



# FUNDAMENTAL TEACHINGS

By

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## Fundamental teachings

(from *In Search of the Stainless Ambrosia, Jewel Ornament of Liberation, Jewel Treasury of Advice and Transformation of Suffering*)

### Buddha Nature

All sentient beings have the Buddha nature, or seed of Enlightenment. In the *Samadhi Raja Sutra*, the Buddha said, "All sentient beings are pervaded by the essence of the Sugata (the well-gone state). For example, silver abides in its ore, oil abides in a mustard seed, and butter abides in milk. Likewise, the seed of Enlightenment abides in every sentient being. Complete Buddhahood is Dharmakaya, which is all-pervading emptiness. And this emptiness pervades all sentient beings. For this reason, all sentient beings have the seed of Enlightenment." The suchness of all reality has no differentiation. The reality-suchness of the Buddha and the sentient beings is not differentiated. There is no better and no worse, no higher and lower, no larger and smaller. Therefore, all sentient beings have the essence of Enlightenment. As it is possible to extract butter from milk and oil from the sesame seed, so it is possible for sentient beings to achieve Enlightenment.

### Precious Human Life

To attain Enlightenment one must take birth in human form, and to attain this form, one must have the eighteen qualities which include the Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments. *The Eight Freedoms* are one must not be born

1. in the Hell realms
2. as a hungry ghost
3. as an animal
4. in a place where teachings are unavailable
5. as a long-life god (always content and therefore has no motivation for progress)
6. with wrong view (no understanding of karma, and no understanding of past and future lives)
7. where no Buddha has appeared
8. deaf, dumb, blind or mentally deficient

If one is born in any of the above realms, there is no chance of studying and practicing the teachings. What is therefore necessary are the *Ten Endowments* which consists of *Five Inherent Endowments* and *Five Karma Provisions*. The Five Inherent Endowments are one is born

1. as a human being
2. where there are teachings
3. possessing five senses
4. not having committed heavy negative karmas
5. having confidence in and devotion to the Triple Gem

The Five Karma Provisions are one is born

1. where a Buddha has appeared
2. where a Buddha has taught
3. where the Dharma teachings flourish
4. where there are followers who enter the pure path of Dharma
5. where there is support from the kindness of others, including the spiritual master.

In addition, we need *The Three Confidences* and they are:

1. *Faith in the clear mind* arises when we see the supreme qualities of the Three Jewels. We develop devotion for and interest in the Buddha as the teacher who shows the path, the Dharma which becomes the path, and the Sangha which guides one in order to accomplish the path.
2. *Faith of desire*, the wish to be enlightened, to study and practice the Dharma. Seeing what samsara is, we sincerely wish to escape, to reach enlightenment. Recognizing the assets of virtue, we wish to make them our own. Seeing the defects of non-virtue, we wish to avoid them. These wishes inspire the faith of desire.
3. *Faith in the truth of karma* (causes and effects), trusting that happiness is the fruit of virtuous causes and suffering is the fruit of non-virtuous causes.

One must have all the above qualities together to be freed from samsara.

There are many obstacles to Enlightenment. Our human body is called "precious" because with this vehicle one can avoid all non-virtue and achieve virtue, cross the ocean of samsara, and complete the path of Enlightenment ending in full Buddhahood. Therefore, the human form is superior to any others, including those of gods and nagas. As this advantage is difficult to obtain, we must have ethics and morality and practice the ten virtuous actions. We must not waste the wonderful opportunity we have to practice, as it is extremely rare. In fact, the Buddha gave the following analogy to demonstrate the rarity of this opportunity: a blind tortoise was swimming in an ocean in which there was a yoke with a hole in it. This yoke was tossed about in every direction by the waves, while the tortoise only came to the surface of the water once every hundred years. There is as much chance of being born in a human body as there is that the blind turtle's neck will meet up with the

hole of the yoke! if one has this opportunity, one is very fortunate. Therefore, one should rejoice and use this opportunity to the full, both for oneself and others. In fact, one should use human life to cross the ocean of samsara as one uses a ship to cross the sea.

To achieve Enlightenment, we need devotion and confidence in Buddhahood. Without these, it is difficult to attain to a spiritual quality in the mind. Just as a rotten seed cannot produce a healthy plant, so faltering devotion cannot produce virtue. Devotion and confidence mean an understanding of cause and effect. A positive cause creates peace and happiness, and a negative cause leads to suffering. Afflicting emotions cause different levels of suffering to arise, whereas Enlightenment is sacred and precious, free from confusion and pain. To achieve this state, one must have devotion and confidence in the Buddha as the teacher who shows the path, the Dharma as the path itself, and in the Sangha as the community which cultivates the Enlightenment mind and acts as a guide to Buddhahood. Devotion and confidence are like water to a seedling; if one is endowed with these qualities, one can meet many great masters and receive the precious teachings. So when the precious human body containing the Eight Freedoms and Ten Endowments and in addition possesses devotion and confidence, the being has the basis for achieving Enlightenment.

It is asked why, if we are born as humans many times before, and have met spiritual masters, we did not previously achieve Enlightenment. The reason is that we fell into conditions of error such as attachment to this life, attachment to samsaric pleasures and laziness, attachment to our own liberation, and not understanding the method for achieving Buddhahood. To dispel such errors, there are four antidotes: the contemplation of impermanence, understanding the suffering in samsara and the truth of karma and result, the practice of loving kindness and compassion, and the cultivation of the Enlightenment mind.

*Obtaining a life of leisure and endowments is like arriving at a continent of jewels.*

*Whether we attain liberation or not is up to us.*

*Be sure, therefore, not to leave empty-handed.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Contemplation of IMPERMANENCE as an antidote to attachment to this life**

The Buddha has said, "The whole world is as impermanent as clouds in an autumn sky. Birth and death are like the movements of a dancer." One should meditate on death, on the decreasing time that remains, and on the inevitability of separation. To meditate on death, think that it is the stopping of breath, the transformation of the

body into a corpse, and the scattering of consciousness. To meditate on the shortness of life, think that your life since last year has become shorter, that since last month it has become shorter still, that since yesterday it has become yet shorter, and that even since this morning it has become shorter. In the *Bodhicharya Avatara* it is said that life is each day becoming shorter, and that as there is no way to add to it, we surely experience death. To meditate on separation, consider that no matter what dear friends and close relatives we have, we must separate from them when death comes. No matter what wealth we have accumulated or how beautiful our body has been, we must leave them behind.

Another way of meditation on impermanence is to consider that we will definitely die one day, that we do not know when this will happen, and that when we die nothing will help except the realization of the teachings. It is certain that everyone who has ever been born has died. Even great masters who achieve many qualities, or famous people, or wealthy persons all experience death. There is no way of escaping. One reason that death is certain is that the body is composed of many elements and all things which are composite will decompose. This is the nature of change. Life is decreasing from moment to moment. For this reason, also, death is definite. Each moment that passes bring us closer to death. It is like the archer who shoots the arrow through space until it reaches the target. The arrow does not remain in space even a moment. In the same way, from the day we are born until we die, life does not stay still for even a moment. Life is also like a flowing river. As the river does not cease its flow even for a moment, so does life, gallops on. It is ever changing, yet ever the same in its change. Our life moves daily closer to death like the prisoner moving towards his place of execution. Our life has no predictable span, especially in this world system. Some beings die in the mother's womb, some at the moment of birth, some as infants, some in youth and some in old age.

The body has no value in itself. It is but a composite brought about by many causes and condition. If we analyze it, we cannot find anything permanent in it. Generally, everything one can name acts as a catalyst for death. If even food or drink or medicines in some circumstances can cause death, all other things can, too. Life is as fragile as a bubble in the water. At the time of death, our wealth will not help us. No matter how much we have accumulated in our lives, we must leave with empty hands. Moreover, wealth is actually harmful because it creates attachment and anger. If one has negative karma through accumulation of wealth, one must experience its fruits. Friends and relatives will also not help at the moment of death. No matter how powerful, skilled, or wealthy they may be, they cannot protect us from death. Nor will one's body help. No matter how strong it has been or wealth they may be, they cannot protect us from death. Nor will one's body help. No matter how strong it has been and how agile, no matter how expressive and attractive, it cannot protect us from death. It is like the sun which cannot stay from setting. Not only can it not protect us, but it is the cause of much suffering. How

often it produces pain, discomfort, hunger, thirst, and the fear of attack! And by protecting ourselves from danger, we can create further karma which brings yet more suffering.

We may also meditate on impermanence by thinking of those who have died, recognizing that this will one day be our state. For example, if we know a dying person, we can meditate on how he used to be strong, clear of complexion, capable of body, joyful of mind. Yet disease has suddenly caused him to lose all physical power, to grow dark of complexion, to suffer in the mind, to writhe in pain, and to derive no benefit from medication. Aware that there is no escape, he surrounds himself with friends and relatives, eats his last meal, pronounces his last wishes, and stops breathing. No matter how important he was to his family or his nation, his body must be carried away. Some of his relatives may cry and try to hold onto him, some may faint from grief, but he cannot return. His body is then either buried, or cremated, or thrown into the river. One should therefore meditate that one day the same will happen to oneself. One is not beyond this.

If we hear that someone is dead, whether he be known or unknown to us, we should think: One day I, too, will be like that person. We should also remember those who have died, young or old, in our family or city, thinking: Soon I will be as they, a mere memory. The Buddha said: Birth leads to death; meetings lead to partings; gain leads to loss; and construction leads to destruction. The beneficial effects of meditating on impermanence are that by understanding the nature of composition and decomposition, one learns to detach from this life. The teachings, far from being pessimistic as some people think, lead to ultimate peace of mind because they cause us to drop attachment to that which, being impermanent, bring no lasting happiness. They support the motivation to achieve Enlightenment, and help free one of hatred. With them, one has the chance to realize the equanimity of Dharma-as-such.

*Impermanence and death are like the spreading shadow of sunset at the mouth of a pass.*

*It approaches without stopping for even an instant.*

*Apart from Dharma, nothing will help.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Contemplation of SUFFERING as an antidote to attachment samsara's pleasure**

If you think that it is acceptable to die because you can be reborn in the human or god realm and enjoy the luxuries of those states, that is merely attachment to samsara. For this, the antidote is understanding samsara by meditating on its negative features. In general, there are three types of suffering: pervasive suffering

(root cause of all suffering-impermanence of the unenlightened body); suffering of change (impermanence of peace and happiness); and suffering of suffering. Pervasive suffering is the nature of samsara. No matter what kind of conditions we enjoy, sooner or later suffering will pervade our worldly state, where our afflicted ordinary bodies are a source of pain. Suffering of change is like eating food mixed with poison. Suffering of suffering is physical and mental pain (sickness, depression, etc.). Pervasive suffering brings about a feeling of apathy; the suffering of change brings about a false sense of euphoria; the suffering of physical and mental pain brings about anguish.

The five ordinary skandhas are the cause of pervasive suffering, but ordinary people do not recognize them as suffering, just as when stuck by plague, they do not notice minor illness. However, those noble beings entering the path recognize this as suffering, just as, when the plague abates, one notices the pain of a lesser injury. pervasive suffering is like a hair, ordinary people are like the hands, and noble beings are like the eyes. When a hair touches the hand, there is no feeling of discomfort, but when it is in the eyes, it is intolerable. The joys of samsara are ultimately the cause of the suffering of change. It is written in the *Karma sutra*, "The kingdom of the gods and the kingdom of humans are the cause of suffering." No matter how high the rank you achieve in samsara, you will eventually fall, for you are fundamentally attached to temporary enjoyments which cause the suffering of hope and fear. The body composed of the five skandhas causes the suffering of physical and mental pain, for the moment we enter into it we experience suffering which brings about the feeling of pain.

There are six realms of suffering: the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, the human realm, the demi-god realm, and the god realm.

### *Hell realm*

There are eight hot and eight cold realms. The eight hot realms in ascending order are: the reviving hell, the black thread hell, the crushing hell, the howling hell, the loud howling hell, the heating hell, the Avici hell. The eight cold realms are: the realm of infected bubbles, the realm of frozen bubbles, the realm of chattering, the realm of cold sounds (Achu), the realm of other cold sounds (Kyihü), the realm of crackling like an utpala flower, the realm of crackling like a lotus flower, the realm of crackling like a larger lotus flower. Two further hell realms are: Nyitshe (the suffering close to the hot realms) and Nyekhor (the place close to the hot realms).

### *The hungry ghost realm*

There are two types of hungry ghosts: The first are those who see food guarded by someone who will not allow them to touch it, or see food transformed into waste as

soon as they behold it, or see food and water as a mirage, or are unable to eat or drink because though their stomachs are as large as a valley, their throats are as narrow as a horse's hair. The second are those who experience food as fire or filth as soon as it reaches their stomach. In the hungry ghost realm, even the sun grows cold in winter and even the moon grows hot in summer. Thus, the inhabitants become living skeletons. So intense is their suffering that a story is told of one of the Buddha's disciples who, on passing through the hungry ghost realm, was asked by a woman there to look for her husband who had long before gone out in search of food for her and their five hundred children. When the disciple finally found the man, he said that he had not been able to find food in all his search, but that he had managed to grab some saliva that a compassionate monk had spat upon the ground. So eager was the man to keep hold of his treasure amidst the hundreds of ghosts who had set upon it avidly that he had clenched his fist until his fingernails had been driven through the top of his hand.

### *The animal realm*

There are different types of animals: many-legged animals, four-legged animals, and apods. Most animals live in the ocean, on the plains and in the forest. They suffer from being beaten by humans; from having no freedom; from being killed or dismembered for fur, bones, meat, skin, and pearls; and from preying on each other.

### *Human realm*

The suffering of the human state includes birth, aging, sickness, death, separation from loved ones, meetings with enemies, desire for that which one cannot obtain, and the loss of that which one possesses.

**Birth:** After wandering in the Bardo (intermediate state), we take birth in a mother's womb and remain there for about thirty-eight weeks. There are many stages of inconceivable suffering in this process, as well as at the moment of birth, which most people do not remember.

