody totally irrelevant in the past. If that were the case, what happens to us would be chaotic. Since we could experience the results of actions of just anybody, anything could happen to us. This is not the case.

## The Lack of Truly Established Existence of All Phenomena

Thus far, we have discussed grasping at the truly established existence of a "me." Now the text examines grasping at the truly established existence of "mine" - in other words, what a "me" might experience or possess. This refers to grasping for the truly established existence of all phenomena.

Discussing the lack of a truly established identity or "soul" of all phenomena, the text uses the same argument of "neither one nor many," and describes how the existence of things can only be established as merely what can be labeled on the network of their parts, causes, and so forth. Then the text discusses the relationship between a whole and its parts, particularly in terms of dependent arising. Things are related to each other because their various parts and causes are related to and dependent upon each other, and that is how results come about.

Dependent arising means that things come about as a result of being dependent or reliant upon various other things. The only possible way for that to function would be for things not to have a truly established independent existence of their own. If things had truly established independent existence all by themselves, they would be able to stand, figuratively, on their own feet. If they could do that, they would not have to depend on anything else or have any relation with anything else. In that case, neither could they enter into any relationship with other things in terms of dependent arising, since they would be totally self-sufficient. As an image in a mirror doesn't just arise by itself, things cannot arise without depending on certain circumstances.

Take the example of a man who walks with a cane. If he walks with a cane, he can't stand on his own. In other words, the existence of his standing can only be established dependently on his leaning on a cane. So these two possibilities are mutually exclusive. His standing can only be established either independently on his own or dependently arising on his leaning on a cane.

If we speak in terms of all phenomena, then likewise their existence can only be established either independently on their own or dependently on other phenomena. [These two mutually exclusive possibilities form a dichotomy: things can only be one or the other, and not both or neither.] For example, if we divide all phenomena into either human or non-human, then all phenomena have to fall into one of these categories, as either human or non-human. But if we divide phenomena into the categories of human and vase, that doesn't cover all existent phenomena, because there are things that are neither human nor vase. [Thus, although human and vase are mutually exclusive - nothing can be both a human and a vase - they do not form a dichotomy.]

Just as in our example of dividing things into human or non-human, which covers all phenomena, likewise phenomena are either dependent on other things or not dependent on other things; there are only the two possibilities. If the existence of something can only be established in terms of other things, then that would accord with saying that the existence of things can only be established dependently. On the other hand, if we determine that the existence of things can be established by their own power, on their own, without relying on anything else, they would have truly established, independent existence. So there are only two possibilities: as with human or non-human, things can only be one or the other.

When we refute or disprove that the existence of things can be established independently on their own, disconnected from all other things, we're left with only one other possibility. The existence of things can only be established dependently on other things - specifically on what names and concepts refer to.

Take, for example, the word *middle*. This word can only be understood as referring to something not on the left side or the right side. The existence of a "middle" can only be established in terms of or in relation to something being neither one side nor the other. Likewise, when we speak of Madhyamaka, the "Middle Way," we understand it to mean a position that is established in terms of its being neither of two extremes. The two extremes are the nihilist position and the eternalist position. When the existence of things cannot either be established independently [which would render them eternal since they could not be affected by causes in order to arise or perish] or not established at all [which would render everything as totally nonexistent, then in relation to those two extreme positions, we are left with a "middle way."] We then know that the existence of things can only be established dependently on other things. So, voidness - the total absence of impossible ways of establishing the existence of things - is neither something preposterous just made up by the mind or a nihilistic concept that denies everything.

## The Two Types of Meditation on Voidness

There are two types of meditation on voidness: discerning or analytical meditation and stabilizing meditation, in which we absorb our concentration on voidness. First, we need to ascertain, which means come to a decisive understanding, of voidness. This is an understanding that discerns voidness. Then we need to stabilize this understanding by absorbing our concentration single-pointedly on voidness, the total absence of the object to be refuted. We ascertain, decisively understand, and then discern the total absence of the object to be refuted by relying on logical reasoning and the texts that present the five lines of reasoning to be used.

[See: [The Five Great Madhyamaka Lines of Reasoning](#) {23}.]

It is important that our understanding be in the form of what is called a "nonimplicative negation phenomenon." This is a negation or refutation of the type: "there is no such thing as this," which means that, once we have excluded or refuted the object to be refuted, there is nothing left in its wake. In other words, nothing is left there by implication. So, we come to a decisive understanding that there is no such thing as the object we are refuting.

This is not an implicative negation phenomenon, namely a refutation of the type: "it is not this" or "it is not that." Such a negation leaves or implies some alternative possibility left over in the wake of the negation. The decisive refutation with voidness, here, is: "there is no such thing as this at all" - which leaves no other possibility in its wake.

[See: [Affirmations, Negations, and Denumerable and Nondenumerable Ultimate Phenomena {24}](#).]

Next, the text points out that if we haven't well-identified the object to be refuted, then when we say that the object is impossible and doesn't exist at all, we are not going to be left in a very clear state of mind. This is because we haven't yet fully defined and understood what it is that we're saying doesn't exist at all.

Further, when we absorb our concentration on the total absence of what doesn't exist at all, it is necessary to do so with full mindfulness and alertness following all the instructions for developing *shamatha*, a stilled and settled state of mind. For that, we need to clearly identify the coarse and subtle levels of mental dullness and flightiness of mind, mental agitation. We need to identify them correctly so that we can remove these faults that keep us from being totally absorbed on the object of our focus. That object of focus is the total absence of the object to be refuted, and that object to be refuted is a totally impossible way of existing.

