LOJONG
TRAINING OF THE MIND IN SEVEN POINTS
Gelek Rimpoche

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Jewel Heart Transcript
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Gelek Rimpoche, Lojong – Training of the Mind in Seven Points
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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.

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Acknowledgements

This is the transcript of the teachings given in Nijmegen and in New York, both in 1999. In New York it was a series of evening teachings from January till the end of September; in Nijmegen the annual Spring retreat at the beginning of May.

The subject is about training of the mind, *Lojong* in Tibetan, methods to develop the altruistic mind. These methods are no sinecure as the ego-cherishing part of our minds is confronted straight out, in this case by ‘nine bullets’. From this it may be clear that these teachings are aimed at the Mahayana practitioner. Even though these teachings stem from the twelfth century, they still totally apply to our present-day situation and can be applied very well in our present-day lives.

The text from which is taught is Geshe Chekawa’s *Seven Point Mind Training*, together with the commentary by Gomo Tulku, *Becoming a Child of the Buddhas*. This is the second of two Lojong commentaries which Rimpoche shared. The other one [published a few months ago] deals with Langri Tangpa’s *Eight Verses of Mind Training*.

On request of Rimpoche we have tried to combine the two teachings into one. It was not an easy job. The teachings in Nijmegen were straightforward and compact; those in New York carried the specifics of a two-weekly open teaching: easy to follow, stories, reviews, questions and discussions. As Rimpoche advised, the Nijmegen teachings are used as the base and the New York material has been inserted. (Note that not all of the New York material is directly to be found in here: a) what is double has been left out, a.o. reviews; b) of the questions and answers we’ve selected those that are complementary to the teachings.) This way we’ve been
able to combine the best of two sides: the clarity and completeness of the teaching in Nijmegen joined to the looseness and direct connections with daily life of the New York teachings. A very rich joint venture. Thank you Rimpoché!

The New York transcription was received from Kathleen Ivanoff. The Nijmegen transcription was done by four Jewel Heart members. Final editing was done by yours truly who also takes full responsibility for any inaccuracies.

Nijmegen, August 17, 2000  Marianne Soeters
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Geshe Chakawa
Compassion is a word that is almost overused. Our late friend Allen Ginsberg used to call it a buzz word, meaning it is used so much, by so many people and at so different levels, that it has almost lost its value. From the left wing – liberal, new age love and light – to the extreme right wing – conservative, tele-evangelists – everyone uses the word compassion. It has become too extreme, the use of the word compassion. So, you see, it has become a buzz word. To make it not to be a buzz word, to make it meaningful to us, we really have to get into the essence of compassion: what is it about? What does it mean when I, the individual human being, experiences this? What do I feel? How do I connect to it? How do I deal with every part of the world and with every part of me? This thinking will reclaim the meaning of the word compassion.

**BODHIMIND [SKT. BODHICITTA]: COMPASSION AND WISDOM**

The ultimate compassion is unlimited and unconditioned, and that is called bodhimind. Bodhimind really means unconditioned and unlimited love-compassion. We all do carry some compassion, some love, but ours is conditioned. The American expression is, ‘What is in there for me?’ When someone wants to do something good for somebody, there is always some motivation of, ‘What am I going to get out of this?’ You see, even when you do something good, it is conditioned. Since the essence of love and compassion is bodhimind, we’re going to talk about the development of the bodhimind, the relative and the absolute bodhimind both, which will be: compassion and wisdom.

It must say here, technically it’s not right if I say bodhimind is ultimate unconditioned love and compassion; technically, it’s wrong. Any Tibetan scholar will ask me, ‘How can you say that?’
and they can argue. Probably I can defend it. Though it’s technically not right, you can get a better idea that way. Practically speaking, it works. So you are going to train the mind to the ultimate love and compassion level and if that doesn’t make a difference to the individual, then anything else will be very difficult.

There are various ways for developing the bodhimind. The teachings emphasize on how to develop the bodhimind through a variety of systems, such as the *Lam Rim*, which we know, the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation* and so forth. All four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, Sakya, Nyingma, Gelug and Kagyu, talk about it in their own way.

On top of that, the Chinese and the Japanese Mahayana, the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Hindu traditions and I’m sure the Muslims, too, talk about compassion. All the great traditions, the great –isms, talk about love and compassion. The same goes for the new-age people, with their new-age gurus, like e.g. Ram Dass. They carry love and compassion as their main theme.

Let’s talk about the absolutely true, real compassion: bodhimind. That is what Buddha talks about. How can the individual develop this bodhimind? I’m not making propaganda because I am Tibetan, but if you look into it, you’ll find that the Tibetan tradition carries the complete system of developing the bodhimind. All others talk a lot about compassion and caring and also do something, but they did not develop a systematic way to develop it. The Tibetan system really has identified a particular mind, the bodhimind, and also tells you how you can get it. The systematic way of developing that mind boils down to two systems. That is:

1. The seven stages of developing the bodhimind – the system of Maitreya, Asanga and so forth.
2. The exchange stage of developing the bodhimind, the wisdom tradition, which is the system of Manjushri, Shantideva and so forth.

**TRAINING OF THE MIND: LOJONG**

The great Kadampa lamas, the followers of Atisha, developed a way how to work on this. That is called ‘training of the mind’, in Tibetan *lojong*. *Lo* is mind; *jong* is training or practice. So, lojong is training of the mind for bodhimind. These days, the word *lojong* is
used by so many people. Everybody talks about lojong, very lightly, so it’s becoming almost like a buzzword, too, which is not very good. When you’re talking about lojong, it should have a rich meaning, with feelings close to the heart. What really is lojong? A lot of people may tell you that lojong is the give-and-take technique, visualizing giving all your good things and taking in all sufferings. That is bullshit. People write books on it and these books are quite popular, as a matter of fact, but when you read them, they may use the word, but there is no lojong at all. Some people will tell you that the seven stages of development of the bodhimind is mind training, so therefore it’s lojong. That is not correct either. The lojong is really a very exclusive way of training the mind. It deals specifically with the Mahayana. The essence of it is how to develop the bodhimind. That’s why anything other than bodhimind, doesn’t correspond with lojong – doesn’t get it right. I like to make it absolutely clear to you. The idea of lojong is totally based on the exchange stage of development of the bodhimind, plus has the give-and-take practice, tonglen. That combination is called lojong. A lot of people talk about tonglen and label it as lojong, loosing the other leg completely. I do have a problem with that.

Various Kadampa lamas have taught lojong. There is the Eight Verses of lojong by Langri Tangpa, the Seven point mind training by GeShe Chekawa, the Wheel of sharp weapons [Tib. tson cha khorlo] and there’s another lojong called The peacock that digests the poison [Tib. maja dugjom]. There is a lojong called Essential nectar, another one called Essence of Mahayana and another one The key to open the door to Mahayana [Tib. tri gyen gon je]. There are a lot of them. A number of people, especially His Holiness is giving lojong teachings in various parts of the world today.

Out of them, I’d like to teach on the basis of the root verses of the Seven point mind training, which is supposed to be the essence of all lojong. There are a number of different Chekawa translations available, but I chose to pick up this one, it looked a little simpler to me, not so complicated. I also recommend a book to read Becoming a Child of Buddha’s by Gomo Tulku. Why am I recommending you this book when there are a lot of mind training texts that are available? Because I learned a lot of things from Gomo Rimpoche, who happens to be one of my gurus. When he finished
the book, he gave it to me for editing, and to correct spelling. The publisher gave me a copy he signed. I’m also using this as a commentary for these teachings. You don’t have to read from the beginning to the end, just try to read the subject that we cover. Read it three, four times, and every time you will pick up something different. That will be helpful.

We’ll go through the root text. It’s very useful to have a text. If you look at the text, you can get grounded. If you don’t look at the text you’re going to fly. What I am planning to do is a reasonable, not elaborate teaching on this that helps you try and make a difference to your life. I’m going to talk, and what you are supposed to do is pick up the message. The teaching is actually giving you material to meditate on. It is not story telling or entertainment. If you really want to make a difference to yourself, I really think you should ponder it carefully.
Homage to Great Compassion.

These instructions are the essence of the nectar. They have been passed down from Serlingpa.

They are like a diamond, the sun, and a medicinal tree. Understand the purpose and so forth of these texts. When the five degenerations are flourishing, transform them into the path to enlightenment.

ONE: PRELIMINARY SUPPORTING DHARMA PRACTICES
Initially, train in the preliminaries.

TWO: TRAINING THE MIND IN THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT
Training in relative bodhicitta
Put all the blame on the one. Meditate on everyone as kind. Train alternately in the two, taking and giving. Begin taking with yourself. Mount the two upon the breath. There are three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue. These, in brief, are the instructions for the post-meditation period. Be mindful in order to admonish yourself. Train yourself with the verses during all activities.

Training in ultimate bodhicitta
Having attained stability, be shown the secret. Consider phenomena to be like a dream. Analyze the nature of ungenerated awareness. Even the antidote itself is naturally free. Focus on the nature of the basis of all, the entity of the path. Between sessions be an illusionist.
THREE: BRINGING UNFAVORABLE CONDITIONS INTO THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT
When the vessel and its contents are filled with negativities,
Transform these unfavorable conditions
into the path to enlightenment.
Immediately apply whatever you meet to meditation.
Possess the four preparations, the supreme method.

FOUR: INTEGRATING THE PRACTICES IN A SINGLE LIFE-TIME
In brief, the essence of the instructions is to apply the five forces.
The Great Vehicle instructions on transference are those very five forces; cherish this behavior.

FIVE: THE MEASURE OF A TRAINED MIND
Combine all the Dharma into one intention.
Of the two witnesses, rely on the primary one.
Always rely on mental happiness alone.
The measure of being trained is to no longer regress.
To be trained is to possess the five signs of greatness.
You are trained when able even if distracted.

SIX: THE COMMITMENTS OF MIND TRAINING
1. Constantly train in the three general points.
2. Change your attitude, but remain natural.
3. Do not mention [others’] impaired limbs.
4. Do not think about others’ affairs.
5. Initially, purify whatever affliction is the strongest.
6. Give up all hope of reward.
7. Avoid poisoned food.
8. Do not hold a grudge.
9. Do not respond to malicious talk.
10. Do not lie in ambush.
11. Do not strike to the core.
12. Do not put the load of a dzo on an ox.
13. Do not aim to win the race.
14. Do not use perverse means.
15. Do not turn a god into a demon.
16. Do not seek [others’] suffering as a means to your own happiness.
SEVEN: ADVICE REGARDING MIND TRAINING
1. Perform all yogas with the one.
2. Apply the one to all perverse oppressors.
3. Do the two activities, one at the beginning and one at the end.
4. Be patient whichever of the two occurs.
5. Guard the two at the risk of your life.
6. Train in the three difficult ones.
7. Obtain the three principal causes.
8. Cultivate the three without deterioration.
9. Possess the three without separation.
10. Train in purity and impartiality with respect to objects.
11. Cherish all of the encompassing and profound trainings.
12. Meditate constantly on the special cases.
13. Do not look for other conditions.
14. Practice the most important right now.
15. Avoid the distorted understandings.
16. Do not be erratic.
17. Train continuously.
18. Attain liberation with the two, investigation and analysis.
19. Do not boast.
20. Refrain from retaliating.
21. Do not act impetuously.
22. Do not wish for gratitude.

translation: Gomo Rimpocbe, Becoming a child of the Buddhas
Geprezen zij Groot Mededogen.

Deze instructies zijn de essentie van de nectar.
Ze zijn overgeleverd via de traditie van Serlingpa.
Laat het belang van deze instructies goed op je inwerken.
Ze zijn als een diamant, de zon, een geneeskrachtige boom.
Laat het belang van deze instructies goed op je inwerken.
Wanneer de vijf degeneraties gedijen, zet ze om in het pad naar verlichting.

EEN: VOORBEREIDING
Oefen je eerst in de voorbereidingen.

TWEE: TRAINING IN BODHICITTA
Relatieve bodhicitta

- Geef het ene alle schuld.
- Mediteer op de grote goedheid van alle wezens.
- Beoefen afwisselend deze twee: nemen en geven;
  begin met te nemen van jezelf;
  laat die twee bewegen op de ademhaling.

De instructies voor tussen de meditaties:

- Drie objecten, drie vergiften en drie bronnen van deugd.
- Hou jezelf constant in de gaten.
- Train jezelf door middel van de verzen bij alles wat je doet.

Absolute bodhicitta

Als je stabiliteit hebt bereikt, ontvang dan de verborgen instructie:

- Beschouw alle verschijnselen als dromen.
- Onderzoek de aard van het ongeboren bewustzijn.
- Besef dat zelfs het tegengif eigenstandigheid ontbeert.
- Richt je aandacht op de grondslag van alle dingen, het wezen van het pad.

