

The Six Paramitas

A Commentary on verses 25-30 of *The 37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*



Khenpo Samdup Rinpoche



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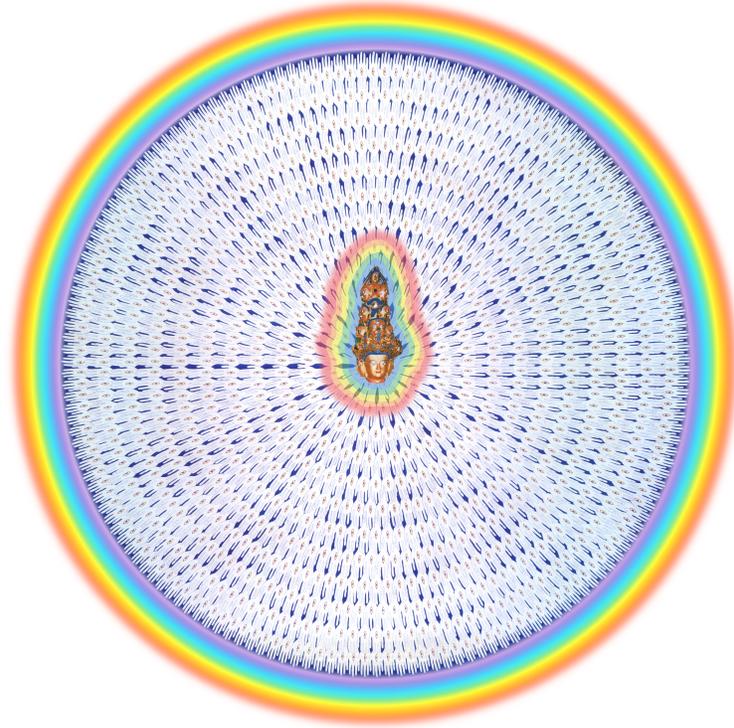
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OM MANI PADME HUM

The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas by Ngülchu Togmay Zangpo

Homage to Lokeshwara!

I pay constant homage through my three doors, to my supreme teacher and protector Chenrezig, who while seeing all phenomena lack coming and going, makes single-minded effort for the good of living beings.

Perfect Buddhas, source of all well-being and happiness, arise from accomplishing the excellent teachings, and this depends on knowing the practices. So I will explain the practice of Bodhisattvas.

1 Having gained this rare ship of freedom and fortune, hear, think, and meditate unwaveringly night and day in order to free yourself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

2 Attached to your loved ones you're stirred up like water. Hating your enemies you burn like fire. In the darkness of confusion you forget what to adopt and discard. Give up your homeland—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

3 By avoiding bad objects, disturbing emotions gradually decrease. Without distraction, virtuous activities naturally increase. With clarity of mind, conviction in the teaching arises. Cultivate seclusion—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

4 Loved ones who have long kept company will part. Wealth created with difficulty will be left behind. Consciousness, the guest, will leave the guest-house of the body. Let go of this life—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

5 When you keep their company your three poisons increase, your activities of hearing, thinking and meditating decline, and they make you lose your love and compassion. Give up bad friends—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

6 When you rely on them your faults come to an end and your good qualities grow like the waxing moon. Cherish spiritual teachers even more than your own body—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

7 Bound himself in the jail of cyclic existence, what worldly god can give you protection? Therefore, when you seek refuge, take refuge in The Three Jewels which will not betray you—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

8 The Subduer said all unbearable suffering of bad rebirths is the fruit of wrongdoing. Therefore, even at the cost of your life, never do wrong—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

9 Like the dew on a tip of a blade of grass, pleasures of the three worlds last only a while and then vanish. Aspire to the never-changing supreme state of liberation—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

10 When your mothers who've loved you since time without beginning are suffering, what use is your own happiness? Therefore, to free limitless living beings, develop the altruistic intention—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

11 All suffering comes from the wish for your own happiness. Perfect Buddhas are born from the thought to help others. Therefore, exchange your own happiness for the suffering of others—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

12 Even if someone out of strong desire steals all your wealth or has it stolen, dedicate to him or her your body, possessions and your virtue, past, present and future—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

13 Even if someone tries to cut off your head when you haven't done the slightest thing wrong, out of compassion take all his or her misdeeds upon yourself—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

14 Even if someone broadcasts all kinds of unpleasant remarks about you throughout the three thousand worlds, in return, with a loving mind, speak of his or her good qualities—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

15 Though someone may deride and speak bad words about you in a public gathering, looking on him or her as a spiritual teacher, bow to him or her with respect—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

16 Even if a person for whom you've cared for like your own child regards you as an enemy, cherish him or her specially, like a mother does her child who is stricken with sickness—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

17 If an equal or inferior person disparages you out of pride, place him or her as you would your spiritual teacher, with respect on the crown of your head—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

18 Though you lack what you need and are constantly disparaged, afflicted by dangerous sickness and spirits, without discouragement take on the misdeeds and the pain of all living beings—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

19 Though you become famous and many bow to you, and you gain riches equal to Vaishravana's, see that worldly fortune is without essence and be unconceited—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

20 While the enemy, your own anger, is not subdued, though you conquer external foes, they will only increase. Therefore, with the militia of love and compassion, subdue your own mind—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

21 Sensual pleasures are like saltwater: the more you indulge, the more thirst increases. Abandon at once those things which breed clinging attachment—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

22 Whatever appears is your own mind. Your mind from the start was free from fabricated extremes. Understanding this, do not take to mind [inherent] signs of subject and object—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

23 When you encounter attractive objects, though they seem beautiful like a rainbow in summer, don't regard them as real and give up attachment—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

24 All forms of suffering are like a child's death in a dream. Holding illusory appearances to be true makes you weary. Therefore, when you meet with disagreeable circumstances, see them as illusory—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

25 When those who want enlightenment must give even their body, there's no need to mention external things. Therefore, without hope for return or any fruition, give generously—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

26 Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being, so wanting to accomplish others' is laughable. Therefore, without worldly aspirations, safeguard your ethical discipline—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

27 To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue, all harm is like a precious treasure. Therefore, towards all cultivate patience without hostility—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

28 Seeing even Hearers and Solitary Realizers, who accomplish only their own good strive to put out a fire on their head, for the sake of all beings make enthusiastic effort, the source of all good qualities—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

29 Understanding that disturbing emotions are destroyed by special insight with calm abiding, cultivate concentration which surpasses the four formless absorptions—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

30 Since the five perfections without wisdom cannot bring perfect enlightenment, along with skillful means, cultivate the wisdom which does not conceive the three spheres [as real]—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

31 If you don't examine your own errors, you may look like a practitioner but not act as one. Therefore, always examining your own errors, rid yourself of them—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

32 If through the influence of disturbing emotions you point out the faults of another Bodhisattva, you yourself are diminished, so don't mention the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

33 Reward and respect cause us to quarrel and make hearing, thinking and meditation decline. For this reason, give up attachment to the households of friends, relations and benefactors—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

34 Harsh words disturb the minds of others and cause deterioration to a Bodhisattva's conduct. Therefore, give up harsh words which are unpleasant to others—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

35 Habitual disturbing emotions are hard to stop through counteractions. Armed with antidotes, the guards of mindfulness and mental alertness destroy disturbing emotions like attachment at once, as soon as they arise—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

36 In brief, whatever you are doing, ask yourself, “What’s the state of my mind?” With constant mindfulness and mental alertness accomplish others’ good—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

37 To remove the suffering of limitless beings, understanding the purity of the three spheres, dedicate the virtue from making such effort to enlightenment—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

For all who want to train on the Bodhisattva path, I have written *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*, following what has been said by the Excellent Ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras, and treatises.

Though not poetically pleasing to scholars owing to my poor intelligence and lack of learning, I’ve relied on the sutras and the words of the Excellent, so I think these Bodhisattva practices are without error.

However, as the great deeds of Bodhisattvas are hard to fathom for one of my poor intelligence, I beg the Excellent to forgive faults, such as contradictions and non sequiturs.

Through the virtue from this, may all living beings gain the ultimate and conventional altruistic intention and thereby become like the Protector Chenrezig, who dwells in neither extreme—not in the world nor in peace.

This was written for his own and others’ benefit by the monk Togmay, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngülchu Rinchen.

A Brief Biography of Bodhisattva Ngülchu Thogme Zangpo

The Bodhisattva Ngülchu Thogme Zangpo was the seventy-third successor of the Lamrim lineage. He was born in 1295 in a village near Sakya Monastery.

As soon as he was able to speak, it became apparent how compassionate he was. One day, as he sat on his mother's lap, he saw a leaf blown away by the wind, and he began to cry. His mother asked him why he cried. He pointed at the leaf and said: "An animal has been carried away into the sky."

At another time, when he was able to walk, he went outside but returned quickly, naked, to the great surprise of his mother. She asked him, "Where are your clothes?" He replied, "Someone was very cold out there." His mother went outside to see who it was and saw that his clothing was covering a frost-covered bush, and stones were placed on its corners to keep it from being blown away by the wind.

His mother passed away when he was three years old and, two years later, his father also passed away. His relatives raised him until the age of nine when he left the pasture lands and went to Samling Monastery, where a monk taught him how to read and write.

At the age of fourteen, he received the novice monk vows and began intensive learning the following year. Due to his outstanding performance, he gained the name Thogme Zangpo, which means "Virtuous Without Hindrance." Later, he earned the added name of Gyalse, meaning "Son of the Buddha" or bodhisattva.

After having received full ordination at the age of thirty, he served as the abbot of Bodong E Monastery for nine years. After that, he went into retreat for more than twenty years.

He had composed over one hundred works, most notable among which are: A Commentary on The Seven-Point Mind Training, The Thirty-Seven Practices of

Bodhisattvas, and a commentary on The Way of the Bodhisattva called The Ocean of Essential Explanations.

Like all holy beings, when other people suffered, he suffered more than they did; when other people were happy, he was happier than they were.

He passed into nirvana in 1369, at the age of seventy-five.

Herein resides,

A Concise Explanation of the Six Paramitas from verses 25-30 of *The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*

From “How to Develop the Heart of Ultimate Compassion, *The Thirty Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*” teachings and Chenrezig practice given on June 20, 26, and 27, 2021.

Part One: Virtue in the Beginning—The Introductory Section

Your wisdom is buddha. The practice increasing wisdom is called Dharma, and the person who practices that is called Sangha. That means that as long as we have the six paramitas, also called the six perfections, we are buddha. This is not an outer way of understanding Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Buddha’s teaching is subsumed within the six paramitas. As long as we practice the six paramitas, we are practicing Dharma; we are taking refuge in the Dharma.

Part Two: Virtue in the Middle—The Main Body of the Teaching

2.1 The Paramita of Generosity

Verse 25 When those who want enlightenment must give even their body, there’s no need to mention external things. Therefore, without hope for return or any fruition, give generously—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

The first of the six paramitas is generosity. There are many different levels of practicing generosity depending on the individual’s disposition and capacity. Those who want to attain enlightenment must give even their body. This means that high level realizers are no longer attached to their own body. For beginners, of course the body is most important. Without the body you cannot survive. Without life, you

cannot practice the Dharma. This verse is not saying that you have to give your own body for others. We need the body in order to stay alive and practice Dharma. Highly realized bodhisattvas are not attached to their body when they attain enlightenment. First level bhumi bodhisattvas and those who have further progressed have realized absolute truth emptiness. Until we reach that level, we have attachment and have not realized emptiness. If something effects the body, we experience pain and suffer, so you do not need to give up your body until you are a first level bhumi bodhisattva. When you are a realized first level bhumi bodhisattva, then it is easy to give up your body. Until then, we have to practice generosity at the level of external objects first.

“Therefore, without hope for return or any fruition, give generously—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.”

This means that bodhisattvas do not care about their own benefit. They try to benefit others one hundred percent. Bodhisattvas give up their own life for others without any problem. However, in regard to this section, Buddha said that beginners should never give up their own body. Otherwise, it creates the causes of suffering. This entire section is followed by individual level and capacity. When you attain the level of being able to give up your own body, then at that time you are already a bodhisattva, a very high realizer. Now, we are only entering into the bodhisattva’s path. Don’t give up your body, but whatever things you can give up, give to others as your practice of generosity. Most importantly, generosity means to be no longer attached to the object. To give up things is not important. The true meaning of *giving up* means that **mind** is no longer attached. When mind is free from attachment, that becomes the perfection of generosity. If you give up many things, but you still have fixation and attachment, that means you have not perfected generosity. When you have perfected generosity, it means that your mind

has already given up everything, and that you have no desire or attachment to the object.

