SHANTIDEVA’S
Guide to the Bodhisattva’s
Way of Life
An oral explanation of Chapter 1:
The Benefits of the Awakening Mind

Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche
Teachings 1996        Ann Arbor, Michigan
Jewel Heart Transcripts are lightly to moderately edited transcriptions of the teachings of Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche and others teachers who have taught at Jewel Heart. Their purpose is to provide Rimpoche’s students, as well as all others who are interested, with these extremely valuable teachings in a way that gives one the feeling of being present at the teachings.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book contains a lightly edited transcript of Kyabje Gelek Rinpoche’s oral explanations of Chapter One of Shantideva’s Bodhisattvacharyavatara, A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life. Rinpoche gave these teachings as a series on Tuesday nights in Ann Arbor, Michigan, from May to October 1996. Rinpoche’s teachings on Shantideva’s text have continued to the present; he has now reached Chapter 7. Transcripts of Chapters Two through Ten will be issued in separate volumes as they are completed.

The Bodhisattvacharyavatara is, as Rinpoche notes in the Introduction, one of the most important texts of Mahayana Buddhism. While it has been translated into Western languages a number of times, only a few commentaries exist in English, and these do not comment in detail on every verse (see the Selected Bibliography for a list of English translations and commentaries). Understanding the many Tibetan commentaries requires, in addition to knowledge of the Tibetan language, both considerable education and spiritual realization.

In the oral explanations transcribed here, Rinpoche discusses every verse of Shantideva’s original text, making use of the Tibetan commentaries as well as his own experience and his knowledge of contemporary society. In addition, he presents
the material in an accessible form useful for meditation and practice in daily life. These qualities make this a uniquely inspiring and important work, one that we are indeed fortunate to have available.

The English translation Rinpoche uses throughout is that by Stephen Batchelor, published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. Since Rinpoche frequently makes reference to Tibetan words and phrasing, the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit original is included in Wylie transliteration in Appendix I.

Appendices II to IV consist of material presented during the period of these teachings that was not strictly a part of the oral explanation of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara, yet may be of interest to the reader. They include a discussion by Rinpoche of the Seven-Limb Practice, and a Dharma talk by Kyabje Rilbur Rinpoche, one of Gelek Rinpoche’s own teachers.

Rinpoche did not introduce a traditional outline in giving this teaching. For those interested, an outline of this sort may be found in Geshe Kelsang Gyatso’s Meaningful to Behold. The headings and subheadings in this present volume have been added by the editor for ease of reference, and to help delineate changes of topic. Footnotes and a glossary provide some background information; the first use of each term mentioned in the glossary is printed in bold.

The transcription of these teachings from tapes was done by Hartmut Sagolla, who has spent countless hours transcribing a great number of Rinpoche’s teachings. Much editorial advice and support was given by Marianne Soeters, to whom all Jewel Heart owes a debt of gratitude for the efforts she has put in as editor to make transcripts of Rinpoche’s teachings available in useful form. Marianne also provided the glossaries from which most of the entries
in the glossary in this volume were drawn. It has been my
great good fortune to be able to work on this volume. Er-
ors in this transcript are solely due to my carelessness or
lack of knowledge. Please let me know about any you may
find in order that we may improve future editions.

May this work be of great benefit to all who read it
or even hear about it!

_Jang chub sem chog rin po che_
May the precious bodhimind _Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig_
Not yet born arise and grow. _Kye pa nyam pa may pa yang_
May that born have no decline, _Gong nay gong du pel war shog_
But increase forever more.

Anne Warren
Cleveland, Ohio
October 26, 2000
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

The Text Itself: The Title and Homage 15
  The Title 15
  The Homage 17
  Questions and Answers 18

THE TEXT ITSELF: CHAPTER ONE THE BENEFITS OF THE AWARENMENT MIND 21
  Verse 1a: Paying respect to the Three Jewels 21
  Verse 1b: Shantideva’s promise to compose 23
  Verse 2: Shantideva’s reasons for writing 28
  Verse 3: Reasons for writing (continued) 34
  Verse 4: The nature of the teaching: Who can practice 36
  Questions and Answers 46
  Verse 5 50
  Questions and Answers 55
  Verse 6 60
  Verse 7 65
  Verse 8 66
  Verse 9 67
  Questions and Answers 69
  Verse 10 73
  Verse 11 74
  Verse 12 80
  Questions and Answers 83
Gelek Rinpoche

Verse 13  84
Verse 14   89
Verse 15 and 16  91
Questions and Answers  94
Verse 17  95
Questions and Answers  106
Verse 17 (continued)  126
Verse 18, 19, and 20  133
Questions and Answers  138
Verse 21 and 22  141
Verse 23  150
Verse 24  151
Verse 25  152
Questions and answers  159
Verse 26  163
Verse 27  168
Verse 28  172
Verse 29 and 30  187
Verse 31  193
Questions and Answers  205
Verse 32  207
Verse 33  210
Questions and Answers  214
Verse 34  216
Verse 35  222
Verse 36  226
Questions and Answers  227

APPENDIX I: TIBETAN TEXT  231

APPENDIX II: A SIMPLE PRACTICE  239

APPENDIX III: RILBUR RINPOCHE ON THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING A SPIRITUAL PATH  255
INTRODUCTION

We will be talking here about the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life. Our reason for doing this is that Aura has been requesting it for a number of years. Though it is going to take a little time, it is one of the most important Mahayana textbooks. I did not say that it is one of the most important Buddhist textbooks, but *Mahayana* textbooks; those of you who are familiar with me know that when I use certain words, you have to underline them.

I am very much tempted to go back to a very traditional way of presenting. Normally I talk in an extremely new way or even New Age way, but this time I am tempted to go back completely to the old style of talking. I am not sure how the old style with its ways and means of explaining is going to work with you people. But whatever it may be, let me follow a little the completely traditional Tibetan way, so that you will know how that is done. I am not talking about prayers, *etc.*, but about the way of presenting.

*How Shakyamuni Buddha Became Enlightened*

Traditionally it begins like this. Shakyamuni, the kind Buddha, first generated a great thought or mind. He built a very important motivation that we call bodhimind. It is very funny - you are going to hear this business of the bodhimind very often in this teaching, because it is the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara.*¹
What is bodhimind? It is the mind of seeking Buddhahood, the intention to become a Buddha. It is not the Buddha’s mind, but the mind of seeking the state of a Buddha. How did Buddha generate this bodhimind?

**Theravada and Mahayana** There are two ways of explaining this, according to the *Theravada (or Hinayana)* tradition and according to the *Mahayana* tradition. You know, Buddhism is often called a vehicle; it is a vehicle that can deliver an individual to the state of a Buddha, like a car, train, plane or ship can take you where you want to go. Now in Buddhism, there is a bigger vehicle and a smaller vehicle. In Sanskrit, the literal meaning of Mahayana is ‘the great vehicle’, while Hinayana is ‘the small vehicle’. So, in India, this was the traditional distinction: great vehicle and small vehicle. Nowadays, those who belong to the category of the smaller vehicle don’t like that; they object to the term Hinayana, so we use the term *Theravada*, the self-liberating path or way of the elders rather than the small vehicle. The Mahayana is still called Mahayana, because they themselves don’t object to being called big or great!

So the presentation of the teachings is slightly different in the Theravada and the Mahayana tradition. The Theravada tradition will tell you that Buddha Shakyamuni generated his own mind or intention to achieve the state of a Buddha, accumulated merit and then attained Buddhahood all within a single lifetime of eighty years. They only talk about that level.

But this is a Mahayana text, so I have to talk to you according to the Mahayana way. The Mahayana tradition says that first Buddha generated bodhimind, then accumulated merits and finally attained enlightenment. In the normal system, they don’t tell you at this point how he generated bodhimind, but if I only told you that he generated bodhimind, accumulated merit and then attained enlightenment, it would not make sense to you. What I am trying to do here is to present the teaching in a traditional way, yet to also give you
some explanations, so that you understand what I am talking about.

**How Buddha generated compassion in a hell realm**

Here it says that Buddha generated the bodhimind, or altruistic intention to become a Buddha, many lifetimes before he was born as Shakyamuni Buddha, during a previous life when he was in the hell realms. While he was there in hell, his job was to pull the horse cart of the hell realm managers, the people who were dictating what was to happen in the hell realm, the administrators of the torture chambers. So they probably were sitting in the horse cart, but instead of using horses they had hell people pulling them.

It is very similar to what I saw in a movie about a medieval European kingdom; they had people pulling horse carts, too. In the description of the hell realms you find many cultural influences. You could have Western cultures influences or Eastern cultural influences. When the sufferings of hell are projected, when they are presented as some kind of physical appearance, naturally the hells are shown as some kind of torture chambers. There are actually only a few types of tortures, either through heat or through cold, or cutting, wounding and beating. What else can they project? There is nothing else besides that, since these are the basic types of physical suffering. In reality, however, it is nothing but a projection, a dream, but we perceive that and feel pain. In reality, it is beyond that. Anyway, since we feel pain in that way, that is how the projections are.

So Buddha was in the hell realms pulling the horse cart together with another hell being. The passengers in the horse cart beat them. It is like what you see in movies about ancient Rome, where the horse cart drivers beat the horses. So in the hells, instead of the horses getting beaten, it is the people pulling the carts. Suddenly Buddha developed tremendous compassion for his companion rather than for himself, although he also experienced pain himself. However, he was feeling the pain of the person next to him and he thought,
“Poor thing, how difficult it is for him. It is so hard, the poor guy.” The moment he had that mind of caring for that particular guy, the hell administrators knew it and told him, “How stupid you are. What are you thinking?!” and they whipped him and hit him on the head with a stick. So in this particular incident Buddha’s previous lifetime in hell ended—he died instantly. This death was his exit from the hell realm. His release from the hell realm came directly through the powerful mind of caring for his companion rather than himself. Buddha’s life story is nothing but inspiration and shows us the steps how we can follow him.

So according to the Mahayana, Buddha first generated bodhimind not in the lifetime in which he became Shakyamuni Buddha, but when he was in the hell realms as a person pulling horse carts and the power of his mind of compassion led to his death in the hell realm and he took rebirth in a better life.

If you acknowledge the value of compassion, you will see that if you grow compassion in a hell realm, it ends the hell realm. That is in the Buddha’s life story. The Jatakas, the story of Buddha’s previous lives, tell you that. So the power of the mind of compassion can free anybody from any lower realm. When Buddha first developed compassion, he became free from that hell realm. So that is the first point: Buddha developed his motivation, which actually means bodhimind. Bodhimind is one of the best motivations recommended in Mahayana Buddhism. The reason is that it is a love-compassion-oriented altruistic mind; therefore it is the best motivation.

Tibetan Buddhist teachings will tell you that the beginning and the end are the most important activities. The beginning activity is setting one’s motivation. The Buddha showed us that if you can develop a compassion-oriented altruistic mind, you can free yourself even if you are in a hell realm! So when we say that we would like to develop the proper motivation, we should follow the same thing, because
what Buddha did earlier is a road map for those of us who want to follow him. When we see that, in Buddha’s case, the mind of compassion could free him from a hell realm, that it has that much value, we should also get a little benefit. Buddha is the teacher and in this way he has taught us, given us the message. So if we follow that, we also get benefit - even if we don’t get that much, but to a certain extent.

_Causal and result vehicles_ The second step is about when Buddha came out of the hell realm. This is a non-Vajrayana talk. I told you earlier that in Buddhism there is Hinayana and Mahayana, the small and the big vehicle. The big vehicle is further divided into two categories: the _causal vehicle_ or yana and the _result vehicle_ or yana, in other words the cause-oriented way of practicing and the result-oriented way of practicing. Both vehicles will give you results, but the result-oriented vehicle means that you do everything as though you were already a fully enlightened being. This result-oriented practice is very suitable to our way of functioning. It is called _Vajrayana_, or sometimes it is referred to as the diamond vehicle or _tantra_. These terms all mean the same thing; they are synonymous, but the tantras mentioned here are not necessarily sexually oriented tantras. The causal vehicle is sometimes also called _Sutrayana_.

Some people may say that they have heard about a different division of the vehicles into Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. That is also a way of counting; there is nothing wrong with that. But the official or traditional way of counting is Hinayana and Mahayana, with the Mahayana divided into two divisions, Sutrayana and Vajrayana. So when I use the term non-Vajrayana, I mean that we are not talking about tantra or Vajrayana at all, but purely about the causal or sutra-Mahayana part.

So in this regard, using the causal vehicle, Buddha practiced the accumulation of merit. You work for something until finally you get the result. Right? That is normally what you do. Likewise here, you first establish a motivation and then
you work for it. There are two ways of doing this: 1) By purifying negativities. 2) By accumulating merit.

The sutra Mahayana system says that Buddha accumulated merit for three countless eons. That is quite a long time, isn’t it? Finally, after that, he obtained enlightenment; that is what they say. This is different from Vajrayana, which is called the special way or quick way or swift way. Instead of spending three countless eons, you may be able to cover the whole path in the short span of a human lifetime of sixty or so years. This is able to substitute for three countless eons! That is why it is called the quick path. So Buddha had accumulated merits for three countless eons and then became the Buddha, one of the best beings that ever came into this world.

What is the state of the Buddha?

What does it mean to be a Buddha? Actually the state of the Buddha is called the awakened state. All others are sleeping; he is the only one who is truly awake. He is called ‘awakened’, because he has a tremendous amount of awareness, so much so that Buddha is also often referred to as an all-knowing person. If there is something to be known, it is known to the Buddha, no matter if it is past, present or future. With regard to the future, he also knows how the future is shifting and how it is finally going to happen. That is why his mind is called an awakened mind.

The mind of a Buddha is able to know everything at the same time; not only reading other people’s minds, but even everything that happened a million years ago and what will possibly happen another million years in the future. It is all known to Buddha like we know the palm of our hands. If you look at your palm, there is nothing hidden, it is all there. If you don’t know how to read it, that’s too bad! Otherwise there is nothing hidden, there is no mystery about it. This is beyond our comprehension. If try to be aware of ten things happening at the same time, we go crazy! Buddha will not go
crazy, though there are billions of things happening together, coming, going, taking rebirth and dying, functioning, living - everything together. This is way beyond our comprehension, beyond our capacity. That is why Buddha’s state is called the awakened state, or the state of all-knowing.

The Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma
After he gained this all-knowing state, what did he do with all this knowledge? He gave us guidance by leaving the message we call Buddha’s teaching. Technically it is sometimes called Turning the Wheel of Dharma. It is not turning the wheel of the car! What it really means is that he shared his experience, he shared his knowledge and gave us the message out of the knowledge that he had in his awakened mind. Yes, Buddha gave the whole message, however, we are only capable of picking up certain parts of the message, and not others. The messages are all there, but we cannot pick up certain things. So later, other great masters who followed Buddha’s path analyzed Buddha’s messages and divided his teachings into three categories: the first, second and third turnings of the wheel of Dharma.

Some people interpret that to mean that the first period of Buddha’s life was the first turning of the wheel, the second part of his life was the second turning and the last, just before he died, was the third turning of the wheel. There are some teachers who tell you that.

The First Turning of the Wheel. Traditional Tibetan Buddhism does not accept that. It states that the first turning of the wheel is famous in the world today as The Four Noble Truths. He taught this three times, which makes it twelve. I have to explain what three times means here. I once saw a traditional Indian movie made about Buddha teaching the Four Noble Truths. In India, they have a strange rule, which says that nobody is allowed to show the body of the Buddha in a movie. There are pictures of Buddha but you cannot show him in a movie, so in any movie about Buddha you will
only see huge feet and crossed legs up to the waist. You cannot see anything above that. That is the Indian law. So the picture which is stuck in my head is seeing these huge feet and that big voice saying, “This is the Noble Truth of Suffering” and the second, “This is the Truth of the Cause of Suffering,” then “This is the Truth of Cessation of Suffering,” and finally, “This is the Way to get to the Cessation of Suffering.”

So the first of the three rounds of the Four Noble Truths was to introduce them, to say what they are. The second time he explained the purpose, which is to acknowledge suffering, to avoid the cause of suffering, to attain cessation and meditate according to the path. The last of the three rounds is to acknowledge suffering, yet recognize that there is nothing to be acknowledged; to avoid the cause of suffering, yet recognize there is nothing to be avoided; to attain cessation, yet recognize there is nothing to be attained; and to meditate on the path, yet recognize there is nothing to meditate. The third round is actually introducing wisdom. Everything which we acknowledge, avoid, attain and try to meditate on, is just like a magician’s show. It is illusion; it is not real. That is where the famous Buddhist teaching of emptiness comes in. This third round is the wisdom part.

So these twelve rounds of teaching are called the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma. This is a technical description. It is the first category of Buddha’s teaching. Some people can be liberated completely just by that alone, just by introducing the Four Noble Truths, explaining the purpose and giving the wisdom aspect alone. This is the essence of the Hinayana or Theravada teachings.

The Second Turning of the Wheel. The second category of teachings is the Interdependent Relationship of people, of mind, body and existence. That does not only concern human beings, but all existence, including the environment, the inhabitants, the elements, everything. It is interdependent
origination, even including how we take rebirth, how the process functions.

There is something called **Twelve Links of Interdependent Origination**. It deals with the causes, with how we function and how we create ourselves, what we experience and how we end. It is based on the life of one individual within the system of the Twelve Links. But the links are hooked in this manner, rather than only twelve in that way [Rinpoche demonstrates]. You know, it is one hook within a hook. You are completing certain circles of the Twelve Links here and you are also creating certain points of the Twelve Links there. So these different cycles of the Twelve Links are hooked up. That is why there is a continuation of reincarnations or rebirths, which are all interlinked within the system of the Twelve Links of Interdependent Origination. It shows how one individual life functions and how it is related to other lives. In some explanations, even three lives hook together.

So the second turning of the wheel is those Twelve Links and the actual way out, the wisdom of emptiness. This means the emptiness of individual beings and the emptiness of things other than beings - articles, things, etc. These two are the major teachings which fall under the category of the Second or Middle Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

**The Third Turning of the Wheel.** The Third Turning of the Wheel is the method, like bodhimind, generosity, morality, etc. These are the activities of someone who has generated the altruistic, love-compassion-oriented mind. This book we are discussing here is called the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, in English *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*. It is about how you conduct your life, how you function. These are called methods. This book deals with how important altruistic mind is, how important love and compassion is, what compassion is, how you function with this, what you act with this, how you make it part of your life and not only part of your life, but how your life becomes that, how you make your life itself love-compassion-oriented. Not only love-compassion-
oriented; it is becoming love, it is becoming compassion! This book will guide you through the steps; first introducing love-compassion, then how you orient yourself with this, and finally how every task and chore we have to do itself becomes love and compassion. That is the Bodhisattva’s way of life. Any teaching about that is part of the third turning of the wheel of Dharma.

The traditional way of beginning these teachings

In traditional style, we say Buddha first generated bodhimind, then accumulated merit and finally attained enlightenment and shared his experience. We talked about generating bodhimind according to the Mahayana custom and teachings. That is, he generated bodhimind in the hell realm and just by that thought in the mind he was able to end this hell realm experience and come out of the hell realm. Then he accumulated merit, attained enlightenment and shared the teachings. This he did by turning the wheel of Dharma three different times. The first turning is the Four Noble Truths, the second is the wisdom and the third is the method part. This is according to Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen also known as Gyaltsab Je⁶, one of Tsongkhapa’s outstanding disciples. (The other was Khedrup Je.)⁷ So the third turning of the wheel of Dharma contains all other activities, all contemplative methods, including love, compassion, bodhimind, etc.

The traditional old lamas will just say, “Buddha first generated bodhimind, next he accumulated merit and finally he attained enlightenment.”⁸ This little three-part statement contains everything I have explained so far, but I have given a little more detailed information about Buddha’s life. Traditionally I would just say, “Buddha first generated bodhimind, then accumulated merit for three countless eons and finally attained enlightenment. Then he taught. The teachings he gave were firstly the Four Noble Truths, then the wisdom teachings and then the Bodhisattva’s way of life.” That is the traditional way in which it would be presented; the meaning
behind it which you would have to understand is everything I have said so far.

**How the Buddha’s teachings came to be collected**

According to Western scholars, the collected words of the Buddha should be called the Canon of Buddhism, because Buddha did not really compose books as we do today. Western scholars also maintain that the Mahayana sections in there were collected one hundred and ten years or more after Buddha passed away. Who really knows who is right? Nobody. According to the practice-oriented points in the Indo-Tibetan tradition and also the Chinese tradition, it is always said that the Mahayana teachings were given by Buddha and were just not recorded during Buddha’s lifetime, but were only written down after he passed away.

**The three collections** There were three of the Buddha’s disciples - in Tibetan they are called Wösung, Kungao and I don’t remember the name of the third one⁹ - who repeated the teachings of the Buddha according to the Three Higher Trainings¹⁰ of the mind. Each one of them repeated one of these three. That was then called The First Collection. The Second Collection was when some kind of interpretation came in and corrections were made. Then, during the period of King Kanika, eighteen groups of the Buddha’s followers with differing viewpoints had big disagreements among themselves. Each group claimed to be right. At that time, seventeen thousand Bodhisattvas and Arhats and learned Mahapanditas had a big assembly to settle the matter. That was the Third Collection and the beginning of writing the teachings down. That was maybe one hundred and ten years later. So this is the reason why the Western scholars prefer to call it the Buddhist Canon rather than The Collected Works of the Buddha.

**The origin of the Kangyur and Tangyur.** I mention this because, according to the Tibetan tradition, all the teachings of Buddha comprise the 108 volumes of what we call the
These are the words of the Buddha translated into Tibetan. The Chinese version of this has much more than 108 volumes.

The essence of this is that no matter how vast the amount of teachings given by Buddha, every single point in his teachings is actually relevant to help an individual attain enlightenment. There are so many methods or tricks, so many ways and means, there is always some answer to whatever difficulties there may be. However, it may be impossible to be able to go through all 108 volumes of Buddha’s teachings, or even all the commentaries, which also run into almost four hundred volumes. These are just the commentaries by the early Indian teachers, which were translated into Tibetan from the original Sanskrit! These commentaries are called *tangyur.*

During the time those texts were being translated into Tibetan, it was just like what we are experiencing today with many different versions put forth. Each and every one of those translators had his own way of explaining and expressing. The difference between that period and today is that then each of the many translators had an Indian scholar working with him. Both of them would translate and so different versions would come out.

Every year, each of these versions was then submitted to a council headed by the religious advisor for the ruler. The council then finalized and made decisions that this translation was good, and that translation was not good. They would not block a whole translation though, but pick through each word of each translation. They would say that “Mr. A has used such and such a word in the translation, Mr. B has translated it as this and that,” and they would go through the different versions of translations and put them together and would credit the final version to that translator whose major part of the work was picked up, rather than crediting it to ten different translators. They also did not allow them to argue with each other, because there is no end to arguments. Any-
body can argue for anything. The Tibetans developed a saying, “Even the son who kills his own father will also have an explanation and points for arguments.” So all arguments were cut out and the council selected the translations. The translations are therefore really authentic and standardized. It was made clear which Sanskrit word meant what in Tibetan. They did that every year for about one hundred years. Every year they would work through whatever translations had been submitted, and in this way all the four or five hundred volumes were standardized.

Today we have a number of translators from Tibetan into English. All of them have their own version of translation and they stand behind that. Just look at the translations of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* alone! You are going to find quite a number of very different translations.

In reality, however, all these hundreds of volumes of teachings are meant for an individual to attain enlightenment. That is the standing viewpoint of the *lam rim* tradition. That is the standing viewpoint of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* and also that of the *lam dre.* They all have that viewpoint. Out of that, the essence of developing the bodhimind, love and compassion, and leading one individual to enlightenment, is the real message of this particular book, *Bodhisattvacharyavatara.*

**The Author of this Text**

I have to tell you something about the author who wrote this particular book. His name was **Shantideva** or **Zhiwa lha** in Tibetan. Truly speaking, he was a Vajrayana practitioner. Vajrayana activities can be either *trö che* and *trö me*, which means with activity and without activity. Shantideva’s practice happened to be the kind without activity. He slept all the time! Even his colleagues and friends called him the person who only knows three things: how to eat, how to sleep and how to shit! The only time they saw him was at times when food was available and the rest of the time he was sleeping, apart from the times when they saw him going to the toilet.
Buddha’s monastic rules were to purify all the negativities every second week: all negativities in general and particularly any negativity that went against the monastic vows. So every second week you would have a monks’ gathering for that purpose. I know, because I used to do this. We would stand up and make confessions together. It is not that everybody has to get up and say, “I have done this and I have done that,” but all the monks as a group confess having broken the four root vows, the twelve branch vows, the thirty sub-branches, the ninety sub-sub branches, the two hundred and fifty-five secondary vows. So everybody says all of that together - everything. They will say, “All that and whatever else was done, we purify here together.” So if there were one thousand people present, they would recite all that together. So it was not an embarrassing thing for any one individual. At the end of the procedure, one of the senior monks will read out the sutra once again and everybody will just listen and then go home. In case of the nuns, one monk from the monastery came over in order to conduct that sutra teaching every second week. That used to be the rule.

So one time, the monks of the monastery where Shantideva was staying were fed up with him and wanted him to leave. They wanted to insult him. So they selected him, the one who only knows three things and told him, “It is your turn to go and give a teaching at confession.” Shantideva said, “Okay!” Then monks said to each other, “Look at him, how shameless. What is he going to say? He knows only three things. He has nothing to teach. Anyway, let’s watch what he will do.” And to insult him further, they built a huge throne without any way to climb up onto it.

When Shantideva came by, he saw that huge throne and thought, “Did they really do that out of respect or do they want to insult me?” When he meditated for a bit, it became clear that they did it as an insult. So then he reached up with his hand towards the top of the throne and his hand went up there longer and longer and actually reached the top of the
Gelek Rimpoche

throne and then he started to press it down. When he did that, the whole big throne shrank to a normal height and he sat down on it. After that, the throne started to go back up, as high as it had been constructed!

Once he was on the throne, Shantideva proceeded to give this teaching of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara in ten chapters, totally extemporaneously! This teaching is now considered to be one of the best works of poetry available in Sanskrit. When they translated that into Tibetan, it was not as good. The normal teachings would tell us that the value was reduced by fifty per cent through the translation. Translated now into English, it is bound to be worse. As he was giving this teaching, when he reached chapter 9, Shantideva rose up into the air, higher and higher, and finally went up in between the clouds. When he spoke the tenth chapter, people could only hear his voice; his body could no longer be seen. And that is how he left that place. So the origin of this book is very unusual and extraordinary.

All the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Sakya, Nyingma, Kargyu and Gelug accept this as true. Besides Buddha’s words, this book is one of the things that is accepted by all of them. Apart from that, each different school has its own commentaries and ways of doing the practice. I consider myself lucky that I am able to read and discuss that with you and you people are also very fortunate.

The Text Itself: The Title and Homage

The Title

I have talked about the author, so let’s start with the text itself. In order to understand it, we will first consider the title of this book. In English, it is called A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life. I do not know how to explain that. But if you look into the Tibetan translation, it says in there, “In Indian language, Bodhisattvacharyavatara, in Tibetan language, Jang chub sem pai chö pa la jug pa.” That means, probably, in English something like a guide to the Bodhisattva’s
way of life. Since I don’t know Sanskrit, I cannot explain the Sanskrit title. However, the word Bodhisattva in Tibetan is *jang chub sem pa*.

**The meaning of the word Bodhisattva**  What does that mean? You may say that it means a person who possesses bodhimind. That is the correct understanding, but there is more meaning than that. The meaning of *jang* is one who has trained well, who has experience. Training here means that your mind is very well managed, because you have removed your mind from the control of negative emotions. The message behind that refers to one who has freed himself or herself from the obstacles. The word *jang* gives you the quality of the individual being who is free of obstacles. So when you say *jang chub sem pa*, each of these syllables has a meaning. *Jang* is clarity, that is, the mind is cleared from obstacles, negativities. *Chub* is the one who built up positivity. *Sattva* (Tib. *sempa*) is the one who has built up love and compassion. The *va* out of the *sattva* stands for a person who has done that. It indicates a person.

So the term bodhisattva means a person who has been able to clear the obstacles of negativities, particularly selfishness and self-cherishing. *Chub* is one who has obtained compassion and love and *sempa* indicates the person whose mind has such qualities. So to me the term *bodhisattva* or *jang chub sem pa* carries much more meaning than just saying it. For Westerners, perhaps bodhisattva is easier to pronounce than *jang chub sem pa*, translators may prefer to use Sanskrit terms for that reason. In the early 1960s, when I began to pick up the English language, I thought many of those Sanskrit terms were English words! They used those terms within the English text. So that shows you how much Sanskrit I know!

**The meaning of guide to a way of life.** The last part of the title is *chö pa la jug pa*, or *chöön juk* for short. In this English translation, he translated that as *Guide to a Way of Life*. I do not know
what that really means. In Tibetan it means how one follows
the activities of a *jang chub sem pa*. *Chö pa* means activity or
behavior of the persons who have cleared the obstacles and
neuroses in general and in particular, narrow, selfish interests
and who have a tremendous amount of good qualities in
general and love and compassion in particular. The book is
therefore all about how to follow their behavior or activities.
This is really the title of this book. I cannot criticize the En-
GLISH translation, because I have a lack of understanding in
English.

In Tibetan, each syllable has meaning, combined toget-
er they have additional meaning. In Tibetan, you just have to
say *chön juk* and everybody will understand, whereas if you say
*bodhisattvacaryaavatara*, nobody will know what you are talking
about. At least that’s how it was in old Tibet; Tibetans coming
out of India now probably know, because there are transla-
tions in Sanskrit and in English and all this. *Chön juk* is the
title accepted by all the different schools, whether you are
Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kargyupa or Gelugpa. This book is ac-
cepted by everybody without any questions. Each school has
hundreds of different commentaries on it. *Chön juk* means
how one can follow the bodhisattvas’ way of functioning.

There is a direct explanation what the title means in
Sanskrit. *Bodhi* is *jang chub*, *sattva* is the person with that mind
(*sempa*), *charya* is behavior (*chö pa*), and *avatara* (*jug pa*) means to
follow.

**The Homage**

Under the title itself both the Tibetan and this English trans-
lation say:

*Homage to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas*

Which of the Three Higher Trainings of the mind does this
teaching belong to? The homage itself indicates this, and tells
something about what the subject is going to be. The hom-
age could be to Manjushri or to compassion, to wisdom, or to
the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, or to just Buddha himself. In
this case, the homage is to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which out of the Three Higher Trainings is the training of the mind in high activities, which is the accumulation of merit. This is the major emphasis. Obviously this text talks about the Bodhisattva’s way in general and particularly how to develop bodhimind, and how you behave and how you deal with everyday life once you develop the bodhimind. That is the major emphasis.

Questions and Answers

Student: After Buddha was released from the hell realm through his development of compassion, did he maintain this level of compassion in his next and following rebirths?

Rinpoche: I believe the answer is yes, in the case of the Buddha. Will that be the case for every human being? I don’t know. It depends on the individual. For some it is the case, for others it is not. Bodhisattva vows, however, are different from monks’ and nuns’ vows. Monks’ and nuns’ vows end when the person dies, but Bodhisattva vows don’t end there. They carry on continuously. You take them until you are a Buddha. That is a big difference.

Student: Could you comment on the different levels on which one can receive the Dharma?

Rinpoche: I cannot say no to this request. According to Tsongkhapa, the first level is learning, then meditating and concentrating and finally obtaining enlightenment. There are many ways of learning, that is definitely true. But when you talk about Buddha’s teaching particularly, I will tell you how I obtained the teachings. For us, in the old Tibetan monasteries - whether it was the Theravada or Mahayana principle, or Vajrayana - the teachings were normally divided into three categories: 1.) the oral transmission, 2.) the explanation, and
3.) the initiation. We were taught that all three of these are absolutely necessary and important.

*Oral transmission* What is oral transmission? This deals with the textbook of the subject you are learning about, on the basis of which you are receiving the teachings or doing your practice. You listen to the sound intact, read to you by your teacher. The message is written in the book, it is there, you can read it. But there has to be the continuation of the sound of what you read, from the author who wrote that particular text all the way down to your own teacher. He will give that to his students who will pass it on to the future generations. So the sound continuation from the author through the generations is the oral transmission.

*Initiation.* Initiation means introducing people to a mandala, appropriately describing the mandala to the students and introducing it to them with the full ritual. In the case of the Maha anuttara yoga tantra level of Vajrayana, you have to receive all the *four initiations* perfectly as the seed for the *four bodies* of the enlightened level.

*Explanation.* Then there is the teaching and explaining part. That includes answering questions and giving guidance. For that there are different ways and methods at different times.21 Basically, these are the three different levels of teaching and one must receive all three in order to make Vajrayana work perfectly.

*Student:* Can you clarify what you have said about the Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma?  
*Rinpoche:* This is something which the Tibetan tradition has taken for granted. But somewhere the Dalai Lama has said that the system of the Three Turnings of the Wheel is not available in the Theravada tradition. But according to the Tibetan tradition, the first Turning of the Wheel was the teaching about the Four Noble Truths. That also was done three
times each with a different purpose, which makes it twelve rounds.

The purpose of the first round is to acknowledge:

1. This is suffering
2. This is the cause of suffering
3. This is the cessation of suffering
4. This is the way out.

The second round points out that the first is what is to be acknowledged, the second what is to be avoided, the third what is to be obtained and the fourth what is to be practiced. In the third round, there is wisdom. You are saying that while you have to acknowledge suffering, there is nothing to behold or acknowledge. You have to understand, yet there is nothing to be understood. You have to obtain, but there is nothing to be obtained. You have to develop, but there is nothing to be developed. In that way there are twelve rounds, which altogether constitute the First Turning of the Wheel of Dharma.

Then the Second Turning of the Wheel of Dharma is the naked teachings on interdependent relationship and the ultimate emptiness, whether it is the emptiness of persons or that of phenomena other than beings. These are the two kinds of emptiness.

The Third Turning is the method, like bodhimind, love, compassion and the six, five, four or nine other paramitas.

Having said that, if you read the Dalai Lama’s book *The World of Tibetan Buddhism*, it does not say that. But even though it does not say that, it does not matter, that is what it is.

**Student**: Does that mean that you can analyze the teachings in more than one way?

**Rinpoche**: This is not a question of analyzing. It is the technical description of the teaching.
THE TEXT ITSELF: CHAPTER ONE
The Benefits of the Awakening Mind

Verse 1a : Paying respect to the Three Jewels

Respectfully, I prostrate myself to the Sugatas
Who are endowed with the Dharmakaya,
As well as to their Noble Children
And to all who are worthy of veneration.

I’d like to go through it in Tibetan. The first line says: De sheg chö kyi ku nga se che dang The first word is de sheg. That is translated here into Sanskrit (not English!) as Sugatas. There is a long way of explaining what Sugata means, but I am not going to do it.

The meaning of the word Sugata is similar to the previous explanation of jang chub, one who is free from obstacles and has fully developed. Remember in the explanation of gone, gone, gone beyond, when you have the ultimate gone beyond which refers to the fully enlightened Buddhas. Sugatas refers to the Buddhas, the first out of the three objects of refuge. Why are Buddhas called “The ones who have gone beyond?” Because they have overcome the obstacles. That again refers to overcoming negative karma, the causes of negative karma, which as the bottom line means the neuroses. They have overcome those neuroses and that is why they
have gone beyond, are well-traveled. That is one side. In the Tibetan tradition, when you empty the mind of neuroses, it has to be filled up with something else. What is it filled up with? Enlightenment, compassion, bodhimind, etc. That is what Sugata is referring to. Even the word Buddha refers to the Buddha as one who has cleared all obstacles and is fully developed; in Tibetan, Buddha is sang gye, the one who has cleared all the blocks and who has fully awakened or fully knows everything. The obstacles are totally cleared away, and the knowledge is totally built up.

The next word in the Tibetan translation of this text is chö kyi ku, which has been translated into English as Dharma-kaya. The line in English says, Who are endowed with the Dharmakaya. The translator is trying to tell us that the Sugatas are enriched with the Dharmakaya. What is Dharmakaya? The first moment of fully enlightened mind. It is the mental capacity, the first mind of the fully awakened state. This state is intangible, has no color, no shape. That knowledge, that mental part, free of physical blocks, great spacious-looking openness, no block, no limitation, limitless awakened mind level, that is what is referred to as Dharmakaya.

There is nothing wrong with the translator using the word Dharmakaya for chö kyi ku. However, the chö here is actually referring to Dharma itself. Out of the three refuges, the Dharma is chö. So we have the Buddha and the Dharma. Buddha is the person who represents the totally enlightened state. Dharma is the true development within the individual. Out of the three refuges, the Three Jewels, it refers to that Dharma, the Dharma jewel. So the verse should be understood as I respectfully prostrate to the Buddha, the Dharma, as well as to their Noble Children.

This first verse is actually paying respect to the Three Jewels. So de sheg, chö, ku nga. Now, instead of saying chö kyi ku, instead of putting the comma after the ku, if you put the comma under the chö and then say kyi ku nga, then that refers to the Sangha, here translated as Noble Sons or Children. Bodhi-
sattvas are the Mahayana Sangha; whether male or female Bodhisattvas does not matter. The Dakas and Dakinis are the Vajrayana Sangha. The Sutrayana or Theravada Sangha are the monks and nuns. So the way of looking at the Sangha is different from the angle of each of the three yanas.

In English, sons refers to male children, while female children are called daughters. If you say children, you include both genders. In Tibetan se does not necessarily refer to the male children, it can be both male and female, and is sometime translated as heir. That term in Tibetan is se, although there is also an additional name for female gender called se mo. That has the mo suffix for female gender added on. However, in this language se can be read as children. Therefore here it means the children of the Buddha, which is the Mahayana Sangha. In translations where se is translated as sons, if you want to change it, you can change sons to children, or daughters or heirs if the book belongs to you. You can have the freedom to do that.

The last line of the first verse in English says, And to all who are worthy of veneration. This actually refers to your own spiritual master and the persons that you admire throughout your journey towards enlightenment, in other words, whoever you look at as worthy of veneration. It particularly means your own spiritual masters and those who are traveling with you. Then the English translation finishes here, but the Tibetan text does not. In Tibetan the verse does not end there. In the English version, this goes on into the next verse, 1b.

**Verse 1b: Shantideva’s promise to compose**

Here I shall explain how to engage in the vows of the Buddhas’ Children, The meaning of which I have condensed in accordance with the scriptures.

There are hundreds of different commentaries. I am just looking at three different ones, but I think the translation should not have *vows* in it. This is my remark. In Tibetan the
word is *dom* which can be vows, but it can also refer to a general system of how to function. It can even mean spider! So one single word can be translated in a hundred different ways.

Actually, we cannot completely denounce the translator here. I was reading through a commentary by Gyaltsab Je and also Pabongka’s commentary. Neither of them explains *dom* in verse 1b as vows, but on the other hand, Togme Sangpo’s commentary does explain it as vows. So I might have been too quick to correct the translation of that line. Ngulchu Togme Sangpo, however, interpreted *vows* to mean morality and pointed out the **three moralities**: the morality of collecting merit, the morality of patience and the morality of committing yourself to helping others. So it might be too easy to say that the translation of *dom* as vows in this case is wrong. As I told you, that same word, *dom*, with the same spelling, can also mean functioning, a system - actually the workings of a mechanical system. That is what it should be. Once it is translated as vow, then what is a vow? It is morality. So I thought I should share that with you. However, I would rather look at it as the general way of functioning of the Bodhisattva’s way of life, rather than vows.

Again, here you have a reference to the Buddhas’s sons or children, *de sheg se*. Actually the translation should read: *Here I shall explain the general system of relative and absolute bodhimind.* This refers to the relative and absolute parts of this precious mind. I am trying to give you an alternative way of looking at this, rather than just as the Buddhas’ Sons or Children. This translation is perhaps too literal. Once the translator had decided on *Sons of the Buddhas*, he could only take *dom* to mean *vows*, there is nothing else that works.

So Shantideva sets out to explain how to function within the system of relative bodhimind and absolute bodhimind. This is the guy who only knows how to eat, sleep and shit! This three-minded person is talking to the monks at this moment! He also says in this verse that he is going to explain
this *in accordance with the scriptures* (in Tibetan: *lung shin*); in other words, he is saying that he is not creating anything, not making anything up. He also says that he is going to explain this briefly, meaning that there is not going to be any repetition.

It was considered to be a problem, if you repeated the same terms over and over again. In English, whatever you say, you try to keep the terminology consistent. In the traditional Tibetan and Sanskrit, if you try to be consistent, it shows that you have a lack of knowledge. You must not repeat the same word again. You always try to find another synonym, use a different word. To try to be consistent shows that you have a limitation of view, of explanation, and that is considered to be a problem. So when Shantideva says that he is going to give a short explanation, he means that there is not going to be repetition, in other words, he is not going to use the same word for the same purpose again.

**Four reasons for writing** When he says that he has condensed the meaning of the teaching in accordance with the scriptures, he is claiming he has *four reasons* for writing. In the traditional Sanskrit and Tibetan system, you would not write a book without what are called the four reasons. Number one is that there has to be a need. Second, you must really have something to say, rather than copying what somebody else has said or what you have heard somewhere else. Third, you really must have something to say that goes in accordance with what Buddha really explained. It goes well with that and you have ways and means of getting it to the people. These are the four major reasons, without which you don’t want to write. If you don’t have anything to say, shut up. Even if you have something to say, but there is no need, keep your mouth shut. And fourth, you only write something if ultimately it will help the people who hear it or read it to be liberated.28

So these are the reasons for explaining. So whenever it says, “I will explain as briefly as possible,” that means that the author has the four reasons, the need, there is something to
say, that message goes according to the Buddha’s teaching and it will help to lead the individual to liberation. If these four reasons are there, you can say it or write it, otherwise shut up!

**The importance of authenticity** Buddhists have a big worry about teachings and rituals that are made up and have not come down directly from the Buddha on. Making things up is considered terrible for spiritual practitioners. If you try to make up something and write it down, it becomes non-authentic. When something is non-authentic, it does not guarantee the perfect result for the individual practitioner. As a result of that, the whole thing can be lying and cheating. That is the biggest point where the traditional teachers in India as well as in Tibet always tried to make sure that this was not done. Because of that, all the texts translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan, will say that it was done *in accordance with the sutras or scriptures*. This is trying to prove that this work is authentic, based on the Buddha’s personal experience and that of the disciples that followed after him. One of the things Buddha, Buddhist teachers, and spiritual masters throughout the lineage have objected to is the cooked up stories. In *Liberation in the Palm of the Hand* at Day Ten it says:

> It is the essence of the teachings of the Buddha and his disciples and not a made up story.
> It is the path accepted by the great forerunners of the Buddhist teachers and not a cooked up story.\(^{29}\)

This shows how important it is to be authentic. Even if somebody has composed new words, you have to be able to trace them back to Buddha’s teachings. That is so important! That is why you read everywhere statements like *I have condensed the meaning in accordance with the scriptures*. That is how you check whether the spiritual path you have is true or false, whether it is in accordance with the Buddhist scriptures or not. Even in the Hindu tradition they will also check whether a text follows the earlier great Hindu masters or not. That is
one of the bottom lines, when you want to check if a practice is capable of delivering the goods or not. As Buddhists, we make a judgment if it was accepted by Buddha or shared by Buddha or explained by the Buddhist masters thereafter. If something new has come up since the 13th or 14th century, we will not follow that. The Tibetans have a saying,

If you want to drink pure water, you must see that
the water comes from the snow mountain.
If you want to have a pure, perfect practice, you
must see that the tradition traces back to Buddha.

So in statements like *This is done according to scriptures* there is a hidden message. The hidden message is that if something is not done in accordance with scripture, you cannot take that as a guaranteed path, because then you never know what the results will be. If you look around carefully, you will find these messages here and there; this will help you judge the spiritual path which you are going to follow. In this country, there is no such system, so anybody can come up and present something nicely worked out as a spiritual path. There is no counter check, no checks and balances. I have been telling all the Tibetans that we are very lucky. Critics here don’t know how to criticize us, so we don’t get any criticism! They have no idea how to criticize, because they don’t have the base on which to do so. That is what is really going on at the moment in the West.

Traditionally, these are the points a critic would look for when any new book came up. What is it following? So in old India, every author who had something to say would have emphasized that he was writing *in accordance with the scriptures*. This gives you the authenticity of the teachings. This is particularly important for the United States in the 1990s and the year 2000 and beyond, because otherwise there is no way of judging. In any Eastern tradition you will see messages like this thrown in here and there. A lot of hidden messages are there. You may write something new today, but you have to be able to prove that every single word is right because in the Buddha’s teaching - the *kangyur*, or the commentaries on this,
the *tangyur* - it says this and that. If you can prove that, you are okay. If you cannot prove that but just say that you have put something together which was said by somebody here and there, then it does not work.

Another quality of the Buddhist teachings is that you have to follow everything according to that particular system of the subject you are teaching. Let’s say you are talking about guru devotion. So anything you talk on that, every reference you bring in is collected on this subject itself. You cannot pick up a technique from somewhere in the six paramitas and try to bring it into and cover the practice of the guru devotion. You also cannot select some practice out of the *Vajrayogini* tantra and bring it into the *Yamantaka* practice or vice versa. If you do that, you are making a mistake and you are misleading people. It has to be authentic, in accordance with the tradition. Each and every individual yidam has its own specialty. You have to leave it there. That is a basic Buddhist and particularly a Vajrayana rule. You have to follow that very carefully. If you don’t, it will not be in accordance with the scriptures. That is how the critics should judge. But then, there is a great limit on critics, so it is a period of great freedom! But within a very short period people will pick it up. Then we will get into trouble.

**Verse 2: Shantideva’s reasons for writing**

*There is nothing here that has not been explained before*
*And I have no skill in the art of rhetoric;*
*Therefore, lacking any intention to benefit others,*
*I write this in order to acquaint it to my mind.*

With that, Shantideva is saying, “I have nothing new to explain, nor do I have great rhetorical skill. I know only three things.” Right? Remember, he looked and wondered, “Why do I have
such a huge throne? Is it an insult or is it respect? It is definitely meant as an insult.” So therefore he is throwing in these words.

Shantideva says *there is nothing here that has not been explained before*. That is very interesting. If there was something new, then what proof could there be that it was authentic and thus reliable? Who could you point out that has developed a spiritual path through it? Who could have attained enlightenment by following it? These are the questions. So Shantideva says here that the path he is going to share with us has been explained by Buddha and his disciples; nothing new is being said. If there was something new that was not spoken by Buddha and his disciples, then that would be looked at as a fault.

This is one of the great qualities of the traditional Sanskrit texts translated into Tibetan; this has great meaning and really explains how wonderfully it works. Even Shantideva at his high level says that there is nothing here that has not been explained before!

**Cutting pride** Next he says, *and I have no skill in rhetoric*. He says this because he is known as the person who only knows three things! Looked at in another way, however, what he has produced is definitely beautiful art, but traditionally you would not blow your own horn. In the West, it is the normal system that people blow their own trumpet. If you know ten words, you say that you know hundreds and thousands! In a way, in this culture, you do have to blow your own horn, because otherwise people will consider you to be useless and worthless, unless they really have known you for a long time; then it is different. Otherwise, if you keep quiet and try to be very humble, in the West, they will humiliate you.

But in the tradition, even someone like Shantideva will say, *I have no skill in the art of rhetoric*. We can clearly see that there is a great skill here in what he says. Also, he has just demonstrated great powers by flying up onto the throne, but still he says that. You know why this is done? You do that to cut down your ego. You pull the red carpet from under the
feet of the ego. That is what traditional authors always do. If you read the *Three Principles of the Path*, you see it, too. You will read that everywhere except in the Buddha’s sutras. Otherwise, everybody will say, “I have no knowledge. I don’t know anything about that. I have nothing to say.” The tradition considers that to be a good quality rather than a humiliating statement. Sometimes, however, it can be overdone. I have received letters where the writer says, “I am the stupidest person you have come into contact with in your whole life.” That is maybe too much! But cutting down your ego is very, very important.

There is a hidden message here, too. When someone is blowing their own horn, you have to be cautious around that person, according to the traditional system. Especially, if somebody says, “I know everything and I am your teacher,” you should run a hundred miles away without looking back! Traditionally, nobody advertised their own development. Naropa did not do that and neither did Tilopa. Naropa saw Tilopa as some crazy fisherman who ate live fish. He bit the fish through in the middle and then swallowed them. That is how Naropa perceived Tilopa. Marpa perceived Naropa as another crazy guy. Naropa did not approach him, saying, “I am Naropa and I am here to teach you!” Nor did Milarepa perceive Marpa in that way. Milarepa ran to Marpa and said, “Hey, give me teachings!” but Marpa slapped him and shouted at him to get out. This is exactly how it used to function in this tradition. These days of course, in this Western culture, we advertise ourselves and do all sorts of funny things, but according to Shantideva, that is the wrong way. He is one of the greatest persons in the Tibetan Buddhist teachers’ lineage and yet he says *I have no skill in the art of rhetoric*!

When His Holiness came to visit Ann Arbor, I worked out my little speech in which I was going to say “His Holiness does not need any introduction.” Then somebody said, “In this case, people will think, ‘Shut up then, what are you do-
ing?!” So I changed my line to “It is my privilege to introduce His Holiness…”

It is the same thing here. Someone might say to Shantideva, “If you have nothing to say which has not been said before and if you have no art of rhetoric, why don’t you shut up?” To answer that objection, Shantideva himself says in the next line of this verse: I write this in order to acquaint it to my mind. He says that he is writing it down in order to build up his own understanding and development, to inspire himself, to familiarize himself in accordance with the scriptures as well as put it into an order which makes it easier for people to understand.

**The commitment to teach** This is what the words tell you directly, but there is also an indirect meaning. He is confirming that “I am going to explain.” The confirmation is extremely important. Confirmation is commitment. To honor your own commitment is morality. That is why it becomes important. It is said that great beings will not commit to so many things, but once they commit, it is carved in stone. No matter how long it will take, no matter how difficult it might be, no matter how many times it will be interrupted, no matter how many difficulties are being faced, they will complete what they have said they will do. This is the commitment of a great being. They will not commit to anything unless they can make sure that it will materialize. It becomes like a vow for them.

So Shantideva is saying that he will commit himself to teach this, write it down, talk about it. So directly he is saying that it is just for his own understanding, confirming his own development, not meant for anybody else. But indirectly he is saying, “I am sure it will help somebody else like me.” He is putting himself in the lowest category, which, if it helps him, may also help others. For some layperson who would like to work with this, there is the possibility that it might help. So with that in mind he is writing, composing and talking about that. This is the indirect message.
For great beings, once they commit to something, it is like a carving in a stone. You know, snow may fall on that stone and ice may develop. But when that snow stops and the ice melts, the carving still remains in the stone. Dust may come and cover it, but when the dust goes away, the carving in the stone still remains. Water may run in a brook, but the stones will remain. So the strongest commitment is like a carving in stone. *The Three Principles of the Path* has that commitment, too, where it says, “I will explain as well as I can,” or something like that. So the commitment here is almost like a vow. If you break that, it is immorality. That is the indirect message.

Having said that, in order to be helpful, there have to be the four reasons for writing that I mentioned earlier:

1. What is the message or subject- what are you going to talk about?
2. Why? What is the immediate need?
3. What is the ultimate purpose?
4. What is the connection between 2. and 3.?

So when Shantideva is saying that perhaps this might be helpful to others, it means that it is capable of delivering ultimate enlightenment. This is the ultimate purpose for writing. The subject to be talked about is the path leading to enlightenment, the Mahayana path, the Bodhisattva path. How is it being done? In a very organized way. For example, this first chapter is about the benefits of bodhimind.

There is one line in verse 2 which we have not mentioned: *Therefore, lacking any intention to benefit others...* This is interesting. A lot of the traditional teachers will say this or something like this. The root text of the *Pramanavartika*, *The Root of Logic*, says:

Almost everybody is busy with attachment. They have no wisdom at all. They are people with
bodies and without minds. They all move around like zombies. Even if somebody does say something good, everyone will be very jealous of it. Therefore I have no hope that this will be helpful to anybody else, but I am writing this just to satisfy my own ego.

That is the beginning of the whole root text of the *Pramanavartika* by Dharmakirti. This is typical of the old Indian Buddhist tradition. The Tibetans have watered it down quite a lot from there. They do it more in the manner of saying, “I will explain as much as I can,” or something like that. Now in the West we will say, “I have something to say which nobody else can say or do! I am capable of doing it! Here I am!” Look how much it has changed from Buddha’s time up to today! That is why this is called a degenerate age! Earlier masters, the people who really had these great experiences, said, “I have nothing to say, I don’t know anything about it.” Then the Tibetans, from the 11th century up to the 1950s, would say, “I will explain as much as I can.” That is already watered down a lot. Now we have to say, “I am going to say something that you could never even imagine!” We go to that extent. This is how the spiritual path degenerates.

So it is in this sense that Shantideva is saying that he is lacking any intention to benefit others. He is saying, “I don’t think this is going to help anybody.” There are two purposes. One is to reduce his own ego. He is saying, “I have nothing to say that could help others. Therefore I have no intention that would help others.” So this is like putting your ego under your feet and stepping on it. That is one purpose.

Great people who have really developed really think that they have nothing to say. They have such great respect for everybody that they think that everybody else must be better than them. For a long time they think that, until they come to sit down and talk. Then they begin to realize, “Oh, I do have something to say.” That is how the minds of Bodhisattvas really work. They never think, “I am great. I am the Chosen
One!” If you think, “I am the Chosen One,” it is a good sign that you are not a bodhisattva.

Now in this case, when you don’t have anything to say, why write anything? Why not just shut up? Shantideva explains that at least it is a good exercise for his own positive development and that he is making sure that his own exercise goes according to the Buddha’s teachings. And indirectly he is saying, “If anyone else is like me, then there is also the possibility of that this could help others.” This is one point.

Another purpose is that indirectly Shantideva is saying, “In case there is a mistake in this work, I apologize.” He never claimed that he had something to say or even had the art of a good presentation. He is saying, “If I made any mistakes, please forgive me, it is for my own sake that I wrote it.” This is the easy way to waive your responsibilities - I am just joking!

Verse 3: Reasons for writing (continued)

For due to acquaintance with what is wholesome,
The force of my faith may for a short while increase because of these (words).
If, however, these (words) are seen by others,
Equal in fortune to myself, it may be meaningful (for them).