Zie tussen de meditaties alles als illusie.
DRIE: TRANSFORMATIE VAN SLECHTE OMSTANDIGHEDEN IN HET PAD VAN VERLICHTING

- Als de wereld vol kwaad is, zet die ongunstige omstandigheden dan in het pad van verlichting.
- Gebruik meteen wat je ook maar tegenkomt om te bemediteren.
- Maak je de vier voorbereidende beoefeningen eigen, de allerbeste methode.

VIJF: DE MATE VAN GETRAINDEHEID VAN DE GEEST

- De kerninstructie is kortweg het toepassen van de vijf krachten.
- Deze vijf zijn de mahayana instructies voor de overdracht van het bewustzijn (phowa); geef de voorkeur aan deze houding.

VIJF: DE MATE VAN GETRAINDEHEID VAN DE GEEST

- Alle dharma dient hetzelfde doel.
- Je verlaat je op de belangrijkste van de twee getuigen.
- Je behoudt steeds een vreugdevolle geest.
- De mate waarin de geest getraind is blijkt uit het gebrek aan terugval.
- Een getrainde geest kenmerkt zich door vijf tekenen van grootheid.
- De getrainde blijft bekwaam, ook al wordt hij afgeleid.

ZES: REGELS VOOR TRAINING VAN DE GEEST

1. Train je voortdurend in de drie algemene punten.
   [1 hou je ge- en beloften, 2 wees niet arrogant, 3 wees niet partijdig.]
2. Verander je innerlijke houding, maar gedraag je gewoon.
3. Spreek niet over de gebreken van anderen.
4. Bemoei je niet met andermans zaken.
5. Ban om te beginnen de grootste negatieve emotie uit.
6. Geef elke hoop op beloning op.
7. Vermijd giftig voedsel.
8. Koester geen wrok.
9. Ga niet in op kwaadwillige praat.
11. Tracht niet een ander te treffen.
12. Leg je lasten en verantwoordelijkheden niet bij een ander neer.
13. Probeer niet haantje de voorste te zijn.
15. Maak goden niet tot demonen.
16. Zoek niet je eigen geluk ten koste van anderen.

ZEVEN: ADVIEZEN VOOR TRAINING VAN DE GEEST
1. Laat alle handelen gericht zijn op één intentie. **ontv v bodhicitta**
2. Breng die éne intentie in stelling tegen alle weerstand. **motivatie - toewijding**
3. Pas de twee activiteiten toe:
   een aan het begin en een aan het eind **voor-/tegenspoed**
4. Welke van de twee ook verschijnt, wees lankmoedig. **ge-/beloften**
5. Behoed beide, als gaat het om je leven. **motivatie - toewijding**
6. Oefen je in de drie moeilijkheden. **verwin-d-vooringenomenheid op alle gebieden**
7. Verwerf de drie hoofdoorzaken. **motivatie - toewijding**
8. Ontwikkel alle drie en zorg dat ze niet afnemen. **voor-/tegenspoed**
9. Laat geen van drie achterwege. **voor-/tegenspoed**
10. Oefen in zuiverheid en niet-vooringenomenheid op alle gebieden. **voor-/tegenspoed**
11. Koester alle immense en diepzinnige methoden. **laat alle handelen gericht zijn op één intentie.**
12. Bemediteer voortdurend de belangrijke zaken. **laat alle handelen gericht zijn op één intentie.**
13. Zoek geen andere omstandigheden **laat alle handelen gericht zijn op één intentie.**
14. Kies meteen voor de belangrijkste beoefening. **laat alle handelen gericht zijn op één intentie.**
15. Vermijd verkeerd begrip. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
16. Wees niet onregelmatig (in je beoefening.) **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
17. Oefen gestaag. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
18. Bevrijd je door onderzoek en analyse. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
19. Wees niet arrogant. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
20. Wees niet rancuneus. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
21. Ga niet onbezonden te werk. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**
22. Wens geen dankbaarheid. **vermijd verkeerd begrip.**

Nederlandse vertaling: Piet Soeters.

Vertaling gebaseerd op Gomo Rimpoches Engelse vertaling en Gelek Rimpoches commentaar.
Homage

Homage to great compassion.
Thugje chenpo la chagsello

First the great compassion is praised. The word is *thugje chenpo*, not *Chenrezig*, which is the Tibetan name for Avalokiteshvara, the embodiment of compassion. The translation here says great compassion. But the word *thugje chenpo* is applicable to both, the deity Avalokiteshvara and to the mind of compassion. The English word does not convey that, and I presume neither does the Dutch.

When you say ‘homage to great compassion’, there are two types of homage: the relative and the absolute. Relatively, you are paying homage to Avalokiteshvara, who is the Buddha of Compassion. That is the direct meaning of this homage. Absolutely, you are not paying homage to a Buddha, but to a most important mind, the mind of great compassion. That is the hidden, real or absolute meaning.

Why is the mind of compassion praised? Compassion is important. It is important at the beginning, important in the middle, important at the end.

*Compassion is important at the beginning.* That is because it is your inspiration, it is your motivation. That is extremely important for us. Compassion to ourselves, compassion to our companion, compassion to the people we care for, is the inspiration that makes us to do whatever we are supposed to do, whatever we want to do. If you don’t have compassion, you don’t care for yourself, you don’t care for others, you don’t care for anything, so why should you bother? Even coming here is not easy. It’s difficult, sitting here for hours, all cramped in this room here. Why do we bother? Because
we care. Whatever our reasons may be, we care. Maybe you care for yourself, maybe you care for me. Maybe you care for a companion. Maybe you want to find a real good spiritual way to help yourself. Whatever your reason is for being here, it’s because you care.

A lot of people care a lot. They want to do something. Particularly, the Dutch always want to do something when there’s injustice. However, many of those who want to act against injustice do so based on anger, rather than on the basis of compassion. Late Allen Ginsberg was one of the responsible persons in the anti-war movement in de sixties, together with all these new-age gurus, like Timothy Leary, William Burroughs, Ram Dass etc. Those of you above 40 or 50 will know. They would fight and as a result of that they got burned out, like a balloon losing its air. That is because it was based on anger.

If your action is based on care, it is different. Whenever Buddhas and bodhisattvas have to be involved in any action, it is the compassion-mind that pushes, motivates and energizes them. Otherwise, they could go out for lunch, why bother? Why do I come from Michigan to here? Just because I care. I care because I think I may be able to contribute a little dry word that may have some effect on a person to relieve suffering. That’s why I come here; that’s why I go back and forth and do all this. I’d be happy if I could just do my usual projects and lie down, watch the television and see how the Washington circus is going. I’d be okay. But, it’s the motivation, which makes you move.

You know, Allen Ginsberg once all of a sudden asked me, ‘What is the purpose of poetry?’ The purpose of poetry I said, is to relieve suffering. All artists – musicians, painters, writers, editors – provide a little relief of some pain. The musicians, who play all kinds of different instruments and present different kinds of songs, create an atmosphere that will give us a little relief from the constant nagging pains and worries that we go through. This is what the Buddha says.

It is the caring that makes the difference. Mothers don’t lose their energy, efforts and enthusiasm when their child is suffering. Mind you, that is independent of whether you like your mother or not. Whether you get irritated or not, mothers always like to do something for their child. With the exception of a few, if the child calls you about two a.m., asking to pick them up 40 or 50 miles
away, the mothers will not hesitate to go. They put on an overcoat and go and pick them up. Parents are able to do that; that is their care. It might not necessarily be compassion, but it is care. And when I say that mothers like to do something, don’t look to your mother, look at yourself as a mother and what you would like to do, then you’ll understand better. There is a big difference between mothers looking at their children and children looking at their mother. You can clearly see that, whether you are a mother yourself or not.

So deal with your own personal experience. Because of this care, no matter how tired you are, no matter how difficult it may be, you will not have second thoughts for what needs to be done; you will just do it. That is the care we’re talking about. That is the reason why they you need compassion at the beginning.

Compassion is important in the middle. If you don’t have compassion during the contemplation period, you are in trouble. A lot of people say, ‘I dropped out, I got burned out, it is too much for me’. You try to do something, spend a couple of weeks at it and when nothing happens, you give up. You lost the priority and it is put on the end of the list of what ever you have to do. Loosing interest, being unable to complete your work, all those are lack of inspiration, lack of compassion. You understand? If in the middle, when you work so much, you feel, ‘Oh it is too much for me, I can’t do it’, remember, that is the sign you’re loosing the compassion! If you have compassion and caring for yourself, it will push you forward. It will be the source of inspiration and the key that pushes you. That’s why it’s important during the contemplation period.

How Buddha developed the bodhimmind. It is customary to tell you here a little story about how Buddha developed the bodhimmind. I’ll cut the story short. In one of the Buddha’s previous lives\textsuperscript{8} he was in the hell realm, pulling a horse-cart together with someone else. A terrible officer was beating them up. Suddenly Buddha felt an enormous compassion. He was not worried so much about his own pains, but felt so much compassion for the person who was pulling together with him, that he tried to take the whole thing on himself alone. The stupid officer behind saw that and hit the Buddha on the head, shouting, ‘What do you think you’re doing!’ That caused the death of the Buddha at that time and next time he was
reborn as a human being. So, this compassionate mind does not only carry the values that we as human beings see today, but it also carries that much value in the spiritual world, too.

Story of Asanga. I must share here another story. There’s a great Indian teacher, called Asanga, who lived in the very early period of Buddhism. Actually, Asanga and Nagarjuna are the co-founders of Mahayana teachings. Asanga wanted to know. He read somewhere a reference to transcendental wisdom, so he said, ‘Well, I shall practice, go do a retreat, and try to see Maitreya, the Buddha of love, and then I can learn from that Buddha and share whatever I learned with other people.’ That was his total goal.

So, he went up in some rocks somewhere, and sat there for three years, meditating, doing the same mantra, doing purifications, you name it. He tried everything to encounter with one of those enlightened Buddhas, possibly Buddha Maitreya. Three years passed, nothing happened, so he got tired, and gave up. He said, ‘It’s hopeless’ and walked away. He went back down the mountain where he met an old Indian guy who had a little piece of very soft, cotton cloth, with which he was rubbing a huge iron pillar. He was rubbing that iron pillar like shoeshine. So, Asanga said, ‘What are you doing?’ The Indian man said, ‘I want to make needles out of that big iron pillar’. He said, ‘Can you make needles out of that?’ ‘Yes, I can make many, but I have to have a little endurance.’

Asanga thought about it. ‘Well, I only spent three years at my task, maybe it’s not enough.’ So, he changed his mind and went back up the mountain. He sat another three years; nothing happened, so he came down again, and looked at the cave where he used to meditate. He saw some kind of cut in the rock. Something had kept on rubbing the rock, producing a deep cut in it. He said to himself, ‘What is this?’ After a while, he observed birds flying up and down, touching their feathers against it. ‘Oh my god! The soft feathers of birds occasionally touching, make such a deep cut in the rock. What kind of person am I?’ So he went back again, for three more years.

After twelve years, he gives up completely and leaves. The first thing he sees is a female dog on the road. On the upper part of the body, everything’s fine, but the lower part of the body is completely wounded, filled with worms. So, he feels a tremendous amount of compassion for the dog. He says, ‘I must help; I’ve
committed to help. How can I help?’ He starts thinking, ‘If I don’t remove those worms, then the dog is going to die, so I have to remove the worms. If I remove the worms, the worms are going to die. So, what am I going to do?’ He decides without any hesitation to cut a piece of flesh out of his own thigh to feed the worms. Then he thinks, ‘Well, if I touch the worms with my fingers, and I squeeze them, they may die, so, my purpose of saving both of them may be defeated. So, what can I do?’ Then he thinks, ‘Maybe I can take the worms out by my tongue, and then put them on the flesh one by one.’ He closes his eyes and puts his tongue out, trying to reach the maggots. And when his tongue seems to be getting close, and is not touching anything, he opens his eyes wondering what is happening. Instead of seeing the dog, he sees Maitreya Buddha standing there. Asanga says, ‘How unkind you are! I spent twelve years here, trying to see you.’ Maitreya says, ‘I was there, right in front of you, the day you started, but you couldn’t see me, because of your negativities. But today you have such great compassion, even to the extent of being willing to cut a piece of flesh from your own body and trying to save both the dog and the maggots, because of this compassion, you were able to cut a lot of your negativities, and are able to see me.’ Asanga says, ‘Before I do anything, I must show everybody that you are here. You cannot run away. I have to share you with everybody. I’m going to carry you on my shoulders, and go around the town, and show everybody the Maitreya Buddha!’ Whatever Maitreya says, Asanga will not listen. He carries Maitreya, running around the village, shouting, ‘Look everybody, Maitreya is here!’