**Aging:** In youth the body is straight and strong; later, it becomes bent and feeble, the limbs shake, it becomes difficult to sit or stand, the hair changes color or falls out, the skin, once soft as silk, becomes thick and wrinkled, and the complexion, once like a newly-blossomed lotus flower, becomes faded. In youth one has the strength to undertake anything, and one is optimistic. Later, one loses strength, cannot work, and becomes depressed. The once-sharp senses decline so that it is hard to see, hear, or taste foods vividly. In youth one gains respect, but in older age, having lost dignity, one is scorned even by children. Materially, it becomes difficult to increase one's wealth or to solicit support from others. One craves food and drink which one cannot afford. Aging is the worst disease because it cannot be cured. All other

sicknesses are brought on by aging. Mentally, one becomes forgetful and confused. Milarepa said: If one does not realize the nature of non-aging, the suffering of aging is inconceivable.

Sickness: In old age, there are operations, pain, bitter medicines, the desire to eat unhealthy things, a dependence on physicians, the exhausting of one's resources on physicians and medicine, and the fear of death. Milarepa said: If one does not realize the nature of non-sickness, the suffering of sickness is inconceivable.

Death: If one is caught by the Lord of Death, one is separated from one's protectors and objects of refuge. One endures pain, shaking limbs, shallow breath, the abandonment of physicians, and the inability to sit upright. Making the great transition to the next life, one enters the dark unknown, leaving everything familiar behind, including one's body. Only the realization of the precious teachings can help. Everything else is but illusion that creates further suffering. After breath stops, one goes on to a new life which depends on one's karma.

Separation from loved ones: When one is separated from parents, relatives and friends, there is great pain.

Meetings with enemies: When one meets with enemies, one experiences the suffering of quarrelling, anger and unease.

Difficulty in obtaining one's desires: One desires that which one does not have, and no matter what one does have, one still craves more. Thus, there is no satisfaction in the mind and this, in turn, causes further suffering.

Loss of what one possesses: One constantly worries that thieves may steal one's possessions, or that they may be destroyed. This leads to further unrest in the mind.

These are the basic sufferings of all humans, whether high or low-born, rich or poor, educated or uneducated.

### *The demi-god realm*

The suffering of the demi-gods includes pride, jealousy, fighting (with the gods), and death in battle.

### *The god realm*

The suffering of the gods includes fighting (with demi-gods), dissatisfaction no matter how many pleasures are granted, and rebirth in lower realms as a result of using up all previous good karma.

Samsara pervades the six realms. Therefore birth in any of these realms brings suffering. We all exist in an ocean of suffering. By recognizing the reality of samsara and becoming detached from the six realms, one is able to cultivate a mind free from suffering, thereby achieving Enlightenment.

*Renunciation and the mind that abandons negativity are like a captain piloting a ship.  
Freedom from samsara depends upon them.  
Therefore, always think on this without distraction.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Understanding KARMA as an antidote to attachment to samsara**

All sufferings of all the realms of samsara are caused by negative karma. All positive results are caused by virtuous karma. In illustration of this, the Buddha recounted the following two stories:

### ***Story 1***

When Lord Buddha was residing in Shrawasti, there lived a poor Brahmin woman who gave birth to a hunch-backed child named Gurchung. As her milk dried up very quickly, Gurchung was precariously sustained with milk from buffaloes and other animals. When he reached adolescence, his father told him, "Son, our lives are sustained by begging, so now you must search for your own sustenance." Gurchung received a bare minimum on which to survive. Meeting the Lord Buddha, he asked to be ordained as a monk. In the days that followed his ordination, the other monks fed him, but soon they too, told him that he must be responsible for his own food. Again, Gurchung barely managed to survive.

Even when he begged for food in the company of other monks, he always suffer a mishap. Either there would be no food left when it was his turn to present his bowl, or, if he was served first, the food that remained would spoil, leaving the other monks hungry. To resolve this, the Buddha order that Gurchung should henceforth stand at the end of the line of monks receiving food. One day, the buddha told Gurchung to clean the temple, where Gurchung found a large quantity of food. 'thus able to rebuild his strength, he increased his practice and attained the state of arhat. However, when he returned to the temple thereafter, he found that someone else had already cleaned it, so he once again had to beg for alms. The first day, a wealthy family invited the Buddha and his retinue for a meal, but by the time

Gurchung had arrived, the food was gone. Once again, he had to go hungry. The following day Ananda, one of buddha's chief disciples, brought two begging bowls, one for himself and one for Gurchung. After eating his own portion, he set out to bring Gurchung the food he had collected for him, but he was attacked by dogs who consumed the food. The following day, ananda announced that all the offerings of food received by the monks that day would be given to Gurchung. However, the people who normally provided the food were unable to do so, leaving Gurchung to pass another day hungry. The next day, another disciple, Maulgalyayana, brought an extra begging bowl for Gurchung, but on his way, he tripped on a rock, so spilling the food which was eaten by crows. The following day Sariputra filled two begging bowls, but on his way he encountered ghosts who by their miracle powers made the food disappear. The next day Sariputra again brought Gurchung food, but every spoonful of food disappeared just as Gurchung placed it in his mouth. When Sariputra then tried feeding Gurchung by hand, Gurchung's mouth locked. Despite his miracle powers, Sariputra could not succeed in feeding Gurchung, whose mouth unlocked only after mealtime was past. Sariputra then asked Gurchung, "Of all your physical sufferings, which is most intolerable?" Gurchung replied, "I am so thirsty; please give me water." When Gurchung raised the bowl to his lips, a karmic spirit placed ashes in it. drinking this, Gurchung attained miracle powers and levitated in the air. But following this display he passed away. When the Buddha was asked why Gurchung, who had attained the state of arhat, should have died in such a manner, the Buddha replied, "Many kalpas ago, there live a wealthy family who gave alms to Brahmins and the poor. When the father died, the mother continued this generosity, but her son objected, feeling that if the mother continued the practice, their wealth would be destroyed. The son pleaded with the mother to stop such giving, but the mother refused to listen. Finally, when the son married, he locked his mother in a room without food. The mother begged for her release, saying she would leave the house, but the son decided that if she left, she would probably take with her what remained of the of the family's fortune. For seven days he kept his mother locked in the room without food until relatives, hearing the rumors, came to investigate. They found the woman nearly dead. When she asked her son for water, he gave her a glass sprinkled with ashes. Drinking the spoiled water, the mother died."

The Buddha then revealed that in a previous life, Gurchung had been this shameful son. The son then took rebirth in hell for thousands of years. When he finally took rebirth in higher realms, he continually suffered from hunger, and died shortly after drinking the water spoiled with ashes. Even having achieved the arhat state, he had to accept the negative result of his previous actions.

## *Story 2*

To show that the fruits of positive actions are just as inevitable, the Buddha then told this story: In the Buddha's life-time, a daughter was born to a humble family. She was exceptional, both for her beauty and because she was born wearing a white cotton cloth. As she grew, the cloth grew with her. When she reached marrying age, she expressed the desire to renounce samsaric life. Her parents offered to make her nun's robes, but instead she told them that she would be grateful if they would help her in her quest to meet the Buddha Shakyamuni. When she finally beheld him, she requested that he initiate her into the nunnary. The Lord Buddha welcomed her, and instantly her hair shed and her white cloth was transformed into the five traditional garments of a nun. Through her diligence in practice, she shortly afterward attained the state of arhat. Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, asked what kind of previous virtue allowed the woman to attain that state in this life. The Lord Buddha replied, "In a past life, Buddha Soekyab appeared in this samsaric world. Every human being showed him great respect. At this time, a monk wandered from city to city encouraging people to make offerings to the Buddha. A very poor lady named Danaka, living with her husband in a shack, possessed only a piece of cotton cloth which she shared with him. Whichever one went outside would wear the cloth while the other remained naked inside the shack. One day Danaka met the wandering monk who advised her of the great merit received from making an offering. Danaka asked the monk to wait a few minutes. Returning to the shack, she said to her husband, 'Because of our previous lack of generosity, we were born into this life in poor circumstances. If we do not demonstrate generosity in this life, we will suffer the same fate in the next. Please give me permission to make an offering.' The husband gladly agreed, and Danaka beckoned to the monk to come to the door of her shack. He said, 'Give what you have to give and I will say prayers for the gift'. Danaka replied, 'I have only this cloth which I am wearing.' She then went inside disrobed and passed the cloth out to the monk, knowing that she would thus have no choice but to remain in the shack and wait for death. The monk took the offering to the Buddha, who was addressing a gathering of royalty. Upon the monk's arrival, the Buddha immediately asked, 'Where is the offering of cloth?' and took the cloth in his hand. The kings misinterpreted the exchange, believing that the Buddha had grown so materialistic that he would accept even a ragged doth. Reading their minds, the Buddha replied, 'The offering of this cloth is more perfect than any of the offering you have made.' He then revealed the details of the offering. A royal couple present took off their fine clothes and ornaments and had them sent to the poor couple so they could attend the gathering. The Buddha then gave numerous teachings which liberated many from samsara." The Buddha Sakyamuni then concluded the story by saying, "The poor woman Danaka was the previous incarnation of this white-clad bhikshuni. By offering the cloth with pure motivation, Danaka was reborn wearing the white cotton cloth for ninety-one kalpas. She never again suffered from poverty. By the merits received from listening to my teachings and from the

aspiration to be free from samsaric life, the young bhikshuni has now attained the state of arhat."

### *The Ten Non-virtues*

Karma is caused by all the varieties of samsara, it is said in the *Abidharma kosha*. Specially, it is set in motion by the ten virtuous and ten non-virtuous actions. The ten non-virtuous actions can be divided into three physical, four verbal and three mental non-virtuous. Physical non-virtues include taking life, stealing and sexual misconduct. Verbal non-virtues include lying, abrasive words, harsh words and senseless talk. Mental non-virtues include covetousness, harmful motivation and wrong view.

#### *Taking life*

- Taking life as a means of gratification, or to obtain wealth or to feed oneself.
- Taking life as an act of hatred by resentment or by killing an enemy.
- Taking life through ignorance, killing as a sacrifice.

#### *Stealing*

- Through force
- Stealthily
- By presenting as pure a product that has been mixed with impurities

#### *Sexual misconduct*

- Having sexual relations with one's mother, father, sister or brother
- With another person's marriage partner
- With a monk or nun

#### *Lying*

- Falsely claiming to have had visions
- Making promises one will not keep
- Lying for no particular reason

#### *Abrasive words*

- Forcefully trying to divide others
- Politely trying to divide others
- Dividing Sanghas

*Harsh words*

- Forcefully condemning another's faults
- Politely condemning others

*Senseless talks*

- Repeating non-virtuous mantras
- Telling useless stories (gossip)
- Giving teachings to those who are improper vessels

*Covetousness*

- Attachment to one's own body, qualities and wealth
- Jealousy regarding others' wealth and possessions
- Attachment to that which is not owned by others or oneself (country, locale, etc.)

*Harmful motivation (desire to destroy)*

- Born of hatred
- Born of jealousy and competitiveness
- Born of resentment

*Wrong view*

- Thinking that positive karma will not lead to happiness and negative karma will not bring suffering.
- Not believing the truth of the path, and thereby not achieving the truth of the result.
- Thinking that the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha do not exist

If all of the ten above are done repeatedly, one is reborn in a hell realm. If they are done occasionally, one is reborn as a hungry ghost. If they are done infrequently, one is reborn as an animal. Another way of expressing the above is to say that if one acts in anger, one is reborn in a hell realm; if one acts with desire, one is reborn as a hungry ghost; if one acts in ignorance, one is reborn as an animal. One could also say that if one commits negative acts against Enlightened beings, one is reborn in hell; if one commits negative acts against one's parents or some other crucial person, one is reborn as a hungry ghost; and if one commits negative acts against ordinary sentient beings, one is reborn as an animal. The root causes of non-virtuous actions are ignorance, desire and hatred. It is therefore important to eliminate these afflicting emotions.

### *Characteristics of Karma*

*The self-ascription of Karma* means that the results of an action are always reaped by the sower of the action and no one else. If this were not the case, it would mean that our actions bore no fruit, or that we were the victims of negative actions we had not committed. Neither of these is true.

*The Strict result of Karma* means that positive and negative actions will inevitably bring about positive and negative results, respectively. For example, the poisonous seed will produce poison, and the medicinal seed will produce medicine.

*Minor Karma produces great result* means that as a small seed can yield a large tree and many fruits, so can a minor action (positive or negative) produce strong results.

*The inevitability of Karma* means that unless karma is eliminated by an antidote, or purified, it may remain intact for thousands of kalpas until conditions finally cause it to produce its inevitable result. In the Sutras the Buddha said, "Fire may grow cold, the wind may be caught by a lasso, and the sun and moon may fall to the earth, but the result of karma is inevitable."