There are different kinds of generosity: the generosity of material objects, the generosity of protecting the lives of others, and the generosity of giving the Dharma. Buddha said that first, ordinary people should practice giving external material things to others who are in need. Generosity is the first step of practice. It is not necessary to become a monastic in order to practice generosity. Ordinary people, everyone, can practice generosity. When Buddha Shakyamuni entered into the bodhisattva's path, his first practice was generosity. The result of generosity is that you will be reborn as a human being with enough food, clothes, and material objects. If life is very difficult, the focus of life becomes survival, and there is no time to practice Dharma. Without these necessary resources, we cannot practice the Dharma, and also our life is miserable and full of suffering. These good circumstances that support our Dharma practice come from generosity. That is the reason Buddha's first practice was generosity. Then, one can be born into higher realms and can provide greater benefit to more beings. Therefore, the first paramita is generosity. Compared to other paramitas, generosity is the easiest, and its result is the condition to practice Dharma. Without generosity, there is no condition with the Dharma in a future life. It's through the practice of generosity that we create an accumulation of merit, and that is where the conditions come from to practice Dharma.

The second type of generosity is to protect and save the lives of other beings. If someone is going to kill an animal or person, to help them and save their life is also a practice of generosity. The third type of generosity is to give Dharma teachings. Bodhisattvas practice these three levels of generosity without hope for return or result, and that becomes very powerful. If you have hope and are attached

to the result, then even if you do something that is significantly generous, the result is less. If you are not attached to the result and give something smaller, the result of that generosity becomes very powerful. Ordinary people always have hope for a result when doing something. Even if we go to the monastery and do something, we dedicate that with hopes for our parents. That's also good to dedicate in that way while thinking of our relatives and parents. We dedicate in that way followed by our perceptions. That is a good first step that helps us to gain effort, but the highest level of generosity has no hope for return or any fruition. This means that we have to understand emptiness; this is called wisdom. This is the perfect practice of bodhisattvas.

Generosity is practiced in combination with the other paramitas: generosity, generosity with morality, generosity with patience, generosity with joyful effort, generosity with meditation, and generosity with wisdom. Each practice combined with the others yields thirty-six types of paramitas, which is a more detailed way of looking at the six paramitas. When we give humbly and respectfully, that is generosity with morality. Generosity with patience is to give something while maintaining patience, and also to give no matter what difficulty arises. Generosity with joyful effort means we are happy to practice generosity, and we have joy and effort. Generosity with meditation is to practice generosity correctly and to mindfully recognize what we are doing. And generosity with wisdom is to be without hope for return or any fruition. All six perfections are subsumed within this one practice of generosity.

Generosity has different levels because the practitioner is using different methods. This is the same for other spiritual practices in which we have outer, inner, and secret level offerings. For example, when we practice a sadhana, part of that practice includes generosity. The Seven Branch Prayer is also a special method

to create the perfection of generosity. Usually, we give material things for someone in need. Dharma practitioners give outer level offerings, inner level offerings, and secret level offerings depending on one's individual ability. Beginning practitioners always use outer level offerings. These offerings are for people who have dualistic thoughts (dualistic perceptions), and pure, beautiful objects are offered according to our perceptions. The seven bowl offerings, which are objects that we desire, are also outer level offerings. These are used when we practice the yidam deity. As long as we are stuck in samsara, we have desire, so we use these objects of desire as offerings to create an accumulation of merit. Those who don't know how to offer in this way, these desire objects are the causes of samsara. Those who know the yidam deity Vajrayana practice use all of these desire objects as outer level offerings. This is for the beginning level because we see beautiful, pure, attractive objects and we offer them to the buddhas. As long as we have impure perceptions, we cannot offer things that are not beautiful, valuable, or enjoyable. We follow in this way for outer level offerings; however, this is not always the case, depending on the capacity level of the practitioner.

Inner level offerings are used by higher level practitioners and may seem to contradict outer level offerings. Outer level offerings are followed by our perceptions of what is good, beautiful, and pure, whereas practitioners use inner level offerings to transform negative things into something positive. That's the reason there are two kapalas and also tormas offerings, representative of inner level offerings in Vajrayana rituals. One kapala is red and one is white. Red represents blood and rakta, which is the essence of females. The white offering represents the essence of males. In that way, practitioners use their body's essence as an offering, using method and wisdom together. Negative emotions are also used as offerings. Our whole body is an offering: bone represents anger; blood represents attachment;

and flesh represents ignorance. Our body represents the three poisons transformed into offerings. All of these things are inner level offerings. Those who don't have the capacity to use inner level offerings must always use outer level offerings. Using inner level offerings, a person becomes more of a practitioner, understanding that impure things can be used and transformed. The highest level, secret level, offerings consist of Mahamudra meditation. We are not thinking of transforming the three poisons, just directly recognizing that the nature of mind is Buddha. This all depends on and is followed by one's individual level.

In many Buddhist countries, people have strong perceptions and judgments about what is considered to be good and bad things to offer. Teachers often share these teachings on outer level offerings for students, and that is why their mentality is so strong. Some people don't accept inner and secret level offerings, and they are stuck with only outer level offerings. As long as you understand outer, inner, and secret level offerings, you are not stuck with just one. You can accept all three. It's hard for those who don't know the yidam deity practice and who do not use a sadhana. If someone doesn't have an education and doesn't study, or have a guide, then it is very hard to accept inner level offerings because they are considered negative for beginners. However, for those who know the inner level offerings, then you really know the essence, the meaning of these offerings. Inner level offerings are much more powerful than outer level offerings. One's whole energy is used, and it becomes an offering.

You don't need to find some beautiful outer level object for an offering. We already have all of these offerings, so we use that energy and make offerings. The meaning of inner level offerings is like recycling garbage or like using solar power to recharge again. You don't need to find an outer level object. Also, the person who is making inner level offerings has to really understand the main point, how to

make these offerings, and how to use them. Sometimes, when we share the teachings it seems kind of easy, but when you are practicing what you have learned, it's hard. That's the reason we can use the torma, which represents our body. We can use rakta, which represents our blood, and we can use amrita (medicine), which represents white drops, red drops, and the body. These objects symbolize all that we are offering. When we are practicing prayers, we have to recognize that we are offering our body and the essence of the body. Also, we are reducing or transforming our ignorance, attachment, desire, and anger. These three offerings symbolize that all is being transformed. We must know that and do it correctly. Then, it's a very powerful offering practice.

Secret level offerings are used by Mahamudra meditators who recognize their own nature. When you realize your own nature, there are no thoughts. You are into the natural state, and you experience bliss and joy. That is the offering, which is called method and wisdom. Emptiness is wisdom. The clarity aspect of mind nature is part of method. When method and wisdom are inseparable, that is called union. The person who realizes the nature of mind experiences bliss. That bliss is a high level, secret level offering. That's all part of the paramita of generosity, so practitioners really don't need to try to get material things in order to practice generosity. Your energy and your meditation are your offerings of generosity, which are followed by different levels.

The result of outer level offerings is that we are reborn in higher realms with material things, rich and powerful, and we can use that to benefit many beings. A practitioner who makes offerings of generosity at the secret level becomes a practitioner realizer. The result of secret level offerings is the Sambhogakaya form body—Buddha. Inner level offerings are the causes of Dharmakaya. Without inner

and secret level offerings of generosity, it is not possible to become buddha. Each of the six perfections follows in this way.

2.2 The Paramita of Morality

Verse 26 Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being, so wanting to accomplish others' is laughable. Therefore, without worldly aspirations, safeguard your ethical discipline—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

Morality also has these different levels. Beginners follow outer level morality, which is to abandon the ten non-virtues and to practice the ten virtues.

Ten Non-Virtuous Actions

Ten Virtuous Actions

(As found in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* by Gampopa)

Three from the body:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Taking life | Protecting the lives of others |
| 2. Stealing | Practicing great generosity |
| 3. Sexual misconduct | Maintaining moral ethics |

Four from speech:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4. Lying | Speaking truth |
| 5. Divisive speech | Harmonizing those who are unfriendly |
| 6. Harsh words | Speaking peacefully and politely |
| 7. Idle talk | Speaking meaningfully |

Three from the mind:

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 8. Covetousness | Reducing attachment/Developing contentment |
| 9. Harmful thought | Practicing loving kindness and so forth |
| 10. Wrong views | Engaging in the perfect meaning |

Outer level morality is also followed by three different levels:

- 1) The ethical discipline of restraining from negative action means that all non-virtue is abandoned and virtuous actions are accomplished. This is part of the basic teachings, and the main point is to not harm other beings.
- 2) The ethical discipline of gathering virtuous Dharma means that all virtuous actions are infused with the bodhicitta intention. If you stop committing the ten non-virtues, then you follow the ten virtuous deeds. Virtuous deeds means not only to refrain from harming other beings. They are also part of your generosity too. When we practice generosity, we are practicing morality as well because generosity means doing something to benefit others.
- 3) The ethical discipline of accomplishing the benefit of beings means that all virtuous acts are done solely for the sake of sentient beings.

More details can be found in, *Essence of the Mahayana Teachings, A Commentary on Jigten Sumgön's Lam Rim Text*.

All the beginner level, practitioners follow outer level conduct, and generally we share outer level conduct (morality) with the public. Outer level conduct is followed by avoiding bad actions through body, speech, and mind, and by engaging in good actions through body, speech, and mind. This is determined by the perceptions of beginners, or ordinary people. That's the reason we take vows, which means we promise that we are not going to do these negative things. That has many different levels too. Morality according to outer level practice is dependent upon the individual's capacity. There are many different levels. Buddha shared the teachings according to individual level or capacity. Lay practitioners have five precepts. If you can follow five precepts, you are at the monastic level of a partial nun or partial monk. For instance, you can take a single vow promising

not to kill any other beings. That precept has power. There is a difference between taking vows and not taking vows. Due to your precepts, your virtuous deeds are increasing twenty-four hours a day even if you are not doing anything. Taking vows is like making an investment—your money is increasing in value. It is multiplying. If you have not taken vows, then you gain merit when you do virtuous deeds; however, you are not creating an accumulation of merit when you are not engaged in virtuous deeds. If you do nothing with your money, if you just leave it at your home, that is the same as not taking the vows.

Buddha shared many stories in his cause and effect teachings about how virtue increases when one takes vows. One story is about a hunter who took the precept of not killing any beings during the nighttime. When he passed away, his perception was that he always enjoyed nighttime. Four or five dakinis served him, and everything was perfect. When daytime came, the dakinis transformed into animals. They became tigers and lions and ate him. Buddha taught his students that the hunter's precept brought him happiness and enjoyment during the night, and his perceptions changed during the daytime due to his actions of hunting and killing animals during the day.

If you say you are not going to kill anyone, that precept is very powerful too. Not killing anyone also has different levels. When a person receives the monks' or nuns' vows, if you specifically say, *I will not kill human beings*, then it is easier to not lose your vows. Of course, you cannot harm other beings, but if you kill an animal, then it is not virtuous, but that vow is not broken or lost. Four conditions must occur for a vow to be broken or lost:

- 1) The person has a bad intention and wants to commit the non-virtuous action.

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- 2) Recognition of the action and the being that will be harmed.
 - 3) The person commits the action.
 - 4) The person is successful and rejoices in the non-virtuous action.

If for example, someone who has taken vows kills a being by mistake, then that can be a non-virtuous action, but those vows are not lost. This is also dependent. If you take the vow for one day, it is easier to lose that vow. If you take the vow until death, it's not easily lost. When taking the one day vow, no matter what you kill, for as long as you kill a sentient being you lose that vow. It is a very sensitive vow. If you take the vow for the duration of your whole life, then that vow is more stable and not that easy to lose.

Buddha has compassion and wisdom and gives everyone an opportunity followed by their individual capacity and level. When looking to Buddha's story and history, he never denied anyone. If someone had an open mind, he gave something to benefit each person based on their level and capacity. That is the reason lay practitioners can also take vows. The vows are as follows:

- 1) No killing
- 2) No stealing
- 3) No sexual misconduct—this is the same as what is against the law: no abuse, forcing, torture, etc.
- 4) The fourth precept is no lying. A white lie is okay if you have a good intention. This means that you cannot lie in order to benefit yourself or in order to take advantage of someone. The first four vows are called directly non-virtuous deeds because no matter who does these actions, it is non-virtuous, according to Vinayana teachings.

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- 5) The fifth vow is to abstain from alcohol. This depends on the individual. Alcohol could be medicine for one person, and it could be poison for another. If someone drinks alcohol and they lose their mind and self-control, then the other four vows are easily lost. That is why Buddha never said in the Vinayana teachings that alcohol is a non-virtuous deed, but it can affect the other four vows easily. If you drink alcohol, it is not a direct non-virtuous deed, but you can lose your mental faculties and then your mindfulness is lost, which affects the other four vows. If you have that problem, then you have to take the fifth precept.