What does wholesome mean? I am going to explain according to the Tibetan. I think what is wholesome means virtuous activities. In Tibetan, it says virtuous actions or ge wa, that means the whole path. But all virtuous actions are not the total path. So, can wholesome imply wholeness or completeness? Probably here it is not only some virtue or other, but also the complete path. Why the complete path? The subject that is going to be explained in this book is the complete Mahayana path. So Shantideva says that he is writing this in order to acquaint himself and also build up his own personal inspira-
The word used in the translation is *faith*, but I would like to call it personal inspiration. So I think the commentary to Stephen Batchelor’s *wholesome* will have to work this way. Not only virtue alone, but the *whole* path, because the subject of this particular book is the whole Mahayana path, the whole thing together, not just a bit here and there. It is the wholeness of it. The translator may have been thinking that way. In Tibetan, it just says *ge wa*, which means virtue. Every single positive action is virtuous, but here, when you are committing to writing something, you are not pointing out a single virtuous action. It must be understood that the wholeness of the path is meant. So the translation as *wholesome* can be justified with that in mind.

Then in the next line it says, *the force of my faith may increase for a short while*. In Sanskrit and Tibetan, this *short while* is also mentioned. This is because our inspiration is such that even when we are inspired, we can only keep that going for a short period, not for very long. That is our habitual pattern. We are so much habituated to the negative, that we lose whatever positive inspiration we get very soon. Because our own negative habitual patterns are so powerful, they will soon overtake us. So in one way that is the message. In another way, it also gives you the message of impermanence. There will be more on that in the next verse, so I will not go into it here.

The rest of the verse goes along with what I have already explained earlier. It gives you the message that the person writing this is not full of pride.

**How to use this text and commentary**

If you want this to have an effect on you, read and reread the verses from the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*, then you will remember the explanations. Otherwise it will not build up. On top of that, there are two commentaries, one called *Meaningful to Behold* by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and the other by the Dalai Lama called *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*. If you can have both, that is fine, but if you have to choose, I suggest you take *Meaningful to Behold*, because it is much more
detailed with more elaborate explanations. Probably that guy had nothing much else to do at the time and kept on talking, while His Holiness has a busy schedule, so he jumped through the verses! If what you read contradicts any other teachings you have studied before, mark that and bring it up as a question. Just reading alone will not help. Read the root text, then the commentaries, then read the root text again. Check if the commentaries contradict each other. The next verses are very similar to what you have learned in lam rim. There is a lot of opportunity to compare and if there are doubts, it is good to raise them. That way you can gain stronger confirmation within you, which will give you inspiration for your own development. It might not help anybody else, but it will help you yourself!

Verse 4: The nature of the teaching: Who can practice

Basically the outline for the Bodhisattavacharyavatara is divided into three main parts:

1. How it was composed
2. Nature of the teaching itself
3. How it is concluded

We are moving on now to the nature of the teaching itself. Here we also have to examine who is fit to practice this and what kind of mind that person must have and what kind of action should be done. That is what the fourth verse is about:

Leisure and endowment are very hard to find
And since they accomplish what is meaningful for humanity,
If I do not take advantage of them now,
How will such a perfect opportunity come about again?

Out of what person is fit to practice, this deals with what sort of body is needed. The body is the physical base on which you practice, and then, in addition, there is the mental base. With
regard to the physical base, we are here talking about the eighteen different qualities, the **leisures and endowments**.\(^{34}\)

This human life that we have in this human body has a tremendous amount of leisure. You will say now, “How can you say that when we are so busy with the all American life! We have so many deadlines and are so absolutely busy!” You may think that, but in reality we all do have time. If we pretend we don’t have time, that is fine. But if you really think carefully, you will find that you do have time. If you really want to, you do have time.

Look at it this way. Think about how much time we have to sleep: we sleep seven or eight hours, but a minimum of six hours within every twenty-four hours. How much time do we spend on our daily chores? That is not counting the time spent on earning money to pay our bills. How much time do we spend on idle things like gossiping, reading the papers, sipping coffee or beer, smoking cigarettes, \(\text{etc.}\)? When you look superficially, it seems that we don’t have time. There may not be a large chunk of time that we can allocate for spiritual practice, but apart from that, we can find time. It depends on how you organize your life. If you organize well, you have time for everything, if you don’t, then even if you have twenty-four hours at your disposal, it will not be enough, not even for idle gossip alone, not even enough for sitting around. By the way, I forgot to mention some other things that we find time for, like doing exercises such as running, swimming, \(\text{etc.}\). Think about that. So we do have a tremendous amount of time.

**The eight leisures** When it is said that we have eight leisures, this actually refers to being free from non-human existences like being 1) a hell being, 2) hungry ghost, and 3) animal, and also being free from existence as 4) a long-lived god. You know, these gods remain for a very long time in some state of joy. It is an extremely high state and they don’t move, but just remain in that for one or two centuries. Then there are 5) those who have no idea of or any faith whatso-
ever in anything spiritual, so they have no opportunity either. These are the one hundred per cent yuppies - or Republicans! There must be some Republicans in this audience. In the plane on the way here I sat next to a lady who worked for General Motors and she was a Republican, but she was a nice woman! Anyway, those who totally deny spiritual development or spirituality as such, those who deny that it is required or necessary or that it can help human beings, are in one category. Another category from the Buddhist point of view is 6) to be born in a time when no Buddha was around, or 7) as a barbarian in a land where there is no Dharma. The way of counting the leisures in the Bodhisattva-bhavyavatara is slightly different from the lam rim, but it is okay. It goes into lifetimes when no Buddha appears, when there are no Buddhist teachings at all - so these people have no opportunity. Further, if you are 8) totally stupid, you also have no opportunity. So there should be eight categories in which one has no opportunity.

In our case, we are in none of these categories: we are not in a hell realm. In the hell realms, there is so much pain that you cannot think about anything else but how to get out of that pain or else you just give up and hopelessly sit there. If you are a hungry ghost, you are extremely hungry and think about nothing else except how to find something to eat. If you are an animal, you also have no leisure. You know it; no matter how clever your pet may be, it is not intelligent enough to say OM MANI PADME HUNG. If you are a barbarian, in a land without dharma, you only want to kill somebody and do something terrible, and that is it. If you are completely high - not even as a samsaric god - if you are very high on anything, including marijuana, then you are just high, you have no opportunity, you are off the path. If you do it occasionally, that is okay - I believe. Don’t tell Governor Engler from Michigan that I said that - or Giuliani! If you refuse to believe that spiritual practice is of any use to anybody, then that is another cause of not having an opportunity.
If we look at our own situation, we are not in any of these categories. We are not in a hell realm, we are not hungry ghosts or animals, we are not barbarians, we are not high all the time and we do always think that the spiritual path is an alternative to develop the human potential, that it allows human beings to reach to the ultimate level. So we are not in the category of wrong views. We also live in a time where the Buddha’s teaching is available. As a matter of fact, we live in a time where all the spiritual traditions of the East as well as the West, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Buddhist and the Jain, every tradition is available to us. Not only available, but they are all in the Yellow Pages! So it is definitely not a time when the Buddha’s teachings are not available. Nor is any one of us totally stupid. Therefore, we are free of these eight states in which there is no leisure to make life worthwhile, unless you want to put yourself in the category of an ultra-yuppie. If you want to do that, go ahead! Then you are in the ninth category of lack of leisure.

In this way, our existence in this body has provided us with eight leisures. This is according to the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. In the *lam rim*, it is slightly different, but the bottom line is the same.

**The ten endowments** Next there are the ten endowments or opportunities. We are human beings with human qualities. That is a tremendous endowment for us. The human capacity is totally different from that of any other living being, no matter how much one may think how great extraterrestrials are. They may not have the qualities that we have, and even if some of them do, there could be some give and take. We could learn from them, they could learn from us. There is always some way. Never think that, “We human beings are something bad and backwards, while extraterrestrials are something better.” Never think like that! Whatever it might be, they can pick up qualities from us and we can pick up qualities from them. We will be on an equal footing, if not better. You never know. These beings also consist of all
types of people. There are better ones and worse ones. That is why the human potential is a tremendous potential for us.

Look at the difference between our potential and the potential of animals. In that way, we can understand. No matter how intelligent your dog, cat or horse may be, look at the difference. I used to say to people, “If you think your cat is so intelligent, why don’t you give it your car keys and ask it to go and buy the groceries?” Then look at the difference between the hungry ghosts and ourselves. We are afraid of the ghosts and spirits, and so forth, but the ghosts and spirits are equally afraid of us human beings. So the human body is of great value. You can understand and also communicate what you understand. This is the extraordinary value we have. Compare that with all the eight other different states. Remember, Tsongkhapa has said, “It is more important than a wish-fulfilling jewel.”

Let me count the ten endowments: 1) The first is that we live in a time and a place when Buddha’s teachings are available. 2) Buddha has come, 3) given teachings, and 4) these teachings are continuing. 5) There are ways and means for us to make a living and 6) we are at the center of a time of spiritual growth. 7) Next, we are human beings, and 8) we have all the basic foundations of our intelligence intact. We are not crazy. We are not handicapped in regard to spiritual practice. It is not that we cannot do anything. 9) Further, we have a karmic connection. We believe in the spiritual path. We have profound respect for Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. [10) We have not committed any of the five worst or limitless bad deeds.]^35

In that way there are ten endowments. So we are rich by having these ten endowments and also the eight opportunities or leisures. These are very hard to find. That is what the first line of this verse tells us, Leisure and endowment are very hard to find.

The next line says since they accomplish what is meaningful for a human. When you have these eighteen qualities, your exist-
ence becomes meaningful. Such a life with all these qualities is extremely difficult to find. Remember, in the lam rim the example is given of a blind turtle which comes up once in five hundred years in an ocean which covers the entire world. Just by chance he might come up and put his head through a yoke that is floating on the ocean – but it is not very likely! That is the example for how difficult it is to find this sort of life- and we have found it! The qualities of a human life will give you the power and the capability to accomplish any short-term or long-term spiritual goal. The body we have and the circumstances we live in are capable of delivering those goods. As to the long-term goal, if you want to become a Buddha, you can; you are qualified to become a Buddha. If you just want a short-term achievement - if you don’t want to go that far - you are qualified for that, too.

The eighteen qualities give you the power to accomplish both short-term and long-term goals. It is so important to recognize this, so that you do not waste this great opportunity we have now. This is absolutely true. Time goes by so quickly - you have no idea! We just had the New Year - and if you look, it is almost the middle of June. Half of 1996 is gone. So we don’t realize how time goes. We make ourselves extremely busy and give all priorities to those other things. By wasting this great opportunity to achieve something extra good you are really letting yourself down. And you won’t get that opportunity again; that is absolutely true. This opportunity is hard to get. We cannot take it for granted that we will be reborn as a human being again. So while you do have the opportunity, while you are physically okay, while you are mentally stable, when you have all these qualities, that is the time - and it is high time! - for us to achieve something. Otherwise, it is a waste.

*The middle path between hippie and yuppie*  So if you want to devote all your time to some material achievement - go ahead. That is no problem for us - but it is a problem for you. If you want to ignore the material side totally, again that
is a problem. Mind you, this is the 1990s, and we are going towards the year 2000. In these times, people who are doing something spiritual must handle spiritual practice and material achievements combined together. It is not the time to be a yuppie, nor to be a hippie, either. You have to merge them together, have a middle path. This is important. The spiritual path can accomplish what is meaningful for humanity. Anybody can achieve some material benefit. Rats, parrots, or any animal can achieve that. Mice, especially, are very good at collecting wealth - far better than human beings! Their bodies are so small, but otherwise they are very good at it.

Once, one of the earlier Kadampa lamas was meditating. He had a big turquoise on his mandala offering. While he was trying to meditate, he saw these little mice running up and down. They saw that turquoise and decided that it was a valuable thing. So one mouse tried to move it and could not do it, another came and could not do it. Finally the lama noticed that five of them came up together. He was wondering what they were trying to do. One mouse lay down on its back. Another pushed the turquoise onto its chest, and then four of them pulled at its arms and legs and in that way they started to move the turquoise. That is what mice can do! So accumulating wealth is not particularly a human value. Mice can do it better than humans! So as humans, we must accomplish both material and spiritual success. The combination of both is going to be the spiritual path that Americans will enjoy in the year 2000. We have to look at that, that is what it is going to be. It should be and it will be. That is exactly what it is.

If I do not take advantage of it now, how will such a perfect opportunity come again? Such an opportunity is not going to come again; we cannot take that for granted, so we cannot afford to waste what we have. Remember, I used to say jokingly, “If I give you one million dollars, will you let me cut off your head?” Nobody will say, “Okay!” So that is the
life we have; how valuable it is! Often, we don’t appreciate our lives. But if you think more, this is what it is. So do not abuse this body. Do not over-abuse this mind. Make the best use of it!

*The cause for a human rebirth: perfect morality*  This verse also gives you a meditation on how to appreciate your life, to appreciate the qualities your life has. It also gets you to meditate on the question of whether you can get another life just like this one, if you waste the one you have now. The answer is that this is not likely. Basically, in order to get reborn as a human being, you need perfect morality as foundation. This is the foundation to build a human life. Not only a perfect morality, but we need a lot of perfect morality. That must sound very strange to you. People must be thinking, morality is morality and if it is not perfect, it is not perfect. The morality we are talking about here may not be the same you are used to from the Judeo-Christian conservative viewpoint. I mean it is slightly different than what we hear from Pat Robertson. Here we are talking about morality from the karmic point of view. That means even one single vow or commitment counts. Lets say I have taken a vow, “I shall not kill human beings.” If we can accomplish that vow, it is a perfect morality. But we may still be killing ants, mosquitoes and cockroaches, *etc.* So if you take a vow, “I shall not kill,” and you then kill ants, maybe the morality is not perfect. From the Buddhist point of view, when we talk about perfect morality, we are not talking about what your sexual orientation or preferences are. We are simply talking about commitments, vows and karmic fulfillment. That is what morality is all about.

*Three types of morality*  From the Buddhist viewpoint, we talk about three kinds of morality.

1. Protecting yourself from downfalls.
2. Accumulating positive karma for yourself or others.
3. Committing yourself to helping other beings and working for the benefit of others.

So to take rebirth as a human being, you need a perfect morality. To take rebirth as a human with the eighteen different qualities, you need a lot of perfect morality.

One of the Panchen Lamas, the second or third, gave teachings in Tibet, telling people that the qualities of a human life are so difficult to find, and so forth. A Chinese guy attending the meetings had very strong faith in the Panchen Lama and really liked him and was totally devoted, but he kept on thinking, “He is talking like that, because he has not been to China and there are so many people in China and he just has not seen that.” Finally he could not help himself and he told the Panchen Lama about this, “If you go to China, you will find so many people there - so the human life is not hard to find there!” So the Panchen Lama replied, “You did not get me! I am talking here about the perfect life, the life with the eighteen qualities. Even in our own lives, our companions, our friends, people that we went to school with, might not have these eighteen qualities.” This is true, whether you believe it or not. Some people will say, “I don’t care about any spiritual path.” Some people will say, “I am not interested.” Others will say, “I want nothing to do with the spiritual development.” Some people will prefer to remain very yuppie-like. So that is what the Panchen Lama meant. This kind of life is so difficult to find!

**Appreciating and embracing our life**  

Anyway, there are two things to remember.

1. We have to appreciate our life
2. We have to embrace our life

We should not reject it. That is why this practice is mentioned in the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* as well as in the *lam rim* and also in the *Three Principles*. So in the first place, any human life should be appreciated. Furthermore, a life with the eight-
een qualities should even be appreciated much more. It is extremely important and terrible to waste that. Time really passes. You can listen to one of Stevie Wonder’s songs *I just called to say I love you*. In this song he goes through the events of the year, like Halloween, *etc.*, and if you look at that, you notice how fast it goes. The weeks go so fast, the months and years go so fast. You have no idea! Like now, we have just had the New Year and now it is already June! Time even goes faster when you have to divide it up between weekdays and weekends, working days and holidays, *etc.*. That makes the time go fast and easy. We may think that we keep extremely busy and have a very productive week, but at the same time, we are also losing time. So it is extremely important not to waste time.

*How to make life meaningful.* That does not mean however, that you should subject yourself to a program of saying mantras all the time, twenty-four hours a day. No one can do that; it is impossible. You should simply look for a good way of training that can change every chore that you have to do into a very positive action.

That is why we emphasize so much integrating practice into daily life. As long as your activities are not by nature non-virtuous or negative, you should be able to change everything into something positive. As Vajrayana practitioners, we even talk about dream yoga and changing all of our sleep into practice-oriented sleep. If you can change your sleep into positive work, then why can’t you change your waking state into positive life? This is extremely important. It depends on the motivation and on awareness. So motivation and awareness are the keys; they will guide your life in that way. This is very important for everybody. If you expect to do a million mantras - maybe if we lived in the eighteenth century, it would be okay, but we are not. We are almost in the year 2000. There are so many things happening now. The world is much smaller than in the eighteenth century. We have to
have our spiritual practice correspond with our day-to-day life.

**Questions and Answers**

*Student*: Can you go over the ten endowments again?

*Rinpoche*: Within the ten endowments, we basically have five personal and five related to time. The five personal are about us as human beings:

1. Born in a central location.
2. Having all faculties - you have all your senses intact.
3. All your hands and legs are together, nothing is broken.
4. You are not a closed-minded person.
5. Having faith in the karmic system and the Buddha-dharma.

Now the five relating to time:

6. It is a time in which Buddha has officially appeared.
7. He has given teachings.
8. The teachings are still continuing.
9. There are people who are following his teachings - there are companions.
10. All possible support is available.

The *lam rim* has the same basic qualities listed; there are some slight differences, but the bottom line is the same. What this is trying to tell you is that this opportunity is extremely rare and important. A number of people say that we live in a degenerate age and therefore we are not that fortunate. True, we do not live in a time when the Buddha is alive or many great teachers with great developments are available, but the time we do live in is the perfect time, because almost every single method Buddha has shown and which people are following is still available; it is all alive. The main point, in Tibet-
an Buddhism especially, is the living tradition, the living practice. We are not really talking about what happened 2500 years ago, but what has been happening to people from 2500 years ago up until now, what is happening, how has it developed, how it affects people. That is why the ten qualities are extremely important. To find another opportunity like the one we have now is not likely. That is why this life is so important.

Our life is capable of fulfilling whatever our desires may be, whether material or spiritual. But whether we are capable of making the maximum use of it is the big question. When the eighteen different qualities are mentioned, that is trying to tell you that the life we have is great. This human life that we have is in general capable of fulfilling everything we want. On top of that, when you have these eighteen different qualities, this life is capable of giving us the ultimate spiritual development. In this case, from the Buddhist point of view we are capable of becoming an arhat, and even a Buddha. All that is possible. From the point of view of the life, the chance or opportunity is not lacking. That is why the eighteen qualities have been repeatedly taught, from the time of Buddha onwards up to now. Whether we can take the maximum advantage or even any advantage at all is totally dependent on ourselves. But from the point of view of the quality of our life, it is capable of delivering. That is why our text says:

Leisures and endowments are very hard to find
And since they accomplish what is meaningful for a human,
If I do not take advantage of them now,
How will such a perfect opportunity come about again?

Student: Can you talk a little about how to reconcile the practice of precious human life with renunciation?

Rinpoche: What do you mean by renunciation?

Student: Non-attachment to life.
Rinpoche: As far as I am concerned, I almost never use the word renunciation to translate the Tibetan term *ngenjung*, but instead use Seeking Freedom or Determination to be Free. Renunciation can suggest some very strange things. People could get the idea that everybody should shave their heads and go into the forest or something; that is why I don’t use that word. But your question remains the same. I actually do not see any contradiction between appreciating human life and seeking freedom. You are not seeking freedom from life, but from suffering. If you want to renounce anything, you should renounce suffering! You don’t renounce life.

**Attaining liberation within a lay-person’s life**  One of the beautiful things in Buddhism is that it is not only the ordained people, the monks and nuns who can obtain liberation, but also laypeople. This is illustrated by Marpa, the founder of the Kargyu tradition. He was a farmer, a layperson with family and children, yet he obtained total enlightenment. He was a farmer, a villager, who grew food on his land. In Tibet, they did not have high tech farming. The only choices of livelihood were to be a farmer or a nomad. These were the most common professions. So Marpa was a family person and farmer. He had a huge amount of land, considering the Tibetan hilly land and yet he became the founder of one of the most important traditions in Tibet, the Kargyu tradition. Sixteen sub-sects have come out of that. The tradition itself is great, a huge one. So the founder of that great tradition was a lay-person. Renunciation in this case is to renounce suffering, not to renounce life. Marpa was the teacher of Milarepa. Anybody who knows about Tibetan Buddhism knows about Milarepa.

So do not misunderstand renunciation! Some orthodox people may interpret that renunciation is most important and that you have to renounce everything, shave your head and go to a forest or monastery. I do not believe that. On the contrary - I will make sure people do not do that, unless I am
sure that these people remain a hundred per cent for the rest of their lives in that manner. If that is so, it is the greatest thing you can do. We will all fold our hands in praise and say, “Great!” But in the West, you know, there are people who like to shave their heads and put on the robes and remain like that for six, seven years or some up to fifteen years, but thereafter their hair is starting to grow a little longer, their sleeves come up to here and then the whole thing is on the way out. So that is not worth it. There is the opportunity for everybody, for laypeople, men and women - everybody. It depends on the mind, the training of your mind, on the efforts you put in. It does not depend on the dress you wear or on the hair color or skin color, on any physical appearance, on whether you are a yuppie or a hippie.

*Student:* You have said that it takes a perfect morality to have the foundation for a human life. How can someone in the hell realms who is only thinking about their pain, create a perfect morality - or can only humans go on to another human lifetime?

*Rinpoche:* Perfect morality is for everybody. It is not the case that only human beings can take rebirth as a human being. Your question will be answered by the sixth or seventh verse in our text. However, I would like to say this: even people in the hell realms have the karma of perfect moralities. You may ask the question, “How come they are in the hell realm then?” It is because of karma, and you have to remember that karma is not an absolute dictator, but a dependent arising. Karma depends on the conditions. A karmic result can only develop in dependence on the conditions. So people in the hell realms, when they take rebirth there, somehow the conditions for a human life are not right, even though they may have the karma to be human. They cannot connect to their positive karmas at that point. Somehow the conditions are only right to connect them to their negative karma, so they happen to take rebirth in the lower realms. That does
not mean that they remain there forever. When the karmic connection is picked, it will go.

You remember, we talked about one of Buddha’s previous lives down in the hell realm, where he managed to develop bodhimind. Verse 8 is about that. Buddha at that time developed tremendous compassion and bodhimind for his companion who could not pull the horse cart. So he thought, “I wish he did not have to pull this horse cart. I will pull it alone, so that he does not have to suffer.” The moment this thought came into his head, the hell guardian attacked him, hit him on the head and he died as a hell realm person and got reborn in the human land. This is exactly how they connect. Karma depends on conditions. Life depends on so many things coming together. Karma and conditions come together and then you have a life.

**Student:** Did you say earlier that the cause of our negative karma is our neuroses?

**Rinpoche:** Our negative karma comes from our own negative thoughts such as anger, hatred, jealousy, and so forth. These are what I call our neuroses, what else? These neuroses of ours really are the creators of our own negative karma. That is what I always say. It is simple. Negative karma is negative actions. When you complete or half complete a negative action, that is negative karma. If we did not have neuroses, we would not commit such actions. So the neuroses are really the cause of negative karma which is the cause of suffering. Indirectly, the Second Noble Truth, the cause of suffering, truly speaking is nothing but our negative emotions or neuroses.

**Verse 5**

*Just as a flash of lightning on a dark, cloudy night,*  
*For an instance brightly illuminates all,*
Likewise in this world, through the might of
the Buddha,
A wholesome thought rarely and briefly
appears.

The opportunity is rare and brief. Sometimes we experience a
brief window, a glimpse. Many have had this opportunity in
their lives, many have not. Those who did got it in various
ways, some with the help of meditation, some with the help
of chemicals, with the help of all sorts of things. They re-
ceived a glimpse of something perfect, better and wonderful.
When we get this, we can see and feel it, we can touch it, but
it does not last very long. Perhaps to the younger generation
here, this does not make much sense. But the people who
experimented in the sixties will definitely nod their heads!
That kind of glimpse of something perfect indicates to us
that there is something more than what we normally consider
the dreams of our lives.

Everybody has dreams. They differ from person to per-
son. Recently, on the TV I once again saw Martin Luther
King saying, “I have a dream.” That dream had an effect on
a lot of people and helped them. But everybody has their
own dreams and many of us have dreams that are oriented
towards material success. Many people do, whether you ac-
cept or not. People may call it success in life. But there is
something more than that, something that goes beyond that.

How the sixties provided an opening  What some people
did in the sixties really helped tremendously to open up the
spiritual path for a lot of people. There was the chance to see
something beyond. It is really an unfortunate thing that so
many of our dreams are only directed at material success,
although you have got to go with the way society functions,
you cannot fight against it. It is unfortunate, because today
people’s lives are measured in terms of money. It is unfortu-
nate, but because it is all over the world, we have to also fol-
low that.
I was talking about that with Doctor Dorje, the Tibetan doctor who lives here. He recently went back to his native homeland in Tibet. He spent a week there and came back. His sister lives there and she is a nomad. He told me that one of the biggest problems these nomads are facing is the lack of grain to eat. The system used to be that the nomads would bring their normal products like meat, butter, skins, etc., down to the valleys where they exchanged them for grain that was grown in the valleys. So the nomads came with their cheese, cream, milk and butter, etc., and exchanged that for grain. It worked for everybody. The nomads got enough grain to eat and the villagers got enough dairy products. This exchange may have happened only two or three times a year, but everybody had enough.

Now the economic system based on money has been introduced. So the villagers growing the grain bring it to the bigger cities where they try to get cash for it. The poor nomads then have no way of getting anything. They have to keep on eating their cheese, yogurt and milk throughout the year. I thought of that because traditionally the value of work was for filling human needs. Today our values and success are measured in terms of dollars, or even just figures on the banks’ computers, which is really unfortunate.

What human beings are actually seeking is happiness and joy. Money is incapable of providing all the happiness and joy we are seeking. Believe it or not, it cannot do that. But good human qualities, like kindness, compassion, and love, all of these are capable of delivering the goods. Our problem is that we are too materialistic - but we have to go along with the system of the society we are in. If you don’t, you are neither helping yourself nor anybody else.

In the sixties, for whatever reason, there was a little opening, whether it was as Shantideva’s verse says, through the might of Buddha - and this verse was not written after the sixties! Because of either the Buddhas’ deeds or the fortune and luck of individual human beings or of human beings in gen-
eral, occasionally we get that sort of glimpse, *like a flash of lightning on a dark, cloudy night*. Either individually or collectively, we always somehow get to see another little bit. We can be particularly affected by this; it is an opening for us, but unfortunately it does not last long, just *for an instant*. Whatever the cause may be, it is not our karmic cause.

From the background of reincarnation, for many lives we have not had an opportunity such as we have now: a life with the eighteen qualities. This is also *like a flash of lightning* in the dark night; it only lasts for a very brief period. Now while we have the chance, it is time for us to grab this opportunity. Don’t let it go to waste!

I am sure you people have read both the commentaries by the Dalai Lama and by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso on this particular verse. But you also have to translate with your own personal experience and the experience that other people have had. A lot of people will say that their experience was a hallucination, that it was useless. Others say that it was great. But even the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* has made this statement over a thousand years ago! Such an opportunity appears in this world occasionally here and there, either collectively or individually. It is a great indication that one has the opportunity; it is there. It is up to each individual, whether they want to grab this opportunity or let it go. The way to grab the opportunity is explained in the ten chapters of this book. This will tell you how to make the great opportunity of this life truly worthwhile.

We are still talking about verse five. Last time I mentioned that the *flash of lightning in the dark, cloudy night* could be seen as the sort of experience that people do occasionally have through various ways and means. That was very much relevant to people here since lot of people have had such experiences. That is not necessarily a great sort of experience, but not necessarily a bad one either. It just gives us some idea that there is something other, something more than what we nor-
mally think. It also gives us the idea that the dreams of life do not have to be limited to material comfort and success alone.

Having said this, I have to go back and look at this verse in the traditional way, too. It is *a dark and cloudy night* - like the many lives that we experience. Too many of them are like the dark, cloudy night. That means that most of the time we don’t have any idea or understanding or knowledge of any spiritual path, any knowledge of how we can liberate ourselves once and for all. That idea is extremely rare.

**The great value of the life we have** We see that this is true when we think about the preciousness of this human life we have. There are so many people very much the same as you and me. They were born in the United States, they are educated, nice, kind and wonderful people, just like yourself. But when the question of the spiritual path comes up, they have no interest whatsoever. That is true for a number of people we know.

We have had so many lives and in many of them we have not even been human. In many that were human lives, we were absolute yuppies who had no interest in anything except money or material life - if that is the meaning of ‘yuppie’. Maybe it is not. We all know many people who may be nice, kind and wonderful persons but simply have no interest in the spiritual path, because it does not mean anything to them. These persons never show interest in whether there are any future lives or not, yet they may be great, wonderful beings, you may never know.

I met this doctor from Stanford or Harvard, Sherwin Nuland, who wrote a book called *How We Die*. He describes how the body dismantles completely and ceases to function. He told me personally, “I don’t buy into any spiritual path at all; as a scientist I should not. If I had to choose one, I would pick Tibetan Buddhism, because it makes the most sense here on the subject of death. But I am not going to do that, unless I see somebody coming back from the bardo to shake
hands with me. Until then, I cannot follow that. That is my principle as a scientist!” So there are these wonderful, great people around, straightforward, honest, great people. However, they will not buy or accept that there is any future life. That is fine, absolutely fine, but what I am telling you is that this deprives him of the opportunity to explore what happens when you die and thereafter. That opportunity is cut off.

Therefore, even as human beings, only a very limited number of people have the opportunity to look into it. The majority of even human lives are covered by this *dark and cloudy night*. Only a few will have the experience of the lightning that *brightly illuminates*. That is one of the reasons why Buddha said right from the beginning that Buddhism is very rare. Buddha kept saying that even though in his time in India there were hundreds of thousands, even millions, following him. He kept on saying what a rare opportunity this was. It is not only that it is difficult for Buddhism to come, but that the opportunity for one individual to take it and connect with it and get an interest and look into it is very rare. It is like lightning in the dark night. The whole night is dark and the lightning only comes for a very short period. That is what this verse is talking about.

Then the verse continues that similarly, in this world, through the efforts of the Buddhas (*through the night of Buddha*) or through your own good karma or fortune, a brief opportunity comes for people. We are in that brief period.

That is the traditional way of explaining this verse. The way I did it last time is the practical way, the way people experience things.

**Questions and Answers**

*Student*: You said that such an experience is not our karmic cause. But I thought in the karmic system, you can only experience something if you have the cause for it.

*Rinpoche*: You are becoming quite some Geshe-la, aren’t you? Yes, this is just my rhetoric. It is true, for everything that
happens, there is bound to be a karmic cause. This particular translation here says, *through the might of the Buddhas*, while the Tibetan really says something more like *through the luck and fortune of all existence*. You could say that is the good karma of all existence. That is why I say ‘whatever’, because it can be both. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are always there to try to show people something else, something beyond what we normally know.

We can see Tara up there in the thangka, always holding that beautiful flower as an invitation telling people that there is something better than what we normally consider to be great. The gesture means, “Come over, let me show you!” That is what it is. This is what the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* says. This is what a lot of people have experienced through various means, some through meditative states, some through chemical effects, some through dreams, some for no apparent reason - it just pops up in their heads. Then some other people do not experience anything. All of that happens. This is how it is explained. This is how we have to think and put efforts in.

When you have such a glimpse, you always want to go back to it and you try to use the same method for that. But I don’t think you get back the same feeling all the time. If you want to know why, you could have asked Timothy Leary. Shortly before he died, he said, “Why?” and “Why not?” So nobody knows what that means. Actually shortly before that I had him also on the telephone, but he was not able to talk, he just made some “aaabbb” sounds, so I just chanted a little bit. His wife actually rang me and then she left the room and he tried to talk to me, but all I could hear was this “aaabbb” sound. I could not hear much, so I just kept on doing whatever I had to do. Afterwards he said, “Why?” and “Why not?”

According to this Tibetan text, the glimpses we get are attributed to both the power of the Buddha and the good fortune and karma of the people. But this particular transla-
tion we have does not say that. That is why I like to use the word *whatever*. So it is due to the power of the enlightened beings as well as the power of the individual. The way the text describes it, *like lightning in the dark night* shows you how the individual can get struck. You may not get enlightened, but wake up and all sorts of things can happen. In Vajrayana, you can explain a lot of different things here, but in this context I would like to remain on the ground and stick with the explanation that it is the glimpse that people can get. It is people’s experience.

*Student:* Is the way you come out of a hell realm experience with a lot of nasty karma by linking up with some distant previous morality?

*Rinpoche:* Actually, if you die with anger, the chances are that you are likely to connect with negative karma. Believe it or not, each one of us has a tremendous amount of karma stored up, both good and bad. If you do not have enough good karma, you will not be able to take rebirth as a human being. The very fact that you are born as a human being, and not only as a human, but as a human being in one of the world’s most advanced and developed countries, and not only that, but the time is such that there is a tremendous amount of spiritual practice and interest is growing, that itself indicates that we have a tremendous amount of great karma in our reserves. There is no question about it. At the same time we also have a tremendous amount of negative karma, too. There is no question about that either.

The only question that remains is “What is the best way to use this store of karma?” The question is, at the time of death, which karma will I connect to? That’s what it is. If a person dies with tremendous anger, there is a great chance that that person will connect with a negative karma. If a person dies with attachment, chances are that they will connect with negative karma. If a person dies with tremendous regret, it is also not good. Fear can go both ways, but pride, *etc.*, are not good. All sorts of things can happen.
In everyday life, when people push our buttons, how do we feel, how do we react? It is the same thing at death. A tremendous number of buttons are being pushed by nature, by conditions, by weakness and suffering and pain and losing everything. Every possible button is pushed. So at that time how you can really think makes a difference to what karma you can really connect with. That is why Vajrayana practitioners have a daily practice that includes the death and the dying process; because you have practiced, you will recognize it, and you will feel which buttons are being pushed and you recognize that all this is happening. It has become almost an everyday event. Then you are automatically able to think what you are supposed to think. Even though you may not have made it through the great path of Dharmakaya and all this, but still, we have a ninety-nine point nine per cent chance of connecting with positive karma, which is much more than anybody else, because of the daily practice. So it really is a big deal. When you do not think of it building up, you don’t think of it as a big deal, but it is - provided it is a perfect practice.

Student: Will all sentient beings eventually reach enlightenment or will some continue to cycle through samsaric existences?

Rinpoche: I have to give you the answer philosophically. The Buddha was asked the same question, “Is there a beginning of samsara?” He kept quiet. “Is there an end to samsara?” He kept quiet. That is called Buddha’s great silence. There is supposed to be a time when each individual is supposed to become free of suffering. But when and what and how, I have no idea. I have no answer for that. There should be, but there may or there may not be - who knows?
Student: If someone was about to be liberated from samsara during death, would they have any idea about that beforehand or does it come as a surprise?

Rinpoche: I wish it could be like that. It would be a very pleasant surprise, if that was true! But I don’t think so. Spiritual development is something that grows very slowly and steadily within the individual. You may or may not be aware of each and every time there is a particular development. Basically, though, you are aware of the general development you have. If you are not aware of what you have, then perhaps you don’t have it.

Student: But the glimpses become more regular?

Rinpoche: The Bodhisattvacharyavatara does not say that they become more regular, it says that they come very seldom and rarely - just joking! The main point is that your spiritual practice should be able to develop, even if you are living in the middle of downtown Detroit in between gunshots. That is the challenge. We can go to a nice and beautiful place and have nice, beautiful feelings, and try to translate that into spiritual practice and development - that is perhaps okay, but I don’t think that is what it should be. Spiritual development should continue no matter where you are, no matter in what condition you might find yourself in - under any circumstances, whether you are in the Chinese jails or torture chambers or a five star American hotel - wherever you may be, it should have the same effect on the individual. What I am about to say is not quite right. I was going to say that spiritual development should be free from relying on external conditions. Actually, at our level, we do depend on the external conditions a lot, but it should not be that way. When you get to a certain level, then you don’t depend on those external conditions at all.

Student: In verse five when it says a wholesome thought rarely and briefly appears, I don’t quite understand what is meant by wholesome thought.
Rinpoche: I was also not fully satisfied with the English translation *wholesome thought* at this point. In Tibetan, it says, *jig ten sō nam lodrö*. The word *jig ten* here means samsaric existence. *Sō nam* is luck and *lodrö* is wisdom. So occasionally you get the wisdom and fortune of all beings. I think the translator chose to put the terms *existence, luck and wisdom* all together and chose to call that *wholesome*. Actually that is the cause of the *lightning in the dark, cloudy night*. It is the fortune, positive karma, and the blessings and wisdom of the enlightened beings.

Student: How do Buddha’s blessings and good karma bring that about? I can understand the karma part, but what are the Buddha’s blessings doing in there?

Rinpoche: The answer to that is that the world in which we exist very much depends on our own karma, the good and the bad. It also depends on the other beings’ functioning. We are interdependent; we don’t arise independently. So the Buddha’s blessings have something to do in there, too. Not only that, your own neighbors, your own friends, the Panamanians and Mexicans, too, have got something to do. Every part of existence here is interdependent. It is so much so that any little event that happens anywhere affects everything everywhere. A little movement by a butterfly in China will affect the United States, environmentally. This is the way everything functions, because we are a dependent and interdependent world. It is your own deeds that create it, no doubt, but it also depends on other conditions. You may now raise the question, “In that case I don’t have to care much about myself. I can go and do all bad things, let others do all the good things and I will get the same effect!” Maybe it is true, maybe it is not. It is not, because you would not then have the basis on which to function.

Verse 6

Hence virtue is perpetually feeble,
The great strength of immorality being
extremely intense,
And except for a Fully Awakened Mind
By what other virtue will it be overcome?

The Tibetan text literally says that *As we explained, the period of virtue is weak and short*. Therefore virtue is not very strong with us. Why? The basis on which we can be perfect is very weak and small. Therefore, virtue itself is weak in us.

*How to check the state of your mind*  It is true. Simply observe your mind. Give yourself thirty minutes to keep on watching your own mind. Traditional Tibetan teachers used to do this when there was nothing else to do. You pick up black and white pebbles and if you notice that a positive thought comes up, you put down a white pebble. If you have a negative thought, put a black pebble, or whatever other color. Keep on putting down pebbles according to what kind of thoughts come up and you are going to have a lot of negative pebbles and only very few positive pebbles! That is how it was measured in the good old days, when they had nothing to do. They used to sit for whole days, putting down pebbles! In the evenings they would weigh them, and the weight of the negative pebbles would always be greater.

In those earlier days, they did not know how to calculate things in terms of statistics. Nowadays we know that. So instead of sitting the whole day, just sit there for half an hour. That will give you enough information to get your statistics right. That itself will prove to you how weak the positive thoughts we have are, how weak our positive-karma oriented mind is. The positive influence we can get depends on how many positive thoughts we have. From this it will be absolutely clear that virtue is *perpetually feeble* within ourselves. Really, that will be absolutely clear if you do this experiment!

Since it is clear how feeble virtue is, what will be strong or extremely intense is the negativity, the opposite part. We are such people that we don’t sit around idle much. Western people in particular never sit idle, unless they are high! You are active, physically, mentally, emotionally. If you don’t have
positive mental attitudes or positive emotional feelings or positive physical actions, you are bound to have the opposite. That makes the great strength of evil extremely intense. This is not talking about some external evil, some devil with horns, etc., but the negative emotions and thoughts that will make you do something very negative, very mean. That is the evil, the immorality.

I am such a strange fellow, when I come to think about myself! My background and my upbringing comes from a period and society which had a tremendous amount of superstition and mystical things. What I heard, what I learnt, what I dealt with, all that was very mystical. However, as a person myself, I am not into anything mystical at all, but very plain. Therefore to think about somebody called ‘Evil’, some kind of formless being, that comes round to harm us, does not work for me at all! That does not exist at all. I have had a number of encounters with all sorts of ghosts and so forth, but I look at them as beings, like all of us human beings are. They are persons you can talk to, negotiate with, give and take all sorts of things. I see them like that rather than as some kind of mythological figures. So when the words ‘evil’ or ‘devil’ are used, my mind straight away goes within me and identifies that with my neuroses, my attachment, my anger, my hatred, jealousy, meanness, etc. That is what I refer to.

So when the positive portion is weak, then the extremely powerful, intense thing you have within you is that negative one, right? That is human nature. That is the division within us - the good and the bad. When you see that the good is weak, the strength is in the negativity. Whenever we do a Dharma practice, we are shifting this balance. The evil, negative side should be made lighter and lighter, and whatever positivity we have should be made heavier.

I always say that positive and negative karma function within the individual like a seesaw that children play on. The change we are trying to bring about is in this way rather than that way, to bring the positive side up and the negative down.
That is the shift we have to make from the evil forces to the positive ones. That is why practitioners in Tibet kept on playing with pebbles. You put the different colored ones in piles according to what thoughts you have. If you have nothing to do, sometimes it is fun. Give yourself half an hour or twenty minutes and put down different-colored pebbles and see what happens. If the positive ones are more, be happy, rejoice. If the negatives ones win, be more cautious and careful. That is how you have to deal with your life.

So we do have these extremely intensified evil thoughts. How can we purify them? How can we make them useless and harmless? How can we make the great change? How can we switch that around? The text says,

And except for a Fully Awakened Mind, by what other virtue will it be overcome?

It is not possible to overcome such powerful, evil neuroses, except through the Awakened Mind, which means bodhimind. Bodhimind is ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion. Nothing else, no other mind can overcome these evil neuroses. It is not possible. That is why we say all the time that bodhimind is one of the best means of purification. Bodhi refers to Buddha, who has the totally awakened state. The mind or thought or intention which seeks that, which is interested in that, the mind which makes you interested in having that bodhi state, that is called bodhimind. It is ultimate love and compassion with no self-interest at all. This mind is not based on self-centeredness at all; it has shifted from self-centeredness to caring for others. Therefore, it is not going to bring any frustration, it has no difficulties in finding out how to work.

We talk about the Three Principles all the time. The first is Seeking Freedom, determining to free ourselves. The moment we realize that it is absolutely necessary to get freedom, our mind is straight away going to drive us to the question, “How am I going to get that? What should I do? Should I prostrate? Should I do mandala offerings? Should I do mantras? Should I do retreat? Should I shave my head?”,
etc. A zillion different thoughts will burden you all the time, so much so that you cannot even sleep at night, you will be so anxious to find the solution! You will wonder whether Hinduism is better or Buddhism, maybe the Zen tradition or the Tibetan tradition, maybe the Jewish kabala is better, or maybe voodoo is better. However, you are not going to find anything with that attitude. You know why? If you go looking around, thinking, “I should do this, I should do that, I, I, I!” then that itself is a problem.

This is not only with Buddhism, but everywhere you go. The moment you have that idea, the Buddha’s wise way, technically called skillful way or skillful means is to recommend, “For this moment, forget the ‘I, I, I,’ move to the second and third person, or think ‘others, others, others.’” You can get the joys you are seeking when you help others. If you do something good for somebody, don’t you feel joy? You do, you have satisfaction.

Pat O’Meara came here last week with a broken arm, and he said, “I have been a Bodhisattva.” He said that he saw a girl, about thirteen to fourteen years old, who took her mother’s car and crashed it into a tree. He saw that it was starting to catch fire, so he broke the window and pulled the girl out. It may be a Bodhisattva act or not, but it is a good citizen act! When he pulled that girl out and saved her life, he felt joy. That is an example of how anybody who helps someone can feel the satisfaction. Right?

All these joys and all the bliss and all the great things follow from love and compassion. That is why, when you just think, “What can I do? I, I, I,” you won’t get it. When you say, “You, you, you,” or “Others, others, others,” then you get it. That is the point. If you could gain everything from self-centeredness, there would be no need for the second principle, Bodhimind. You could stay with the first principle and get it over with. But you can’t. In order to get over it, you have to move to the second principle.
So the quality of ultimate compassion or bodhimind has the power to overcome our neuroses, our negativities, our immorality. I am not fully happy with this translation we have. I mean I cannot do better than that, but am I really happy? No. That is why I was hoping that somebody else would have another translation for this.

It says here, *Except by the fully awakened mind, by what other virtue will it be overcome?* We are talking about overcoming evil thoughts, evil emotions, evil motivations, evil actions, which are the neuroses which cause negative karma. Therefore the best purification is bodhimind. I guarantee to you (I sound like I’m advertising a warehouse sale on TV, but I’m not!), I guarantee to you that generating bodhimind is a million times better than doing a million prostrations, or a million mandala offerings or a million Vajrasattva recitations. The *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is a witness to that.

**Verse 7**

All the Buddhas who have contemplated for many eons,
Have seen it to be beneficial;
For by it the limitless masses of beings
Will quickly attain the supreme state of bliss.

Not only does bodhimind give tremendous powerful purification, but it also helps you. It is one of the best ways to bring about an accumulation of merit and one of the best ways to reach your goal. The spiritual strength you can get is this. So *the Buddhas thought for many eons*, trying to find the best way to help other beings and have found that this is the key. This particular quotation has been used by the traditional teachings for the Seven-Limb Practice and for bodhimind both. After eons of meetings, the Buddhas resolved that the Seven-Limb Practice is the best solution for easy work, and at the mind level the bodhimind is the best way to reach to and bring countless beings to the ultimate spiritual position.
Actually the first chapter of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara totally gives you the benefits of the bodhimmind. Why does it do this first? When it shows you the benefits of the bodhimmind, it is able to shift the yuppies’ focus from the extreme yuppiness into the center and also draw the hippies from their extreme into the middle. That is the reason why the benefits are chosen first.

The next verse continues to talk about these benefits.

Verse 8

Those who wish to destroy the many sorrows of (their) conditioned existence,
Those who wish (all beings) to experience a multitude of joys,
And those who wish to experience much happiness
Should never forsake the Awakening Mind.

Why does the translation say conditioned existence? Anyway, samsara, the cycle of existence for life after life, uncontrolled reincarnation, is based on the conditioned existence. What is conditioned existence? Created phenomena? The text is trying to tell you what the root of samsara really is. In Tibetan they use the term sipa, which is samsara.

The nature of samsara  What is samsara really? What is the continuation of life after life? That is really the question. You may simply say, “Me,” but that is not right. If I have to continue, then I would have to be permanent. Samsara is really the continuation of the contaminated identity of the individual; that is what is really continuing. It is what we identify ourselves with. It is not necessarily the physical identity or mental identity, not necessarily the emotional identity, but the combination of it. Sometimes there is form, sometimes there is formless form, sometimes there is something, which we refer to as me, which continues, which will be the basis of our
functioning. This is the really true me, who can experience, who can remember in future. There is some kind of identity that will continue. That identity at this moment is contaminated. The moment you switch from samsara to nirvana, that identity will become uncontaminated identity rather than contaminated identity. Why do we have contaminated identity? Because we have continuous neuroses. The brief way this is described here in the text is conditioned existence. That is the cause of our suffering.

The verse continues and those who wish to experience much happiness, a multitude of joys should never forsake the Awakening Mind. One should never give up bodhimind. If you do, you are never going to find much happiness. If we are looking for the way out, from the Mahayana point of view this is nothing but love and compassion. Generating love and compassion up to the ultimate level, up to the ultimate degree, is the way out. If you give that up, if you forsake the Awakening Mind, there is no other way to get that anywhere else.

**Verse 9**

The moment an Awakening Mind arises
In those fettered in the jail of cyclic existence,
They will be named a ‘Child of the Sugatas’,
And will be revered by both humans and
gods of the world.

I know this verse by heart. A son or child of the Sugatas means a child of Buddhas. So it does not matter how weak a person you may be: you may be completely tied down in suffering, or you may be at the bottom of the pit, fettered in the jail of cyclic existence. You remember that Buddha first generated bodhimind in the hell realm. He had tremendous compassion for the companion with whom he had to pull the cart. His companion could not pull and so Buddha wished that he could manage to pull it all by himself, so that his companion would not have to suffer. Then the hell administrator hit Buddha’s
previous life’s incarnation on the head with a hammer and said, “How dare you think that way!” He hit him so hard that he died and was reborn as a human being. This is exactly what this verse is about.

No matter how weak you may be, no matter how much suffering you may have, no matter how much difficulty you may have, no matter how much you may be tied by all these neuroses, if you grow this mind within you, you get out. These are the tricks in the spiritual path! The moment you have bodhimind, you become a son or heir of the Buddhas, a prince.

This does not mean that the daughters are looked down on, but you have to remember that this tradition started in India two thousand five hundred years ago. We are talking about a time of kings and kingdoms and princes and all that. What used to happen is that when you were a prince, no matter how young, how weak, how immature you might be, you were much more powerful than those great mature diplomats and ministers. By virtue of being the prince, you overpowered those ministers. No matter how old and mature these diplomats and politicians might be, just by virtue of being the Prince of Wales you could totally overpower them.

**The key** Likewise, this is the key for us. No matter how conditioned our immature state might be, if we can grow the bodhimind, we have the solution. It is the mind that cares for others, which has total altruistic dedication. It is the mind that admires and seeks enlightenment in order to serve others. If you can grow that mind, you are like the Prince of Wales of the enlightened beings! This is a little easy way to help yourself without much effort; it is like a short cut. This is how you can overcome negativities. This is how you can push yourself in, without having twenty-four hours devoted to meditation, saying mantras, or doing something, without even putting eight hours in. It is simple and the best way to function. It is like joining the Harvard Club! Does that make
sense to you? When you join the Harvard Club, you can get the best jobs in the United States. That is how you go about it.

Questions and Answers

*Student:* Isn’t the goal of bodhimind to do things for others without observing the joy? Is it a natural process to gain bodhimind to observe the joy?

*Rinpoche:* The answer for that is that the joy is going to come, whether you like it or not. You will enjoy it. The satisfaction is there, but you don’t look for joy. The joys will come in a sense effortlessly. You don’t look for joy, you don’t work for joy, but joy comes. What you do is good deeds, and that will give you joy. You don’t have to feel guilty that you enjoy it; you deserve it! Really true. But if it is fake joy, it is fake and not that great anyway.

The truth comes the moment you seek enlightenment, when you want to seek freedom for yourself from your neuroses. So you are looking for a way and you perceive it like this, “All others are in the same condition as me. How can I help them?” That is the key for opening the way out. The key is not thinking, “What can *I* do, how can *I* do it...” The key is thinking of others, how they are, what they are doing. The moment you say, “What can *I* do for them?” it is not that great work. In American life it may be considered great work, but there is an *I*-interest there. So you don’t want to bring that in. Straight away switch to thinking, “What about others?”

The moment you are focusing on what *I* can do, it is the doorway to idiot compassion. That is true. Also, in that case you are not letting go of the ego-grasping and this is the actual point where you hold back. Conditioned existence is ego-existence. As long as you do not let that go, no matter what you do, you are not going to find the way out. Remember that in the future.

Our mind is trained in such a way that no matter how many times we say, “This is for the benefit of others,” there is always self-interest. That is always locked in. Even if you
would like to do something great, it should be *me* who is doing something great rather than *you* who are doing something great. This is locked in back there. It may not come out openly, but it is there. Therefore, if you have to let something go, it should be the ego-existence or conditioned existence. Conditioned existence is the root of samsara.

*Student:* When you try to generate bodhimind in the earlier stages, is there a way to protect yourself from idiot compassion?

*Rinpoche:* I don’t think you have to protect yourself from idiot compassion at all. Idiot compassion will not destroy bodhimind at all. It is fine; it is no problem as far as bodhimind goes. It is a problem for the practitioner, but no problem for the bodhimind. However, you do have to protect yourself from ego-grasping. You have to protect yourself from the *I,* rather than from idiot compassion. The *I* is the problem if you want to create wisdom and the *I* is the problem if you want to create bodhimind. So if you want to seek protection, seek protection from *I!*

*A meditation on why we need to become enlightened*

We are talking about the benefits of bodhimind. *Bodhi* refers to the enlightened level. So it is the mind that would really like to seek ultimate enlightenment. This mind actually is ultimate, unconditioned, unlimited love and compassion. That is a simple explanation of bodhimind. The reason why you want to gain the best spiritual development is in order to help all beings, because you committed yourself to do this.

Just to make ourselves happy and joyful, we do not need to achieve enlightenment or even to seek enlightenment. But we are acting not only for our own purposes, so we need to go and benefit all beings. In order to help all beings, it is absolutely necessary for us to communicate, to be able to do everything we need to do. That is why there is a need for ultimate enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism normally tells you
that the state of the Buddha is your goal. That does not mean anything to you. But so many of you have kindly bought that from me or any other Tibetan without asking any questions why. So that is great, wonderful, it makes the job easier! However, for you it is not that great. While you try to go through with that, you say all the time, “I want to obtain Buddhahood.” After some time you begin to ask yourself, “Why? What do I need that for?”

I often share this following story with you. About five or six years ago, a friend of ours asked me one day, “Rinpoche, could you tell me something about Buddhahood?” She asked me while we were standing by the road, so I quickly said, “It is something like God.” She thought for a while and then said, “If it is the stage of God, I have no interest in becoming God at all!” Thinking about that, however, benefited her tremendously and some time later she told me, “Practicing this has been good. People have started treating me better.” Actually, she started treating people better, and as a result they started treating her better also. I think that is the bottom line.

Helping others is difficult In one way, she was absolutely right. There is no need to have absolute enlightenment for our own purposes. If we get free from our negative neuroses, that is good enough for us. But when you talk about Mahayana, Bodhimind and Bodhisattvas, you are talking about ultimate love and compassion; you care for all beings, not only the people you normally would care about, but also those who you normally don’t care for at all. When you want to care for those who you don’t even care about, that goes beyond meeting your own needs. You need to help and get into the people’s ideas. You have to talk to people. If you have to talk to even a single politician to make them change their minds - or forget about politicians, if you just want to convince one of your own companions about something, it takes a tremendous amount of effort and tremendous amounts of skill. You don’t want the companion to run away from you,
you don’t want them to misunderstand, yet you want to convince them of something.