Nobody saw Maitreya. But everybody thought this great scholar and teacher spent too much time up there and has now gone cuckoo – except for one old lady, who said, ‘Leave that dog alone!’ This old lady saw him carrying a dead dog’s body, while screaming that Maitreya is there. Otherwise, nobody else saw anything. That is one of the Asanga stories.

Again, the compassion and the caring made him return three times to meditate for a total of twelve years. Plus, he developed the compassion to even cut a piece of his own flesh to save the life of a maggot, and that made a difference. That’s why I say compassion is important during your contemplation period.
Compassion is important at the end. At the end it is important, too. Why? When you become a fully enlightened Buddha, if you don’t have compassion, surely you go out for lunch. Why bother? But constantly the Buddhas come back, and try to serve, and help. I’m saying ‘Buddha’ because I’m from a Buddhist background, that’s why, but the enlightened beings come back in different forms. They appear again and again in the form of a Buddha, or Jesus, Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, or maybe in the Dalai Lama form. Why do they have to come back? Because, of the compassion. These are the reasons why in order to train your mind, it is important to have compassion: at the beginning, during the contemplation, and even after enlightenment.

The basis of compassion is care. That care developed and made stronger becomes compassion, then great compassion, then bodhimind. Training the mind, lojong, will show you how you become a kind, compassionate, loving and caring person. According to the Buddhists view, bodhimind is grown out of compassion. If there’s no compassion, there’s no ground for bodhimind. Compassion is like the ground. Out of the ground we get fruit trees, we get grasses, we get flowers, everything that grows. The ground level here is a kind and compassionate mind. Therefore: ‘Homage to the great compassion!’

The authenticity of the teaching

These instructions are the essence of the nectar.

The word in Tibetan is dbutsi nyingbo⁹. The instructions here are actually what the word tells you: how to defeat all these sufferings, such as dying, illnesses, and accidents, that are constantly nagging us, life after life. Such instructions are the essence of nectar.

The word nectar is the translation of the Sanskrit amrita. A direct translation of that word would be: not-dying, living forever, immortality. That gives you another meaning, when you look at the four types of evils¹⁰, of which one is called the ‘evil of death’. In Tibetan the word for death is chi-wa, and the negative of that word is chi-me, which means ‘not dying’ or ‘deathlessness’. That indicates having completely destroyed the evil of death, which means: gained the buddha-level. So the word ‘essence of nectar’
here really means: the way to develop such a state: deathlessness, having defeated the evil of death.

There are three types of nectar: 1) medicinal nectar: a healing nectar, the essence of which overpowers illnesses; 2) nectar that defeats death, called the nectar of life; 3) uncontaminated nectar, i.e. the wisdom nectar, which defeats all contaminations; that is the stage of a buddha, the enlightened level. So these lojong instructions will tell you how to defeat the sufferings and attain the stage of buddhahood. Such instructions are the essence of nectar.

Traditionally, the Tibetan Buddhist way of presenting teachings first focuses on the authenticity of what is to be studied, looked at or meditated on. When it is not really authentic, then there is no guarantee that it's going to affect or help the individual. It is not enough that somebody like you or me comes up with a good idea and writes about it. It becomes a tradition when many, many people from Buddha onwards have had the same experience and have been helped by these methods.

If a teaching is not authentic, you cannot rely on it. These days we see so many rituals, practices or instructions performed, put together by wonderful writers, quite impressive, because so well composed. But from the karmic point of view, what does it do? It’s not authentic if somebody sits down and has really wonderful ideas and puts them together and makes a performance. No doubt it will be good entertainment, but what does that do to the individual from the karmic point of view? How does that help the people or environment?

If you look at Buddhist rituals, Buddha has made sure that each and every ritual has not only its own purpose, but it also contributes to the environment and the inhabitants. That’s why in the Buddha’s tradition, authenticity becomes necessary. Otherwise, I can sit here and make dreams of so many beautiful things, you know, I can have things singing around, and all of you can go and dance, lie down, get up, experience all kinds of things. I’m very sure I’m capable of doing that. But I can’t do that. That’s not my background. I’m capable, if I want to, but I don’t want to. It has to be the essence of the Buddha’s personal experience that is shared. That which has some reliability, some value in it. Not somebody’s delusional thoughts and some good ideas, put together – that can’t
be Dharma. It can be a performance, but it’s not a spiritual thing, according to Buddha.

The message must also be tested, and put into practice, with a number of people gaining the same experience. Buddha’s message is based on his personal experience, which he shared with other people. When you do everything right, no matter whoever or wherever you might be, you’ll have the same experience. That is the value that Buddha always emphasized. When it is an authentic teaching, these values are there.

It also has to be experienced by many others. When they do it the same old way, the result must come the same old way. It has to be the same result. That’s why any important Buddhist teaching, particularly from the Tibetan point of view, tries to prove from the beginning that it is authentic. People who try to follow this advice, and try to practice, are not just doing an experiment. They’re not devoting their time and energy to do something that does not have a result. Why should we fool each other? These are the values of the authenticity.

In short, any practice should lead the individual to the enlightenment level, not the other way around. This is the basis on which the traditional Buddhist teachings have been evaluated by a group of experienced adepts – to make sure it’s reliable. Otherwise, why should you and I spend the time we don’t have?

Remember, at the beginning of the Lamrim you find the four great points. These first lines are the equivalent of those points for this particular teaching.

The lineage of the teaching

They have been passed down from Serlingpa.

You may think, So what? What is the big deal? Must be some guy called Serlingpa. Maybe he’s a little famous, but still, so what? There’s a hidden message here. This sentence gives you a quality of this particular teaching: a) It gives you the unbroken lineage. b) It tells you that Atisha took the dangerous journey of thirteen months to get this particular teaching from Serlingpa.

Atisha, the famous Bengali teacher who later came to Tibet to reform or purify the existing Buddhist practice, went all the way from India to Sumatra – at that time! – with great difficulties. Mind
you, even a person like Atisha, one of the greatest masters of the eleventh century, took the trouble of traveling for thirteen month on a fishing boat, crossing the ocean to get this teaching! (And, of course thirteen months back). This makes us at least to think that if such a person took that trouble, there must be something in it! Atisha’s activities have become extremely important, not only in India but also in Tibet. Wherever he went or whatever he did, whatever he touched, became important and that is to be attributed to this, the lojong.

This not only goes for Atisha, but for all the great masters of the great traditions. If you look at these great people’s tributes, they are mostly to be attributed to the great compassion, caring and bodhimind. Even in our recent history, look what Mahatma Gandhi did. If Gandhi’s activities against the British imperialism had been based on anger, he would have been like the militant Indian leader Supash Bosh who wanted to gain the freedom by violence. We don’t hear of him any more, but we do hear of Gandhi, so we try to follow Gandhi rather than Supash Bosh. And likewise Mother Theresa. People like to follow Mother Theresa, rather than Milosevic. That is the difference between compassion and military power. That is why compassion is so important. Look in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the great saints we talk about, like Saint Thomas etc., the bottom line why their activities made them to be a saint, why we admire them is compassionate wisdom. So the compassion is the one who makes the difference, to us and to our future generation, to everybody. Not the anger, hatred, or militant mental attitude. That has been proved again and again in Eastern and Western history, both. Not only in the spiritual but in every part of the human history. This is the quality of this particular way of developing compassion. That is why, when it says ‘It has been passed down from Serlingpa’ you can’t say, ‘So what?’

How does this training of the mind, come from the Buddha? From the Buddha it was shared with Maitreya Buddha, [and from him with Asanga] and then already in the time of Buddhism in India, there were three different divisions: one is Dharmarakshita, one is Maitriyogi, both from India, and the other is Serlingpa.

What happened is that in the 11th century, this particular teaching had become very rare in India. It was almost unavailable. It
was Serlingpa, who happened to be in Indonesia, who still held the lineage. India is referred to as the land of aryas, extraordinary beings. At that time, it was true. (Today, it might not be; it is the land of the atomic bomb, absolutely unnecessary for India, you know. Mind you, it’s birthplace of the Buddha, it’s Mahatma Ghandi’s country. Why does India have to be involved with that? Absolutely crazy, isn’t it?) In those days it was the land of aryas. Yet even in the land of aryas, this teaching was not available. Atisha therefore spent thirteen months to cross the ocean, to try to get these very teachings – just a couple of pages. During the time of Serlingpa all three different divisions were collected into one person. It was Atisha, who got it from Serlingpa, and brought it over to Tibet. He shared it with only Drom Rinpoche, the founder of Reting Monastery a layperson, not a monk.

_Drom Rinpoche_. In my personal opinion, Drom Rinpoche was female. I’m sure if some other Tibetan lamas heard that, they might say, ‘Did he go crazy? He’s probably going senile’. But I have very strong reasons. Every other teacher at that time was in a monk’s robe. This particular funny person was in the lay person’s robe, had long hair, and an interesting belt, that goes nine times around the body. She is the teacher of every Kadampa geshe next to Atisha. Somehow they left her there [considered a man]. My theory is, (I’m a funny person, I think funny things, so I cook up lot of conspiracy theories) those days were the days of the refining of Tibetan Buddhism, and Atisha came from India, while so many other great teachers were there; if in the middle of that, a woman would be running around, it would make a lot of people very suspicious. They’d think, ‘What the hell is going on up there?’ So, probably, they put her in a funny robe there, and she took care of Atisha throughout his life.

The day when they met, until he passed away, he or she was a 24-hour companion of Atisha. The day when he or she came and met Atisha, somebody else had invited Atisha to lunch, but even though he committed to it, Atisha wouldn’t go. Finally, they all said, ‘You have a commitment, you have to go’. So he went and stayed a very short period. When they served lunch, he said, ‘Where is the share for my guest?’ He kept on collecting everything to share with his guest. By the time Atisha came back from that lunch, Drom Rinpoche arrived at Atisha’s place, and they
said, ‘Atisha went for lunch.’ He or she said, ‘I don’t have time to wait; I’m going to go there.’ So when Atisha was coming back, they met on the road. The first thing he said is, ‘Well, I brought your share.’ and he gave him or her a piece of butter, a piece of dough, a little piece of meat, and some cooked daikon radish. That night, he or she made that butter into a lamp, and put it near Atisha’s bed. Since that day, until Atisha passed away, every day she made a butter lamp for Atisha, at his bedside.

So, Atisha gave these teachings only to Drom Rimpoche and to nobody else. Drom Rimpoche also gave them to one or two great Kadampa lamas, not to all those big Kadampa geshes. It came down as a ‘most secret teaching passing from one mouth to one ear’, or maybe two ears only. It went from one person to another person, up to Geshe Chekawa. During this period, Chekawa used this practice to help lepers. At that time, in the 1100’s, there was no treatment, so they did this practice with a lot of lepers, and it was very helpful. It even became known all over Tibet as the ‘leprosy practice’. At that time, Chekawa decided that to keep this as a secret would be a very big loss for future generations. So, Chekawa started this as a public teaching, and wrote this text.

**The qualities of the teaching**

They are like a diamond, the sun, and a medicinal tree.

First of all, these teachings are like a diamond. A diamond can cut any glass or any inferior jewel, but those cannot cut the diamond. So, this means: the value of this lojong is superior to any teaching you may see or hear. Also this. Traditional India was a princely state, so if you were the son of a king, you were going to be a crown prince and later you were going to be the king. No matter how immature you might be, a little baby or eight years old or fifteen years old, by virtue of being a prince, you would be more respected, more valued than that of seasoned ministers. Just like that, even a broken bodhimind, even an incomplete, one, or even the slightest touch of bodhimind, makes the individual much better and important than that of a seasoned arhat. That’s why they are like a diamond. In Tibetan, it is actually *dorje*, indestructible, but this translation goes straight to diamond, so it is fine with me.
Second, they are like the sun. When the sun shines it destroys all darkness. Likewise, what Buddha is trying to tell you is that when you adapt this message within you, not just because you heard about it, or read it, not because you tried to practice a little bit, but because you actually meditated, learned, and gained benefit out of it – its benefit is like sunshine. It will destroy all the darkness of our negative emotions; it clears the dark shadow of ego.

It also is like a medicinal tree. Not only the medicinal tree itself, but even the branches and the leaves cure the illnesses. This is homeopathic cure; it clears the ego.

**Understand the purpose and so forth of these texts.**

After having been told that these teachings are authentic, they are important, they are like a diamond, the sun and a medicinal tree, this line says; ‘Now understand that this is what this teaching is all about’. You have to understand that these particular texts are for the purpose of helping yourself.