These five precepts are called complete lay practitioner's precepts. This is called morality. The partial monks and nuns have the same vows. The only difference is that the vow of no sexual misconduct is changed to abstaining from all sexual activity. These precepts are all outer level morality. Fully ordained monks and nuns have 250 different vows. The main focus is the first four, which are the same. Individuals have an opportunity to take one, two, three, four, five, or the same vows as monks and nuns. You have a choice. Due to Buddha's compassion and wisdom, he gave everyone an opportunity to have a different practice. These are all followed by a country's laws and our individual precepts of what is good or bad because these are outer level vows.

At the Mahayana level, we have inner level precepts. Everything is mind, so we don't follow these outer level precepts one hundred percent. As long as you can benefit someone, and you are not thinking about your own benefit or taking advantage of anyone, you can do these five precepts, without objections. If you don't do that, then you don't have the qualities of inner level precepts. That is also determined by one's individual level. The outer level precepts and the inner level precepts appear to be contradictory. Outer level precepts say you cannot do these

things; however, when you come up to inner level precepts, it is dependent. You can do something as long as you benefit someone and you are not acting in order to benefit yourself. Everything is through compassion. The power of a compassionate intention changes all the objects and the situation. That's the reason that many people get confused. They see a person doing something and think, *He can't do that*. Then, they want to know why the person is doing that. That's the reason we do not judge other people because we don't know their intention or their abilities. We have to follow by our own level and capacity. We have to look to our own intention and what we can and cannot do. According to the outer level, we cannot accept some things that a person may be doing. However, we don't know if the person's actions are correct or incorrect because we don't know the person's capacity and levels. That's why Buddha said, **Beginners do not act the same as practitioner yogis. Yogis cannot act the same as siddhas. Siddhas cannot act the same as Buddha.** All is dependent upon one's individual level. Inner level precepts follow compassion bodhicitta. As long as you have compassion bodhicitta, it changes everything, including outer level precepts.

When you go up to secret level conduct, you must be free from outer level precepts. If you are still attached to outer level precepts, you become dualistic. The highest level conduct (secret level) is free from dualistic concepts. I have already shared with you the Ganges Mahamudra. In the Ganges Mahamudra, Tilopa was giving instructions to Naropa. Everything he shared was secret level conduct helping to free Naropa from dualistic concepts. Tilopa was not helping Naropa with outer or inner level conduct. Naropa had dualistic perceptions. He was especially attached to outer level conduct due to his monastic education as a monk. He stayed in the monastery and had very strong ethical discipline according to the monastic view. As long as he was strongly attached to that, he couldn't realize

absolute truth. That's why Tilopa tried to help free Naropa from his strong mental attachment to his monastic precepts (conduct).

Morality is also followed by our individual level: outer (beginners), inner, and secret. For yogis, alcohol is nectar for them. Alcohol never affects their mind. When they drink alcohol, it could be that more realization songs come. For example, when Marpa Lotsawa drank, he never lost his mind, and it could be that he had more realization songs. When he first received Milarepa, he offered him beer. That means they were high level yogis, and alcohol was nectar for them. For beginners, alcohol is poison. The object is dependent on the individual. We cannot say alcohol is always negative and cannot say alcohol is always positive because it depends on the individual's level. Like that, we follow these outer, inner, and secret levels of morality. We have to know the different levels, and if someone is at a different level than we are, we don't say that person is wrong or mistaken. You can accept their action, or maybe you recognize that person is wrong, or maybe you see that person is correct. Most importantly, you understand if you know these three different levels, and we have to know and recognize our own individual level and then follow that.

Verse twenty-six says, **“Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being.”** It is not possible to benefit others then either. Outer level ethics (morality) helps us to be reborn to higher realms. When you are reborn to higher realms, everything is perfect. You are reborn to the right place, meaning there is no violence; you receive Dharma; the five senses of the body are intact; and you are reborn to a precious human body. These are all the benefits of outer level morality (precepts). Outer level morality does not lead to Buddhahood, but we are born to higher realms and conditions come together for Dharma.

Inner level morality helps us to become free from samsara, and its result is Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya. The result of secret level morality is Dharmakaya. We need all three of these levels of conduct (morality). If we are not reborn to this precious human body, then it is not possible to practice inner and secret level ethics. That is the reason outer level ethics are very important for beginners because we need the conditions for Dharma. If we don't have Dharma conditions, it is not possible to become Buddha. All of our Dharma conditions are because we did something great following outer level conduct in a previous life, and now we have this precious human body and are connected with the Dharma. We have to rejoice in ourselves because we did something great in a previous life. Now, we want to be free from samsara, and we have to also focus on inner level and secret level conduct in order to liberate from samsara and become buddha.

Of course, we have to follow the three different precepts including the outer precepts. If in the future we are reborn to the lower realms again, it is not possible to connect with the Dharma. That's the reason we have to practice outer level conduct. When practicing inner and secret level conduct, the result is not only to be reborn to the higher realms in a future life. The goal is enlightenment. Those are the reasons we have to follow all of the different levels of precepts in our practice.

“Without ethics you can't accomplish your own well-being, so wanting to accomplish others' is laughable.”

If we don't practice inner level love and compassion, it is not possible to benefit others. If we cannot benefit ourselves, then it is laughable to say that we want to help others to become liberated. If we want to help others to become liberated, where does liberation come from? It comes from practicing love and compassion,

so first we have to practice our own love and compassion, and then we can benefit others. Therefore, we have to practice inner level conduct.

**“Therefore, without worldly aspirations, safeguard your ethical discipline
—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.”**

“Without worldly aspirations,” means to not think about wanting to be reborn to the higher realms in a future life. It is incorrect to think, *I want to follow morality in order to be reborn to higher realms.* To follow outer level only, you cannot be free from samsara. Our ethics (morality) must have an inner level quality too.

There is a story about this. Prince Siddhartha had given up his home and followed a spiritual life. His father had expectations that Buddha’s younger brother, Chungawü, would become the successor to the throne. However, Chungawü did not have a stable mind. His mind shifted and was easily changed. He saw something and then wanted it, but then when he saw something else, he would give up the thing he desired first. He was not engaged in things long enough to accomplishing anything. Prince Siddhartha practiced and meditated, and after seven years he became Buddha. When he returned to his father’s kingdom in Sakya, his younger brother, Chungawü, saw Buddha and wanted to follow him. Buddha told him, yes, that it was okay to follow him. However, due to their father’s expectation of Chungawü being the next ruler of his kingdom, he told Buddha that Chungawü could not follow him and had to stay and become the king. Buddha told the king: *No, he cannot be successful spiritually or worldly because his mind is not stable. Let him follow the monastic life, experience hardship and difficulty, and if he goes back and wants to become king, he’ll be stronger. Let him become a monastic.* Their father thought that was correct and accepted that

Chungawü would follow the Buddha. Chungawü followed Buddha, but he had a girlfriend, and when he was a monastic with Buddha and his monks, he was only thinking about his girlfriend and was not able to meditate and follow Buddha with a stable mind. When he saw the Buddha, he wanted to follow him. When he was by himself, or when he went back to his kingdom at times, he thought of his girlfriend and wanted to give up following the Buddha. Buddha knew his agenda and what was going on in his mind. One day, Buddha took him to one small lake and asked him: *How is your practice going. Is your mind stable or not?* Chungawü told Buddha about his issues. Then, Buddha told him to touch his robes while closing his eyes and meditating. Through miraculous power, Buddha first showed him a tsenmo, which is like a female demon. Buddha asked, *Which is better, your girlfriend or this demon?* Chungawü replied, *No, no, my girlfriend is a thousand times better than that one.* And he wanted to go back to his girlfriend.

After that, Buddha took Chungawü to heaven. Heaven has many dakinis, beautiful goddesses. He showed him the goddesses and asked, *Which is better, the goddesses or your girlfriend?* He was no longer attached to his girlfriend and said, *The goddesses are much better, thousands of times better than my girlfriend. I never knew my girlfriend could be so ugly, so terrible. I don't want to be with that. Why do these goddesses have such beauty?* Buddha told him, *If you follow good conduct, you are reborn to the higher realms and have these good conditions, and your body becomes beautiful and radiant. All these beautiful perceptions come from good conduct.* After that, Chungawü's practice was focused on being reborn in the god realm due to his attachment to the goddesses. **“Therefore without worldly aspiration—”** we see that he was following the precepts in order to be reborn to the higher realms and have a goddess as a girlfriend.

Next, Buddha showed him the hell realms with so many suffering beings. Each being was cooking, burning in the hell realms. One stove had a hot fire, but no one was burning in it. Chungawü asked the hell realm gatekeepers, *Who is going to burn here?* Their answer was: *Chungawü, you are in the world focusing and aspiring to be reborn to heaven. When you finish your karma, you will fall into the hell realms.* That helped him release his attachment to heaven and the goddesses. He then understood that samsara really is suffering, and he wanted to be free from samsara. He no longer had worldly aspirations. Slowly, Chungawü developed the highest level discipline. Due to this, he could also hold the lineage for Buddha.

As Chungawü did, some people follow the precepts due to their fear of being reborn to the lower realms and wanting to be reborn to the higher realms. All of the good conditions of the higher realms come from the practice of morality. Some people are attached to that, and that is the reason they follow the precepts of morality. That is also incorrect. Samsara means when you go to the higher realms, you fall to the lower realms again. Chungawü's story teaches us that we cannot be attached to being reborn to the higher realms because it doesn't matter where we are reborn, it is suffering. That's the reason that when we meditate on the four thoughts that turn the mind to Dharma—1) a precious human body, 2) cause and effect, 3) impermanence, and 4) the defects of samsara—we want to be free from samsara. We are no longer attached to samsara. When we practice and follow the precepts, our goal is not to be reborn to higher realms, and we are not only thinking of connecting our future life with good conditions. **“Without worldly aspirations, safeguard your moral discipline—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.”** Bodhisattvas have no expectation to the result. They meditate, practice, and follow the precepts (vows) without any attachment or expectations for their future life.

2.3 The Paramita of Patience

Verse 27 To Bodhisattvas who want a wealth of virtue, all harm is like a precious treasure. Therefore, towards all cultivate patience without hostility—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

For bodhisattva practitioners, all enemies become treasure for them. That is a very powerful statement. For ordinary people, an enemy is someone who harms and creates suffering. We have to think about ourselves and ask if we are bodhisattvas or ordinary people. As long as we have the perception that enemies are harming us, we are ordinary. When enemies are benefitting us, then we have become bodhisattvas. Practicing patience is also followed by outer, inner, and secret levels, which include the three yantras. Through the practice of outer level patience, we know the meaning of karma cause and effect. If someone is harming us and we fight back with our body, speech, and mind—if we choose to harm others, that cause will create the result of hell realm suffering. Due to that, we are scared of lower realm suffering and avoid our enemies. If someone is going to harm or create difficulties for us, we do not return harm to that person. We try to avoid that because we know and are thinking about cause and effect. Then, we can practice patience. If we don't know cause and effect, it's actually not possible to practice patience. The practice of patience is very difficult for beginners. Without knowing cause and effect, you have no tolerance if someone harms you, and in return you retaliate. If someone creates difficulty for ordinary people, they don't like that person and they recognize that person as an enemy. They always avoid benefitting that person and do not like to see that person receiving any kind of benefit. Ordinary people want that person to receive some kind of miserable suffering. Their mentality is naturally like that. Even if we say, *No, I don't think like that*—due to our self-grasping, that easily happens in our mind.

In order to stop and avoid that situation, we have to cultivate cause and effect. First, we recognize karma cause and effect. For example, if someone is harming you, recognize that is your karma. Then, to cultivate cause and effect think: *I did something in a previous life to harm this person, so now this suffering is coming back to me. That is the reason this person is harming me.* Then, you can accept that others are harming you. If you really know cause and effect, you know that we have already created causes, and we have to accept those results. As long as you can accept that person's actions, then you no longer have hate for that person, and you don't suffer. That's also your practice of tolerance, your practice of patience. When we practice outer level patience, we always have to think about karma cause and effect. That is the most powerful way to practice outer level patience. If we are not thinking of cause and effect, then it is not possible for us to control ourselves because we are also very selfish with strong self-grasping, and we easily have hatred for others.