We have a saying in Tibetan, “Without scaring the bird away, you have to pick up the eggs.” In order to do that, you need skills; you need methods. Ordinary methods are not enough. You need the ultimate, best methods, because you are going to care for those you don’t even care about. That is why you need the best tools; that is why, when you get to this level, love and compassion and seeking Buddhahood become relevant. When you are at the beginning level, at the primary or preliminary level or even on the common with the lower or medium level, you don’t need that. Your goal at that point is simply to free yourself from your neuroses. At this level, you shift your goal from just freeing yourself from your neuroses to helping and caring for others.

We need the best tools available  When you need to help the different varieties of people, you need the best tools available. Even on our usual educational level, if you want to help somebody, you need a lot of degrees. If you want to become a midwife, you need many kinds of skills and degrees. If you want to talk to people, you have to become a psychologist or psychotherapist. On all the different levels, you need to have skills. Here you want to try to help all sentient beings and bring them to the best level of enlightenment. Certainly, you need the best tools in existence! That is why enlightenment needs to be the goal that you want to achieve. These are the reasons.

When you don’t question the need for total enlightenment at the earlier level, but simply repeat that you want to become enlightened for the benefit of all beings, and for that purpose you do this and that, etc., then you just sit there and it is nice, but after some time you will begin to ask questions. You will think, “I have not seen any reasons why I have to become enlightened!” Naturally, people will get thoughts and ideas coming up, so naturally it is a good thing to have that
thought. Better late than never! I do welcome these thoughts. I really am happy when people talk to me that way. I am happy, because I see that people are thinking, that they are analyzing.

To me, that is meditation. When you analyze, when you think, that is meditation. Whether you are sitting on the pot or in the shower or on the cushion - I don’t care, as long as you are not driving! When you are driving, it is dangerous. As long as you are thinking, that is good enough, and it will make a difference. You have to think and analyze and become convinced that you need to become enlightened - if you want to become enlightened. If you don’t want to, you don’t have to! You can quit this level and go back to the level where all you want is freedom from your neuroses. We will all say that we do want to have freedom; that is because we can see and feel and touch it. But here, we are going one step beyond the ordinary level.

So this first chapter deals with the benefits of this kind of ultimate love and compassion.

**Verse 10**

*It is like the supreme gold-making elixir;*
*For it transforms the unclean body we have taken*
*Into the priceless jewel of the Buddha Form;*
*Therefore firmly seize this Awakening Mind.*

It is like the gold alchemical solution, a *gold-making elixir*, which can magically transform all ordinary metals into gold. This is not talking about something dipped in gold or gold-plated; this is one of the Hindu-Buddhist mythological stories. Supposedly, in early India there was some kind of special potion that just by touching iron could turn it into real gold, because of the power of the solution. In fact, well-known Indian politicians told me repeatedly that in India even recently they had this magical solution which changed metals into gold. They told me that this was how they financed
Ghandiji’s non-violent movement against the British - with this funny magic! While I was telling people in India that this was one of these mythological stories, a number of well-known, respected old politicians, including somebody who worked as Ghandi’s secretary and is currently the chairman of the Ghandi Peace Foundation, objected. He is a student of mine, a very respected Indian politician called Rabindradharma. He repeatedly told me, “Rinpoche, this is not a mythological story, this is reality! This is how we supported Ghandi’s peaceful movement.” I asked him, “Who knows about that method?” He said, “Only a couple of sadhus knew, and after the independence they decided not to reveal it any more.” So when I was giving teachings on this particular verse in Delhi, Rabindradharma told me that it is not a myth, but reality. Who knows, but it must be. Rabindradharma is a well-respected person, chairman of the Ghandi Peace Foundation right now. So maybe it is true. Our text does not really clarify it. It just says that, when the special solution is applied, it becomes gold, not just gold-plated.

Likewise, if you develop this love and compassion, even our ordinary human form is changed into something extraordinary - the precious body of a Buddha. It becomes the priceless jewel of the Buddha Form. You cannot put a price on it. Therefore, if you are an intelligent person, why would you not want this jewel to be part of you?

Verse 11

Since the limitless mind of the Sole Guide of the World
Has upon thorough investigation seen its preciousness,
All beings wishing to be free from worldly abodes
Should firmly take hold of this precious
Awakening Mind.

If you have this mind, you will become the only guide who can lead all sentient beings, *the Sole Guide of the World.* Otherwise, you will be a guide who will lead only a limited number of people, a few people, five or ten, or hundreds or thousands. But when you have bodhimind, you will become *the sole guide* of all sentient beings. Whether you have anything to do with certain persons or not, it does not matter, you will care for them, you will really like to help them and you really will guide them. That is why you will be the sole guide of all sentient beings.

If you check and investigate, if you really analyze the value of such a mind, what are you going to find? You will find that it is immeasurable, *limitless.* Why? You will be able to fulfil the wishes of all beings, and even before you can help all beings, you can help hundreds and thousands of beings. If you can fulfill just one person’s wishes, if you can help even a single person, how much joy do you get?

*The source of joy* Today I will again mention this Bodhisattva example that I have given everywhere from Chicago to San Diego, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Minnesota. When you see a girl caught in a burning car and there is no time to find a stone, you have to use your hand and all your strength and break the window to pull the girl out, saving a life. That is one example. And even if you break your wrist in the process, it does not matter. The joy of saving a life: how great that is! Likewise, everybody can do something. Saving even a bird or feeding a hummingbird by giving it sugar water or something: when you realize that some being that has been dying comes back to life and flies off because of your little gesture of giving water, how much joy you receive! When you can help a disturbed child, giving it a respectable life, guiding it in a proper way, and when you see how that child is no longer disturbed, and has been helped, how much joy can you get out of it? We know that, right? The joy you
can get if you do even a little bit for somebody is tremendous. So if you can help countless numbers of people, the joy you can receive from that is immeasurable.

If you can do something to help a lot for a lot of beings, how great the joy must be! We are talking here about happiness. Forget about the Vajrayana great bliss of the movement of the semen up and down; forget about that! Even Taoists can do that. There is no comparison between Buddhism and Taoism. Taoists are totally dedicated to the benefit of this lifetime alone. You can increase your lifespan as much as possible, from one hundred to one thousand years. You can do that. Buddhism is concerned with life after life. That is the difference. There is no comparison. Don’t forget reincarnation. If you forget about reincarnation, I will be out of a job! I am just joking. That is the benefit you are getting. It is immeasurable. There is no limitation to the joy you can receive from the love and compassion. The immeasurable mind is precious; it is priceless.

**The State of Buddhahood** Why does this verse talk about being the sole guide for all beings? You are not only leading all beings, but you are leading them to the ultimate level of all-knowingness or omniscience. Let us talk about the state of a Buddha. Normally we talk about the Buddha as one particular guy who was born in India two thousand five hundred years ago. Here we are not referring to that. A Buddha is all-knowing. His mind is everywhere; it is the pervasive knowledge, the pervasive capacity. Even from the normal Christian point of view, we say that God is everywhere, don’t we? How can you explain that? God is everywhere, because he knows everything. There is nothing he does not know. So when he knows, it is there; this is pervasive, the knowledge is pervasive to enlightenment. Enlightened mind sees all that knowledge. So therefore it goes this way or that way. The frequency of the mind and the body is the same. This is the extraordinary quality of enlightened beings - the union of
body and mind. When their mind is there, their body is there and when their body is there, their mind is there.

In our case, body and mind are separate. We know by mind and we feel by body. At the enlightened level, though, it is the same thing; body and mind are a union, they are oneness. If the body is there, the mind is there. If the mind is there, the body is there. Therefore if the mind is all-knowing, the body as well as the mind is there, they see it, they feel it, they touch it and taste it. That is what all-knowing is.

We think that there are certain things we can keep absolutely secret and nobody will know, except me and my friend. But that is not true, because the enlightened mind is everywhere; it knows everything. But don’t worry about it! That is why it is called the limitless mind. There is no limit, because that mind is all-knowing mind. We call it Buddha, but whether you call it Buddha or God really does not matter. What does matter is what you can attain as a human being. You know, the division by names comes from the religious traditions. The Eastern ones call them something, the Western ones call them something else. What we are really referring to here is the ultimate level. Technically, in Buddhism that is called the enlightened level. I don’t know what equivalent terms the Judeo-Christian religions have. You cannot call it the God level, because that is never obtained by any person. Anyway, the ultimate level is limitless. Those who have achieved it know everything, they are there wherever their mind is. If this ultimate all-knowing mind analyzes, or makes a thorough investigation, what is it going to find? That those who cannot accept ultimate love and compassion, are nothing but fools. (I have added the word fools.)

So from the point of view of human beings, we look at all the paths available to us and see what we as human beings can really reach in terms of spiritual development. In the West, we have a tremendous amount of intelligence and we try to develop the human capacity externally through science and technology. How much we can do! It is almost limitless. You can now very easily sit in your living room and watch...
Jupiter or something. It is an almost immeasurable achievement on the external, material level. If that is so, then on the internal level we can even develop much more. If you cut out those little so-called traditional thoughts and ideologies of various religious schools and go beyond that, if you take the precious human mind and look at what it can achieve on the spiritual level, you will see all this. That is why the Bodhisattvacharyavatara refers to it as the limitless mind of the Sole Guide of the world. If you have that limitless mind, you will be the sole guide.

**Two ways of understanding the first line of this verse** I have explained the term Sole Guide of the world in two ways. First, if you have that mind, you will be the sole guide. Second, if you take it the other way round, if the limitless mind of the sole guide of the world analyzes, it will see the benefits you can get out of love and compassion. If you measure caring for others against the narrow selfish interest of “Me, Me, Me,” and “How can I do it?” unless you are a fool, you have to accept the benefits of bodhimind. Not only do you have the opportunity to help others, but the way you develop yourself is by caring for others.

We have gone through the Three Principles of the Path. The first is seeking freedom from our neuroses. Once you have established that, you don’t just think, “How can I do it? Should I sit, sleep of walk? Should I sit on the pot or on the meditation cushion or what?” If you do that, you are not going to go anywhere ultimate. We told you, remember? That is a self-centered mind; it is one-sided. Move from there to caring for others, to love and compassion. Measure that and then see which one is better. Find out from your own level of intelligence. Then look from the window of the limitless mind and see what it is. Then naturally, unless you are a fool, you have to choose to move to caring, to love, to compassion. It won’t work if you just think, “Should I say more mantras? Should I sit? Should I do prostrations? Should I do retreats?
Should I shave my hair?” You may shave your hair or go into retreat or say mantras, you may do prostrations and circumambulations, but as long as you don’t shift self-centeredness, you will remain the same old mule or donkey. (This is not the Democrats’ donkey, but the usual donkey!)

While we can see the benefits of the bodhimind on one side, at the same time we can see the faults of the narrow, self-centered mind. What we try to do is shift the attention, shift the focus from the “I, I, I,” attitude to thinking, “How can I help? What is the best way to help you? What is the best way to help all beings?” You have to move from there. This is the way; this is the path. There is no magical path for which you just have to eat a special pill or drink an elixir. There is no such thing! What you have to do is your Buddhism 101, that is getting the determination to be free, and then you move to 102: the way to do that is through love and compassion, not through “Me, Me, Me,” and “I, I, I.” This is extremely important. Those who would like to help other beings, who would like to guide other people, have to hold this mind very carefully.

**The suffering of cyclic existence** All beings wishing to be free from worldly abodes means that all beings are in the world of suffering, in cyclic existence, the continuation of suffering. There is no question that there is reincarnation or rebirth, but every new birth is suffering after suffering. What is really happening in samsara is that we have a tremendous amount of suffering and pain, each and every one of us. Who does not have mental, physical and emotional suffering? I would like to meet somebody who does not have any of these. Is there anybody here? No? Right. So each and every one of us has either mental, physical or emotional sufferings, or maybe all of them. And we have no control over this. Repeatedly we die and are reborn with that again and again. That is how ‘born again’ is true for us. I am not being sarcastic towards anyone, but....!
In absolute reality, it might not be real suffering. It might almost be illusionary, but it is a good enough illusion to make us suffer! It is a good enough illusion that we feel pain. Normally, we say in the context of wisdom that we do not truly or inherently exist, but relatively we do. Relatively we exist, because all the conditions are right. At that point and in that way we do exist and that is good enough to exist. Our sufferings and pains may be illusions or hallucinations in absolute reality, but it is good enough for us to feel pain, to suffer; so we need to get out of it.

The two truths  This is the reason Buddha taught two truths and not just one truth. The two truths are absolute truth and relative truth. Buddha said that both are true. It is good enough to feel the pain, that’s why relative truth is true. A lot of folks tell me that if there is a truth it has to be one truth, there cannot be two; that it is either right or wrong. But apparently there can be two truths. You can have right as well as wrong. That is the mystical part of our life; that is the mystery. We can have both. Absolutely speaking, nothing exists. That means all our existence functions only collectively. Things exist because of terms, conditions and time. Then it is good enough to be existing, because we feel it, we suffer or we enjoy. The problem with a number of people is that they cannot accept establishment of our reality, our experience based just on the combination of conditions. Scientists may not have that problem, because they also see that if certain factors come together, certain things come into existence. When certain parts fall off, the thing disappears. That is true in our lives as well. That is why relative truth is based on collectiveness alone. One should be able to accept that.

Verse 12

All other virtues are like the plantain tree;
For after bearing fruit, they simply perish.
But the perennial tree of the Awakening Mind
Unceasingly bears fruit and thereby flourishes without end.

The *Awakening Mind* is bodhimind, the mind that seeks enlightenment because of ultimate love and compassion. Any good work you do, like saving a life, being generous, being kind, being a good person and going to church, *etc*., normally will bring one result and then it is finished. That is how karma works: do one good thing and you get one result. *After bearing fruit,* it is over, finished. You do one bad thing; you get one bad experience. You wash out that karma. You settle your account. That’s what it is. But when your mind is influenced by bodhimind, it does not settle or end in that way. It gives you fruit constantly and continuously.

This text says *unceasingly bears fruit.* Another translation says that it *constantly bears fruit.* Once you produce a positive karma with the bodhimind, it does not finish with one little positive result. It keeps on giving you results all the way until you become enlightened. That is the best investment. It is safe from any stock market crash; it is immune to that. It is a blue chip investment!

You know why? Because karma is definite. If you do something with a big mind (perhaps it is a long shot, but that does not matter!) thinking that you want to do something in order to become enlightened, even if it is only one single *migtsema* mantra, that is good enough to yield results until you become enlightened. But if somebody else says one hundred thousand *migtsemas* without bodhimind, the value of that one single mantra exceeds these by two hundred thousand! This is because of the mental capacity, the value of the motivation.

**How to make all activities positive** That is why I urge all of you to pay attention to this! Even the young ones among you, whose lives are not yet established, who are in school or halfway here and halfway there, you are in a picnic spot right now, you don’t feel any pressure, everything is nice and won-
derful, love and light and beautiful, no doubt, but when you move up in age a little bit, in a few years time you will feel the pressure. You will have to make money to pay your bills, whether you like it or not. It will be like that.

Unfortunately the sixties are gone, the seventies and eighties are gone, the nineties are going and 2000 is coming. There is going to be a lot of pressure for everybody. There are going to be economic pressures, age pressures, time pressures, and commitment pressures. All of that will come up, so you have to learn how to make every single chore or task you do in your life worthwhile. You people may say that you are young right now and don’t have to worry about it. But if you can worry about that now, it is better. Even at the young, nice, love and light level, you can also get this benefit. This is simply the motivation which you establish in the morning and the commitment that you make that you want to devote all of your time to benefit all beings, to serve them. That is the mind training that you should do for yourselves.

Remember, I told you when I was a kid they taught me a few prayers to say in the morning and if I woke up and did not say these prayers, I would get pinched. This is what that was about. Think, “May I be helpful to all beings.” I had to say that every morning, whether I liked it or not. If I did not, I would get pinched. I did not like to be pinched, so that is how I got trained! You people are lucky: kids are very well protected here, so there is less child abuse. But if you love yourself, if you care for yourself, you should have that thought in your mind. And then, in the evening, you should dedicate every good thing you have done to the attainment of enlightenment. Don’t waste your good deeds in the manner of those trees that simply perish after giving one result, like plaintain trees. Go for the kind of tree that gives you fruits constantly, unceasingly, all the time.

So dedicate your actions to total enlightenment, for the benefit of all beings. Because you set your motivation towards that result, every single damn chore you do during the
daytime will be beneficial to you! If you do your laundry, it will be of a positive nature. If you clean your room, your house, etc., it will be beneficial for you and everybody. We need to learn this method to make every chore we perform into positive karma. That is possible, unless you do things which are by nature negative like producing B2 bombers or something. Even then it is not necessarily bad, because a lot of B2 bombers provide relief food here and there. They do not necessarily just drop bombs. In any case, all neutral actions, in particular sleep, regret and the analyzing mind, are very easy to change into positive karma. It is in your own hands, right in front of you, whether you take it or not. That is the ready-made TV dinner provided by Buddha, presented by Ngawang Gelek or Gelek Rinpoche. If you like it, take it, if you don’t, throw it away! That is it. I am going home.

Questions and Answers

Student: [Question about the difference between Stephen Batchelor’s version and the Oxford Edition in the translation of verse 10]
Rinpoche: In Tibetan it is called sen gyur tsi⁴⁴, which is a solution that changes every metal into gold, not just gold plating or another metal dipped into gold. One thing changes into another. So when the bodhimind develops within you, it is like alchemy, like one metal changed into another one, iron changed into gold. Likewise, when you obtain the bodhimind, the ordinary body, which is valueless compared with the body of a Buddha, that will change into that valuable Buddha’s body and your limited ordinary mind will change into unlimited mind. It does not become unlimited knowledge right at that moment, but it changes its nature.

Student: If there is no self, at whom is compassion directed?
Rinpoche: Who told you that there is no self?
Student: You did.
Rinpoche: Did I? There are a lot of people here who do not agree with you. Selflessness does not mean that there is no
self. By selflessness, we mean the lack of an intrinsically existing self. One exists just through the combination of conditions and collections. People have difficulties accepting that, because we have a deeper feeling or thought that there must be something more solid than just the combination of things together. Somehow we cannot satisfy our mind that existence is based only on conditions meeting. That is enough to exist, but somehow we cannot take that. A lot of people have problems with that. They probably think that there is something deeper than that, something more solid, something going far under the ground and sticking there. I think that is the problem. People just cannot accept that when the conditions are right, things happen. It is like when you go outside from a room in which the air conditioning was turned on too high. You go out and it is nice and warm. You feel good. It is simply that the conditions are right for the texture of our body. It is soothing us and that is why we feel good. But we are not satisfied with that and look deeper for something called joy or pleasure or something. If I put my ten fingers together, just the meeting of them is not enough, we think that some solid stamp still goes below that. We are looking for intrinsic existence. That’s what it is.

Verse 13

Like entrusting myself to a brave man when greatly afraid
By entrusting myself to this (Awakening Mind) I shall be swiftly liberated
Even if I have committed extremely unbearable wrongs.
Why then do the conscientious not devote themselves to this?

When you generate bodhimind, you will have an extremely powerful companion on your spiritual journey. Traditionally, when people used to travel in old India or Tibet, there were a
lot of robbers and thieves. The thieves would come at night; the robbers would rob you in the daytime. It was difficult. You could not go on a journey by yourself. In order to ensure a safe journey, you needed a very powerful traveling companion, a brave man. You could rely on that companion; he would take you and it would be easy to cross over, without difficulties at all.

The obstacles on the spiritual path  Likewise, on the spiritual journey, we will also have a lot of obstacles which attack us. One obstacle will be that you might be either overly enthusiastic for a while or not interested enough, just too relaxed. Then, either way, you would lose interest. Another obstacle may be your friends. The friends to whom you talk, with whom you share your experiences, may say, “What a crazy thing to do! It is very unscientific. What makes you think it works? Don’t waste your time, don’t do it! Don’t get into it, it was good in the old times, but it is not meant for now.” On the other hand, they may say, “This is not safe. You better make sure that you are safe!” Then they will try to save you from falling into the clutches of some kind of evil spirit, from going to hell, from getting on the wrong side of God. These are outer obstacles.

Even if you are free from them, you will get your own internal obstacles such as doubt. You don’t see what is going on. Spiritual development is such a slow movement. You won’t really realize how much progress you are making unless you look back. When you look five, eight or ten years back, then you can see the difference. But when you try to see a difference between now and what you did three months ago or last year, you are not going to see it. Then you may think, “What is happening? I am stuck, nothing is happening, I am not moving.” So you get doubts.

Another obstacle is lack of support. Another is our attraction for all sorts of things. We have attractions to companionship and materialistic development. Remember, our biggest problem is our fantasies - our attachment to our fanta-
sies. They are our hang-ups. We have materialistic hang-ups, sexual hang-ups, etc. My thought was going to somebody who had to bury their vibrator in the backyard! Hang-ups, you know! So those hang-ups are our problem. They will throw you off the path. Sometimes, however, over-enthusiasm can be a problem. You put all your energies into it, try to get something done, but you may not be exactly on the point where you have to be, and your efforts go off in that way. So these are our obstacles.

On top of that, we lack awareness. That is another problem. We have very little awareness. We don’t focus; we don’t concentrate. That is one of our biggest obstacles. After you free yourself from the external and internal doubts, and all your friends have come to try to save you, if you get through all this, your biggest problem will be the lack of awareness. We spend time, like days and weeks, without awareness. That is our biggest problem. To protect ourselves from all of those, a big macho-Viking guy comes and moves around with you as your body-guard! This powerful body-guard, this brave man, is bodhimind. That is the powerful companion who makes sure that you don’t get tripped up by one of those obstacles, or that you don’t fall into holes.

**The five limitless negativities** If you have such a powerful companion, able to cut through all the obstacles, you will make it even if you have committed a tremendous amount of negativities, extremely unbearable wrongs. You may even have committed the five limitless negativities, that is: killing your own father or mother, killing an arhat, killing or trying to harm a Buddha, and creating disunity among the Sangha, making them fight among themselves. These are the five limitless negativities.

Arhats are those people who are free from samsara or cyclic existence. They have gone out of that cycle and achieved nirvana or peace. They are free from the cycle of uncontrolled rebirth, life after life. Technically it is not quite
correct. If you ask what is samsara, in the technically correct way I have to say that is the continuation of contaminated identity. To be free from that is nirvana.

So if you kill an arhat, or if you try to kill a Buddha (you cannot actually kill a Buddha) if you kill your own father or mother, or create trouble among the sangha, these are the five limitless negativities. According to Buddhism, these are the five heaviest negativities, even heavier than what Jeffrey Dahmer did. These are even worse than what Angulimala had done.

There was one king in old India who actually accumulated two of the five limitless negativities. He killed his father who also happened to be an arhat. He had thrown his father in jail and when he realized how great his father really was, he got extremely worried and gave the order to free him, but he came two seconds too late. That king had tremendous regret and he ran to Buddha. Buddha did not say, “You made a terrible mistake!” He said instead, “It is okay. You should kill your father and mother. You should destroy your whole retinue, then you will be liberated.” When the king heard that, he was so shocked that he had to sit down for a while, but through that Buddha gained the opportunity to change the king’s thoughts. Later he gave him all the explanations. So Buddha could do that, we can’t. A Buddha has the capacity to handle that, we don’t, we are not Buddhas - although when Gelong-la passed away during the retreat, John, who found him, came running to me and I said to him, “Sit down and have your breakfast!” He said, “Me, breakfast?” “Yeah,” I said, “Breakfast!” and he said, “Okay,” and sat down and he had this muffin in front of him. The muffin never went into his mouth!

Anyway, even a person who has committed all of the five limitless negativities, even a person like that does not have to be afraid, because there is this powerful helper, companion, friend, ally - and that is bodhimind. It is also very quick. It can take you comfortably, quickly through your journey. If you are a person who has any awareness, any un-
derstanding, if you are conscientious, why would you not rely on such a powerful ally? So that is the point.

**Why motivation is so important** This is why we always say, “Watch your motivation!” Motivation is the most important thing. No matter whatever you do, your motivation is extremely important. If you have a good motivation, the influence of that motivation will run through the eight hours or sixteen hours of your day, and through the time that you sleep, whether it is six, eight or nine hours. If you cover like that the twenty-four hours of the day with such a great mind, that makes every one of your chores perfect.

I am telling you all the time that even if you have to wait at the check-out counter of the grocery store, or at the parking lot, or if you are a very busy shuttle flier and go all the time between Detroit and New York, even if you have to do that, if you have such a motivation, you will have a tremendous amount of benefits. That is the power of ultimate love and compassion. It is a power that makes every work, every action that you do positive. Who in hell, if you are a sensible person, would not take that as their companion? Why don’t we take that as the solution to the busy American life in the 1990s and 2000 – as a way to make everything positive? If I had to choose between such a powerful motivation, while being a busy lawyer or resident doctor, and on the other hand, not having that motivation and having all the time in the world to say mantras and meditate, without any hesitation I would choose the busy resident doctor’s life who has to work 68 hours at a stretch! From the point of virtues and positive karma you are better off than the lazy guy who is sitting down, saying mantras all the time. True, that is the power of this mind. When you read the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*, it will tell you.
Verse 14

Just like the fire at the end of an age,
It instantly consumes all great wrongdoing.
Its unfathomable advantages were taught
To the disciple Sudhana by the wise Lord
Maitreya.

Buddha Maitreya taught his disciple Sudhana about bodhimind.47 I am not going to go through this according to the commentary; it is very long on this. Actually, the commentary also says that bodhimind is one of the best things to protect people from fear. We do have a tremendous amount of fear within ourselves; that is one of our obstacles. A lot of people don’t know what they are afraid of. People are afraid of giving up, of falling down, of being left out. People are even afraid of not knowing what they are afraid of. Sometimes people are afraid that somebody might come out of their closet! All these fears are there with us. Funny or not, but that is what it is. Bodhimind is one of the best ways to overcome fear, particularly the fears that come out of negativities, which will make you fall. Bodhimind will protect you from that.

The end of an eon  Verse 14 talks about the end of an age or eon, when the whole universe is going to be destroyed by fire. Christianity talks about that, too. I did not know about that until the incident at Waco, Texas.48 These people said that they did that to fulfill a prophecy. Anyway, the whole universe will be destroyed one day by fire, also by water, air and earth. These four elements will destroy the universe. About the end of the universe: a lot of people will say that something will happen and everything will disappear suddenly. I have had that discussion with a number of people. It might not be like that. For sure, the universe will be destroyed by the elements, but it will happen gradually, not all of a sudden. If you are looking for that, you will be disappointed. We are already losing a tremendous amount of for-
ests year after year through fire. Certain things happen in cycles, definitely, but certain things we are losing more and more. We have been seeing a lot of elemental destruction in the last couple of years.

That White Tara practice which we made - the shorter one - is also dedicated to protect from that elemental destruction. If you notice, there is a little notice under the actual practice. There is a little dedication of mine in there somewhere, if you have the correct copy. Apparently it was too long and was cut out of some versions. Anyway, it is dedicated to that, simply because the elemental destructions are increasing. This is a clear indication that we are going to go through worse times, so we would like to drag our feet as much as possible. Still, it is going to come slowly, not in one bang. If you are the last one when that happens, you have got to go, that's that. But the final destruction is that fire will destroy everything up to the first level of the samadhi. You can look at the General Motors-type of chart of the different realms, you see there the 52 different realms of existence according to the Buddhist thought. Out of these 52, there are the six desire realms, the four form realms and the four formless realms. The first level of the four form realms is called First Samadhi. Up to that level everything is supposed to be destroyed by elements at the end of the age. The fire element will destroy everything up to that level.

**Bodhimind as purification** In a similar way, bodhimind destroys all the negativities that we have created. According to Buddha Maitreya’s teachings, the bodhimind can destroy all the negativities in one go - like a powerful fire. You can see on television all the time how fast the fire can come and burn the trees. Hundreds of acres are consumed within hours and everything is burned. People are amazed how fast that happens. Similarly, bodhimind has that much power to consume all the negativities - even five limitless negativities created by one person. Bodhimind can destroy that!
This is so powerful for purification! Bodhimind is not only the companion that protects you from fear, but it also gives you tremendous purification. If you do the Vajrasattva recitation a hundred million times, it is great. But that work, if you have developed the bodhimind, can be done in one minute! One minute of bodhimind is capable of doing that. So it is extremely important, this powerful companion. This is the solution to change ordinary mind into extraordinary mind, like the elixir changing metals into gold. This is the most powerful purification. It is the most powerful companion to travel with on your spiritual journey. This is the source of comfort, the source of changing everything into positivity. Looking at that, who in the world would not be interested in developing this mind? This is the solution, this is how you have to develop, this is it! This is bodhimind - ultimate love and ultimate compassion.

Then you will begin to raise questions. What is bodhimind? How do I get it? That will be answered in the next verse.

Verse 15 and 16

In brief, the Awakening Mind
Should be understood to be of two types;
The mind that aspires to awaken
And the mind that ventures to do so.

As is understood by the distinction
Between aspiring to go and (actually) going.
So the wise understand in turn
The distinction between these two.

That gives you the prayer form of the bodhimind and the action form of bodhimind. The prayer form is aspiring or wishing to be able to do that. It is praying, “May I develop that.” The second type is actually taking action, doing something to make that happen. It is the difference between saying, “I would like to go,” and actually going. So the first type is like saying, “I wish to do
that, I wish to do that.” Even that alone is great, although you don’t actually do anything, it is such a powerful mind. That is the power of love and compassion: even if you can’t do anything and just say, “I wish to do something,” this makes you perfect. Then, if you actually do it - no comparison! There is no equivalent. It is inconceivable.

*The importance of Bodhimind*  You are actually holding the keys in your own hands. Do not miss the opportunity! Why is this your spiritual home? You know Vajrayana is great, no doubt. But what makes Vajrayana great? It is because of *these* points. I always tell you: if you build a castle on the ice, in June the ice will melt and the castle will collapse. But if you build a solid foundation, it is different. *This* is the foundation. These are the keys that make Vajrayana powerful and perfect and make it work. If you miss it here, you miss everything! This is very important.

Bodhimind, this precious mind, is ultimate, unlimited love and compassion. Technically, it is called bodhimind. That is Buddhist terminology. If that mind is divided, there will be two categories. One is called *mön sem*, aspiring bodhimind, the other *juk sem*, actually going mind. First we have to develop aspiration. Without aspiration, you can’t act. So even the aspiration has tremendous power. Don’t forget that!

Before I go into that division, let me ask, what is that bodhimind really? Traditionally, teachers would be satisfied that it is known, perhaps they would explain what *bodhi* means, that is comes from Buddha. But that does not mean anything. Unlimited love and compassion - how does that feel? What does it aspire to? On whom is it focused? What does it want? How do we get it? These are the questions people have to think about. First we have to know what we are talking about. If we say it is unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion, you get some idea.
The definition of Bodhimind  Maitreya Buddha has given a description or definition of Bodhimind in one of the five different teachings he gave to Asanga. One of them is the *Prajnaparamita*, the transcendental wisdom. In one verse of this, Maitreya describes that for the benefit of others one seeks the ultimate development. In that way a two-pronged mind is developed. One aspect is totally dedicated to the benefit of others. The other prong is the desire to become fully enlightened, whatever the highest possible level of development is. Why? Because you are totally dedicated to helping all beings. In short, bodhimind seeks total enlightenment not only for the person who is seeking it, but for the sake of all beings.

The Buddhas of all times have been saying all over the world that this mind is so precious because it cuts down the narrow, selfish interest by developing total dedication for others. Then, in order to fulfill this wish to help others, one also needs to have the best tools available. If one wants to do something, one needs tools. It would be easy for me to say to Dan and Supa to go and make a table, but if they don’t have tools, how can they make one? For that they need all the materials, wood, tools, etc. Without these, they cannot produce a table. When you desire to help all beings, you not only want to help a little bit, but give them the ultimate help, the best possible help, the ultimate service; you want to try to fulfill the absolute desire of every living being. What they really want is to have joy. They don’t want suffering. When you commit yourself to helping them, that is what you have to give them. In order to fulfill that commitment, you need a tremendous amount of skill and capability, the kind you can have only as an enlightened being. If you don’t have that, it is going to be difficult. So basically that is the idea of bodhimind.

Now we have the division of the two bodhiminds. The first is just the wish. “Yes, I would like to have that. I would like to become fully enlightened for the benefit of all.” That is just developing the aspiration. You are not really doing much. Then
the second one is that you are ready to actually do it. “It is serious and I am not joking. I am getting seriously into it!” The next verse should make it even clearer.

**Questions and Answers**

**Student:** You have talked about the division between aspiring and action bodhimsind. In order to attain the first bhumi, do you have to have both?

**Rinpoche:** Yes.

**Student:** So you have to have the action bodhimsind before entering the first bhumi?

**Rinpoche:** Yes. Bhumi is a technical term. It means soil or ground. If the question is whether the first bhumi is the dividing line between the aspirational and the action bodhimsind, my answer to that is no. The first bhumi equals the third path, the path of seeing. So the level of the bhumis is connected with absolute bodhimsind rather than relative bodhimsind. That is probably the confusion which caused this question to come up.

**Student:** So there are two different ways of categorizing here. On the one hand you have relative bodhimsind and absolute bodhimsind and on the other hand you have aspirational and action bodhimsind. This is very technical - I am sorry. Both aspirational and action bodhimsind are relative bodhimsind.

**Rinpoche:** That is difficult to answer. If you are a very sharp and witty person, plus if you are lucky enough, it is possible to gain the wisdom first. There are people who have done that. Then there are people who attain bodhimsind first and then go on to achieve wisdom. So this question is difficult to answer. It depends on the individual. But what happens is that those who first attain wisdom and then the bodhimsind enter the third path straight away the moment they become
bodhisattvas. They supersede the first two paths, those of merit and action. They immediately enter the path of seeing. It is like a helicopter lift. That is the difference.

*Student:* What happens to the beings of the world when it is destroyed?
*Rinpoche:* This is not the only world. There are zillions of galaxies out there. When one world is destroyed, the beings get reborn somewhere else, here and there. There is no shortage of places. Existence will go on. Many universes like this one have been destroyed before and many will newly arise. That is what Buddha talked about 2500 years ago. There are zillions of universes. Beings are reborn here and there. That is why you need a mental body. If you had to drag a physical body, you couldn’t go here and there.

*Student:* When we have obstacles to our spiritual development, is that where the aspiring bodhimind helps?
*Rinpoche:* Sure. Let me repeat what the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* says in verse 13. What person would not be interested in developing bodhimind, if they are intelligent, fortunate and educated in terms of the spiritual path. If you are educated and intelligent, how in the world could you not be interested in it? So the way it has been put is unless you are not intelligent, or have too many screws loose, there can be no other reason why you are not interested! Of course, everybody has some screws loose. It is all right to have a few screws loose, otherwise you become like Newt Gingrich!

**Verse 17**

Although great fruits occur in cyclic existence
From the mind that aspires to awaken,
An uninterrupted flow of merit does not ensue
As it does with the venturing mind.
The division between the two types of bodhimind, here called *aspiring* and *venturing*, is like two groups of people wanting to go somewhere. There are those people who are saying, “Oh, that is a very attractive tour you have!” Then there are those who are really, actually going. You have bought the ticket, you paid for the tour and everything. You are actually becoming members of the tour group; you are joining in. So there is a division between those who actually bought their ticket and are really becoming members, have paid their down payment and are going to take the trip. The other group is looking at the tourist information, is very excited and is saying, “Yes, it is wonderful, it is great, I would like to go, but maybe I will go next year, not this year.” So they don’t actually take the trip, whereas the other ones are actually going.

In terms of bodhimind, both of these are actually counted. Why? Even just simply aspiring or wanting to do it is itself of tremendous benefit according to the Buddha and according to this text. Not only is it of benefit, but it influences every activity that you do. Every good work that you do gains an extremely perfect pure quality, just because of the influence of this mind. That is why we are always saying that it is so important to have a perfect motivation. This mind or attitude, by just sitting there, having that aspiration, liking it, that itself will tremendously uplift the individual in their spiritual journey. That is why even just the aspiration is counted in there and the mind is divided into two categories, the aspiring and the venturing.

The first one is where you would like to go and it is like looking at the areas, at the pictures, the scenery, the picnic spots. That is all. But even that is counted, because it is of tremendous value in the spiritual path. The lack, the ignorance that we have is that we don’t know those little techniques, those sensitive buttons that may be very simple, but make a hell of a difference. We don’t recognize those. That is basically our problem.
Getting yourself excited about enlightenment This here is one of those techniques. You get very excited about the qualities of enlightenment. Unless you know something about enlightenment, however, you are not going to be excited. Every advertising person knows that. You have to give the people punch lines and punchy pictures. A picture speaks more than a hundred words. These are really the points.

Our problem is that this material is not commercially geared or presented. The problem is that there is no excitement about enlightenment, because it is not being advertised! It is really a problem. Also it is difficult to speak about, because the qualities of enlightenment are very different from our usual level of understanding. At the total spiritually fully-developed level, the individual becomes all-knowing. You know every single damn thing, whether it is good or bad. Your knowledge, your understanding is immeasurable. You don’t have to think, you don’t have to analyze, you just do it and you are right. You know everything. That is the quality – totally awakened, without any defilement, there is no delusion, there is no anger, no attachment, no hatred. There is no crying, you are not too high, neither is your experience lukewarm. It is stable and wonderful. These are the qualities. If you see those qualities, imagine, if you only had half of that, how much you could do! How much difference you could make for people whom you really want to help! It is like opening the door completely.

We all have problems. We all would like to do something for ourselves and for people we care about. But we are very much handicapped, because we really do not know what to do. Anybody who works on the spiritual path will have the question, “What is next? How can I do it?” Don’t we have that? This is because we have limitations. If you become enlightened, that limitation will be lifted. You will know exactly what to do. You know exactly how to influence the person in the right way, whether it be your son, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, your mom, or whoever it maybe. You know how to turn the person perfectly, for the good of that person and
for the good of all society. That quality lies at the enlightened level. That is why you have the mind that thinks, “I have to get to that position, because then I will know how to turn it around, how to put things in the proper way.” Putting it into the proper way is meant in the sense that people will buy it.

So the need to attain enlightenment is not only for the benefit of others, but for yourself as well. We never know what to do next. We may learn how to say OM MANI PADME HUNG, but we find out that this is not enough and then we ask, “What is next?” We do that. These are our limitations and this is called ignorance in Buddhism, because we don’t know. If we do know something, we know it the wrong way. Enlightenment means that all this ignorance is lifted. The big, heavy lid of ignorance is removed. That is what enlightenment is.

How bodhimind helps in this life  So if you get excited about enlightenment, you begin to see that this is something that you really want to have, not only for yourself, but for everybody, and that becomes the mind of aspiration. Even if you don’t do anything, it helps tremendously. It helps all beings tremendously, all beings and yourself. That is the mind which changes all the metals into gold. Remember, we talked about that earlier. If you have that mind, you are called a Child of the Buddhas. The moment you have that mind, you get yourself free from the suffering. We have shared the story of Buddha’s previous life, when he developed tremendous compassion for his companion who could not pull the horse cart. Buddha was thinking, “Oh, I wish I could pull his side too. How wonderful that would be!” Then the terrible horse cart driver hit him on the head with a hammer, saying, “How dare you think that way!” That blow from the hammer made him die from the hell realms and he was reborn into a life in which he became a Buddha, an enlightened one. That is how he got free, even from the hell realm. I am recalling verse 14:
Just like the fire at the end of an age,
It instantly consumes all great wrongdoing

So that aspiration alone, that mind, can burn all your negativities; it is one of the best purifications. It is better than sitting tight, without eating.\(^{54}\) That is why Buddha, after spending six years in meditation and depending on minimal food for his survival, learned that the extreme of such rigidity is also not the answer. A lot of people think that the answer is to depend on extreme hardship for purification, either physical or mentally or emotionally or even financially. Buddhism does not agree. In Buddhism you don’t take a vow of poverty either, even as a monk or a nun. The simple reason is that you have tremendous methods of purifying. Purification does not depend on making it hard for yourself, neither physically, mentally, emotionally, nor even financially. This very mind, this wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of others, can burn, can consume all the great evils or wrongdoing. As verse 14 continues:

Its unfathomable advantages were taught
To the disciple Sudhana by the wise Lord Maitreyā.

There are zillions of pages in the sutras on this, so it is difficult to cover everything. I tried to read about it this afternoon. One of the most interesting points was this story. There was a lady called Mangata Samo who was traveling through some kind of funny place, some hell realm place available in the human land. People forget that these places are there, but you shouldn’t. While she was traveling there, she saw some kind of karmic hell realm machine running over a person’s head with tremendous fire burning from it. She could not figure out straight away what to do, because the machine was moving and also giving off tremendous amounts of heat. She had no alternative but thinking how best one could cool that. She could not think anything else.

According to the Buddha there are the *nyi ste* and the *nye kor*,\(^{55}\) two small hell realms which exist within the human
land. What the sutra tells us may just be a description. However, in my personal opinion, it is about those people who have tremendous pressures in their heads. By that I mean mental pressure, like thinking, having financial pressures, physical pressures, health pressure, time pressure. All these pressures that we take up overburden the individual completely and heat rises; that is the kind of pressure you can get, an experience like a hell realm machine rolling on your head. In the Hindu-Buddhist mythological terms you hear about these huge machines running over your head with fire coming from them. In actuality, there are these tremendous pressures that people take on. That is one of the hell realms that is over here, not over there.

Observing that, the lady felt tremendous compassion. She was herself also in the same condition but she thought, “How can I best help that person?” Because of that, she died and took rebirth in some kind of pure land as a samsaric god or an angel-type of person.

This is what the wise Lord Maitreya explained to his disciple Sudhana. There are actually zillions of stories, but that one example caught my attention.

So these pressures, the mental, physical and also financial pressures, etc., are what we experience. These are our sufferings, our problems. Compassion can cool it down, can settle it down and even if you cannot stop it, your life will change from worse to better. It is true that there are hell realms; it is true that there are heavens. But at the same time we also have to acknowledge that even in our lives there are sufferings and the relief from these. These experiences corresponding to hell and to heaven exist in our human lives as well.

That is why human life is much more valuable and important than even the samsaric gods’ life, according to the Buddha. Remember, in the lam rin teachings we are told that the human life is much more precious than any other kind of life. These are the reasons. Here in our precious human life
we can have experiences that correspond with all this – both heaven and hell - within our own lifetime. We can feel the pains and the joy both and thus can understand far better than anybody else in the other realms. There are certain lives where you can only feel pain, nothing else. There are certain lives where you can only feel joy, nothing else. We are beyond that level, because we have a perfect mixture; that is the quality that makes it possible for us to develop compassion, even if it is the aspiration alone.

*How aspiring and action bodhimind differ* If you not only aspire, but start putting your energy and your efforts in, and then you not only work on the level of aspiration, but this bodhimind goes into the action period. Last time the question came up about clarifying the definition that shows the difference between the aspirational bodhimind and the action bodhimind, and also what level each one corresponds to. This is a very important, complicated and difficult one. It is going to be a little bit more philosophical and maybe even a little boring!

There are two different theoretical viewpoints. The first view says that the aspirational bodhimind is only up to the first Bhumi level, and thereafter it is mostly the action level, but still, the aspiration mind is also available, because the practitioner may not be straight away totally dedicated, so at certain periods you could say yes, and at certain periods it would be no.

The second viewpoint says that once one has received the Bodhisattva vows, thereafter all one’s activities will become actual going; you have action bodhimind. Maybe I should give you just that, since that is actually the correct view of Buddhapalita. To continue, you do not have to be on the level of the bhumis in order to attain the action bodhimind. But you have to have taken the vows of the action bodhimind and thereafter actually be working within the influence of the vows. Whatever you do then becomes action
bodhimind. So these are those two viewpoints. There are more, but the most accepted are these two.

**Two views of what a vow is** According to Bhavaviveka, the vow is only mind. It is the mind of protecting the vow. So the protecting mind, according to him, is actually the vow. That is why any action without that mind, without an actual intention to protect the vow does not become an action of bodhimind.

But according to Buddhapalita, a vow is a subtle physical form which grows within the individual, in their psychic life or spiritual life. When you have a physical form that grows with you, whether you are mentally aware or not does not matter. That is the difference between the views. That makes a hell of a difference in the individual’s life! If it is only the mind of awareness, then you have to have a constant mind of awareness, all the time. In this view, if you miss a minute or so, then whatever your action is, even if it is the same category, that same moment you drop down for that period. If it is physical, then even if you don’t have awareness, even if you are not thinking about it at that moment, it does not matter. It continues to go on; whether you are sleeping, eating or talking, or walking, or shitting, or bathing, or bull-shitting, whatever you do will be within that action bodhimind. A few verses further down, this will be explained. So the difference is that every vow is actually physical form. The conclusion drawn by all the great masters, by Tsongkhapa and everybody thereafter, is that a vow is a physical point, because once you have it, you have it. Whatever action you are undertaking, you are making headway. The vows are not only a mental faculty that thinks of protecting the vows.

The key to reaching the **path of accumulation** is this: the aspirational bodhimind, even on an artificial level. When you reach the level of the path of accumulation, you will reach the accumulation path itself. The amount of efforts, redoubling your efforts, that is not the key to get to that point.
How to make every action into Mahayana practice through bodhimind

What I have been saying all along, whether you heard it or not, is that if we try to put in the time to say mantras and prayers and to meditate, we are not going to be able to do that at all. We may be able to do half an hour, forty-five minutes or two hours a day and that is a hell of a job. We only have twenty-four hours. If you take out quite a number of them for various purposes, two to three hours is a hell of a job. You will never be able to get there. So we have to make use of every single movement we are making: walking, talking, and every single thing, every part of our daily life has to be positive and has to be building towards your spiritual purpose. All of your twenty-four hours per day can be going towards that. Buddhism has that possibility.

Just this afternoon I read that one of the reasons why Buddha attracted all these kings and queens and all these people got involved is that Buddha said that for them mind and motivation is the key. He told them to keep that as the principle in their lives and thereafter to carry on with their work as ruler, with their jobs within the royal family, so that the people would also be benefited and that the kingdom’s power would not go down but remain continuously. The key that Buddha gave to them in order to achieve that is this mind, bodhimind.

We need these special techniques and keys, because we don’t have time. So redoubling your efforts and doing Vajrasattva and so forth, all of that is great, no doubt. But with that special key, whatever we do, even if it is just walking around in downtown Ann Arbor in the middle of the art fair will also be perfect spiritual work! What makes that possible is the motivation of this mind. This is the key. The key is based on Buddhism 101 and is itself Buddhism 102. It is not how much time you put in, how many mantras you say, whether you run here or run there, do this or do that, shave your head or not.

Right now our aspiration will not yet be true aspirational bodhimind, but some kind of artificial one. Even that artifi-
cial one serves the purpose. Not only does it serve the purpose, but it has great purpose, it is tremendous! There is an example for that. The texts talk about a broken diamond. If you have even a broken diamond, it is still a diamond and still better and more valuable than any other jewel you have. It is in a different category. A diamond ornament, even a broken one, is better than turquoise or glass. So for people on our level who have not yet reached the first path, not even to the preliminary of the first path, even then this artificial mind is better and more powerful than a huge turquoise jewel that would make one’s neck bend down. That is the diamond ornament example.

Another example is that the Bodhisattvas are called Heirs of the Enlightened Ones or Children of the Buddhas. If you are a prince, by virtue of your birth you will be more respected than a mature senior minister, like, for example, the Prince of Wales. So even if you have not reached the first bhumi or the first path, it does not matter, because you are wealthy with this aspirational mind; you are in the royal family. That serves the purpose. Purification will be done by it, accumulation of merit will be done by it, negativities will be consumed by it. When it comes, it comes from the sky, when it dissolves, it dissolves to the ground. That is on the point. Even if you have not reached to the first ground or bhumi, it is far better than being an arhat who has gone beyond samsara.

**Summary of these points** Just by having the aspiring mind, the individual will be driven away from samsara. This alone gives you a tremendous amount of results. However, it is not like with the venturing or action mind. The venturing mind continuously gives you positive results; the aspiring mind does not. Although it is tremendous, it is not the same thing as the action mind. I have told you the reason. It is the difference of Bhavaviveka’s view and Buddhapalita’s view. I gave their reasons and that is why I had to take you into the philosophical points. You will find that different Indian
scholars and Tibetan lamas will give you different points here. Some will tell you that both the aspiring and the action mind are available from the beginning. Others will tell you that they are not available until you reach the first path. Basically, what you have to remember is that until you have the bodhimind, you don’t get onto the first path. The moment you have bodhimind, you have the first path with you.

With the first path, if you have taken the action vows, you also have the action bodhimind. If you don’t have the vows, even if you are on the first path, you only have the aspiring mind, remember? If your vow were only the mind of protecting, you would have to think all the time. When you were not thinking about it or paying attention, you would discontinue the vow. Therefore Buddhapalita, whose view is accepted by all, said that a vow is a subtle physical form which grows with you. If that is so, then even when you don’t have awareness of it, the vow will continue. So on the first path you have grown bodhimind. When you are on the first path, and you also have the bodhisattva action vow, from then on, until you become a Buddha, you have the action bodhisattva mind.

Verse 19 in particular tells you that whether asleep or awake, you are accumulating merit and you are building positive karma equivalent to the sky, meaning that the sky’s the limit! You are accumulating virtue all the time, because of the action bodhisattva mind. The aspiring bodhisattva mind is not physical, so it does not function that way. But even if you don’t have the action bodhisattva vow, but have the aspiring bodhisattva vow, that mind itself is capable of driving the individual away from the ocean of samsara. It will take you out.

The example given here is diamond jewelry. No matter how fragile or spotted a diamond might be, it is still a diamond. If your golden necklace has a diamond in it, it is far better than any other necklace, even though the diamond may not be the best diamond. If you have the bodhimind within you, even if you are just stupid, good-for-nothing,
even then you are far better than the arhats. You are a diamond. You may be totally immature, still you are better. Remember, the Prince of Wales, no matter how immature he may be, he has his own dignity, able to overpower even seasoned diplomats and ministers. Of course, that example only works in a kingdom, not in a democracy!

That is the example of what bodhimind does for the individual. So please have a diamond necklace! Even if it is not a great or perfect one, it makes a big difference.

Questions and Answers

*Student:* So, in order to have what according to this text is the aspiring bodhimind, one already has to be on the first path, one has to have attained some realization of the determination to be free?

*Rinpoche:* The determination to be free comes even before bodhimind. Here we are talking on the level of the bodhimind. The first principle is the determination to be free. That is Buddhism 101. Here we are on Buddhism 102.

*Student:* But it seems that people can have that aspiration in their mind, even though they don’t have the realization of the determination to be free.

*Rinpoche:* No, that is not possible.

*Student:* So if somebody without realization of determination to be free thinks that they would like to help other beings the best way possible, do they just have a hallucination in their mind?

*Rinpoche:* Well, is that the only thing one needs for the aspirational bodhimind? Did I not give the definition of the aspirational bodhimind? First I gave the definition according to Maitreya, then I divided that mind into the aspirational and the action bodhimind.

*Student:* But the way you presented it before was such that even some person who does not have any other spiritual
practice and hears about the qualities of bodhimind could find it attractive.

Rinpoche: But it is understood that actual bodhimind can only occur on the basis of the very strong foundation of the other paths. On the basis of that you have to function. I have been talking about the aspirational bodhimind. That aspiration itself is bodhimind. Therefore, all of the foundations for the bodhimind have to be there in the first place, for sure.

Student: But Rinpoche, in the story that you told before, the person in the hell realm developed compassion for the other hell being and was killed and reborn as a human. There was no mention of determination to be free.

Rinpoche: Do I have to talk everything right from the beginning for everything I say? You build your base and then you go on. That should be understood. Here we are talking in the context of Buddhism 102. Remember that!

Student: Why do we have to know about these two different views?

Rinpoche: It is because of the question of what a vow is. That is the point.

Student: It is frustrating for me. I know I don’t have bodhicitta, but I am sure interested and not just that, I have bought the fucking ticket and made the reservation and yet, it is not happening! Also you told us in another teaching that we are really not yet even on the path of accumulation. So what is the issue of even talking about the bhumis at all - why even bother?

Rinpoche: Good point. But the theoretical distinction actually does make a difference.

Student: With regard to the bodhisattva vow, does that only come into effect once you have reached the first path or first bhumi? You cannot really observe the vow before bodhimind has really developed, can you?
Rinpoche: No, I believe that vow has grown with you. You do take the vows every day, don’t you? Many of us do that. When you say the long Six-Session Yoga, there is a passage where you take the bodhisattva vows.

From this moment on, until I am a Buddha,
May I never give up, though my life be at stake,
The attitude wishing to gain full enlightenment
In order to free from the fears of samsara
And nirvana’s complacency all sentient beings.

O Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Gurus, please listen
To what I now say from the depths of my heart.
Just as all Buddhas of the past have developed
The thought of enlightenment, true bodhicitta,
Then practiced its stages of graded development
Following the trainings for all Buddhas’ sons,
So may I too, for the sake of all beings,
Develop bodhicitta and follow the trainings
Exactly as all Bodhisattvas have done.

The first five lines are taking the aspirational bodhimagd vows and the second part is about taking the vows of the action bodhimagd. You don’t have to take them every day from a person, but you can do so from an image or a mentally created supreme field of merit. We do that all the time. So even if you don’t have the bodhimagd, you do have the vows as physical form in your spiritual life. This makes a difference.

Student: It is hard for me to believe that this works right now and hard to see how it benefits anybody. May be in the future it is beneficial but right now it is like a joke, it is like the aspiration of the aspiration! It is not the real thing in any sense of the word. When you say that because of the vow every one of our actions becomes positive, I have to say that for me that is not happening. So is it happening in some kind of deluded form right now and ultimately it will become focused and real?
Rinpoche: It does not have to be focused on or concentrated on. Aren’t you getting it?
Student: But is what I am doing right now beneficial because of taking that vow and is that fifty per cent or hundred per cent? Is everything we are doing right now better because we have taken these vows? Is that the case?
Rinpoche: It is the case, because a vow grows within the individual not only as mental awareness, but as a physical thing, and therefore it functions. It is too materialistic to think that you have to really do something and that you have to push it and get it. Chögyam Trungpa, in his book *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism* referred to that. We are looking at spiritual materialism. So let it loose and it works within that.

Many of us think we are getting nowhere. But you should really realize that you are somewhere. When you look back you will know it. That is the point. We are not fully satisfied with what we have achieved, because we want to go to the fully enlightened level. We are not there yet, but you have to go in a non-materialistic, relaxed manner. This is a very sensitive subject for many people. But I have to bring in the theoretical viewpoints, because that makes a difference. Why two different theoretical points? Because of their viewpoints. One says that the aspirational bodhimind is still available even after the first bhumi; the other one says no. That is the difference.