**Motivation.** I would like to raise an important point here. A lot of the people I come across, would like to develop spiritually, but they really don’t know what to do. Some will tell you, ‘We don’t have a direction.’ Others say, ‘I don’t know what to do.’ It is true; if you don’t have direction, you don’t know what to do, it is a big problem. I always try to tell you, don’t do something if you don’t know what you’re doing. Don’t pretend to be somebody when you know you are nobody. It will get you nowhere and it cheats other people, which is a very heavy negativity. So whatever you are doing, you must do knowingly.

Where do we get our direction from? Normally we get our direction from our motivations. When your motivation is right, it gives you direction. Do you understand what I’m talking about? What are you doing this for? What do you want to achieve by doing it? Why are you toying around with this thing called, ‘training of the mind?’ Setting your motivation, whether it is for the day, for the week, for the month, for life, or even for a session, it will give you the direction you need.

Where are you going to get the motivation? Buddhism, particularly Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism will tell you, ‘For the benefit of all sentient beings, I would like to become a Buddha, for that reason, I will do this and that.’ We may listen to that, and behave like
a little parrot that repeats words after somebody who has some
good nuts for them, but does that really help us? Does that make
sense? Each one of you, please think about this. In one way, spir-
itual practice is complicated and difficult – a goal that looks a long
way off. In another way, it’s simple and easy and very grounded:
‘Yeah, I’d like to become a Buddha, but when and where and how?’ So watch yourself. Look inside.

You know, we automatically use our mind to solve our problem
by tapping into our education and our information. We start pick-
ing up and making use of it to solve problems, with or without re-
alizing we are doing it. That’s what we do all the time. So any chal-
lenge that pops up in our life, our mind is busy with how to deal
with it: ‘How am I going to handle it, what am I going to say?
Should I say it the nice way, or should I show my temper, or what
should I do?’ And automatically you calculate and draw conclu-
sions and you do something. We are so used to using the mind for
solving problems. Nothing wrong with that. But, sometimes you
also have to watch, how the mind itself functions. Before we can
train our mind, we have to know a little bit about our mind. If you
don’t know anything about the mind, what are you going to train?

A verse says,

The nature of the mind is luminous, but thoughts temporarily
pop up.

If you think about it, the person is not an ‘angry person’, the per-
son is not a ‘jealous person’, but the emotion of anger and the
emotion of jealousy take over the consciousness of that person.
Just watch yourself and you will know it. If you want to train your
mind, you should at least know how the mind functions. Don’t
simply use the mind in one direction – looking externally for solv-
ing the problems.

When the five degenerations are flourishing,
transform them into the path to enlightenment.

1. Time. The Hindu tradition talks here about \textit{kaliyug} \textsuperscript{14} – degener-
ated age. In the 1960s and 1970s we used to say our age is a de-
genated age, but today is the truly degenerated age. From every
point of view. In the 60s and 70s there was a hesitation for throw-
ing bombs, worrying about the Russians, ‘What will happen to
New York?’ Today there’s no worrying, it’s just throwing bombs.
A little excuse is used, but the bombs are thrown everywhere, in Iraq, in Yugoslavia, and who knows where next.... And what do we get back? Cyclones – like the one in Oklahoma that hit the power station, two million people out of power and some 30 people killed. Our teacher used to say at this point,

In earlier times the karma took a long time to return to you, nowadays it goes round on the fingertip

That quick it comes. That is the sign of the degenerated age.

During this sort of time the toxic environment will make you suffer tremendously on your spiritual path. A number of people think it has nothing to do with it. That’s not true. The toxic air, the ground, the water, all of them gives you a big disturbance for your spiritual practice, for your mental level. It is a very important point, we have to remember that. A contaminated environment is very harmful. Contaminated companions are harmful. They are called negative friends. Interestingly, if you read the earlier Kadampa lamas, they talk about negative friends a lot. They say there is no such person called ‘negative friend’ with horns and fangs. They will not appear in that way. They will come as caring, loving, close, ‘poor you, you are right, blah, blah, blah.’ In that manner they will come and take you away from your own spiritual path. These are called negative friends.

When you are talking about the degenerated age, it’s the toxic environment, the negative friends, our own negative thoughts, delusions, and the conditions. Conditions like ours where we are extremely busy. Busy because we have to work. We have to work because we have to pay our bills. If you’re rich, you have big fat bills to pay. If you are poor, you have your small little bills to pay, but you have to pay it. You have to work, you have to do it. Rich or poor, makes no difference, you have to do it, so that cuts the free time that we have. That’s also the degenerated age. But it doesn’t mean don’t work. Okay?

2. People. The sign of the degeneration of the people is the saying, ‘What is in there for me?’ Everybody is looking for economic profit; nothing else is taken into consideration. As long as your economics are going fine, everything is fine. You also do whatever is best for your economy rather than what is really good or bad. That is the sign of degenerated people. Really true. Look into our
life. What is the major consideration today of everyone in power
today in the world? Economy. You know, when Clinton was run-
ning for president of the Unites States, nobody ever expected him
to win, because he did not belong to the blue-eyed club. His advis-
ers formed a committee, called the war-zone committee. They
found: ‘the economy, the stupid economy.’ So all his campaign
changed from domestic development to economy. And that is
how he got elected.

3. Delusions. Obviously the next degeneration is the delusion. Dur-
ing the degenerated age the negative emotions rise much stronger
than normal. Every one of us is caught in delusion. I really think it
unfortunately is true that our negative emotions today are more
powerful than that of people in Buddha’s time. There is much
more busy-ness than before. We are much more mean, more cun-
ning, more motivated to cheat people. That is the problem we
have: all kinds of delusion, our own personal delusions and inter-
national delusions. At this moment we’re caught in the middle of
international delusion. What to do to stop this crazy guy\textsuperscript{15}, killing
all these people, cleaning the ethnic culture? We decided to bomb
– which is the safest – and not to send ground troops for they’re
going to be killed. That is international delusion. It is difficult to
find an answer. There is no answer; what can you do? Can you
simply sit there and watch, do nothing? Or are you going to go
there and bomb and kill so many people? That choice is driving
you from bad to worse. That is what I mean by international delu-
sion. That is where we are.

4 Life. The next one is the degeneration of life. Of course our life
gets shortened – we are bombed or caught in the cyclone, not to
mention all these diseases that have come up and shorten our life.

5. View. Whatever view we take, whatever decision we take, it has
a problem. If you decide to bomb you have a problem because
you kill a lot of innocent people, or the poor soldiers get killed as
soldier, they also loose their life. They may have had direct in-
volved in the ethnical cleansing or robbing the people or rap-
ing the women, but they did not issue the order, they did not take
the decision. The decision was taken in Belgrade, by Milosevic. But
the bombs are not pointed at Milosevic, the smart bombs are not
searching for Milosevic, but for the soldiers. And if we do nothing,
it we let him do whatever he is doing, there are problems, too. So it is degenerated international view. About the personal degenerated view I don’t have to tell you; you know better.

These are the five degenerations. What do you do during a degenerated age like this? When you cannot transform negative emotions into the path to enlightenment, then what you have to do is to have a severe, restricted way to restrain them so they don’t create negative karma, which brings more suffering. In the 1100’s Geshe Potowa talked a lot about the degenerated age during his teachings. One of his disciples became so worried about it and complained, ‘Oh my great guru, this and this and this is degenerated blah, blah, blah.’ Then Geshe Potowa said,

It may be a degenerated age in general, but it’s not a degenerated age for you, it’s not a degenerated age for me.
For you and me it’s a great opportunity.

That’s his bottom line. The degenerated age is there. There is tremendous amount of toxic dumping going on, it’s true. There’s busy-ness and negative thoughts coming up all the time, however, we also have an opportunity here. The individual should not go into the degenerated age. This is important. The text says: ‘When the five degenerations are flourishing, transform them into the path to enlightenment.’ Its sounds exactly like what we need today. Let’s find out how that is going to work.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Audience: Is our age really that much degenerated? And in what perspective of years do we have to view that? Isn’t there always degeneration to a certain extent?
Rinpoche: In Buddhism and other Eastern religions they talk a lot about the degenerated age. But also, really, for us this is a great time. Here right at this moment we have the best of the two worlds: of the material as well of the spiritual world. Whether it is degenerated or not, I don’t know. According to the text we have to talk about the degenerations, but truly speaking we’re having a great time. That’s my personal feeling. Will it degenerate? Who knows? I’m not a soothsayer. One must not take the text too literally. Think about ourselves at this moment: we are free, we are no longer slave of anybody, we are not subjects of a medieval king, we
can make choices, we’re not handicapped and though we do have enough suffering we’re not that bad off, we’re not in Kosovo, we’re not in Africa. So we are okay, we have the best of both worlds: from the spiritual angle you can pick up what you need, whether Judeo-Christian, Buddhism, or New Age ‘love and light’. You have choice. And we have the best of the material world, too. We have all these scientific developments, if you want a smart bomb you can have one…. So personally, for us this is great time, not a degenerate time at all. That’s my opinion.

Audience: You stressed the responsibility of leaders in taking decisions, e.g. leaders in Belgrade decide what the soldiers in Kosovo have to do. How about your individual responsibility as a soldier in executing their orders? The connotation, especially for the Dutch, is the excuse German soldiers after the Second World War used for the prosecutions, ‘I was ordered so I had to do it.’ Could you say something about that?

Rimpoche: I like to. It is true, each and every individual soldier there has a responsibility, so no one should be excused. That responsibility is definitely there. But the major responsibility, the bigger picture, falls on the decision makers. They make the decision and soldiers are made to execute that. But if the soldiers are taking pleasure out of it, and using it for their best, that is their fault. True, even now after fifty years, we see that we are not that much angry with those individual soldiers that did their duty in fighting and protecting their life, yet we still are angry with the persons that were very strongly mean, managing and pushing the holocaust. You can see the difference even now, fifty years later. There is the example of John Demjanjuk in Cleveland who was arrested and brought to trial in Israel just a few years ago, on the accusation of having been the leader of a concentration camp. Though he had worked there, he was proved not to be the leader and therefore he was set free with even expenses paid. So, I’m not telling you the soldiers have no responsibility, but they’re not equal to the leaders in responsibility.
Point One:
Preliminary Supporting Dharma Practices

Initially, train in the preliminaries.

The preliminaries are:
1. embracing human life: its recognition and it being difficult to find,
2. impermanence, in particular death and the dying stage;
3. thinking about and analyzing the sufferings of the lower realms;
4. seeking refuge;
5. karma: [actions and their consequences];
6. thinking and analyzing the sufferings of samsara in general.

I’m not going to talk in detail about those. If I do so, I won’t get to the other points. For the preliminaries I mainly refer to the dharma groups that you have of the Three Principles of the Path and the Lamrim – which you do in Jewel Heart throughout the year. Those are your preliminaries [Tib. ngondro] for this practice, and for many they are the actual path. Why are those six the preliminary for lojong? Because this teaching belongs to the Mahayana teachings.

*Meditation.* I’m going to make very short, practical points. You can use them two ways – either meditatively analyzing and accepting it, or through some kind of praying. Which one you want to do is your choice. I’ll go in-between.

What is the first and foremost thing that you do in your meditation? Watch your mind. What you are watching? You watch whether your mind is occupied with negative emotions, with positive emotions, or you are in neutral state. That is the first thing to do.
If your mental state is in a negative state, can you meditate? Truly speaking, no. In that case any meditation, including the calming down meditation, will become a negative action. That’s why it’s not very helpful in the long run. So, what you do is, you try to change the mental state from a negative level to a positive level. Can you switch like that, flipping over like a hamburger? No, you cannot. That’s why you focus on the breath. You sit there and count the breath.

Learning how to focus and concentrate is one independent purpose of meditation. [Skt. *shamata*]. Another point, the major point, is to make the transition from a negative state into a positive state. At that level, it is not concentrated meditation but a meditation that is dealing with the subject, analytical meditation. [Skt. *vipashyana*]. These two types of meditation: analytical – which I’m going to talk about – and concentrated, both have to go together. These two are like the two wings of a bird. If a bird has two wings, it will be able to fly. If it has only one wing, it will circle. Therefore, both of them are needed.

1. Embracing human life. The first subject for meditation is our life. What kind of life do I have? Is my life good or bad? If you really give a little time to yourself, you will be bombarded with all the wrong things that have happened in your life – ‘This thing is wrong, that thing is wrong, I am sick, I am weak, I’m too fat, I don’t have a companion, I don’t have a good job, I don’t have money, I don’t have a house, I don’t have a car…..’ Bombarded. You are going to get bombarded by all of those. What should you do with all those thoughts? Ignore them. These negative thoughts will come. Let them go. Find out – if you want to – whether there is really a valid reason for these thoughts. You are going to find that most of them are there because of too much desire.