There are many different kinds of situations to practice outer level patience depending on the individual. There are many different kinds of objects, and we need mindful awareness. When you recognize that you are going to be stuck in a difficult situation and you try to avoid that object, that also is your practice of patience and tolerance. If you don't do that, then you are stuck with difficulty or stuck with someone harming you. Then, it is very hard for you to practice patience. That's the reason we use mindful awareness to recognize and avoid that situation before we get in it.

Beginners, or ordinary people, think of an enemy as someone who kills their relatives or friends, or someone who physically harms them. We also have to generate patience for those who create the causes of our anger. Sometimes we think, *Oh, I don't have enemies.* However, for as long as we have anger, we always

have an enemy because our anger is our enemy. If you never have anger in any situation, then you do not have an enemy. If anger arises in some situations or conditions, then you have an enemy. We don't have an enemy who is physically attacking us or coming to get us, but ordinary people always have a condition of anger. Our true enemy is our own anger. Bodhisattvas have no conditions of anger and have no enemies. Ordinary people's minds can be upset, jealous, angry, and unhappy. They see that someone else creates the condition for their emotion, and then that person becomes the object of their unhappiness, anger, jealousy, etc. As long as we have that object, we say that we have an enemy due to our own anger or afflictive emotion, which is our true enemy. First, we have to try and stop that condition. If we cannot stop the cause of the outer level condition, we have to cultivate karma cause and effect. That really helps you to not lose your patience. If you cultivate karma cause and effect, you can reduce, subdue, and control your own anger. We have to think about our previous life and not only think about this life's causes and conditions. In a previous life, we did something to harm others and the result is coming. Then, it is possible to happily accept that result if you can. That helps us to become a practitioner of outer level patience.

The inner level practice of patience is the bodhisattvas' practice. Bodhisattvas use love and compassion while recognizing those who harm them as a treasure. They use that negativity in order to generate more love and compassion, which is the cause and the condition. Therefore, we have to meditate on love and compassion often and often. The guidelines for practicing the love and compassion meditations are found in *Stages of Meditation, Awakening the Mind* (see Appendices A and B for outlines of these meditations). These meditations help your love grow for others. Use these guidelines to meditate and cultivate these love and compassion meditations so that one day when you have an enemy, that person

becomes a treasure. They are a treasure because that enemy becomes the causes of our love and compassion again. They create our love and compassion, not our anger. If the person is a treasure or not depends on how you use that situation. If someone creates difficulty for you and anger arises in you, then that object is not a treasure. That object is really bad, and it is the cause of the hell realms. If you generate love and compassion, that enemy is a treasure, which means your enemy creates the causes of you becoming Buddha.

We need support in order to discover that we are Buddha. We cannot do it on our own, and our enemy is our support. If an enemy is a treasure or not also depends on the individual. When you read the beginning level Dharma teachings, it never says that your enemy is a treasure. You can pray for them in your aspiration prayers, but for beginning practitioners, an enemy is not a treasure. This all depends on our individual level.

At the inner level practice of patience (the practice of bodhisattvas), the enemy is a treasure, and that is the reason that in inner level practice, sentient beings and buddhas are equal. For outer level practice, buddhas are at a higher level and ordinary beings are lower because ordinary beings have emotions and they create the causes of suffering. The buddhas benefit us by helping us liberate from samsara, and we can ask for protection by praying to Buddha at the outer level. Think about who is important when you practice these six perfections—Buddha or sentient beings? Especially when we practice generosity, we need sentient beings. Without sentient beings, you never accomplish generosity, so sentient beings are a treasure for our practice. When you practice morality (ethical discipline), sentient beings become a treasure for us. This means we need these other conditions in order to practice morality. If you are attached to a desire object and you choose not to be attached to it anymore, you use that object to practice morality. You need an

object, which are sentient beings, in order to practice morality. Without sentient beings, we never accomplish our practice of morality. That is why Buddha and sentient beings are equal in these practices of generosity and morality. We stop harming sentient beings when we practice morality. Sentient beings are the objects of our patience and morality, not Buddha. These sentient beings help us accomplish our practice of morality.

When we practice patience, buddhas and sentient beings are equal. When you practice patience, you need enemies as an object. Without enemies, how can you generate love and compassion? It is not possible to accomplish our practice of patience without sentient beings. That is the reason that inner level practitioners, bodhisattvas, see sentient beings as a treasure and equal to Buddha because they help us to become Buddha. Without both of these conditions, we cannot attain enlightenment. Buddha shares these Dharma teachings, and we can practice Buddha's teachings and use all these sentient beings as objects of our practice.

The secret level practice of patience means that you meditate and realize your mind is Buddha, and you see all sentient beings as Buddha because we all have the same nature mind, the same essence, the same capacity. At a higher level, all becomes Buddha. All Mahamudra teachings are secret level practice. We have to follow these three different levels depending on our capacity level. In the *Essence of the Mahayana Teachings* (p. 102) it says:

Patience means to abandon angry reactions to provocation or harm inflicted upon us by others, and to be able to tolerate, to bear, their antagonistic actions. When someone harms us, we can reflect, *I must have done something like this to someone in the past,*

and now being the victim myself, I recognize that I am reaping the karmic fruit of my own previous negative actions.

That is the instruction for beginning meditators because we have to think about cause and effect, and then we gain tolerance. For example, if you borrow money from someone and they ask you to pay it back, you cannot be angry. You have to pay it back. It is the same with paying back our karmic debt. If someone harms you, then think, *I did something in my previous life, and this is my karma. I have to pay back my karmic debt.*

Simply put, patience means the ability to bear all personal suffering and [tolerate the discomfort of] training to work only for the benefit of sentient beings.

In order to practice Dharma, you need to practice patience. Without patience, it is not possible to accomplish our practice. We must not only practice patience with our enemies, or when we think that someone is going to harm us. Without patience, we never accomplish any of our goals; it is not possible to become Buddha. For example, when practicing Dharma, we have to tolerate discomfort. When you are listening to the teachings, you experience discomfort in different ways. If you are waiting to go to the restroom, you need patience. People who do not have patience get up right away and go to the restroom, and when they come back they have missed sections of the teachings and do not know what the teacher is talking about. Those who practice patience don't get up and leave right away. When you have habituated patience, you can always tolerate discomfort when practicing Dharma. When you feel a little hot or cold and you get up right away to adjust the air conditioning or heater, or you are getting up to do things during the teachings, that

means you have no patience. We always have that problem, especially in the Western countries.

When we were growing up in the monastery, that was not a big problem because we followed by the rules and knew that we could not do that. When there was cold weather, we put on more clothes. When it was hot, we wore fewer layers of clothing. The area I came from in Tibet was cold, and there were no heaters in the temples, especially when I was in Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's monastery. There was no roof, and the ground was cement. We had to sit on the cement floor while listening to teachings for two hours without any mats or cushions. Sometimes, we sat on our shoes. It was extremely cold, so much so that it was even hard to turn the pages. We stayed like that, and everyone was okay. Everyone was tolerant of that discomfort and was used to it. No one said, *I'm not going to the teaching because I'll be too cold.*

When I was in India, it was very hot. There was no air conditioning in the temple. We did the prayers and practice, and no one was thinking of air conditioning there. In Tibet at that time, no one was thinking about heaters. When we follow in this way, we get used to the conditions, and it's not that much difficulty or a problem. If I am in discomfort sometimes, it is okay. I let it go and am not bothered by that. But here, it is common for people to sit down for practice and then get up to do many things, such as to adjust the heating or cooling, fix a cup of tea, or get a cushion because they are not comfortable. The result is that you are always preparing, and then the time is gone. There is no more time to practice. We know that is a problem here in the Western countries. We are preparing, and then we don't have much time for doing the things we have been preparing for. For example, think about going on vacation. You spend months preparing, and it takes you a long time to get to your destination. Once you are there, you stay a very short

time. Even once you are there, you are still preparing—cooking, buying, and doing things. How much of your vacation are you really enjoying? Not much. That is wasting energy and time.

We see our Sangha who has been listening to teachings for years and years, and they have more patience. Staying for two hours is very easy for them, but it can be very hard for new people. They are not used to that, and they also lose focus. And sometimes, people want to listen to the teachings, but they are temporarily interrupted due to external circumstances. Most of you who have been listening to teachings have built up patience slowly. Now you have patience, and that's why you are still here listening to the teachings after two hours without losing your focus. That means you have patience. Without patience, we cannot accomplish anything. Without patience, you cannot receive the complete teachings on the *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*. Without patience, I am one hundred percent certain that you cannot receive teachings on even one section from this teaching. Without patience you might think, *I don't understand what he is saying*. And then your mind gets distracted with other thoughts and you decide, *Oh, I cannot understand this*—and then you don't try. The people who follow in that way don't try to change. They think they need to be given everything while they just relax. They think, *I need to get and understand everything, but I'm not going to put any effort into this*. We can see that problem in ourselves. I'm sharing the teaching, and also I cannot give everything to you one hundred percent correctly. You also have to put forth effort, really focus and pay attention with enthusiasm. Then, I share the teaching as much as I can, and this all comes together. We have the practice of patience and joyful effort. We both have to be engaged in the teachings; otherwise, it's not possible. Everything cannot come from only one person. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are all interdependent.

All of these objects of patience are a treasure for bodhisattvas because it generates more practice of the six paramitas. When bodhisattvas hear someone's voice asking them to give something, they are extremely joyful and happy.

When they hear a beggar crying “Give!” or even when they think of such a thing—in other words, when the merest thought occurs to them that they might have the chance to practice generosity—Bodhisattvas experience a joy greater than that of Arhats entering the expanse of peace beyond suffering. Is there any need to speak of their happiness when they actually do give away everything—their possessions and even their physical organs—to satisfy the wants of those in need?

This excerpt is found in Chandrakirti's, *Madhyamakavatara, Introduction to the Middle Way* (Padmakara Translation). In these teachings, Chandrakirti shared that bodhisattvas' objects of generosity, morality, and patience are a treasure for them because even giving their own body for others is their goal. In our case as beginners, an enemy is an enemy, not a treasure. At this time, we have to cultivate cause and effect. That helps increase our practice of patience. Of course, it helps when we practice and meditate on these teachings, and you are engaged often and often. When you sit down to meditate, don't think about what you need. Try to put more effort into the main practice and let go of other conditions. If you don't have everything with you, it is okay as long as your mind accepts that.



2.4 The Paramita of Joyful Effort (Diligence)

Verse 28 **Seeing even Hearers and Solitary Realizers, who accomplish only their own good strive to put out a fire on their head, for the sake of all beings make enthusiastic effort, the source of all good qualities—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.**

Verses twenty-seven and twenty-eight are similar. The practice of patience and the practice of joyful effort are very similar, but have different aspects. In order to practice joyful effort, you must have tolerance and must practice patience. The word *Hearers* originated from Buddha's followers (monks and nuns) who heard the teachings from Buddha and put effort for practice. The reason they put effort for practice was due to their fears in samsara. They wanted to liberate from samsara. Hearers went to beg for food, and when they got a chance to share the teachings, they shared with others. They benefitted others, but their goal was self-liberation. Solitary Realizers are a little different. They put more effort than Hearers. They receive the teaching and practice on their own. Instead of joining a group, they stay by themselves and they attain realization more quickly than Hearers. Solitary Realizers have had teachings from a previous lifetime. When they receive a teaching in this life, they recognize that they do not need lots of teachings. That's the reason they stay by themselves and put effort to practice. Both Solitary Realizers and Hearers can attain realization and liberate from samsara. Both of them have the goal of self-liberation, which means not thinking about benefitting others in the same way as Buddha. Their effort is used to liberate themselves, not others. Their level of compassion depends on the individual. They have compassion, but their compassion is not the same as Buddha's. Buddha talked about his many past lives, and in his last life, he was born as Siddhartha. He was looking for true nature, wanting to benefit others. He was not looking to only

benefit himself. That is the reason he is called Buddha. Those who have bodhicitta become enlightened buddhas. Buddha sees every being the same as his own mother. Buddha has equanimity compassion for every being. Solitary Realizers and Hearers have compassion and they help others, but they do not have unlimited compassion.

“...strive to put out a fire on their head...”

Hearers and Solitary Realizers put so much effort for practice. It’s good that they put effort for self-liberation. Those who practice the *37 Bodhisattva Practices* are considered to be bodhisattvas. Ngülchu Thogme, who composed this text, is saying that we have to put more effort than Solitary Realizers and Hearers. They are thinking about their own benefit and still put so much effort. We are considered to be bodhisattvas, thinking of not only our self-liberation. Our goal is that we want to benefit all other sentient beings. That means we have to put more effort to practice the Dharma than Solitary Realizers and Hearers.