From the time you have taken the Bodhisattva vow, that vow grows within you and that makes the difference. It looks as if you have better horsepower. You are qualitatively changing. If you look back you will see it. That itself is a development. You don’t sort of drive yourself crazy, thinking, “I want to have that materialized right now!” You can’t do that. We have heard it: “I bought the fucking ticket, I have made the reservation, but I am not getting there!” I am not blaming you, that is fine, but when you are driving yourself too strongly towards that, you feel that you are getting nowhere. It is like when you waiting for somebody to come and pick you up at the airport. The waiting time is so long. You
look at every other car that comes up the airport ramp, wondering whether that is the one that is coming to pick you up. You will go, “This is not the one, that is not the one.” But if you forget about it and go and get a cup of coffee inside somewhere, then by the time you get back the person will be there, saying, “Was your plane late or something?”

_Student:_ I thought that the growing of realizations within us is not just a matter of waiting passively for development, but that through practicing the six perfections in our everyday lives there will be improvement.

_Rinpoche:_ You are absolutely right! But the impression I got is that for some people, even though all of that is happening, on top of that they want to get results quicker and get frustrated because they are not getting that.

_Student:_ But you cannot just sit there, you have to do some work also!

_Rinpoche:_ But even if you don’t do work, it still functions - we pointed that out. We have the division into two categories. Doing work and not doing work. We have to draw a conclusion here for you. In traditional old Tibet or Asia in general you would hear the subject day after day and then you could understand by yourself. In America, if you don’t draw certain conclusions in the teachings, it does not work. So the conclusion is that if you put in certain efforts and work, it will definitely work perfectly. But even if you don’t do that, it has a benefit. So if you do put efforts in, there is no doubt at all that it will work!

_Student:_ With this bodhimind, in some ways we are like actors in a play called _Bodhimind_. Taking the bodhisattva vows is like getting a part in that play and then we rehearse and rehearse, until we finally get good enough to open up the play to the public and when the curtain comes up, it is like the path of accumulation. Is that how it works?
Gelek Rimpoche

Rinpoche: Good thinking. You said the bodhimind is the play, and taking the vows is getting parts in the play. But let’s put it in another way. The path itself is the play, developing bodhimind is getting a part in it, the vow will help to practice, and then you keep on practicing until you are perfect. Then, on the path of seeing, not the path of accumulation, you open the curtain. Then you can entertain people. That means you can lead the people on the path as you are practicing it. They can go home, copy it and get there, too. Entertainment is showing the path, the Student will copy it in their own home, because they like it. If they did not like it they would not buy the ticket to the show. They will not make the “fucking reservation”! I am overdoing it - sorry about that.

Student: Once you have taken the vows, does it get easier over time to keep them, not to break them or forget them?
Rinpoche: You don’t want to lose the vows. That is the point.
Student: What about if someone does not want those vows any more?
Rinpoche: They won’t go away. That is the point. If it were only the mind protecting them, then they could get away. But since it is said that vows are physical form, then they cannot get away. They influence and have effects, unless you totally break them. Read verse 19 about this:

From that time hence,  
Even while asleep or unconcerned,  
A force of merit equal to the sky  
Will perpetually ensue.

This is because the vows are physical form. That makes the difference. Spiritual development is both psychological and physiological.
Student: So what happens to these physical aspects when you die?
Rinpoche: Your spiritual values don’t die. Your spiritual-physical body does not die. Even the bardo beings have bodies. You do not keep this very gross, human flesh and bones body; that
will be separated from your mind and spiritual physical body. Even after you die, your psychic-spiritual body is not dead.

*Student*: Rilbur Rinpoche mentioned last weekend that the conventional bodhicitta is the basis for the Buddha’s form body.
*Rinpoche*: Yes, maybe. But that is altogether a different subject, I believe.

*Student*: When you say that we have artificial aspiration, are you saying that because there is always some self-projections?
*Rinpoche*: No, I am saying that, because we are doing a copycat; we are imitating Bodhisattvas.
*Student*: Is that not all self-projections also?
*Rinpoche*: I don’t know, maybe, but there is nothing wrong here. We don’t really have the true mind of bodhicitta yet. If you watch yourself, you will see how much selfish interest you have.
*Student*: But that is because of the self-projection, isn’t it?
*Rinpoche*: Let me say what I understand when you say self-projection. It is when you mentally project some kind of thought and follow that.
*Student*: Sometimes the only way to understand someone else’s suffering and connect with it is by partly relating it to yourself. So there is some part of your own ego attached to that connection. That is what seems to happen.
*Rinpoche*: Maybe, maybe not. You know, ego-attraction is very simple. You may be thinking, “I want to do something good and beneficial.” Then suddenly you get a mind that is saying, “I should be doing it. That is Me who should be doing it.” Then it may even go beyond that: “How will people know that I did it? How will so and so know that I was involved in that?” This is the ego jumping in. Some people have more, some have less of that. As long as we have that, whether it is more or less, we have really no perfect thoughts free of ego involvement. That is why at that level, whatever we do, I call
it artificial. We try to project something and follow that. But even then that is a great thing.

*Student:* I think that is what I meant. But even relating other people’s suffering to one’s own experience is part of that.

*Rinpoche:* I hesitate to put that in the same category. Reacting to somebody else’s feeling can be sometimes be the feeling of pain. In that case this is not ego-boosting. Ego-boosting is when the ego wants to take the credit. The ego would like to be noticed; it would like to be entertained. Such thoughts come up very often. This is not foreign to us. In the midst of doing something good very few people will say, “I don’t want my name in that.” Everybody will like to say, “How will people know that I was involved?” Even those who claim to have no ego will also say, “Well, I had the opportunity to contribute a little bit.” This is still the ego pushing. As long as we have that, the bodhimind is not real; until that is gone, it is artificial. Yet by practicing the artificial bodhimind alone, on the basis of the seven-stage method of development or the exchange-stage method, it will change.

*Student:* If that is the case, how can you have conventional bodhicitta without absolute bodhicitta?

*Rinpoche:* The difference between conventional and absolute bodhicitta is whether it is with emptiness or not.

*Student:* I understand that, but...

*Rinpoche:* And ego is not ignorance alone. Thank you, you got the message.

To summarize: If you grow the bodhimind within you, you will be on the first path. If you have the bodhimind plus emptiness, you are on the third path. There are no gradual steps. The moment you grow the bodhimind, you are on the first path. Without bodhimind, you are not on the first Mahayana path at all. Aspiring bodhimind is also real bodhimind. Let me repeat again: At the moment you don’t have that, because your ego is not letting you go, nor are you letting the ego go. This is the ego of selfish interest, the ego-entertaining interest. As soon as you let that go, you are out.
As long as you hold that, no matter what you do, you are stuck.

*Student:* Then why do we always talk about fulfilling the two aims?
*Rinpoche:* That is the temporary and the ultimate aims. The permanent one is to become a Buddha and the temporary one is to free ourselves from suffering. What is wrong with that?
*Student:* I don’t see them as separate.
*Rinpoche:* But there is a big separation. To become a Buddha and to be free from suffering are two different things. Don’t forget the arhats.

It is getting late and I will not answer any more questions. Our older friends have taken up more time. So if the new people got bored, I am sorry about it. Sometimes the older students also need an opportunity. And these questions can help you younger ones to think a lot also.

*How do I apply this to my life?* We are still talking about the first chapter, on the benefits of bodhimind. Before going further into that, it might be interesting to respond to the question that many people might have in their minds. Many of you may be thinking, “It is very interesting to learn how the Bodhisattva’s mind functions. But how do I as Joe Blow apply that to my daily life? How do I go about it?”

Last time we dealt with verses 15-17, which talk about the division of the bodhimind into the aspiring and the venturing bodhimind. There are many different divisions of the bodhimind, looking at it from all different angles. It can be divided into twenty-two types of bodhimind, for example. But basically from the point of view of the mind itself it is divided into two, the aspiration mind (or prayer form) and the action mind. We talked about the action mind, taking vows, *etc.*, however it is only applicable to the people who are already on the first path out of the five paths, the path of ac-
cumulation. The moment you have the bodhimind grow with you, you become a bodhisattva. Until the bodhimind grows with you, you cannot be on the first Mahayana path. You may be aspiring to the first path and going towards it, but you are not on it. If the bodhimind is with you, you are there. That is how you know.

That is why we say that bodhimind is the doorway to the Mahayana path, just as refuge is the doorway to becoming a Buddhist. It happens the moment you truly take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This is not about a ceremony. The ceremonies are show biz. I don’t mean that, but it is show biz. I keep on saying that I don’t mean it, but I then say it again! When the refuge really grows with you, when you understand the qualities of the objects of refuge, when you understand why you need it, when you take refuge from the bottom of your heart, that is the actual refuge. Until then, whatever you do is show biz.

**How to develop bodhimind** Likewise, it works the same way with bodhimind. Bodhimind either follows the seven steps or the exchange steps which are covered later in this book. You can develop with either of those or with the combination of the seven steps and the exchange stage, which becomes eleven steps. Remember “7-11, open twenty-four hours”?

Whatever you do, you have to follow one of these systems. Just sitting there and saying that, “I am meditating on bodhimind,” does not do any good at all. Remember the story about a lama who had a disciple who wanted to meditate on patience. The lama said, “That is very nice, please go out behind my house, a little bit up the mountain. There is a cave where you can meditate on patience there.” So he went up there and started meditating. After a while, the lama told somebody else to go up there and insult the disciple who was meditating as much as he could. When he started insulting him, the meditator lost his temper and began to chase him
down the mountain, throwing stones at him. This is exactly what happens if you don’t follow certain footsteps or stages.

**Know what you are doing and why**  Experimental and adventurous movements and methods are a great attraction for the Western mind, but if we don’t know the spiritual path very well, it is safer for us to follow some perfect footsteps. In this way you can be sure you will reach the same place the people who you are following reached, so you don’t have to take any risk. To develop bodhimind, you have to follow either the seven step, or exchange stage, or the eleven-step system. By following that, the moment you develop the bodhimind with you, you will know it. If you don’t know whether you have the bodhimind grown with you, it is a clear sign that you don’t have it. A lot of people think, “I don’t realize, but I am sure I have it.”

One of my root gurus, the person who taught me the Tibetan alphabet and the first meditations on the *lam rim* stages, Gen Yun Dun Rinpoche, was known among the Lhasa noble families as Gen Shatai Geshe Rinpoche, because his own benefactor was a big family named Shatar. They were already the benefactors of Tsongkhapa in the 1400s. So Gen Rinpoche was later known as Shatai Geshe Rinpoche in the Lhasa area. Gen Rinpoche was great and because of him the master of the Shatar house knew so much about Buddhism. He had a tremendous amount of knowledge and a good practice. So he was sent to do an investigation into some fight between two monasteries or a monastery and the farmers around about some distribution issues. He was the investigating officer. He went to that monastery, which was quite a big one, with two hundred to three hundred monks. He spent about a week to ten days there and began to realize that the monks in that monastery had no knowledge whatsoever!

Basically, a monastery has to have three foundations or bases. 1) purification every second week called *sö jong*, 2) a summer retreat for at least a month and a half, where you
also refrain from killing insects and so forth [yar ne], and 3) there is a holiday following that [gal ye]. So he decided that it was very necessary to investigate the monastery.

The elder monks approached him and tried to butter him up, so that he would stop investigating. He said, “I will listen to you, if you can give me the three bases, or foundations.” So the monks got some idea that he needed some kind of three bases and if they could give them to him, they would go free, otherwise he was going to give them trouble. So they said to him, “We will soon have whatever you ask for. We will definitely fulfill all your wishes, whatever you want. Just tell us openly exactly what you want.”

They were thinking that he was demanding some kind of bribe; they thought it was some kind of corruption. He sort of played with that and said, “I really want those three bases. Take all your time, I am here for a month.” They went on looking for ten more days and then came back to him and said, “We looked everywhere in our monastery’s storage and could not find it. But we have one crazy old monk who often goes to India for some kind of business and he probably has it. He has not come back yet. We are probably going to break into his household and look in his boxes and I am sure we will find it and then give it to you.” He said, “That is fine. Do whatever you have to do.” They broke his lock and went into his room, broke his boxes and everything and could not find anything!

Finally, after twenty-five days they went back to Gen Rinpoche and said, “We are very sorry, we cannot give you these three bases, but if there is anything you want besides that, we are happy to give it to you.” Then he began to tell to tell them what he really observed and they got the biggest shock in their lives.

What happens if you do not know what you are doing
This is the reason I told this story: if you don’t know what bodhimind is, how it is divided, how it grows, what it does for the individual, if you don’t know that and just keep on talking about it, then somebody could come and demand
your bodhimind and then you can start going through your garage and round the garage sales in the neighborhood, trying to buy bodhimind! At the same time, once you know very clearly that the action bodhimind is not possible for us to grow at this moment, since we are not on the first path yet, the only thing left for us is the aspiration bodhimind. So we try to grow the aspiration bodhimind within us. The way we try to do that is by the seven steps or the exchange stage or the 7-11 development.

However, if you don’t know how to do that - if you simply come here because you like the way we talk about things, if you simply like how Buddhism addresses your needs, if you just would like to apply that to your life and you don’t know how to do that - I would like to touch on that, because there may be a need for certain individuals.64

**The importance of setting one’s motivation daily** Remember, the motivation is the most important thing. Whatever you do, have a good motivation. Then to fifty percent you are okay, unless the work you do is by nature negative. Then you cannot change it. Otherwise everything, whatever you do, is okay. You have to do your daily chores; you have to carry out your duties.

For example, if you are a nurse or health care provider, your duties are by nature positive and if you have that motivation, then every single thing you do, from the moment you get out of bed, from that thought onwards until you are finished, until you say, “I am calling it a day, I am going home,” until that time it becomes positive, because the nature of the work itself is positive.

If you are in any kind of service industry, not only in health service, but also food service, if you are working in a kitchen or restaurant, if you are taking care of the environment, whatever you are doing, if you go with that motivation, it is by nature positive. If you are working with flowers, it is a great thing to do. You do also have the killing of insects
there, but forget about that, that is everywhere. Basically, by nature it is positive, but there are also negativities involved. Even if you drive a car, there is negative involvement. Under your car, under your tires, a number of insects are being smashed. It is bound to happen. It is great if you don’t smash squirrels or raccoons and all these people on the road, but you do smash a number of insects.

**The importance of daily purification** The negativities are there. That is okay. I mean it is not okay, but you can’t help it, because of the way our life is. But every negativity we get does not doom us, because there are ways and means of purifying. That is why we recommend that in the morning the first thing is to watch your motivation and in the evening, the last thing is to dedicate and purify. Purification and dedication are the two pieces of bread in the sandwich of your day. The first slice is the motivation bread - it should be Ed’s Bread, or nowadays it is more the Zingerman’s Bread.

Then you perform your daily activities for the whole day, whatever you do. You may be in healthcare or you may be a lawyer, or an electrician or engineer, sales person, in food services, a musician, it does not matter. By nature your work is service-oriented. The purpose of your work is to make life easier for other people, for other beings. That is what it is all about, making life easier by serving them. You may make money; clever people make that in between, they get money for providing a service. The service is something to make life easier. If you are musicians, the music you play by using different instruments, brings a beautiful, soothing sound. By hearing that, people are relieved of pain in their bodies and minds. That is the musician’s job. That is the musical service. That is how music helps people. You enjoy the sound. When you listen to it, it relieves certain anxieties, it gives you joy and pleasure.

So everybody, whatever they are doing, by nature, they are doing something to help somebody, to make their lives a little easier. It is a service, so by nature it is positive. If you
have that motivation of the Zingerman bread and carry your work, which is like the vegetables or cheese or if you like, salami or corned beef in between there, then you finally close it off with the Ed’s bread, that is by using the dedication and purifying. In the process, although it is by nature positive, service-oriented, and your motivation is positive, however, in the process we also create negativities.

I remember once, somebody tried to argue with me that eating meat is negative and how great it is if you become vegetarian. I kept on saying, “Oh, yeah, all the vegetables must be growing in the pure lands, where there is no insect killing involved at all!” That is the training of my mind. It will immediately react like that. If somebody takes an opposite viewpoint, straight away I have something to say against it, no matter whatever it is.

I don’t mean it, but at the same time, if you are looking from the viewpoint of negativities, you will find them. Even vegetarians have the same problem. Vegetables don’t really grow in the pure land only. So also, working with flowers is a great thing, wonderful, no doubt about it. But still, if you dig in the ground, you also kill insects, no question. Every single thing, whatever we do, even though it is positive, has negative aspects, all the time. Even within some positive action, you can’t help it. There is no way out from that. But what we can do is to purify these negativities. Any negativity, whatever it may be, can be purified. Negativities are impermanent and changeable. Every negativity, every negative and every positive karma is impermanent, it changes. It is a dependent arising. It depends on conditions, and therefore it is changeable. It is purifiable.

This is hard to get through to some of you, because your background is such that you think, “If I have committed a negativity, I am doomed! I will go to the wrong side of God. If I have done something positive, I will be saved, I will go to the right side of God.” That may be true, I have no quarrel with that, but everything positive and everything negative is
impermanent. Even if you go to the right side or the wrong side, both are impermanent. That is what it is, unless you make it permanent.

**How to distinguish compassion from idiot compassion**

So that is basically how you handle your life. In principle, you put your mind into the control and under the influence of compassion, caring, and have wisdom. If you don’t have wisdom, idiot compassion will take over. You will become an idiot. Idiot compassion will make the person an idiot, no matter how intelligent you may be, no matter how educated you may be. If you let idiot compassion take over, you become an idiot. The mind makes the person. That is why you have to watch out for idiot compassion.

The way to watch out is by using your wisdom. If you don’t have wisdom, use your common sense! That is good enough wisdom for us, really true. It tells you what you can do and what you cannot do, what you are capable of and what you are not capable of. You can make a difference. Everybody has the capability to make a difference, but everybody has their limitations how far and how much. That is how you use your common sense; that is the basis of your wisdom. Most of us live by our common sense. We don’t have that great wisdom yet, the all-knowing nature, seeing beyond what is shown. We don’t have that, but we have common sense. So use it; that is the wisdom we are capable of. When you start using your common sense, you cut out a lot of bullshit!

Anyway, that is how you put your life into it. Then, as a result of that, as a result of thinking of compassion, whatever you are dealing with, you will have a sense of compassion. That itself is great. But watch out for idiot compassion! So the action bodhisattva mind is not yet applicable for us. We have to look for the mind that aspires to awaken.

**Why do we need to become enlightened?** So you would like to be enlightened. Why? You have to raise that question to yourself: Why do I have to become enlightened?
Louise told me once, “If to be enlightened is like being on the level of God, I have no interest in becoming God.” That is what she told me six or seven years ago in Long Island in New York. She is right. There is no reason why we need to be enlightened for our own purpose. We are seeking freedom, freedom from suffering. That is what we need and we know it and want it. We have no question about that. We are sure that we want that. But we are not sure why we should be enlightened.

We don’t have good reasons. Is it simply because the Tibetan Buddhists told me or the Bodhisattvacharyavatara says so? These are not perfect reasons at all. So why do you need enlightenment? You have to search your soul to find the reason and you are not going find any other reason except that you want to help all beings. When you want to help all beings, you have to find the best way to help them. That is the only reason, nothing else, unless it is because of a big ego, thinking, “I’d like to be an enlightened being tomorrow, so people will look up to me as an enlightened being! That is what I would like to be.” That is just ego-service and not a good reason.

One has to be careful here. ‘For the purpose of others’, ‘In order to help others’, are very interesting words. If you really have a heartfelt desire to help others, then it is different. If you don’t have that and simply use these words, you just boost your ego. There is a very thin difference between these two. You could be saying, “I want to help all sentient beings, because it is me! I should be the one who is doing this!” If you think like that, you are doing no good for anybody. You are simply boosting your ego. If you go away from that and think, “I really want to help, even if it is only one being or two, it does not matter. I need to find the best way to show them a way out of the suffering that they are having, just like I want to get out of the suffering that I am having.” You remember, this attitude has been built on the basis of the First Principle, Seeking Freedom. The reasons why you are seeking freedom
are just as applicable to every single being that you look at across the room. The reasons apply to everybody. Imagine anybody’s face and try to see the difference between what you have and what they have - it is the same reason. They are also seeking to be free from suffering and to have joy. That is the same reason you have. You have somehow got some understanding, so you need to communicate that.

The obstacles to developing bodhimind If you have to convince Governor Engler that cultural and social programs are important, it is very hard to communicate that to him, yet this is only one person. Here you have zillions of different people and you want to convince them that the way to seek freedom is not by admiring the fantasies of samsara. How can you convince them? You need tools. If you are thinking like that, then you are not doing an ego service. Otherwise, even wanting to help all beings is a big ego-boost. Remember that.

As long as we are entertaining the ego, we are never going to reach the first path at all. Why? Because true compassion has not yet grown within us. Any compassion, any positive thought has been used to satisfy the ego. So you have this big hat on, five times bigger than your body, and walk around in that. These are the true zombies and zombinis of the spiritual path. You don’t know what a zombie is? A dead body that gets up and walks around. So as long as you become a spiritual zombie, you are not going to reach the first path. What makes you become such a zombie is the entertaining of the ego.

We have touched on the most important obstacles to developing bodhimind, the most important obstacles to reaching the first path. It is not possible for me to mention that all the time and also not possible for you to hear it all the time. It is not even appropriate for me to repeat that all the time and for you to listen to that all the time. So once you hear it, just remember it. Really, this is the introduction to
your problem. Watch for that. If you overcome that, there is no reason why you could not develop bodhimind within you.

Basically every human being has some good, kind nature and especially people in this room definitely have good, kind natured minds. You are looking for spiritual development, for bodhimind, you are interested and you have all the ways and means of getting it to you. It is a dependent arising. All the conditions are there, only our obstacles get in the way. There is always something not right. Something goes slightly wrong. That is basically the karmic system of our group here. It simply indicates that for every individual as well as for the group all the conditions are right, just some things are not clear, whatever that little something might be. Mostly it is ego, the urge to satisfy the ego. That is how it works. Once you overcome that, there is no reason why at least the aspiring bodhimind could not grow with you. No reason at all. No reason whatsoever.

In verse 16 we had the division between those would like to go and those who are actually going. Both like to go, including those who are going. They also need a desire to go, otherwise they will stop walking. Even though they may not think, “I am going, I am going,” they still have the desire to do so, otherwise they would stop.

Student: You have said that one needs the determination to be free before being able to get the bodhimind. But can you be working on both things at the same time?
Rinpoche: Sure. That’s a good question. Sure, why not? But will it work? That is questionable. Unless and until you have a strong determination for yourself to be free, you have not really understood why others need help.

Student: I can imagine how a Buddha would always have a totally compassionate mind. But when you first have bodhimind, how continuous is it? Right now, I sometimes have sympathy and want to help, at other times I don’t. When you have bo-
dhimind, any time you see another being, do you have the strong urge to help them, to alleviate their suffering? Is it a matter of degree from one stage of development to the next? Rinpoche. You should have compassion continuously, but at this stage you don’t. Unless and until you reach the third level of the third path of seeing, you don’t have the continuation at all. We all have this pull and push and this goes on all the way up to the level where you are immune against falling into the lower realms. At what level do we gain that immunity? Let me ask you!

Student: I am not sure whether it happens on the level of patience or best of Dharma of the second path.

Student 2: I heard Rilbur Rinpoche quoting Demo Rinpoche that sometimes even high-level Bodhisattvas go to lower realms. So it appears to me that there is no absolute immunity until total enlightenment.

Rinpoche: You must be thinking of the story of Ra Lotsawa who very briefly went to the hell realms. But there are two types of rebirth in lower realms. One is through compassion and prayer [rather than involuntarily through karma and delusions]. You also have to consider that from the first Mahayana path on all practitioners are bodhisattvas. The first path, the path of accumulation, has three levels. Then the path of action, the second path has four levels: heat, peak, patience and best of Dharma. Up to the level of patience one can still fall into the lower realms. žö tob nyien dra yang mi tong: patience obtained, no more lower rebirths. Once you obtained the level of patience, you don’t go to the lower realms at all.

Coming back to the continuity of bodhmind: Up to the level of patience, conscious awareness of bodhmind might not be there all the time, but its influence is always there and that is good enough to serve as continuation. You may not have that strong feeling of compassion there. Sometimes you may even have to block that feeling of compassion. (Joe is the example. I had a half-day discussion with Kathy about Joe. I am talking about Joe Blow.) So in a way it is continuous and gradually progresses, affecting the individual’s life. Somebody
made a statement here last Tuesday and that is right: You don’t just sit there, you practice the six paramitas.

Student: But before you have said that if you don’t remember it, you don’t have it.

Rinpoche: I think you have got mixed up. I said that if the bodhisattva vow were just the mind of being aware of protecting it and not a physical form, then if you weren’t thinking about it, you would not have the vow any more.

Student: When you are talking about the vows being physical form, what kind of form would that be?

Rinpoche: I mentioned it before. Actually, it is not physical in the sense of the gross physical level, but it is sort of a psycho-physical thing. It is like when we talk about chakras, nadis, etc. It exists in that manner.

Student: So it is subtle form?

Rinpoche: Yes, if you like to call it that.

Student: Thank you.

Rinpoche: You are easy to satisfy!

Verse 17 (continued)

Right now we are talking a little bit about bodhimind and its benefits. Then we will go on to the activities, once you have that mind. That is what the whole book, this Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life is about. So in one way it is an ongoing teaching on the basis of that text, but in another way it is material for meditation, particularly in this case on love and compassion. Let’s look again at verse 17:

Although great fruits occur in cyclic existence
From the mind that aspires to awaken,
An uninterrupted flow of merit does not ensue
As it does with the venturing mind.

This mind that aspires to awaken is ultimate love and compassion. This means caring and having love for every single being, regardless of who they are and how they are related to
you. It is easy to have what we think of as love and compassion for those close to us, for our dear and near friends, companions, lovers, wives, husbands, children, or whatever. But we need to check and think about why we have love for these particular people, why do we care for them? There are always reasons.

**Distinguishing between love and attachment** Very few people will think it is just because it is a person or living being. Many will think, “He is so and so, she is so and so, she is a close friend of mine, she did something good for me.” We may give all sorts of various reasons, but we don’t give the reason that he or she is a being, or even that he or she is a human being and that therefore we do care. That thought is very rarely with us, so our caring is very limited. This clearly shows us that the little love and compassion we think we have has also some attachment involved. As long as we have attachment involved, it is ego entertainment rather than real love and compassion. That is my feeling.

It is usually very hard to tell people, “You care because you have attachment.” They will definitely say, “I do not have any attachment whatsoever! I do care!” So it is very hard to tell people that, but you know, this is one advantage of an open teaching like this. We can say things that we could not say individually, one to one, face to face. The benefit that this has is that you can pick it up, understand and use the teaching as a mirror to find out what kind of compassion you have. You can check, “On the face of my compassion, do I have a spot of attachment? Do I have a spot of hatred?”

The teaching can really become like a mirror. You can look at your face in a mirror and check whether you have a black spot here or a red spot there. Maybe you have too much red over here or not enough white over there. You can make changes. The purpose of these talks, these teachings and these compositions is to provide you with material that you can use as a mirror. It is also easier for me to speak in this way. It is not addressed to any individual but to anybody.
You know, attachment and love and compassion are so close. It is so difficult to make the distinction. It is very hard for people who have not trained their minds. We don’t have that much mind training, so for us it becomes one piece of mumbo-jumbo, a nice, juicy, wonderful, but at the same time sticky mixture.

**What is real mindfulness practice?** The goal is to make your mind pure, to move your compassion beyond attachment. Attachment is deceptive; it actually appears to us as something nice that we can enjoy and have a wonderful time with. We look in that way. But very soon, this wonderful time is over; then it gives you pain, trouble and all sorts of difficulties. We know that, don’t we? That is the indication that it is attachment, not really pure love. Pure love and pure compassion should not give you any pain at all. They are always free of that sticky stuff. Are you people with me? Simply look within you; you are not going to find it outside. Ask yourself what is the reason why you care for this particular person, why you can tolerate that person better than another person, why you don’t get upset with this person, but you get more upset with that person. This is the real mindfulness; this is how you really observe.

Usually, you think of mindfulness as when you sit and count your breaths and observe how one breath comes and then goes, and tickles you at a certain spot, *etc.* Of course, that is mindfulness. But *why* do you do this? Because it trains you in how to watch your mind.

Earlier Tibetan masters used to give the example that the mind is like a naughty monkey in the temple. If you let a very naughty monkey loose in the temple, what will it do? It will jump all over the place, drink the offering water, knock down the lights, break the incense, eat up the fruit on the altar and mess around everywhere.

In the same way, our mind does not stay focused on anything. It will be here, then it will be there and all over the
place. This happens to us constantly. Right now, you may be listening to me, you may be focused, but with a subliminal mind you may be thinking about something else. You could be thinking, “Where am I going to go after this, for a coffee or to a discotheque?” Maybe you have a date and are thinking about where you are going to take her or him. Or you may be thinking about your work. That kind of mind is there, but there is really no mindfulness.

Mindfulness is actually looking after your monkey! Watch where your monkey is going and what mischief it is up to. Some small monkeys are more steady and stable than other bigger monkeys. So with good mindfulness you observe, “Why can’t I be more tolerant towards this person? Why do I have more love or caring for that person?” You will come up with a variety of reasons like “Well, I am strongly attracted to this person, so I have tremendous tolerance and caring for them.” This situation is most probably attachment! Physical attraction, mental attraction, emotional attraction, attraction to somebody’s character, or simply attraction to somebody as a person, all these are most probably attachment, outright attachment. You probably have greater tolerance at the moment for somebody if they are your friend, if you know each other. The other way round, you try to justify that you did something for a person, because they did something for you. This is ego-service. When you start thinking, “I am doing something for this person, because he or she is a wonderful human being,” then we are getting somewhere! This is how you watch your mind; it is very simple.

In short, with caring and loving, you have to watch that you are not seeking anything for yourself in return. In the normal American way we say, “What’s in it for me?” So when there is no “What’s in it for me?” and yet you totally care for that person, then probably this is not ego-service, but pure love, pure compassion. When that becomes bigger and better, you will probably care for everybody, every human being, no matter what their skin color or race is, or whether they are
short or tall, fat or thin, black or white, yellow or green; you will have the same feeling equally towards any and every human being.

When we talk about bodhimind or even great compassion, the object of that is all sentient beings. From this level on, the object is all sentient beings. Then the aspiration or the perception of the mind to care or to give and develop, that is where the difference between compassion and love comes in. When you can get the focus even on all human beings, we are getting somewhere. When we say that bodhimind is very far away from us, it is because of this. If you train your mind to be able to look at a room full of people and try to develop that compassion, try to develop that caring and love, it will make it much easier to develop fully.

**How to work towards great compassion**  
When you look at a room full of people, you will probably have various feelings towards different people. You may decide, “Yes, I am OK with caring for this person, but not that person.” The simple reason could be that “He let me down,” or, “She stood me up,” or any reason. It could be, “This is a terrible person, my friend told me about him.” All these reasons will come up, and many times these reasons are also true. However, if you really look through or beyond the face and the skin of the person with a bad personality, short temper or jealousy, that person is really driven by his or her ignorance. It is not really the fault of the individual, truly speaking, but the fault of the ignorance. To be able to see that is a great mind; that is a great being that has that mind. When you can manage to build up your compassion towards that room full of people, then you can go on and build it up for everybody. Finally, you will be able to build up that great compassion even towards people who hurt you, hit you and hate you.

A few days ago when I was in Chicago, the Dalai Lama was giving a big lecture to about four thousand people there in the Madonna temple. His Holiness told a story which sur-
Gelek Rimpoche

prised me. He said when he was young, there was a monk who came to help him say his prayers, rituals, etc. He was not a famous, learned scholar, or respected monk, just a simple guy who simply knew how to recite prayers well. Probably he was good at pronouncing the rituals, so he used to help the Dalai Lama with that.

When His Holiness came out of Tibet, that monk was left behind. He was put into labor camps, and he was tortured. Later, when the situation relaxed, he was released and escaped from Tibet and stayed with the Dalai Lama. He told the Dalai Lama about his experiences in the Chinese labor camp. He said, “Normally it was okay, but on some occasions it was very dangerous.” So His Holiness thought that there must have been some danger to his life. But when that monk explained further he said, “No, there was the danger of losing my compassion towards the Chinese. There was a big danger sometimes.” So the Dalai Lama said that when he heard that he was surprised, even shocked, and this guy became in his eyes huge, much bigger than before.

That is true and it becomes possible when your mind is trained. When your mind is not trained, then forget about being put into a labor camp and beaten, but just somebody giving you a slightly different look will make you snap, “What is the matter? What did I do wrong?” Right? We will probably go to that extent. Just because of a slightly funny look.

I thought it would be good to share that story with you. It shows what one human being can achieve, without much difficulty. The way to achieve that is by looking at people as human beings, at each person as just another human being, full of suffering, anxiety, pressure, desire, anger, hatred, jealousy, fear, afraid of losing something. When we can really see that person as we see ourselves, then it can really begin to draw a heartfelt caring towards that person. In other words, we try to develop love and compassion towards another person not because that person is beautiful, not because they have a beautiful body, hair, mouth, voice, etc.; that is just at-
attachment. We care because that person has pain, suffering and misery just as much as I have myself.

We are now actually in Buddhism 102. In Buddhism 101 we learned that we have all that pain, suffering and misery. As much as we have realized this about ourselves, we have to recognize it in other persons. If you can do that, it is the beginning of training the mind in that direction. And at that level it is not even love and compassion. It may be, but - it is my habit to put down the qualities that we have. That does not mean that I like to push people down, so you don’t have to cry, but at that point you are getting somewhere.

**The true source of joy** Richard Gere was also at that event in Chicago. He gave a speech as well. At first he talked like a Hollywood guy, but after a little while he changed his mind and opened his heart and talked. He said that he noticed that whenever he did something for himself, he did not get any happiness, joy or satisfaction, but when he tried to do something for somebody else, he began to get some satisfaction. He said that he learned that from Tibetan Buddhism, from His Holiness and all the other teachers that he had been around.

I thought that was a great message. If you keep on thinking, “How am I going to get it? How am I going to do it? I want great bliss, I want this, I want that,” you will never get it, never. When you begin to see that just as you yourself are having difficulties, others have that too, and when you start caring about them, that is the beginning of experiencing joy and bliss yourself. So it is not the question of “How can I get it? I, I, I,” but you have to think, “How can I help, how can I do something?” That is what brings joy.

With such a mind, gone beyond the ordinary level with the focus on all sentient beings, you are then seeking ultimate enlightenment. Even praying in this way is bodhismind: “May I become fully enlightened for the benefit of all beings,” without the ego hiding somewhere inside, without any pride.
hiding somewhere inside, without self-attachment. Is there such a word? Selfishness is involved too, but what I mean here is beyond selfishness. What I am trying to say is that you pretend that you are working for all beings, wanting to benefit all beings, yet you are cheating yourself, because from deep down you are pushing your own image up in front. It is I who is doing it! You feel like a tall person among the short ones; that is a Tibetan saying. You are slightly cheating yourself because of a deep attachment to yourself. This is not coming out openly, but hides under layers and layers of make-up like “For the benefit for all beings, it’s not for me, man!”

There are all sorts of layers like that and you can peel them off and find that deep down underneath there is that self-attachment. This is more than selfishness. Selfishness is not that bad because it is open, you can recognize it. This here, however, is hiding, it is cheating ourselves and we do that very often. We say that everything is fine, but in some corner of the mind we say “But I will be the one” There are two ways how the I comes in there, the self-attached way and another one. This second way is where I am not seeking anything in there for me. I don’t want a name, prestige, popularity. I am not seeking anything. I could be seen as a doormat, yet I am doing it. When you get the honesty of that mind and only you yourself know that - then it is free of self-attachment. Then, if you are seeking enlightenment for all beings, you don’t even have to say “for all beings,” because it is true, you are really seeking it for the benefit of others. That is when it becomes precious and even a simple prayer is what is called aspiring bodhimind. Such a mind alone can drive you away from samsara and give you a great result. When you actually function with that mind, when you act, when you have the venturing bodhimind, you are bound to have continued, great benefit constantly with you, all the time.

Verse 18, 19, and 20

And for those who have perfectly seized this
mind,
With the thought never to turn away
From totally liberating
The infinite forms of life,

From that time hence,
Even while asleep or unconcerned,
A force of merit equal to the sky
Will perpetually ensue.

For the sake of those inclined towards the lesser (vehicle),
This was logically asserted
By the Tathagata himself
In the Sutra Requested by Subahu.

By this time, you are totally dedicated; you have perfectly seized this mind. You are not going to turn away at all. You have developed that mind with which you are going to go all the way out to liberate all beings, the infinite forms of life. You are going to be the best servant of all sentient beings. When you have come that way, you don’t just care for one or two, but for all of them. So from that time onwards, bodhi-mind remains and produces great merit even if you do nothing, even while asleep, or when you are unconcerned like when you get drunk or when you don’t pay attention, or if you are lost in some football game or if you are high on marijuana - I am not encouraging drinking or smoking, but I am giving you some extremes in relation to the word unconcerned. I am looking here into a commentary that also talks about whether you are eating, drinking, walking, standing, sleeping. It is taken from one of the sutras where Buddha had advised a king. Buddha said,

You are a king, you are busy, you have a lot of work to do. You cannot devote your time to meditation twenty-four hours a day, like the monks and sanyassins do. Therefore, since you do not have much opportunity to meditate and
practice, you should develop this mind. Once you have developed this mind, wishing to become fully enlightened, with strong faith in the Enlightened Beings, with strong desire to become an Enlightened One yourself, not for your own sake, but with total dedication, if you do that, then you can do whatever you usually do. You can take care of your royal activities, such as walking, sitting, moving, having fun, being involved in games, eating, drinking, making judgments, etc. This is the way to handle all of that without losing your kingdom, without losing your kingdom’s activities and with your own spiritual development building up together. This is what you should do.

This is what the commentary says on this particular level of benefits. This quote from the sutra that I read is actually not in relation to verse 19, but verse 17. So even just aspiring to become a fully enlightened being can do that much. If you then have the venturing or action mind, there is no question about the benefits! That is why they bring the examples of going to sleep, drinking, etc. At that level it does not matter, whatever you do, you are constantly building up a tremendous amount of positive karma like the sky. The sky is the limit! Buddha has said this, and Buddha does not lie. If he lied, he would not be Buddha.

So this is the method we can use to handle our lives. We want this, don’t we, in the year 2000? We won’t have much time, but we all want quick spiritual development. His Holiness said in Chicago that people asked him for the quickest method of spiritual development. He said, “I think the next question will be, ‘What is the cheapest way?’”

There is no cheap spiritual development and there is no quick spiritual development. Instant coffee is not good. We all know that, right? Although we may enjoy looking at the commercial of Taster’s Choice, however, it is not that great a choice! Instant things are not that good, and there is no in-
stant enlightenment at all. But this is one of the best and quickest ways to get to enlightenment.

It is a perfect way for us to do our daily chores. We can be on the job at 7.30 or 8.30 in the morning. Many people cannot get off work before 5 pm, or some will even still be there at 8 pm, 9 pm or even burn the midnight oil. We do that day after day, week after week. When we have to do that, we need such a path, where even the usual thing, the usual work can go on and we simultaneously build our spiritual development. You are building positive karma within you.

This is as if you were putting a big investment into something like blue chip stocks. Then even while you are busy doing something else, it still keeps on building. Your money is working harder for you. You see, I have seen the commercials! This is exactly how your spiritual path is working harder and better for you while you are engaged in daily chores, working to pay your bills. That is what our need is in the year 2000. This is right in front of us. Somehow we have to find it.

The hidden treasure. I am sure that many of you have heard this a number of times. I am sure many of you have read the lam rim books Liberation in the Palm of your Hand, Essential Nectar, Treasury of Dharma, Anthology of Well-Spoken Advice, and so on. But somehow you have not picked it up. It looks like you have not highlighted this. You are still looking at transforming negativities, you are thinking of how to accomplish that, how to get to the benefit. You think that somewhere there is a hidden treasure. But it is not. The hidden treasure is right in front of you. You have read about it a number of times. You have heard about it a number of times, but you have forgotten to highlight it. Now, please do not forget! Use three, four different colors to highlight it!

In my personal case, I have not read the Bodhisattvachar-yavatara much. The lam rim I have read a lot. The teaching on the Bodhisattvachar-yavatara I also only took once myself. I did
read the commentaries, like Khenpo Shampön’s and Gyaltsab Je’s, but now that I am going through it again, I can hear much more, I can highlight better. That is what is happening. The hidden treasure is right in front of you! Don’t miss it.

Those of you who are seriously doing it, please read the commentaries by the Dalai Lama (A Flash of Lightning in the Dark Night) and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (Meaningful To Behold) as well as the book itself. We can study both those commentaries together, they will not contradict each other! Did you get the joke? If not, it does not matter.

The title of A Flash of Lightning in the Dark Night has been taken directly from one of the first verses of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara. I remember I explained it as a glimpse of something beyond our human realm and level. You can see how just a few words can have so much meaning. Think of the rare opportunity of this precious human life, like you have a long, dark night and there is one little flash. Another interpretation I gave was from the point of view of the experiences we had in the sixties. That was also like a lightning in the long, dark night. It has shown us that there is something beyond our material world. People had a glimpse of a life beyond that. I read it that way and explained it that way and this is also true, particularly in this country. Today’s interest in spirituality and going beyond the material world would not be there without all the different revolutions you had here in the sixties. A lot of things happened. That is the collective karma of the people in the West, those of us who immigrated to this country and those of you who are born here earlier, now, later. The collective karma has made that possible. It also brought a lot of trouble too, but at the same time a lot of openings. That was the positive part of the culture of the sixties.

I believe verse 20 is talking in reference to the previous verses and is given for the benefit of those who would like to use the lesser vehicle. Verse 20 says that verses 18 and 19 are right. Not only that, Buddha himself taught this for the benefit of those who want to follow the lesser vehicle.
Questions and Answers

*Student:* Wasn’t there anybody at the time when Shantideva was asked to teach as an insult who saw him as an extraordinary being? What happened to their compassion? Also, you have given the example of that simple monk who said that there was a great danger that he might lose his compassion for the Chinese in the prison camp. You said that His Holiness was surprised and that because of this in his eyes this guy had become big. Was there not a wisdom that would have known that this person was great? Also you said yourself that we should look at everybody as our teacher and not make them big or small. Can we really enter the path in the desire realm?

*Rinpoche:* I don’t know if I have the answer for all those questions. As far as Shantideva is concerned, there were a number of people at the time who knew exactly what Shantideva was up to. Otherwise they would not have sent him there. There were a lot of people who knew him and a lot who didn’t. Probably, as usual, those who knew kept their mouth shut and those who did not know were at the executive level and therefore decided to build that huge throne! It is simple and always true and that is what happens. Those who know keep their mouths shut. That is the normal, nice way of keeping quiet in the monastic environment. If you have a lot of ideas, you will become very active with those. So a lot of them did know exactly what was going on, but just sat there pretending to know nothing. That is what obviously happened at that time.

Now to the second part of your question. I am sure the Dalai Lama knew that this guy was a great being. But the Dalai Lama appears as an ordinary being, just like you and me, with his nose this way and not that way, with only two eyes, not a thousand. Therefore he has to behave like a normal human being and as such was surprised and shocked and said
that this guy has become bigger for him. I don’t really see a contradiction in that.

As for the last question: Can you really enter the path in the desire realm? Sure you can! Not only can you enter the path in the desire realm, but you can attain enlightenment - even in this particular life. That is according to Vajrayana, through Vajrayana practices. The hardest part is the beginning. We are struggling; we are sort of really there. It is now a matter of clicking. Once it begins to click, it goes, even if you go to sleep, drink, walk, eat, shit, stand, sit, whatever you do, it is constantly functioning. It is a matter of clicking now; I mean you are quite there. We are quite there.

**Student:** You may do something for somebody without expectation. That person says that they will do something good to you too, but that does not happen, like birthday or Christmas gifts. What is that?

**Rinpoche:** That is treating human relations and spiritual practice as business: I do this for you, you do that for me. That is the usual American life-style. You have the saying, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.” Probably that is the business-minded, materialistic influence in human relationships and the spiritual path. That needs to be cut through. Cutting through spiritual materialism - it could be talking about this subject in that book by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Very soon we are going to touch on the subject of generosity. If you are going to engage in any generosity, it should be totally based on not hoping for any return. There should be no attachment. There should not be any thought like “If I do that, what will you do for me?” That is a business deal, not generosity. Americans are used to this. I should say, “We Americans are used to that.” But that is business-influence. I am sure you people have been brought up since childhood in that manner. It might have even been projected for you as being spiritual. Who knows? To me it is the business-mindedness getting into the picture. You should not think, “The other people should do it.” That is their own obligation
or spiritual duty. But if they do or don’t, it should make no
difference on your side. Then you are happy. Otherwise you
will be unhappy, because your ego will say, ”I did not get re-
ciprocation!” The ego will be upset, unhappy, because it did
not receive reciprocation. That is the ego pushing. That will
bring unhappiness. It will cut down your joy and happiness.

*Student:* After studying Dharma for a while, I think in general
I wish people more happiness than I used to and get along
better with people. But every now and then a name comes up
from the past and I see how I get furious and that anger
seems to wreck everything I tried to build. It is embarrassing.
*Rinpoche:* I really appreciate that question. It seems that you
have touched an old wound. If you did not touch that, it
probably would get rotten, get infected and would create
trouble. So it is great that you could feel it and great that you
could say it. Don’t feel embarrassed. This is family, we work
with that and share that. That is not a problem, you don’t
have to be embarrassed at all.

*Student:* Thank you.
*Rinpoche:* Don’t thank me, I am not even through yet! It de-
pends how much you can work with it. You have to raise the
question: are you ready to forgive? Are you willing to go be-
yond that anger? Then there are ways and means of meditat-
ing. Or do you have to let a little bit more time pass in be-
tween? These are the two points I can come up with in my
head right now. If you are ready to give up and let it go, you
have to think, “Why was I angry? Why has that anger come
up now?” If you ask that, you will probably find out that you
earlier on had left a situation without clearing the anger. You
just left it, dropped it, did something else. You may have
been preoccupied or forced to leave it. So it is unfinished
business. That is where your anger is hitting now. What were
the reasons why you have got angry at the time, whose fault
was it, yours or hers?
*Student:* Mine.
Rinpoche: So are you angry with yourself?
Student: Yes, it is strange.
Rinpoche: I don’t think it was your fault. Definitely not. It could be your anger’s fault. It could be your attachment’s fault. It could be your jealousy’s fault. Think about that. Whatever it is, it is the anger within you, or the attachment or jealousy within you, that is the cause. So direct your current anger at anger, not at yourself. The anger is the trouble, not you. You are not anger. You may be an angry person, but you are not anger. Anger is a mental faculty that comes up within you and changes your personality. You remember the example I normally give? It is the lampshade and the light bulb inside. Changing to a red bulb will make the clean, crystal-clear lampshade look like a red lampshade. But it is the bulb, not the lampshade. Anger is a mental faculty; it pops up like toast from out of a toaster. That is the problem. It is not you. Can you think on those lines for a while? And then talk to me next time when I see you.

Verse 21 and 22

If even the thought to relieve
Living creatures of merely a headache
Is a beneficial intention
Endowed with infinite goodness,

Then what need is there to mention
The wish to dispel their inconceivable misery,
Wishing every single one of them
To realize boundless good qualities?

So if one has the thought or wish to solve a single person’s difficulties, that creates tremendous amounts of merit or good karma. It becomes helpful and beneficial.

We are in the middle of reading the Bodhisattvacharyavatara. We are using the translation called A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life. We are within the first chapter which is about the benefits of the bodhimind. Bodhimind is the tech-
nical name used here. It is ultimate compassion, ultimate love, unlimited, unconditioned compassion and love. That is the real essence of the bodhimind. So we are really talking about the qualities and benefits of that love and compassion. Within that we are saying now that if we are trying to solve a problem for even one individual, it helps tremendously - not only the individual with the problem, but also the person who is solving the problem.

**Caring for others and serving them** I mention very often that our main job is to make ourselves free from the misery of negative neuroses, such as anger, hatred and jealousy when we realize we have them. When you realize that and you see how difficult it is, how much you are suffering from it, then it is so important to switch the focus and realize that everybody else, the person that you share your life with, that you live with, your companion and everybody has the same problems. You have to recognize that. That becomes extremely important, instead of remaining with the attitude, “How can I get out of this problem? What shall I do?” Don’t do that. That is what I have been telling people ever since we started the *Bodhisattvacharya*vatara. The way to get out yourself is by caring for others who are having the same problems. Realize that, work for it, try to relieve their pain. Find out the best way to do that. And when you can relieve the other person’s pain, you will be happy, satisfied. Are you with me? That is extremely important, rather than saying, “How can I do something for myself?”

Also, you have to remember that the way to work like that is not so much by withdrawing inside yourself, under the pretence of meditation and saying mantras. Indirectly, in other words, you are finding another cocoon in which to hide and if you try to keep yourself in that cocoon, thinking, “How can I develop?” you will still go round. So the way to do it is, the moment you realize there are difficulties and you
want to be free, you see that also all other people have difficulties and want to be free.

**Love and compassion begin at home** Begin with the people you share your life with, your family members, your kids, parents, *etc.* Everybody is in the same boat. Think, “As much as I have that difficulty, they have the same difficulty.” Begin with one to one, on an individual level, rather than with all sentient beings as a big, impossible long shot. It is a long shot. It has tremendous benefit thinking of all sentient beings, no doubt. But it is a long shot to solve each and every single person’s problem. So whatever we can do, right in front of our own nose, who comes face to face with us, each one of them, try to pick up their problem and try to help them, rather than making it more complicated, more confused, and adding up your own neuroses on top of their neuroses. That makes it only more difficult. Instead of that, whatever wisdom you have, whatever compassion you can get, whatever caring mind you have, try to solve their problem, try to help them. If you can solve that, how happy you will be, even if it is only a little bit of a problem. That is the Bodhisattva’s way of building happiness - by serving others.

So verse 21 says that relieving someone of any problem, *even just a simple headache*, with the desire, motivation and influence of bodhimind, compassion, has tremendous benefit. *Not* because you resolve the headache. *Not* because you happen to be a doctor and give the right drug to get rid of that headache. But you have the motivation to relieve the suffering that people are experiencing, just as you yourself are experiencing. Try to relieve that, with the desire to relieve that, to bring them joy, to relieve their suffering. When you have that motivation, you create a tremendous amount of benefit. It is not because you prescribe the right drug for the right illness, but because of the mind, the motivation. That is why you get benefit.

*Practice for the new millennium* I keep on saying that in the year
2000, we are not going to have time to meditate all the time, we are not going to have eight hours to put in. We are not going to have time to sit for three years in a cave or under a tree. We are not going to have that at all! So we must find the best techniques to make our daily chores, our commitments, paying our usual bills, and so forth beneficial. That is what we have to make into our spiritual path. To do this depends totally on the motivation. That is what I have been saying ever since we have been meeting here.

Unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion will not just select one or two persons. When you have the desire to relieve everybody’s problems and bring everybody to the ultimate level of joy, you are bound to have a tremendous amount of merit. That is what verse 22 is saying. So the benefit of this mind is tremendous; it is immeasurable, really.

We have just covered that when looking at the vows. Once you have the vows, then even if you are just sleeping, or if you are high all the time, it will be beneficial. So it depends so much on the power of that mind, how you set up your mind. The mind has tremendous power. We all know that. The mind is what makes everything different for us. If you depend on physical things only, it is very limited. If you want to say mantras, how many can you say? Ten, fifteen, twenty perhaps. There may be a few people who will be able to say a couple of thousands or a hundred thousand or something. So it is really limited.

In the year 2000 and beyond, we will be much busier and there will be much more pressure. It is not like the good, old days, really. I was really shocked when I met some of the Tibetans who recently came from Tibet to the United States. Each one of them has two jobs! They each are working something like fourteen or sixteen hours a day just to make a living. That must be the same for you, too. Those of you who hang around, half working, half not working, are very lucky persons - if you can manage continuously. Otherwise, there is tremendous pressure. When you have two jobs,
where is the time to meditate, to say mantras, where is the
time when you can hide in your cocoon? There is none.

Therefore, you really have to make the best use of what
is available right in front of you. Simply learn how to moti-
vate yourself and use that. Even if you don’t have bodhi-
mind, you can have some kind of artificial bodhimind work-
ing towards that direction. Try to develop that and even be-
fore you develop that, try to pray that you may develop that.
It works. Then try to bring that mind up. Then every single
thing you do will become beneficial. Every single chore that
you do regularly: doing your laundry, ironing your clothes,
going shopping, waiting in the malls, driving the highways.
Each one of them will become beneficial. One has to learn
that that is what bodhimind does.

In this teaching we are going to go through how to de-
velop bodhimind and how to practice after that, what sort of
attitude the individual should have. By the time you have
completed this teachings, you will have some solid
knowledge or understanding about how you should focus
your life in the spiritual path. This is the guidance and direc-
tion that this will give you.

To continue with verses 21 and 22, the translation you have
here does not go easily when translated directly from the Ti-
betan. If you read the Tibetan, the English does not make
much sense. I have to explain on the basis of Tibetan rather
than English, because I do not know English. Anyway, the
first two lines talk about the wish to relieve all beings of head-
aches. The bodhimind, ultimate love and compassion, is focused on
all beings, all sentient beings. The object of great compassion
is all sentient beings. Its aspect is the desire to help and re-
lieve suffering. That is the main reason why it is so tremen-
dously beneficial, even if you just have a simple wish to help
someone to relieve a headache, either through medical ways
or healing or mantras.

The traditional Tibetan way of healing is different
from the Western way. Here you just go and see any doctor
who will probably give you some drugs, whether they know what is wrong or not. We don’t do it that way, although we also have our family doctors. But even before people go to a doctor they will go and see a spiritual master who can tell them which doctor is best in order to cure a particular illness. Spiritual masters somehow have ways and means of checking and they will sometimes recommend to see a medical doctor, sometimes they may recommend a spiritual healer, sometimes they will send you to some physical massage therapy type of treatment, sometimes they will send you to a person who works through mantras. Even to cure a headache, there may be medicine or advice on what to eat or what not to eat, or there may be mantras or spiritual blessings.