You are really not going to have a valid reason. Your life is the life that Buddha had earlier. It is the same life that Einstein had. You may think Einstein and Buddha were genius and you are stupid. You may be wrong about that. Stupidity and genius come in two ways – naturally and built up by training yourself. There is always two ways, never only one. See the quality of life. Compare it with any other life that we see: the dogs, the cats, the horses, the cockroaches, the mice, the birds, and the fish. Ours is different – it is a human life.
I’m a human being, I have these qualities in my life. The bottom line is, can I make a difference to myself? I can make a difference to myself. If I want to become a Buddha, this life is capable of giving me that.

Think about it! Think about it until you’re totally convinced that the life that you have is a really wonderful life. You will probably get many things in there like, ‘I’m sick, I have this and that problem.’ It’s true, yet you also have all these qualities, which any other life doesn’t have. We happen to be this physical identity, which we call a human being and that makes a big difference. We must appreciate that, convince ourselves of it. Appreciate the life. Also, recognize this life is impermanent. It’s a wonderful, beautiful life, but it’s impermanent.

We have many excuses for putting ourselves down. Don’t do that. If we want to make use of this life, we all have the capability. Look everywhere today, whatever the scientists achieve, is a human achievement. All the spiritual achievements of Buddha, Jesus or Ghandi are human achievements. They are not a different type of human being than we are. If you really think, it’s there. The achievement of anybody – Milarepa, Ghandi, Mother Theresa, or Dr. King. Think! There is no difference in the life itself, it is only a matter of how we use it, how we think, how we utilize our resources. Zillions of people waste their life, their capacity, their capability. That is sad.

The spiritual training that the Buddha wanted to give you was, ‘Don’t waste your life! Don’t waste it. Hey! This is important, this is valuable, this is fantastic, it is not something which you can easily get’. The Kadampa lamas’ earlier teachers used to tell us,

If I have three days to live, I should make sure my next immediate life is safe and good. If I have three years to live, I should make sure that I’m totally free of all sufferings and of the negative emotions that cause suffering.

2. Impermanence. There are two types of impermanence here; the subtle and the gross impermanence. The gross example of impermanence is death. The subtle example of impermanence is the changing from minute to minute. Our life is like a bubble in water. It is very, very fragile. Important, beautiful, wonderful, capable, and very fragile. I am giving you material to meditate, to train your mind, which means you have to think about it. To tell you the
truth, meditation really means: think! Think, analyze and concentrate. That is meditation. Nothing else.

Motivation is the key to giving you direction. Motivation is to help free yourself from negative emotions. Like it or not, the Buddha’s number one choice for the purpose of spiritual practice is to free yourself from negative emotions. The bottom line is, the source of suffering is negative emotions, and nothing else.

If you cannot cut the source, no matter how much you work here, it’s not going to cut down anything. And you’ve got to do it now, because you cannot do it tomorrow. Tomorrow never comes. Life is not permanent. Who knows whether tomorrow is going to come first or the so-called next life? Nobody knows. In normal cases, those of us who are sick, who have terminal illnesses are supposed to be going first, but many people go before them. As a matter of fact, we all have terminal illnesses. We’re all going to go one day for sure. Who is going to last here? Forget about 100 years, 50 years from today not a single one of us, except maybe the little kids here, will last. Gone! Do we ever think about that? We all go. Living doesn’t last forever, definitely.

When we look at a spiritually developed person like Buddha, or all those great teachers we talk about today, we must realize they’re all gone. Economic power, military power, political power, nothing can make life permanent. These are suggestions to talk to your own mind. Otherwise, the mind will think we are permanent, we are here forever, until we get the biggest shock. So you have to meditate about impermanence. In other words, think about impermanence.

The Buddha introduced two purposes for training the mind. The ultimate purpose and the temporal purpose. We really have to think that the temporal is the first goal. That purpose is freeing ourselves from the sufferings that we encounter every day, so you’ll take one step towards a better future life – if you believe in reincarnation. Freeing ourselves from negative emotions is our direct goal because negative emotions are the cause of suffering.

When you meditate you think, analyze and draw conclusions, and also pray to the enlightened beings, that you may be able to develop the true understanding of impermanence. Impermanence is absolutely true. We’re bound to die sooner or later, and what will happen if I die? Should I be sad and worried? Will that help? Is it enough? No, it’s not enough. It’s not even the right thing to do.
4. *Seeking refuge.* I must share with you a story here. In Jewel Heart Holland, there is a medical doctor. Last year she had terrible illnesses – a very big problem. Because of this illness, she used to faint. When I went there, she told me, ‘I realize I have nothing.’ I said, ‘How?’ She said, I’m a medical doctor, I know I’m going to die, and what I’m thinking is: what can I do for myself? I can’t think of anything else except refuge, and that’s a very low level and so I have nothing.’ I said, ‘You’re lucky you can think of refuge! That itself is good enough. That will make sure, at least, your next life is good.’

Bite what you can chew. Thinking of taking refuge alone, is more than enough. What is not good, is, ‘Oh how sad that I have to go’. That will not give you any extension of life, so that’s not going to help you. There’s no use resisting. If you’re going, you’re going, that’s fine. You’re not going to disappear, you’re not going to be lost. You’re simply changing your identity, changing the body. The identity is whatever we have that’s made of those chemicals, and it has its limitation, and when that limitation comes, you can do nothing. Each and every one of us will go, so do not fight or resist. If you have to go, you have to go. At the time of death, there are certain periods where your consciousness will be clear, and certain periods where it will be not so clear, and there will be a period of darkness, and there will be period of light thereafter.

When the consciousness is clear, this is the time you have to think of positive things. Think of the compassion that you had. Think of the kindness you shared with others, and others’ kindness shared with yourself. If you can’t think of enlightened beings, think of the generosity you have experienced. Those are the important points we can think about. If you can take refuge, fantastic! If you can develop a desire of being freed from suffering, that itself is very good. These are the points we can easily think about. It is also important to know what you should not think about. Don’t think about anger. Do not entertain any negative emotions at that time. If you are near some friend who is dying and you try to help them, generate positive thoughts, do not contribute to a rise in negative emotions. These are important things you can do.

Having said that, we are not going through that yet. This is for your information. At this moment, get impermanence in your mind while you are meditating. Think! Whatever life we have, we
have to use it. We don’t get anything to add onto that. It is like the running river which has to continue going somewhere. Whatever life we have, it’s going. There’s nothing adding up – no rainwater coming from any other hills adding to it. It’s going to be finished one day. Then look at the conditions. There are so many conditions that something can go wrong with our lives, there are so few things that help to extend our life. Think of those diseases – countless! When you really think of all this, we are very fragile. No matter how much you think you’re young right now. The bottom line is, we are certain we’re going to go, yet there’s no certainty about when we’re going to go. Nobody knows. How many great-grandparents have attended great-grand children’s funerals? That will tell you it’s not certain. There’s nothing certain in this life. Those are the lines you should meditate on and realize as true. When you meditate on that, don’t get too extreme and say, ‘Oh how sad it is, we’re all going to go!’ Yes, we know we’re all going to go, but if you don’t realize it, then it’s a problem.

5. Karma. So the question comes up, at the time of death, what can help? That means, what will do me well, what can I do to gain something thereafter? Not the money, savings, life insurance, job, fame, position, nothing! Tibetan teachers have a saying,

The kings will leave their kingdom,
and the beggars will leave their begging bowls.

When the bardo comes, whether king or beggar, nothing they have will help. So what can help you at that time? Only positive karma will help you and negative karma will harm you. It goes with us just like a shadow that follows the body. You have only these two, in the form of an imprint only. How they materialize depends on the conditions. So while life is in your hands, help yourself, because no one else can, except you. How do you help yourself? Build positive karma, and cut down on negative karma. Cut down the negative emotions, build the positive emotions. That will do the job.

The bottom line is, we have to fight or get rid of, or clear, or purify our negative emotions. Some people like to call it purification. It sounds a little more mystical, rather than to get rid of it or clear it, which is fine with me. Purifying all negativities may sound too holy. We don’t want to make it too mystical. The practice
must be real to us – that is the most important point. If it becomes too holy, then it will take something away from you, and won’t help much.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Audience: What is the difference between action for a certain good cause from anger, from compassion or from a strong feeling of indignation?
Rimpoche: The first point is, your help is influenced by anger. ‘I go out of my way to help you, because I don’t want him.’ Like wanting to help Tibet not out of love from Tibet, but out of hatred for communism. The second point is, you harm because of compassion. Because of compassion you kill, because otherwise they’re going to kill so many. It’s possible. All of them have a double connotation: the helping point has its own positive connotation, the harming point also has its own connotation. So, both these are mixed actions. I share one example I know. Buddha was supposed to be a chief-captain of a ship with 500 soldiers. There was a robber a board that unless being stopped would kill those 500. So Buddha killed that guy. Not as a Buddha but in one his previous lives. That is the example. So there was a negativity of killing one person, yet there was a positivity of saving 500 lives. What he did was the right thing, however that end did not justify the deed. This is the example. The examples are for us to watch and to observe and to figure out what we can think. In my opinion the end never justifies the means.

Audience: You talked about karma being the shadow that follows you at death. So my question is, at death there is no self, no identity, so to what does the karma belong to?
Rimpoche: Well, I’m not sure whether you leave a self behind. You may leave your physical identity behind, but you may still have a mental identity, and your mind is certainly with you. I mean you yourself is certainly with you.

Audience: But what part of you?
Rimpoche: If I had that, then there would be true inherent existence, but because we don’t have that, we don’t have inherent existence. That’s a very important point. If I have something to point out, ‘this is it’, there should be true inherent existence. I don’t have
that to point out, ‘this is it’ But you are there. It is a collection of impermanent things.

Audience: Then how is the karma connected with me?
Rimpoche: Because that’s you. It is a continuation of yourself.

Audience: Then that implies some sort of permanence...
Rimpoche: No, it is a continuation. Trungpa Rimpoche uses the word ‘continuation of discontinuity’. A very useful and important word. There is something continuing, which is a collection of something which is you, which you cannot point out as ‘this is it’. If you could point to something and say ‘this is it’, there should be inherent existence. When you can’t, we say, there is no inherent existence. It is a very subtle matter, and I’m glad you’re thinking that way. That’s a good way of thinking. Actually you are very much on the right track.
Point Two: Training the Mind in the Path to Enlightenment

I like to remind you of what the Kadampa teachers used to say:

There are two activities,
the activity of the beginning and the activity of the conclusion.

The activity of the beginning is correcting your motivation: what is your purpose, why are you spending time, money and energy for the spiritual practice, in particular here today?

Motivation is most important. Not only it inspires you, it really guides you, it determines whether your action is right, good and complete or bad. ‘Well, what is in here in that Tibetan Buddhism?’ or ‘Well, I like to pick up something and make myself a great teacher’ — that type of motivation is not considered to be good. Though it may be good to become a teacher, the thought, ‘I would like to learn and pick up to become a teacher’ is not great.

What is the correct motivation? The correct motivation that Buddha has recommended and that the great bodhisattvas, the great learned masters and the great maha-siddhas have followed ever since, is the bodhimind, which we have already been talking about quite in detail\(^\text{17}\). Even if you don’t have a good understanding of what bodhimind really is, at least you think,

To benefit all beings I would like to become a buddha for which I would like to learn how to become a buddha. For that reason I’m sitting here today, I’m learning, I’m in Jewel Heart and doing the spiritual work.

The teaching you are listening to has many qualities. I talked about them yesterday\(^\text{18}\), but I would like to remind you of the following,
- This is the path through which all enlightened beings have taken their position.
- It is the essence of the early Indian saints and scholars’ practice and learning.
- It is the essential teaching of both the Old and New Kadampa tradition, out of which we’re doing Geshe Chekawa’s mind training.

When I say New Kadampa, I’m not talking about a specific group that calls itself New Kadam, but I’m talking about the tradition from Tsongkhapa onwards. From Atisha to Tsongkhapa it is called the Kadampa tradition and from there onwards it is the New Kadampa tradition.

I. TRAINING IN RELATIVE BODHICITTA

Relative bodhicitta means: actual bodhicitta, actual bodhimgind. Having come to the actual training, you train yourself in the relative bodhicitta, [because] the goal of the spiritual practice according to the Mahayana tradition, is to become a Buddha. Period.