Think about worldly people. They work to benefit their own families in this life. They put so much effort that there isn’t even time to eat together, drink tea together, and relax peacefully. There is no time due to the great effort they put into worldly life. Comparing worldly people to Hearers and Solitary Realizers, they all put effort. Hearers and Solitary Realizers put effort, and they are going to liberate from samsara. Worldly people put effort and create the causes of samsara; they create the causes of suffering. The great effort that Hearers and Solitary Realizers put forth is of much benefit compared to worldly people. They benefit others based on their own individual levels and capacities, but not in the same way as Buddha. Now, think how we are not at the level of a bodhisattva, or Hearers, or Solitary Realizers. We are still in the level of worldly, ordinary beings. We see where we

put our effort. Sometimes people hold a low opinion of Solitary Realizers and Hearers thinking that they do not have good qualities while believing that buddhas and bodhisattvas are great. That is incorrect. Compared to our own situation, we don't have the level of Hearers and Solitary Realizers. We don't have that kind of effort; we don't have that kind of Dharma practice. Also, we don't have their level of benefitting others. We are always focused on worldly activities, and the result is suffering. There is no essence in what we are doing. We can see that clearly, but we don't want to accept it. That is everyone's situation. If you like something, and then someone tells you that it is not good and that you don't need that, we don't like to hear those words because we want and are attached to that object. We don't want to give up anything when it comes to our worldly activities. We want all of these desirable objects.

The Hearers and Solitary Realizers are not attached to worldly, desirable objects. They are far beyond ordinary people. Self-liberation means they are already free from samsara. Sometimes we think they are not that great because they are not thinking about other's benefit, but compared to us, they are far beyond ordinary people. Compared to Buddha, their qualities are not as great. The Hearers and Solitary Realizers have no emotions. This is the reason they don't take birth in samsara. The reason they don't have emotions is because they have realized selflessness of person, meaning they see *Self* and *I* do not exist. It is not just an intellectual understanding. Look to yourself. As long as we have *I* and *Self*, the emotions easily arise because the causes are there. We have to follow the Hearers and Solitary Realizers and meditate on selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena. Buddha has realized selflessness of phenomena. Hearers and Solitary Realizers have not completely realized selflessness of phenomena, meaning they haven't completely realized emptiness. However, they know what they have to do.

They know where samsara comes from. They know that samsara is suffering. They know how to liberate themselves from samsara. That's why they put effort in selflessness of person meditation and realize selflessness of person, and they liberate from samsara.

During Buddha's time, Buddha shared these teachings of selflessness of person meditation. These teachings are based on impermanence, which reduces desire and attachment. Buddha's followers practiced this meditation and almost 99% became realizers during Buddha's time. Most became Hearers and Solitary Realizers. They put all of their effort and energy into meditation, as if they wouldn't even take the time to put out a fire on their head, or as if they wouldn't take the time to put out the flames if their meditation hut was on fire. This means that they put all of their energy into realizing selflessness of person meditation and do not put any effort toward samsaric life. That is the reason they attain realization. If we put effort in this life, we also have an opportunity to realize selflessness of person. If we realize selflessness of person, we are free from samsara. That is logically proven. You can follow what is logically proven, meditate, and the goal will appear.

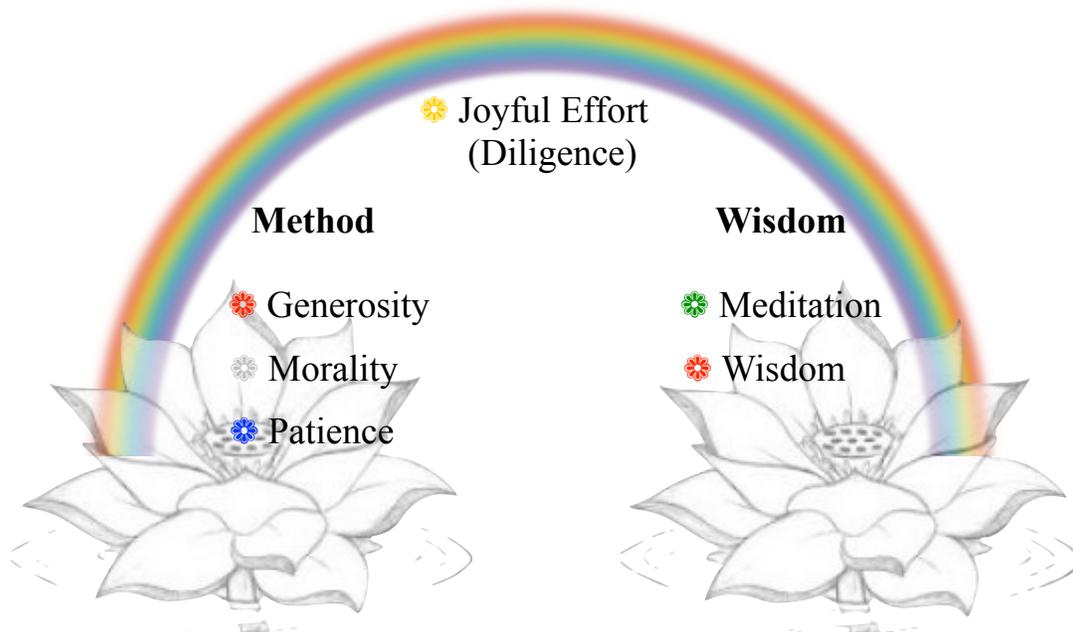
“For the sake of all beings,” refers to bodhisattvas. Gyalse Thogme Zangpo, who composed this book, says we are bodhisattvas too because we follow the *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas* teaching. **“For the sake of all beings,”** means those who practice these *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas* are not thinking of their own benefit. We are thinking of benefitting all beings. Therefore, we have to put more enthusiastic effort than Hearers and Solitary Realizers because our goal is bigger than theirs. Their goal is like someone taking care of their own family. Our goal is like taking care of the country, the whole world. That is the reason we have to put more effort than Hearers and Solitary Realizers. Worldly people put so much effort for their own worldly benefit. Those who really know the Dharma, know that is the

cause of samsara, the cause of suffering. Solitary Realizers put effort in order to become free from samsara. Comparing the two, the result is completely different, opposite. Bodhisattvas go beyond that, not thinking of our own benefit of liberating ourselves from samsara. Bodhisattvas want to benefit all beings, and that is the reason their goal is much bigger. Those who follow the *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas* have to put more effort than Solitary Realizers. If we put more effort than Solitary Realizers, we become bodhisattvas. You have to look to your own actions to see if you are a bodhisattva or not. You can decide if you are a Solitary Realizer, a worldly person, or a bodhisattva. If you put effort into self-liberation, you are Hearers and Solitary Realizers. If you put effort to only benefit others, you are bodhisattvas. If we only put effort for worldly activities, we are ordinary worldly people. You can clearly see those different levels.

This verse is teaching us about joyful effort. Joyful effort is followed by each of these paramitas. Think about joyful effort followed by generosity. Without joyful effort, you cannot be successful in your generosity practice. Without joyful effort, generosity cannot be Dharma. Joyful effort takes all activities onto the path. Everything becomes Dharma. Joyful effort means you must have enthusiastic effort. You must be joyful and happy while putting effort for spiritual activities. It does not mean to put enthusiastic effort for worldly activities. If you have enthusiastic effort for worldly activities, we cannot call that joyful effort. We cannot call that Dharma. When practicing generosity, you must want to and be happy to do that. You must not think that someone is pushing you to do that. You should have a happy and joyful mind, wanting to benefit others, and wanting to offer something. Then your action becomes Dharma. Otherwise, if you are not happy, if you don't have enthusiastic effort when you are giving something, then it may not be Dharma. That is the reason that taking generosity on the path means we

need enthusiasm; we need joyful effort. Morality must also be combined with joyful effort. Then, you follow cause and effect joyfully and happily. Practicing patience and joyful effort together means that in order to put effort into your practice, you must have patience. And in order to practice patience, you must have joyful effort. That's the reason joyful effort is followed by each of the six paramitas, which can be subsumed into 2 categories.

The Six Paramitas subsumed into the 2 categories of Method and Wisdom:



Generosity, morality, and patience are method. Meditation and wisdom comprise the wisdom category, and joyful effort is both method and wisdom. As long as you have joyful effort, you can practice method. As long as you have joyful effort in your meditation practice, you have wisdom. Joyful effort is a very important section because it follows all of the six paramitas and is both method and wisdom. Earlier in the teachings, I shared that you practice the six paramitas at the outer, inner, and secret levels depending on how you apply your effort. If you put

effort for outer level practice, then your joyful effort practice becomes an outer level practice. This is the same for inner and secret levels as well.

Diligence (Joyful Effort) can be classified into three categories, as found in the *Essence of the Mahayana Teachings* on p. 104.

- 1) Level One — Diligence of action refers to abandoning idleness, apathy, and laziness through wanting to bring all sentient beings to the state of Buddhahood. Idleness is the reason we are stuck with mundane, worldly activities, wasting lots of time and not having much time to practice Dharma. Laziness is delaying our Dharma practice thinking, *I'll do it next time*. We have idleness, apathy, and laziness and must abandon them. That's the reason we need the action of wanting to bring all sentient beings to the state of Buddhahood.
- 2) Level Two — Armor-like diligence means not to procrastinate engaging in Dharma activities, but to practice the moment inspiration hits. When thoughts of practicing Dharma arise in your mind, then put effort right away in that moment. Use that moment to put effort to practice.
- 3) Level Three — Insatiable diligence refers to the ongoing commitment to the Dharma that prevents feeling tired or weary no matter how much hardship we endure during meditation or for Dharma activities. It means doing away with being satisfied with a limited amount of practice or Dharma activity. It means that when it comes to the Dharma and bodhisattva conduct, we never think, *Okay, I've done enough now*.

This is similar to practicing patience and joyful effort, but this level of diligence means never being satisfied with a limited amount of Dharma activity. It means to

never stop putting effort for our practice of benefitting others through our bodhisattva conduct. This applies to outer, inner, and secret level diligence. Without joyful diligence, there are no accomplishments. It is the same with worldly activities as well, such as school and work. Usually, we do not put forth enough effort because we are usually not patient enough. If we put forth effort, then we attain the goal. If we don't put forth effort, then it is not possible to know the 37 *Practices of a Bodhisattva*. Until the 8th bhumi level, we have to put forth effort. We need to receive this teaching many times until we become a realizer. This section on joyful effort is very important.

We must have these three different types of diligence in all of our Dharma practice: outer, inner, and secret levels. We must never stop putting forth effort to practice no matter the hardships we endure. That result is to reach the goal of accomplishment. Accomplishing Dharma practice is all dependent upon diligence (joyful effort). Without joyful effort, it is not possible to accomplish anything, not worldly activities and not even Dharma. For example, without effort, one cannot get an education and cannot sustain a job. That is the reason that joyful effort is so important for practitioners. Usually, we don't have enough effort and patience. If we know the Dharma, but don't have effort, that's the reason we are still stuck in samsara even though we know the Dharma. Then, it is not possible to attain liberation. Those who have effort, even if they don't know that much Dharma, they attain the goal. To know the Dharma means to put effort into practice. If you don't put effort into practice, then you don't know the Dharma. That's the reason that Ngülche Thogme Zangpo said:

“Perfect Buddhas, source of all well-being and happiness, arise from accomplishing the excellent teachings, and this depends on knowing the practices. So I will explain the practice of Bodhisattvas.”

If we don't put effort, then it is not possible to know these *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*. If we know the *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*, that also is not enough. We need diligence (joyful effort) until we reach the 8th level bhumi of a bodhisattva. When you reach the 8th level bhumi, then you don't have to put effort. We cannot be satisfied to only hear the teachings. We receive the *37 Practices of Bodhisattvas*, and we have to put effort to practice. Receiving this teaching once, twice, three times is not enough. We need this teaching over and over again until we become realized. As long as we have joyful effort, then all Dharma, all of the six paramitas arise, and we can accomplish our goal. That is the reason this section on joyful effort is very important.