**Helping without a personal agenda** So we are talking about the desire to help someone get rid of their headache or any other illness, with the sincere desire to try to find a way to help the person - without any personal agenda. You know a personal agenda is a problem. If somebody asks you to help with something, you probably have ways and means of checking that person and you have to check with the sincere desire how karmically that person can be helped and what could be done, rather than thinking, “I will be the instrument to relieve that person’s suffering. I will be credited with that.” The moment you think like that, it becomes a personal agenda. If you have a personal agenda, even if you have a desire to help, it does not become the flawless love and compassion. It becomes faulty.

So when Shantideva says *Even the thought to relieve a headache,* this means wishing to do that without a personal agenda at all. Such a thought will bring boundless good qualities. Remember here we are in Buddhism 102, not 101, where we are only seeking freedom for ourselves. 102 will tell you that the way to seek freedom for yourself is by helping others, not sitting there and thinking, “How can I get out of suffering myself?”
A headache is just one example. You can take any simple suffering. Even wanting to relieve that with a sincere desire and without any personal agenda, *boundless good qualities will be realized*. In other words, you are going to generate a tremendous amount of good karma. This is because of the compassion, the love, the caring, and because you don’t have any personal agenda at all. If that is so, then with the bodhi-mind, which is real ultimate love and compassion which wishes to free all beings, not just some, limited by creature, color, citizenship or anything, without any limitations, directed at all sentient beings - if you can’t think of all sentient beings, than at least all human beings, - if you have that much, the object of your wish to relieve suffering is expanded. It has gone beyond just ‘fellow citizens’. Since the Republican Convention is on right now, I am using that term! There is no limit. That is why we realize boundless good qualities.

*The reasons why bodhimind is so beneficial*  So even if you wish to relieve just one or two persons of a simple illness, such as a headache, that realizes a lot of good qualities. If you do that for all the boundless beings, let’s say all human beings, going beyond the citizens of the United States, even legal aliens and illegal aliens - in other words all human beings - the number of objects of your caring has expanded tremendously. Secondly, your desire of relieving them of their suffering has gone beyond just relieving a simple headache. It has gone to relieving all of their suffering once and for all, cutting the root of all suffering. That is what you are going to bring in. Unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion will take that direction. If the limited and conditioned wish to relieve one person of a head ache brings tremendous good qualities, then the expansion of that wish to all sentient beings and wishing to relieve them totally from all suffering, is bound to be more beneficial than that! Not only that, but thirdly, you not only wish to relieve their physical and mental
suffering, but also bring the qualities of the enlightened beings to them.

Such a mind, even if it is only in the wishing form, wishing all beings to have these qualities, will bring countless numbers of merits and tremendous, boundless, good qualities for yourself. So the way to attain those qualities yourself is not by asking, “How am I going to get them?” The question is “How can I help all beings? How can I relieve their pain and how can I bring all the good qualities to them?” Even doing that on the wishing level alone brings countless good qualities to you. In other words, if you keep on asking how you are going to get them, you are not going to get them. If you keep on thinking, “How am I going to get it?” you will not find the way out; you are also going to bring yourself a tremendous amount of anxiety, and that is followed by all sorts of problems we can see around. All that is just because of focusing too much on yourself.

The only way to help others become free of all suffering and attain all good qualities is by trying to bring oneself to the level of enlightenment. First Buddhism 101 will tell you that you have to be free from your own suffering. You have to make a strong decision that you have to be free and that you want to be. Once you have made up that mind, you immediately turn that point towards others and observe the people that you deal with. You will find out that they all have the same problems as you do. You really need to change the focus from yourself and put the other people in. Try to see how they are. Then, instead of asking how you can help yourself, you look for ways to help them.

A two-pronged mind In the beginning, it is only wishing to do that. You wish them to be free and not only that, you would like to bring the qualities of total enlightenment to them. This is how you learn. First, it is just through wishing; that itself is of tremendous benefit to yourself. The bodhi-mind does bring benefits for oneself, also. It is a two-pronged
mind. There is the mind that wishes to attain enlightenment for the sake of others and the mind that wishes to help beings. The mind wishing to help all other beings is the vehicle that delivers you to enlightenment, not the desire to obtain enlightenment, although it is part and parcel.

Remember, the other day I shared an example with you of somebody who had some kind of terrible machine on their head, running around, seeing that people are suffering tremendously and that person wishes to relieve that. In reality it might not be a physical machine, but sometimes a mental machinery makes us suffer tremendously. Our funny thoughts are worse than those Dutch windmills! It is more than a windmill that we have on our heads. That tortures and makes the individual suffer tremendously. Our funny thoughts are worse than those Dutch windmills! It is more than a windmill that we have on our heads. That tortures and makes the individual suffer tremendously, “What shall I do? Should I go ahead or not?” You pull this way and then pull back. All this push and pull we have. Earlier they gave you examples with metaphorical terms like somebody with a big machine on the head that made him suffer. But the real machine is the mental machine and when somebody can really think, “I wish I could take that and relieve that person.” With that very thought the person wishing that died and took rebirth in a perfect angel realm.

We also mentioned before that according to the Mahayana tradition the Buddha first generated bodhimind while in the hell realm. He thought, “I wish I could help the person that is working with me, pulling the horse cart of that terrifying hell guardian!” The moment he had this thought, the hell guardian hit him on the head with a hammer and said, “How dare you think like this in the hell realm!” So that blow with the hammer killed him and he was reborn and became the Buddha. This really shows us how such a thought has so much power to uplift the individual towards enlightenment. That wish has tremendous power to bring the good qualities to our level. This mind itself does that. You don’t really have to do it physically or mentally yourself. It is the power of love and compassion even just by wishing, even if you actually
don’t do anything. This is what this particular verse (verse 22) is telling you.

Verse 23

Do even fathers and mothers
Have such a benevolent intention as this?
Do the gods and sages?
Does even Brahma have it?

Normally, fathers and mothers always have to desire to help their children. They love them and try to help the children to help themselves. They have the desire to help, but they don’t have the desire to bring total spiritual development to the people. No matter how much love they may have for their children, no matter how much they care, no matter how much they care about their companions and everybody, they don’t have the mind of bringing them to enlightenment, do they? Even the small ‘g’ gods and sages are like that. There is boundless love and compassion there, but all these beings don’t have the mind of bringing ultimate spiritual development to them.

First, they don’t know about it and then, even if they do know, they are very skeptical. Even if they are not skeptical, they will be afraid for their children. For whatever reason, they will not buy the idea or in any case, they will not help. They don’t have that mind. Not even the samsaric gods have that. Basically, that is talking about spirits, etc. The Tibetan tradition refers to them as gods too. So when it says gods, it really means good spirits, angels, and so on. These have also a good mind of helping, but they do not have a good mind of bringing people to the level of enlightenment. Neither do the sages. Then the text mentions Brahma, a Hindu god. He has an immeasurable, great desire to help all sentient beings, but even though he has a good mind, which is kind, and compassionate, he will not have the desire to bring all sentient beings to the ultimate spiritually developed level.
The possibility for us, that means you and me on the level of ordinary human beings, to be able to do that really puts us spiritually even higher than those beings! This is because of love and compassion. I am not saying that, it is this book right over here! You can read it here in these verses.

Verse 24

If those beings have never before
Even dreamt of such an attitude
For their own sake,
How would it ever arise for the sake of others?

Do those of us who are ordinary beings really have such a mind that wants to bring enlightenment even just for ourselves - forget about for others? Most beings have not even met with this path, so they do not have that desire in their ordinary thinking and not even in their dreams. People can have all sorts of funny dreams, but the desire to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment does not arise even during dreams for ordinary beings.

Did any one of us ever dream that? We have all sorts of unthinkable, unimaginable dreams, but never a dream of bringing all sentient beings to the level of enlightenment. This is not a joke. It just does not happen, because we are not at that level yet. We are lucky, we are fortunate in our lives, no doubt, but we also have our limitations. When you go deeply into the spiritual path, you begin to see those things as well. When we dream, we dream about things we don’t normally even think about - all sorts of things, good, bad, enjoyable, miserable. But we don’t get that wonderful, extraordinary dream.

What that is trying to tell you is that this quality is even superior to ordinary angels, small ‘g’ gods and sages and even Brahma. Because of the benefit of love and compassion you are better than that. We are in the chapter which describes the benefits of love and compassion. Somehow the Bodhisatt-
vacharyavatara chooses in its first chapter to start with the benefits of the bodhimind. It tells you what love and compassion can do and what others cannot do.

In the next verse, bodhimind is introduced as precious mind, as *jewel of the mind*.

**Verse 25**

*This intention to benefit all beings,*  
*Which does not arise in others even for their own sake,*  
*Is an extraordinary jewel of the mind,*  
*And its birth is an unprecedented wonder.*

We don’t really even dream of bringing all sentient beings to the level of enlightenment. Why is that level of total enlightenment so important? Because that is the ultimate spiritual development in which you are free of all neuroses and causes of neuroses. You also ensure that you have the best methods to help others, to free them. You do that on the basis of your own experience, your own development. This is the best level you can achieve.

That is why the mind that seeks this is referred to as the jewel mind, in other words Jewel Heart. This is true. In the tradition of Asian cultures and thinking, the heart is the basis of the mind. In the West, they think that the head or brain is the basis of the mind. In the East, the heart is the basis of the mind. So when we call our organization Jewel Heart, we are really referring to love and compassion, the basis of bodhimind, the basis of ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned caring and love, the way you can practice it.

*Developing through hearing, thinking and meditating*  
Here we are focusing only on sharing the teachings that Buddha has given, sharing the message that Buddha left for us. We try to share that with you, but do not focus so much on how you sit down and meditate. We focus on giving you
the message, giving you the essence and then we expect that you will go back to your own home and meditate within your own four walls, that you will think and analyze on your own. You don’t need so much assistance for analyzing and meditating. You and I both have limited time; we don’t have unlimited time at all. We are all working; we are all paying our bills one way or another, so our time is limited. With this limited time we are doing the best we can, so here we share the ideas which are based on the Buddha’s personal experience, shared by the great teachers, masters. We share that with you.

You then keep these things in your thoughts, and go back to your own home and think about it, analyze it at a time that suits you. I am not telling you to meditate, but to think about it. Thinking is meditation, analyzing is meditation. You may sit cross-legged and turn your eyes blue, black, yellow or whatever. You may do that or not. You may sit on the pot or in a nice, warm shower and think about it. But what happens is that the thoughts, ideas, the analyzing and remembering should affect your mindstream. That is what we are looking for. That is what spiritual development is.

**What is true spiritual development?** To be able to fly in the air is *not* spiritual development. I was watching the Republican Convention and there was a guy who was flying in the air with different colors. I don’t think that it is spiritual development! On the other hand, it is material development. You have to remember that Buddha said repeatedly that material power, mantra power and spiritual power are all equal. Two thousand five hundred years ago Buddha repeatedly said that they are equal. Whatever you can do materially, you can also do spiritually. Whatever you do spiritually, you can also do materially, too. When talking about the material, don’t think money, but different chemicals, technologies and so forth. So it is equal at that level.

But what is lasting? Only spiritual development is everlasting since it does not depend on external materials, like chemicals. Material development does depend on them. If
the guy at the Convention had not had those balloons, he would have landed flat on the ground rather than flying around! Spiritual development does not have to have that. The worst is mantra power. You may think that mantra power is great, but it is the worst. Mantra power is more unreliable than material power. Buddha put them in this order of effectiveness: mantra power, samadhi power, material power, and spiritual power. Out of these, spiritual power is the best because it does not depend on anything else. Material power depends on other factors, and so it can go wrong, but is still very reliable. Samadhi power depends on the samadhi. The moment the samadhi is finished, it is like hot air going out of a balloon. That is why it flops. Mantra power is even worse than that. So these are the four powers, which are equal, though not equally reliable, according to what Buddha said two thousand five hundred years ago.

Flying in the air is not a spiritual development. Birds fly around all the time. Nor is remaining under the ground spiritual development. Worms remain under the ground all the time, even groundhogs and moles go underground, then come up and look around. This sort of thing is not spiritual development. Spiritual development is making a difference in one’s life, one’s attitude, one’s mind. Spiritual development is a person becoming kinder, gentler, better. That makes a difference. That is development. That also builds up more and more and that is solid. Whenever we say that you need a solid foundation, this is what we mean. The solid foundation is the positive karmic change you need. You are the one who has to work for that. When you think, when you analyze, it influences the way you deal with the world. It makes a difference in how you deal with the world, and through that, it makes a difference within you.

If you are a very angry person, and often throw things around and break them, you then can become a little kinder, a little gentler. That does not mean that you will never lose your temper. You still will, because we have very powerful
negative addictions within us, which will make us get angry, make us lose our tempers. But your fits of anger should become weaker, not so long lasting. If you used to feel like killing somebody, that anger should decrease so that you may only feel like slapping the person instead of killing them. When these bad things get weaker, that is improvement.

This is really the level where we are. We are at the top level of negativity! We have the best possible development of hatred, anger, jealousy! We cannot go beyond that level anymore - we are at the top level. We are really at the peak level already, so the only thing we can do is try to come down. When the level of negativity is coming down, the person is improving. When you work on your spiritual path, that is what you do - try to get that down, further down as much as possible and finally, completely eradicate it. So when you lose your temper, don’t ever feel bad. We are bound to do that, because we are born that way. This is our way. Dharma in Tibetan is called chö which means correction. We have to correct our negative ways into positive ways. That is what Dharma really is. Chö or dharma really means changing, bringing improvement.

**Slow and steady wins the race** It is better to go slowly and steadily rather than making big steps and then stopping. That does not work. I don’t know whether the example is English or Tibetan, but in Tibet they would tell the story of a competition between the rabbit and the tortoise. Is it the same story in English? Okay, so the rabbit may jump around a lot, but in the end he will lose. The tortoise goes slowly and steadily, but gets it done. A person who is intelligent, but very emotional, will act like the rabbit. Don’t do that! Act like a tortoise. That is how you go.

Let’s talk more on verse 25. I believe we have to link verse 23 and 24 together. Verse 23 simply tells you that if you have the great mind of benefiting others, it brings a tremendous amount of merit. It gives you examples from ordinary life,
asking if even fathers and mothers have such a benevolent intention as this, and further if the gods and sages and even Brahma have it. We talked about this in detail. In other words, it is about the benefit of bodhimind. Even though fathers, mothers, sages and the great Brahma have a tremendous amount of compassion, they don’t have that much of the mind that wants to benefit everybody in an ultimate way.

Then verse 24 continues that line and says that most people do not have the attitude of wanting to bring all beings to total enlightenment, total freedom; they do not have that wish or attitude, which is bodhimind, even for themselves, for their own sake, for their own benefit. They just don’t get it yet. We usually care for ourselves tremendously. Whether we are right or wrong, we like ourselves, we want to protect ourselves and help ourselves. We are the ones for whom we want to reach the greatest aim, the best of all. All this is there within our mind. But we cannot even think yet that we want to become fully enlightened. That thought does not even arise for our own benefit. So how can it be possible for us to want to benefit others? How is it possible for such a thought to grow within us?

Bodhimind, the ultimate love and compassion, has learned that the ultimate achievement is total enlightenment and therefore one must have the desire to be able to bring all sentient beings to that level. When you have such a mind, this mind is called a precious mind or a jewel mind or heart. This is what verse 25 tells us. Such a mind is not only precious, but extraordinary. We have never before had such a mind within us. Now we have found ultimate love, ultimate compassion, unlimited. It is unlimited with regard to the object that you want to benefit, unlimited in the goal. What you really want to bring to them is also unlimited. Therefore, its birth is a wonderful, extraordinary thing.

Rejoicing in the existence of bodhimind If we want to have that in our mind, we must know how joyful, wonderful
and extraordinary it is. We must know how happy we should be. If it has not yet grown within us, but we see that it has grown within somebody else, we must think that a wonderful thing has happened. So one way or another, whether it happens within ourselves or within somebody else, we must know how wonderful it is, accept it and rejoice.

Verse 25 says, *It is an extraordinary jewel of mind and its birth is an unprecedented wonder.* So whether its birth has taken place in your own mind or in somebody else’s, it is wonderful. You should really rejoice in that. That is the best happiness you can bring - because such a mind has developed in us. Even if it has not developed with us, but if we see that somebody has that, it is also a tremendous amount of wonder, an unprecedented amount. Therefore those of us who have not developed it yet should try to develop it. Those of us who have developed it, should try to grow it further. This is what this verse is talking about.

What it really is saying is that bodhimind is called the great mind. Why is that so? It is the source of all qualities that we can develop. We have been saying that we want to develop ourselves. In Buddhism 101 we learned how to develop the mind seeking total freedom. Once we made up our minds that we should seek freedom, the way to do that is by serving others, helping others, using love and compassion for ourselves and all beings. That is how we are learning. Rather than asking “How can I get it?” we ask “How can I help others?” Do we have such a mind of helping others? We don’t. Everybody will say, “I’d like to help, I’d like to do this and that,” but if we look deeply in our minds and ask if we really have the desire to help others, we have to say that we don’t have it. If you look at the question whether you really have the desire to help yourself, you do have that half-way through. It is half-way, because you know that you don’t want problems and misery, you want to have benefits and joys. We do care for others also, but only up to a certain level; if we have to make a choice between ourselves and that
person over there, we have to acknowledge that the choice is for ourselves.

Traditional Tibetan teachers used to give an example: if some crazy guy comes walking in with a big knife and starts to cut up people, you will soon see who is hiding behind whom. That will tell you how much we really care for others. So, in one way, we have it half-way through.

When we are comfortable and have neither physical nor mental nor family problems nor other difficulties, we look like great practitioners. We care for all beings. But when you have certain difficulties, you don’t know how to handle them and you become worse than worse than some unworthy beings. You get anxiety attacks. People almost have to make you sit down and breathe in properly. People with spiritual knowledge, interest and background will do that. That simply tells you that although you may say, “I’d like to help. I am here to serve, I am here to help,” when you dig down to the ground level, we don’t have that attitude; we are still very weak. That is the problem.

If you have developed real love and compassion - forget about bodhimind - just ordinary love and compassion - what that reduces in the individual is not only selfishness, but also this sort of anxiety which perceives that any crisis is almost the end of the world. This sort of thing will definitely be reduced. If such an ultimate love and compassion develops in the individual, it really becomes an unprecedented wonder. To realize and appreciate that is also important. There are zillions of people among ourselves who do have such a mind, but somehow it does not affect us at all, because we don’t know how to appreciate it. Even if such an effect comes to us, we don’t know how to appreciate it and if we lose that, we also don’t even know that we lost it. All of this is a big problem.
Questions and answers

Student: Does material development include scientific development?
Rinpoche: Scientific development is based on material. It is all external things. Not just money, but scientific knowledge, technology and everything.

Student: If yearning to be free is Buddhism 101, what is trying to make the world a better place?
Rinpoche: Yearning to free yourself is 101 and making the world a better place is 102. Let’s put it that way. Today we said that very strong care and loving, without having any personal agenda, trying to go in there and help, really wishing to be helpful to the person and totally dedicating that work will be perfectly good love and compassion. But that mind should also know where its limitations are. If you don’t know where your limitations are, you could go on and say, “I am the great savior, I am supposed to save you!” You cannot do that; there are limits! So within the limitations, you can help. If you go beyond the limitations, you will never be able to help, because others will not be willing to accept you. So it is good to say “without any personal interest” and you have to go with these conditions and if you have any anxieties about that, it is a good thing. But if you want to push yourself without any limitations, not knowing your limits, that is the wrong thing to do. So anxiety is good, but within the framework.

Student: We talked before about bodhimind as it relates to the paths and stages and how one had to have a solid realization of the determination to be free, before one even gets to the wishing part of bodhimind, as referred to by Shantideva. But last week you said that you can pray for it and that works, too. I am wondering how is it that that works.
Rinpoche: Without really having the development of the first principle, the Buddhism 101 level, wishing for oneself to be free from suffering and the cause of suffering - without such a desire for yourself you cannot develop a strong desire to do
the same for others. You have to develop that understanding on the basis of personal experience. With that understanding, you can also go, even though it may not be perfect. But we can also go in a sort of semi-perfect manner. We should actually go in that manner and we are doing that, and that becomes a wishing form. So in that way we are going after bodhimind. We try to behave and act like the Romans in Rome. It brings benefits and makes a difference in our lives, both for others, and for ourselves. That is what I meant. The word for prayer form in Tibetan is \textit{mön sem} which is really a praying mind. So when I said we can develop by praying, that is what I meant - developing that sort of mind. In Tibetan the praying mind and prayer form and wishing form is the same word. So prayer, which in Tibetan is \textit{mön lam}, and the wishing mind go together and that is probably how that word \textit{mön sem} came about.

\textit{Student}: Is that what you talked about a few weeks ago when you explained that there is an artificial form of bodhimind which is going towards the wishing form of bodhimind, like a pre-fab sort of bodhimind?
\textit{Rinpoche}: I think we are talking about the same thing, yes. Right now, what we have is an artificial or as you said pre-fab mind. We don’t have the real path within us. Whatever we have is only on the level of information. We don’t have it actually in our hands and we are training our mind to be able to get on the path. So it is pre-fab right now.

\textit{Student}: With developing our compassionate nature, should we be seeking out circumstances where we might feel uncomfortable? Is there a benefit there?
\textit{Rinpoche}: Let me express it this way. Compassion and love, particularly pure love, and attachment or desire, are very close, extremely close. Sometimes it is very difficult to make distinctions between pure love and attachment. Whenever there are uncomfortable feelings or aversion as you try to be
compassionate and loving, when it gets to that level, it might be a good idea to put the love over there and observe it a little bit. Check where it is coming from and why is it arising. Is it really a desire to relieve pain and be of service or is there some hidden agenda within your own mind? So focus on that love, put it over there, observe it very carefully from the front, sides and back and ask yourself where it is coming from and why you have it. To do that is a very good advice. If you see that no personal strings are attached, then it is pure love and it is something great. Whenever there are strings attached, you have to cut those strings. When you do that, you really get the basis of building a pure, wonderful love. The First Dalai Lama had some interesting advice. He said, “When the ghost is in the east, to throw all your gifts and mantras to the west is useless.” I hope I am not doing that with you. So when you discover that there are personal strings attached, you have to cut them. It used to be rather uncomfortable for me to talk about that, but now it is becoming rather easy. I don’t know why.

Student: I heard also something else in that last question. If as beginners, we are looking at developing compassion, should we spend more time around people that we don’t like and don’t get along with and confront situations that we don’t like?

Rinpoche: Thank you, that really clarifies a lot. There are two things. A number of people could handle that. For example a few weeks ago we had teachings on Chöd. This is a technique where you use really awkward situations, like going to cemeteries where there are lots of ghosts. That is one way of handling things. But is such a way of handling suitable for all of us? The answer is “Certainly not!” We don’t have control over our own minds. I know people don’t like the word control, so let me say, we don’t have a smooth mind. When you sometimes get into odd situations like that, there is a danger that it may pull you off the path, off from what you are trying to do, rather than helping you. My personal way - that is my
own way – is to go a smooth way rather than do that. That is why I don’t do Chöd myself! [laughs] It is probably a weakness of personality, not so brave!

*Student:* Can you say something about how to cut the strings of attachment?
*Rinpoche:* I did not say how to do that, you are right. But realizing that you are held by strings like that itself cuts the strings halfway through. If we actually realize that and feel a little embarrassed, that way it will cut the strings at least halfway through. You know it is interesting. Buddha listed two mental faculties in this context. One is getting embarrassed in front of yourself and the other is losing face among others. These two were mentioned a lot by Buddha as helpful and effective in cutting down negativities and bringing disciplines. On the other hand, I know that in the West people have a problem using these.

*Student:* What is the difference between a mind that wishes to be able to remove the suffering of others and the mind that wants to take that suffering on themselves?
*Rinpoche:* That is almost the same question we had just then. Yes, it is true, Bodhisattvas are always encouraged to take over the suffering of others, but I do not know how. You can always wish to take them over, but unless you develop some kind of very powerful level, it is hard to take suffering from others. Right now we are talking about the wishing bodhimind, not the action bodhimind. When we talk about the action bodhimind, we will talk more about that.

*Student:* You said that noticing that strings are attached will cut them halfway already. I don’t know how that works with over sensitivity. When I am oversensitive about something, I can notice it, but how do I make it stop, so that it does not burden me any more?
Rinpoche: Listen to yourself. You said, “I realize that I am a little oversensitive and I don’t want that.” That itself is the answer. Your saying, “I don’t want that,” is giving you the message, the understanding. That will gradually build up and if you support that, the problem will be reduced. Nothing will go away once and for all in a moment. You can’t say, “Now I have cut it, I am not going to get it any more!” This is not going to happen. It is a gradual process. It has been in our life stream for millions of years, so you cannot switch it off overnight. But the recognition itself is extremely important. That is how it builds up.

The other day the Dalai Lama was in Chicago giving a speech. He said, “A lot of friends ask me, ‘What is the quickest way I can get this or that?’ and then the next thing that people will ask is, ‘What is the cheapest way?’” So there is no quickest way and there is no cheapest way!

Verse 26

How can I fathom the depths
Of the goodness of this jewel of the mind,
The panacea that relieves the world of pain
And is the source of all its joy?

This bodhimind is the cause of happiness, both of the temporary relief from pain, and the ultimate joy which has never known sorrow. When this mind develops within you, it is able to give joy and happiness to all beings. In other words, where does the happiness of all the beings come from? It comes from bodhimind, the source of all joy. Ultimate love and compassion is the cause of all joy and happiness of all beings. Are you with me? I don’t think so, because the way I am explaining today is not working for you. Let me change it.

How does one obtain ultimate enlightenment? How do you become enlightened? Because you learn about the qualities of enlightenment. Through that you develop an interest in becoming enlightened. Once you have learned that, you have to recognize the suffering and pain that bothers you,
and you develop the desire to free yourself. Once you learn how to care for others, you also learn how to develop the mind that will really be able to help others.

Now where is all this coming from? From the Buddhist point of view, it all comes from Buddha who had all the experience and shared it. How did Buddha understand and develop? By experiencing this. He can only share his experience by explaining it to people. By listening to his explanations, we can understand where our problems are coming from and how we can get free from them. Our ability to learn only comes from the kindness, compassion and caring of those who know. If they did not explain it to us we would not know.

**Love and compassion is the root** Let me put it this way: The teachings are supposed to give you the knowledge of these points of the path. Where do the teachings come from? From Buddha. Where did Buddha come from? From Bodhisattvas. Where do the Bodhisattvas come from? From bodhimind. Where does the bodhimind come from? From love and compassion. In other words, love-compassion is the total root of your and my spiritual development, your and my understanding, your and my methods of overcoming the neuroses! In other words, love and compassion is not only a caring mind, but is also the source of any spiritual development that anybody gets. Any spiritual development whatsoever has to come from somebody’s love and compassion. Do you understand any better now? A little better, but it is still not working very well today. Sometimes it does not, sometimes it does. Perhaps it is my fault. I was trying to finish this chapter today and that is why I am not going so much in detail as I usually do.

**How to deal with pain: the panacea** We were talking about why bodhimind is the cause for the joy and happiness of all beings. According to this translation bodhimind is
called the jewel of the mind or Jewel Heart. It is also called the panacea that relieves the world of pain. Bodhimind is really the panacea! It is the only thing that can relieve the pain in our minds and in everybody else’s.

How does it relieve our own pain? Some time ago somebody said, “I already bought my fucking ticket!”[in the context of an analogy comparing the wishing bodhimind and actual bodhimind as thinking about going on a trip or actually buying the ticket and going and the person was saying that they bought the ticket but were still going nowhere]. This is anxiety. If you try to relieve that anxiety by thinking, “How can I do it?” it will never work. You can’t do it by thinking that way. The only way to relieve this pain is by helping others. If you can help somebody, you will be happy about that, you enjoy that, you are happy. That happiness develops within you. This happiness and joy really becomes the antidote to suffering. This is a very simple example.

If you sit there and think, “How can I become happy?” you will never be able to do it. Not only you will never be able to do it, but you will also develop anxiety, you will get burned-out, you’ll get frightened. All this comes up because you think, “How can I do it?” You are the only one you are concerned about; you are not concerned with others. When you begin to see that you are not the only one, but that others are also having the same problems, you will begin to think that you are a little bit better off than the others. You will see, “Here I have some knowledge; I have a way, a method.” By seeing that you are a little better off than the others, you will find ways to help others. Helping others relieves your own pain. Your own mental pain can only be relieved by helping others. By helping others, you get satisfaction and joy, and this is the basis of the happiness and joy that you will develop later. It builds up. It doesn’t work if you always think, “Is it better for me to do a little more purification? Is it better for me to do a retreat? Is it better for me say more mantras? Maybe it is better for me to go to Thailand!”
I am not saying that going to Thailand necessarily brings anxieties, but all these anxieties are not going to be reduced by thinking like that. Saying mantras will help you - sure. But it is going to be a long process. Why is bodhimind called ‘great mind’? Why is the Mahayana called ‘Great Vehicle’? Mahayana not only involves caring for a lot of people, but also has a lot of ways and methods to develop the individual practitioner, to make things work better for ourselves. There are a lot of techniques and this is one of them.

So you may think, “I have to do say 100,000 mantras.” But you don’t have the time to say that many mantras. I mean, if you sit up the whole night saying mantras it is better than sitting up the whole night for something else, but whatever you do, it is not going to help much. It is going to help some, but it is not going to get you anywhere. So the technique is to care for others, to bring love and compassion into your practice. That will make a difference for ourselves. We normally think, “If I want to improve something, I will have to do something, I myself have the responsibility.” Yes, sure, you yourself have to do it. But the way of doing it is not just to say mantras or whatever. The time we have at our disposal and the things we have to cover - there is a big difference. That is why the Mahayana is so great. It has the techniques which make our practice more effective. That is achieved by caring for others, doing things for others.

You start by realizing that you are not the only one that is having problems. Others have the same problems or even worse ones. You start thinking, “Let me help!” That is how you can plug in to helping others. When you do that, you at least attempt to follow the Mahayana path. That is why it is called ‘Great Vehicle’. That is why it is called the medicine or panacea that relieves the world of pain. So it is love and compassion that relieves the pain in ourselves and in others. Nothing else can do it, not wisdom, not spiritual power. Fortune telling cannot do it. Nothing can really relieve the pain of oneself and others, except bodhimind.
Even if you understand emptiness, it will not do that. It may cut the root of samsara, but the real thing over here is the love and compassion that relieves the pain. Actually, the thing that reduces your own pain and that of others is the joy. If you relieve pain, you get joy. If you replace the joy, what do you get? Pain. It is as simple as that. So helping others, caring for others is really the key. That is why Mahayana Buddhism always says that motivation is so important.

If you want to benefit yourself through saying mantras, you have to do millions and millions of them. But if you are not really a selfish person and you try to do whatever you can to benefit others, then even if you say just a single mantra, you cannot measure even a zillion mantras that you do for yourself against that. So the trick or the technique or method lies in the bodhimind, which is the state of mind or intention that totally makes the difference - even if you simply give a piece of food to an animal. A person motivated by love and compassion who gives a piece of bread to a dog and a person who tries to feed all the dogs in the world with sirloin steaks or something without love-compassion - if you compare the benefits that you get, is tremendously different. Even if you make offerings to all the enlightened beings - the whole environment filled with jewels - and constantly make such offerings to the enlightened beings, a single moment of bodhimind generated with folded hands, motivated by love and compassion - if you compare these, the one moment of bodhimind is far better than the zillions of jewels you offer to the enlightened beings all the time!

**Training the mind** What makes the difference is nothing but this mind or intention. So mental training is extremely important in the spiritual path. Of course, the training in mentally focusing is very worthwhile for everybody. It has been helpful. The American people know about this; it’s what they call meditation. You focus your mind. All that is great, wonderful. There is nothing wrong with it; it benefits and helps you. But that is not all there is to mental training. Here you
train your mind to generate this ultimate love and compassion, how to develop it, find out what is love, what is compassion, how does it become ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned. Seeing this and trying to develop it, even just making the attempt makes a big difference in your spiritual journey and in your path. That is why it is called Mahayana or Great Vehicle. That is why bodhimind is called Great Mind. That is why it becomes the source of joy, the medication to relieve all sufferings, the panacea that relieves the world of pain.

The last line of verse 26 in Tibetan becomes the first in the English translation, How can I fathom the depths….. It is the jewel mind, the panacea that relieves the pains of the world. It is the source of all joy. Therefore it says in the text, How can I fathom or measure its depths? In other words the benefits of bodhimind are measureless.

Verse 27

If merely a benevolent intention Excels venerating the Buddhas, Then what need to mention striving to make All beings, without exception, happy?

If even a benevolent intention, just wanting to help somebody like your father and mother, relatives, etc, is much more beneficial than making zillions of offerings to the enlightened beings, then how can you have the slightest doubt that the wish to help all beings without limit is more beneficial? There is no question what benefit that will bring!

The mind that wants to bring any help to even a single sentient being is considered much more beneficial than making zillions of offerings, filling up all space, to all enlightened beings. This is what Buddha himself has said. He said,

Somebody may make offerings to the Buddha every day that fill up the whole universe. On the other hand, someone may
have a little bit of the mind that wants to help and benefit others. If I had to compare these, I would have to choose the person who has the desire to help others, because this is much more beneficial for all beings.

Likewise, indirectly Buddha is also saying that if he had to choose between someone who is literally doing something that benefits somebody else and someone who is just sitting on the cushion, saying mantras and doing meditation, he would choose the one that is actually benefiting somebody else. That is the bottom line of Mahayana Buddhism. We have a big misunderstanding. We think, “I have got to do something! I have to do it myself! I am responsible!” Yes, you are responsible; you have got to do it. But there are a lot of ways and means of doing it; not only that, there are great ways of doing it. The key lies in the motivation.

**Having a spiritual practice which works in everyday life**

I keep on saying that in the 1990s and the year 2000, we need to have a perfect motivation and a spiritual practice that corresponds with the movements of society. It has to be a spiritual practice that changes all your chores into spiritual work. Even doing your laundry, waiting at the parking lots or teller machines, all of this has to be turned into spiritual practice. That is what we need today. We have a big problem with this, simply because we half agree with this, but with another part of our mind, we deeply think, “That is not going to work.” We think that it is necessary to do mantras, circumambulations, prostrations, etc. We think we should not sleep, should take vows of chastity, should suffer. We almost think that we have to take a vow of poverty! Somehow people have that in the back of their minds. You are influenced by that, thinking that you have got to do all that. Another part of our mind will tell us, “Oh yes, the Vajrayana has different ways of doing it.” But people are not getting it, when they are in the situation. The hangover of the other way of thinking is there.
What you have to do is this: Do whatever you have to do every day. The important thing is to correct your motivation, correct your mind. Dharma in Tibetan is čö, which means correction. It is the correction towards pure thinking, pure love, pure compassion, unlimited love and compassion, the ultimate jewel of the mind. You have to correct your mind, which is full of neuroses, and make it into the jewel of the mind. When you do that, you are making it, you are progressing. It is not necessary to do all these things that we keep on thinking are necessary. They are not. There are ways and means of doing it.

Bodhimind has to be the motivation behind every single damn thing you do. You need to have a good motivation right from the beginning. Early in the morning, instead of crying for coffee, you should cry for a good motivation. Instead of yawning and wiping your eyes, you should wipe out the selfish mind and open your eyes to the motivation of compassion and caring. Because of that, with every single action during the day, this influence will be there. You have to do your job; if you don’t do your work, you are not doing the right thing. You are worthless for the spiritual world as well as for the material world. That is what it is. You are not worth a penny, only a wooden nickel! I am sorry, sometimes I carry on too far! But the reality is, unfortunately, the values of today’s society are measured through the economic condition.

*Combining spiritual and material* Whether you like it or not, you are living in this society. It is not possible to change this society. What you do is adapt to this society, within that society you behave in acceptable ways and become extraordinarily rich in both. That is what I told you earlier. The elder generation of Tibetan masters used to tell me, “We are very proud of our combination of spiritual and material society.” I never understood that. I thought, “The Dalai Lama is the temporal and spiritual head of Tibet. Maybe that is what they are talk-
ing about.” But I was a fool; when I started to talk to you people, I understood in hindsight what this older generation of Tibetans was talking about.

These people who lived the Shangri-la life were proud of being able to combine two things together, material work, where you have to pay your bills, and should become a responsible and respectable citizen, along with being rich in your spiritual practice. The way to do that, this combination of the material and spiritual world, that is what they meant. They were not talking about whether the monks had control over the government, or that the Dalai Lama was the head of the government. They were talking about the way that each and every citizen can combine their spiritual path and their daily work.

We have been blind. How many times have you people read about bodhimind or bodhicitta, how to develop it through the seven stages of development, the eleven stages or 7 - 11 - open 24 hours! How many times have we looked into it! However, we have failed to see that there is a hidden treasure here. We can combine spiritual and material together. There is an easy way to switch all our chores into the spiritual path. Here is the key and our eyes have passed over this key a number of times. Whenever we read the lam rim, the Three Principles of the Path, we have missed it. We have failed to pinpoint and pick up that key. This is the method; this is the way. Bodhimind changes everything into the spiritual path, as long as it is not negative by nature, and sometimes (though rarely) even things that are negative by nature can become positive.

In one of his previous lives, Buddha was the captain of a ship. He had to kill one human being in order to save the lives of five hundred other people. This became a positive action, even though it was killing. I am not trying to support Dr. Kervorkian, but that is how it works! So this is the treasure we can pick up in Mahayana Buddhism. It is what we need today. In the year 2000, nobody will have time to sit down and say mantras as they did in the
17th century. Nobody will have the time or opportunity. We have to recognize this and think about it very carefully.

As I said before, Buddha said that if somebody was to bring him gifts and somebody else was doing something good for others, he would choose the one who helps others. If you can do both, of course that is the best. Then everything you offer becomes greater merit that ripens sooner. Even here we are still talking about whether it helps you and me, even though we are talking about bodhimind. You see, at the level of bodhimind we should not care how much we do and what we do. We should care about how much we can help and develop others. Then your own development automatically happens. You don’t have to work for it; it is automatic. This is something we have to remember.76

Verse 28

Although wishing to be free of misery,
They run towards misery itself.
Although wishing to have happiness,
Like an enemy they ignorantly destroy it.

Ordinarily, we all do have the mind that wants to get rid of suffering. Who does not have it? But we run towards misery itself. How is that? The ignorance of not knowing how karma works gives us wrong directions or instructions. We think we are doing something good for ourselves, but we are doing bad things.

For example, suppose you want to relieve the suffering of hunger. So you go out and kill all the animals and eat them. Is this the right way of relieving our suffering of hunger? Or you would like to be rich and go and steal things, rob banks, cheat others? You could make a quick buck overnight. But is this a good thing to do? No. Very similarly, our education tells us that if you want to become rich you have to work. If you want to become healthy, you have to eat good
food. Brown rice, right? You won’t get the result if you don’t create the causes.

**Ignorance** In our ignorance, we do not know how to get rid of our suffering and we do the wrong things. Some people are very thirsty and go and drink salt water. Will that help? So this is how ignorance works in our minds. That is why the verse says that we are running towards suffering, that *they run towards misery itself.* That is why people say that we lack clarity or a sense of reality. There is a word for that; it is the deluded mind. Somebody in the spiritual path knowingly threw that word among us, so we use it very often. We have the mind that wants to get rid of suffering, but *we are running towards suffering.* We wish to have happiness, but what do we do? Because of ignorance, *we destroy the very sources of our joy.*

Lack of wisdom is the problem. Ignorance makes us so ignorant! There are two kinds of ignorance. One is ignorance of the karmic system. The other is ignorance of the nature of reality. The ignorance of reality is the deeper problem, but does not directly cause so many problems. We create our problems directly through ignorance of the karmic system. That is our problem and this particular verse deals with this. What does bodhimind do? It eliminates this ignorance completely. All forms of ignorance are based on ego servicing; this underlies all delusion, all neurosis. To satisfy our ego, we work in the direction that actually harms us. Once we shift the focus from ego-service to serving others, all these problems will be eliminated. That is the benefit of the bodhimind.

**Oral transmission** We are coming to the end of chapter one. We have done verse 28. [Rinpoche reads that verse in Tibetan]. There is a reason why I read this verse in Tibetan. Though I don’t understand it, I can read it, because I know Tibetan. That helps me to understand it before I talk to you! [laughs] Secondly, in the living tradition of teaching, if you hear the sound from living person to living person, it be-
comes the transmission. That is why I am reading it aloud to you.

For those of you who are new but want to come continuously, I recommend reading and rereading this book by Shantideva. There are several different translations. One is called the Oxford translation by Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton, the other is translated by Stephen Batchelor. They almost look like two different works. Therefore is better for me if I read and teach from the Tibetan.

We are all in the same boat Verse 28 is talking about why we should have compassion for all sentient beings, particularly for persons that you care about. Take the one right in front of your nose, the person who makes you happy, who brings you joy, who irritates you, who makes you angry: look at that person, and see what that person really wants. That person’s wish is to get rid of suffering; they don’t want suffering. Look at yourself, then look at the person right in front of you. Look forward and look back. There is no difference in what we desire and what we are seeking. You seek joy, you seek happiness; I seek joy and happiness. What you don’t want is misery and suffering; what I don’t want is misery and suffering. We are equal in what we want. In what we are capable of, we may also be equal; perhaps not, but we may be. But when it comes to what you want and what I want, we are very much equal.

How we create our suffering Like everyone else, I do have a tremendous desire to throw away my sufferings. But what do I do? I run towards suffering. This is because we have something called ignorance within ourselves. What does ignorance do? It gives us wrong information. For example, I would like to be happy and in order to make myself happy, I think it is a good method to sacrifice other beings. Don’t we do that? In order to get fat, to get strong, I eat meat. Not only meat, but also cheese, butter, etc., and all this is at the expense of animals. To survive, we eat food and people have to grow food.
People work and sweat and insects die. So to keep ourselves happy and joyful we run towards creating negativities which in turn cause unhappiness. That is what all minds of delusion are all about. Ignorance gives us the wrong information.

If your information and education is limited, then in order to become rich, you go and steal. Why do thieves steal? To make some extra bucks here and there. You may or may not know that stealing is a bad thing and has its own consequences. Harming others is a bad thing and has consequences. Whether we know it or not, that is what we do. *We are running towards misery itself.* Think how we function in our life, how we live in the dream or rather in the fantasy of our lives. We build a fantasy which we call a successful life. Then we work towards fulfilling that in whatever way we have to. We will cheat other people or whatever we have to do in order to accomplish the dream of our life. We create all sorts of negativities.

Yesterday I was watching a movie on television called *The Man from Snowy River.* There were two brothers and both fell in love with a very nice young girl. She said, “I will marry whoever becomes rich.” So one of the brothers immediately started up a cattle business. The other started digging for gold. So the first guy ran a ranch, raising and killing cattle to sell the meat and hides. The other started digging for gold. The moment you have the aim to become rich at the expense of the lives of the cows, you start killing the cows, so that you can become rich and marry that woman. That is running towards suffering. When I read this verse, I thought of that movie.

This is exactly how we function. Our mind has set up a fantasy which we call achievement or success. In order to reach that, you could go and kill so many cows. You may think that it does not matter and that they are just cows. But that is the example of how people *run towards misery itself,* although wishing to gain happiness. Ignorance makes us *destroy our happiness like an enemy.* In our deep consciousness, the ignorant mind does not really know what brings happiness.
Positive karma gives you happiness, but we don’t really know that or we forget it.

**Living in society.** We think that a quick way of making money can give us happiness. It is actually unfortunate in our society that success in life is based on economic achievement and that is based on the dollar amount. That is really unfortunate. Actually it is a terrible thing that everything we want to achieve, like comfort or whatever, is measured in dollars. Really, it is very bad. But the society is that way and you cannot run away from it; you cannot swim against the current. People in the sixties actually did just that. You did tremendous work and achieved something here, but you also wasted tremendous amounts of energy and opportunity in order to achieve some small, little result.

The best thing in the 1990s is to swim through the current and get yourself out rather than fighting against the current. There is no use in fighting against the way society in general thinks. How much can you fight? If you try, you will create trouble in your family. Your teenage children will think you are cuckoo. Your husband or wife may go along with you half-way and half-way they don’t know what is going on. Fighting the current does make a difference in society, for sure; you cannot ignore that. But the amount of energy that you waste on that, or spend on that, you could spend differently.

The total and overall aim is to attain happiness for all beings. Trying to change society’s way of functioning is not going to make everybody become enlightened. That is not even going to make you individually enlightened, let alone all sentient beings. What you can do is function within society, even though it is bad. The river current carries some people away, but if you know how to swim you can get through it. This is the current of society, the basic human (I hate to say it) negative functioning. When we measure human achievements in terms of a dollar amount this is what is going to
happen. If you think carefully, the amount of dollars is not really wealth, neither spiritually nor even materially.

If you have the dollars, it does make a difference in your life, however, the value of the money goes up and down. Luckily, the American green dollar never really goes down. It is always maintained on a certain level because of the economic manipulation, if I may say so. But if for example you look at the Brazilian currency, what had happened last year? So the economic manipulation cannot challenge. Actually to me the dollar is really a certificate of having a certain amount of internationally accepted wealth. It is really a certificate. If you go to the bank, the lady at the teller is really supposed to go down to the safe and see if you have an equal amount of gold. Then she is supposed to come up and tell you, “You have one dollar down there.” That is what should have been, and used to be, but it is not the system anymore. It is paper currency, in reality a manipulated certificate, an economic manipulation. That is the true emptiness; deep down there is true emptiness. Earlier, I said that I don’t want to talk about it, but these things came into my head and I could not hold them back!

This manipulation makes us, the individuals, work for money, for manipulated certificates; our energy is utilized to work towards this. It is really the normal American system of carrot and stick. It is like when you have a goat that you entice with a carrot and hit it with a stick. In this case you show the people the dollar certificate and make them work for it. Everything is manipulated and measured in those terms. That is called the price, right? You want yogurt, you have to buy it. If you want food, you have to pay for it. That is how society is economically structured. It economically manipulates people. It makes you work for the dollar. It is the carrot and stick approach.

**Honey on a razor**  Tibetan traditional teachers didn’t talk that way, but what they would say is that any samsaric joy is like honey on a sharp razor blade. If you like the honey and
try to get it, you have to lick the razor blade and cut your tongue, too. That is exactly how our society functions and it is not very great, but you cannot use all your energy fighting against that. So you go along with it and make the best use of it. If you are a spiritual practitioner and you are interested in making the persons that you care about happy once and for all, there is a way how to make your life function within that society and have both spiritual and temporal success.

You can do that because of your mind. Your mind is the powerful vehicle that makes it possible. How you use your mind is through your motivation. The best motivation recommended is love and compassion, ultimate love and compassion for yourself and others. Every single chore or task you have to do to get the honey off the razor without cutting you tongue is possible with the motivation of bodhimind. Buddhas tell Bodhisattvas to function as one of the people in society. They are advised not to go off away from society. Be within society, function within that system, and yet become a Bodhisattva. Every one of these verses will share with you how you can function.

Wishing to get rid of misery, they run towards misery itself.

By telling you that, it means you should reverse that. If you wish to get rid of misery, do not run towards it! That means do not create the causes of misery. How can you change that; how can you stop creating the causes of misery? Simply by a perfect motivation, the motivation to help all beings. Whatever you have to do, help all beings. By doing that, even if something is neutral or even non-virtuous by nature, it will become positive karma. When you act with a perfect motivation, you do not run towards misery. You can have a fantasy of life, but know that the fantasy of life is in the nature of impermanence, in the nature of emptiness and yet it is what is needed today, so you work for it for the benefit of all beings. That is how you can function.
Many years ago when I was passing through Hong Kong, a friend of mine arranged for me to talk at the Plaza Hotel. I talked about attachment and so on. At the end of the talk a gentleman raised his hand and asked, “What should I do with my Rolls Royce?” So I said, “As long as you drive the Rolls Royce, you are fine. But the moment the Rolls Royce starts driving you, you are in trouble.” If you drive the Rolls Royce, you are fine, you are not running towards misery itself. But if the Rolls Royce drives you, you are running towards misery itself. So know this and reverse it.

Although wishing to have happiness, like an enemy they ignorantly destroy it.

We want joy and positive karmas cause joy. We don’t realize that, so we look at positive karma as an enemy, because we think, “That does not make money. That does not make sense. What is the use of me having compassion towards all beings? Are you crazy? Do you want me to be a doormat for everybody? I am not going to do it. I can’t do it. I don’t want to do it. That is not the way to do it!” That is ignorance talking to you. Of course it does not mean that you have to become a doormat! But ignorance makes you think, “Who am I that I should have compassion for all of them? What do I owe them? Nothing!” That sort of mind, particularly the mind which protects and entertains the ego, is the mind which really destroys the cause of joy.

Look, what happens when you can help somebody a little bit. Remember, a few months ago, Pat broke the window of a car to save a girl after an accident. By doing that he fractured his wrist and had to keep his arm bandaged for some time. I kept on calling it the ‘Bodhisattva arm’. That girl was about to catch fire in that car and he did not have time to find a way to open the door. He had to break the window to get the girl out and in the process broke his wrist. But the joy he got from that! And not only he, but also all of us, when he shared the story. The joy that develops from that - how great it is!
When you are able to help somebody, the joy comes with that. If you just keep on sitting there, thinking, “I need to know if I can do something, so what can I do?” you will not find anything to do. The more you keep on crying, “What can I do?” and “How can I do it?” the more you get depressed. First you get nervous, then you get irritated, and soon you find that you are incapable of functioning in society. After that, you will say that you don’t want to talk about it. You would like to close your windows and doors and maybe cut off the telephone. This is how you bring yourself misery. So instead of that you should say, “What can I do for you? How can I help? Is there any way I can help here?” and you have to think, “That is my practice. That is the way to bring happiness and joy to myself and the persons that I care about most.”

*How we destroy our joy*  If you always think that you have to defend yourself, if you have the fear that your ego may get hurt, if you start to get angry with your friends and attack them, so that after a while they attack you back, that is how you create trouble - even in the family. You snap at each other. Then you start using harsh words. Then you start to think what would be the most effective words for hurting the other person. You try to inflict pain on the other person by using terribly sharp words. Your tongue becomes a sword to cut other people’s hearts. Then of course they do the same and it goes back and forth. That is another way we run towards misery. That is how we destroy our joy *like an enemy.*

The friends you fight with and the companion you hurt are actually people you love. You try to make them behave in the way you want to, because you have control issues. When they don’t want to behave that way, you use the sharpest weapon you have available. You cannot use physical violence, because you would go to jail. So you use the sharpest weapon you can and that is how you destroy your friend and
your own happiness like an enemy. That is exactly how it works in our life.

When you see that, reverse it! Dharma means nothing but correction. Correct that attitude. Correct what happened. Make it better. If you want to hurt the other person and you think of sharp words to say, even if you have them on the tip of your tongue, try to swallow them down. That is positive karma. Develop compassion. Love really means, “I will make you happy in whatever way you are and whatever the way you want to be.” It does not mean that, “I want you to be the way I want you to be.” If you twist it round in that manner, it does not work. This is what this verse is telling us.

**What is a Bodhisattva? How does a Bodhisattva deal with life?** The technical term Bodhisattva really means a person who has developed ultimate love and compassion, yet has not reached the fully enlightened level. Buddhas may have ultimate love and compassion, but they are not called Bodhisattvas, they are called Buddhas. It is as simple as that.

This book is about the Bodhisattvas’ way of life. Look very carefully. The title does not say something fancy like, *Bodhisattvas’ Dharma*, or *Bodhisattvas’ Practice*. It means “How does a Bodhisattva behave and deal with life?” Actually even the word ‘behave’ sounds a little strange. It is how Bodhisattvas deal with the incidents that take place in their life.

This afternoon I was talking with a few friends about how people are traveling through their life and suddenly they take a break and stop for lunch, dinner, a weekend or something, and what effect that has. It is not that somebody is going somewhere and something happens, but when you are going through your life, particularly when you look at life after life, basically we are running and we are traveling. Within that travel there are a lot of rest areas where we stop for the night, for lunch or dinner or for tea. During this journey we encounter the activities of millions of other people. They, too, are going this way and that way, traveling here and there.
Each time you contact and meet somebody, you experience the effect of their life and energy and you also affect them. We encounter that in our lives all the time. Some encounters are for longer periods, some are shorter. Some contribute to each other in a positive way, some in a negative way. That is basically what we do in our life. We meet some people and spend a longer time with them and call them companions. We share our life, time, interest, energy. We affect each other positively or negatively. It depends on what we have to share.

Each one of us carries a very wonderful human nature, which we call Buddha-Nature. But somehow we don’t share that, because it is either immature or covered with negative mental conceptions. I think that is the word they use here. They use ‘disturbing conceptions’ in this translation. Some translations use the term ‘delusions’, some ‘afflictive emotions’. So here ‘disturbing conceptions’ is used, and actually it is true. Once such an emotion or thought comes, the effect for the individual is that they get disturbed. Anyway, when we have those things a lot we affect the other people negatively.

How do Bodhisattvas deal with that? They go through exactly the same things as we in our lives. There are positive things happening in our lives, we have the highest periods, also negative things happen. Not everything you do goes right; often something goes wrong. There are periods where you are sitting with a long face. So, when Bodhisattvas encounter the disturbing conceptions, how do they really deal with them? That is why this book is called *A Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*. But when we read it we cannot read what we need immediately, but after we start, we know where to look and how to deal with it. So that is what we are studying here. Apparently it is very effective and extremely helpful.

*The importance of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara* Especially since I have been talking with you about this, I began to
realize how important it is. It is not that I did not realize that it was important before. Everything is important in Tibetan Buddhism. There is nothing which is not important. But this is a totally different approach. Although it is almost the same as lam rim, it deals with it from the Buddhism 102 level rather than the Buddhism 101 level. So it is very effective and very important for us - each and every verse. They may talk about the same thing over and over again, but I think it makes a lot of difference to the individual. Aura requested me to do this teaching about two years ago and somehow I was a lazy guy and did not want to go through with it. So we went through the Three Principles of the Path and the Foundation of Perfections and also two different lam rim texts. At that point I thought it might be nice to pick up the Bodhisattvacharyavatara. It is quite a long study, no question.

Anyway, like this we are not going anywhere, but we don’t have deadlines either. Wherever we go, that is where we go. There is no stopping or resting or anything. Whatever is going to be effective for the individual, whatever the manner that is effective, that is what we have to do.