The goal to gain freedom is very relevant to us. We all like it and we understand it.’ Freedom’ is our language. But to become a Buddha… Why? What we want is the best of all, which is unconditioned, unlimited love and compassion. If we look into our love, we are conditioned. Conditioned means, ‘What’s in there for me?’ — the usual American mantra. It has limitations, ‘Well, if it is my circle, my family, my friends, I can understand it; if it is going beyond that, why me?’ This is the clear sign that we have limitations. We like love and compassion. But what Buddha really wants is unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion. Not conditioned love, not limited love, not love with an agenda.

What does unlimited love and compassion mean? That means love-compassion equal to everybody, whether it is your friend or your enemy or whoever it might be. Equal. That is American language, right? This right and my right and your right and the citizen’s rights – all these are another big American mantra. So we understand that. When the Buddha is talking about bodhimgind, about ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion, he’s talking about equality among all. Not only among the whites and the African Americans, but also the Asian Americans, Hispanics, and everyone.
How am I, who is so used to caring for myself and my family and my circle, going to get to that great equality? That is the big question.

Let me remind of the different methods of training in relative bodhicitta:

1. The seven stages of development of the bodhimind, which you find in the usual Lamrim. That is the tradition of Buddha Maitreya, Asanga and so forth. It’s also called the method of the six causes and the one result. It is a mental training trying to develop bodhimind, no doubt, but that does not qualify it to be lojong.

2. Then there is the exchange way of developing bodhimind. That is Manjushri’s wisdom style, followed by Shantideva in his Bodhisattvacharyavatara The combination of the exchange stage with the give and take technique is qualified to be called lojong.

3. Je Tsongkhapa combined the seven stages and the exchange stage together to become the eleven stages of development of bodhimind. We always joke here: 7 -11 – open 24 hours!

Bodhimind itself is a mind totally dedicated to the benefit of all beings and seeking the most efficient way of serving, which is the enlightened method. Bodhimind has two prongs: one is the desire to become a buddha and the second point is the commitment or dedication to do so for the benefit of all beings.

Why you have such a dedication? Because you have a commitment, what we call ‘the special mind’. You commit yourself to do whatever it will take, ‘I’m going out there, roll my sleeves, whatever I have to do, I’ll do.’ That special mind is possible for us because of our love, our commitment to people. Love-compassion is one mind with two different aspects. Love is the wish to make them happy and joyful for ever and ever, which will be possible because you would like to make them free of suffering. The commitment of removing their suffering came as a result of love.

In our normal life, if I love you I take care of you, and if I don’t love you that much I won’t take care of you that much. We know that, don’t we? It works the same in the spiritual level. Believe me,
it works exactly the same. Love comes in when you become dedicated. You recognize the person, you have attraction, you remember how kind they have been and you’d like to do the same thing to them. You really love them, you really want to make them happy, you really want to make them free of suffering. (The two aspects, remember?) That makes you think, ‘Yeah, I’ll do it!’ But then you realize you don’t have the capacity. Nevertheless you say, ‘Whatever it may take, I’ll do it!’ Then you see Buddha’s level and think, ‘Ha, that is what I want!’ That is what bodhimind is all about. I made it very simple, sorry. I hope I’m not doing you a disservice.

Traditionally it is said: 1) recognizing all beings as mother beings, 2) remembering their kindness, 3) committing to repay their kindness, 4) love, 5) compassion, 6) special commitment, 7) bodhimind. These are the seven stages of developing the bodhimind: six causes and the bodhimind as result. Mind you, all these stages are only possible if you have equanimity within you. If you don’t have equanimity [as a base] you won’t get there. Equanimity is the first one, the pre-step.

A. PRACTICE IN THE MEDITATION SESSION

*Three layers of equanimity or equality* [Tib. *btang snyoms*]  

The English word equanimity doesn’t give you the meaning straightway. In fact, it is equalization, making equal. There are different levels.

*First layer of equality - the immeasurable thought or wish*

That is within the Buddhist prayer called the four immeasurables or the four limitless thoughts:

> May all beings remain in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion, keeping close to some and distant from others.

The equanimity or equality in the practice of the four immeasurables is: all the people have suffering, which is coming out of attachment and aversion. (I say people because that makes more sense to us, but remember, it’s not only people we talk about, we talk about all sentient beings.) Whether it is you or me, all of our sufferings are coming out of aversion and attachment. Seeing that attachment and aversion cause those sufferings, we simply wish everybody equally to be free of those.
What causes us suffering is coming from the second noble truth. It’s not coming from nowhere, nor is somebody giving it. It has a cause and I created the cause. The actions that I took were caused by my negative emotions: attachment and aversion.

I see that the cause of suffering in all people is aversion and attachment, and I wish and pray: ‘Stop, stop, stop! May I stop the attachment, stop the aversion, free myself from attachment and aversion, and remain in the equanimity of that level.’

Not only I myself wish to be free of attachment and aversion. Likewise I wish everybody to be free of attachment and aversion, because all our sufferings are coming out of those.

This is the sort of superficial level. Not only Buddhist practitioners recite this; it has become a common prayer for all new-age people throughout the world. Any new-age guru that gives a talk will at the end make you visualize an equanimity cloud going round the world, from Paris to China to Moscow, equalizing the whole world and blah blah blah. That is their latest prayer. It is just wishing freedom of attachment and aversion, equal to all. It is very good and wonderful. Today – only with regard to this teaching (!) – we’re going to label this as superficial. That does not mean you should not say that prayer. In general, when you’re going from a certain level into a deeper level and you look down on that previous level, you get one of the downfalls mentioned in the Six session guru yoga: insulting the Dharma.

Second layer of equality – developing equanimity within oneself

That is one layer below the superficial level. It is the equality/equanimity we discuss as a pre-step to the seven stages of developing the bodhimind. It has the same name as the previous one, but is different. Here you’re looking into your own mind and you see the hatred to the enemy, you see the attachment to the friend and you’re equalizing yourself. You try to stop the hatred, you try to stop the attachment and you try to equalize your feelings towards friend and enemy. This is deeper than the earlier one. The earlier one is more wishing, while here you try to put a little practice in, stopping your attachment and stopping your hatred.
How attachment and aversion bring suffering. When you really look it through, you will find that while dealing with people you suddenly do have attachment, or aversion. At the same time, all different ideas pop up, like insecurity, ego protection like, ‘If I don’t protect myself, I’ll be the doormat’, also wanting to force the other person to admit his or her mistake, trying to get hold of the person, sit them down and talk to that person and say, ‘Hey its your fault, admit it now! Don’t go!’ All of those things we do. As a consequence of that you get all kinds of trouble. The friend is no longer so close as he used to be – slightly distanced. The relation with the dear friend you could not live without for a single minute, becomes, ‘I need room for myself…’. Those types of thoughts come in. Slightly it changes, almost like shifting gears. That is how attachment and aversion bring suffering. A simple example dealing with our every day life.

If we go through with this, that’s what happens. We always blame it on somebody else, for all kinds of reasons. Think about it: first, there’s attraction, it brings you together, then something goes wrong and you start to compare, to see if you and him are compatible. If you have nothing to do with the person, the person never becomes your enemy. Many of the people that you dislike, who are giving you discomfort, whom you don’t want to think about, don’t want to talk about, have somehow first been pulled by attachment, and later separated by aversion, hatred or anger. If you look into your own mind, and look back into your own history, into the melodrama of your life, for the last whatever amount of years you want to, you’re going to find that it is really truly the attachment and aversion which sort of pulled you together, and then separated you.

The final cause of it is not even just attachment and aversion; it is the personal ego, the ego within us. Ego manifests in all different varieties of thoughts: in the form of protecting myself, in the form of my own goodness, in the form of being there for my own service and protection. You know, if ego would come up and tell us, ‘Hey I want you to listen to me and do exactly what I told you!’ we would never be under the control of ego. We would all just give them the finger, or we’d use the F-word, or whatever. We’d kick the ego out straightaway, with no problem. But unfortunately ego doesn’t come out that way. It comes as part and parcel of myself, as my own protector, my own guardian angel, as something
very precious, very important, almost like the Buddha within me. That’s how ego manifests. That’s why it has been able to control us.

So, when you call a person ‘enemy’, the moment you imagine that person, the moment the face pops up, immediately dislike comes into the mind, sourness. It doesn’t feel great, there’s no looking forward, and your face looks like 😞, while when you call a person friend, the face goes up, changes into 😊. The moment you notice that, you have to check, ‘Why am I doing this?’ Then you’ll get all these reasons, ‘Oh, he hurt me, she said something behind my back…’ A zillion different reasons for different persons will come. The main reason is, ‘He hurt me; therefore, I don’t like him. I can’t say it, but I wish he had some trouble.’ That is anger and when it goes deeper, it becomes hatred. It is not really the simple temper tantrum that we face right at the beginning, but a sort of constantly remaining feeling. And the label is attached to that person; whenever the idea of that person comes up, hate begins with you, or you start wishing them some difficulties. That is the anger/hatred combination, coming up together.

When you recognize that, when you see that within yourself, do not deny it. Our chances are that we’re going to deny it first, ‘Oh yeah, I don’t like it very much, but it’s okay.’ We really lean towards denying having hatred, denying dislike, denying that we are wishing trouble to that person. That will give room for negative emotions to grow. It becomes their breeding ground. Just like when swamp and heat come together, the mosquitoes can breed, here you give that same opportunity.

At this second level of equanimity – I’m not in the deep level yet – you try to somehow normalize the relationship. Let me remind you of that meditation.

– Equanimity meditation from the relative point of view

You look at the three different people you have in front of you: enemy, friend and stranger. When you look at the enemy you straightway develop dislike. Then you observe yourself, ‘Why do I develop a dislike? Why don’t I like that person, why do I hate him or her?’ You’ll have some simple reasons, like ‘That person did this and this to me, insulted me’, or, ‘I tried my best
but he kept ignoring me’. Any reason will come, as a powerful wind that tries to push your mind towards hatred or anger.

How do you stop that? You stop it by remembering the kindness and care, the good times shared with these people. That way you try to reduce the hatred. You may think,

Her today’s behavior is such a thing, however, she or he did this great thing last year, or last month, or even yesterday.

If you do that, the hatred that you developed, the anger that was coming up against that person, is reduced. It’s because you remember the good things that person did to you, the wonderful things that you shared together. You purposely bring them out.

This person may have been my friend before; this person may become my very good friend in later years.

In reality, this person is not exactly the way I imagine him, the way I project her. It can be a friend at some time, even a very close friend at some time. He or she may have helped me before, and may help me later, that person may become one of the best friends that I could ever have. Past tense, future tense, present level – I consider all of those. I’m now labeling that person as an enemy, and I’m trying to discard them, I’m trying to throw them away, I’m trying to not care, not be concerned.

What I’ve been doing might be slightly wrong. This is my hatred, and that is not right. There’s no reason why I have to hate that person so much.

That’s how you stop hatred. I’m giving you the material to think. In other words, it’s your meditation, that’s how you meditate. Doing it once is not going to stop the hatred, it needs to be repeated, again and again, and again. Saying, ‘I’m going to get rid of my anger once and for all’ or, ‘Anger somewhere inside of there, get out!’ is not going to work. When you see the anger or hatred, keep the projection of the person you’re angry with in mind, look for the reasons, and then give yourself a decision to stop. That’s how you stop anger/hatred on an individual person. You say,

I am going to stop it. I am not going to have hatred anymore to that person.
But then two minutes later, you’ll find that you’re angry again. It
doesn’t matter, that’s what we all do. Look at the children. They
learn how to walk by falling down three hundred times a day, they
learn how to get up, and finally they learn how to walk. That’s ex-
actly the way we should do it. Is that clear to you?

In the same way you can stop attachment. Likewise, this is the
training for changing your attitude towards the person who you
don’t care about; you use the same good old reasons of past, pre-
sent and future times. That’s how you stop from your part that big
black and white difference. From your own mind, you are equaliz-
ing hatred and attachment and ‘I couldn’t care less’.

– Equanimity meditation from the more absolute point of view

The Buddhist idea is, ‘What about the previous lives? I don’t even
know. This person may have been my real good mother once.’
Well, if you’re not really well trained in Buddhist training, then
don’t bring the mother in there, you may create more trouble! You
might take the blame you put on your present mother and put it
on top of that previous mother, and then it becomes a bigger en-
emy rather than a better relationship, you know. That may happen.
But, if you can, you think,

How many times has this person been my child? How many
times has this person been my mother? How many times did
my personal survival depend on this person?

Look from the future’s window, and think about the dependent
nature, particularly with respect to enlightenment. (Actually I
should not talk that here, that belongs to the absolute bodhimind).

Where is enlightenment coming from? Enlightenment is given
to us by people. It is not a gift of the Buddha, but a gift of the
people. If there are no people, where am I going to develop my
compassion? If there are no people, where am I going to de-
velop my love? Whom am I going to take care of? So I depend
on them and I cannot say ‘All the people except you.’