2.5 The Paramita of Meditative Stability

Verse 29 Understanding that disturbing emotions are destroyed by special insight with calm abiding, cultivate concentration which surpasses the four formless absorptions—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

Verse twenty-nine is the most difficult to explain. We have to go beyond samsara. We cannot get stuck in samsara. You gain some benefit in samsara from practicing some; however, that is not enough. Practicing shamata, calm abiding meditation, calms your emotions, meaning the emotions are released at the gross level. Your mind becomes more relaxed and peaceful. Shamata meditation benefits you in this life and future lives in a worldly context, but cannot take you to liberation on its own. We have many types of meditations, mindfulness, shamata, etc. These meditations are of benefit in this life. When you practice mindfulness and shamata meditations, you change your life. You become more peaceful, have less emotion, are calmer and happier. Your body, speech, and mind become perfect in a worldly context. However, you are not free from samsara. You still have subtle

level emotions. If you practice shamata meditation in this life, you are reborn a calm, peaceful person, or you will be reborn in the formless realms where there is less desire. These meditations help us to be reborn to higher realms in the future. Samsara's six realms can be subsumed into three categories: 1) the desire realm, 2) the form realm, and 3) the formless realm. There are lots of general details according to Buddha's basic teachings on these three different realms and the causes to be reborn there, which are explained in the Abhidharma. The Mahayana level is in accordance to one's individual perception, which can be very different from other's individual perceptions. The Mahayana level is based on compassion. At the Vajrayana level, Vajrayana practitioners create all forms as Buddha, and this is entirely different from the other levels. The Abhidharma generally talks about ordinary people's perceptions, not the perceptions of high realizers. For example, according to the Abhidharma, when Buddha shared what this world looks like, he talked about the levels of Mount Meru, and the four continents. It is different from what we see right now; however, it doesn't affect Buddha's teaching. We tailor our speech depending on who we are talking with—kids, the elderly, or high scholars. When Buddha talked about the world and our perceptions, he did so according to ancient Indian tradition, texts, and the philosophy they were familiar with, and he left it like that. Buddha's goal was to help free them from samsara. The goal of the teaching is to take people to liberation, not to describe the shapes and features of the universe. That's the reason that the description of the world as found in the Abhidharma is different than what we see now.

Where we are right now is considered to be the southern continent. There is Mount Meru, the continents, and the subcontinents. Mount Meru has levels similar to a stupa: the god desire realm, the form realm, and formless realm. Most of Mount Meru is in the desire realm. The four continents and subcontinents are all in the desire realm, and we are reborn there due to our desire. As long as we have

desire, we are reborn to those realms, and we have more suffering compared to the form realms. Beings in the form realms have a better situation than ours. They have seventeen different levels, and beyond that is called the formless realms. Those with less desire are reborn to the form realms, and beyond that is called the formless realms. Each one has different levels which accords to one's individual meditation level. Reducing desire and attachment takes us to all these different realms, all the way up to the formless realms, which have four different levels.

According to outer level Dharma practice, there are different kinds of outer level meditations like shamata and mindfulness meditations. Shamata has many different subtle levels. The main point of shamata is: 1) to focus with an object, and 2) to focus with the breath. Meditation with the breath also has many different levels. These meditations cannot take you beyond samsara. They can take us into the formless realms, but cannot take us beyond that. It is not possible to go beyond samsara only practicing Dharma at the outer level.

“Understanding that disturbing emotions are destroyed by special insight with calm abiding...”

As long as we have gross level emotions, it will lead to rebirth in the desire realms. Fewer gross level emotions lead to rebirth in the form realms, and subtle level emotions lead to rebirth in the formless realms. These three realms are still in samsara, not beyond that. With calm abiding, shamata meditation, we are still stuck in samsara. Therefore, we need special insight meditation—vipassana meditation. In Madhyamaka teachings, vipassana meditation is absolute truth. In Vajrayana, vipassana is Mahamudra meditation. These can completely remove subtle level emotions and take you to Buddhahood, free from samsara.

Ngülchu Thogme's main point in this verse is that shamata and mindfulness meditations are not enough. They cannot take us to Buddhahood. That's the reason we have to practice special insight meditation with calm abiding and cultivate concentration that surpasses the four formless absorptions. There are no gross level emotions within the four formless absorptions, only subtle level emotions. That's the reason they are called absorptions, meaning that beings at this level don't really have these five sense faculties that are used to follow objects. They don't have something like that at the gross level, because that is dissolved. A dissolved absorption means that eye consciousness doesn't follow the form object; ear consciousness doesn't follow sound, etc. The senses are dissolved, but these practitioners have not accomplished seeing true nature. That is the reason we have to go beyond that and practice special insight meditation. We have to look to our own nature of mind; we have to see our own nature. Otherwise, we are still stuck in samsara. This is the practice of bodhisattvas. Bodhisattva practitioners don't only meditate in order to calm down and feel joy. That is not enough. A bodhisattva's practice goes beyond samsara.

There is a detailed description of the formless absorptions in the Abhidharma texts, and it is very hard to understand. Even if you don't know what formless absorptions are, it is not an obstacle to realization. Solitary Realizers and Hearers follow mindfulness meditation and shamata meditation levels, as well as being mindful of their feelings, and know how to abandon disturbing emotions. That takes them to different levels and experiences, which are the four different absorption levels. A bodhisattva's goal is beyond that. They are not stuck with that. Also, Hearers and Solitary Realizers are not stuck here either because they go beyond that. If they don't go beyond that, then they cannot be realized Arhats. A Hearer's goal is Arhat, and a Solitary Realizer's goal is Pratyekabuddha. A bodhisattva's goal is Buddhahood. If Hearers and Solitary Realizers don't get

special insight meditation instructions, they are stuck in the formless realms. If they dissolve all these senses, and then don't see their own true nature, they are stuck there in their absorptions. Occasionally in the news, you will hear of people finding a meditator's body. The hair on the meditator's head is still alive. Those are people who are in absorption because they are dissolving all the senses. They don't have feelings because they dissolve everything. Their mind consciousness is not followed by senses. Everything is dissolved, but the problem is that they don't have this special insight meditation. They don't see true nature mind, so they are stuck with these four formless absorptions, meaning that is the kind of perception they have. I don't think they have forms; they have a totally different mental state that is without suffering. They are stuck in that state for eons. They don't take birth in samsara, but have not attained Buddhahood. They are not Arhats or Pratyekabuddhas. They are stuck because they do not have special insight, and do not see the true nature of mind.

According to *The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva*, shamata meditation practice is not enough. With shamata, we must have special insight meditation, vipassana. Vipassana is seeing your mind. For example, if I stay in a dark house, I can calmly be there, not following thoughts and emotions. When I turn the lights on and see everything clearly, that is like special insight meditation. It is not just being there; it is really seeing your own nature. When we meditate, we don't only want to just stop the emotions. In meditation, you can stop seeing forms. You can stop hearing sounds. You can stop all these five sense objects and can be in a state of absorption, but that means you are not really seeing your nature. You are in the absorption state and can be very calm, peaceful, and not recognize how much time passes. You can peacefully and joyfully be in that state for a couple of days, and maybe you only feel like one hour has passed. Meditation means that we have to practice special insight meditation and not only meditate so that the mind is just relaxed and

present. You have to really see your own nature. This meditation cannot only be followed by the outer level. You also have to follow by inner and secret level meditations. The outer level is basic meditation practice. The inner level is meditation practice with compassion; you create compassion, bodhicitta. At the secret level, you are seeing your own nature. To become Buddha means that these have to come together. Our mind with compassion is emptiness. Emptiness mind is with compassion. If we have not realized secret level emptiness, then our mind's compassion is limited. Once you have realized emptiness, your compassion is immeasurable. Your compassion becomes unconditional compassion, and that takes you to Buddhahood. That's the reason inner level and secret level practice must be in union, inseparably taking us to Buddhahood. You meditate and your practice becomes inner level and secret level practice, and you go beyond the formless absorptions. This is the practice of bodhisattvas.

2.6 The Paramita of Wisdom

Verse 30 Since the five perfections without wisdom cannot bring perfect enlightenment, along with skillful means, cultivate the wisdom which does not conceive the three spheres [as real]—this is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

Verse thirty is very important. Without wisdom, these other five perfections cannot take you to Buddhahood.

“Since the five perfections,” (generosity, morality, patience, joyful effort, and meditation), **“without wisdom cannot bring perfect enlightenment...”**

Special insight meditation is called wisdom. When wisdom arises, then these five perfections take you to Buddhahood. For example, if a group of blind people want to travel along the correct path, they will not know which direction to go because

they cannot see the path. If one person who can see comes to help, that person can take all of the blind people to the right path, leading the others away from danger so they are not falling into unsafe places. In that way, these five perfections are like five blind people wanting to go the right direction, but they don't see the path. Wisdom, the sixth paramita, is the same as the person who can see and is taking the others to the right path. In that way, wisdom is followed by generosity; wisdom is followed by morality; wisdom is followed by patience; wisdom is followed by joyful effort; and wisdom is followed by meditation. When wisdom arises, these five perfections are the causes of Buddhahood. Without wisdom, these five perfection practices are the causes of samsaric happiness. You cannot go beyond samsara without wisdom.

Enlightenment comes from wisdom. Without wisdom, we cannot attain enlightenment. Then we ask, *What is compassion and bodhicitta?* Wisdom must become inseparable with compassion and bodhicitta. Otherwise, compassion is limited. Ordinary people who haven't realized true nature have limited compassion. When wisdom arises, our compassion becomes immeasurable compassion, and we have immeasurable love and immeasurable equanimity. This all comes from realizing wisdom. That's the reason that wisdom and compassion become inseparable. As long as wisdom arises, then all five perfections take us into perfect enlightenment with immeasurable compassion, love, and equanimity.

“...along with skillful means, cultivate the wisdom which does not conceive the three spheres [as real]...”

With wisdom, all of the skillful practices (the methods such as love, compassion, and so on) take us to Buddhahood. Wisdom means to realize emptiness. Not conceiving the three spheres as real means to realize that the

subject, object, and action do not truly, inherently exist. They are emptiness. Think about generosity. If you think that generosity is real, then you have not realized wisdom because you have a subject, object, and actions, which is to conceive of the three spheres as real. For example, I decide that I want to do something. I is the subject. I give something in order to benefit someone, which is the object. Maybe I provide a house, food, money or whatever is needed, which is the action. If I think that the three spheres exist, then my practice is limited. That practice cannot take me beyond samsara. Practicing the paramitas without the realization of wisdom is outer level practice, which takes us to a higher rebirth. Wisdom means realizing that *I* and *self* do not exist; therefore, we have to cultivate selflessness of person. When you practice generosity, think about selflessness of person—*I and myself do not exist*. When that is cultivated, you will not have an expectation for a certain result, and you will not be attached to a goal. For as long as you have an expectation that follows your generosity practice, then that is not the perfection of generosity. That is called worldly generosity, not wisdom generosity.

We don't have this realization yet, but we can create the causes to realize emptiness, to realize that the three spheres are not real. Look at whatever you are doing (for example, providing for others) and think about impermanence. Your action also doesn't inherently, permanently exist. Then, look to the object. For example, if someone is suffering, you realize that person also doesn't inherently exist. We can still cultivate impermanence even if we are not thinking about emptiness. Examine yourself when practicing any paramita, such as giving something for others, to see if you are attached to the result or not. In doing so, you create the causes for emptiness, free from the three spheres. Afterward, we dedicate. We think about Manjushri and Samantabhadra and their aspirations and dedications, and we think, *May my dedications be the same*. In this way, our practice of generosity or whatever virtuous deeds we are engaged in, is sealed by

wisdom and is transformed to wisdom, like transforming copper into gold. We dedicate in that way, and although we don't know how to dedicate perfectly free from the three spheres, we pray, *May my dedication be the same as the bodhisattvas Manjushri and Samantabhadra*. When we do that, it is like our practice is sealed with wisdom or like it is plated with gold. Then, that generosity becomes wisdom, the cause of Buddhahood, not the cause of samsara. With wisdom practice, our emotions cannot remove virtuous deeds. For example, if gold falls into the garbage, the dirty garbage can never remove the qualities and value of the gold. In that way, your emotions, which are the same as dirty garbage, can never remove your virtuous deeds as long as you mindfully dedicate in this way with wisdom. Otherwise, your generosity is followed by the three spheres, which means that you think: *I am going to give these things to help this person. I also have some expectation, wanting something or a certain result in return, or to be benefited in some way*. Let's say that you have practiced that kind of generosity, and maybe one hour afterward, anger arises. Your anger is more powerful than your generosity. That is the reason that anger removes your virtuous act of generosity, and there is not any virtue left there. That is like planting seeds in the ground, and afterward you pour boiling water on those seeds. Those seeds are dead, and it is not possible for a plant to grow. However, if you plant your seeds and protect them, then the weather (the conditions) cannot destroy them. In that way, emotions can never destroy virtuous deeds that have been dedicated with wisdom. Those virtuous deeds are the cause of Buddhahood, not samsara. You also need to dedicate in that way when you practice morality (conduct) and the other perfections.