**What spiritual practice really means** We are just simply reading about one verse per day. But if you get the message out of those verses and use it and apply it, you are dealing with your life. When you have difficulties and frustration with your life, take whatever is useful out of this and try to apply it. Whatever you have to deal with in life, ups and downs, joy and misery, try to apply this to your own life. That is what spiritual practice really means.

If you can’t use the message you get here to deal with your life, if it does not make a difference to the everyday life that you lead - whether it is your job, dealing with people, watching the news or a movie, reading the newspaper, sitting in the shop, selling momos, making momos, etc., if you are unable to apply these teachings to the periods of difficulty, then you don’t have a practice.
Do not think of practice as some period of time that you leave out there somewhere to do some funny things like sitting cross-legged. We all do funny things here. We sit cross-legged, close our eyes, burn some incense, put a candle on and so on. If you identify that as practice and think of it as a certain period of time cut out of your life, then you are not going to get anywhere. That does not mean that you don’t have to do that formal practice. Whatever you get out of this learning, thinking, analyzing, meditating, receiving information - or I should really say perceiving information - acknowledging and digesting the information, making it part of your system, this will pop up whenever you need it in your life.

Basically, it is almost like programming a computer, putting information in the computer’s memory. Then whatever you need, you press the key or push the button and that information will come up. Exactly the same thing should happen to us in dealing with our daily life. That is the most important and that is what having a practice means.

*Getting things done without getting angry*  
When somebody is actually pushing you into a corner and using harsh words, etc., your natural reaction will be to get angry and fight back. When that condition comes, definitely this information should pop up and stop you from losing your temper. Yet you also must learn how to fight back without losing your temper, to fight back without getting angry. You have to fight back sometimes. You don’t sit there, saying to everything, “Yes, sir!” You can’t do that. If you don’t fight back, you become a doormat. People will take advantage of you.

My main point is this: I would like to give a few examples, but if I do this, it looks like I am blowing my own horn. But the point is, I used to live in India and there you could never get anything done, unless you screamed and shouted at the top of your voice, almost insulting people. You have to shout things like, “How stupid you are, you can’t even do
this!” You have to shout until you choke, in order to get things done. If you don’t get things done, you are letting the people who rely on you down. That becomes a disservice for your job, your duty, your purpose. If you think that you can’t shout because you are not supposed to lose your temper, then you pretend to have compassion and that is what I call idiot compassion. You may try to save your face but in actual reality you are doing service to your ego. You can’t show that you are screaming, but you are letting the people down that you are responsible for - for the sake of ego-service or for the sake of one being. That is the point. So sometimes you have to shout and scream. I used to shout all the time. If you don’t, you don’t get anything done. If you do, things do get done.

One example comes to mind. We were organizing Tibet House in New Delhi. It was supposed to open soon and the Dalai Lama was expected and representatives of the Indian Government. The Dalai Lama’s brother, who is basically a very nice person, was responsible for that. He had a group of Indian carpenters working there. They changed a number of times. His way of functioning was to give them whatever money they asked for. He did not bargain. So they asked for some fantastic amount of money and they just gave it to them in cash. The carpenters were supposed to be finished soon, but after two weeks not even half the job was done. The company who hired the carpenters had a little guy on site with a little briefcase and a tie. He acted as interpreter, because he could speak English. He was the elder son of the company owner. When he saw that the carpenter was not finished, he did not even speak to him, but grabbed him and used his tie to choke him and beat him up. He physically beat him up so much that he had three broken ribs and had to be put into hospital! That night a whole group of those carpenters came back, about twenty or thirty of them. They worked by electric light throughout the whole night and then the whole next day and so on for about a week and more carpen-
ters came and worked in shifts non-stop. There were about forty or fifty of them over three days.

So sometimes that is how it has to be done. I don’t know if this guy lost his temper or not, but he did beat this carpenter up completely. He literally beat him up and broke his ribs. He did not talk to him, because there was nothing to talk about, there was no excuse. So the work got done within a week. I am not saying that this is a great way of doing it, but if he had not done that, the work would never have been finished in time for the opening - especially when they already had received the total amount of money! They would never have done it. The most important thing here is not to get angry. If you get angry, that is wrong. If you don’t lose your temper, you can still shout and scream and play all your monkey tricks. That is how you protect yourself from idiot compassion.

If you read this text it will probably tell you how a Bodhisattva should function. You will see the positive ways and the negative ways. The main purpose of saying this is that you should use each verse we are discussing in two ways. First, whatever message you get from these verses, try to apply however much you can in your daily life. When I say daily life, I don’t mean the time when you sit down and meditate. Everybody does their best at that period. There is no problem. The problem arises when you are in the office, in the work place, in the street, when you are talking to somebody, when you are driving and somebody gives you the finger, when somebody tries to cut across right in front of you. These are the times when you apply these things. As long as you have the confidence that your mental faculty is not overpowered by disturbing conceptions of anger, attachment, pride, jealousy, you are okay. You can scream, yell and do anything. As long as you see that there are disturbing conceptions of anger, attachment, jealousy, pride, etc., then stop. Don’t yell, don’t scream, even if you have to become a doormat. That is how you make the distinction within yourself.
Verse 29 and 30

For those who are deprived of happiness
And burdened with many sorrows
It satisfies them with all joys,
Dispels all suffering,
And clears away confusion.
Where is there a comparable virtue?
Where is there even such a friend?
Where is there merit similar to this?

Let’s talk about verse 29 first. All beings want joy and happiness, but many do not have it. They are deprived of happiness. Why? Because they don’t have the causes of happiness, positive karma. By the way what is positive karma?

Student: The result of a positive action.

Rinpoche: Give me some word to hold on.

Audience: Good luck?

Rinpoche: What is good luck? What does saving somebody’s life do for the individual? You will be happy. What else?

Student: Results have to be similar to the cause. So in some way, if you save a life, you will receive benefits at some stage in the future, like a long life.

Rinpoche: It is getting close, but I am still not quite happy with that.

Student: It pleases all the enlightened beings.

Rinpoche: You have read too much of the Bodhisattvacharyavya-tara! It is a point.

What a karmic imprint is But what happens is that you make an extraordinary impact on your soul (to go beyond Buddhist terminology), or some extraordinary imprint on your consciousness. That imprint is a powerful seed which, when it meets with the right conditions, can ripen and can make a difference in your life. You could extend your life span, have a longer life, have fewer illnesses or whatever. It is a positive form of energy, some kind of seed-capability, formless, colorless, a capability left on the consciousness, very similar to
an IOU note. Saving a life is important, but for you as the individual who has done that, you have that particular impact attached to you as a seed, which becomes your credit. It is not that somebody else is going to count at the end and pronounce a judgment. It is more like a credit that you will be able to cash in whenever the conditions are right, whenever it is needed. That is more effective to the individual. This is positive karma.

Negative karma will to do the same thing in a negative way. It is not credit, but debit. It will be taken away from your credit account. When the conditions are right it will manifest as some kind of undesirable, painful suffering that you have to experience. It may be physical, mental or emotional.

So that is basically what karma is. It is different from the Dharma-Karma explanation that Deepak Chopra gives. The other day, I saw a Deepak Chopra talk on television He was using the terminology of Dharma and Karma. But when he explains that, he explains them differently. That is what I noticed.

Anyway, this is the way in which you become responsible for your own deeds. Of course, besides saving a life and being happy about that, this is the karmic credit that one takes. On top of being happy about saving a life, saving a life gets you additional credit. The basic law of karma almost functions like those gimmicks we get in the mail which promise, “If you do this, you will get a million dollars, etc., and if you act right now, there will be extra benefits for the early birds!” Very similarly to that, you have the basic nature of karmic credit, plus the credit of saving a life, plus being able to rejoice in saving that life. All of that bundles up, adds up and increases. This is true for both the positive and the negative ways.

Take a negative example. You kill somebody and you are happy that this person is now gone. You think that now there is no more problem, it is all over. Each of these nega-
tive things will add up and become your debit. That is basically how our life is functioning and is creating what will happen next. As a result of that negative action, you can reach the most negative experience ever possible because you are using the tools that will get you to that level. I am sure it does not work according to the ideals that we are used to in the West. We always like to look at the positive way.

When you consider Dharma, it really is the spiritual path, and your spiritual development, too. It is the gains that you have credited within your own consciousness. The credit thus left at your disposal makes a difference in your life. That is the real Dharma. I forgot what Deepak Chopra said, but from whatever little I know, it is not right. He gave some kind of really materialistic explanation. It was a true example of spiritual materialism.

When we have a lack of this kind of credit, we have the state of being deprived of happiness. Nobody else has caused it except ourselves. We are responsible. That is why in one way this particular verse is talking about those who are deprived of happiness and also burdened with many sorrows. Actually, when you are deprived of happiness, the vacuum created by the lack of happiness is definitely going to be filled up with sorrow. There is nothing else.

This particular verse presents you with the aspects or rather the objects of compassion. What does compassion feel? You want to relieve the suffering which people are experiencing. The suffering they are experiencing is being deprived of happiness and being burdened with many sorrows.

**Love and compassion as one mind**  Then verse 29 goes on to say, It satisfies them with all joys, dispels all sufferings. If you can satisfy them with joy and dispel all their sufferings, what more can you do? Do you see the compassion and love in there? Compassion wishes to dispel all suffering. That mind is called compassion. The mind wishing others joy, satisfying them with all joys, as the text says, is love. In other words, love and compassion is one mind with two different aspects, fo-
cusing on other beings. So this verse presents both love and compassion, one face going this way, and the other face that way.

What kind of suffering is it that you would like to dispel? It is the suffering that causes all misery in general and particularly the miseries in samsara. Now, gradually I have to take you deeper into Buddhism.

*The three sufferings* We can see the pains that people are experiencing. Particularly, we ourselves experience many pains. A lot of them are very gross pains. We do not really acknowledge the subtler pains, and especially not the so-called pervasive pain. Although we do experience them all, we do not acknowledge them. We don’t recognize them, because our physical or mental gross pain is so severe that we are not able to recognize them.

Many times I have said that people in the West do not have the opportunity to experience the economic suffering which Indian coolies at a railway station experience. We don’t have that opportunity. Their situation is so severe, depending on the economic condition of themselves and their country. They, however, do not have the opportunity to experience the sort of mental pains and agonies that we go through here. This is because their physical suffering is so severe that they don’t experience the sort of pains that we do. It is always like this. Whatever pain you experience severely prevents you from seeing other kinds of pains.

In reality, we all have three different layers of pain. 1) There is the severe, gross pain which we all acknowledge, like a cut or a wound, or physical, mental or emotional illness. They are all gross pains. 2) Then there is the subtle pain. At our level we have those gross pains and therefore do not see the subtle pains. 3) The pervasive pains we never have the chance to acknowledge. We do experience them all the time, but we cannot acknowledge the experience, because we suffer from grosser, more severe pains than that.
When you wish to dispel all suffering, we are talking about these three different layers of pain. When we try to bring joy for all beings, we have again three different layers or levels of joy. The first is the joy which we ordinarily experience in samsara. A lot of people think we should not experience these, that somehow it is not right to enjoy these material, physical and mental joys. Again, these are gross levels of joy. A lot of people really think that as spiritual persons we should not really enjoy those things. But that is not right. It is basically our hard-earned right - to use the normal American language!

**The difference between love and attachment** You can definitely enjoy samsaric joys, but don’t fall into the traps that come with them. You are in a trap if you cannot live without it. You get attachment to this. Attachment is when you think, “I want it and it has to be mine! If I don’t get it, nobody else should get it!” All these things are the symptoms of attachment. Pure love does not have these symptoms. Pure love does not say, “I want what you have!” If you say, “I want what you have, the good figure, the beautiful look, the wonderful smile or smell,” if you feel that you want it - forget about thinking, “I own it, it is mine;” but just wanting it alone is a symptom of attachment. Thinking, “How wonderful, it is great, I enjoy, it is beautiful to look at, wonderful to share with you wonderful things.” This is love. “I wish that you can experience that continuously, I am happy for you.” This is normally another American saying we use a lot.

Actually, thinking “I am happy for you. I appreciate what you have,” that is love. The moment you say, “I want it, it is mine,” that is attachment. This is not a definition I am giving you here. Don’t debate with me, or I will lose! But I am trying to give you something to hold on in order to make a distinction between love and attachment. This is extremely difficult. It is not easy to make a distinction. Everybody will make a mistake on that. We will always make mistakes. So don’t worry about it.
Then the text says,

And clears away confusion. Where is there comparable virtue?
Where is there such a friend? Where is there virtue similar to this?

Deprivation of happiness, disturbing conceptions - where do all these come from? From ignorance. If you don’t have confusion at your basic, fundamental level of mind, there is no reason why you would have disturbing conceptions. We would not have them. To bring all happiness, to dispel all suffering, what you have to do is to clear the confusion. If confusion is cleared, ignorance has no room to play. There is no better way to make yourself come closer to enlightenment. There is no better way to find your way out from sufferings. You may be serving others, dispelling their confusion, freeing them from their disturbing conceptions, but that is also the way you find your way out of suffering yourself.

That is why I keep on saying that it is wrong to sit there and think, “How can I do it?” With that you are not going to get any answer. It is going to make you depressed. Instead of looking for the way out, switch your attention to other people, change your focus from yourself, from thinking, “How can I make it?” to thinking, “How can I help?” That change itself is actually removing the red carpet from under the feet of your own ego. The ego may scream, but you actually remove the carpet from under it. Once you have done that, the pride of the ego which took it for granted that it could use you as the most obedient slave, has been shaken. Then there will be a fight.

You are beginning the fight with the ego. When you find the point where the ego says, “Don’t let me go, don’t let me go!” you have really come quite a long way. A lot of people will not find that right away. If you do get to that point where the ego is screaming to you, “Don’t let me go!” you are doing quite well. That is if it is really genuine. If you just
Gelek Rimpoche

project that and pretend that, it is a different story. So instead of thinking, “What should I do? Should I do Vajrasattva recitation or should I meditate? Should I meditate in the morning or in the evening? What should I do?” think, “How could I help others?” Immediately switch from Buddhism 101 to Buddhism 102. That is the Bodhisattvas’ way of life. They look in that way. If you do that, you cannot do anything better than that. Not only that, there is not even anything equivalent to that. As the text says, Where is there a comparable virtue? Where is there a comparable positive karma that you could generate?. The text goes on, Where is there such a friend? In Tibetan, it actually says teacher at this point. The translator has used friend. Where is there a teacher comparable to that? Where is there merit similar to this?

Verse 31

If whoever repays a kind deed Is worthy of some praise, Then what need to mention the Bodhisattvas Who do good without its being asked of them?

Generally, if someone helps you when you are in difficulties, it is the basic understanding of human nature that you have to repay their kindness. When somebody does something good to you, you owe them. There is even the phrase, “You owe me one.” So somehow you have to adjust that. Here the Bodhisattva acts without being asked, trying to solve everybody’s problem, trying to remove the red carpet from under the ego’s feet for all beings. That definitely deserves praise. To be an example, to be a role model, that is what it is.

The last two lines tell you that for the person who is capable of doing that, who can attempt that, it becomes a good quality. That individual who perceives things and deals with things in such a manner, that is a quality of such an individual. This is actually talking about the quality of being a good human being.
How to use these teachings to overcome disturbing misconceptions

We just read three funny, little verses today. But don’t leave what we have talked about here in the book! Take them with you and whenever you are getting disturbing conceptions, those mental faculties which are disturbing in nature, apply what we have talked about. Actually they are conceptions, because you perceive things in a certain way. We call them ‘blocks’. What do these conceptions block? The light of wisdom. They give you deep, dark shadows. They also do not let the individual go through the proper way. That is why they are blocks. They are wrong conceptions, and they will disturb your peace. You will perceive in a certain way, acknowledge things in a certain way. A lot of people talk about dualistic attitude and conceptions. We don’t want to deal with the idea of dualistic conceptions right at this moment, but we are coming closer to it. So we are talking about conceiving information in a certain way which has a disturbing effect on the individual; that is why it is called nyöng mong or disturbing conception.

How does each one of them affect your mind? If you don’t check or stop it, such a thought will push you and demand a physical or verbal or mental action. Then you will perform that mental action and even go to the extent of verbal abuse, and if you are not satisfied with that, you will go beyond that and physically abuse sentient beings, people. Can you see it? The physical abuse is the third step, the verbal abuse is the second step, like swearing, F-words, showing the finger, etc. The first step, however, is one or more of the disturbing thoughts or conceptions. They make you believe in a certain way and push you and block the wisdom of discrimination. You don’t get it, if it is right or wrong. It is almost like when you take a tranquillizer or anaesthetic, you are not aware of certain parts of your physical feelings. Very similarly to that, the disturbing conceptions make the wisdom part of your mind numb. Lack of wisdom is the credit of ignorance.
That ignorance makes you perform certain negative acts, whether verbal, physical or mental.

That should be good enough. We went back and forth and back and forth through the process of how the disturbing conceptions affect us. We call them negative emotions, delusions, disturbing conceptions, afflicting emotions. You are really the one who is disturbed. You are confused by those negative emotions, whether it is anger, hatred or jealousy.

**How love and compassion can help**  So what does love and compassion do? Love and compassion may not be able do deal directly with the deep ignorance. But the sources of abusiveness that we use physically, verbally or mentally, such as being judgmental, etc., all of this comes from the disturbing conceptions. Love and compassion balances them out. You are focusing on somebody else’s suffering, deeply wishing them to be free. That does not give any room to your disturbing conceptions, there is no way to entertain them and your ego-entertainment is cut. That is basically how Buddhist practice really works.

You don’t have to shave your hair and wear brown or yellow or green or red or white or blue clothes. Whether your sit cross-legged or on a chair, that is not the point. That is not Buddhism. Real Buddhism is dealing with your mind, dealing with the ego. Cut all this ego-entertainment out, try to push out those disturbing conceptions! Balance them out. Don’t give them any opportunity to come in, keep yourself busy with compassion. Even laziness has ways of getting things done. So keep yourself busy with love and compassion, with caring, and automatically you are building positive karma. Therefore there is no comparable virtue. Where is there even such a friend? Where is there merit similar to this? Remember that. Virtue is positive karma, merit is positive karma. These are the spiritual foundations you are building. These are your foundations. Such compassion can do all of this. That is why I always say that the next millennium will be an extremely busy one.
No one will have time to cut off and say, “I am meditating!” So better learn quickly how to make every moment of your life into practice!

You know, wealthy people may be playing on the golf course or having a holiday in the Bahamas or sailing through the world, but their money is working and building up. Right or wrong? Similarly, you have to do the same thing. You may be busy working in the office, walking through the street, going here and there, but your positive karma should always be credited to you and that is the trick of the trade. I guess we have to leave it there.

How far have we got? Verse 31? That is good, at least we are past verse 28. It seemed that we were talking about that a lot and then the next time we talked it was verse 28 again. We did verse 31, and now we are on verse 32. Those of you who have the book, read these verses and those who cannot afford to buy it, at least borrow a copy, xerox it and read it. It is good to have it. You know why? If you read it again later at some time in your life, maybe not immediately, but in five, ten years or so, you will begin to remember what you have heard at this moment and what you have meditated on after that, what the effect on you has been.

I would like to clarify verse 31 a little more. Actually it is telling us what a great being the person who has bodhimind is. For example, in our usual world, if somebody did something for someone, even if it is ordinary, people will praise that person as a worthy person who keeps his or her word and repays the kindness given to them, who does not forget and repays others’ kindness. Such a person is considered to be a good person in our society, worthy of some praise. This is true. On the other hand, if you do good to somebody all the time and they still do not appreciate it, but turn around and become your enemy, that is considered to be a bad person in this world.
Now focus that on the bodhisattvas. If you have bodhimind, that is the ultimate love and compassion, nobody has to ask you to help a person. Without any request, without any invitation, without it being asked, bodhisattvas will go out of their way to automatically help the person in whatever way they need assistance and do their utmost possible. That must definitely be considered a great being! Not only are they persons worthy of praise, but even Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and even the gods – that is the ‘small ‘g’ gods’ will all praise such a person, because this person is honest, appreciates somebody’s help, is gracious. Therefore, bodhisattvas are great persons worthy of praise. In other words, if you want to become a great being, the method is to grow the bodhimind with you. If you can become a bodhisattva, you will be a person who is fit to be the object of such praise.

Buddhism 1.01 and Buddhism 1.02  What is bodhimind? I keep on telling you all the time that it is ultimate love and compassion, unconditioned, unlimited. Whoever has that, such a person is called a bodhisattva in the Buddhist terminology. Who is eligible to become a Bodhisattva? Everybody, every person! It is not some kind of Buddhist hierarchy, reserved for some privileged persons called ‘children of Buddha’ or something. No! Everybody is eligible, as long as they have the basic development of Buddhism 101. If you remember, what we are talking about here is Buddhism 102.

Buddhism 1.01 teaches you to look inside yourself and see how you are functioning, to see what your condition is, how these neuroses or delusions develop within you, how they grow, what makes them grow, how they are functioning. Watch how they come up. Talk with your friends about how you get angry. Just say for example, “John, tell me how can I make you mad?” [laughs]. In that manner you see how anger develops, how attachment develops. See this within your own mind. Observe when it develops, how it acts on you, when it is active, what can you do, how can you prevent this thing happening to you. This is extremely important.
These are preventative measures, and they are very important. However, we are not in the position to do that right now. We can only do it in the aftermath. When you are already angry, during that period you don’t even want to talk about it. That is also fine. Shut your door, turn your phone off. Whenever you feel ready, come out, connect your phone, open your door and talk about it. You can look back at what happened, what has not happened, what should have happened. You don’t even have to talk to anybody. It may make you madder. But think about it. Through that, you are getting closer and next time, when you are in that period of anger, you may be able to recognize it. Afterwards, you may be able to correct. Gradually you may be able to recognize it while you are angry. Gradually, you may be able to prevent it before it arises. You will say, “Oh, yes, I can smell the anger.” Then you can prevent it. All this is Buddhism 101 level.

Then Buddhism 102 is when you recognize and acknowledge that this is your condition, you don’t just sit there thinking, “How can I get rid of that?” Don’t just keep on thinking that. Think, “What about the person that I love, the person that I care about?” The way to get out of your problems is by looking at the person that you love and care about. We talk about love and compassion, saying that we have to look at all sentient beings as our mothers, but the way and how you do this is simply one by one, a person with a face and a name, starting with the persons you care about. Your lover, your companion, your parents, your children, these are the subjects on which you develop your compassion stronger. These are the persons we do it with first.

It is great to think about all sentient beings, but normally that sort of thinking ends up with me, the big, fat guy looking at all these nameless, faceless dots that fill all of space! Then whatever you dictate to them, they will follow. But then, one day there is somebody with a name and a face who will say, “No, that does not sound right!” Then you freak out com-
pletely and say, “You are not supposed to say that! You are supposed to follow exactly what I have told you!”

So you are dealing with persons who have names and faces. Sometimes, if you enjoy that, you can do it with nameless, faceless dots who are listening. You can dictate to everybody. If you enjoy that, you can do that occasionally. But in the actual practice, think about a person that you care about, a person you love and care about, the person that you spend time with for eight hours or twenty-four hours, a person you love, who loves you and who irritates you and whom you irritate. That is the person for you to exercise with and practice love and compassion.

**Superficial practice and real practice** Remember, this is training your mind. Actually, you are not going to put some kind of superficial influence in your mind. A lot of people may tell you to develop some kind of superficial mind with which you can sit in front of the Buddha and everything is wonderful and great. You can burn incense, some nice music is going on somewhere and you feel uplifted from your usual mindstream. I am not criticizing that. That is one thing. But is that alone capable of developing the individual? No. It is a great thing to have happen occasionally. It is wonderful to have it. But is that alone capable of developing bodhimind? Is that alone capable of delivering the individual to the Buddhist goal that you want to reach? Definitely not!

It is funny. I just had a request from *Tricycle* to talk about this very argument. We said no. They wanted to have two different viewpoints. One person was supposed to say that it is good enough and then they wanted me to say that it is not good enough. I said no, but somehow that brought me to mention it today. It may be able to bring you a little superficial feeling for a short-lived period, which may have some nice influence in your life. That is okay, there is nothing wrong with that. But is that enough? It is not. Will it help? Yes. Will it be capable of delivering the goods? No.
We have a great life, extremely important and capable in the spiritual and in the material sense. There is no other sort of life with that capability. Look at the cows, the dogs, the horses, the monkeys. Look at all the different creatures around. None of them is capable of thinking the way human beings think. None of them has the capacity of human beings’ understanding. Our problem is ignorance. So what we need is wisdom and we need compassion. Ignorance is the blocking point for us, because of not knowing and wrongly knowing. This is the obstacle. That is why we create negativities. Negativities give us negative results. It is the karmic law. To cut the negativity we need wisdom.

That sort of good feeling, that sort of superficial mind, is not capable of cutting the ignorance at all. Not only this good feeling, but even love and compassion is not capable of cutting ignorance. Buddha himself said, “Love and compassion is not the direct opponent of ignorance.” Therefore love and compassion is not capable of cutting it. For that you need wisdom. Wisdom does not grow from good feelings, nor does love and compassion. And neither of them can grow out of sitting meditation alone. You sit there nicely and wonderfully until the cows come home - that is the good old American phrase! While you are sitting there, no negativities will arise directly, but when you get up, the negativities come up.

Two wings, relative and absolute When you talk to somebody and they say, “No, I do not agree with you,” then you say, “You are not supposed to say that, you are supposed to listen to me!” These are the points. These are the main reasons why these things are not capable of delivering the goods. That is why great teachers, the Buddha himself followed by the great Indian masters, have talked about the two truths, the absolute and the relative truth. They have given the example that we are like the birds: when they want to cross the ocean, they need two wings. With one wing they will just circle, they won’t cut across. Likewise, in order to deliver the goods, in order to cut our neuroses, to free ourselves from them, we
need both wings, the wing of the relative and the wing of the absolute. Absolute refers to wisdom; relative refers to bodhi-mind, compassion, love and so on. That will give you the power to move across. You can make your journey and cut across the ocean. Imagine, an aeroplane with one wing! Will that fly? That is exactly what it is.

So sitting meditation alone is not capable of delivering the goods. Good feelings for short periods are not capable of delivering the goods. Is it good? It definitely is. Will it help? Definitely. Is it enough? It is not. If you are interested in making the spiritual path develop with you, if you are interested in cutting the neuroses in your own mind, you need two. Without two legs you cannot walk. With one leg you can hop, but how far can you get? What you need is the relative and the absolute path. What we are doing here is the relative path, love and compassion. You also need wisdom. We are going to talk about that in chapter nine of this text. In that chapter, you will find there is a very interesting dialogue between you - and you.

**Becoming a role model**  Lets go back to verse 31. When somebody *repays someone’s kindness*, you consider that person a nice guy, a person *worthy of praise*. If you become a bodhisattva, there is no question that you become a person worthy of praise. Not only that, you become a role model for others. Through that, you are helping others. You do not necessarily have to become a big teacher. You do not necessarily have to become a bishop or cardinal or pope or Dalai Lama. But simply showing other people how one can handle certain problems when they come up, that itself is helping others. **Becoming a role model for others is a great deed.**

As I said before, you don’t sit there asking, “How can I do it?” That invites depression. Why? Your mind is focused on yourself and you are desperately looking at how to do it, adding up pressure after pressure. The problems become so big, they are exaggerated. They will become huge monsters. You will feel that you cannot even breathe. You
feel that you are under a layer of five hundred huge monsters or something. The moment you shift the focus from yourself to others, thinking, “The people whom I care for, they also have the same problem, how can I help them?” you are actually pulling the carpet from under the feet of depression.

It was embarrassing for me, but I had to learn that from a neurological surgeon. I needed to have a neurological surgeon to tell me that Buddha said that love and compassion helps people to get out from depressions. Actually the focal point shifts from yourself to others. That is the key, I believe. This neurosurgeon told me that this is how it is. I asked him, “And it really works?” and he said, “Yes, it does.” He started quoting so many doctors who wrote books about it. There must be something in it. And Buddha has been saying that for two thousand five hundred years, screaming at us, “The moment you learn that you have to get out and obtain freedom, don’t sit there and focus on yourself! Shift the focus on the others; this is the time to shift the focus from Buddhism 101 to 102!” So there must be some reasons, if even the neuroscientists say the same thing. The spiritual path and science will tell you the same thing. There must be some reason. It must be worth trying. After all, we all go through that. So often we don’t want to talk.

The next verse will tell you that not only do you become an object of praise but also a great benefactor. How do you like that? Normally we think that only millionaires can become benefactors, nobody else. But that is not true. Verse 32 should tell you that.

**Cleaning as Purification**

As you know, these teachings are not a one or two night affair, but a long, continuous teaching on a quite long text. What you receive here is material to think about. Some other time I mentioned the practice of cleaning as one of the best ways of purification, remember? Yet the meditation room is not being properly cleaned. It is left to two or three people
and after some time nobody does it. Cleaning is a good purification practice.

*The story of Small Road (Arhat Lamchungpa)* We always tell you the story of one of the arhats called ‘Small Road’. He was so stupid that he could not learn anything. He had been kicked out of all these different schools of learning in India. Finally he went to his own brother who tried to teach him whatever he could, but even he could not help him at all. So his brother thought to himself, “Is it better to be kind and gentle with him or would it help him to be a little wrathful?” So he realized that he should be wrathful, and consequently he beat up Small Road and threw him out of his place and left him on the roadside.

Buddha came past and saw him crying. Buddha asked him what the matter was and he said, “I am so stupid, there is no one as stupid as me in the world! I have been kicked out of all different schools of different traditions. Finally I went to my own brother and he kicked me out too!”

Buddha then said to him, “Come with me.”

Small Road said, “No! My own brother could not keep me, how can you keep me?”

Buddha said, “Your own brother is only an arhat, but I am a Buddha!”

Then the Small Road guy said, “Okay, but first give me the commitment that you will not kick me out.”

Buddha said, “I can do that.”

So then Small Road said, “Now, what do you expect me to do?”

Buddha said, “Just sweep the floor.”

“That I may be able to do.”

Buddha said, “But when you clean the floor, say to yourself, *du pa tri ma pa*, that means ‘clear the dust, clear the dirt’.”

Buddha told all the monks, “Repeat these same words every time you see this man, because he forgets. When he remembers dust, he will forget clear and when he remembers
clear, he forgets dirt. When he remembers dirt, again he forgets the word ‘clear’.”

So the monks around there repeated those words whenever he was around. While he was sweeping, he heard them saying that and remembered, “Oh yeah, that is what I am supposed to say.” He almost got the idea that this must be some kind of mantra, as everybody was always saying it. But after some time he actually remembered the words. The moment he had learned them, Buddha told the other people that they did not have to repeat them any more. Then one day, he picked up the meaning behind these words. He found out, “I am not cleaning only ordinary dirt, but the dirt of attachment. I am not cleaning just dust, but the dust of anger.” That is how he developed and finally became an arhat.

So the method he used was sweeping, cleaning. Cleaning is tremendously useful. In India, the Brahmins have to use kusha grass for cleaning. When they think that they have obstacles, whether mental, psychic or sacred, they always go to the field of kusha grass and sleep there. So cleaning is extremely important. Even those who were highly developed Mahasiddhas - if you look into their biographies - there is always a lot of cleaning, clearing and washing involved. Some were laundrymen even.

That is a method of clearing the ignorance which is the obstacle of wisdom. The antidote of ignorance is wisdom. To sweep away your ignorance, one of the methods is dusting - particularly the meditation room where you obtain teachings, the monasteries where the monks and nuns are, clearing the place of your own spiritual master, the temple, the road side, etc. This is one of the best ways to clear obstacles. We have provided you the opportunity to use a vacuum cleaner here and if you don’t take this opportunity, it does not make a difference to me at all. If you look into the Japanese or Korean traditions, if people were given such an opportunity, there would be ten people pulling the vacuum cleaner around! We, however, have difficulty finding one person to pick it up.
This shows how ignorant we are! I have probably said enough. But it is really true. And when you use the vacuum cleaner, don’t just think, “I am cleaning the dirt people have brought in on their shoes,” but think that you are cleaning your ignorance, anger and attachment. That is the best way to do it. But if you don’t want to, no one can make you do it either.

Questions and Answers

*Student:* What happens to your personal commitments when everything is always changing?

*Rinpoche:* Good question. When the conditions are changing, the commitments change. It is as simple as that.

*Student:* Thanks.

*Rinpoche:* You are easy to satisfy!

*Student:* But for example when I have to maintain a commitment to secrecy and because of that have to lie, isn’t there a contradiction?

*Rinpoche:* I don’t think so. The vow of secrecy that comes with taking the Vajrayana vows changes when you come here to people who do the same practice. So you can talk.

*Student:* No, I mean more situations where you don’t tell people like your friends what you are doing.

*Rinpoche:* When you tell your friends that you are practicing Vajrayogini, that does not mean that you lose the vow of secrecy.

*Student:* But even when friends ask me what I am doing I try not to lie and tell them something about Buddhism.

*Rinpoche:* But in that case there is no commitment of secrecy at all! We do have a vow of secrecy, but do we really have the information that we are supposed to guard secretly? I don’t think we do. Therefore the situation of breaking the vow of secrecy doesn’t arise much. It is there, but I don’t think it is important for you now, because you don’t have that much information at all. That is why we only give limited information. We don’t throw everything at people. That is the rea-
son. You don’t really have that much. You have to use your
discriminating wisdom. That is the bottom line.

Student: You said that when conditions change, the commit-
ments change. Does that also refer to situations like when the
Chinese took over Tibet and a lot of the Tibetans preferred
to go to jail and get tortured rather than to denounce their
values and practices?
Rinpoche: I don’t mean that at all. I was not even thinking on
those lines. Let me give a very simple example. You take an
initiation, including the vow of secrecy and there is only a
group of people around that have also taken the initiation. So
the conditions have completely changed and you can talk
about whatever you want to. The commitment of not break-
ing is not applicable, because the conditions have changed.
We take a vow of not killing. But if there are monsters com-
ing at you right and left and you have got to kill one of them
to get yourself out, that is a change of conditions.
Student: But could I give a book about the Kalachakra initi-
ation by Jeffrey Hopkins to a friend who knows nothing
about Buddhism but is curious?
Rinpoche: The Dalai Lama gives Kalachakra initiations to
groups of four thousand people. When there are no broken
commitments there and you give a book that has already
been read by more people than that - perhaps thirty thousand
- I don’t think you have to worry about broken commit-
ments!

Student: The other day I was meditating and one of my
friends was upset about me meditating and kicked me. I was
not angry and continued meditating, but afterwards told the
person that it is not all right to do something like that. The
person then said that she knew that herself and that I did not
have to come and tell her that, just to humiliate her.
Rinpoche: There is nothing wrong with communicating things
like that, as long as it is appropriate. It should not cause anger
or suffering in the other person. We call that skilful means, which is difficult to find. When you have so many experiences of being kicked, you will learn the way of skillfully communicating that. I am joking!

*Student*: It was not that hard a kick anyway.

*Rinpoche*: I know that.

*Student*: My practice is going up and down a lot. Some weeks it is going all right, but then I experience anger which can go on for a week. So I feel the only thing I can do is start again. Then I blow up and have to start again. Is that actually a correct way of doing it?

*Rinpoche*: I believe so. We are like children. We don’t know how to walk and fall down. So what you do is get up and try again. That is what you do. The same thing will repeat again, naturally, until we learn how to walk properly. It is a learning process, isn’t it?

*Student*: What exactly were the three levels of suffering you mentioned?

*Rinpoche*: I am just going to give you their names. First there is the suffering of suffering. Then there is the changing suffering; this looks like happiness, but it changes into suffering. Then there is pervasive suffering. We do not usually acknowledge that as suffering at all. I am just giving you the names.

**Verse 32**

The world honors as virtuous
A man who sometimes gives a little, plain food
Disrespectfully to a few beings,
That satisfies them for only half a day.

The world *honors as virtuous* a man who sometimes gives a little. What is a little? A handful of food, a couple of bucks, a couple of old, used clothes. The manner of giving is also not
very respectful, but rather more like “Yecch! Here you go!” or like, “It is of no use to me, maybe it is useful for you. Take it!” This is disrespectful giving. Another example is if somebody forces you to sit down somewhere and eat some food, whether you like it or not, forcing you to empty the whole plate, saying, “It is good for you, you cannot get up until you finish that!” That is also disrespectful giving. A lot of people do that, we know.

Some people will do it, because they really think it is good for you; other people believe it is disrespectful to the food, if you don’t finish it. They think it is a terrible thing to waste food, therefore whatever they put on your plate, you have to finish. People do that. I am not aware of any negativities that you may get if you do not finish your plate! However, I am also not against those who tell you that you should not waste food. I have great respect for it. I am not sure if you get negativities for wasting food, I am not sure. I don’t know.

If every person wastes a little, then it builds up. Yes, Mao used to say that in China. If every person in China wasted one grain of rice, this would become like ten million ounces or something! He used to say something like that. So I do have great respect for people saying we should not waste food. You know why? Because half the world is hungry. However, your leftovers cannot reach those people either, really true.

When I first came to America I thought that the daily food wastage from New York City alone would be enough to feed all of India for a day. However, it won’t reach there. It would cost more money to get those leftovers to India than it would cost to feed those people anyway. That is how karma works. You should also appreciate how fortunate we are in this part of the world. People here do not appreciate what they have. If you go overseas to India, China, Africa, to all these places, you will know how lucky we are. We are very fortunate.

Who brought this about? You did it yourself. Your own deeds have brought you here. Not only are we lucky in the ma-
terial sense, but also in the spiritual path. Where else in the world is there a place like the United States, where you can see all kinds of spiritual paths? They are available, even advertised in the Yellow Pages! Even Jewel Heart is in the Yellow Pages. Unfortunately, they put my personal address in there. We are also fortunate if we are able to pick up all the best methods from those spiritual paths and - mark my words - don’t mumble-jumble them all together but find the best techniques to cut down the negativity.

Never look at it as a wonderful presentation, but as that which is the best to cut down negativities. If you can cut down the negativities within you, then whatever comes out of you when you teach, whether it is a good or a bad presentation, will help the other person. If you don’t cut your negativities, if you are always looking outside, then whatever comes out from you, even if it is a great presentation, it will not help at all. Maybe it will be great entertainment, but that is not worth it. Better stay at home and watch the Jay Leno show! So always look inside, make a difference to this one, pointing your own finger to yourself. The way to make a difference is by cutting your ego. The symptom of cutting your ego is whether your neuroses are going down or not. That is the symptom of hurting your ego. Your ego will fight back. It will insist. Your ego will bully you, it will beg you, it will cry on your shoulder. But this is the opportunity for you to get rid of it. That is what Tibetan Buddhism is all about. Really, the main aim is that. If you can take it, it is yours. If you cannot, that is that.

Back to the verse 32, The world honors as virtuous a man who sometimes gives a little, plain food disrespectfully to a few beings, that satisfies them only for half a day. That means that somebody feeds you for just one meal. If somebody takes you out for lunch or dinner, you will say, “Thank you very much, I am grateful,” especially if you don’t have any food or any money yourself. Then you will feel that it is great. Even if it is offered disrespectfully, it is still considered a good deed.
Verse 33

What need be said then of one
Who eternally bestows the peerless bliss of
the Sugatas
Upon limitless numbers of beings,
Thereby fulfilling all their hopes?

What is peerless bliss? Do you all know what bliss is? There are some pagers who give you a noise signal and there are some that vibrate. That must be the bliss! Buddha says that we consider all the changes in our lives, as long as they don’t bring us severe pain, as joy. Everything, any feeling that is different from the usual, as long as it is not severe pain, we consider to be joy, having a good time, just because we are feeling different than usual. You label it, “Ha, nice, beautiful!” Then you perceive it as beautiful. You say, “Hmm, great!”

You are not lying, but Buddha said we have never known what true joy really is. We have never experienced and never seen it. Therefore we really don’t know what true joy is. That is why we don’t have any idea what bliss really is. The bliss of the Sugatas refers to ultimate joy. Sugatas are the enlightened beings. When we have no idea what joy is, there is no question that we cannot expect to know what ultimate joy is. One of the reasons why ignorance is able to fool us is that we consider any change to be nice, pleasant and different. If we knew that things just changing does not mean true joy, there would be no way for ignorance to fool us. There would be no way that we would have dissatisfaction with our ordinary, normal joys. That is why we are never satisfied with our usual, ordinary joys. We always want more and different experiences. At the same time, your feelings about it become less and less. That is because it is not true joy. Do you get the message?

Bodhisattvas who try to help all beings actually do so by helping them to cut down their neuroses by becoming exam-
Gross compassion and subtle compassion I would like to share a little bit from that discussion. We identified what idiot compassion is. First, we talked about compassion on a very gross level. For example, let’s imagine you see a dog run over by a car. The lower part of its body is smashed, while the upper part is still intact. The dog is alert, yet in great pain. It tries to move its body from the road, the upper body trying to drag the rest of the body from the road. Imagine that picture and the feelings that come with it. See yourself jumping into that picture, trying to help, trying to pick up the dog and move it. This is the gross level of compassion. We feel the pain; we have to do something. That is gross compassion. It is good compassion, no doubt, but it is not good enough.

You also need subtle compassion. You need subtle compassion towards yourself first, then towards others. If you don’t have subtle compassion for yourself, you will never be able to be compassionate to others, never! If you don’t know how to help yourself, you cannot help others. Take it from me. Compassion is also towards yourself, recognizing your own difficulties, your problems, then seeking freedom from those problems, having the desire to be free of those pains and problems. This is compassion for yourself.

But do not go to the extreme of self-pity! You have to draw a line in between there. If you try too much to have compassion for yourself, you may fall into the pit of self-pity.
You develop compassion for yourself, then switch over to other persons. Develop compassion towards another person and then extend that to yet others. That is how you expand it. You are first, then the person you care for and love the most, and then others. Don’t yet try to handle those whom you hate, because you may begin to say, “I don’t care about them.”

The recognition of compassion and love is important. That is a subject you should always think about and analyze and try to get information about.

To come back to the Bodhisattvacharyavatara: The person who takes you out for lunch is considered a benefactor and an object of respect. But here the bodhisattvas try to help countless beings, as vast as space and for countless eons, trying to treat them to the best happiness ever possible - the bliss of the Sugatas. That definitely has to be a great benefactor! So if you can benefit other beings by any means you are a benefactor.

**Self-interest as an obstacle to helping others** Here you are trying to benefit all beings with that great motivation, with the dedication of selflessness. As long as you have any selfish interest, you have a problem. Even if you want to help people and have the best idea ever possible, you will not be able to help people on the spiritual path if you have self-interest somewhere held deeply. That is one of the biggest obstacles.

There are two important points I’d like to share here, although they are from another source. The Gyalwa Drikung pa, who founded the Drikung Kargyu tradition, has some very interesting things to say. He mentioned five points. Of these I would like to quote the following two:

Your spiritual master is like a snow mountain. If that snow mountain does not receive the guru devotional respect of
sunshine, you will never receive the 
blessings of the stream of rivers that are 
flowing down from it. It is important to put 
the focus on that. 

Even if you have the horse of the bodhimind, but if you 
don’t have the bit of altruism, there will not gather a lot of 
people around you and you will not be able to help them. 
Therefore one of the main points is to have an altruistic 

Self-interest here is in the sense of trying to get fame, 
wealth, trying to become somebody big. These are the nor-
mal, mundane, selfish types of interest. If you have them 
within you, you will never be able to help a large number of 
people at all. In order to be able to help a large number of 
people, you should totally detach yourself from that sort of 
self-interest. You have to totally detach yourself from seeking 
a name, fame and building up wealth, all this. These are the 
qualities. If you have them, you will be helping a lot of peo-
ple. If you have an agenda behind that, you may become a 
great scientist, a great professor, but you can never become a 
great spiritual teacher, friend or guide. Somewhere this self-
interest is inside, twisted. You may or may not recognize it. 

Tsongkhapa, who lived from 1357 to 1419 in Tibet, be-
came very popular and hundreds and thousands of people 
followed him wherever he went. One Sakya lama asked him, 
“What sort of ong du practice do you do that enables you to 
accumulate these large numbers of people?” Tsongkhapa 
said that he did not have any ong du practice at all. He said, 

It is only guru devotion and the perfect 
motivation. These are the keys to helping all 
others. 

That is why Gyalwa Drikungpa, the founder of the Drikung 
Kargyu tradition, made these five points called nga de. It is not 
necessary to talk about the three others today. The two we 
did mention are guru devotion and the total altruistic mind. 
If even when the methods and the mantras are perfect they
do not work with the individual, it is due to lack of guru devotion. If even when you have wonderful things to say, somehow you are not able to communicate them to people, it is due to lack of bodhimind, lack of love and compassion. There must be something wrong deep inside. Search your mind, review your mind and if there is any self-interest there, cut it out and try again. It will work differently. That is all I have to say to you today.

Questions and Answers

Student: In order to fulfill your spiritual goals, you need both bodhimind and wisdom. However, it is the wisdom that ultimately delivers the goods. So why don’t we perfect our wisdom first and reach the enlightened state and then perfect bodhimind?

Rinpoche: I do not know the answer, but I'd like to try this. Wisdom alone is incapable of delivering ultimate enlightenment. You can develop wisdom first and then go to the bodhimind. This path is for the genius. I am not saying that you are not a genius. But someone who is may be able to develop wisdom first and bodhimind later. If you do that, you reach the third path straight away. It is like a helicopter that flies over the first and second path. This path is available. It happens, but it does not happen to us. It does not happen to us, because although we talk about wisdom and read about it here and there, we don’t get it - even though for example a few people told me during the summer retreat that my talk there about wisdom was the clearest they had heard and absolutely clear and wonderful.

I am going to cut my own lie here. That is a Tibetan saying. It means I am going to bust myself! In that summer retreat, I did talk about wisdom, but what I talked about was the emptiness of an independent, permanent self. True, this is emptiness. But is it the best emptiness? No. This is how I am going to bust myself here. First I don’t even know the
Gelek Rimpoche

best emptiness. Then, even if I did, it would not become clear to you at all. So if we talk about emptiness on a very gross level, it is clear. As somebody told me - in that talk during the summer retreat it was crystal clear. I am happy with crystal-clear. That helps tremendously. But it was not the ultimate emptiness either.

Student: During last fall you talked about the five paths. There you said, “Don’t have doubt, hope and fear.” How can we then develop the altruistic mind without hope? Where do we get the inspiration for it?

Rinpoche: If we could have a Buddha, some enlightened being, right in front of us as a role model, that would be wonderful, it would make it tremendously easy for all of us. Unfortunately, we are a little bit too late to see Buddha appear as Buddha. The role models that are supposed to be around here these days have a lot of faults. This makes it very difficult. We talked about that in New York last week. A guru is a guru, but the guru also has a lot of problems. All the gurus have problems here - there is one scandal after another. Maybe they are human beings! That is why. If there were a perfect role model, it would be great! But we don’t have that. But whatever it is, you can get a small inspiration from gurus, from the sanghas. You have got to take that. The most important thing however, is that unfortunately nobody can do it for you. You have got to do it yourself. Can we go without hope? I doubt it. We need hope until we become fully enlightened. Until then, we have to keep our fingers crossed.

In the West, however, keeping your fingers crossed means doing nothing, just sitting there, but that is not right. You have got a lot of things to do. In training for the altruistic mind, begin with visualization, begin even by talking to yourself. Begin by correcting your motivation in the morning. Try to remind yourself of this motivation three times a day and three times a night. Try to constantly do that until it becomes habitual for you. When it has become habitual, then you are trained. That is the sign that your training has
achieved something. You have not reached enlightenment but your mind has been trained to be altruistic, to be helpful. This itself is a gradual process within the individual. By having that altruistic mind, you are moving closer to enlightenment. You are pushing yourself; you are also helping all others. That is all I know.

I will share a secret with you. Last weekend I was in Cleveland and taught on the short lam rim by Tsongkhapa. I did not have the Tibetan version with me. I had that memorized, but the verses did not come back to me. I only had the English version with me, but although I can read it, I don’t get the bigger message. So I was caught between a rock and a hard place. I managed okay, I just talked generally about lam rim, not knowing what the particular English verse referred to. So that happens. Today I am lucky to have the Tibetan version of this text, the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*.

**Verse 34**

The Buddha has said that whoever bears a harmful thought Against a benefactor such as a Bodhisattva Will remain in hell for as many eons As there were evil thoughts.

I don’t know what that means in English. Let me talk to you from the Tibetan. We referred to Bodhisattvas in the previous verses as benefactors. We gave the example of ordinary benefactors who give you clothes and food for half a day and you consider them great and feel indebted to them. They may not even give the offerings respectfully, but shout and scream and tell us to finish the plate. However, we consider them helpful, especially if we are hungry and don’t have anything. That is the ordinary benefactor. Better than that is somebody who gives you food, shelter and so on without any self-interest. Here the Bodhisattvas do not give you ordinary material gifts. Instead of that they are giving you the bodhi-
mind, extraordinary total enlightenment, extraordinary total blissful highest level of enlightenment. So there is no question that they should be considered great benefactors!

Now this verse 34 talks about the bodhisattvas. The Tibetan version refers to them as *Children of Buddha*. To tell you the truth, it actually says *Sons of the Buddha*. That does not mean that they are male chauvinists! At that period in India the family tradition was such that the son normally would keep the name of the family. The daughter would go out and get married to somebody else and not carry the family name. So in this case it refers to the persons who will take the Buddha’s name. Such a person may be a woman, a female bodhisattva. She would still be referred to as *Son of the Buddha* in this context. So don’t get confused. So in traditional India, if the father was called Agarwal or Gupta, the son would keep that name while the daughter would get married and take on the name of the husband. That is the same here too, actually, although not necessarily any more. So the people who are going to become Buddha are therefore called *Son of Buddha*, whether they are men or women. Now, of course, such language is not necessarily great. Let’s say *Children of Buddha*.

So this verse is about the situation when such a benefactor, who happens to be the crown prince or crown princess of Buddha’s kingdom if you like, becomes the object of anger, bad feelings, meanness, harm, etc. As much as someone is holding those bad feelings or *harmful thoughts* against such a bodhisattva, he is creating the karma to remain in the hell realms for that many eons. That has been said by Buddha.

This is telling you that the bodhimind is so important. Any person, man, woman or child who has this mind is like the crown prince or crown princess of Buddha’s kingdom. Such a person also becomes an object in relation to whom you can create tremendous good or bad karma. If you want to harm a bodhisattva, if you are angry with a bodhisattva, there is a huge difference between that and being angry with anybody else. Being angry with a bodhisattva is supposed to create a tremendous amount of negativity. The text says that
ten minutes of anger with a bodhisattva creates the karma to remain in the hell realms for ten cons. That is what it really means. Even if you are angry with a Buddha, you don’t get that much negativity. Buddha said that. This is the difference in the Buddhist rule. Why is that? The Buddha is supposed to be greater than a bodhisattva. What do you think?

Student: Perhaps it is like child abuse!

Rinpoche: Very good thought! The five limitless negativities are killing father, killing mother, killing an arhat, drawing blood from a Buddha. Does that mean that Buddha cannot go to a hospital? No, it means that you cannot actually kill a Buddha. Even if you want to kill a Buddha, because you are very angry with him, you can’t, but the anger is negative and that probably is meant by ‘drawing blood from a Buddha’. So it is considered one of the five limitless negativities. These are considered to be more negative than what Jeffrey Dahmer has done.\(^5\) The last of the five limitless negativities is to create a schism in the sangha, that means causing divisions, fighting among each other, forming groups which fight among themselves for no reasons. We form groups all the time and fight for no reason. Even if there is nothing important to fight about, you create a big thing. In one way it may be a big thing, but in another way it is not. Whatever is happening in the world is dependent on how you perceive it, how you look at it. In one way it may be a huge thing, but looked at from another angle, everything is not that big a deal. So we do that and make big things, causing trouble among the members of the sangha. If you make it your group and my group and pit one against the other, collect your supporters, etc., that is a problem in the community.

Buddha actually never said that any one of these five negativities, or even all of them together, cause you to remain in the hell realms for the equal amount of time as you had negative thoughts. He never said that. But here in this case, Buddha has made carefully repeated statements, one after another. The act itself is not that bad. You get angry with a
bodhisattva - that is fine. You get angry with person A, B, C, D - you do. But why is it so much emphasized not to get angry with bodhisattvas? It is in order to show you how important bodhisattvas are. They are considered even more important than a Buddha. From the hierarchy point of view - although it is not really a hierarchy - the Buddhas are higher than the Bodhisattvas. But the Bodhisattvas are more important than Buddhas. Why is that?

**Student:** Because they are the heirs of the Buddhas?

**Rinpoche:** Normally, we say that when someone dies, their children are the heirs. But here it is the other way round. The Bodhisattvas can become Buddhas. They don’t have to wait until Buddha goes away. They are therefore the cause of the Buddhas. Without Bodhisattvas there would be no Buddhas at all. Not only are they the cause of the Buddhas, but also the result of the Buddhas. It is like when you ask whether the egg or the chicken came first. It is the chicken and egg question!

**The dangers of anger** The commentary says that if a person is acting harmful towards a Bodhisattva, they are not only harming a Bodhisattva, but harming the cause of a Buddha. With that you are harming a source of joy for all sentient beings. This is the major reason. Bodhisattvas are the sources of joy for all sentient beings. Bodhisattvas are the result and the cause of the Buddha. That is how important Bodhisattvas are! That is why it says that if someone is angry with a Bodhisattva for ten minutes, they create negativities strong enough to send them to the hell realms for ten eons. That is whether the act is with or without knowledge. You don’t have to know that it is a Bodhisattva you have harmed or even what a Bodhisattva is. Even if an atheist is angry with a Bodhisattva for ten minutes, that atheist also creates the cause to be in a hell realm for ten eons. Are you really going to go to the hell realms for ten eons? That is a different issue. The point is that the Bodhisattvas are very important.
I should also point out something here. This one is also one of the most dangerous negativities that Bodhisattvas can get among themselves. Buddha has said in a number of sutras that anything can happen, but the Bodhisattvas can make it through. They may do anything, but they will get through. But if a Bodhisattva is angry with another Bodhisattva, he or she creates this very downfall. For Bodhisattvas among themselves there is no downfall equivalent to getting angry with each other. That does not mean that apart from that they do not get any negativities. They do, but somehow they can manage it.