He also told the following story in proof that one cannot escape the fruit of one's actions: There was a king called Pawajin who had 84,000 queens, 1,000 princes and 500 princesses. At that time the Bodhisattva Metok Dadze was staying in a dense forest practicing meditation and giving teachings. One day, he announced with profound understanding and great awareness that the time was ripe for him to travel from city to city giving teachings for the benefit of all sentient beings. The other Bodhisattvas warned him, "Lama Metok Dadze, your physical and spiritual beauty will incur the jealousy of kings. You will be in grave danger." He replied, "If I think only of my own safety, I cannot protect the teachings of the Buddhas of the Three Times. All Buddhas achieved Enlightenment through great actions in which they sacrificed the protection of self. One can only protect the teachings when one renounces attachment to form, sound, taste, smell and touch. The merit received from keeping one precept diligently for twenty-four hours, at a time when the Dharma is in decline, greatly exceeds the merit received by the devoted being who offer food, drink, the precious umbrella and light to the millions of Buddhas for kalpas as unlimited as the sands of the river Ganges." Lama Metok Dadze then traveled to many towns, giving teachings which established 90 million sentient beings in unsurpassable Enlightenment. Then he journeyed to the palace of King Pawajin, where he gave teachings for seven days during which he also fasted. On the seventh day 1,086 queens instantly attained the state of non-returning Enlightenment after merely glancing at the monk. Young girls also gathered to make offerings and receive teachings. Blinded by his jealousy of the beautiful form of the Bhikshu, King Pawajin believed the Lama was preaching a misguided path

for his subjects. He therefore ordered his one thousand princes to take Lama Metok Dadze's life, but they refused. Finally Gache, the kingdom's butcher, consented to do the deed. The King ordered Gache to sever the lama's hands, legs, ears and nose with a sharp sword, as well as to cut out the monk's eyes so that he might never again look on the King's consorts with desire. When the order had been completed, hundreds of thousands of light rays radiated from the monk's body in the ten directions, and then returned to his body. Instead of blood, milk gushed from his veins. From the severed limbs the eight auspicious symbols and thirty-two special marks appeared. At this display, the King and his retinue were filled with misgiving. After seven days they returned to find that the monk's body had not discolored in death. They concluded that Lama Metok Dadze had been a very special Bodhisattva who had attained the non-returning state of Enlightenment. King Pawajin cried out. "I have committed every negative karma; I will be reborn in hell." Instantly, eight thousand gods appeared in the sky and affirmed the king's fears. Filled with remorse, King Pawajin said, "bodhisattva Metok Radze, listen to me. Please wake up like a full moon. Teacher, free from all aggression and anger, please wake up like a shining sun. You have practiced patience for a long time. Where is your great compassion and perseverances. Wake up and say something, Great Loving and Kind One." Having said this, King Pawajin placed the Lama's body in a coffin and annointed it with medicine, sandalwood, juniper and incense. The body was cremated and a stupa was built with the remains. For ninety-five million years King Pawajin made daily offerings and practiced purification by the four powers-the power to effect atonement, the power to practice good as an antidote to evil, the power to desist from evil, the power of reliance. 'when the King died, he was reborn in hell, experiencing infinite suffering. After one million kalpas, his eyes were gouged and his hands and legs were severed. King Pawajin's fate demonstrated the inevitability of karma. The buddha Sakyamuni concluded the story by explaining to his attendant anada that he was King Pawajin in a former life and that Lama metok Dadze was later reborn as Buddha padme lame, the previous incarnation of the unparalleled Gampopa.

Thus it is important to understand and watch over the causes of karma, trying to eliminate them rather than fighting the result.

### *The Ten Virtues*

When we renounce the ten non-virtuous actions, they are transformed into the ten virtuous actions. Entering into the path, the ten virtuous actions are

- *Protecting life* (physical)
- *Widespread giving* (physical)
- *Maintaining ethics* (physical)
- *Speaking truth* (verbal)

- *Speaking harmoniously by mediating among divided groups* (verbal)
- *Speaking lovingly and peacefully and speaking meaningfully* (verbal)
- *Cultivating admiration, satisfaction and contentment* (mental)
- *Becoming helpful, loving and compassionate* (mental)
- *Cultivating correct views* (mental)

The root causes of the above are a lack of ignorance, desire or hatred. Therefore, it is important to strengthen these qualities of mind in order to achieve happiness for oneself and others. One who practices the ten virtuous actions is reborn as a human or in a god realm; one who practices all of the above and in addition renounces samsara achieves the arhat state; one who practices all of the above and cultivated Bodhicitta achieve Buddhahood.

There are three types of beings:

- Beings with small capacity - these work only for the pleasures of samsara
- Beings with medium capacity - these work for individual growth and renounce samsara
- Beings with great capacity - these renounce samsara and practice Bodhicitta for all sentient beings

*The results of virtue and non-virtue are like the shadows of flying birds.  
We may not see them now, but they will appear at the time of death.  
Make effort to abandon non-virtue and to accomplish wholesome deeds.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### **Practicing LOVING-KINDNESS and COMPASSION as an antidote to attachment to the pleasure of peace**

When one has great loving-kindness towards all sentient beings, there are limitless beneficial effects, for such kindness represents an offering to all the Buddhas. All other beings are then drawn to us and wish to protect us. This will cause peace and happiness for oneself, one will benefit one's entire environment. One will not suffer harm from weapons and poisons, one's wishes will be fulfilled without effort, and one will be reborn in higher realms.

Practicing loving-kindness, one is not attached to one's own peace and happiness, but rather has concern only for others. Loving-kindness is the state of mind in which one wishes that all sentient beings may have happiness and the causes of happiness. The object of one's goal is the well-being of all without exception. In this connection, the Guddha told a story about how loving-kindness could reverse

even very negative karma: In the ancient city of Varanasi, King Champetop (the power of love) practiced loving-kindness for all sentient beings. At this time, a spirit named Vaisravana and his retinue arrived at Varanasi, but no one welcomed him with the traditional tormo (ceremonial food and drink) offering. Consequently, he grew very angry and manifested this anger in the form of a widespread plague which killed thousands. Greatly saddened by the suffering of his people, King Champetop and his court meditated on loving-kindness. Through the power of these virtues, the plague was pacified. One day when the King was walking through a garden, he encountered Vaisravana and his followers disguised as Brahmins. One of the group acting as a spokesman asked for food, explaining that they had not eaten for many days. The King ordered his attendants to bring fresh food, but the spokesman interjected, saying that the group could only eat raw flesh. King Champetop grew thoughtful, pondering whether it was appropriate to take the lives of other beings for one's own consumption. He resolved the question by asking the kingdom's butchers to open his own veins and slice his flesh as an offering to the Brahmins. When the butchers refused to cut the flesh and draw the blood of their king, the king did the job himself and presented the offering to the Brahmins. When they were satisfied by this sacrifice, the King gave a teaching on the preciousness of all life and the necessity of abstaining from harming others. He also initiated Vaisravana into the five principles of discipline, namely: not killing any sentient being, not engaging in false speech, not stealing that which belongs to another, not engaging in sexual misconduct, and not drinking alcoholic beverages. He concluded the teaching with the prayer for sharing merit, and then addressed his disciples thus, "King Champetop's every action is directed towards helping all sentient beings. By following his example of loving-kindness and abiding by the five principles of discipline, you may also attain the state of Enlightenment." Lord Buddha concluded the story by revealing to the gathering that he was King Champetop in a previous life and that his five ascetic disciples were Vaisravana and his followers in their previous lives.

Before practicing loving-kindness to all sentient beings, we must first reflect on the kindness offered to us by our mothers over many years. When we were born, we were like a small insect, unable to do anything. Thereafter, our mother gave us food and drink, sacrificed to give us clothes and shelter, and otherwise tried to please us.

Even when she lacked resources she tried to give us what we needed. All that she used for her child she acquired through hardship. Our mother also protected us from fire, water, falls and all other dangers. she worried about our health and well-being. We knew nothing when we were born, but our mother taught us how to talk, rejoiced over even our first faltering words and steps, and oversaw our education, helping to make us the best among all others. If a friend helps us a little, or offers us a cup of tea, we feel much gratitude. Think, then, how much more gratitude one should feel for one's mother who has done so much for us. Then we must meditate on the fact that we have been reborn in innumerable lifetimes. So all sentient beings

have been our mothers at one time or another. Therefore, we must realize that all beings have been kind to us, and we must repay this by practicing loving-kindness and wishing that all may have happiness and the cause of happiness. We extend the kindness we feel for our mother to our other relatives, then to our friends, then to our countrymen and finally to all beings universally, even to those whom we regard as enemies. Lord Jigten Sumgon said: If you cannot think kindly of your mother, think of a dear friend and extend outward from there.

Compassion is wishing that all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. If your mother or a close friend is experiencing a crisis, you are responsible for helping. Even if your mother is crazy, you must try to help, so in the same way you must help all sentient beings deluded by the three poisons, clarifying their view if possible. When one has great compassion towards all, one will achieve the Buddha's qualities, as the Buddha himself explained in this story: In the city of Varansi in India there was born a child whose father, a sea captain, died during one of his ocean journeys in search of precious gems. His mother never told him the truth of his father's profession, fearing that he, too, would wish to go to sea and might be drowned there. The child was very respectful to his mother. but one day he learned the truth, and announced to his mother that he would go to sea. Holding him by the feet, the mother tearfully pleaded with the young man not to leave her. But he only became angry, kicked her in the head and left. His mother prayed that he would not suffer the negative karma of having harmed her. During one sea journey, the son's ship was destroyed by crocodiles, but he managed to float to day land where he was greeted by beautiful goddesses who offered him food, drink, rich garments and wealth. Thereafter, wherever he wandered he met yet more goddesses who offered him ever more lavish hospitality. Finally, he arrived at the "City of Iron", but as he entered, the city gates immediately locked behind him. He passed through several further doors, and at the last he beheld the terrifying spectacle of a huge being with a wheel of iron turning on the crown of his head. This creature was being nourished by the pus that oozed from his head. Za-o Bumo (for that was the man's name) asked the cause of the great being's obvious misery. The creature answered, "It is because I harmed by mother." Immediately, Za-o Bumo realized that fate had brought him to the City of Iron for he, too had harmed his mother by kicking her.

From the sky, a voice announced, "Liberate him who is tied, and tie him who is not tied". Instantly, the being with the wheel of iron was liberated while Za-o Bumo now suffered the horrific pain of the iron wheel turning on the crown of his own head. He asked, "How long will this wheel turn on my head?" The voice in the sky replied that the wheel would remain fixed to his head for sixty thousand years. Za-o Bumo then asked whether any other beings would suffer the same fate. The answer was that whoever had harmed his mother would suffer similarly. 'through his sufferings, Za-o Bumo acquired great compassion for other sentient beings. He

proclaimed, "I will assume the suffering of this turning wheel for all those who share this karma." Immediately, Za-o Bumo was freed as the wheel of iron arose in the air the distance of a tala (palm) tree. He died and was reborn in the Tushita heaven. Then Lord Buddha revealed that he was Za-o Bumo in a previous life. By giving his earnings to his mother (which he had done before finding out her deceit), he found enjoyment. By kicking his mother he experienced suffering. But by cultivating compassion, he had been freed of suffering. The lifetime practice of compassion is a skillful means of practice for Bodhisattvas.

Loving-kindness and compassion are the essence of the Buddha's wisdom, and the nectar which transforms everything into the medicine that cures the disease of the mind. They are the light of wisdom which dispels the darkness of ignorance.

*Uninterrupted compassion is like a river.  
It doesn't tire or become discouraged.  
It is equal to the limits of samsara.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Antidotes to not understanding how to achieve Enlightenment:**

### **Refuge**

Before cultivating Bodhicitta, we must know and perform the ceremony of refuge. Powerful worldly deities, mountains, great trees, Gods, nagas, parents or other relatives cannot give refuge. The reason is that to give refuge one must be free from all fears, suffering and the causes of suffering and confusion. As ordinary beings are not free from suffering, they cannot be objects of refuge. The Buddha is the one who is completely free from confusion, fear and suffering; the Dharma is the only path to achieve Buddhahood, and the Sangha is the only company in which to practice the Dharma.

The power of the refuge is illustrated in this story of the Buddha: When the Buddha was staying at Vulture Peak Mountain, there lived a man named Palbe who was a devotee of teachers. These teachers were jealous of Buddha and therefore counseled Palbe: "The man called Buddha bears the pride of someone empowered with omniscience. He has converted many young people into monks and nuns. This will bring harm to our kingdom. You must therefore do this: Dig a large hole outside your house, within which build a fire. Then place a thin covering of grass across the hole to disguise the trap. Second, prepare a feast in which the food is sprinkled with poison. A luncheon invitation will then be extended to the Buddha and his retinue. If the Buddha is omniscient as he claims, he will perceive the danger and decline to attend. If not, he and his followers deserve their death, either by the fire or the

food." The following day, Palbe invited the buddha and his retinue for lunch. Lord Buddha realized the time was ripe to tame the householder, so he accepted the invitation. Palbe returned home convinced that the acceptance of the invitation signaled the deceit of the Buddha's claim to omniscience. But his wife watched his preparations with great fear. "If you kill the Lord Buddha," said she, "you will be filled with great remorse." Fearing that his wife would spread word of his intentions, Palbe locked her in a small room. Meanwhile, at Vulture Peak Mountain, the Lord Buddha gave Ananda the following instructions: "Although it has been customary for one of my disciples to lead the way, today no one should walk in front of me." Then, putting on his Dharma robes and gathering his bowl, he and his retinue walked to Palbe's homestead. He was escorted also by the gods Brahma and Indra. Upon his arrival at Rajagrha, the earth quaked six times. The gathering crowd was filled with awe. One upsaka, noting the Buddha's imminent arrival at Palbe's home, begged the Buddha to turn back, warning that Palbe had made harmful preparations. The Buddha replied, "Do you think that fire will bring me harm? Even when I took rebirth in the animal realm I was exempt from the dangers of fire. Now, I am enlightened, so what possible damage could the fire inflict? Because I have dispelled the fire of the three poisons of ignorance, desire and hatred, ordinary fire has no power to harm." When the Buddha placed his golden leg on the grass covering, the hole was transformed into a lotus-filled lake populated by buzzing honey bees. Gods complemented the new scenery with pots of sandalwood, and the crowd was filled with wonder. Meanwhile, Palbe and his teachers had been hiding in the house. Fearing that the noise of the crowd meant the success of Palbe's evil deed, Palbe's wife pounded down the door of her room. She was thrilled with happiness at the sight of the lotus-filled lake, and cried. As the Buddha came closer to the house, Palbe became frightened. The hair of his body stood on end and he prostrated before the Buddha. "Sugata," said he, "I have made a grave mistake on account of my involvement with wrong spiritual friends. Please forgive my wrongdoing which is a result of wrong view. In the future, I will never commit any evil deeds. Please stay, and I will never commit any evil deeds. Please stay, and I will prepare a fresh feast untainted by poison." The Buddha replied, "There is no need for you to prepare a different meal. Even when I took rebirth in the animal realm, I was immune to the dangers of poison. Now I am enlightened so I could not possibly be harmed by the dangerous substance. Before you distribute the food, recite the following verse: 'Ignorance, anger and desire are the three poisons of samsara; Buddha is free from these three poisons; Buddha will destroy the power of these poisons. The Dharma is free of poison. by the power of the Dharma, the poison will be purified. The Sangha is stainless; by the power of the nature of this excellent community, the poison will be purified.' Because I, the Buddha, the Peerless One amidst samsara, achieved Enlightenment, the poison will not affect my body. Because the dharma, the most perfect teaching, is distinguished by purity, the poison will not affect my body. The three poisons, anger, attachment and ignorance, afflict sentient beings. By power of purification through the

Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, the mind is completely guarded from these poisons." The Buddha thus purified the food of its poison, and Palbe took refuge in the Buddha. He memorized the verse, recited it three times and made offerings of the food. Thus, Palbe was tamed and became a great devotee of the Lord Buddha.