It is the people that make a difference in our life. It is true. I
can look anywhere; it is the people that make the difference.
It’s not the leader that makes the difference. It is the people
that make the difference to the nations, it is the people that
make the difference to the individual, and it is people that make
difference to people. Our enlightenment depends on the peo-
ple. That greatly dependent we are.

So, seeing their care and compassion before, their kindness
now and the dependence in future, looking from the past, pre-
sent and future point of view, how can I hate anybody?

That’s how you stop anger and hatred, anger that can drive you
almost to the extent of killing people. People are killed by anger.
Attachment does the same thing. Attachment will drive you crazy,
completely crazy. I often told you how attachment exaggerates.
Now I will talk the other direction. Attachment will tell you, ‘This
is mine and I must have it! And if I don’t have it, I’ll make sure
nobody will have it!’ People do that all the time. Attachment
makes people think, ‘I’ve been deprived of my right. This is a
God-given birth right of mine and I’m deprived of it.’ That’s not
true: a) It is not God-given. b) It is not birth right either. c) Every-
ingthing is a dependent rise; it depends on the conditions. When the
conditions are right, everything functions well; when the condi-
tions are wrong, it doesn’t function at all. And no one has the right
to force any conditions on anybody else.

Everything is dependent. Let’s talk about two people getting
together. That also depends. It depends on the projection of each
person, the perception of each person and on the conditions. That
is the art of love, truly speaking. When you know how to manage
that, you have a good grip on how to manage life, and particularly
relationships. Sometimes, no matter how much you do your best,
it doesn’t work. In such a case, don’t take it personal. It’s not per-
sonal; it is the conditions. Please, remember that. It is not your
fault, not the other person’s fault, these are the conditions. The at-
tachment will not let you believe and understand the conditions.
Attachment will tell you that you are bad and that that’s why you
are lost, which is absolutely not true. Okay? It is the complicated
mental, physical and emotional baggage, put together. Looking at
this body as a sack, two people are like two big sacks together.
When it is rice or wheat and you put them together they will stay
there. But human beings are bags of emotions, they have their
own way of doing, they move. They trigger the attachment pinch,
so you feel the pinch. If you don’t understand it, that pinch is pain-
ful and has the power to make your life miserable. But if you do understand it, the power of miserability that is in it, gets lost.

Knowing that, then when you are not in attachment’s pains, there is the opportunity for you to analyze. When you’re in attachment’s pain, it’s not the right time to analyze at all, for then it will only increase. When you analyze, you see so much of my-business, ‘It belongs to me, it’s my birth right’. It doesn’t need not be a person, it can be articles, it can be anything. It is said,

Pigs have attachment to the mud; they think their pen a palace and their mud a mandala.

We know it is not, but we have exactly the same type of exaggeration. We know it is not true, but when we are suffering from the pain of attachment we think that way, too. And it does not stop there. It brings anger, it brings hatred, it even brings self-deprivation and psychological problems. So that idea is wrong. It is nice to be with the object of your attachment, but it is not that you cannot manage without; it is not the end of the world. To be able to recognize that, that alone will cut down the attachment enormously. So the idea of, ‘If I get it, great, if I don’t get it, I can’t live’ is a wrong thought. That idea was wrong in the past, it is wrong now and it will always be wrong. That is how you stop the attachment, and likewise the hatred.

So when from my angle I look to the people, and I see I have very strong attachment and very strong hatred, somehow I try to neutralize that and I pull back from those two extreme points. I am pulling back, standing over here, looking at everybody the same way.

That is the number two layer of equanimity/equality, which is part of the seven stages of development of bodhimind of Buddha Maitreya, Asanga etc. It’s not yet lojong’s equality.

Third layer of equality – attacking ego

Now when we talk about the particular equanimity in this lojong practice, we have to go still one layer deeper. All these pains that we talk about, attachment pain and hatred pain, where do they come from? Who is paining [us]? We think, ‘My pain is coming from him or her’. That is our projection. That is very pathetic. It is not him or her who gives you pain. He or she is not trying to give
you pain, he is trying to get the best for himself, she is trying to get
the best for herself. It is not coming from him, it is not coming
from her, she is not sending it, nor is he. Then who is doing it?
What would you say? Yourself? Wrong, totally wrong. Not you ei-
ther, believe me. You want to do the best for yourself, you don’t
try to give trouble to yourself, and you try to do your best. But you
can’t even breathe. You are suppressed and squeezed and smashed
by your ego. You want to do the best for yourself. You don’t want
to harm anybody else. You don’t want to be sticky with somebody
else. That is not you, but still you notice that you’re doing it. So it
is your ego that is overpowering you. It is your ego that could not
take any more anywhere. Who is the one that is giving all those
pains? It is the ego inside you. It is definitely not you; it is your ego.
I would like to read one line here:

Put all the blame on the one.

The one. That is not you, not me. It is our ego. It is our ignorance.
It is the creator of our suffering. It is within ourselves, pretending
to be me. Pretending that I’m getting hurt. It is not you, it is not
me, it is your ego. That is why lojong tells you, ‘Put all blames on
the one.’ Underline that: the one. So you, me, he, she, everybody
wants to do best. My ego, your ego, everyone’s ego is creating the
trouble in the world.

If we wouldn’t have an American ego, Hussein wouldn’t not be
bombed any more. Think, what can he really do? It is true, he
walked through Kuwait, but you already reversed that, destroyed
the infra structure and everything, and you still kept bombing Iraq.
That is American ego. Now we’re going to repeat the same thing
with Yugoslavia. So all troubles in the world are created by ego. If
you really go deep down inside, you’ll find everybody has a good
personality. And I’m sure you find that with Saddam Hussein and
Milosevic as well. There is a human face there. You know, we
make a monster out of a group or organization or nation, but
when you go deeper inside, everybody is a nice person. But then
there is monstrosity there, too; that’s what we project. That is our
ego. That is why all blames must be targeted on one, the one.

It is the ego that makes all the trouble we have. Because of the
ego issue, and the desire the ego has, because we have to entertain
our ego: all our problems are created by the service we render to our ego.
Each and every one of us carries that ego, some carry big ones, some carry a small one, but we all carry the ego, and we all try to entertain our ego. This is a problem. When we are training the mind, we should train our mind in such a way that we really look where the fault is, where the problem is coming from. Dissatisfaction, and the feeling that you’ve been mistreated, felt that you have been ignored, felt, ‘I deserved much more than this’– all of those are the ego.

But don’t blame yourself. Your self has been tortured and has suffered under your own ego, tremendously. The self who tries to make a nice person, who tries to make everything, that’s not the person to be blamed. We are trying our best, but we cannot make it, because our ego really possesses us so badly. Shantideva says,

Whatever suffering there is in this world.
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 129

Again, the problem is not really myself, they’re talking about that my ego wants to be happy. We carry a desire and we work hard to make our ego satisfied, to make our ego happy. That’s where we put all our efforts. We don’t put our efforts in making ourselves happy, we never do! We know it very well, we don’t do it! We put efforts to make our ego happy. That’s the problem. That’s what Shantideva is saying: all the sufferings come from there. It is true; because we want to be different from what we are, we want to hide our mistakes. Sometimes, people do not even hesitate to kill somebody because they want to hide their own little mistake. Shantideva also says,

If all the injury,
Fear and pain in this world
Arise from grasping at a self,
Then what use is that great ghost to me?

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 134

Our number one enemy, our true enemy, is within ourselves. Not out there. Nothing with horns, nothing with a moustache or fangs. Really true. It is within ourselves. Who is causing the miseries? It comes all from our ego. It is the manifestation of ego within ourselves that gives us the most trouble. It is the ego that tells us that no matter how much joy and pleasure we have; it is not enough,
not enough, not enough. It is true. If you look into history, all these great European emperors could not be satisfied with what they had and that drove them finally to destroy each other; that was their ego. Take Napoleon and Waterloo: who stops whom? At the end they destroy each other. The same with the Chinese emperors. It is all because of dissatisfaction. So history is telling us, if we do not watch and control our ego, we’re going to destroy ourselves as well. Wanting to help myself, to help others, we all have. I’m quite sure that wanting to do the best is with the NATO as well as with Milosevic, both. I’m quite sure, but still we have a problem. Not only we human beings but also even the mice, the ants and cockroaches, that we want to get rid of, have a desire to do the best. If we want to help, to nurture, we really should nurture and help that one, the one who wants the best.

On the second level of equality the point was: As far as I’m concerned, I don’t want attachment, I don’t want aversion. Here you’re going beyond that, again.

Not only I stop my attachment and I stop my aversion, but I’m going beyond that. I’m going to help them, I’m going to free them from sufferings. I’m going to bring joy to them. It doesn’t matter whether that person has the label ‘my enemy’ or the label ‘my friend’; from my own point of view, I’m going to work for them equally, no matter whether I know that person, or I don’t know that person, no matter whether that person was my enemy or my very, very dear. Whatever they may be, I’m going to work for them without any discrimination at all. I’m going to work for all of them, equally.

This is that commitment. Can we honor this commitment? It’s not easy. Not at all. Why is it not easy? Who is standing in between? The ego. The ego will tell you, ‘How can you do that? How can you ignore your dear friend?’ How can you treat them as equal, your enemy and your friend, how can you? Are you crazy?’

Now here we need a lot of work. So far we could not help ourselves and others because the ego is in between. It is the stupid ego that is to be blamed. Blame everything on that one. Now it is time for us to target the ego. We really have to shoot the ego now. We have to shoot the ego nine times, we’ll use nine bullets. Hopefully that will work.
In short, the third layer is: only stopping the hatred and attachment is not enough. From our point of view we should work to bring joy and clearance of suffering equal to all. This one is called special equanimity. Special because it takes the two earlier layers within it. It belongs to the exchange stage of development of bodhimind, the way of doing that is very much emphasized by Shantideva in his Bodhisattvacharyavatara.

Nine bullets to shoot at ego

In order to develop this layer three level of equality, we need to really think, analyze and meditate. We need meditation directly against our ego, because ego is the one who really creates the ‘me, me, me’ business. From me you get my and from my you get my enemy and my friend, and from there hatred and attachment. Therefore, the bottom-line is the point of ego.

I like to make my statement clear. Putting ego as self-grasping or as object of negation is theoretically not right, it is wrong. But practically at this moment, at our level, this is the right point. Theoretically wrong, practically correct.

We try to proof that what our ego wants us to believe is wrong. We do this by nine different reasonings – nine bullets to shoot at ego. After the nine different reasonings, that we think about, bite, chew and digest, we hope to have five resolutions.

- Three reasons from the other’s point of view in the relative every day life.

  1. All beings are equal in wanting happiness. I mentioned before: our ego want us to believe that we should have strong attachment and close feelings towards our friends and we should have hatred, aversion and distance towards our enemies. We tell the ego, ‘That is wrong, that is unfair, how can I do this, all people…’. (Instead of ‘sentient beings’ I use the word people because that works better with our mind.) All people, whether we know them or not, whether we hate or love them, desire to have joy and happiness and try to avoid suffering. Look at each and everyone here in this room, those in front of you, those at your back, those to your right and to your left; each and every one of us wants happiness, wants joy. And what each and every one of us doesn’t want is suffering. You may think that some people enjoy suffering. To a certain extent that may be true, When you don’t know what hap-
piness is, you indulge in some kind of suffering because it is a change – if you know what I am talking about. Everybody, including the people that indulge in enduring pain, wants happiness, not pain. Now ask yourself: Is it fair to make that much distinction between those I know and those I hate? It certainly is not.

When I’m looking into my life, I find that I always want to be happy, I want to be joyful. Also, the people that I am to deal with every day or occasionally, I want to be cheerful and happy. I look for those people. I don’t want a person to say, ‘Oh this is wrong and that is wrong, my head aches and blah blah blah…’ I don’t want to deal with that.

Whatever I want, is: I want to be happy and I want to be joyful. I want everything to be bright and to be up. Such a desire to be happy is not only there during my waking state but even during my dream state, too. I don’t want terrifying dreams. I want to have happy dreams. I don’t want miserable dreams even though I get them all the time. I want to be happy. That is the way we are.

When I start looking at the people on my right hand side, I realize that he or she wants the same thing. When I look at the people on my left hand side, he or she wants the same thing, and when I look at the people sitting across to me, he or she wants the same thing. When I hear the people at the other end of the telephone, he or she wants the same thing. Wherever, whenever I look at anybody, he or she wants the same thing like I want. Even if I look at those little mice, the dog, the cockroach, the robin, each and every one of those living creatures wants the same thing I want.