*Student:* But we are bound to get mad with each other all the time!  
*Rinpoche:* But are you a Bodhisattva? If you are, I can’t get mad at you! [laughs]  
*Student:* When people take Bodhisattva vows, aren’t they Bodhisattvas then?  
*Rinpoche:* Maybe not. Maybe then you are an artificial Bodhisattva!  
*Student:* What is the result of getting angry with an artificial Bodhisattva?  
*Rinpoche:* That may not be that bad!  
*Student 2:* You probably go to an artificial hell realm!  
*Rinpoche:* I said before that Bodhisattvas get through even if they perform all sorts of negativities. That does not mean that they get less negativities for doing the same things than somebody else. If a Bodhisattva is involved in a killing together with a non-Bodhisattva, he and the non-Bodhisattva will have the same negativity. But Bodhisattvas can get away, whereas the non-Bodhisattvas cannot. You know why? We used to talk about that during the *lam rim* when dealing with karma. Nagarjuna said,

> For learned, intelligent persons, negativities, even if heavy, become light.
For other persons, even if light, they become heavy.

The example given is that an equal amount of iron can be made either into a round ball or flattened out into an iron sheet. When you throw these into a river, the iron sheet will float, but the iron ball will sink. Now you can figure it out. However, if one Bodhisattva gets angry with another Bodhisattva, that will really catch the Bodhisattva. That negativity can get the Bodhisattva down easily. So, since we don’t know who is a Bodhisattva and who is not, it is very important not to get angry with anybody! With each one of us, we don’t know who is a Bodhisattva and who is not. So better not get mad at anyone! If you are a Bodhisattva and you get angry with yourself, you get the same problem too! So don’t get angry with yourself either. Okay? That is important.

Dealing with anger  Anger is such a thing, it just comes. We have no control. It will pop up like a red flashlight or like burnt toast out of a toaster. You can’t help it, but it is very important to recognize it. You have to say, “Oh hi, here you are again. I know you, Mr. Anger!” Awareness is extremely important. At our level it is very difficult to stop the anger completely, so we get angry. But you must learn to recognize when you get angry; if you can recognize it, the anger will be embarrassed. The anger-influenced evil will be embarrassed, and so it will go down. If you think you ears are getting red and people will notice that, put your hair over your ears and cover them up!

There are two important mental faculties that Buddha mentioned in this context, embarrassment and shame. Normally, in the English language, you say, “Shame on you!” But Buddha used it differently. He says, “Be ashamed of yourself!” If you know you have gotten angry and lost your temper, you will admit how embarrassing it was and your ears will get red. If you recognize that, it is not the true you who is being embarrassed, but the ego. You will feel bad, miserable, pressured. But it is not you who is feeling the pres-
sure, it is your ego. We must recognize that. Ego is the one who is getting embarrassed, who is getting uncomfortable. Ego is the one who thinks, “I will become a doormat.”

Anger will come, no question. People will get angry. If I read from that book, “If you get angry with a Bodhisattva for ten minutes, you will go to the hell realms for ten eons,” some people will get angry just hearing this! For sure! But that is okay. We call it human nature, but in reality it is our anger addiction that is coming up. If you recognize and acknowledge the anger, it will cut the anger down. You will be embarrassed, ashamed of yourself, and that shame and embarrassment will cut down the anger, far better than anything else. It is a hundred times better than somebody else telling you, “Shame on you!” By doing that repeatedly, even after the anger is gone, you will build up a habit. The addiction to anger that comes up without your even realizing it will begin to change. A habit in the opposite direction will build up. You will remember, recognize and acknowledge it sooner and sooner, until you are aware of it even before anger actually arises.

The actual antidote against anger is patience. But if you try to use that in the beginning, it does not work directly, though it will indirectly. What works directly is training yourself to be embarrassed. You will see it with a number of people. They will get angry, but will catch themselves immediately and relax their anger. They can do it and that is a great achievement. Then, after a little while, you just don’t get angry, no matter what people may say. In your heart of hearts you will say, “What’s the big deal?” but you can’t say it aloud, because the other people will get more upset.

Verse 35

But if a virtuous attitude should arise (in that regard).
Its fruits will multiply far more than that.
When Bodhisattvas greatly suffer they generate no negativity, Instead their virtues naturally increase.

Instead of getting angry with a Bodhisattva, if you learn how to respect that person, if you see the quality of the person, if you like and enjoy seeing the quality of the person, and express the desire to have for yourself the qualities which that person enjoys, that brings virtue or positive karma without equivalent.

We may think that this is no big deal, but it is an extremely big deal! If I read the sutra about this part, you would be shocked. The sutra says that if someone got angry and took out the eye-balls of all sentient beings - not one or ten or hundred, thousand or a million persons, but all sentient beings - and if then someone else came and made them see again, how great would be the virtue or positive karma that person would gain. But if you admire the qualities of the Bodhisattvas and gain respect towards them, the amount of positivity of giving the eyesight back to all sentient beings would not even be a fraction of what you gain from that. Do you believe it or not? That is what this text says and it is true. Bodhisattvas are that important, but we don’t acknowledge them. We are not aware of this and don’t understand. Even if we do hear about it, we find it unbelievable - Buddhist bullshit or Bodhisattva bullshit. However, this is repeated by the Mahayana sutras one after another, so that is what it is.

Sometimes accumulating positive karma is not that difficult. We may think that we have to say millions of mantras or meditate for centuries or eons. But if you gain the respect towards a Bodhisattva who may be sitting next to you, if you admire the qualities of that Bodhisattva, you are probably better off than sitting in retreat for sixty years. Bodhimag and love and compassion make such a difference! I keep on telling you that since we don’t have the time to sit down and meditate a lot, we need to know all these loopholes or techniques of the natural law. You have got to be a good natural law lawyer!
A Bodhisattva is an important base, a base upon which you can create negativity very easily and powerfully, a base upon which you can create positivity easily and powerfully. That is the quality of bodhimind, that is the quality of ultimate love and compassion. If you have that, you will be the subject of it, and if you don’t have it, you don’t have it. The second half of verse 35 goes

| When the Bodhisattvas greatly suffer, they generate no negativity, Instead their virtues naturally increase. |

When the Bodhisattvas have suffering and difficulties, they do not lose their patience. They do not submit to negativities. If they suffer, if they get sick, they know better. Since they know better, they don’t get angry and don’t generate negativities. For us ordinary people, when things do not work so well, we get angry, we get upset. Our mood will swing. A long face will come up. That is the sign of an ordinary person, a non-Bodhisattva. Really true. That is how the Bodhisattvas handle it. Any difficulties that come, somehow they manage and make it through.

During the last visit of Dagyab Rinpoche I talked with him and he said,

| It is coming from the sky and it dissolves to the ground |

That is like rainfall, which comes from the sky and dissolves into the ground. That is the Bodhisattva attitude to everything, to positivity, negativity, suffering, joy, success, failure, to life, death, living and dying. That is the attitude: coming from the sky, dissolving into the ground. This sentence has much more meaning than just this! Do not dismiss it with the little interpretation I gave you today. There is much more meaning in that. Gradually you people will come to know.
The sign of a trained mind  Not only do the Bodhisattvas not generate any negativities when they suffer, but instead their virtues naturally increase. Bodhisattvas know how to do the lo jong techniques. They know how to do the technique of give and take or tong len. Lets say a Bodhisattva has a headache. He is not going to sit there and cry. He may have a little more moody face than usual, but he is not going to sit in a corner, shut down, close the doors and curtains and turn off the telephone. That is not the Bodhisattva way. He will probably think,

Well, it is very fortunate that I have that headache. My headache will substitute for everybody in the world who has a headache. May this be the substitute for all of them. I am happy to have the headache. I like having the headache. I pray that this headache may remain forever and ever, for life after life.

That is how a Bodhisattva thinks, really! Therefore, Bodhisattvas will not create any negativities, but instead their virtues naturally increase. They do not just think, “I have your headache so that you will not have any.” They think, “I have a headache so that all sentient beings may not have a headache!” Because there are countless numbers of sentient beings, the virtues increase at the same rate. So it is very fortunate to have a headache or a toothache! That is how they handle things.

This is the best way to handle it anyway. Instead of that, you think, “How can I get rid of my headache? It is not going away, even though I have taken echinacea and ginger compresses. I have tried aspirin and it is not getting better. Should I take antibiotics, should I see a doctor?” All this is a waste of time. Yes, you can have echinacea or aspirin, you can go to see a doctor, but thinking like that, you lose an opportunity to create positive karma by thinking about countless numbers of people. But you have to think about them with sincere thoughts - not artificially. Artificial thoughts will
have artificial results. You will develop an artificial pure land! You have to think sincerely from the bottom of your heart. You can really push that. There is no problem at all. I should not blow my own horn, but I always pray that my diabetes may substitute all sentient beings’ diabetes. I pray every morning that I may remain diabetic. Not that I want to - I have no choice! But I get benefits if I think that way. It is training of the mind; it is the mind that makes the difference.

Verse 36

I bow down to the body of him
In whom the sacred precious mind is born.
I seek refuge in that source of joy
Who brings to happiness even those who harm him.

Bodhisattvas are not only an object to bow down to, an object of respect and refuge, not only a source of joy. They bring happiness in two ways. In one way, they are compassionate and always want to help. In another way, if you cannot have a good connection with a Bodhisattva, then it is better to have a bad connection rather than not having any connection at all. These are the two reasons. Even a bad connection can bring positive results quicker and better than sitting in meditation for a hundred years. If even a bad connection can bring that much benefit, then there is no question that a good connection is wonderful! If you can become a Bodhisattva, you benefit not only yourself but everybody who connects to you. That is how they help and work for sentient beings. They become worthy of that. That is the quality of ultimate love and compassion. Thus I have concluded chapter one.

Don’t forget not to leave that information in the notebook which then remains at home or in the car. Then it won’t
work! But having it in the book or in the car or home is still better than not having anything either.

We have seen how great the qualities of bodhimind are. So do not forget! These are the inspirations that help the individual to get through, because the journey is hard and harsh. It is difficult, but you will definitely reach a wonderful spot. During the hard traveling period, inspiration is necessary. The first chapter is totally inspirational - every point. So don’t leave that in the car or at home! Don’t leave it in the bookshelf or in your bag! Keep it in your mind.

The next chapter, I believe, is about purification. Again, the Bodhisattvas’ way of purifying is different from anybody else. And yet, as much as we see the qualities of the Bodhisattvas, the Vajrayana practitioner has triple the qualities. There is another text which talks about the Vajrayana qualities.

Questions and Answers: Don’t be too serious, lighten up!

*Student:* You have said that Nagarjuna said that Bodhisattvas can make their non-virtues light. However, there are these cases, for example, Aryadeva, who lost his eyesight just because of pride, and Marpa, who prostrated to the mandala instead of his guru Naropa and because of this, tremendous repercussions occurred. So minor incidences here led to great repercussions.

*Rinpoche:* Minor incidents will definitely have big repercussions. But I do not really believe that Marpa made that mistake and I do not really believe that Aryadeva lost his eyeball. I do not really believe that Naropa had his balls smashed. Why do the biographies mention this? Why did these incidents take place? Aryadeva did not end up blind. Naropa’s balls did not end up smashed - they worked. Was Marpa deprived of anything? No, he became enlightened. These things are just manifestations or not even manifestations, but they were meant to demonstrate to people that these things can happen. I don’t think in reality this did happen.
These things do tell us, “Don’t be so serious, lighten up!” Really. Sometimes things look terrible, gloomy: everybody is yelling, there is no time to breathe. Yet everything is available; there is a lot of positivity. A lot of things are happening. So don’t be so gloomy. Lighten up, take things easy. Sometimes there are difficulties, but so what? Nobody is going to hit you! You should take the difficulties according to whatever comes. That is how you deal with life.

If you keep on thinking about and projecting difficulties and take it more seriously, your projection of the difficulty will be much bigger than the difficulty itself. You torture yourself long before the difficulty itself has really appeared. So why bother? Better go and see a movie. Have fun, but just don’t drink. Bob Dole says, “Just don’t do it.” But we say, “Just do it.” Really, the Bodhisattvas’ way of approaching life, I believe, is like that. I am not trying to show you how to be irresponsible. Be responsible, be sharp, be kind, be wonderful. But don’t worry too much. What is going to happen is going to happen. So what? The sky is not going to fall down on the ground, the ground is not going to burst, you are not going to be smashed in between two trees.

*Student:* When a person practices very seriously, does he have to expect greater obstacles?

*Rinpoche:* No, no! Again, this is projection. You think that more obstacles will come, because you are working hard. It may be possible. I cannot say no to that completely, however, it is not likely. Seriousness is one thing, but you have to be *liberally* serious. The ‘L’ word is a good word here! You have to have some open-mindedness, lightness, not such an extreme seriousness. If you become extremely serious, you get all these problems. You have to be serious, yes. Whatever you do, do it nicely and seriously, but then you must lighten up! Do not carry that sort of heaviness around for twenty-four hours a day, fourteen days a week, sixty days a month. You can’t do that. It is not going to help you at all. Instead of
Gelek Rimpoche

it, it is going to torture you. You must learn how to be light and playful.

You know Kyabje Song Rinpoche used to go always to toyshops to buy toys. He was an old gentleman with a white beard, like a wise Chinese guy. Even when he was in his seventies, when he had some time he used to go to toyshops to buy those little monkeys beating the drum, toy horses and snakes. When he came back to India, he would have suitcase after suitcase full of toys.

The previous Karmapa loved songbirds. Karmapa’s attendant told me in Delhi, “Other lamas, bring back gold and wealth when they come back from overseas, but when our lama, the Karmapa, comes back, he brings only birds with him!”

The Dalai Lama loves orchids. When he came to Michigan last year, he said, “This must be a nice place, you have orchids here.” Then I told him, “Your Holiness, these orchids were especially ordered for you from Hawaii!”
Appendix I: Tibetan Text

BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'I SPYOD PA NYID 'JUG PA BZHUGS SO
Title in Sanskrit and Tibetan: RGYA GAR SKAD DU, BO DHI SATVA TZRYA AA BA T'A RA, BOD SKAD DU, BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'I SPYOD PA LA 'JUG PA

Homage: SANGS RGYAS DANG BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA' THAMS CAD LA PHYAG 'TSAL LO

1. BDE GSHEGS CHOS KYI SKU MNGA' SRAS BCAS DANG,
   PHYAG 'OS KUN LA'ANG GUS PAR PHYAG 'TSAL TE,
   BDE GSHEGS SRAS KYI SDOM LA 'JUG PA NI,
   LUNG BZHIN MDOR BSDUS NAS NI BRJOD PAR BYA,

2. SNGON CHAD MA BYUNG BA YANG 'DIR BRJOD MED,
   SDEB SBYOR MKHAS PA'ANG BDAG LA YOD MIN TE,
   DE PHYIR GZHAN DON BSAM PA BDAG LA MED,
   RANG GI YID LA BSGOM PHYIR NGAS 'DI BRTZAMS
3. DGE BA BSGOM PHYIR BDAG GI DAD PA'I SHUGS,
'DI DAG GIS KYANG RE ZHIG 'PHEL 'GYUR LA,
BDAG DANG SKAL BA MNYAM PA GZHAN
GYIS KYANG,
CI STE 'DI DAG MTHONG NA DON YOD
'GYUR,

4. DAL'BYOR 'DI NI RNYED PAR SHIN TU
DKA',
SKYES BU'I DON SGRUB THOB PAR GYUR
PA LA,
GAL TE 'DI LA PHAN PA MA BSGRUBS NA,
PHYIS 'DI YANG DAG 'BYOR PAR GA LA
'GYUR,

5. JI LTAR MTSAN MO MUN NAG SPRIN RUM
NA,
GLOG 'GYU SKAD CIG BAR SNANG STON
PA LTAR,
DA BZHIN SANGS RGYAS MTHU YIS
BRGYA LAM NA,
'JIG RTEN BSOD NAMS BLO GROS THANG
'GA' 'BYUNG,

6. DE LTAS DGE BA NYAM CHUNG NYID LA
RTAG,
SDIG PA STOBS CHE SHIN TU MI BZAD PA,
DE NI RDZOGS PA'I BYANG CHUB SEMS
MIN PA,
DGE GZHAN GANG GIS ZIL GYIS GNON
PAR 'GYUR,

7. BSKAL PA DU MAR RAB DGONGS MDZAD
PA YI,
8. SRID PA'I SDUG BSNGAL BRGYA PHRAG GZHOM 'DOD CING, SEMS CAN MI BDE BSAL BAR 'DOD PA DANG, BDE MANG BRGYA PHRAG SPYOD PAR 'DOD PAS KYANG, BYANG CHUB SEMS NYID RTAG TU GTANG MI BYA,

9. BYANG CHUB SEMS SKYES GYUR NA SKAD CIG GIS, 'KHOR BA'I BTZON RAR BSDAMS PA'I NYAM THAG RNAMS, BDE GSHEGS RNAMS KYI SRAS ZHES BRJOD BYA ZHING, , JIG RTEN LHA MIR BCAS PAS PHYAG BYAR 'GYUR,

10. GSER 'GYUR RTZI YI RNAM PA MCHOG LTA BU, MI GTZANG LUS 'DI BLANGS NAS RGYAL BA'I SKU, RIN CHEN RING THANG MED PAR BSGYUR BAS NA, BYANG CHUB SEMS ZHES BYA BA RAB BRTAN ZUNG,

11. 'GRO BA'I DED DPON GCI G PU TSAD MED BLOS, LEGS PAR YONGS SU BRTAGS NA RIN CHE BAS,
GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

'GRO BA'I GNAS DANG BRAL BAR 'DOD PA RNAMS,
RIN CHEN BYANG CHUB SEMS LEGS BRTAN PAR ZUNG,

12. DGE BA GZHAN KUN CHU SHING BZHIN DU NI,
'BRAS BU BSKYED NAS ZAD PAR 'GYUR BA NYID,
BYANG CHUB SEMS KYI LJON SHING RTAG PAR YANG,
'BRAS BU 'BYIN PAS MI ZAD 'PHEL BAR 'GYUR,

13. SDIG PA SHIN TU MI BZAD BYAS NA YANG,
DPA' LA BRTEN NAS 'JIGS PA CHEN PO LTAR,
GANG LA BRTEN NAS YUD KYIS SGROL 'GYUR BA;
DE LA BAG CAN RNAMS KYIS CIS MI BRTEN,

14. DES NI DUS MTHAI ME BZHIN SDIG CHEN RNAMS,
SKAD CIG GCIG GIS NGES PAR SREG PAR BYED,
DE YI PHAN YON DPAG TU MED PA DAG,
BYAMS MGON BLO DANG LDAN PAS NOR BZANGS BSHAD,

15. BYANG CHUB SEMS DE MDOR BSDUS NA,
RNAM PA GNYIS SU SHES BYA STE,
BYANG CHUB PA'I SEMS DANG NI,
BYANG CHUB 'JUG PA NYID YIN NO,
16. 'GRO BAR 'DOD DANG 'GRO BA YI,
    BYE BRAG JI LTAR SHES PA LTAR,
    DE BZHIN MKHAS PAS 'DI GNYIS KYI,
    BYE BRAG RIM BZHIN SHES PAR BYA,

17. BYANG CHUB SMON PA'I SEMS LAS NI,
    'KHOR TSO 'BRAS BU CHE 'BYUNG YANG,
    JI LTAR 'JUG PA'I SEMS BZHIN DU,
    BSOD NAMS RGYUN CHAGS 'BYUNG BA MIN,

18. GANG NAS BZUNG STE SEMS CAN
    KHAMS,
    MTHA' YAS RAB TU DGROL BA'I PHYIR,
    MI LDOG PA YI SEMS KYIS SU,
    SEMS DE YANG DAG BLANGS GYUR PA,

19. DENG NAS BZUNG STE GNYID LOG GAM,
    BAG MED GYUR KYANG BSOD NAMS
    SHUGS,
    RGYUN MI 'CHAD PAR DU MA ZHIG
    NAM MKHA' MNYAM PAR RAB TU 'BYUNG,

20. 'DI NI 'THAD PA DANG BCAS PAR;
    LAG BZANG GIS NI ZHUS PA LAS,
    DMAN MOS SEMS CAN DON GYI PHYIR,
    DE BZHIN GSHEGS PA NYID KYIS
    GSUNGS,

21. SEMS CAN RNAMS KYI KLAD NAD TZAM,
    BSAL LO SNYAM DU BSAMS NA YANG,
    PHAN 'DOGS BSAM PA DANG LDAN DE,
    BSOD NAMS DPAG MED LDAN GYUR NA,

22. SEMS CAN RE RE'I MI BDE BA,
    DPAG TU MED PA BSAL 'DOD CING,
    RE RE'ANG YON TAN DPAG MED DU,
    BSGRUB PAR 'DOD PA SMOS CI DGOS,
23. PHA'AM YANG NA MA YANG RUNG, 
SU LA 'DI 'DRA'I PHAN SEMS YOD; 
LHA DANG DRANG SRONG RNAMS 
KYANG RUNG, 
TSANGS PA LA YANG 'DI YOD DAM,

24. SEMS CAN DE DAG NYID LA SNGON, 
RANG GI DON DU 'DI 'DRA'I SEMS, 
RMI LAM DU YANG MA RMIS NA, 
GZHAN GYI DON DU GA LA SKYE,

25. GZHAN DAG RANG GI DON DU YANG, 
MI 'BYUNG SEMS CAN DON SEMS GANG, 
SEMS KYI RIN CHEN KHYAD PAR 'DI, 
SNGA NA MED PA'I RMAD CIG 'KHRUNGS,

26. 'GRO BA KUN GYI DGA' BA'I RGYU, 
SEMS CAN SDUG BSNGAL RTZIR GYUR 
PA, 
RIN CHEN SEMS KYI BSOD NAMS GANG, 
DE LA JI LTAR GZHAL GYIS LANG,

27. PHAN PAR BSAMS PA TZAM GYIS KYANG, 
SANGS RGYAS MCHOD LAS KHYAD 
'PHAGS NA, 
SEMS CAN MA LUS THAMS CAD KYI, 
BDE DON BTZON PA SMOS CI DGOS,

28. SDUG BSNGAL 'DOR 'DOD SEMS YOD 
KYANG, 
SDUG BSNGAL NYID LA MNGON PAR 
RGYUG 
BDE BA 'DOD KYANG GTI MUG PAS, 
RANG GI BDE BA DGRA LTAR 'JOMS,
29. GANG ZHIG BDE BAS PHONGS PA DANG, SDUG BSNGAL MANG LDAN DE DAG LA, BDE BA KUN GYIS TSIM PA DANG, SDUG BSNGAL THAMS CAD GCOD BYED CING,

30. GTI MUG KYANG NI SEL BYED PA, DE DANG DGE MTSUN GA LA YOD, DE 'DRA'I BSHE'S KYANG GA LA YOD, BSOD NAMS DE 'DRA'ANG GA LA YOD,

31. PHAN BTAGS LAN LON GANG YIN PA, DE YANG RE ZHIG BSNGAGS 'OS NA, MA BCOL LEGS PAR BYED PA YI, BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA' SMOS CI DGOS,

32. 'GRO BA NYUNG ZAD NAR MA'I ZAS SBYOR BA, SKAD CIG ZAS TZAM SBYIN PAR BYED PA DANG, BRNYAS BCAS NYIN PHYED 'DRANGS PAR BYED PA YANG, DGE BA BYED PA YIN ZHES SKYE BOS BKUR,

33. SEMS CAN GRANGS MTHA' YAS LA DUS RING DU, BDE BAR GSHEGS KYI BDE BA BLA NA MED, YID LA BSAM PA MTHA' DAG RDZOGS BYED PA, RTAG RU SBYIN PA LTA ZHIG SMOS CI DGOS,

34. GANG ZHIG DE 'DRA'I RGYAL SRAS SBYIN BDAG LA, GAL TE NGAN SEMS SKYE'D BYED NA DE,
GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE

NGAN SEMS BSKYED PA'I GRANGS BZHIN BSKAL PAR NI,
DMYAL BAR GNAS PAR 'GYUR ZHES THUB PAS GSUNGS,

35. 'ON TE GANG ZHIG YID RAB DANG BYED NA,
DE YI 'BRAS BU DE BAS LHAG PAR 'PHEL,
RGYAL SRAS RNAMS LA DO GAL CHEN POS KYANG,
SDIG PA MI 'BYUNG DGE BA DANG GIS 'PHEL,

36. GANG LA SEMS KYI DAM PA RIN CHEN DE,
SKYES PA DE YI SKU LA PHYAG 'TSAL ZHING,
GANG LA GNOD PA BYAS KYANG BDE 'BREL BA,
BDE BA'I 'BYUNG GNAS DE LA SKYABS SU MCHI,

BYANG CHUB SEMS DPA'I SPYOD PA LA 'JUG PA LAS BYANG CHUB SEMS KYI PHAN YON BSHAD PA ZHES BYA BA STE LE'U DANG PO'O
Appendix II: A Simple Practice

*Using the breath to shift the mind to a neutral or positive state* The first thing you have to do is what Allen Ginsberg says in his song *Do the Meditation Rock*: “Sit on the ground, and if the ground’s not there, sit on a chair.” And as he says, “Keep your backbone straight and let the breath flow.” That does not quite sound like Allen, but anyway, you sit straight and let the breath flow normally. Don’t try to hyperventilate or something - that creates unnecessary trouble, unless you know what you are doing and you are guided by a proper person. Otherwise, simply let the breath flow slowly and steadily, carefully. Let the breath flow from the stomach. Don’t just take short breaths from the lungs, let it go all the way down into your belly.

Since we are focusing on bodhimind, each time you breathe out, all the undesirable energy within you, including negativities like attachment, hatred, jealousy and so forth, goes out of your system completely in the form of the breath from both your nostrils. When you breathe in, suck in the blessings of the enlightened beings and the positive karmic deeds in the form of air, really push right through the stomach, don’t let it stop at the throat or the chest or somewhere. Take the positive in and let the negativities go out.

You do this is to give yourself a little bit of peace and tranquility. Also, it gives your mind a little bit of rest, lets you settle down. That is what Allen means when he says, “Sit on the ground.” That means really mentally settling down. You
real relax and you unwind a little bit of the winding system
that we have. When you rush down highway 94 at 85 or 90
miles an hour to get here, you know it! So when you follow
the breath in and out, you are really unwinding yourself and
you get a little relaxed. At the same time, you are throwing all
your negativities out. You don’t have to think about to whom
or where you are throwing them! You don’t have to think that
you are making a mess in the universe! The American mind is
so funny. People think, “Oh, I am throwing all my mess into
the universe!” Don’t worry about it; the universe can take care
of itself, if you can take care of yourself.

Watch your mind What you do next is check and correct
your motivation. You know, I always tell you what the first
step in meditation is. The Buddhist books translated from
Sanskrit into Tibetan always start with ‘In Indian language...’.
That gives you the title of the book in Sanskrit. Je
Tsongkhapa asked somebody the question “What corre-
sponds to this in meditation? When you open the book, you
find at first, ‘In Indian language...’. So what do you do for that
in meditation?” That question was answered two hundred
years later by Panchen Lama Lozang Choekyi Gyeltsen. He
said, “The first thing to do is to watch your mind.”

There are various ways of watching the mind. One is to
watch whether you are thinking funny things or whether your
mind is settled down or not. But I don’t think that is what is
meant here, but rather watching and checking to see whether
your mind is influenced by negative thoughts or is it neutral
or positive. Negative thoughts will bring negative activities.
Therefore watching the mind really means to check whether
your mind is under the control of negativities, positivities or
in a neutral state. If it is in a neutral state, fine. If it is positive,
great! But if it is in a negative state, you have to change it, be-
cause negativity does not do any good for us. So, watch your
mind, and if it is negative, change it into a neutral state and
then bring the positivity in.
Watching the breath go in and out helps to change the negative mind into at least a neutral state. It is impossible to switch from a negative mind level directly to the positive mind level; you can’t make a 180 degree turn. Even if you are used to it, you can’t do it, no matter how much you try. That is why the neutral state is the bridge in between. Watching the breath is something which is by nature neither positive nor negative and will help to switch your mind round, provide you with a base, cool you down and unwind you a little bit, so that you can rewind the other way round if you want to. If you are completely twisted to the left, you cannot immediately twist to the right. You can’t do it. First you have to unwind.

**Taking refuge and invocation** We take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, followed by inviting or invoking the enlightened beings.

**The seven-limb prayer** In their presence, we offer the seven-limb prayer, starting with:

1) **bowing down**, expressing our admiration for their qualities of body, speech and mind. So we are not simply bowing down, but admiring their qualities, saying that we would like to have those same qualities.

Though it is not my subject today to tell you what all the qualities of enlightened body, speech and mind are, in brief, the quality of enlightened mind is knowing all things. The body quality is that there is oneness of body, speech and mind; there is no separation. We have a separation; we feel by body, send the message with speech and the mind acknowledges. So we have to do double work all the time. Although it is quickly done, there is double work. Enlightened beings don’t have to do that. Body and mind are the same. So the body sees, reads, talks.

I shared a number of times the story of the First Panchen Lama who was so old that he could not read and see anything. When he had to read in order to give an oral transmission, he would touch his hands on the lines in the text and read that way. It is not like here where you have books especially for the blind with letters that you can feel by hand. They did not have
those in Tibet. So by just touching the page, he could read every-
thing. That is an example for the sameness of body and mind
at the enlightened level. Normally we say “God is everywhere,”
or “Buddha is all-pervasive” and this is simply that body and
mind function on the same frequency. Whatever the mind
knows, it is right there. So in this case, whatever the mind
knows, the body is also there. That is the extraordinary quality
of the enlightened beings. We admire such qualities and express
that we would like those qualities. That is why we bow down.

2) Then we make offerings. I don’t think that the enlightened
beings are sitting there waiting for our offerings, nor do they
need them. But doing this is an opportunity for us to accumu-
late merit, to get some gains. One of the best ways of gaining
merit is the practice of generosity. Among all the kinds of gen-
erosity, giving to the enlightened beings is considered to be the
most important one. It is more effective than any other offer-
ing. What you can really give is really limited and we do not
want limited gain. In order to create unlimited gains, we do of-
ferings that are both actually arranged and mentally created. You may
only have a glass of water, a couple of flowers or candle lights,
or you may have some electric light. But in order to get unlim-
ited gains, we mentally create tremendous amounts of offer-
ings. You think that you are giving everything. In the Six-Session
Yoga, it says,

I give my and others’ virtues of body, speech and mind
which we have accumulated from the limitless beginning. Ev-
ry good thing that has ever existed in the universe I pick up
with my mind and I offer it to you, the supreme field of merit.

In that way, even though materially you may only give
very little, because of mental training you give limitless, coun-
tless things. You accumulate the most merit that way. You have
to remember that actual giving and generating the thought of
giving are very much related. Although they are separate things,
they are closely related and both accumulate positive karma.

There is a disadvantage in there, however. That goes for
the Asian cultures, like the Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese, or
even the Indian culture. In Asia in general, we emphasize very
much this aspect of giving to the supreme field of merit as a superior way to accumulate merit. Because of that, the monasteries, temples, saddhus, lamas and monks get a lot of gifts. The needy people, the homeless, etc., are neglected. Giving to them is not so much emphasized. We should not repeat that here in the West where there is a great tradition of giving tremendously wherever it is needed. That should not be neglected. You know, I have the experience of both cultures and sometimes I have the opportunity to see the faults in each culture. So when you create American Buddhism, that problem should not be repeated.

3) Next is purification. This is extremely important. We carry all kinds of negative karmas all the time. We also create countless negative karmas constantly. There is no question, even if we think, “I don’t have such a thing called negativity, I did not kill anybody, I did not cheat anybody, I did not lie to anyone. So what do I have?” We think like that a lot. But positive and negative karma is not only accumulated by doing something physically. Mentally we do tremendous things. Our mind is really not very well behaved.

Traditionally, the teachers would say that our mind is like a wild monkey in the temple. If you let the wild monkeys loose in the temple, what will they do? They will jump all over the different images, in between the offerings. They may drink the offering water, eat the fruits, knock down the butter lamps and do all sorts of things. Likewise, our mind is also very fickle, does not stay. So we constantly create negativities. Even when we drive we do. You may think that driving is not anything negative, however, while sitting in the car you drive over insects. There is rain and heat and so there are insects. You drive over them and kill a number of them. These things happen constantly. That is in our nature.

It is extremely great that some people remain vegetarians. It is wonderful. However, there are things you can argue there. Some time ago, the Tricycle Magazine people asked me what I thought about vegetarianism. I said that it was wonderful. Then they said, “Eating meat is a negative action.” I said that eating
meat is not negative. One does contribute to the killing, but by nature eating meat itself is not negative. Then I said to them, “Vegetables do not grow in the pure land either.” So that was the argument. Even if you want vegetables, you have to make sure they grow. All sorts of actions are involved in there.

So do not think that you have no negativities! Then you will ask, “What can I do about all this negative karma?” You can purify. We do create negativities all the time, but that does not mean that we are doomed. Definitely not! Whatever negative karma we have created can be purified. Kyabje Ling Rinpoche, the Senior Tutor of the Dalai Lama, used to say,

Negativities have their own good quality. That is they can be purified. That is their good quality.

The most important reason why negative karma can be purified is that it is impermanent. Impermanence is the main reason why purification can take place. Positive karma, negative karma will change. We all change all the time. We are impermanent. If you go beyond that, you can consider emptiness. Things are empty. Ka la tong pa nyi rung va de la tam che rung wa gyur; if things are empty, there is every room to play. There is room for miracles, for purification. There is room for accumulating negative karma and room for purifying it. Everything is there. The reason why we are responsible for our own deeds is because of emptiness and because of impermanence. If I talk too much about that here, I may not make sense.

When we don’t understand emptiness clearly, we can at least focus on impermanence and that helps. Everything is impermanent. If things were permanent we could do nothing, everything would be static. Once you had done something wrong, it would be done forever. Once you were born you would be born forever, once you had died you would be dead forever. That is not how it works. We know. When we are born, we are small, and then we get bigger and bigger and better, and then we get bald-headed and wear glasses, all sorts of wrinkles come and finally we die and our body disappears. All
of that happens because of impermanence. That is the nature of life. That is why there is room for all this. If it were permanent, there would be no room for any changes at all. As we can see, our external body is impermanent in nature. We get the opportunity to get sick and also the opportunity to die. We also have the opportunity to create negativity and have the opportunity to purify negativity. All that is because it is in the nature of impermanence, and emptiness. There is room for everything. Miracles also happen.

When you want to purify something, you don’t have to confess and shout, “I did this, I did that!” You simply regret what you did. That is very important. If you don’t regret what you have done, there is no reason why you should purify. When you realize that you have done something wrong, instead of sitting there thinking, “What can I do?” you purify it. If you have killed some beings, you save a life. If you have stolen something, then give, be generous. Or you may have done something wrong in your morality, that is breaking your vows or commitments. Keeping vows and commitments is the real definition of morality. Whether Congress passes a bill or not, we are not talking about that kind of morality. We are talking about vows and commitments, whether it is the refuge vow or marriage vow - any commitment you have taken. If you break that, it is breaking a vow. There are the Vajrayana vows, Bodhisattva vows, refuge vows or a simple, solemn commitment between two individuals or whatever. If you have broken a vow, you have broken a vow. That is immorality. That is the bottom line. So try to be pure. Then generate bodhmind. That is on the point here because we are supposed to talk about the Bodhisattvacaryavatara. Generating bodhmind is one of the best ways to purify all negativities. We have read in verse 13 where it says,

\[
\text{By entrusting myself to this Awakening Mind I shall be swiftly Liberated, even if I have committed extremely unbearable wrongs. Then verse 14 says,}
\]
Just like the fire at the end of an age, it instantly consumes all great wrongdoing.

So bodhimind is one of the best ways to purify negativities. There are two great methods: meditating on emptiness and meditating on bodhimind. These are the most important and goes beyond saying hundreds and thousands of Vajrasattva mantras. Many people say that when you have committed some negativities, “Just say some Vajrasattva mantras.” People do have that habit, particularly Tibetans. But generating bodhimind is an extremely powerful antidote action for all the negativities that we have committed.

The four powers of purification What you really need is the four powers. The power of the base is taking refuge and generating the bodhimind. Then the power of regret, the power of the antidote action and the power of promise not to repeat the action. These are the four powers. All negativities, whatever you do, can be purified by the application of the four powers.

This works for the Tibetans, but does not make much sense for Western people at first. We used to say, “Who told us that there are negativities? Who told us that there are non-virtues? Who told us that non-virtues bring negative results?” The answer is that Buddha told us all that. He told us that through negativities we take rebirth in lower realms. Buddha also said that negativities can be purified. That is what we used to say among ourselves in Tibet. Buddha’s words were accepted beyond question. In that sort of culture we were born. This does not make sense to Western people. Yes, Buddha might have said that, but so what? Right? What is the scientific proof you have for that? So you cannot say that here. Among the Tibetans we used to say that. I wanted to share that with you, so that you see that there are big differences between these two cultures. For us Tibetans it is a powerful enough reason to say that Buddha said that there are negativities and that they can be purified. I don’t know whether there are scientific reasons that
prove that negativities can be purified. I am not aware of it. Maybe some scientist will come out with that.

4) The next is **rejoicing**. This is a very important trick in the spiritual practice. That is why these seven-limbs have been selected to make it easy. The spiritual trick is that rejoicing has tremendous gains and no risks. It is a risk-free investment and it also overpowers jealousy.

Normally we get a tremendous amount of jealousy towards people who are equal to us. We are good at generating compassion when we see people that are suffering physically, mentally, emotionally, or environmentally. We can definitely generate compassion for them. But it is not so easy with people who are equal to us, whether they have the same level of education, job, etc. Towards our peers we always have jealousy. When somebody next door does some good work we say, “She is doing good work, sure, but she also does this and that.” That is simply our jealousy. We say, “So and so has good qualities, no doubt. But there is an agenda behind that.” We always talk that way because of jealousy.

What does that do to us? It makes us losers. It gives nothing to us. There is no benefit in jealousy at all. On the contrary - if we rejoice in whatever they do, we get benefits - according to the Buddha. If we rejoice in the qualities of somebody who is more highly developed than ourselves, we at least get half of their positive karma - just by rejoicing in the activities they are doing! If it is your peer, you get the equal amount. If it is somebody lower than you, you get double the amount. You make other people work hard, rejoice and get double the profit. That is why I call it a good spiritual trick!

Mind is such an important thing. You can really play with it a lot. If only physical actions counted, we would be very limited. But the mental capacity is unlimited; therefore we can create unlimited positive and negative karma. Once you know how the spiritual way functions - this is what we call karma or natural law - there are a lot of loopholes and if you know how to plug them, you can really get a very good profit out of those. Enlightened beings selected all these easy ways of doing it.
They brought out seven of them which we can use in our daily, weekly or occasional practice, or monthly practice. You can take this opportunity and do these seven steps or seven limbs. It is said that the Buddhas thought for eons and as conclusion came up with these seven things which people can do easily. So whenever people ask, “I need some direction. I would like to know what to do when I am alone. I would like something to do on a daily basis,” this seven-limb practice is what you can do daily.

This one little page that we use as preliminary practice before the Bodhisattvacharyavatara teachings is what you can do daily in your home. What I am saying to you gives you material to think about in relation to each one of those sentences. You should say the words written on this page and think about what we have been talking about here. That is your practice. Meditation truly speaking is nothing but thinking and training the mind in concentration. Thinking about and concentrating on a subject is basically meditation.

There are thus two basic types of meditation. One is called concentrated meditation, technically known as shamatha. The other is analytical meditation, also called vipassana, insight meditation, and so forth. It is actually analyzing the karma that we create, its consequences, its loopholes, how to go around them, how to take advantage of them, actually how to cheat karma and how to cheat death. These are the main meditations. That is really what meditation is; that is what really training of the mind is. Mind is such a thing that you can turn it around into a good way, bad way, neutral way - anywhere. You have all these Silva mind trainings, hypnosis, and so forth, and all of those have room to work, because mind is powerful, flexible and easy to use. It has tremendous value and power both spiritually and materially, for both positive and negative. Wherever you use it, it is a very powerful vehicle which you can drive anywhere. That is the real mind training. To make it spiritual, it works through karma, through love and compassion, through emptiness, the nature of reality. It is challenging the negativity within ourselves. It is cutting down the negativity, cutting down
ignorance, building wisdom. This is basically how you train your mind.

This is your journey on the spiritual path. That is why Tibetan Buddhism emphasizes so much following the footsteps of Buddha and his disciples. If you follow these footsteps, you will reach where they have reached. It is really scientific. It does not matter who does it and where they do it. If you follow the same steps, you get the same results. Buddhism is nothing but Buddha’s life experience. It is the experience of negative and positive things in karma, in life and how he had handled these and what results he got. The simple statement of these processes is actually Buddhism.

It is also a living tradition. That means that people do practice this and it makes a difference to their lives. You can see it. Look at the person to your right, left and in front of you. They are all making a difference in their lives. So you also are bound to make a difference in your life. That is why it is a living tradition. While it is still alive, it has effects. So this is how the seven-limb practice makes a difference to people’s lives.

5) The next is the) **request to remain**. That is not so important to every individual. But those few people who expect to become a Buddha in their life times, for them it becomes important. The request for the teachings to remain and to be given on time is definitely important for those people. You definitely need on time teachings. Although we normally give all the teachings at the same time, but at the time just before you become a Buddha that last minute springboard push is needed.

6) That is why the **request to give teachings** becomes important.

7) The last one, **dedication**, is again important for everybody. It is another trick or special technique in how to deal with karma. The rule is that karma is definite. That means once you have created karma for something, it has to give you the result, and a result that is similar to the cause. The karmic imprint remains until the conditions are right, then it has to revive and you get the result. If you dedicate a karmic action so that all of
us may become enlightened or for something else big and im-
portant, then until that result has come, the karma will not be
destroyed. Karma can be destroyed during the time it is not
active; that goes for both positive and negative karmas. Positive
karma can be destroyed by anger, like a forest fire consumes
the wild woods; in the same way, negative karma can be de-
stroyed by purification.

We talked about that in relation to verse 14 of the Bodhi-
sattvacharyavatara. In order to protect your positive karma, you
dedicate it. If you dedicate it along with the karma that the great
beings have dedicated, then whatever you do, your positive
karma will remain as long as their positive karma remains be-
cause you mix them together.

The Tibetans have a very interesting story about this in the
teaching tradition. It might not make much sense in the West
unless I tell you about tsampa and black pea flour. In Tibet,
poor people didn’t get to eat tsampa, roasted barley flour which
is the Tibetan staple food. Poor people couldn’t afford tsampa
so they made flour out of black peas without removing the
dark skins. This pea flour is full of black specks, like when you
grind black pepper; it is yellow with a lot of black specks. If you
were a little wealthier, you could eat barley powder which does
not have any spots.

The story goes that there were two travelers who were
traveling together for a few days. One was a little wealthier and
had some barley powder that he had to carry. The other one
was a poor guy who just had a little bit of this pea powder that
was almost all used up. The poor guy looked at the other trav-
eler and saw that he had a lot to carry. In old Tibet, there were
no motels, hotels or restaurants. So if you had to go some-
where and it took seven days, you had to carry food for seven
days on your back or, if you had a horse or yak, you would load
it on that. The poor traveler calculated that his pea powder
would not last for the rest of the journey. He started thinking
about how he could manage and got the idea to mix his food
with the rich guy’s, so that as long as the rich guy had food, he
would have some, too.
So he said to the rich guy, “Hey, friend. We are going to the same place. We stop in the same camps and cook our own food. You cook yours and I cook mine. You have to carry a huge load and I also carry my own. Why don’t we mix our food together and cook together, so that we don’t have to do two jobs? I will also carry it all for you.” The richer guy said, “All right, that is a very good idea.” So they mixed the food together, tsampa and pea flour all mixed up together in one bag.

They continued their journey and kept on eating equal amounts of that mixture. To start with, the poor guy had had very little, while the wealthy guy had had a lot. While there was plenty, they did not think about it, but once the reserves began to shrink, the wealthy one started thinking, “The other guy had very little, but I had a lot. We mixed them together and since then we have been eating equal amounts. His portion must be finished by now. I better tell him, because otherwise I may not have enough for myself.” So he asked the poor guy, “Don’t you think your portion might have been finished by now?” The poor guy said, “Maybe so, I only had a little. But we can look and check.”

When they opened the bag, there were black specks everywhere. The poor guy said, “Oh mine is not finished yet. There are black specks here and there are black specks there.” So the pea flour with its black specks will not be finished until all the tsampa is gone, right? The teaching tradition gave us this example; they told these stories, so that we would remember the point. Actually, in a sutra itself it says,

If you put a drop of water in the ocean, no one can say that your drop is finished until the ocean is finished.

That was Buddha’s statement. Then to make it interesting and easy to remember, they made it into this traveler’s story. That is dedication and why we dedicate. The best recommended dedication, then, is this:

Whatever the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the great beings, have dedicated, I also dedicate
Whatever virtues I have along with their virtues, to become enlightened for all beings.’

That does not exclude yourself. So you don’t have to worry about what is in it for you! You also get enlightened!

That basically covers the seven limbs, which we do every time before the teaching. If I did not explain it, you would probably wonder what it is talking about. You might think it is just a prayer in seven lines, but if you think that way, it does not serve the purpose. If you know what you are doing, it makes a difference to your life. You can do this practice in your own home, in your own room. Whatever you want to do, it is not compulsory. If you like to do it, you can.

**How practice instructions are given** People always tell me, “I heard a beautiful lecture, but I did not get any instructions on what to do!” So here you are, these are your instructions. Beyond that, we don’t tell you what to do, because you are all grown-up intelligent, educated people. You should know what you are doing. It is up to you. No one can force anything on anybody anyway. Our job, however, is to present this to you, so you can think in this way if you want to.

We should never say, “You *should* do this, you *should* do that” or “You *cannot* do this or that.” Buddha never said, “You should do this and that.” He said, “I suggest you could do this and that.” He showed that if you do a certain thing, it will create such and such a problem, and so forth. Buddhism is actually just pointing the finger at problems and their causes. So if you introduce the problem and what caused it, this automatically tells you the suggestions to get rid of the problem. Buddha never said, “This is the rule and you have to follow it. If you don’t follow this you will be excommunicated!” This is unless you are a monk or nun. They are expected to follow certain rules and if they break them, they will be out. But leaving that aside, Buddha presented everything as suggestions by showing the problem and the causes and consequences.
So in our Tuesday night and Thursday night classes we give you these presentations. We also give you examples of what practices you can say talk about what to think as you say them. So if you put two and two together, you will find your direction. We really want you to find your direction rather than have us telling you.

We don’t want it to be like in that Tibetan story about somebody learning the alphabet. In Tibetan, the first letter of the alphabet is Kha, not A.

So, the teacher says, “First you say Kha,” and the student repeats, “First you say Kha.” Then the teacher says, “Don’t say that, just say Kha.” The student repeats, “Don’t say that, just say Kha.” Then the teacher says, “Damn you, say Kha!” The student repeats, “Damn you, say Kha!” So we don’t want to do that! You have to figure out a little bit for yourself.
Appendix III:
Rilbur Rinpoche on the benefits of learning a spiritual path

Introduction by Kyabje Gelek Rinpoche  [Gelek Rinpoche also translated the following talk] Tonight we have a very special guest, Rilbur Rinpoche, who has been here for almost a month and has given teachings on the weekends for senior students. Rinpoche will be leaving tomorrow. I asked him to join us tonight and so we are very happy to have him here.

Many of you know Rilbur Rinpoche, many don't. He is one of the very senior lamas and he lives in Dharamsala in India with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. He has had seventy-four years of training in both the spiritual and temporal systems of Tibet, including communist Chinese prisons; he is also of high rank. He is a very close friend of my family, as well as being my father's disciple. That is why he chose to come here first before beginning his tour in the United States.

He is visiting the United States, giving teachings and has been teaching here for the last two weekends. Tomorrow, Rinpoche will go to Washington DC and then will go to California to give a variety of teachings, including Heruka initiations and teachings, Vajrayogini initiations and teachings, also Lama Chöpa.

Dharma talk by Kyabje Rilbur Rinpoche  I have been asked to speak and so I have to say something. Especially, if there is something which brings joy temporarily and blissful pleasure permanently, I should definitely speak about that. But this
invitation to talk came all of a sudden, so I really don’t re-
member much. However, I have observed Gelek Rinpoche
talking and you people listening and I would like to make
some comments as well as I can. What I observe is that you
people are very fortunate, because you have a nice teacher
here. He is also a great Mahayana master who is sharing the
essence of the Mahayana teaching which is called the Bodhi-
sattvacharyavatara. This is very fortunate and if you read the
text itself it says there that unless you have accumulated a
tremendous amount of virtuous merit, you will not have such
an opportunity. You have a qualified teacher giving you the
essence of the Mahayana teaching, I rejoice in that.

Today I would like to talk about the benefits of learning
a spiritual path. I would like to quote the Buddha who said
that learning is the light to clear the darkness of ignorance.
Learning is the best wealth. It cannot be stolen by thieves or
anybody else. It is the best friend who will never let you
down, no matter how low you may be and how great the dif-
ficulties you may be in. It is also the best weapon to protect
you and destroy your enemy, ignorance. It is also the friend
who shares with you the best m
ethod.

**Spiritual knowledge is the best wealth** It is very im-
portant to learn and gain knowledge, because the spiritual
path is such that one cannot really properly follow it unless
you really know what you are doing. So the first step is defi-
nitely learning. I have met a number of people around the
world who have lost various things; many of them told me
that their bags had been stolen, that they had forgotten this
thing and that thing was gone, *etc.* But the wealth of learning
is such that you will never forget it on the bus and leave
without it. Somebody that takes your bag can never take your
knowledge. So this is something you will never lose, unless
you forget! It travels around with you, wherever you go. Spirit-
ual knowledge is really the best wealth you can accumulate.

It is the best wealth. Many times at airports, I have seen
people that cannot lift their bags because they are too heavy,
they cannot carry them but only drag and push them around. People have to hide some other possessions from customs officials and law enforcement people; they are afraid to show them. With spiritual wealth, you don’t have to do that. You don’t have to drag it around; you don’t have to hide it from the customs officers or the law enforcement. You don’t have to lift it up, but can take it with you wherever you go. You can move around with both hands free and that wealth will move with you.

_No one can take it away from you_  I also had some personal experience. When I was in Tibet, the communist Chinese arrested me, put me in jail and went through everything I had in my pockets. They looked through everything. I had a watch and they took that; I did not get it back. They took my shoes and even my socks and my belt and still kept on searching after that. If there was anything I wanted to have in jail, I had to hide it. But they could not take from me the knowledge of what I had learned of the spiritual path; they could not strip it off me, it went with me. Therefore material wealth is unreliable. It does not necessarily go with you, even in this lifetime.

The wealth of knowledge that I had learned stayed with me and traveled with me. As long as I have my body and mind together, that knowledge will be with me. That knowledge has become my best friend. It gave me all sorts of methods how to exist in prison. It showed me how to act, how to think, particularly how to endure the sufferings of torture. It became a really good friend when I had to go through hardship. That knowledge is what I have received from a great many masters, like for example the _lam rim_ and the training of the mind. That has become a really handy, useful, reliable friend who will not let me down and will not cheat me.

In prison, although I went through a lot of physical difficulties, I was able to keep my mind at peace and in harmony, and this helped tremendously. I saw that all the treatment
and the torture in jail was the reality, the ugly face of samsara, the cycle of life that goes round. It is the result of the negativities that we have indulged in, and it is also a great opportunity to purify the heavy negativities we have accumulated. That not only helped me myself, but I could share it with other people and that helped them, too. Some other people could not think properly, so they started crying and screaming in prison. So I talked to them and said, “Don’t cry, don’t feel bad, use this as a great opportunity, etc.” So it became very helpful. In this way, spiritual knowledge is your best friend. It gives you a lot of solutions. Even though there may be physical difficulties and even torture, you can still maintain your mind at peace.

There were about two hundred people with me in prison. If you looked very carefully, quite a number of them had the experience of learning spiritually, particularly the lam rim and training of the mind. All of them had physical difficulties, but they were still making jokes and having fun. They were very relaxed and totally different from those who neither had that learning or never thought about it or meditated on it.

You could see the difference, like black and white. You could see it absolutely clearly with each and every individual. I would like to give one example. If I don’t give any names, it would not be right. There was a guy who was one of the chief judges in Lhasa, called Drang Döpa Mikyö Dorje. He happened to be a judge, but not a very nice person. He spent most of his time drinking and gambling. When he was arrested, he was so nervous, he could not sit down, he was literally shaking, crying and after a while, no tears were coming any more, but he was still sobbing and hoping, “Do you think they will let me go free?” He knew that all others with him were prisoners and yet he was still asking, “Do you think they will let me out?” So he was crying, could not sleep at night and had all these difficulties. I am sure that he had asked other Rinpoches the question before, but he asked me too, so I tried to explain to him the best way I could. He would listen
and became quiet for a little while, and then he became hysterical again and I tried to calm him down again. At the end of all that, when they were all released, he hold me, “The help you gave me in prison was really great. Otherwise, by now I would have gone totally crazy. I managed to go through with all this, because you people comforted me and shared with me. This was very helpful.”

We need a complete unmistaken path  Now when you decide what to learn, you need to have a complete spiritual path which will not let you down. Just because something claims to be a spiritual path does not guarantee you any ultimate development or that you will not be let down. We are all educated human beings. As educated human beings, we should behave better than dogs. If you throw a piece of liver to a dog, the dog will eat it immediately, without even examining it. As educated human beings, we should not behave like animals; we should examine and look for a perfect path. We should make sure that the path is unmistaken. A perfect, unmistaken path will not let you down.

It is very important to observe the dharma or teaching and check very carefully whether it is useful to you and helpful to you, whether it is good for you. You should observe that for yourself, rather than accepting what just anybody presents as a spiritual path. In other words, you should not follow blindly. Not only should you observe the teaching, but also the individual teacher. Find out whether he or she is good for you or not and observe very carefully. The great Kadampa master Geshe Potowa said,

Before you take a teaching you have to observe the teacher very carefully. Once you have taken teachings, you have to give the best respect and follow whatever that person’s teachings are. You should not think otherwise, because then it would become a big problem for you.
Another great master said,

The blessings of the great lamas or gurus or Buddhas do not depend on the teachers themselves, but on the individuals and how they treat their masters. They will receive the blessings accordingly.

In the spiritual path, it is extremely important to observe and examine the path, the teacher, and the teaching and finally follow it with the proper devotion.