Anyone going for refuge must first be convinced of the suffering of samsara, and must have confidence in the Triple Gem as the object which can protect us from suffering. The Buddha is the embodiment of the three perfect forms (Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya), and is completely purified of all obscurations, perfected in wisdom and compassion, and possessed of all the great qualities. The Dharma consists of three categories of teachings which includes the wisdom of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, as well as the truth of the path and the truth of the cessation. The Sangha includes those who motivate one to achieve Enlightenment. The ordinary Sangha consists of four or more pure monks and nuns. The noble Sangha includes those who have achieved realization beyond samsara.

However, the ultimate refuge is the Buddha because he is Dharmakaya, the nature of wisdom, the complete form of all Dharma, and the ultimate state of all the Sangha. He is beyond birth, arising and cessation, is completely pure, and is free from all desire. The Buddha is like the physician, the dharma like the medicine, and the Sangha like the nurses. Just as the physician explains the nature of the illness and its causes, and prescribes the necessary medicine, so did the Buddha describe all the different states of suffering in samsara and their causes. To help us be free of suffering and achieve peace, he gave us the Dharma. And just as we obtain medicines from a nurse, so can the Sangha support our practice. If one follows this path properly, one can be freed of suffering and achieve fearlessness.

Anyone desiring the refuge ordination should receive this from a living master. After taking refuge, the following practices are important: One must perform offerings physically and mentally to the Triple Gem wherever one may be; offer whatever is eaten or drunk; do not abandon the refuge for rewards, or even to protect your life. Through awareness of the great wisdom-compassion qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, take refuge repeatedly. Having taken refuge in the Buddha, one should not then take refuge in worldly spirits or powerful deities because they are not free from confusion, and so do not have the wisdom to free others from suffering. Having taken refuge in the Dharma, one should not harm the life of any sentient being. The Dharma is the antidote to violence and confusion, so if one cannot help others, one should at least not harm them, because as oneself likes and searches for peace, so do all other sentient beings. Having taken refuge in the Sangha, one should not associate with persons holding wrong views (those opposed to the spiritual path), or not believing in karma. Generally, the fellowship of the Dharma is important. A medicinal plant growing in a forest turns the neighboring plants into medicine, and a poisonous plant turns the neighboring plants into

poison. Just so, when we are in the company of spiritual persons we are inspired towards spiritual life, and when we associate with worldly persons we tend to fall into worldliness.

One should respect the Buddha and even images of him, elevating them as objects of refuge. One should also respect the precious teachings and even texts written about the Dharma. They should not be placed upon the ground. If you find a text on the ground, think: this is a precious teaching, containing the methods for purifying the mind's obstructions and achieving complete wisdom and compassion. With this understanding, elevate them. One should also respect the Sangha, and all the levels within it. These include both beginners and highly realized masters, but all are cultivating their mind to achieve Enlightenment. Therefore, one day all will achieve Buddhahood. They are unlike ordinary people. Bearing this in mind, we should treat them with respect, especially those who are monks and nuns.

### *The beneficial Aspects of the Refuge*

- One enters into the Buddhist path. The ideal behind the Buddha's teaching is not just to make others Buddhist. Because of his wisdom and compassion, he developed a method to free all sentient beings from the limitations of confusion and suffering.
- The refuge ordination is the foundation of all the higher vow and tantric empowerments.
- This is a method for purifying previous negative karma and
- a protection from harm caused by humans and non-humans.
- One accomplishes all one's wish.
- One accumulates wisdom and merit.
- One will not be born in the lower realms.
- One attains Enlightenment swiftly.

Although samsara is endless, we can through refuge, limit its boundaries. So this is a joyful path. When one studies and practices meditation, one should make effort joyfully, though one sometimes face obstacles.

*The Three Jewels are like the sphere of the sun.  
Their compassion is impartial and unfailing.  
Take refuge from the bottom of your heart.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### **The spiritual master**

It is very important when taking refuge to find a qualified spiritual master. Those who wish to achieve Buddhahood must depend on the spiritual master because alone one does not know how to strengthen all the virtuous qualities and purify the obscurations. All the Buddhas of the three times achieved Buddhahood through the guidance of the spiritual master. The spiritual master is like the guide who helps us when we go to an unknown place. He is the escort when we pass through dangerous regions. He is the captain of the ship, and without him we cannot cross the ocean of samsara.

There are four different types of spiritual master: the ordinary master; the master who has attained different Bodhisattva levels; and the masters who have attained the levels of Nirmanakaya and Sambhogakaya. Each corresponds to one's own level. When one is beginning, one cannot reach the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so one must attain the ordinary spiritual master. When one's karmic obscurations have been somewhat purified, one attains the Bodhisattva master. When one transcends the level of the accumulation path, one can attain the spiritual master of the Nirmanakaya level. When one attains the level of a Bodhisattva, one can attain the master of the Sambhogakaya level. Of these four kinds of masters, which is the kindest? When we are in the darkness of karma and afflicting emotions, we cannot even see the face of the higher masters. By meeting with the ordinary spiritual master and receiving teachings, we are able to enter into the path and progress in our understanding. By this means we are later able to see higher masters. Therefore, of all masters the one to whom we are most indebted is the ordinary spiritual master.

Each level of master has different qualities: The Buddha is completely purified of the two obscurations to liberation and omniscience, and has completely achieved the two great wisdom (realization of the various types of knowledge, and realization of suchness). The spiritual master from the first to tenth level of bodhisattva is purified and practiced in the realization of wisdom. Among ordinary spiritual masters there are three different types: the first has eight qualities - morality, vast knowledge of the Bodhisattva's teaching, realization, great compassion, fearlessness, patience, tireless mind and skillful speech. The second has four qualities: a good knowledge of the Sutras and Shastras, the wisdom that cuts through others' hesitations, virtuous actions, and the ability to point out the afflicting emotions and prescribe their antidote. The third type of master must have at least two qualities: knowledge of the meaning of the Mahayana teachings, and dedication to the Bodhisattva's vow. On this basis the Vajrayana master must have at least received the empowerments, be expert in the teaching of the arising and completion process, and keep the samaya. He may also be possessed of many other, higher qualities.

When we find any of these matters we should attain them, realizing that they are precious, respecting them, doing prostrations, standing when they enter the room, and not allowing ourselves to be easily satisfied. The true master is difficult to meet.

Make offerings of food, clothing, and other necessary articles such as medicines and money. Regard the master as the Buddha himself, obeying him implicitly as did Naropa and Milarepa. Most importantly, please the master through your practice, receiving the teachings from him with one-pointed mind and dedicating the three doors to the practice. If the master is pleased, one may achieve higher realizations and eventually achieve Buddhahood.

When one receives the teachings, one should do so with the Bodhicitta motivation, meditating that oneself is the patient, and that the master is the physician removing sickness. When we receive the teachings, we must keep them properly in the mind, avoiding the three faults; being like a cup that is upside down, or like a cup that has holes in the base, or like a cup that is already filled with poison. When the cup is upside down, nothing can be poured into it. In the same way, if our mind is closed, we cannot absorb the teachings. When there is a hole in the cup, the liquid runs out. Just so, if we do not contain poison, it will spoil any liquid placed in it, no matter how delicious. Just so, if we receive the teachings with desire, anger, hatred, etc., they cannot help us. So we must receive them with pure motivation.

### *The beneficial effects of attending the spiritual master*

- The bodhisattva who attains the spiritual master will not fall into the lower realms,
- will not fall prey to non-virtuous friends and
- will not turn back from the Mahayana teachings.

Such a person will pass beyond the ordinary human state. Soon he will achieve Buddhahood.

*The root of attainments is the vajra master.*

*Developing faith in all his activities, holding his instructions as valid, and respectfully serving and attending him without hypocrisy is the root of all Dharma.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### **The seven pratimoksha vows**

Before taking the Bodhisattva vow, it is essential to take one of the seven pratimoksha vows which are the foundation. For example, if you invite a king to your dwelling place, you must first clean it thoroughly and decorate. Only then is it fit for so distinguished a visitor. In the same way, to invite the king known as

Bodhicitta our mind must be cleansed and free of harmful thoughts. Only then can one cultivate Bodhicitta. Among the seven vows there are two categories including those for householders and those for renunciates. The householder vows are known as upasaka and upasika vows and include the five basic disciplines: not taking life (especially that of humans), not lying (especially with regard to spiritual life), not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct, and not becoming intoxicated. Renunciates' vows, which are built on upasaka discipline, include the categories known as Bhikshu, Bhikshuni, Siksamana, Sramanera, and Sramanerika. In order to achieve peace and harmony for oneself and others, these ethics must be kept, for without proper conduct it is impossible to achieve serenity, no matter how hard we try. A story told by the Buddha illustrates the importance of ethical behavior:

In one of the Buddha's previous lifetimes, in the forest of Kashika, there lived four noble beings - a bird, a monkey, a rabbit, and an elephant. The four, who drank at the same spring, soon became friends. One day they decided that it would be proper to show the greatest respect for the eldest among them. To determine their respective ages, each one recalled the height of a nearby nyagrota tree when he had first seen it. The elephant said, "I must be the oldest. I remember that when I was born the shadow of the tree fell across my body." The monkey said, "I must be the older than the elephant. When I was born the tree had the same size as me." The rabbit said, "I must be older than either of you. When I was born, the seed of the tree was just sprouting. I took a young leaf and ate it." The bird said, "I am older than any of you. When I was born I ate the fruit of a tree south of this spring. The seed of the nyagrota tree passed through my body as waste. So I planted it." The four then showed each other respect accordingly. The elephant placed the bird on the crown of his head, the rabbit on his neck, and the monkey on his back. Then the bird said, "Now we must keep the five basic disciplines throughout our lives." This they did, and to insure that all other beings did the same, the bird initiated all those with wings, the elephant initiated all those with fangs, the rabbit initiated all those with paws, and the monkey initiated all those with fur. The peace that then pervaded the kingdom was so great that the king and his ministers felt its effects and began congratulating themselves. The king thought that it was his wise Dharma rule which was causing the kingdom to prosper; the queen thought that good fortune was due to the royal couple's lack of sexual misconduct; the princes thought it was due to the respect they showed their parents; and the subjects thought that it was due to their obedience to the king. Because each attributed the kingdom's prosperity to a different factor, a great dispute ensued. The king therefore summoned a great, clairvoyant master, who said, "The kingdom's prosperity is due to none of your efforts. In the Kashika forest live four great beings who keep the five disciplines and initiated their families into these disciplines. Through their efforts, prosperity resulted. Because the king and his subjects have also kept these precepts, the kingdom has reaped the benefits of this practice of the Dharma. Any animals who have died have been reborn in the thirty-three states of

the God realm." Indra, king of the god realm, expressed his amazement with the following praise: "With respect and courteousness, enduring the hardship of the forests, through the moral behavior of the birds, all sentient beings of the world are firmly stabilized." The Buddha then revealed that he was the bird in a previous life, while his attendant Ananda was the elephant, Shariputra was the rabbit, and Maugotlayaya was the monkey.

So if one wishes to be free of disease, mental distress and other undesirable conditions in this life and the next, one must keep these vows. The person who belongs to the Mahayana family and has taken refuge in the Three Jewels, and who observes any of the seven sections of the Pratimoksha vow, possesses the foundation for cultivating Bodhicitta.

*The root of the Buddha's teachings is the morality of the vinaya.  
Without this, even if you are called a practitioner, you are still a samsaric person.  
Therefore, guard your discipline as you would guard your eyes.  
(from Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Bodhicitta**

It is not enough to wish others loving-kindness and compassion; we must have methods for effecting this attitude. These methods are known as *absolute* bodhicitta and *relative* bodhicitta. Absolute bodhicitta is a special insight into the pervading nature of emptiness - mind which is clear, profound, indestructible, and free from elaboration and afflictive emotions. In Vajrayana system, this realization is known as Mahamudra. Mahamudra is a vast and complex subject, so one needs great purification and dedication to understand and, especially, to realize it. Mahamudra dispels all confusion and clears the mind, like the sky free from all clouds, and lets us see it as it is. Relative bodhicitta consists of both the desire to reach Enlightenment for others, which is called *aspiration* bodhicitta, as well as taking the practical steps necessary to do it, which is called the *action* bodhicitta.

*The supreme mind of bodhicitta is like an unspoiled seed.  
Without it, it is impossible to achieve perfect Enlightenment.  
Therefore, cherish the cultivation of the mind of mahayana.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Aspiration bodhicitta**

Having aspiration bodhicitta is that one eagerly wishes to achieve Enlightenment (or the search for the pure wisdom of the Buddha) for the benefit of all sentient beings without discrimination. Wherever there are beings, there are afflicting emotions and karma, and where these exist, there are different levels of suffering. So we must cultivate the determination to free all beings from these sufferings.