[See: [Achieving Shamatha {25}](#).]

Namkapel's text then covers the six forces and the nine stages of settling the mind, the five types of attention, and so forth that are also explained in texts on developing this stilled and settled state of mind. When we are able to absorb our concentration in such a state, free of all faults, having progressed through all nine stages of settling the mind, we experience a state of complete flexibility of body and mind, with an exhilarating sense of total fitness. When we achieve such a sense of total fitness of mind and body, we are able to apply our stilled and settled mind to any kind of absorbed concentration. This is extremely important - I can't stress enough the importance of achieving a stilled and settled mind of *shamatha*. Particularly when gained in connection with the tantra methods, this is the best form of absorbed concentration.

We always talk about two ways in which the Buddhist teachings are indicated: scriptural indications and indications from realization. There are many scriptural indications, but it is important to gain a realized indication of the teachings on our own mental continuum and actually to achieve a stilled and settled mind of *shamatha* and an exceptionally perceptive mind of *vipashyana*. With these two, based on the scriptural indications, we'll be able to generate all the good qualities that the scriptures speak of and we'll actually realize these teachings on our mental continuum.

*Vipashyana* is an exceptionally perceptive state of mind, induced by the state of physical and mental fitness that we achieve not only from having the mind be totally concentrated with *shamatha*, but in addition also induced by the mind having discriminating awareness. In other words, we get this state of fitness not only from the mind being able to concentrate perfectly on anything, but also from its being able to discriminate anything correctly. So when we attain this second, special sense of fitness, which would be a joined state of *shamatha* and *vipashyana*, our mind will be both stilled and settled as well as exceptionally perceptive.

## Seeing Everything to Exist Like an Illusion

From these stilled and settled states of mind it is possible to absorb our concentration into more and more subtle states of mind, trying to reach the *shamatha* states of the higher planes of existence. These higher planes are the plane of ethereal forms and the plane of formless beings. The text goes on to indicate, however, that having merely achieved a nonconceptual state of mind will not allow us to see all things as illusions as our subsequent attainment or



subsequent realization when we rise from that state. Perceiving things "merely nonconceptually" means cognizing them [not merely without it being through the medium of a conceptual category, but also] without an understanding of their lack of a truly established identity or "soul." To arise from such a state of mere nonconceptuality does not bring a subsequent attainment or realization in which we seeing all things to be like an illusion.

On the other hand, if we can perceive things in a nonconceptual way as being devoid of self-established existence or identities, then when we arise from that state, we can subsequently see all things to be like an illusion. If we don't have such an understanding, when we arise from our absorption, we may fall into a state of nihilism, in the sense of refuting all things, even their conventional existence.

In the vipashyana section of *The Grand Presentation of the Graded Stages of the Path*, there is a great deal of discussion about how we actually gain an understanding of everything existing like an illusion. For example, suppose our understanding of voidness is that things are merely just made up of a collection of parts and are not findable as wholes. Even if we are able to see things like that nonconceptually, nevertheless, without understanding voidness in the sense of everything dependently arising in terms of mental labeling, we're not going to gain a clear realization of things existing like an illusion. In order to gain that clear understanding of things existing like an illusion, it is necessary to see things in terms of dependent arising -- their arising dependently on merely mental labeling. Only when we see voidness in terms of dependent arising can we gain the two realizations together: realization of the space-like voidness of everything and everything being conventionally like an illusion.

In dzogchen meditation [in which there is no differentiation between total absorption on pure awareness, *rigpa*, and a subsequent attainment or realization], at the same time as we are totally absorbed on the total absence of the object to be refuted, the appearances of things actually do spontaneously arise. But they arise in terms of our understanding of voidness as being dependent arising. In this way, we see things to exist like an illusion in dzogchen practice as well.

## Conclusion

This concludes Namkapel's discussion of the points found in Chaykawa's *Seven-Point Attitude-Training*.

Now come praises to bodhichitta, and to the lineage: praises to Atisha, who combined the lineages from Maitreya and Manjushri and also the lineage from Shantideva. Then come praises to the teachings and [in the commentaries to this text] praise to the author, a disciple to Tsongkhapa called Namkapel.

[Togmey-zangpo's edition ends with the additional verse, "From the awakening of karmic remainders from having previously trained, my admiration (for this practice) abounded. And due to that cause, ignoring suffering and insult, I requested the guideline instructions to tame my self-grasping. Now even if I die, I have no regrets." Pabongka's edition also ends with this verse, but omits its first line, "From the awakening of karmic remainders from having previously trained." Namkapel's edition does not contain this verse.]

We have now concluded the transmission of the *Attitude-Training Like the Rays of the Sun*. This is something very beneficial to the mind, a text on the methods that will lead us to become extremely happy. I often feel and tell people that I must be the happiest person in the

world. It is half due to the position of Dalai Lama that I occupy and it is certainly half due to the attitude-training that I follow, which gives me the happiness and the courage to face all the difficulties that I bear on my shoulders. The preventive measures of Dharma are measures that we actually take, that we practice. We would all do well to devote our every effort to this.

# Links

- {1} [http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/e-books/unpublished\\_manuscripts/bca\\_shantideva/translation/engaging\\_bodhisattva\\_08.html](http://www.berzinarchives.com/web/en/archives/e-books/unpublished_manuscripts/bca_shantideva/translation/engaging_bodhisattva_08.html)
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