Right now you people are on the perfect path. As I said earlier, a great Mahayana master is giving a great Mahayana teaching. So it is all perfect for you. What you really should do when you come here once a week is gather together and listen. That is wonderful. But every night when you go home, you should think, “What did he say last Tuesday?” Try to analyze and think about it. When you try to think, many of these things will be useful and helpful for your mind. Try to remember that every day. As the great Tsongkhapa has said,

The purpose of the Dharma is to have it working in practice with you, in your life.

So whatever you learned, try to think about it and apply it as much as possible. Think about it at least daily. That way it becomes more effective. It is great now, but it will become even better and greater.

The author of this text you are studying is called Shan-tideva, which means something like ‘Great God of Peace’. That is the literal translation. He was undoubtedlly a great learned master. However, sometimes people would call him ‘The one who only knows three things’. They would call him ‘Three timer’, they called that. And what did he know? How to eat, how to sleep and how to shit! Did Rinpoche already tell the story? Oh, he did! So if you already know it, I won’t go into it, there is no use adding up. That would not have any purpose. But we have a saying in Tibetan,
If there is something important, you have to make sure it is remembered. And when it is great Dharma, you have to do it a hundred times more.

But I am not going to repeat it any more today. But since Shantideva composed this text himself, it is totally based on his personal experience, so it is very helpful to your mind. Every time when you listen here, go back home and think about it. It will make a big difference to your life.

You people should realize that you have a great advantage. Not only do you have a teacher who is a Mahayana teacher, a qualified great master living here, but also he is also talking to you on a normal life basis, person to person all the time. It is very fortunate and convenient, too. This is very beneficial. There are other lamas and some are quite open, others are not, however they don’t speak English and you need a translator. Even if they do speak English, they don’t speak it very well and you half think that he said it this way and half you think that he must have meant it that way. Then you have to re-translate and re-translate. Many other centers have a lot of these difficulties. You don’t have that, so you are very fortunate. You should definitely pray that Rinpoche may live long. Actually, if you do that, one of the best ways to prolong your own life is to pray for the longevity of the teacher. So do that also.

I mentioned something last weekend, but because some of you were not there I would like to repeat it again here. Rinpoche is always thinking how he could best contribute to the happiness of the people who come here every week, how he could make them a little kinder, gentler, how he contribute to reducing their anger, their attachment, their fear. I noticed that he thinks all the time about that. He always thinks how he could contribute to each and every individual. That is where you are very fortunate. [Gelek Rinpoche: which is not true!] I spent one month here and I noticed how he was always thinking how best he could bring peace to these peoples’ minds, how best he could help them to become
better persons. He may say that it is true or not, but we can see it, it is reality.

Rinpoche is also looking for a bigger center, better accommodation for you. He is always worrying about it, thinking and talking about it. I said the other day and it is very important: when Buddha was alive he had a lot of disciples and they were all moving around, wherever Buddha went. They followed him and there was no strong center or sanctuary there. Then Buddha told one of his benefactors, “Did you build any sanctuary?” and the person said, “No.” Then Buddha said, “You should build sanctuaries. Wherever they are sanctuaries, Buddhism will develop and will be helpful to all of them.” That is why they did build a sanctuary and Buddha did spend almost twenty-five summer retreats in there. That was an extremely helpful source of the Buddhist teachings which are available even now. Likewise here, Rinpoche is also thinking about having a bigger and better center. In short, the development of Buddhism and the benefit of many beings and American Buddhism and the help for American people will be based on that. I feel that you people should put all your efforts into that. Everybody should put their efforts together and try to help. That is important, not only for you as such, but for the future generations and for everybody.

In order to have a good center, you need to have money and I noticed Rinpoche wondering how to pay the bills. He is talking about it all the time. So I don’t think one individual can pay that much, but everybody should put their thoughts together and find some ideas and try to make some money too.

Tomorrow I am going to California, but for now I really want to tell you, what you need to do is to find some peace of mind, try your best in this. Think about it. When it is helpful to you, follow it. If it is not, throw it away! In Buddhism, especially in Tibetan Buddhism, they don’t tell you, “Go and meditate,” “Go and do this and that,” “Move here, move there.” They simply give you teachings. Then you simply lis-
ten, think about it, observe and use it if it is helpful. And if you don’t need to do it or want to do it, nobody can force you. But if it is helpful, you have to do it yourself. Tibetan Buddhism goes in a very relaxed manner. Buddha himself has said,

Whether you are a disciple, observer, or whatever you may be, check this message of mine. If you find it is worthwhile, pure gold, take it. If not, throw it away in the garbage.

So it is very relaxed. Take advantage of that. If you observe it yourself and find it useful, practice and follow it. If you don’t, no matter who says it, even Buddha, throw it away. Don’t accept something just because Buddha said so. I don’t have much to say, but whatever I said, remember that once an old monk came here and told you that. Thank you.

Appendix IV: About Wesak Day

By the way, the next full moon is the Wesak day, or in Tibetan Saga Dawa, according to the Tibetan calendar. That is the day Buddha was born, obtained enlightenment, and also died - altogether. I mean it clearly shows that the record is not straight, but that is how it goes. But what happens is that whatever positive work you do on that day is considered to be multiplied by a hundred thousand times! So if you don’t eat meat that day, it equals not eating meat for a hundred thousand days. Thinking that eating meat contributes to animals being killed, if with that mind you stop eating meat that day, it will definitely be of great help. With that mind, if you take a vow of silence and cut down the unnecessary chattering and gossiping, it will be great. You can do that, even if you don’t take all the eight precepts. Those of you who have taken the eight precepts before, you can take them by yourself in the presence of the Buddha. For those who have not taken them, I will request Chödrak Rinpoche to give them to you. You have to take them in the pre-dawn period. When you take these precepts for a day, you promise to only eat
one meal that day. You also cannot drink juice or milk in the afternoon. If you go on drinking carrot juice, tomato juice, or anything like that, it is not right. You can drink light tea. Milk is not okay, whether it is soy milk or rice dream or half and half. If you want to drink coffee, it should be the caffeine-free variety. And do something positive. People normally will go and save lives. If you see somebody about to kill a lobster or fish, buy it and save it. It is easy to go to a Chinese restaurant and get the lobsters and don’t cook them. If you can commit to talk less and get less angry, and so forth, for the whole week, it would be good. But if you have to, you can’t help it.
GLOSSARY

ABSOLUTE TRUTH see TWO TRUTHS

ACTION FORM see BODHIMIND

ABIDHARMA (chos.mngon.pa) The general name for the buddhist teachings presented in a scientific manner, as a fully elaborated transcendental psychology. As one of the branches of the canon (tripitaka or three baskets) it corresponds to the discipline of wisdom, whereas the sutras correspond to meditation and the vinaya to morality.

ANANDA A major disciple of the Buddha; his personal attendant. The other two famous disciples are Shariputra and Maudgalyayana.

ANALYTICAL MEDITATION (dbyad sgom) using reasoning to explore a meditation topic, engaging oneself in it mentally and emotionally, until one reaches either a conclusion (as in the meditation on death) or a positive mental state (as in meditations on love and compassion); one then concentrates on what one has reached.

ANGULIMALA A spiritual seeker who, following the advice of an unreliable teacher, killed 999 people in one week. Yet when Shakyamuni Buddha taught him the true path, he purified himself and became an arhat.
ARHAT (dra.bcom.pa) 'Enemy destroyer' or 'foe destroyer'. One who has overcome the delusions or negative emotions and attained liberation from cyclic existence; the spiritual ideal of Hinayana Buddhism.

ARYA ('phags.pa) Title meaning 'noble one'. One who has attained the third of the five paths, the path of insight (mthong lam)

ASANGA (tbogs-med) (fifth century) Extender of the chittamatra or 'mind-only' school of tenets. The lineage of vast or widespread activities (method) was transmitted from Maitreya Buddha to Asanga.

AVALOKITESHVARA or CHENREZIG Embodiment of the love and compassion of the Buddhas; a yidam in the family of Amitabha Buddha. Of great importance in Tibet as special protector of the religious life of the country. The Dalai Lama is considered to be a incarnation of Avalokiteshvara. In China he is known in female form as Kwanyin, protectress of women, children and animals.

BHAVA VIVEKA (500-570 CE) A student of Nagarjuna. One of the founders of the Madyamika Svatatrika school.

BHUMI (sa) Ground. The ten bhumis or the ten grounds or the ten bodhisattva stages are the realizations of superior or ary bodhisattvas: very joyful, stainless, luminous, radiant, difficult to overcome, approaching, gone afar, immovable, good intelligence, cloud of dharma. They are realizations on the Mahayana paths of seeing and meditation. See: Paths

BLESSING (Tib. jin lab) The transformation of our mind from a negative state to a positive state, from an unhappy state to a happy state, or from a state of weakness to a state of strength through the inspiration of holy beings such as our spiritual guide, buddhas, and bodhisattvas.

BLISS an extremely pleasurable, comfortable and joyous feeling; in highest yoga tantra the very subtle clear light mind experiencing great bliss is focused on emptiness.
BODHIMIND (byang.chub.sems.; Skt. bodhicitta) The altruistic motivation of a bodhisattva: a mind that is directed towards the attainment of buddhahood, for the sake of all living beings; the fully open and dedicated heart. Once one has generated bodhimind, one enters the first bodhisattva path, the accumulation path (tshogs.lam). See: PATHS. Bodhimind is divided into the prayer form, the wish to become enlightened for the sake of others, and the action form, in which one undertakes the activities of a Bodhisattva in accordance with Bodhisattva vows. Bodhimind is also divided into relative, which is what is usually considered bodhimind, and absolute or ultimate, which is the direct perception of emptiness under the influence of relative bodhimind.

BODHISATTV A (byang.chub.sems.dpa') Also called 'child of the Buddha' A living being who has generated bodhimind, the commitment to attain unexcelled, perfect enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. The term Bodhisattva refers to those on many levels: from those who have generated aspiration to enlightenment for the first time to those who have actually entered the bodhisattva path, which is developed through the ten stages (bhumis) and culminates in enlightenment, the attainment of buddhahood. See: Bhumi.

BRAHMA Creator-lord of a universe; a title of a deity who has attained supremacy in a particular universe, rather than a personal name. A king of the gods who dwells in the form realm. At the time of Buddha Sakyamuni, Indra and Brahma requested Buddha to turn the wheel of dharma for the sake of all sentient beings.

BUDDHA (sangs-rgyas) . Title of one who has attained the highest attainment, who has completely purified (sang) all the defilements and completely extended (rgyas) and perfected, his understanding. A fully enlightened being is perfect in omniscience and compassion. Every being has the potential to become a completely enlightened buddha. There are countless buddhas. This eon is to have one thousand buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha is the fourth buddha in this eon. The first three
were Krakuchchanda, Kanakamuni and Kashyapa. The fifth buddha will be Maitreya, the eleventh buddha is predicted to be Je Tsong khapa and as the last one of the thousand of this eon Roca is mentioned.

BUDDHAPALITA [circa. 470-550 C.E.] A great Madhyamika master, elucidator of a major work of Nagarjuna. Because of this, he was later regarded as the founder of the Prasangika sub-school.

BUDDHISM 101 and BUDDHISM 102 Gelek Rinpoche uses these terms to refer to the lower and middle scopes (B101) and the higher scope (B102). In other words, 101. is determining to free oneself from the suffering of cyclic existence, and 102. is committing oneself to attain enlightenment in order to free all beings from this suffering.

CAUSAL VEHICLE see SUTRAYANA

COMPASSION. (skt. karuna tib. nyingje) The wish to free others from their suffering. See: Great compassion.

CONCENTRATED MEDITATION (jok gom) placing one’s mind stably on an object.

DAKAS and DAKINIS. (kadro; kadroma) Male and female 'sky-goers'; beings who help arouse blissful energy in a qualified tantric practitioner. Also uses to refer to Vajrayana practitioners, the Vajrayana sangha.

DEDICATION Refers to the bodhisattva's constant mindfulness of the fact that all his actions of whatever form contribute to his purpose of attaining enlightenment for the sake of himself and others, i.e. his conscious dedicating, offering, giving away of the merit that comes from any virtuous actions.

DEGENERATE AGE That period when the traditions of Buddha's teachings are no longer pure and the world situation makes it difficult to properly practice the dharma.
DELUSION (Skt. klesha, Tib. nyong mong) see NEUROSES. A thought, emotion or impulse that is pervaded by ignorance, disturbs the mind and initiates actions (karma) which keep one bound within cyclic existence. That which makes the mind impure. Some synonyms are afflictive emotions, neuroses, harmful attitudes, negativities.

DEPENDENT ARISING Dependent arising or interdependent origination or dependent existence or inderdependent relationship. (Skt. Pratityasamutpada. Tib. Rten 'byung or rten 'bral) Any phenomenon that exists in dependence upon other phenomena is a dependent-related phenomenon. Sometimes dependent-related is distinguished from dependent-arising with the latter meaning arising in dependence upon causes and conditions. However, the two terms are often used interchangeably.

DETERMINATION TO BE FREE The first of the three principles of the path enumerated by Je Tsongkhapa: resolving to free oneself from the suffering of cyclic existence through purification, accumulation of merit and wisdom. Also called RENUNCIATION or SEEKING FREEDOM.

DHARMA (chos) Buddha's teachings and the realizations that are attained in dependence on them. One's spiritual development. That which holds one back from suffering by correcting what is not helpful.

DHARMAKAYA (chos.kyi.sku) Truth Body. The mind of a fully enlightened being, which remains meditatively absorbed in the direct perception of emptiness while simultaneously cognizing all phenomena. See: Kaya.

DHARMAKIRTI Great Indian master logician who lived around 630 CE.; author of Pramanasiddhi, Pramanavartika and other works.

DREPUNG MONASTERY One of the three main monasteries of the Gelug tradition along with Ganden and Sera. The monastery Gelek Rinpoche lived in.
GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA’S WAY OF LIFE

DUALISTIC VIEW Ignorant view characteristic of the unenlightened mind in which all things are falsely conceived to have concrete self-existence. To such a view the appearance of an object is mixed with the false image of its being independent or self-existent, thereby leading to further dualistic views concerning subject and object, self and other, this and that, etc.

EIGHT WORLDLY DHARMAS (jig.rten chos) eight worldly concerns. 1) laṭha; rnyed pa/ gain, finding, obtaining, profit, acquirement. 2) alabha; ma rnyed pa/ loss, not-finding, disappointment, disprofit, damage. 3) yasa; snyan pa/ fame, glory, celebrity, reputation. 4) ayasa; mi snyan pa/ dishonour, disgrace, infamy, disrepute, 5) prasamsa; bstd pa/ praise, laud, commendation, renown. 6) nynda; smad pa/ blame, abuse, reproach, reproof, censure, reviling, degradation. 7) sukha; bde ba/ well-being, happiness, prosperity, pleasure. 8) dukha; sdug bsgal/ misery, pain, distress, trouble.

EMPTINESS (Skt. shunyata, Tib. stong pa nyid) Voidness, specifically the emptiness of absolute substance, of truth, of identity, of intrinsic reality, of self or inherent existence of all persons and things in the relative world.

ENLIGHTENMENT (skt. bodhi tib. byang chub) The realisation achieved by a Buddha.

EON (skt. kalpa tib. bskal pa) An immensely long period of time, described as the time it takes a dove to exhaust a mountain of grain the size of the Mount Everest by removing one grain every thousand years.

EQUANIMITY (skt. upeksa, tib. btang snyoms) as the basis for compassion and love an unbiased state of mind affected by neither attachment nor aversion towards others. In meditation a balanced state of mind upset by neither excitement nor sinking.

ETERNALISM (rtag.lta) Belief in an unchanging ego or self-nature in either persons or phenomena. One of the two extremes to be avoided; the opposite of nihilism.
FIELD OF MERIT In general a field of merit is any basis on which one can collect merit, just as a farmer's field is the basis on which you can grow crops, the quality and amount of the crops depending on the nature of the field.

FIRST PANCHEN LAMA Panchen Lama Choekyi Gyaltsen (Pan chen Blo zang chos kyi rgyal mtsan), 1570-1662, a very influential figure in the Gelug tradition, author of the Lama Chöpa Guru Yoga.

FIVE LIMITLESS NON-VIRTUES Literally sins of immediate retribution, which cause immediate rebirth in hell following bardo: killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an arhat, breaking up the sangha and trying to kill a Buddha.

FOUR ANTI-DOTE POWERS or FOUR POWERS OF PURIFICATION 1. Power of the base: if enlightened being then take refuge; if non-enlightened being then meditate love-compassion. 2. Power of action: generally any virtuous action; the two most powerful are generating bodhimind or meditating on emptiness. 3. Power of regret. 4. Power of repentence or resolving not to repeat the action.

FOUR BODIES The four bodies of a Buddha are the Nature Truth Body, the Wisdom Truth Body, the Complete Enjoyment Body and the Manifested Body. The first two are the DHARMAKAYA, the second two the RUPAKAYA which includes the SAMBHOGAKAYA and the NIRMANAKAYA.

FOUR IMMEASURABLES Immeasurable equanimity, immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy. These are called immeasurables because we practice them by taking as our observed object all living beings whose number is immeasurable.

FOUR INITIATIONS The four initiations of Highest Yoga Tantra are vase, secret, wisdom and word.

FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS (Skt. catuh-arya-satya, Tib. ‘phags pa bdenpa zhi) 1. The truth of suffering; 2. The truth of the caus-
es of suffering. 3. The truth of the cessation of suffering. 4. The truth of the path to the cessation of suffering. They are called ‘noble’ truths because they are supreme objects of meditation. Through meditation on these four objects we can realize ultimate truth directly and thus become a noble, or superior being, an aryā.

GELUGPA The tradition of Tibetan Buddhism established by Je Tsong Khapa and also known as the New Kadam, also sometimes named Ganden Kagyu. The name Gelug means: wholesome way or: virtuous tradition. The three great Gelug monasteries are Ganden, Drepung and Sera. The other main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism are the Nyingma, Sakya and Kagyu.

GOD (Skt. deva Tib. lha) refers to all kind of deities: samsaric and non-samsaric. see: samsaric gods

GREAT COMPASSION (Skt. mahakaruna, Tib. snying rje chen-po) Refers to one of the two central qualities of a buddha or high bodhisattva: the wish for all living beings to be free of suffering. Great compassion is accompanied by the clear awareness that ultimately there are no such things as living beings, sufferings, etc. Thus it is an unlimited sensitivity that does not entertain any dualistic notion of inherently existing subject and object.

GREAT LOVE (Skt. mahanairi. Tib. byams pa chen po) The firm and spontaneous resolve to endow all sentient beings without exception with the real, lasting happiness that knows no suffering.

GYELTSAB JE rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1364-1432). The elder of Tsongkhapa's two foremost disciples. Second throne holder of Tsongkhapa (dGa' ldan khri pa).

HINAYANA (or THERAVADA) The 'small vehicle' of Buddhism, taught by the Buddha for those unable immediately to conceive the spirit of enlightenment, as a means for them to attain personal liberation. It includes the sravaka-yana, the hearer- or disciple vehicle, and pratyekebuddha-yana, the soli-
tary-realizer vehicle. It is a contrast to the Mahayana or 'great vehicle' or bodhisattva-yana, which is taught as a means for living beings of an altruistic aspiration, to attain the liberation of self and others through simultaneous perfection of wisdom and compassion, that is called buddhahood.

I or EGO The self-centered, deluded self. Rinpoche often refers to this one as ‘I rinpoche’, ‘the Big Boss inside’, the ‘Queen Bee’ or ‘Dictator I’. Buddhism does not accept the existence of an independent, self-existent, unchanging ego or self, because if such were to exist, a person would be unchanging and would be unable to purify himself of fettering passions and attain buddhahood. There is acceptance of a relative, impermanent, changeable, conscious entity, which is the continuation of life, linking one’s former lives to this life, and this life to future lives.

IGNORANCE (Skt. avidya Tib. ma rig pa) The root cause of cyclic existence; not knowing the way things actually are and misconstruing them to be permanent, satisfactory and inherently existent. It gives rise to all other delusions and the karma they motivate. Ignorance can be eradicated by the wisdom of emptiness.

INITIATION or empowerment (dbang pronounced wong) Transmission received from a tantric master allowing a disciple to engage in the practices of a particular meditational deity, usually done in the form of an elaborate ritual.

INTERDEPENDENT ORIGINATION see DEPENDENT ARISING

KADAMPA MASTERS (bka’gdamspa). The Kadampa lineage was founded in the eleventh century by the teacher Dromtonje Atisha’s chief disciple. The Kadampa masters carry the lineage of Atisha’s teaching.

KAGYU One of the main Tibetan Buddhist traditions, founded by Marpa, teacher of Milarepa.
KANJUR (bka’ ‘gyur) Literally 'translation of (Buddha's) words'. The Tibetan collection of the Tripitaka: the sutras, the vinaya, and the abhidharma, in one hundred and eight volumes. The collection of commentaries is called Tanjur.

KARMA (las) Generally it means 'work' or 'action', which determines present experience and will determine future existences. By the infallible ripening of karma (like seeds) beings experience misery and happiness.

KAYA (sku) 'body' or aspect of a Buddha; see FOUR BODIES

KEDRUB JE (Mkhas grub rje dGe legs dpal bzang po) (1385-1438), the younger of Tsongkhapa’s two heart disciples Third holder of the throne of Tsongkhapa (dGa’ ldan kbri pa). The other heart disciple is Dar.ma Rin.chen, better know as Gyäl.tshab je, rGyal.tshab rje (1364-1432).

LAM RIM The stages of the path to enlightenment in sutrayana. In tantrayana the stages of the path are called Nag Rim (sNgangs rim)

LAMA (bla ma; Skt. guru) the spiritual teacher. Literally it means the one without superior, the highest. The lama’s principal quality is that of leading disciples from the beginning of their quest all the way to the attainment of buddhahood. Before leaving the earth Buddha said that he would appear in the form of lamas for those who would in the future desire to follow his teachings. A direct guru is any spiritual guide from whom we have received teachings in this life, a lineage guru is any spiritual guide who has passed on the lineage of teaching received by our own direct gurus. Our principal spiritual guide is also known as our root guru.

LAK TONG (Tib. lhag mthong, Skt. vipasyana) Special or penetrative insight. The meditative realization of impermanence, selflessness and emptiness that overcomes ignorance and leads to liberation.
LOVE (Skt. maitri, Tib. byams pa) The wish for others to be happy.

LOWER REALMS (ngendro) Out of the six realms of samsaric existence the realms of animals, hungry ghosts (pretas) and hell beings. See: REALMS

MADHYAMIKA (dbu.mapa). One of the two main schools of Mahayana tenets (the other one being the Cittamatra or Mind-only school). The madhyamika view was taught by Buddha in the Perfection-of-Wisdom sutra (prajnaparamitasutras) during the second turning of the wheel of dharma and was subsequently elucidated by Nagarjuna and his followers. It has two divisions: madhyamika-svatantrika and madhyamika-prasangika, of which the latter is Buddha’s final view.

MAHAYANA (theg.chen) 'The great vehicle', called 'great' because it carries all living beings to enlightenment or buddhahood. It is distinguished from hinayana, which only carries each person who rides on it to their own personal liberation.

MAITREYA (Byams.pa) The embodiment of the loving-kindness of all the buddhas. At the time of Buddha Shakyamuni he manifested as a bodhisattva disciple. Predicted by Buddha Shakyamuni to be the next buddha. He presently resides over Tushita heaven. Maitreya received from Buddha Shakyamuni the teachings of compassion, the lineage of extensive deeds, which lineage he transmitted to Asanga.

MANJUSHRI The eternally youthful crown prince, the embodiment of the wisdom of all enlightened beings. From Manjushri the lineage of the profound view of emptiness was handed down to Nagarjuna. Manjushri incarnated in human form is called Manjunatha (Jam mgon), an epithet for Tsongkhapa.

MARPA (sGra.bsgyur Mar.pa Lo.tsa.ba) A great Tibetan yogi of the eleventh and twelfth century, disciple of Naropa and teacher of Milarepa, the founder of the Kagyu tradition.
MEDITATION (Skt. *bhavana*, Tib. *sgom pa*) Literally ‘getting used to’. The process of controlling, training and transforming the mind that leads one to liberation and enlightenment. The process of becoming thoroughly familiar with positive attitudes and accurate perspectives through both analytical investigation and single-pointed concentration.

MERIT (Skt. *punya*, Tib. *bsod nams*) The wholesome tendencies implanted in the mind as a result of committing skilful actions. That positive energy results in happiness and good qualities.

METHOD Skillful means or liberative technique (Skt *upaya*, Tib. *thabs*). This expresses the great compassion of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Wisdom and method go together as the two wings of a bird crossing the ocean of samsara.

MIGTSEMA (*dmig.rtse.ma*), originally a hymn to Rendawa (Red.*mda'.pa*) written by Tsongkhapa. Rendawa (1349-1412), one of the most important teachers of Tsong Khapa belonged to the Sakya (Sa.*skya.pa*) school. Rendawa reversed the Mig-tse-ma into a hymn in praise of Tsongkhapa.

MILAREPA (*rJe.btsun Mi.la ras.pa bZhad.pa rdo.rje*) 1040-1123. A Tibetan yogi who achieved buddhahood in one lifetime. He was the disciple of Marpa and his biography is a favorite example of hardship undertaken in order to attain enlightenment.

MINDFULNESS (Tib. *dran pa*) In everyday life, being mindful is to remember one’s motivation and correct one’s thought and actions to be in accord with it.

MOTIVATION The underlying reason or purpose for one’s actions of body, speech and mind. The recommended highest motivation is bodhimind, the wish or intention to become a Buddha to serve or benefit others.

NAGA (*glu*) Mythical dragon-like beings who inhibit and have influence over the waters of the world. In Buddha's time they
listened to the teachings and took them to their own world, where they preserved them. See: Nagarjuna.

NAGARJUNA (klu.sgrub) Saint, scholar and mystic of Buddhist India from about four hundred years after the Buddha. Discoverer of the Mahayana scriptures, the lineage of wisdom, according to the myth handed over to him by the nagas. He is author of the fundamental madhyamika texts.

NEUROSES (Skt. klesha, Tib. nyong mongi) see DELUSIONS. Often translated as delusions or as afflicted emotions. A thought, emotion or impulse that is pervaded by ignorance, disturbs the mind and initiates actions (karma) which keep one bound within cyclic existence. That which makes the mind impure. Delusions are mental factors. The three root delusions or the three poisons: ignorance, attachment and hatred; from these, many others arise.

NIRMANAKAYA (sprul.sku) Emanation body. Form in which an enlightened being appears in order to benefit ordinary beings. See: FOUR BODIES.

NIRVANA (mya ngan las 'das pa) The state of complete liberation from samsara; the goal of the practitioner seeking his or her own freedom from suffering. 'Lower nirvana' is used to refer to this state of self-liberation while 'higher nirvana' refers to the supreme attainment of the full enlightenment of buddhahood.

NYINGMA The 'old sects' of Tibetan buddhism, that adhere to the scriptural translations made prior to the eleventh century. The founder of this tradition was Guru Padmasambhava.

OMNISCIENCE This refers to the gnosis of the Buddha, the state of being totally aware of everything.

ORAL TRANSMISSION. (Tib. lung) The passing of a pure, unbroken oral lineage. A disciple is not considered to have received a teaching until he or she has heard all the words from the mouth of a qualified spiritual guide. A teaching that
has been received in this way carries the blessings of all the lineage gurus who transmitted the same teaching in the past.

PABONGKHAPA Je Pabongkhapa (1878-1941) Trinley Gyatso, was the root-guru of both the Senior and Junior Tutors to the Dalai Lama and holder of many sutra and secret mantra lineages.

PARAMITAS \( (\text{pha.ro.tu.phyin.pa}) \) Perfections or transcendences. The main categories of the bodhisattva's activities: giving (skt. \( \text{dana} \)), morality (skt. \( \text{sila} \)), tolerance or patience (skt. \( \text{ksanti} \)), joyous effort (skt. \( \text{virya} \)), meditation (skt. \( \text{dhyana} \)) and wisdom (skt. \( \text{prajna} \))

PATHS in Mahayana (\( \text{theg.chen-gyi lam} \)). Internal paths that lead us to our ultimate destination, full enlightenment. The five paths are: 1. path of merit or path of accumulation (\( \text{tshogs lam} \)); 2. path of preparation (\( \text{sbyor lam} \)); 3. path of seeing or path of insight (\( \text{mthong lam} \)); 4. path of meditation (\( \text{sgom-lam} \)); 5. path of no-more-learning (\( \text{mi slob lam} \)). The first two paths are the paths of ordinary bodhisattvas, the following two paths are the paths of arya bodhisattvas, on the fifth path the Bodhisattva has become a Buddha.

PRAJNAPARAMITA \( (\text{shes.rab.kyi.pha.ro.tu.phyin.pa}) \) Perfection of wisdom. Transcendental wisdom, the profound non-dual understanding of the ultimate reality of all things. As a goddess, she is worshipped as the 'Mother of all buddhas'

PRAJNAPARAMITASUTRA \( (\text{phar phyin}) \) Perfection of Wisdom sutra. The scripture with those teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha in which the the transcendental wisdom, the wisdom of emptiness and the path of the bodhisattva are set forth. There are nineteen versions of different lengths, ranging from the Heart Sutra of a few pages to the Hundred-Thousand. Verses.

REALMS. In \( \text{samsara} \) three main realms are distinguished: the desire realm, the form realm, the formless realm. They are also known as the three worlds. 1. Realm of desire (\( \text{kama-dhatu} \)). The environment, land or sphere of hell-beings -eight hot hells, eight cold hells, two nearby hells-, hungry ghosts (\( \text{pretas} \)), animals, humans and demi-gods are all included in the
desire realm, because beings in this realm have very strong desirous attachment. The environments of gods exist in all three realms.

REFUGE Taking refuge is turning one's mind towards a valid source of protection from the sufferings of samsara. In Buddhism this involves entrusting oneself to the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha

RELATIVE BODHIMIND see BODHIMIND

RELATIVE TRUTH see TWO TRUTHS

RENUNCIATION see DETERMINATION TO BE FREE (Tib.) The realisation of detachment from all of samsara, having understood its faults. Also called: determination to be free.

ROOT GURU See: Lama

SAKYA Tradition of Tibetan buddhism founded in the mid-eleventh century by Drog-mi the translator. One of the most eminent Sakya teachers was the Sakya Pandita.

SHAKYAMUNI 'Sage of the Sakyas', name of the buddha of our era, who lived in India around 563-483 BC. He was a prince from the Sakya clan. He taught the sutra and tantra path to liberation; founder of what came to be known as Buddhism. His mundane name was Siddharta Gautama.

SAMBHOGAKAYA (longs.spyon.sku) Enjoyment body. Form in which the enlightened mind appears in order to benefit highly realised bodhisattvas. It can only be seen by those who are highly realized, who are aryas. See FOUR BODIES.

SAMSARA (’khor.ba or srid.pa) The continuation of contaminated identity. The cycle of existence, of birth and death in the three realms of suffering existence: the desire realm, the form realm, the formless realm. See: Realms.

SAMSARIC GODS (lha) Samsaric gods are samsaric beings dwelling for the moment in an extremely pleasant state.
SANGHA As object of refuge it is the community of arya beings those who have achieved spiritual aims and are able to help. In daily life, it is the community of those on the spiritual path, traditionally a group of more than four monks or nuns.

SEEKING FREEDOM see DETERMINATION TO BE FREE, THREE PRINCIPLES

SELF-CHERISHING The self-centred attitude of considering one's own happiness to be more important than everyone else's. The main obstacle to be overcome in the development of bodhicitta.

SELF-GRASPING A conceptual mind apprehending inherent existence that arises from ignorance of the true nature of phenomena. It gives rise to all other delusions and is the root of all suffering.

SENTIENT BEING (Skt. sattva, Tib. sems can) Any being who possesses a mind that is contaminated by delusions or their imprints. Both ‘sentient being’ and ‘living being’ are terms used to distinguish beings whose minds are contaminated by any of the two obstructions from Buddhas, whose minds are completely free from these obstructions.

SEVEN-LIMB PRACTICE A brief practice recommended by enlightened beings as a way to generate, multiply and protect positive energy (or merit) and purify negative actions. The seven steps are 1. Praising and seeking to emulate enlightened beings. 2. Making actual and imagined offerings. 3. Purifying negativities. 4. Rejoicing in positive actions. 5. Requesting wise and timely teachings. 6. Requesting teachers to remain. 7. Dedicating positive energy.

SHANTIDEVA (c.687-763) A great Indian Buddhist teacher, meditator and scholar, most famous for his masterpiece, Bodhisattvacaryavatara, Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life.

SIDDHI (dgnos.grub). achievement, attainment.
SIX SESSION YOGA A daily practice through which those who have taken Highest Yoga Tantra initiation maintain their vows.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT Term used by Gelek Rinpoche for the realized or internalised Dharma; the extent to which one has decreased one’s negative qualities and increased one’s positive qualities.

SPIRITUAL FRIEND (Skt. Kalyanamitra Tib. bshes gnyen) see: SPIRITUAL MASTER

SPIRITUAL MASTER (Skt. guru, Tib. lama) The spiritual teacher who can lead disciples to the attainment of buddhahood. Before leaving the earth Buddha said that he would appear in the form of lamas for those who would in the future desigre to follow his teachings. A direct guru is any spiritual guide from whom we have received teachings in this life, a lineage guru is any spiritual guide who has passed on the lineage of teaching received by our own direct gurus. One's principal spiritual guide is also known as one's root guru. Levels of looking at the lama: On the Hinayana-level one sees the lama as teacher. In the Mahayana-level one sees the spiritual teacher as a spiritual friend. In tantric practice one sees him as an enlightened being; the guru's body is seen as the sangha, his speech as the dharma, and his mind as the Buddha.

SUTRA (mdo) The open discourses of the Buddha, the spiritual text and the teachings they contain.

SUTRAYANA The openly taught vehicle or path of Buddhism, leading to the attainment of full enlightenment over three countless eons through the practice of the six perfections; hence also called the perfection vehicle (paramitayana)

TANTRA (rgyud). Means 'method' in general. Another name is: secret mantra. The secret teachings of Buddha in the form of Vajradhara The essential practice of tantra that distinguishes it from sutra is bringing the result into the path. The practice involves identification of oneself with a fully enlightened deity. There are four classes of tantras: kriyatantra (by-
a.ba'i.rnyd), caryatrantra (spyad.pai.rgyud), yogatantra (rnal.'byor.ba'i.rgyud) and the annutarayogatantra (rnal.'byor bla-na-med.pa'i.rgyud). The fourth is the highest and often called highest yoga tantra. The tantric stages of the path are called nag rim (sNgags rim). Tantra consists of an important body of literature dealing with a great variety of techniques of advanced meditations, incorporating rituals, mantra and visualisations.

TANTRAYANA: The post-sutra vehicle of Buddhism, capable of leading to the attainment of full enlightenment within one lifetime; hence also called the lightning vehicle; equivalent terms are VAJRAYANA, MANTRAYANA

TARA (sGrol.ma). Female meditational deity. 'She who can free us'. Compassionate savior goddess. She was born from a tear of Avalokiteshvara and vowed to help him to liberate all beings from samsara. Referred to as the mother of the buddhas of the past, present and future. There are twenty-one Tara forms.

TEN DIRECTIONS. These consist of the eight points of the compass, straight up and straight down. As a conventional formula it means 'all directions'.

TENGYUR (bstan 'gyur) The collection of the traditional commentaries on Buddha’s teachings.

THERAVADA Buddhism of 'the elder tradition' as practiced in Ceylon etc. Rinpoche uses this as equivalent to HINAYANA

THREE HIGHER TRAININGS Ethical discipline or morality, concentration, and wisdom. These are the principles themes of the Tripitaka, the three baskets of scriptures, and they are the very substance of the Hinayana path.

THREE JEWELS (Skt. triratna, Tib. dkon mchog) The three objects of spiritual support as viewed within a buddhist framework: Buddha, dharma and sangha. In the Tibetan tradition, the guru or lama, is also mentioned, but rather than being a fourth object of refuge, he is the 'three-in-one'
THREE REALMS (Skt. *trī-dhatu*, Tib. *kḥams gsum*) the desire realm, the form realm, the formless realm. They are also known as the three worlds. See: Realms.

THREE MORALITIES 1. Keeping one’s vows, and thus refraining from negative actions. 2. Doing good actions. 3. Helping others.

THREE PRINCIPLES OF THE PATH: determination to be free, bodhicitta or the altruistic mind, wisdom. Title of a famous poem by Je Tsongkhapa.

TSONGKHAPA 1357-1419 A great fourteenth-century scholar, yogi, and teacher restored the purity of buddhadharma in Tibet, thus founding the Gelug tradition. His many treatises finalized the work begun by Atisha of clarification and synthesis of the vast body of Indian scriptures and schools of practice into a unified exposition of sutrayana and tantrayana paths. He wrote several lam rims, the most well known one is Great exposition on the Stages of the Path, *Lam rim chen mo*. On the stages in tantra he wrote the Great exposition of secret mantra, *sNgags rim chen mo*. He is regarded a full enlightened being and along with Long-chen Rabjam-pa (1308-1363) and the Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) an emanation of Manjushri. That is why he is called ‘*Jam mgon*, lit.'gentle lord', indicating that he and the deity Manjughoṣa -form of Manjushri- are of one essence. He is regarded as the synthesis of Manjushri, Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani and therefore regarded as the embodiment of the wisdom, compassion and power of all the buddhas. The name Tsongkhapa literally means ‘the one from Tsongkha’ (Tsongkha means something like ‘Onion county’)

TURNING THE WHEEL OF THE DHARMA Term referring to the three categories of teachings in which Shakyamuni Buddha shared his experience and knowledge. In brief, the first turning taught the four noble truths, the second turning interdependence and wisdom and the third turning method.
TWELVE LINKS OF INTERDEPENDENT ORIGINATION An explanation of how the cycle of suffering existence is perpetuated. The twelve links are 1. ignorance, 2. conditioned karma, 3. consciousness, 4. name and form, 5. six senses, 6. contact, 7. sensation, 8. wanting, 9. grasping, 10. existence, 11. birth, 12. old age and death.

TWENTY-TWO BODHICHITTAS According to the Perfection of Wisdom sutras (Prajnaparamitasutra) they are: like earth, like bright gold, like a new moon, like blazing fire, like a great treasure, like a jewel mine, like a great ocean, like a vajra, like a mountain, like medicine, like a virtuous spiritual friend, like a wish-granting jewel, like the sun, like a pleasant song of dharma, like a king, like a treasury, like a highway, like a chariot, like spring water, like a pleasant sound, like a river, like a cloud.

TWO TRUTHS All objects of cognition have two modes of existence, called 'truths'. The truth of appearance or relative truth or conventional truth (skr. samvrtisattya) is the aspect of existence according to worldly convention and expression. And the absolute truth or ultimate truth (skr. paramarthasatya) is the voidness of all phenomena, the mere absence of inherent existence, the reality of existence. So, the absolute or ultimate truth is emptiness; all other levels belong to the relative or conventional truth.

VAJRA (rdorje) Diamond scepter; indestructible like a diamond and powerful like a thunderbolt. In the context of tantra it means the indivisibility of method and wisdom., or when used with a bell, the bell is wisdom, the vajra is method.

VAJRA-MASTER Teacher who is qualified to perform the task of a tantric guru.

VAJRADHARA (rDorje Chang), holder of the diamond scepter. Male meditational deity. The form through which Sakyamuni Buddha reveals the teachings of secret mantra. He symbolizes the attainment of enlightenment through the union of simultaneous great bliss and emptiness.
VAJRASATTVA (rDorje Sempa) Diamond Being. Male meditational deity. Recitation of his mantra is a major tantric purification practice for removing obstacles created by negative karma and the breaking of one’s vows.

VAJRAYANA (dorje thegpa) secret mantra vehicle. The advanced means to quickly achieve buddhahood -within one lifetime- for the sake of all sentient beings. Also called TANTRAYANA.

VAJRAYOGINI female meditational deity of the mahayogini yoga tantra, associated with Heruka Chakrasamvara; a mother tantra.

VINAYA (ldul.ba) The first of the three major divisions or baskets of the Buddhist canon, the tripitaka. It also refers to the code of behaviour contained in this vinaya basket, followed by those who have taken the vows of the buddhist order.

VOID See EMPTINESS

VOWS Promises to refrain from certain actions. The three sets of vows are the Vows of individual liberation, the Bodhisattva vows, and the Vajrayana vows.

WISDOM (Skt. prajna, Tib. she rab) The sixth of the six transcendences or paramitas. The unmistaken understanding of things; specifically the insight into emptiness: the actual way in which things exist; Wisdom is the antidote to ignorance. It is symbolized by Manjushri

YAMANTAKA a yidam; in maha-yoga tantra a wrathful manifestation of Manjushri, to overcome hindrances; a father-tantra.

YANA Vehicle; the means whereby a practitioner is led to his or her desired spiritual attainment (sutrayana, tantrayana).

YIDAM meditational deity Yidam (Tib sometimes lha) Also called meditational deity. A male or female figure embodying a
particular aspect of the fully enlightened experience and used as the focus of concentration and identification in tantra.

YOGA ("rmal 'byor") endeavour, application, practice.

YOGI, YOGINI Resp. male or female practitioner of yoga, a tantric adept.

ZHINE (Tib. zhi gnas, Skt. samatha) Mental quiescence or meditative equipoise; a very high degree of concentration. The tranquil, single-pointed settling of the mind on an object of meditation for a sustained period of time. A degree of concentration characterized by mental and physical pliancy or ecstasy.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

English Translations of the Bodhisattvacharyavatara (from either the original Sanskrit or the Tibetan):


Commentaries:
GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA’S WAY OF LIFE

Kelsang Gyatso, Geshe. *Meaningful to Behold: The Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*. Tharpa Publications, 1980, fourth edition 1994. This is a detailed commentary on Shantideva’s *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. It does not include a separate translation, and does not clearly discuss the wording of each verse.

Roach, Geshe Michael, *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life, Part I, II and III; Course X, XI and XII*. New York: The Asian Classics Institute, no date given. These courses include tapes of Michael Roach’s lecture commentary on selected verses, plus study materials taken from traditional Tibetan sources. Geshe Roach discusses the main points, but does not cover every verse.


On the Bodhisattva Vows:


**On generating bodhimind** Much material can be found in the teachings on the higher scope in any lam rim text as well as the following works:


**Selected Lam Rim Texts**


GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA’S WAY OF LIFE

(Transcripts of Gelek Rinpoche’s teachings are for the use of his students. They may be purchased from the Jewel Heart bookstore.)
ABOUT GELEK RIMPOCHE

Born in Lhasa, Tibet, Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche was recognized as an incarnate lama at the age of four. Carefully tutored by Tibet’s greatest living masters, he received specialized individual teaching at Drepung Monastery, the nation’s largest monastery.

In 1959, Gehlek Rimpoche was among those forced into exile, fleeing the Communist Chinese who had occupied Tibet since 1951. While in India, Rimpoche as a member of a group of sixteen monks, was chosen to continue specific studies with the great masters who had escaped Tibet, including the Dalai Lama’s personal tutors.

At the age of twenty-five, Rimpoche gave up monastic life. In the mid-70’s, Gehlek Rimpoche was encouraged by his teachers to begin teaching in English. Since that time he has gained a large following throughout the world. Coming to the U.S. in the mid-80’s, Rimpoche later moved to Ann Arbor, MI and in 1987 founded Jewel Heart, an organization dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture and Buddhism. Today, Jewel Heart has chapters throughout the U.S. and in Malaysia, Singapore and the Netherlands.

A member of the last generation of lamas to be born and fully educated in Tibet, Gehlek Rimpoche is particularly distinguished for his understanding of contemporary society and his skill as a teacher of Buddhism in the West. He is now an American citizen. Gehlek Rimpoche’s first book, the national bestseller, Good Life, Good Death, was published in 2001.
ABOUT JEWEL HEART

Jewel Heart is an educational and cultural center whose doors are open to all. Its purpose is to transmit the essence of Tibetan Buddhism in an authentic and accessible form. Jewel Heart provides guidance and practical methods to anyone interested in spiritual development, as well as to those who wish to follow the traditional Buddhist path.

The name Jewel Heart was chosen to represent the organization because the heart is the essence of the human being, and the jewel something of great value — considered precious. Through embracing the preciousness of our life and developing our qualities, inner peace will grow, and our actions will be influenced by compassionate concern for others. It is to this end that Jewel Heart dedicated its efforts.

The Jewel Heart logo contains three graphic elements: the spinning jewel wheel, the lotus, and the flame. The central wheel symbolizes the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The Buddha represents our potential for enlightenment. The Dharma is the spiritual development within each individual. The Sangha is the community of those individuals, who have developed wisdom, act as guides.

In nature, the lotus rises from the mud, yet remains pure. Similarly, we are capable of rising above ordinary conceptions and putting love and compassion into action in daily life. The flame that surrounds the jewel wheel represents the fire of wisdom, consuming all obstacles and bringing insight.

JEWEL HEART Chapters are to be found:

- USA: in Ann Arbor, Chicago, Cleveland OH, Lincoln NE, New York and San Francisco.
- The Netherlands: Nijmegen, Den Bosch, Tilburg, Arnhem, Utrecht.
- Malaysia: in Kuala Lumpur, Gerik and Panang, and in Muar.
- Singapore

JEWEL HEART P.O BOX 7933 ANN ARBOR, MI 48107
www.jewelheart.org
JEWEL HEART TRANSCRIPTS


17. Tarab Tulku, *Nearness to Oneself and Openness to the World.* 1999. 4 Selected topics.


24. Tarab Tulku, *Unity in Duality; the inter-determinate nature of all that exists.* 2003.


28. Gelek Rimpoche, *Cittamani Tara – Extensive Commentary.* Cittamani Tara, as the highest yoga tantra form of Tara, empowers us to reach enlightenment within this very body, this very life. 2008
29. Gelek Rimpoche, *The Four Noble Truths*. The Four Noble Truths is the basis of all the Buddha’s teaching. Gelek Rimpoche’s eloquent and pragmatic approach sheds fresh light on applying these teaching to daily life.


* Must have Highest Yoga Tantra Initiation to read. To be able to understand them properly, it is important that you receive a Highest Yoga Tantra initiation from a qualified teacher.
NOTES

1 *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* means “The guide to living like a Bodhisattva” – a Bodhisattva is someone who has generated bodhimind.

2 The activity at the beginning is setting one’s motivation; the activity at the end is dedicating the positive energy or merit one has created.

3 Other equivalent terms are mantrayana or secret mantra.


5 Emptiness of beings, *kangzak gi dagme*, emptiness of things or phenomena, *chö gi dagme*.

6 *Rgyal tshab rje*, 1364-1431. One of Je Tsongkhapa’s chief disciples and his successor as head of the Ganden tradition.


8 See, for example, HH Tenzin Gyatso, *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*, p. 2.

9 Mahakashyapa recited the teachings on higher knowledge (abhidharma), Upali those on ethical discipline (vinaya) and Ananda or Kunga-o the Buddha’s discourses or sutras.

10 Ethical discipline (taught in the Vinaya), concentration (taught in the sutras), and wisdom (taught in the abhidharma).

11 *bka’* ‘gyur

12 *bstan* ‘gyur

13 The Sakya tradition teaching the path and results, similar to the Gelug *lam rim*.

14 *Zhi ba lha* The name means ‘god of peace’. He lived between the end of the seventh and the middle of the eighth centuries in India.

15 *Spros bcas* and *spros mad*. 
Tibetan ‘du she gsum pa ba, pronounced dushe sumpawa.

byang chub sem dpai spyod pa la jug pa

spyod jug

See Kelsang Gyatso, Meaningful to Behold, pp. 7-8. The three higher trainings are ethics, concentration and wisdom, and correspond to the three baskets or pitakas of Buddha’s teachings, the vinaya pitaka, sutra pitaka and abhidharma pitaka.

That is, this teaching belongs to the sutra pitaka, dealing with higher concentration.

In his Vajrayogini teachings, Rinpoche mentions four systems of teaching: explanatory, concise, practical and experiential.

The Tibetan text and transliteration can be found in Appendix I.

See HH Tenzin Gyatso, A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night, p. 8.

sangs rgyas

The Buddha is said to have three kinds of heir: his physical son was Rahula, the heirs of his speech are the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and the heirs of his mind are the Bodhisattvas. HH Tenzin Gyatso, A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night, p. 11.

Sometimes expressed as 1) refraining from bad deeds, 2) doing good deeds, and 3) helping others.

Relative bodhimind refers to what we normally consider bodhimind, the wish or intention to become enlightened to help others; absolute bodhimind refers to the wisdom that directly perceives the true nature of reality.

See Kelsang Gyatso, Meaningful to Behold, pp. 10-11.

Pabongka Rinpoche, Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, p. 329.

In the first stanza of The Three Principles, Je Tsongkhapa says, “I will explain as best as I can…”

A great Buddhist logician who lived in India around 630 CE

The Tibetan work for to acquaint with or habituate to is gom, which is closely related to the word translated as meditate.

In Tibetan dadpa, pronounced depa; Rinpoche often translates this as trust or confidence.

See Kelsang Gyatso, Meaningful to Behold, pp. 12-15, or the Odyssey to Freedom or any other lam rim text under the great value of human life.

See Kelsang Gyatso, Meaningful to Behold, p.13. The five limitless bad deeds are killing your father, killing your mother, killing an arhat, attempting to kill a Buddha and causing a schism in the sangha.

The newer translation says The great strength of immorality
The Three Principles of the Path are 1) Seeking freedom or the determination to be free, 2) bodhimind, and 3) wisdom, or the correct unbiased view of reality. See Gelek Rinpoche’s commentaries on *The Three Principles* by Je Tsongkhapa.

See Appendix II, A Simple Daily Practice.

Sipa (*sri pa*) is a synonym for *korwa*, samsara or cyclic existence.

Sometimes Rinpoche refers to this *I* as the big boss inside, or the queen bee.

In the common with the lower level or lower scope, one practices in order obtain a good rebirth. In the common with the medium level o2 medium scope, one practices to escape from the sufferings of cyclic existence by achieving individual liberation or nirvana.

The Tibetan word translated as Guide is *depon* (*ded dpon*) which can also mean helmsman; so Buddha ferries all beings across the ocean of suffering to enlightenment. See Kelsang Gyatso, *Meaningful to Behold*, p. 18.

The word *drebu* (*'bras bu*) in Tibetan means both fruit and result.

Jeffrey Dalhmer killed and ate his victims.

Angulimala killed 999 people, cut one of their fingers off and strung them onto a mala which he wore around his neck. Because of listening to an evil teacher, he believed that if he managed to kill 1000 people in that manner he would achieve enlightenment.

In the *Stalks in Array Sutra* (Sanskrit *Gandavyuhasutra*).

A cult group of extremist Christians killed themselves and burned their property down.

See Gelek Rinpoche’s *Lam Rim Teachings*, chart III, p. 730.

Smon *sens*, or prayer form of bodhimind.

Jig *sens*, or action form of bodhimind.

*Sens bskyed pa ni gzhon phyir yang dag rdzogs pai byang chub ‘dod: bodhimind* is the wish to achieve perfect enlightenment in order to benefit others.

These are synonyms for prayer form and action form of bodhimind.

Rinpoche may be referring here to the purification practice of *nyung nay* (*snyung gnas*) which involves fasting.

*Nyitseway nyelwa* (*nyi tse bai dmyal ba*) or partial or individual hell; *nye kor-nay nyelwa* (*nye ’khor bai dmyal ba*) adjacent or neighboring hell.

At this point, there was a break in the tape, and some of Rinpoche’s commentary is missing. For a discussion on the two views of how
one determines what is action and what is aspirational bodhimind, see Lobsang Gyatso, *Bodhicitta*, p. 114-115.

That of the Svatattra Madyamika, exemplified by Bhavaviveka, an Indian scholar who lived around 500-570 CE.

See bibliography for references on the Bodhisattva vows.

A student of Nagarjuna, who lived around 500 CE; his view is accepted as correct by the Prasangika Madyamika school.

The wish or intention to become enlightened in order to benefit others.

Also called subtle body.

Rinpoche has said that he uses the word ‘ego’ to translate a combination of the Tibetan words *marigpa* or ignorance and *dangdzin* or self grasping.

Also see Rinpoche’s transcripts *Lam Rim Teachings*, and *The Three Principles of the Path to Highest Enlightenment*.

The Tibetan word for ‘people’ includes animals and other beings.

An Ann Arbor bakery.

The Governor of Michigan who is famous for eliminating cultural and social welfare programs.

HH the Dalai Lama and Geshe Kelsang Gyatso may disagree on certain points, but not about the importance of the *Bodhisattvacharyayavatara*.

At this point, Kyabje Rilbur Rinpoche gave the teaching to be found in Appendix III

This story is told in the explanation of verse 17.

A traditional Tibetan prayer *jang chub sem ni rinpoche* (found in the Jewel Heart smoke puja) says:

*May the precious bodhimind*

*Not yet born arise and grow.*

*May that born have no decline, But increase forever more.*

*Ngo tsa* (*ngo tsha*), refraining from acting badly because of how you yourself would feel, and *trel yod* (*khrel yod*), refraining from acting badly because of what others might think or feel.

Metal training can also be referred to as developing a good heart or transforming the heart. *Lojong* or Mind Training is actually training in developing bodhimind.
Dr. Kervorkian is a Michigan doctor who openly and actively assists terminally ill patients with ending their lives.

At this point, Rinpoche gave a teaching on the brief Jewel Heart practice used before teachings. See Appendix II.

Tibetan lung.

See bibliography. The text quoted in this commentary is the Stephen Batchelor translation from the Tibetan.

Traditionally these are called the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and all-pervasive suffering.

Rinpoche does not clarify what the other two levels are.

Tibetan bshes, as in bshes gnyen, spiritual friend or teacher.

The Tibetan word translated as block is drippa (grib pa), which is related to the word for shadow. Some translate it as obscurcation.

Some other words used to translate this are disturbing conceptions, delusions, neuroses, afflictive emotions, harmful attitudes.

See, for example, Odyssey to Freedom, under Create a Sacred Environment.

He was a multiple murderer who ate parts of his victims.

See above, page 91.

Or a powerful object towards which we can create positive or negative karma.

See Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, p. 152, quoting Panchen Lama Lozang Choekyi Gyaeltsaen:

Before any meditation [one should]
Examine one’s mental stream properly,
Just as the words ‘In Sanskrit’
Should appear at the start of a text.
That is what you meant, O peerless guru.

Tibetan zhi ne (zhi guas)

Tibetan lhak tong (lhag mtshong)