There are four conditions for cultivating the mind of bodhicitta:

- *One should see the spiritual master as the Buddha himself* : Visualize in front of you a jeweled throne supporting a lotus, sun and moon discs upon which seated the varja master in the state of Buddhahood. He is surrounded by the lineage lamas, and countless Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, yidams, and Dharma protectors. Meditate that all are complete forms of wisdom and compassion.
- *One should take refuge in the Mahayana way* : Take refuge in the Mahayana way means that one should take refuge until Enlightenment is achieved.
- *One should practice the four immeasurable attitudes* : They are loving-kindness, compassion, joy for others' peace and happiness and great equanimity.

· *Loving-kindness* is the desire that all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness. The more you long for the happiness of all the beings, the more you feel no separation between them and yourself. All your body, speech and mind will form a field of loving-kindness towards all sentient beings. That means that when you act, you act sincerely. When you talk, you will use gentle words and speak the truth. When you think of others, you think of how of they might have happiness and peace. Thus all actions can be transformed into peace, into Dharma.

*Loving-kindness is like a warrior victorious in battle.  
In an instant, it annihilates all the hordes of maras without exception.  
Meditate on all beings as your parents.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

· *Compassion* is the desire to free others from suffering and the causes of suffering. Compassion is the mind free from hatred. Flooded by afflictive emotions, beings create the cause of suffering. With the causes of suffering, there will surely be the results of suffering. Look at such causes and the immense sufferings as a result. Develop the compassionate wish that all beings as limitless as space be free from suffering and achieve Enlightenment, the ultimate peace.

*Supreme compassion is like a skillful mother nurturing her child.  
Abandoning comfort, it engages in the benefit of others.  
Therefore, generate the courage of the altruistic thought.*

*This is my heart's advice.*  
(from the *Jewel Treasury of Advice*)

- *Joy* means to rejoice at others' peace and happiness and hope that they will increase. Pride, envy, jealousy are the real enemies of love and compassion, since they blind us to others' good qualities. Rejoicing at others' happiness is the antidote to those obscurations.
- *Equanimity* means feeling neither hatred for enemies nor attachment to loved ones, but instead, feeling love and compassion for all beings equally. See all sentient beings as your parents, children, relatives, and friends who each bring us the opportunity for Enlightenment.
- One should make offerings to accumulate merits and wisdom, do purification practice and rejoice in others' virtues. One should request that the wheel of teachings be turned, and that the master not enter nirvana until all beings are enlightened. One should dedicate all the merit of virtue.
- Offer all your possessions and those of others. The best offering is one's root virtue and meditation practice, including the arising and completion processes.
- Concerning purification practices, purify of motivation is most important. We must also purify all non-virtuous actions which have arisen from afflicting emotions such as the five heavy negative karmas. The method of purification exists through four powers: remorse, the practice of the antidote, the avoidance of evil, and reliance.
  - a) *Remorse* means thinking of how one has uselessly created negative karma, of how it has engendered suffering, and of the importance of separating oneself from non-virtue. For example, if you eat poison unintentionally, you immediately feel the need to cleanse yourself of it by any means. In the same way, we must at all costs rid ourselves of negative karma.
  - b) *The practice of the antidote* includes such meditation practices as compassion, wisdom, visualization and recitation of mantras, and especially the practice of Mahamudra.
  - c) *The avoidance of evil* means understanding that as negative action will bring immense suffering, one must absolutely avoid it.
  - d) *The power of reliance* includes taking refuge, cultivating bodhicitta and taking empowerments.

Even to practice one of these powers will help purify negative karma, so if one practices them all, one will definitely purify all negative karma. Vajrasattva meditation is one of the best methods of purification.

· Rejoicing in others' virtues is the antidote to jealousy. Rejoice in the Buddha's activities, which have established beings in the Enlightenment state, as well as rejoice in the virtuous actions of all others.

· By dedicating the merit, we bring together all virtues and great qualities of ourselves and others, and of the Buddhas of the Three Times, hoping that by this power all sentient beings will be freed of suffering and achieve complete Enlightenment.

The beneficial results of cultivating the aspiration path are

- Entering into the Bodhisattva family, one receives the Bodhisattva training that cuts the root of non-virtuous action.
- The seed of Enlightenment is planted within oneself.
- One achieves limitless merit and wisdom.
- One pleases all the Buddhas.
- One benefits all beings.
- One quickly achieves complete Enlightenment.

The practice of the aspiration path includes

- Not abandoning any sentient beings
- Recollecting the beneficial effects of bodhicitta
- Meditating that bodhicitta is the seed of Enlightenment, the wish-fulfilling gem, and the shelter in which all can seek safely.

To develop the strength of bodhicitta, one should

- Practice the two accumulations (merit and wisdom).
- Practice the bodhicitta attitude constantly through loving-kindness and compassion.
- Repeat the bodhisattva vow at least once a day.
- Recollect the discipline.
- Avoid the four negative actions and develop the four positive actions. The four negative actions are: lying to a spiritual master or other realized beings, causing regret or doubt in others' virtuous actions unnecessarily, abusing other bodhisattvas and deceiving other beings for one's own profit. The four positive actions are not lying to master or to other realized beings even at the risk of one's

own life, establishing all sentient beings in virtuous Mahayana behavior, seeing all the bodhisattvas as the Buddha and making known their good qualities everywhere and selflessly benefiting all beings with pure motivation.

*Aspiration bodhicitta is like a traveler setting out on a journey.*

*Before long, he will arrive at Buddhahood.*

*Therefore, make a pure aspiration.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### ***The action bodhicitta***

The action path is reached through the study and practice of the six paramitas. The word paramita comes from *param*, beyond the seashore, and *ita*, arrival across the ocean of samsara, and means the perfection of wisdom. It also implies achieving the state of Buddhahood and the method to do so. The six paramitas are: generosity, moral ethics, patience, perseverance, concentration and wisdom.

*The bodhicitta of activity is like a well-built channel.*

*Through that, one can - without care - perfect the two accumulations.*

*Merit will continually arise.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Generosity.** The practice of generosity means to open our heart, to share our happiness with everyone by bestowing wealth, transmitting fearlessness, and giving Dharma teachings. Through generosity, we develop a strength of mind that reaches out to all beings. Without the practice of generosity, one suffers from poverty and is reborn in the hungry ghost realm. Whoever does not practice generosity cannot benefit others, and thus cannot achieve Buddhahood. By practicing generosity, one achieves all that is necessary, has a good life, and will not be reborn in the hungry ghost realm. Everyone wishes for peace and happiness, but without wealth, happiness is difficult. Such wealth comes through the practice of generosity. With this one can also benefit others and dispel their poverty. Those practicing generosity with the enlightened attitude have no difficulty achieving Enlightenment, nor any need to protect their possessions. They become fearless, whereas those not practicing generosity have to protect their possessions, always fearing that others may rob them. This in turn gives rise to other afflicting emotions which create an obstacle to Enlightenment. The definition of generosity is a mind without clinging that renounces its own belongings. Milarepa once said: the practice of generosity is the best means for purifying stinginess, attachment and avarice. There are three types of generosity practice: generosity with wealth, with fearlessness and with prayers and Dharma teachings.

- *Generosity with wealth:* There are many different level of this practice, from offering a drop of water to sacrificing one's entire body. We can offer incense and flowers to all sentient beings in the six realms so that they may become free from suffering and connect to the mind of Enlightenment. Offer support to monks and nuns to allow them to continue and enhance their meditation practices. A very advanced practice is giving one's own body. This can only be performed by Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have attained the eighth, ninth or tenth bhumis. While ordinary people cannot do such practices physically, yet mentally we can do practices such as "Chöd - Cutting Through Self-Cherishing." In it, we invite demons, local deities, ghosts, and all beings who crave flesh and others' lives. Seeing their confusion and ignorance, we generate feelings of unconditional compassion for them. We then visualize giving our own bodies to these beings. Having appeased them with our offerings, we can give them Dharma teachings. We can also make mental offering of this body to the enlightened beings. It is important to offer with *pure motivation*. That means that whatever we offer, offer sincerely with respect, compassion and devotion. Dedicate the merit so that all beings become free from suffering and attain Enlightenment. Offer with *impure motivation* creates negative karma and will cause us to be reborn in the lower realms. So do not give something which harm others, or give for your own renown, or from jealousy. Therefore, avoid giving weapons or poison. Do not give to impure persons, as no benefit results. Do not give with anger or disrespect.
- *Generosity with fearlessness:* Offer fearlessness and protection to those in danger. Give medicine to the sick, help those in danger of drowning, and protect life in general.
- *Generosity with prayers and Dharma teachings:* The mantra "Om Mani Padme Hung" is so profound and so powerful that, even if we recite it in the water and that water flows into the river, blessings will reach the water beings. hearing it, they will be reborn in higher realms and eventually will escape samsara. Giving Dharma teachings means sharing your wisdom with those who are ignorant, confused, and suffering; giving empowerments, explaining meditation practices, virtue, non-virtue, samsara, and Enlightenment. To be effective, teachings must be given by Buddhas and bodhisattvas with pure intentions and are not made up on one's own through dreams or personal experiences. To teach others, first it is very important to establish oneself in the Dharma. One should study diligently, practice well, and experience realizations. Teaching Dharma is a matter of showing the true nature of samsara and Enlightenment, which is not easy.

When giving for the benefit of others, do so without attachment or expectation of result. By helping limitless beings achieve Buddhahood, your generosity is transformed into limitless qualities. If, in addition, you can exercise generosity with wisdom born of the non-dual state, you will experience the perfected generosity

state. The result of generosity practice is that by giving wealth without expectation, one receives wealth, causes others to join in the Enlightenment state and oneself achieves Enlightenment. By giving food, one receives a healthy body; by giving clothes, one enjoys a good complexion; by giving light, one has clear eyes; by giving fearlessness, one resists the attacks of demons and evil spirits; by giving teachings, one will see the Buddha and purify obscurations.

*The giving of generosity, free from attachment is like a farmer sowing seeds.*

*It accomplishes our wishes and intentions without waste.*

*Discover the essence of your wealth.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Moral Ethics.** Moral ethics means avoiding all non-virtues, which are the causes of suffering, and cultivating the virtues which lead to happiness and Enlightenment. Without proper morality one cannot achieve a proper human or god state, even if one practices generosity. Nor can one meet with the teachings, any more than blind men can see form. One also cannot free oneself from samsara any more than one can walk without feet. Without the practice of morality, the path is incomplete. Those who engage in proper conduct will achieve an auspicious body free from the eight unfavorable conditions. Practicing proper conduct is the universal foundation. Just as the ground enables trees to grow and supports living beings, so does morality act as the ground for all the great qualities of the Buddha. When one's ethics are pure, one can achieve the virtues of samadhi meditation, and can realize all one's wishes. Through proper ethical discipline there is no difficulty in achieving Enlightenment or meeting with Buddhas. This is the best ornament we can have, and the source of peace and happiness. All beings highly revere those having ethics. The qualities of ethics are coolness and freshness, free from the bondage of afflicting emotions. There are three types of ethics: binding non-virtue, accumulating virtue and benefiting sentient beings. Mindfulness to moral ethics should be maintained all the times, 24 hours a day, throughout our entire lifetime.

- *Binding morality:* Binding non-virtue is the method for maintaining one's body, speech and mind in the Dharma, not be allowed to cause harm and negative karma. The seven Pratimoksha vows are included in this category, and imply the avoidance of all non-virtue thoughts and actions. According to Shantideva, there are eighteen root downfalls and 46 minor downfalls (refer to *Transformation of Suffering* for details) to avoid.
- *Accumulating virtue:* This practice includes such as the practice of ten-virtues, practicing the six paramitas, reading Dharma texts, reciting mantra, contemplating any of the teachings, practicing sincerely, serving the sick and aging, rejoicing in others' virtues, practicing patience with those who scorn us, dedicating all our virtues towards achieving Enlightenment, purifying our own

mistakes and developing compassion, loving-kindness, wisdom, stability of mind and discipline. All of these purify our obscurations, matures our minds in the Dharma and causes our study and realizations to progress. One must practice, protect and increase the accumulation of virtue.

- *Benefiting sentient beings*: The moral ethics of benefiting sentient beings is based on freedom from all self-cherishing. With a pure mind grounded in Dharma, one undertakes the four means of gathering disciples: discussing, spending time with them according to the Dharma and their wish, giving what is needed, and giving teachings according to Dharma. One's actions should be in accord with the teachings in order to benefit sentient beings. We benefit sentient beings whenever and whatever we can according to our abilities without expectation nor attachment to wealth and fame. Attachment to wealth and fame are the causes to anger, self-deceit, the destruction of virtue and frustration. This method for increasing ethics is the exercise of primordial wisdom and dedication.

The result of the practice of morality is that one will achieve complete Enlightenment, and even while in samsara one will obtain much prosperity and a perfect human body. One will be respected by all humans and non-humans.

*The three kinds of morality are like a warrior's sword.*

*They cut the bonds of the obscuring emotions.*

*You should possess recollection, decorum, awareness and consideration.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Patience.** The definition of patience is the feeling of calm and ease, with great compassion and undisturbed mind. Without patience anger arises easily and will destroy virtues accumulated through the practice of generosity and ethics. In the *Bodhicharya Avatara* it is said: "All the virtuous accumulations caused by generosity and service to the Buddha and others in thousands of kalpas can be destroyed by one act of hatred." When there is hatred, it is like a bullet in the body creating unbearable pain, preventing peace, even keeping one from sleeping. When a person becomes angry, his relatives and friends suffer and avoid his company. In him who lacks patience, the obstacles of mara enter readily, preventing him from achieving Buddhahood. In brief, there is no peace and happiness when one is angry. He who has patience possesses the supreme root of virtue. In *Bodhicharya Avatara* it is said: "There is no heavier negative karma than that caused by hatred, there is no harder ascetic practice than that of patience." Patience does not mean becoming passive, submissive, lazy or weak, but rather the perfection of patience is the strengthening of compassion and wisdom. Patience comes with stability of mind, the mind free from fear, working hard towards Enlightenment. Therefore, ensure the practice of patience by various methods. If one has patience, one will achieve all happiness,

perfect the mind and achieve Enlightenment. There are three categories of patience: patience with those who harm us, patience with suffering, and patience related to the profound Dharma teachings.