First, it is good to mentally generate as the yidam. Then, at the time that you are engaged in the virtuous action, at least you have meditated and have cultivated emptiness. After you dedicate, the result of that merit never ends. That's the reason

wisdom is very important. Bodhisattvas do not see the three spheres as existing, and that's the reason bodhisattvas do not have attachment to their own. They have no hatred for others, and they can benefit others endlessly.

“Meditative stability is known as the ‘uncorrupted, unconditioned meditation.’”

This information on meditation is found in *Essence of the Mahayana Teachings* beginning on p. 104. Unconditioned meditation goes beyond conditional meditation. Conditional meditation is, for example, when you meditate on love and compassion for someone. You see someone who is suffering, and you create (generate) love and compassion. That practice is based on conditions. With shamata meditation, you are focusing with an object or with the breath, which also is based on conditions. All of the conditional meditations (such as love and compassion meditations) cannot go beyond samsara; they are also limited. Conditional love and compassion is not immeasurable love and compassion. As long as you have wisdom, then your meditation is unconditional meditation. If you see that someone is suffering, cultivate love and compassion with wisdom. You see yourself as emptiness. Maybe you see yourself as a true buddha. You see others who are suffering also as buddha, but due to temporary obstacles, they are suffering. That is called wisdom. That meditation is unconditional meditation.

“This refers to the application of antidotes to the three poisons, i.e., meditating on the grotesque and unattractive aspects of an object of desire; meditating on love as an antidote to anger; and meditating on the nature of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance.”

These three meditations are followed by outer, inner, and secret level meditations.

Outer Level Meditations—An Antidote to Desire (Attachment)

1) **“...meditating on the grotesque and unattractive aspects of an object of desire;...”**

Hearers and Solitary Realizers use this meditation. When desire arises for them, they meditate on the grotesque and unattractive aspects of an object of desire. When using this method as an antidote to desire, you see some object that you have attachment and desire for, a car for example. You meditate, taking apart all the parts of particles one by one. Then, you don't see any attractive object there. Like that, when a man is attached to a female, use that method. Beneath the skin is flesh. Under that is blood. Beneath that are bones, and then the dirty, unclean things that are found in the body. There is nothing pleasant there. The first meditation helps to reduce attachment.

For outer level meditation, you see the object and can also meditate on impermanence. For example, when your enemy comes, you see that your enemy is impermanent, is changing. Then, you no longer have hatred to enemies. Those are examples of outer level meditations. Using analytical meditation for outer level conditions is called outer level practice.

Inner Level Meditations—An Antidote to Anger/Hatred

2) **“...meditating on love as an antidote to anger;...”**

If anger arises, what do we do? Meditate on love as an antidote to anger. Using love and compassion meditations as an antidote is an example of inner level practice. This second meditation helps to reduce anger.

Secret Level Meditation—An Antidote to Ignorance

3) **“...and meditating on the nature of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance.”**

The third meditation of meditating on the nature of interdependent origination as an antidote to ignorance is a secret level practice. Secret level is also dependent upon the different capability levels of individual practitioners. According to Mahayana, everything is interdependent. Everything that is interdependent is emptiness. That is the antidote to ignorance. As long as we have ignorance, we don't see the interdependence. If we don't see the interdependence, then it is not possible to realize emptiness.

The opposite of interdependence is permanence, which is thinking that *I* and *Self*, *you* and *everything* inherently exist. Due to that, attachment, desire, and then hatred arises. That's the reason that everything negative is based on ignorance. The highest level antidote for ignorance is to recognize interdependent origination: to know interdependence, see emptiness, and understand emptiness. Think about why we don't recognize emptiness. The reason is because we don't know interdependence. We think everything exists. Even though we have heard this teaching, we don't put much effort into meditating on impermanence. That's the reason we have the perception of everything existing, with such strong perceptions of *I* and *Self*. When we meditate on impermanence, we are less selfish and have fewer desires. If you meditate on interdependence more, then you really see that nothing independently exists. Everything is dependent. When you recognize this, you see form as empty, emptiness is form, form is emptiness, emptiness is no other than form, form is no other than emptiness. All of these sentient beings that you are seeing are emptiness, so understand in that way. That is the antidote to ignorance.

That is followed by the Mahayana path, but according to the Vajrayana tradition, we use the generation stage. During the generation stage, we visualize the yidam deities, and impure perceptions are transformed to pure perceptions. Then we meditate on the completion stage—Mahamudra. Mahamudra is also recognizing one's own true nature.

“The realization that the nature of samsara is nirvana comes from seeing that the essence of all of these interdependent phenomena is beyond arising, cessation, and fixed abiding, and thus recognizing that samsara's true nature is nirvana itself.”

If you understand interdependence, then you realize that the nature of samsara is nirvana—no birth, no cessation, no death, no abiding, and beyond fixed abiding. If there is no arising, then there is no cessation and no fixed abiding. If there is no birth, then there is no living and no death. You realize that samsara is nirvana and nirvana is samsara. That is when we recognize the interdependent true nature. If we don't recognize this, then this nirvana is samsara. Mahamudra is called secret level, highest level meditation—and all answers are there already. Think about the six realms, which can also be subsumed to the three realms. The answer is there: recognizing that samsara's true nature is nirvana itself. This is dependent upon one's individual perceptions. Those who have negative karma will have hell realm perceptions. They perceive this nirvana as the hell realms. Those who have desires, their perception is that of a hungry ghost. Those who have attachment, their perception is the human realm. Those who have ignorance, this nirvana is the animal realm. Those who have jealousy, their perception is that of the jealous gods. Those who have pride, their perception is the gods realms. That is samsara. How do we discover that samsara is nirvana? We discover by our own true nature. That is called secret level meditation.

The following information is also from the *Essence of the Mahayana Teachings* on p. 104.

“All phenomena can be placed within the two overarching categories of relative (or conventional) reality, and ultimate reality.”

All phenomena are subsumed into two categories: 1) relative truth and 2) absolute truth. Ordinary people’s perception is relative truth. Realizers’ perception is absolute truth. Those who have relative truth perception are in the six realms of samsara. Those who have absolute truth perception are free from samsara.

“Relative reality, in essence, refers to the phenomena of the six senses; though things have never inherently existed from their own side, they appear real to the confused mind.”

Relative truth does not really exist, but a confused mind means a delusional mind that perceives these relative truth perceptions.

“Primordially, none of this has ever inherently existed, but beings perceive a diverse range of appearances based on the projections of their own meritorious and non-meritorious karma.”

Our relative perception as experienced through the five sense objects, does not truly exist. Relative truth has not existed from beginningless time until now, but our own confused mind always perceives this relative truth. Followed by karma, those who have created negative karma see this relative truth as an object of suffering. For those who have positive karma, this relative truth appears as an object of happiness. Actually, both positive karma and negative karma do not exist. Then, why do we have to create positive karma? Because as long as we are stuck in relative truth, we also want to have happiness and joy in relative truth.

“The confused mind grasps at these perceptions as being real, hence the etymology of the word *relative reality* (kun rdzobs), a term that means totally false, conventional appearance. Ultimate reality is the true nature, which cannot be encapsulated into descriptions for it transcends expression, word, and thought.”

This is about wisdom. Wisdom means you have to realize true nature. There are two different kinds of wisdom: 1) worldly wisdom and 2) absolute truth wisdom. Worldly (relative truth) wisdom, is also comprised of positive wisdom and negative wisdom. Positive worldly wisdom is knowing and following karma cause and effect. It is knowing impermanence. Negative worldly wisdom is when people create the causes of suffering. There are intelligent people who create weapons, bombs, and many objects that are the causes of samsara. They think what they are doing is the cause of happiness, but actually it is the cause of suffering. All these objects take people into deeper suffering, and they remain stuck in samsara. That's worldly wisdom, but it's negative wisdom. Positive wisdom is to share the teachings on conduct and cause and effect. It is following the spiritual path. However, relative truth wisdom cannot take you to Buddhahood. Where do the causes of Buddhahood come from? They come from absolute truth wisdom.

“Ultimate reality is the true nature...”

We have to follow ultimate absolute truth wisdom. Ultimate truth wisdom is beyond our thoughts and perceptions.

“It is beyond discursive mind, beyond a view that affirms, and beyond a view that refutes any others.”

There is no conceptual mind in absolute truth wisdom. If you create something in your own conceptual mind, we cannot say that is absolute truth wisdom. Absolute truth wisdom is non-conceptual and free from the dualistic mind (non-dualistic).

“It transcends all assertions. It cannot be described in words or with conceptual labels. It is the unconditioned nature, beyond all characteristics. Its realization is what is known as ‘ultimate truth,’ or ultimate reality. This realization can occur in the context of Mahamudra.”

Mahamudra meditation is absolute truth wisdom. Special insight meditation is absolute truth wisdom. Madhyamika practice is emptiness meditation.

Contemplating *The Heart Sutra* and that nothing inherently exists, and meditating on that, is called absolute truth wisdom. That is the reason the name of *The Heart Sutra* is *Prajñaparamita* in Sanskrit, translated as the Perfection of Wisdom.

Part Three: Virtue in the End- Concluding Section

These are the six paramitas (the six perfections). Without wisdom, these other five perfections are the same as a blind person. Wisdom is like the person who can see and who guides the others in the right direction. In the same way, when we practice these other five perfections, we have to practice them with wisdom.

Whatever perfections you are engaging in, you have to cultivate, meditate, and use wisdom whether you are in the beginning of the practice, the middle, or the end during dedication. Then, your virtuous deeds become the perfection of wisdom-generosity, the perfection of wisdom-morality, the perfection of wisdom-patience, the perfection of wisdom-diligence, the perfection of wisdom-meditation, and the perfection of wisdom. As long as your practice has wisdom, then your emotions can never remove your virtuous deeds. Wisdom is like a diamond. Other objects cannot destroy it. Like that, as long as you use wisdom with the other perfections,

negative emotions can never destroy your virtuous deeds. Those virtuous deeds never exhaust all the way until Buddhahood. When you realize Buddhahood, the virtue from your practice doesn't go away, but helps to benefit others. Then the Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya form bodies arise from Dharmakaya to benefit others. That is called wisdom practice.



Link to Recordings of this Teaching:

❁ How to Develop the Heart of Compassion, a teaching on the beloved text, *The 37 Practices of a Bodhisattva*, Gar Drolma Buddhist Learning and Meditation Center—Buddhist Studies Library:

<https://gardrolma.org/how-to-develop-the-heart-of-ultimate-compassion/>

June 20, 26, and 27, 2021

*Transcribed and edited by Sandra Kipper and Amanda Owen. Designed by Amanda Owen.
Please forgive all errors and misunderstandings. May all beings benefit.*



Image from the Garchen Buddhist Institute Online Library
<https://garchen.net/library-images-deity-chenrezig/>

༄༅། །སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཡི་གོ་བླ་མ་པའི་བསྐྱེད་བླ་སྤྱོད་ལེན་པའོ།།

Visualization and Recitation of the Six-Syllable Mantra of Avalokiteśvara

by Mipham Rinpoche

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཡི་གོ་བླ་མ་པའི་བསྐྱེད་བླ་སྤྱོད་ལེན་པའོ།། རྩལ་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ལེན་པའོ།། རྩལ་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ལེན་པའོ།། རྩལ་ལྷན་སྤྱོད་ལེན་པའོ།།

If you wish to practice the visualization and recitation of the six-syllable mantra of Avalokiteśvara in a simple, unelaborate way, first take refuge, generate bodhicitta and cultivate the four immeasurables, then recite the following:

ཧྲིཿ དག་པའི་ཞིང་ཁམས་པོ་ཏ་ལ་ཡི་དབུས། །

hrih, dakpé shyng kham po ta la yi ü

Hrih. In the centre of the pure realm of Potala,

རབ་དཀར་པ་རྣ་ལྷ་བའི་གདན་ཉེང་དུ། །

rab kar pema dawé den teng du

Brilliant white, on a lotus and moon disc seat,

རང་ཉིད་འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་ཀྱི་སྐུ། །

rangnyi pakpa chenré zik kyi ku

I appear in the form of Noble Avalokiteśvara,

དཀར་གསལ་ཞལ་གཅིག་ཕྱག་བཞི་ཞབས་གཉིས་པ། །

kar sal shyal chik chak shyi shyap nyi pa

White and radiant, with one face, four arms and two legs.

དང་པོའི་ཕྱག་གཉིས་ཐུགས་ཀར་ཐལ་མོ་སྐྱར། །

dangpö chak nyi tukkar talmo jar

My first two hands are joined at my heart, and

འོག་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ཤེལ་ཕྱེང་པད་དཀར་བསྐྱམས། །

oma nyi kyi shel treng pé kar nam

The lower two hold a crystal rosary and a white lotus,

དར་དང་རིན་ཆེན་རྒྱན་ལྷན་སྦྱིལ་ཀྱང་བཟུགས། །

dar dang rinchen gyen den kyiltrung shyuk

I wear silk and jewel ornaments and my seated legs are crossed.