- *Patience with those who harm us:*

If someone accuses us, or tries to harm us physically and verbally, generally creating obstacles for ourselves and our relatives, we must practice patience. This implies not allowing the mind to become disturbed, not retaliating, and not holding resentment. Our enemies are the reflection of our own negative karma. Thus Atisha warned us, if you hate, how can you practice patience? Those who harm us, those who obstruct us, are those who blame or accuse us offer us a chance to practice patience, for which we should be grateful. Through this practice, we get a great opportunity to purify our negative karma and obscurations. Through this practice, we can develop merit and wisdom and build great strength of mind. Therefore, we should see our enemies as great teachers of patience.

Another way to practice is to recognize that the other person is not free. For example, if an angry person beats others with a stick, the pain is caused by the stick, not the person. So one should destroy the stick, realizing the stick has no choice because it was controlled solely by the person. Nor is the person free because he was in turn controlled by hatred and confusion. Therefore, one should attempt to neutralize the person's hatred, rather than to react. We must also consider the role our own karma plays in events. The harm which we experience now is the result of our previous karma. That is, we must have committed a similar negative action in a previous life to be experiencing its fruits today. And this must be accepted.

We should also observe the vulnerability within our own body. If we did not have a body, there would be nothing to become physically hurt. That ourselves and others have bodies constitutes a cause of suffering. Therefore we cannot blame anyone else for this fact.

We should observe the vulnerability within our own mind. The mind tries to protect the body in every way, not accepting the fact that everything is impermanent and can easily be harmed. In fact, the person who causes us harm actually is our friend because he teaches us patience which purifies negative karma, strengthens our virtuous qualities, and leads us closer to Enlightenment.

One can also practice patience by thinking: The person who has caused me harm must have been a parent, relative, or friend in a previous life. As he has perhaps endeared himself to me in the past, I should not react negatively. Meditate also that the person who harms you has the nature of impermanence and can die any time. Thus you should manifest great compassion for him. One can also meditate on the

pain of these beings who experience the fruit of the three poisons. One should dispel these by cultivating the Enlightened mind, wishing to free all beings from suffering.

- *Patience with suffering:*

When one works towards Enlightenment, one will face many hardship. One should practice patience by accepting suffering with a joyous mind. The life stories of great masters, Buddha, Milarepa, and others, show how brilliantly they endure hardships and suffering in order to purify the negative karmas, to develop wisdom and compassion, and to strengthen the physical conditions and mental strength. It is like undergoing surgery, treatment and so forth in order to heal the suffering of a virulent disease. *Engaging in the Conduct of Bodhisattvas* said: "Yet the suffering involved in my awakening will have a limit; it is like the suffering of having an incision made in order to remove and destroy greater pain." By practicing patience, one gain victory in the battle of samsara; by annihilating the enemy of afflicting emotions, you are the real warrior. Buddha said that to seek out Dharma we should be prepared to walk through a field of knives or fire. This is not saying that we should gratuitously suffer, but rather it speaks to the level of commitment that we must make. We should contemplate that one day we will have to die, and so keeping that in mind, accept any situation as we focus one-pointedly on Dharma.

- *Patience with the understanding of Dharma:*

One should not be intolerant when one hears of the great qualities of the Buddha (infinite wisdom, the ten powers, four fearlessness, eighteen unparalleled qualities and others), Dharma and Sangha, but should patiently aspire to and patiently practice teachings such as all-pervading emptiness, Mahamudra, selflessness, the illusory body, and the limitless qualities of the Buddha. If misunderstood, these ideas can cause confusion and negative karmas. Patience will increase through primordial wisdom, discriminating awareness, and dedication. When one practices patience for the benefit of all beings, one becomes limitless. When one practices with emptiness and compassionate mind, one's patience becomes pure. *Bodhisattva Bhumis* said: "If he depends on this vast and limitless patience to produce the result of Enlightenment, a bodhisattva will attain unsurpassable, perfect and complete Enlightenment."

*The armour of patience is like a protective suit.  
It cannot be pierced by anger, and it will increase all one's virtuous qualities.  
Through patience, one will attain a body adorned by the major and minor marks.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Perseverance.** Perseverance means diligent and joyous effort towards virtue. Without perseverance, we fall into the error of laziness, are unable to achieve virtue, cannot benefit other beings and cannot achieve Enlightenment. If we have perseverance, all the virtuous qualities will increase like the waxing moon, and we will receive the limitless treasure of the Buddha's wisdom. The mountain of ego is crossed and Enlightenment is achieved quickly. Perseverance is an antidote of laziness. There are three kinds of laziness: laziness through attachment to pleasure, laziness of weakness, and the laziness of worldly activities.

- *Laziness through attachment to pleasure:*

Attachment to pleasurable sensations includes fondness of rest, for the objects of this life, for social enjoyment, and for all pleasing states. One should avoid these. The Buddha once said to his monks: One is soon approaching death, when the activities of this life will end. Even the Buddha's teaching will decline. Therefore, while you can, make all effort towards stable perseverance. If you think you can leave practice until the moment of death, it is then too late. One cannot think of teachings and meditation because of the suffering of the age and pain. Therefore, turn away from pleasure as you would from a snake who jumps on your lap, or from a spark threatening to ignite your hair. There is no more important activity than to work towards Enlightenment and to close the door to rebirth in samsara.

- *Laziness of weakness:*

It includes claiming that one is not sufficiently intelligent to understand the teachings, that one cannot work hard, and that all effort is futile. One must avoid these wrong views and encourage oneself to achieve Enlightenment. If even small insects achieve results through perseverance, it is possible for man to achieve Enlightenment. Meditate that as you are born into the human state and understand virtue and non-virtue, you can achieve Enlightenment by remaining on the Path.

- *Laziness of worldly activities:*

The direct causes of suffering in this life and the next arise from putting all one's effort into subjugating enemies, being attached to non-virtuous wealth, and exerting all one's effort for this life alone. So with an understanding of impermanence and of the essenceless nature of things, avoid the laziness of worldly activities.

To overcome these three errors, we have to apply perseverance. There are three types of perseverance: the perseverance of armor, the perseverance of action and the perseverance of non-satisfaction.

1. *Perseverance of armor:*

Wearing the perseverance of the armor of the mind, determine that until all sentient beings achieve Enlightenment you will never abandon virtue. Do not persevere for a select few or for a limited number, but for all beings without distinction. Reading the life stories of Buddha, Milarepa, and other great masters and seeing their sacrifice for the sake of dharma, say to yourself, "If I cannot do better, then I must do at least as well as these great beings who survived such hardship. Here I sit, completely overpowered by afflictive emotions, why shouldn't I work harder than they? I have the same opportunity as they did. And I am so lucky to have this precious human life, to have met authentic lamas who have blessed me with teachings. Since I now have a chance to study and practice, I will sacrifice and accept hardship, even at the risk of my life. I need to achieve Enlightenment!" With a courageous heart full of dedication and determination, we move forward no matter what the cost. This is our armor and now we can progress.

### *2. Perseverance of action:*

Perseverance of action means purifying all afflicting emotions such as desire and anger. Cause all virtuous actions including the six Paramitas to increase. These should be practiced tirelessly, like a river that never stop flowing. More confidently toward virtuous action like a person drawn towards the sea in the heat. Do not become discouraged or shaken by afflicting emotions, conceptual thoughts or others' obstacles. Make egoless effort. However much one progresses in one's practice, the ego should not become involved. Persevere with the thought of benefiting all sentient beings, supporting them in their understanding of the teachings.

### *3. Perseverance with non-satisfaction:*

It means not being satisfied by small progress in virtue, but continuing until Enlightenment is achieved. Even one who works only for temporal peace and happiness is not satisfied, so how can one be satisfied when working for absolute peace and happiness? Persevering with wisdom, compassion and emptiness in order to benefit all beings, one's perseverance becomes limitless, vast and profound. The great masters never rested on their achievements. As long as they lived, they dedicated their lives to Dharma. A boat may be seaworthy, but without constant rowing, it has no way to cross the ocean. Similarly, whether or not we achieve Enlightenment depends on perseverance. Without joyous effort and diligence, even though we may be intelligent, we will not achieve great results and cross the ocean of samsara. Whoever has great perseverance will be a great practitioner. Whoever lacks perseverance will achieve nothing.

The perseverance of bodhisattva acting with pure motivation will lead him to Buddhahood. Even on the way to Buddhahood, he will experience happiness and achieve the vast and great qualities of the Bodhisattvas.

*Heartfelt recollection of the Dharma is like one's hair, caught on fire.*

*Nothing is as important as that.*

*Therefore, don't be lazy or attached to pleasure.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Concentration.** also known as samadhi means calm-abiding and virtuous one-pointedness within the mind. Though one has the practice of generosity and others, without samadhi, one's mind is caught between the fangs of afflicting emotions. Nor is there calm and stability in the mind, and one will not achieve the clairvoyance without which one cannot benefit other beings. Without samadhi one cannot achieve the proper wisdom, hence Enlightenment. Whoever has the quality of samadhi can achieve all the phases of meditation, and will be free of attachment to the world. With proper samadhi and pure wisdom, one can dispel all the obscurations of the mind, see the true meaning of the teachings, develop great compassion, and establish all sentient beings in one of the three Enlightenment states. The opposite of samadhi, or dispersed thoughts, is caused by afflicting emotions like attachment to family, wealth, fame and others. These must be avoided. By being attached to such objects, one does not experience mental peace, freedom from samsara or Enlightenment. In proportion to one's attachment to objects one experiences continual suffering, for one alternates between the hope of achieving these objects and the fear of losing them. To achieve the quality of calm-abiding, enter into samadhi. To do so, examine the mind and see which emotions are strongest, then apply the correct antidote.

The antidote to desire and attachment is concentration on the body's ugliness and impermanence. The antidote to hatred is loving-kindness and compassion. The antidote to ignorance is meditation on interdependent arising. The antidote to jealousy is equalizing oneself and others. The antidote to pride is exchanging one's situation with another's. In general, the antidote to afflicting emotions is the meditation practice of watching the breath. Other meditations include meditation on the precious human life, the suffering of samsara and Tonglen (sending and receiving).

- *Ugliness of the body*

If one is attached to this body, look at its nature: flesh, blood, skin, bone, marrow, bile, saliva, urine and stool. It has no essence to which to be attached. Go to the cemeteries and view the corpses, whether buried, eaten by vultures, or cremated.

There is no permanent essence to them. The same is true with our own body. In fact, the body is the source of all filth. The clean food one puts in one's mouth exists as filth which even oneself regards as unclean. Therefore, there is nothing to which to be attached. Should we not, instead, use this body to go towards Enlightenment?

- *Impermanence*

All conditioned phenomena, that is those that depend on causes and circumstances, are impermanent. This includes both animate and inanimate objects, sentient beings and their environment. A solid structure today can crumble into dust tomorrow. In particular, your own life is extremely fragile and can be lost very easily. No one can guarantee he will be alive tomorrow and when your time is up, no friends, doctors, medicine, money, wealth or fame can prevent your death. The only thing that can help is the practice of Dharma. If you have accumulated many virtuous deeds during your life, you can die in peace assured that as a result of your white karma, you will gain a fortunate rebirth.

Therefore do not be fooled into thinking that sensory pleasures can bring you lasting happiness. If you are attracted to beautiful sights, think how the moth is lured to his death by his enchantment with a flame. For sounds, consider how a duck is seduced by a hunter's duck-call. Bees are attracted to the smell of a Venus fly-trap and flies to that of feces, only to drown in a toilet. Fish are lured on to a hook by their desire for the taste of a worm. Elephants, obsessed with the physical sensation of scratching themselves, are led by their tame brethren between two thorny trees and thus are captured by trainers and taken into bondage. By thinking of these examples, turn your mind from concern for worldly pleasures.

Mediate every moment on impermanence or death, not just for its own sake, but as a motivation to study and practice Dharma, and to transform everything into Dharma. In this way, we can die with faith and confidence. Meditate so that this body, this heap of causes and conditions, will transform itself into a deity's body. When we walk, that movement is impermanent, so walk towards the Dharma. When we sit, that place is also impermanent, so transform it into a pure land, a Buddha-field. When we eat or drink, eat as if it were the food of samadhi. Rank and hierarchy are impermanent, so always stay low key. Words are impermanent, so recite mantras and prayers. Devotions and renunciations are impermanent, so always make a recommitment. These are some ways to recollect impermanence and to transform all phenomena into Dharma.

*Loving kindness*

First, look at the person you most dearly love, think how you wish to give that person happiness, and extend that wish to all sentient beings. Apply the practice of

patience. In this way, one pacifies the angry mind. People harm us only through ignorance. If we retaliate, that will not help. So think: if we strive for our own peace and happiness, shouldn't we make the same effort for others? When others have peace, happiness and success, we should rejoice and wish that these good things remain in their lives, in the short run as well as the long run. Hatred and attachment are the root of all suffering.

- *Interdependent arising*

To remedy ignorance, to achieve clarity, to purify a mind which is obscured by afflictive emotions and which cannot discriminate between the nature of samsara and nirvana, requires making an effort. In this regard, one of the main subjects to understand is interdependent origination. This consists of two types: outer interdependent origination and inner interdependent origination.

- a. Outer interdependent origination

All things arise from causes and conditions. From the seed comes the seedling and from the seedling, the sprout. From the sprout comes the stem, and from that the bud. From the bud comes the flower and from the flower comes the fruit which contains more seeds. Without a seed, there is no seedling; without a flower, no fruit. Whenever there is a seed, a seedling arises. When there is a flower, there comes the fruit. But the seed does not think, "I will create the seedling." A seedling does not think, "I will create the sprout." The flower does not think "I will create the fruit." The fruit does not think, "I was created by the flower." Yet given the necessary causes and conditions, each comes one after the other, and thus all are interdependent. Though the planets seem independent from one another, due to gravity, they exert a force on each other. Thus they are connected and not independent, as it may appear. Even making a simple cup of tea depends on many causes and conditions that may have originated halfway around the world. This is called outer interdependent origination. Similarly, all things which arise - trees, plants, grass - all depend on this kind of cause and effect.

This also depends on the conditions. Earth, water, fire, wind, space, and time - these conditions all have to be present or else the seed, the seedling, and the sprout will not grow. Earth cradles the seed, water moistens it, fire (as heat and light) matures it, wind gathers it, space gives it room to grow, and time gives it the dimension for change. Without the one, the others cannot exist; we need the support of all of these elements which cannot function individually. Therefore, anything that happens or appears depends on interdependent causes and conditions. Nothing appears by virtue of one condition or by one cause, or without a cause, or with an incomplete or wrong cause. All the necessary causes

and conditions are what brings about the result. In the same way that these outer phenomena are interdependent, all our mental activities - joy, happiness, suffering - depend upon causes and conditions.

b. Inner interdependent origination

Buddha said that when "that" is there, "this" appears. Because of the presence of one thing, the next thing will come. Ignorance brings about mental formations and that brings about endless illusion. When there is birth, there is aging and death. Thus the wheel of samsara turns without ceasing. These are the twelve interdependent links, which cause us to wander in samsara constantly.

1. Ignorance, the basis of all confusion.
2. Karma; mental formation.
3. Consciousness; all habitual tendencies are based on this.
4. Name and form.
5. Six senses and the increasing field.
6. Consciousness contacting objects.
7. Feelings of joy, suffering and neutrality.
8. Attachment.
9. Grasping and clinging.
10. Becoming.
11. Birth.
12. Aging and death, and with these suffering, lamentation grief, disturbed mind, etc. due to ignorance.

The following small commentaries further address the twelve interdependent links.

Ignorance causes mental formation which is ignorant of the past and future, ignorant inside, ignorant outside, ignorant of karma, ignorant of result, and ignorant of the nature of the Buddha, the Dharma teachings, and the Sanghas. Ignorance is darkness which blinds us to the nature of phenomena and give rise to discursive thoughts. And discursive thoughts reinforce mental formation. There are three different types of mental formation: formation of the body, speech and mind. This means that with body, speech and mind, we create karma. Because mental formation brings about consciousness, karma follows.

Of consciousness, there are six different types: consciousness of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. From the continuity of consciousness comes the form of the body and its name. When a child is conceived in his mother's womb, there arise five skandhas - the first is called form, and the remaining four are called feeling, formation, perception and consciousness. Form refers to the four elements - water, earth, wind, and fire - and all things created by the four elements. Form and formation together are called the name of formation. Through the interdependence

of name and form arises the increasing field. There are six increasing fields: the increasing field of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and consciousness. From the six increasing fields come contact, of which there are six different types: contact related to the objects perceived by the eye, objects perceived by the ear, nose, tongue, body and consciousness. The eye contacts form, the ear contacts sound, the nose contacts touch, and the consciousness contacts (apprehends) phenomena.

From the interdependence of touch arises feeling. There are three kinds of feeling: joy / pleasure, pain / suffering, and neutral states. From feeling comes the attachment of the desire world, the form world, and the formless world. From attachment comes the craving to bring what we want closer to us and make it more permanent; this results in grasping. Attachment and ignorance are the most difficult to purify. While anger is more harmful and destructive, it is easier to get rid of. There are different types of grasping: the grasping of desire, of view (of different philosophies or religions), of moral ethics, and of the self. From grasping arises existence or becoming: the existence of desire, of form, and of the formless. Existence itself means karma-cause. since we commit so many physical, verbal, and mental actions, in the space of just a few seconds, we create limitless karma which will result in rebirth.

Birth is our appearance in this world, and as soon as we appear, we begin to age. Each moment, we get older and older, and eventually our hair starts to fall out, our face wrinkles, our body becomes crooked and bent. With aging comes death, decay, and the transmigration to a different stage - the end of life, heat, and breath. (Aging and death count as one aspect of inner interdependent origination.) Our birth, aging and death, in fact all unpleasant experiences, are thus not independent events. Once we realize this, we can dispel ignorance and grasping. By dispelling the illusion that a given phenomenon is one solid thing, we will no longer create mental formations. Without formation, there is no continuity of consciousness or birth, and without birth, there is no aging and death. These are the interdependent origination of both samsara and nirvana. Samsaric interdependent origination arises from ignorance and yields birth and death. Nirvana is the reverse: when you dispel ignorance, you reverse the interdependence of samsara. You cease mental formation. You are free from samsara and have attained nirvana, the cessation of suffering.

- *Equalizing oneself and others*

Envy and jealousy disturb mind, making it scurry in all directions. Resentment - holding grudge or wishing bad luck on another - create a lot of negative karma. Meditate that as oneself wishes peace and happiness and shuns suffering, so do others. Therefore, everyone has the right to achieve their own temporal and absolute peace. In this way, one calms the mind of jealousy.

- *Exchanging one's situation with another's*

Because of self-cherishing, all beings in samsara experience limitless suffering; because of cherishing others, all the Buddhas of the three times achieve Buddhahood. So realize that cherishing self is the source of suffering and that cherishing others is the source of great qualities. Thus, one releases one's ego and pride, and practices walking in another's shoes. In this way, one eliminates ignorance.

*Self-grasping and wrong desire are like crops destroyed by a frost.  
If the Dharma, which is meant to tame the mind, becomes a cause of arrogance,  
the root of virtue is cut.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

When we get sick or fall on hard times, instead of struggling or fighting, we should practice the bodhisattva way, saying, "May I substitute my small suffering for that of all beings." Meditate that their suffering may be purified by our own experience. When we have happiness and peace, say "May all beings have my own favorable conditions." so we make effort to practice not hating suffering and not being attached to happiness. In this way, we may become free from both.

The following is one of the most well-known verses practiced by many great bodhisattvas, through which they received excellent results of cultivating bodhicitta. This is a special method to free ourselves from hope and fear, so that we can transmute suffering into the path of Enlightenment.

*Ho! If I am supposed to get sick, let me get sick, and I'll be happy.  
May this sickness purify my negative karma and the sickness of all sentient beings.  
If I am supposed to be healed, let all my sickness and confusion be healed, and I'll be happy.*

*May all sentient beings be healed and filled with happiness.  
If I am supposed to die, let me die, and I'll be happy.  
May all the delusion and the causes of suffering of sentient beings die.  
If I am supposed to live a long life, let me live a long live, and I'll be happy.  
May my life be meaningful in service to sentient beings.  
If my life is to be cut short, let it be cut short, and I'll be happy.  
May I and all others be free from attachment and aversion.*

- *Watching the breath*

When meditating, maintain the seven proper body postures of the Buddha Vairocana. These are: the legs in lotus position; the spine straight; the chest expanded; the hands on the lap in repose, palms upward; the head slightly inclined downward; the teeth and lips closed but relaxed; the eyes gazing downward the distance of two or three feet. When body and mind relaxed, breath in and out through the nostrils and count breaths. Count each inhalation-exhalation as one. Be aware and mindful for this is the pillar of meditation. Mindfulness means not forgetting meditation technique. Lord Jigten Sumgon had said: The highway of the Buddhas of the three times is mindfulness without disturbance. Without this, there can be no Enlightenment. One should count the breath from one to five, then one to fifteen, then one to twenty-one. If the counting is disturbed by any other thoughts, start anew. Having achieved stability through this meditation, follow the breath out from the nostrils to the navel level, and in from the nostrils to the navel. When this meditation is disturbed, bring the mind back to watching the breath. By these different methods, exercise bringing your mind into a calm, stable state.

- *The suffering of samsara*

Samsara means "to circle", in other words to revolve continually through the cycle of birth, sickness, old age, death, then rebirth, sickness and so forth. It is propelled and perpetuated by ignorance and its mechanism described by the twelve links of interdependent origination. There are four methods of being born, namely from a womb, an egg, heat and moisture and by miraculous transformation. These bring you into one of the six rebirth states as a hell creature, hungry ghost, human, anti-god or god. The first five are in the desire realm and the gods span all the three realms: the desire, form and formless. But no matter where and how you are reborn, there is only suffering. There are three types of suffering. The first is the obvious pain of sickness, old age and so forth. The suffering of change comes from seemingly pleasant things such as delicious food which can turn into an upset stomach. All-pervasive suffering appears neutral or unobvious to ordinary beings, like the sensation of a piece of hair on your palm but is as sharp as a hair in your eye to Aryas with bare perception of Voidness. It is the suffering inherent in the fact of being born with contaminated aggregates which by their very nature are like a magnet attracting sickness, old age and death.

Meditate on all these disadvantages of samsara, you should develop renunciation or the state of mind that wishes to be completely free of all suffering. In addition to renunciation, you must develop an enlightened motive of bodhicitta. Seeing that all beings experience the sufferings of samsara and wish as you do for release from its bondage and to attain ultimate happiness, you should strive to attain Buddhahood in order to liberate both yourself and others. This motive gives the realisation of Voidness the added force that will bring you Enlightenment.

- *Tong Len*

*Tong* is the Tibetan word for releasing all afflictive emotions, obscurations, and attachment to self-cherishing and positive thoughts. It also means giving your good qualities, like love and compassion. *Len* means receiving all virtuous qualities, including bodhicitta. There are several different methods for practicing Tong Len.

Sit comfortably and clearly visualize your own kind mother. Say to yourself, "My mother gave me this precious human life, thanks to which I now can study and practice Dharma. For limitless lifetimes up until now, all the sentient beings who have been my mother have loved me and protected me. How can I repay such kindness? She, along with all sentient beings, are wandering in the six realms of samsara and need protection. Like a mother bear who would steal or kill to protect her cubs, all those mother sentient beings created negative karma protecting me, and because of that they are suffering." Then meditate like this: breathe out and in, thinking, "I will take their sorrow into my heart for the sake of all kind mothers." Breathe out and in, thinking, "They are free from suffering and they rejoice." Now let all their suffering dissolve into emptiness and meditate for a few moments.

Another technique is to offer, without expectations, every aspect of body, speech, mind, wealth, and root of virtue. Meditate that beings receive them and rejoice. Meditate that your body transforms into an infinite wish-fulfilling jewel to offer to all mother sentient beings, thereby purifying their desire, ignorance, hatred, anger and pride. Say, "This, my body, wealth, and life, now becomes a medicine tree which heals all suffering." Mother Earth is the impartial base for all sentient beings no matter who they are. Everyone gets the same benefit: the earth does not discriminate, because without Mother Earth, nobody can survive. Similarly, we should treat all sentient beings impartially from a base of loving-kindness and compassion, and not discriminate against anyone. When we observe things, whether beautiful or ugly, the reason we feel attachment or aversion is because we are ordinary persons. But the bodhisattva meditates on all sentient beings as his own mother, saying, "May I feel great compassion for all beings; may my anger and hatred be substituted for theirs. May they be free from anger and hatred." This is another way of sending and receiving.

We should also practice releasing anger, hatred, desire, ignorance and receiving loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. As a result, our minds become increasingly clear and calm. The bodhisattva transforms all suffering and turmoil into Enlightenment. Meditate like this, "Here is the result of what I've created over many lifetimes. For those who don't know Dharma, misery obstructs their peace and happiness. But for followers of the precious Dharma, there's a special way to transcend suffering. For me, a practitioner, these sorrows are actually a blessing of the Triple Gem because now I have the means to transform suffering into

Enlightenment. The ego I have in my heart, the ego hurt by trouble and bad luck, the ego I protect by self-grasping - this is the real enemy. Whatever turmoil and sorrow exist in this world comes from self-grasping, so why I should cherish this demon?" Consider that, paradoxically, the self we grasp does not even exist. Like everything else, it is temporary, momentary, relative. It has no independent entity, no inherent existence. Meditate in this way: "In the past, I thought everything was permanent, but this was clearly a mistake. I will let go of all this. All enlightened ones, all sentient beings, please come to support me in releasing my selfishness."

We think of this body as the foundation of self and are therefore so attached that, to protect it, we deceive, we steal, we even kill. All the sufferings of samsara, particularly rebirth in the lower realms, are caused by self-grasping and ignorance. Over limitless lifetimes, all our efforts have brought suffering. self-cherishing has never gotten us out of samsara. Instead, it is like a big chain which binds us to it. To release self-grasping, to see sentient beings as oneself - this is the essence of Buddha's teachings. The more we can release, the more peace and happiness we'll receive, even though we aren't expecting it. If we see self-grasping as the enemy, then when trouble and bad luck come, this very misery will be our ally against samsara. We can then rejoice instead of suffer.

As for those who harm or obstruct you, just meditate that they have been your parents over many lifetimes, that they helped you so much out of love and compassion. See them as your parents over many lifetimes, that they helped you so much out of love and compassion. See them as your own heart. Think to yourself, "I have a responsibility to dispel their ignorance and confusion, not to make them suffer. So when they cause me pain, they are only creating negative karma, for which they'll suffer in the future. If I retaliate, I'll be harming myself and them." If you cannot let go of the ego, then you'll have neither peace nor happiness. Any kind of suffering - from being tortured in the hell realm to getting sick in the human realm - is an opportunity to practice patience. Say to yourself, "This is a way to purify my negative karma. May I take the suffering of others on myself." Then, from the bottom of your heart, dedicate your own peace and happiness to others.

There are three different types of samadhi: the samadhi of relaxing, the samadhi of establishing the qualities, and the samadhi of benefiting sentient beings.

- *The samadhi of relaxing*

When one achieves the virtuous one-pointed mind, one is free of depression, stress and neurosis, and both body and mind avoid negative actions, are fully tamed, and achieve the supreme peace free of all afflicting emotions. One is unattached to all worldly activities, the mind is not dependent on outer phenomena, and one fully enjoys the samadhi of relaxing.