སྦྱི་བོར་སྐྱ་མ་འོད་དཔག་མེད་པས་བརྒྱན། །

chiwor lama öpak mepé gyen

And adorning my crown is Lama Amitābha, Buddha of Boundless Light.

འཁོར་དུ་སངས་རྒྱལ་བྱང་སེམས་སྤྱིན་ལྟར་གཏིབས། །

khor du sangye chang sem trin tar tib

All around are buddhas and bodhisattvas gathered like clouds.

གནས་གསུམ་ཨོྩཱུཾ་རྩྱུ་གི་འོད་ཟེར་གྱིས། །

né sum om ah hung gi özer gyi

From the om āḥ hūṃ at my three centres streams out rays of light

ཡེ་ཤེས་ལྷ་ཚོགས་སྤུན་དངས་གཉིས་མེད་བསྐྱེས། །

yeshe lha tsok chen drang nyimé tim

Inviting the hosts of wisdom deities, who dissolve indivisibly.

བྱམས་དབུས་པད་ལྷའི་གདན་ལ་ཡི་གེ་རྩི། །

tuk ü pé dé den la yigé hrih

In the centre of my heart on a lotus and moon disc seat is the syllable hrīḥ,

དེ་མཐར་སྐྲགས་ཀྱི་ཕྱིང་བས་བསྐྱོར་བ་ལས། །

de tar ngak kyi trengwé korwa lé

Surrounded by the mantra garland. From it

འོད་འཕྲོས་འཕགས་མཚོད་འགྲོ་ཀུན་སྦྱིབ་པ་སྦྱངས། །

ö trö pak chö dro kün dribpa jong

Light streams out, making offerings to the noble ones and purifying the obscurations of all beings.

ཞིང་ཁམས་ཐངས་ཅད་རི་པོ་ཏ་ལའི་ཞིང་། །

shying kham tamché ri po ta la'i shying

The whole environment becomes the realm of Mount Potala.

སྤང་བ་ཐམས་ཅད་བྱམས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོའི་སྤྱ། །

nangwa tamché tukjé chenpöi ku

All that appears is the form of the Great Compassionate One,

ངོ་བོ་སྣང་པ་ཉིད་དུ་གནས། །

ngowo tongpa nyi du né

In that essence, which is emptiness, I remain.

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཏཱ་ཏྲིཾ་

om mani pemé hung hrih

oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ hrīḥ

སྣང་པ་ཟངས་མཁའ་ངང་ཉིད་ལས། །

tongpa zangtal ngang nyi lé

Out of that experience of unimpeded emptiness

སྣང་བ་མ་འགག་ས་ལེ་བ། །

nangwa ma gak sa lé wa

Appearances arise, unobstructed and vividly clear,

རིས་མེད་ཀུན་ཁྱབ་འདུས་མ་བྱས། །

rimé kun khyab dü ma ché

Without bias, all-pervasive, uncompounded,

རང་བཞིན་འོད་གསལ་འོ་མཚར་ཆེ། །

rangshyin ösal ngotsar ché

And with the nature of clear light – how wonderful!

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཏཱ་ཏྲིཾ་

om mani pemé hung hrih

oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ hrīḥ

གསལ་བཞིན་སྣང་ལ་སྣང་བཞིན་གསལ། །

sal shyin tong la tong shyin sal

Clear yet empty, and empty yet clear,

གསལ་སྣང་དབྱེར་མེད་བསམ་བཞིན་བྲལ། །

sal tong yermé samjö dral

Clarity and emptiness indivisible, beyond thought and expression—

ལྷན་སྐྱེས་གཉུག་མ་བདེ་ཆེན་འདི། །

lhen kyé nyukma dechen di

This innate, genuine state of perfect bliss,

ངེས་དོན་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཡིན། །

ngedön chenrezik wang yin

Is the ultimate Lord Avalokiteśvara.

ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པདྨེ་ཧཱུྃ་ཧྲིཿ།

om mani pemé hung hrih

om maṇi padme hūṃ hrīḥ

ཞེས་པའི་དོན་བསམ་ལ་བསྒྲ།

Considering the meaning, recite the mantra.

མཐར་དགོ་བ་བསྔོ་ཞིང་བཀའ་གིས་བཞིན་པར་བྱའོ། །

Finally dedicate the merit and recite verses of auspiciousness.

འདི་ནི་རྒྱུད་ལུང་མན་ངག་གི་དོན་བཞིན་རྣམས་ལ་ཇ་ཡི་ཉམས་ལེན་དུ་མི་ཕམ་པས་བྲིས་པ་དགོའོ། །མཚུ་ལཱ།།

I, Mipham, wrote this according to the meaning of the tantras, scriptures and pith instructions for Nāthavija's practice. May it be virtuous! Maṅgalam!

| Translated by [Ane Tsöndrū](#) and [Adam Pearcey](#), 2015.



༄༅། །འཕགས་མ་སྒྲོལ་མ་ལ་གསོལ་འདེབས་བཞུགས།
Lord Atisha's Homage and Supplication to Tara

ཨོྃ། འཇིགས་པ་བརྒྱད་སྒྲོབ་མ་ལ་ཕུག་འཚལ་ལོ། །

om, jikpa gyé kyobma la chaktsal lo

Om! Homage to you, the protector who liberates from the eight fears!

བཀྲ་ཤིས་དཔལ་འབར་མ་ལ་ཕུག་འཚལ་ལོ། །

tashi palbarma la chaktsal lo

Homage to you, blazing with auspicious glory!

ངན་སོང་སྒྲོ་འགོགས་མ་ལ་ཕུག་འཚལ་ལོ། །

ngensong go gekma la chaktsal lo

Homage to you, closing the door to evil destinies!

མཐོ་རིས་ལམ་འདྲེན་མ་ལ་ཕུག་འཚལ་ལོ། །

tori lam drenma la chaktsal lo

Homage to you, guiding to the higher realms!

རྟམ་ཏུ་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་སྡོང་གོགས་མཛད། །

taktu khyé kyi dongdrok dzé

You have always been by my side.

ད་དུང་སྐྱགས་རྗེས་བསྐྱབ་ཏུ་གསོལ། །

dadung tukjé kyab tu sol

Continue ever more to protect me with compassion!

This was spoken by the great pandita Atisha.

The Story of Atisha's Supplication to Tara from H.E. Garchen Rinpoche's, *A Brief Instruction on Tara*

The masters of old India and many great panditas have relied on Tara as their main yidam practice. For example, before Atisha went to Tibet, he crossed the ocean on a boat to meet his guru Serlingpa. When a storm broke out and his boat almost sank, Atisha supplicated Tara and she appeared to him instantly, together with a vast retinue to come to his aid. Tara saved the boat and helped Atisha reach the shore safely so he was able to meet Serlingpa without any other hindrances. There is now a thangka image of Tara as she appeared to Atisha at that time. This image is said to have spoken to Atisha directly, just like one person talking to another person. Also, there are many stories of how Tara spoke to Atisha directly and made various prophecies when he was later in Tibet. There are also many stories of other practitioners to whom this image is said to have spoken directly.

Translated by Ina Bieler, edited by Kay Candler, and transcribed by Jeffrey Rosenfeld and Judith Rasoletti in 2018.

<https://garchen.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/A-Brief-Instruction-on-Tara.pdf>

Appendix A

An outline on “How to Meditate on Love,” from *Stages of Meditation, Awakening the Mind*

“Buddhahood is attained because of bodhicitta, which is brought forth out of compassion. Compassion is brought forth out of love. Therefore, we first meditate on cultivating love. The essence of love is basic kindness. This means longing for all sentient beings to have happiness and the causes of happiness. This intention should be cultivated along with equanimity, starting with one’s present mother and expanding out to embrace all beings equally. There are some individuals who find it difficult to feel love for their kind parents, but you can cultivate love even for those who have not benefited you much. You can think of your lover or your child that you love and cherish from your heart. You can meditate on them as the essence of love and in that way single-pointedly cultivate and grow your love. Gradually, you can expand it out to include all sentient beings.

- 1) First, we bring our present mother to the forefront of our minds and reflect on the kindness she has shown us.
- 2) Now, think of the kindness our mother has shown us by giving us life.
- 3) Now, think of the kindness our mother has shown us by teaching us what to adopt and what to abstain from.
- 4) Now, think of the kindness our mother has shown us by the sacrifices she has made for us, and how she has undergone difficulties on our behalf.
- 5) Our mother of this life has actually been our mother many times before. Buddha said that even the awakened ones cannot count the number of times one being has been the mother of another being. When we think

in this way, we will arrive at the point of longing from our hearts for our poor old mother to have happiness and well-being.

- 6) When such love is born in our minds for our present mother, then we should reflect that each of us has taken countless bodies in samsara for lifetimes without beginning until now. Therefore, we have had countless mothers besides this one. When we realize this, an appreciation for the equalness of sentient beings is born. We realize that all sentient beings have treated us with kindness before, just as our present mother has.
- 7) Then, we should visualize in front of ourselves all sentient beings whose numbers are infinite and fill all of space. Without bias or discrimination, we bring them all into our heart; we cultivate equally strong love for all of them, longing for them to have happiness and well-being, and we meditate until our love encompasses them all.
- 8) The sign your cultivation of love has been successful is that you do not feel any bias or discrimination among beings, whether they are appearing as your enemies, loved ones, or strangers.”

Please look to *Stages of Meditation, Awakening the Mind* and recorded teachings for full instructions on this meditation.

Appendix B

An outline on “How to Meditate on Compassion,” from *Stages of Meditation, Awakening the Mind*

“Compassion is born from love and caring. It is defined as the longing for suffering beings to be free from suffering. Think about your own mother on this earth. If she was enduring immeasurable pain and suffering, how could you not help but feel compassion for her? Would you want to help her, to rescue her from her suffering, or would you feel indifferent? Of course, you should help her. If we shamelessly abandoned our mother without trying to help her become free from her suffering, she would be so heartbroken, and there would be no way to lighten the burden of her pain and sorrow. Thinking of the reasons why we must protect our mothers and not abandon them, we meditate on compassion by thinking about the suffering of intense burning, freezing, starvation, thirst, and so forth. The way to cultivate compassion is as follows:

- 1) Imagine the beings who are suffering intense burning in the hell realms and how they protected us from heat when they were our own mothers. Cultivate compassion that longs for them to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.
- 2) Think of all the beings in the cold hells who are suffering from intense freezing and how they protected us from cold and freezing when they were our own mothers. Cultivate compassion that longs for them to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.
- 3) Now, think of the beings in the hungry ghost realm who are plagued by the suffering of hunger and thirst. When these beings were our mothers, they did everything they could to ensure we would not go hungry or experience thirst...

Cultivate compassion that longs for them to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.

- 4) Now, think of the beings in the animal realm, suffering from stupidity, ignorance, and the torture of being preyed upon by predators. When these beings were our mothers they wanted us to be informed, not ignorant, so they taught us right from wrong and showed us the path of what to accept and what to abstain from. Cultivate compassion that longs for them to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.
- 5) Now, think of the beings in the human realm. Though they spend their lives seeking to fulfill all their desires. Tragically they meet with unfavorable events and fail to achieve what they long for. Cultivate compassion that longs for our poor old mothers to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.
- 6) Now, think of the beings in the gods realm. They helplessly suffer from dying, transmigrating, and falling from the height of the gods realm due to their emotional poisons. Cultivate compassion that longs for our poor old mothers to become free from this suffering and from the causes of suffering.
- 7) In this way, look at how all these sentient beings are tormented by suffering. Think to yourself, ***Just as I do not want to suffer, all these sentient beings want the same.*** Cultivate compassion, so that you feel a longing for all beings who have been your own loving and kind old mothers to be free from suffering and its causes.
- 8) You should keep cultivating compassion at all times, thinking of all sentient beings throughout your day-to-day activities as well.

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- 9) When your compassion has reached the stage at which you feel equal compassion for all and see no disparity, then turn the focus of your meditation toward strangers and beings to whom you feel indifference. Think to yourself, *All beings are my dear friends.*

By meditating in this way, the compassion that longs for those experiencing excruciating suffering to be free from suffering naturally will arise equally toward all beings in your mind stream. This is also the sign you have become accomplished in compassion meditation and is called “great compassion.”

Please look to *Stages of Meditation, Awakening the Mind* and recorded teachings for full instructions on this meditation.



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