- *The samadhi of establishing the qualities*

Achieving the samadhi of relaxing is just the beginning, one may still be stuck unless one realizes the selflessness and limitlessness of all existence. It is with this special insight that one can achieve samadhi bliss, infinite compassion and wisdom. The supreme qualities of the Shravakas, Pratyeka Buddhas and Buddhas, especially limitless compassion and wisdom, are achieved through the samadhi of establishing the qualities.

- *The samadhi of benefiting sentient beings*

With great qualities of bliss, infinite compassion and wisdom, one can benefit infinite sentient beings, and through understanding others' mind, one can give teachings without any difficulties. The samadhi of benefiting all sentient beings includes fulfilling the wishes of the sentient beings according to Dharma that they might be freed of suffering, showing the Path, protecting them from fear, and inspiring them to achieve Enlightenment by calm abiding (the stability of mind achieved by the proper samadhi) and special insight (the complete recognition of the state of the nature of mind on the basis of the stability of the mind)

We are all suffering unnecessarily. But if we can only recognize samsara for what it is, we can achieve tranquility based on virtue, and then, by developing the four stages of samadhi, we can progress into the four stages of the form world and the inner absorption state. Then as we progress, we find four formless stages; infinite space, consciousness, nothing whatsoever and neither consciousness nor non-consciousness. With the support of meditative concentration, we get the best chance to minimize our obscurations and eventually uproot all of them.

*Meditation equipoise is like a glorious palace.*

*One can abide there in peace and joy and can rest there from samsara.*

*Practice samadhi without wandering mind.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

**Wisdom.** Even if one practices the first five paramitas, one will not be free from samsara without the perfection of wisdom. One is like a blind man who cannot reach his destination without being led. Wisdom leads the five other paramitas on the path to Enlightenment. Some remark that for this reason wisdom alone may be enough. But in fact, all the paramitas are necessary. Without wisdom, one cannot be freed from samsara, but without method (the other paramitas), one will fall into Shravaka nirvana, and will not achieve complete Buddhahood. These are like the two wings of a bird. To the extent that one has progressed in the first five

paramitas, one's wisdom increases; to the extent that one has progressed in wisdom, one improves the practice of the first five paramitas. Wisdom sees all phenomena without error.

There are three types of wisdom: hearing wisdom, understanding wisdom, and the wisdom of practice of meditation. These are also called the wisdom of understanding the relative phenomena (common knowledge), the wisdom of ultimate meaning (primary beyond samsara) and the wisdom of understanding the realization of non-duality (beyond samsara and nirvana).

The signs of common knowledge are healing, logic (reasoning), sound (language), art and construction. The signs of the realization of the primary beyond samsara are the wisdom of the Shravaka and Pratyeka Buddhas' meditation, or the realization of the nature of the skandhas (uncleanliness, suffering, impermanence and selflessness). The great wisdom of realization beyond samsara and nirvana is the wisdom of hearing, understanding and meditation practice of the Great Vehicle. It is also the realization of the all-pervading emptiness, free from the boundaries of all conceptual thoughts. (A brief explanation will be given in the Mahamudra section).

*Discriminating awareness is like a clear-seeing eye.*

*It can distinguish all dharmas without mistake.*

*It is the lamp on the path to liberation.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### **Vajrayana practices**

On the basis of the six paramitas, there exists the Vajrayana vehicle, a great skillful means for accomplishing these practices and seeing the Buddha nature directly, with little effort and in a short period. This is also called the path of the transformation. Through the empowerment of the yidam deities, we identify and become one with the yidam itself so that the ordinary vision of the mind is purified. The yidam is the individual's special deity or guide, inseparable from himself, and taking him to Enlightenment. So when we visualize certain Enlightenment deities, we are not simply imagining them or indulging in wishful thinking; rather we are realizing what already exists within. This is the method for fully awakening the mind and achieving complete Buddhahood.

Concerning visualization, some people say that it is impossible to bring the picture into the mind. This is because we are far from "reality" and are not used to this kind of practices. However, if we practice, it is not impossible. A monk who had to work for hours to establish the visualization, through perseverance made his mind stable and clear, so that after several years, he could perform the meditation easily.

Therefore, it is only a matter of time and effort. Because the mind is not easily tamed, many great masters who achieve higher states spend their lifetimes in solitary retreat. Those who seriously desire to be freed of suffering must direct all their energy and capacity toward these practices, especially the *Six Yogas of Naropa* which are the distilled essence of the tantra teachings.

Further, visualizations go beyond cultures, varying in their clarity only according to the purity of the individual's mind. When we do this type of meditation, it is important to have calm and purity in the mind. Calm refers to mental stability, and purity to wisdom visualized not as material substance, but as transparent, inseparable from emptiness, and free from afflicting emotions. When one practices the Vajrayana meditation, it is important to receive the empowerment, lineage transmissions and explanation of the meditation.

*The supreme vajra vehicle is like the lord of elephants.  
In an instant, without difficulty, it brings complete Enlightenment.  
It is the essence of the teachings.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Guru Yoga**

The Buddha achieved complete Enlightenment, which has the nature of infinite wisdom and compassion. To benefit all sentient beings and establish them in Enlightenment, he manifests in many different forms depending on their levels of understanding and their state of mind. There are four basic bodies of the Buddha. These are: Nirmanakaya (emanation body); Sambhogakaya (enjoyment body); Dharmakaya (truth body); and Svabhavikakaya (the natural body, or union of all three bodies). One's root guru should be seen as the embodiment of the four kayas. In vajrayana practice, this is of paramount importance. It is said in the teachings that if you see your root guru as an ordinary person, you will not achieve any qualities, but if you see him as a bodhisattva, you may accomplish something. And if you see the guru as Vajradhara, you will achieve that state. The four kayas of Guru Yoga are a method for viewing one's teacher and becoming inseparable from him. Although the Buddha's teaching exists, one cannot understand teachings and the various ways of practicing without the guidance of a qualified teacher. Therefore, a teacher is a being who causes you to see how to achieve Enlightenment.

*The root lama is like a wish-fulfilling jewel.  
He is the source of all good qualities.  
Therefore, attend him with flawless respect.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

## **Mahamudra, the Great Seal**

All samsara and nirvana are not beyond mahamudra. Mahamudra is a method of realizing the true nature of all things. Since our mind is deluded by confusion and ignorance, we see only the superficial aspect of things. We are confused and suffer through both expectation and fear. All these outer phenomena are part of the mind.

Through the study and practice of Mahamudra, we realize that all phenomena are illusion and that what we see is a projection of our own mind. Thus, it is possible to achieve the absolute state of peace.

The basic cause of confusion and all other errors in samsara is ignorance. Ignorance gives rise to the two selves: the self of the person, and the self of phenomena. The self of the person is expressed as the thought "I" and "mine". We are attached to that self and therefore resent the existence of other beings. This, in turn, creates afflicting emotions which cause negative karma. And all negative karma is responsible for samsaric suffering. From whence does this self come? Does it exist in one's body, mind or name? The body is composed of four elements - the solid form coming from the earth element, the bodily fluids from the water element, the body heat from the fire element, and the breath from the wind element. These elements are the same as those found in outer phenomena, and just as the latter have no self, neither have the former. So does the self exist in the mind? No one has seen the mind, for it has no color, shape, or size. Therefore, the self does not exist in the mind. Does the self exist in a name? One's name is merely temporary and does not exist materially. Therefore, the self does not exist in a name. Regarding the self of phenomena, some say that phenomena exist inherently. but if we reduce phenomena to the smallest particles, we find that they do not exist independently. Since phenomena have no existence, therefore, how can the self exist? by analyzing the self in this way, we can eliminate ignorance and confusion, and develop pure wisdom and compassion towards all sentient beings.

To practice the Mahamudra, it is important to have done the preliminary and purification meditation practices, and to have a mind that is calm and clear. Then, one must attain a qualified spiritual master. When one achieves inner wisdom, one is free of both attachment and fear. Those who progress in the practice of wisdom have the awareness of virtue, thus eliminating afflicting emotions and developing strength of mind. Indeed, the mind becomes as stable as a mountain, as deep as an ocean, and as vast as space. One is thereafter detached from samsaric life, is inclined wholly toward meditation practice, and enjoys true peace and happiness!

## **Dedication of Merit**

Whatever benefits we derive from study and practice should be shared so that all sentient beings attain Enlightenment. Just as a drop of water, if thrown in the ocean, will merge with the whole and not dry out unless the ocean does, so will our achievements, if dedicated to all beings, merge with all and not be lost until one attains Enlightenment. Therefore any practice we do should include bodhicitta, yidam practice, guru yoga, Mahamudra and the dedication of merit.

*Mahayana dedication is like a well-guarded treasure.*

*It bears fruit each day until Enlightenment is won.*

*It accomplishes the benefit of oneself and others.*

*This is my heart's advice.*

*(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

### **The Five Paths**

When cultivating bodhicitta and progressing through study and practice, one crosses the following five paths: the path of accumulation; the path of preparation; the path of special insight; the path of meditation and the path of complete perfection.

- *The path of accumulation*

One who cultivate bodhicitta and receives teachings from a spiritual mater in order to achieve wisdom gains the accumulations of merit and wisdom and is on the path of accumulation. While on this path, the practitioner focuses on the four mindfulness, the four abandonment, and the four feet of miraculous. The four mindfulness are those of body, feelings, mind and phenomena. The four abandonment are those of avoiding non-virtue, not allowing non-virtue which have already arisen, and progressing in those virtues which have already arisen. The four feet of the miraculous are the samadhi of aspiration, the samadhi of perseverance, the samadhi of the mind and the samadhi of analysis. With these practices the taste of the experience increases.

- *The path of preparation*

When one has progressed in the practice of the path of accumulation, a heap of wisdom results and one arrives on the path of preparation for seeing wisdom directly. While on this path, the practitioner focuses on the five powers and the five extraordinary powers. The five powers are confidence, perseverance, mindfulness, samadhi and wisdom. They are called powers because they can defeat the afflicting emotions. The five extraordinary powers are the same, but developed to a higher degree.

- *The path of special insight*

When one has actualized the realization of the four noble truths, one arrives on the path of special insight and sees the nature of selflessness directly. While on this path, the practitioner focuses on the seven branches of Enlightenment: perfect mindfulness, perfect discrimination, perfect perseverance, perfect joy, perfect training, perfect samadhi, perfect equanimity. In this state, the being experiences great joy because he is drawing close to Buddhahood, can benefit more beings, and has purified basic ignorance.

- *The two meditation path*

The path of meditation practice includes the samsaric meditation path and the beyond-samsara meditation path. Without special insight wisdom, one who concentrates one-pointedly is on the ordinary meditation path. Through the samsaric meditation path, the afflicting emotions are calmed (though not uprooted), thus enabling one to develop such mental qualities as the four limitless thoughts. The path also establishes the basis for achieving the beyond-samsara meditation path. On the beyond-samsara meditation path, one attains the calm-abiding and special insight wisdom, and practices perfecting the truth which been seen on the path of special insight. One also practices the eightfold noble path which includes: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right samadhi. In the meditation path, bodhisattvas perfect the ten levels (bhumis) through the study and practice of the six paramitas. Those who have attained these levels have the quality of having realized and understood the vast and profound teachings.

- *The path of perfection*

When one has perfected the practice of the beyond-samsara meditation path, one attains Buddhahood and one's meditation is free of obstacles, samsaric actions and obscurations. The mind, having become completely stable, cannot be moved by conceptual thoughts. One experiences the one taste of all the Buddha's wisdom which pervades the suchness of phenomena. In this state, one ceases the complete cause of suffering, and for this reason no longer experience its effects. Because there is no more to learn and practice, one enters into the state of beyond-samsara and beyond-virvana called the Path of Complete Perfection. At this times, the enlightened being experiences the ten dharmas of no-more-learning. These are: no-more-learning of right view, no-more-learning of right thought, no-more-learning of right speech, no-more-learning of right action, no-more-learning of right livelihood, no-more-learning of right effort, no-more-learning of right mindfulness, no-more-learning of right samadhi, no-more-learning of complete wisdom and no-more-learning of perfect wisdom. At this time, one achieves the limitless qualities of the

Buddha - the four kayas, the four fearlessness, the ten powers, the eighteen unsurpassed qualities and so on. When one attains Buddhahood, there are no conceptual thoughts or efforts. Without conceptual thoughts or efforts, Buddha's body, speech and mind manifest benefit for sentient beings spontaneously and unceasingly.

*The ten bhumis and five paths are like climbing a staircase.  
Because of complete causes and conditions, one can gradually progress.  
One should maintain the activity of a bodhisattva.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

When we study and practice the Dharma, we cannot expect that we will immediately be rid of all suffering, rather, we must learn to confront problems directly and in a positive way, and work to reduce the cause of suffering. To the extent that we depend on phenomena outside the mind, we develop attachment and fear. Thus, to attain fearlessness and joy, we must stabilize the mind through the practice of wisdom and compassion.

*Not taking the teachings to the heart through practice is like the sound of an echo.  
It is empty and without meaning.  
Therefore, apply your mind to the dharma.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

*Bringing everything to the path is like the medicine of the Youthful Healer.  
Even harmful beings do not exist apart from one's mind.  
Release, without grasping, whatever arises.  
This is my heart's advice.  
(from the Jewel Treasury of Advice)*

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### **Dedication**

May the power of virtue of the roots of goodness reach all places, just as reality extends everywhere without exception, reaching all things, all worlds, all living beings, all lands, all phenomena, all space, all time, all that is compounded and un-compounded, all speech and sound; May these roots of goodness in the same way reach the abodes of all enlightened ones, and be as offerings to all those Buddhas, fully adorned, and the present Buddhas, their lands, sites of Enlightenment, and congregations, filling all realms throughout the entirety of space.

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Fundamental teachings

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