What I want and what they want is the same: we all want happiness. They want to be happy. They don’t want pain. They don’t want suffering. They scream when they have pain. They jump when they have pain, no matter how big they may be – the tigers, the leopards, when they are shot they jump at us. And the little ants; look how much they run around when we begin to spray. They can’t help it.

From that point of view, I cannot and should not and will not make a distinction. That is not fair. I cannot accept some and reject some. Cannot, should not and will not.
2. All beings are equal in wanting to be free of suffering. Look at the people. They’re all suffering. Let’s say ten refugees from Kosovo come to my door and ask, ‘We’re hungry we’re sick, we don’t have any clothes to wear, we’re cold, would you help me?’ When I get ten of them can I select, ‘Okay three of you I’m going to help, but you, you, you, I don’t want to help, get out of here; and the four other ones left I’ll consider.’ Would that be fair? No. As all people are in the same condition, how to make a distinction, on what basis?

Forget about Buddhism, even in the normal European culture that’s not right. I may have limitations of what I can do. That’s a different issue. But from the need’s point of view, I really need to help all of them.

When I look at the people, forget about uncontaminated joy, I see that they even don’t have the contaminated pleasure of the suffering of change. Whatever contaminated joy we have, is extremely limited. And we are extremely tired of suffering. We’re sick with attachment and aversion. Very sick. And we’re seeking joy and freedom. Everybody is. So here, how can I make a distinction between them? How can I discriminate among them? That’s why the idea, that ego has given me, to have attachment, aversion and ignoring, is wrong. Absolutely wrong.

The mind of making distinctions, labeling them, you know, black and white, with a big difference between them – it is wrong. The mind that is dictating that to you is wrong. That’s your second bullet. Your target is ego. Who made me do it? Not me, but my ego. Our selves don’t function very well. It’s totally ego-controlled, that’s our problem.

In a traditional Tibetan teacher’s teaching, suddenly we see ten beggars pop up in the middle of the road. Some are missing hands, some are missing legs, little kids with twisted arms and legs. In India, you find all these kinds of beggars. They steal the kids and then twist their arms and legs for begging purposes. If all of a sudden you encounter with ten equally disabled, young kids begging in front of you, certainly, you cannot, if you are in your right mind, make a distinction between them. You do not want to be good to one or five of them and be bad to five others. From their condi-
tioned point of view they are all in the same position: they’re handicapped, helpless and they’re kids; they don’t have education, they don’t have homes, they don’t have food to eat. If you have ten rupees, you take the ten rupees and give one to each and if you have only five rupees you give fifty cents each rather than give all five to one and chase the other nine out.

From their point of view they’re equally poor, weak, handicapped, helpless, seeking your help. We happen to be in the better position in this life at this moment. Believe me, whatever good life we have today is by chance. It’s not a permanent fixture for us, it may last until the end of our life. If your life is a happy, a good one, then you are fortunate, you are lucky to have that. But that’s not going to be permanent. It’s going to change. If you are unhappy with your life, that’s also going to change, for sure. As a matter of fact, I guarantee you it’s going to change.

I happen to be in a better position. I happen to be there as a server or giver, an actor of generosity. It happens to be my action, it’s my turn, it happens to fall on me in this moment. How can I make a distinction between those ten little kids?

You may think, ‘only ten kids’. But if you really look, we are all the same as these ten kids. From any angle you look, you’ll find that, each and every one of us, from our suffering point of view we’re the same as those ten kids. We may be better off financially because we are American or European, but we might not be better off mentally than those ten little Indian boys. (Ten little Indian boys! We have a song there, right?)

As far as it is in my power, I cannot make distinctions in whatever help I give them.

3. **All beings are equal in death.** Let’s say you are a doctor in a hospital and there are three equally sick people in front of you, all in their eleventh hour of dying, a difficult period. What would you do? You try to help all three, you cannot reject them, you do whatever you could. Or would you like to help two and reject one? That’s not fair. Time-wise you may not be able to manage it, that’s a different story, but from your desire point of view, from your willingness, to accept two and reject one is certainly not fair. If you do so it is showing your faults rather than your quality.
It is the ego who is telling you, ‘Pick a few and reject the others’. Is that a good idea? Is that right? Certainly not.

From the people’s point of view, the room full of us, we all have problems and difficulties. How can I commit to help a few and reject others? From my willingness point of view, the willingness should be there, equal to all. I may or may not be able to do it; it depends on resources, time and energy, all of them, but if from the willingness I choose to accept one and reject the other is not fair. Not at all.

If you are in that condition, you cannot say, ‘I wish this one will get better and I wish that one will die.’ You can’t do that. You will not be able to do it. If you do so, you’re wrong. If you do so, it is showing your own quality. This is how you train your mind, how you can bring it to that level. You can’t make that distinction – that’s not right. You don’t have a right to do that. This is the main point:

All sentient beings are alike: all are on the verge of falling into impermanence. Every one of them. It’s natural, we are bound to fall, bound to get destroyed. So, when somebody is going, I cannot say, ‘I wish this one better and that one worse.’ It’s the same as, ‘I wish this person would die and that person would live.’ I cannot make that choice.

You’ll see, these reasons go deeper and deeper. In short, from the point of view of the people, there is no reason for me to be close or distant. I cannot, because of the three reasons I mentioned.

- Three reasons from one’s own point of view in the relative everyday life

4. Taking into consideration previous and future lives. We may ‘hear’ our ego tell us, ‘Hey, these are your friends, these are your enemies, accept your friends, reject your enemies’. Ego is stupid. Ego only knows what happens now. Ego doesn’t know and doesn’t want to know what has happened in our previous life, what will happen in our future life. Neither ego knows nor ego wants us to know. It’s only if our perspective of a life is expanded beyond birth and beyond death that we’ll see it. But we don’t. That’s our ego’s limitation. When we talk about life, we talk about the span from birth to death, don’t we? Or are we talking about
lives? What is your perspective? Ask yourself. If you’re thinking only from birth to death, it’s clear you’re under ego’s control; if you have doubt about previous and future lives, you have a possibility of opening up. I’m not telling you to believe in past and future lives, but I’m trying to tell you to give it the benefit of the doubt. You are not sure that there is no past life, you’re certainly not sure there is no future life, so why not give it at least the benefit of the doubt? Perceive your life in that manner, rather than to have the narrow selfish view of life put into a ‘box’.

When you open it up, you give yourself the possibility or feasibility of previous and future lives. You have a complete set of whatever you have in this life: so-called friends, so-called enemies, so-called ‘couldn’t care less’ persons, so called children, so-called parents – you have a complete set of pictures as it is today. Let’s presume we are all human beings all the time. (hopefully). We have a today’s picture that we project into the future and the past. Who are those? Is it the same old John who was there, is here and will be there? It are all different persons. Today’s mam is not the past life’s mam nor is she going to be the future’s life’s mam. They change. The set of yesterday’s enemies can be today’s friends. And vice versa. That goes into the future as well. So that ego’s stupid suggestion, looking to the people and saying ‘friend’ or ‘enemy’, putting them in a cut box is wrong.

From my own point of view today, I’m seeing some people as my enemy and some people as my friend. It is, actually, a delusion in my mind, it’s not right. From the long term point of view, from the reincarnation point of view, today’s enemy might have been the most important friend in my previous life. Moreover, at this moment he or she may look like an enemy, but down the road, in ten years, or even five years, it may become one of my closest friends. And as long as I remain in samsara, taking rebirth continuously, they will be among my best friends. Not only that, I may have to be depending on them for my life. I’m bound to be, no question.

It may be that some little thing happened that made me make the big difference of enemy and friend. Actually, what does it take for us to change the friend into the enemy? A simple statement. One single word can change everything. If you say the wrong word at the wrong time, that will do it. No matter how close the friend
might be, just a single little word may change everything. How many times do we see it, brothers and sisters fighting each other and trying to get at the throat of each other? How many lawsuits are there among brother and sisters, or even twins, born together and landed into the same condition. So the labeling of ‘big friend’ and ‘big enemy’, supporting them and being against them, is a big delusion. In deep reality, from my own point of view, it is a very strange thing, to call them friend and enemy; we change them so much.

I’m making a big deal calling them ‘enemy’ and ‘friend’ and that’s wrong.

5. Everyone has helped me or is helping me. From the reincarnation point of view everyone has been helping me one time or another. Not only that. We are here to seek enlightenment. For what? For whom? For the benefit of all beings, we say. Who are those ‘all beings’, if we reject a few of them and pick up a few of them. Then what happens to the letters ‘a-l-l’. Are we going to say ‘all except you’? Remember Steven Batchelor’s story. He told that, when he was studying with Geshe Rabten in Switzerland, the joke was, ‘You are not all sentient beings, so get out of my way’. Maybe that idea is wrong. So the rejection is wrong, is not fair. It is ego’s idea. We can see clearly that it is wrong.

Though I say I would like to become a Buddha, though I say, ‘I want to develop myself for the benefit of all beings’, who is really benefitting? Me, the practitioner. Because of those sentient beings, their kindness, and their work, I develop. If I don’t have those sentient beings there, who am I going to gain compassion for? Even basic compassion I’ve been able to develop because of those suffering people. I’ve been able to develop equanimity because of those people. It’s because of their kindness. I’ve been benefited because of those sentient beings. Therefore, from my point of view, I cannot make a big distinction between enemy and friend.

Ego has another suggestion, ‘Alright, alright, I buy your arguments that many people helped you, but many of them harmed you, didn’t they? Didn’t they insult you last year, in public? Are you going to forgive them? Are you silly?’
Yeah, ego, you got a point there. They may have harmed me last year, but they may have done many good things to me many times, too. And the time and period that they hurt me is relatively short compared to when they helped me. Buddha, who knows all, says, ‘All sentient beings have helped me many more times than they have harmed me’. Perhaps Buddha knows it a little better than you, stupid ego. So I’m going to stick with the Buddha. The idea of a simple little bit of harm here is a strong reason for rejecting your reason.

Every time I meditate on compassion, all beings are all helping me. Every time I try to develop bodhimind they are helping me. Every time I want to become a Buddha, they are helping me. Every time I wear a dress, they are helping me.

We say, ‘Hey, you have a nice cashmere sweater. Where is it coming from?’ It’s someone’s hair. Likewise, with each and every single thing we eat, someone was involved. Think about it. You may think, ‘I took the milk from the cow’, but that cow is somebody – really true.

Each and every thing I have is because of somebody, of somebody that has done something, has shared something. Helping is done all of the time and harming is very little of it.

Harming has a lot of misunderstanding, too. A dog may bite because he’s afraid of going to be killed. So, in each and every little harm that I get, some fault of mine is involved, too.

6. I’m subject to death

My most important reason is, ‘I’m going to die and I don’t know when I’m going to die, so how can I make distinctions between people?’

I’m certain that I’m going to die. Am I or am I not? One day, sure, yes. Not only it is definite that I’m going to die one day, but when that one day is going to be nobody knows. I may die tomorrow, nobody can tell me. Can anyone of us in this room guarantee anybody that you’re not going to die tomorrow? You cannot. No one can. You may hope, you may wish, but you cannot guarantee, can you? Certainly not.
Suppose I’m going to die tomorrow. If I’m confirmed to die tomorrow, can I make a distinction between people: this one is good, this one is bad, this is mine, that is not mine… etc. Is it fair? How silly it will be.

The traditional teachers will give you the example of three or four prisoners. They are all going to be executed tomorrow, and you happen to be one of them. So if tonight, you try to discriminate between two other colleagues, who are also equally going to die tomorrow with you, is it worth it? Is it right? No it’s not. However, if you let your mind go completely under the control of attachment and aversion, you will. And you’ll be surprised you’ll be doing that, and you will know how wrong you are but still you’ll do it. Such an act will be useless, silly and wrong; do you see it? We are in the same condition, the same boat. So we should not discriminate.

Picture yourself as a sort of overviewing person and you see little kids running around doing that. Sometimes I’m wondering, what the enlightened beings think when looking at us. They know much better than we do, they know our past, they know our present and future while we have the very limited view of the present only. As we’re running around like a little crazy, they may view us as being very similar to the ants running around and fighting. They must be viewing us the same way. Have you ever thought like that? That idea comes into my head very often.

The point really is, we are all transitory. Within that transitory period, why rejecting, accepting? Why? That shows the ego is wrong.

- Three absolute reasonings

This equanimity is, again, much deeper than the other two equanimities.

7. There is no true friend or enemy. If the enemy and friend division were really true from the Buddhist point of view, Buddha must know it. Buddha is in a great, wonderful, open, free, all-knowing, awakened state, free of attachment and aversion. How wonderful that is.
Does Buddha make a difference between enemy and friend? No. How does Buddha behave in that respect? The great Indian scholar Dharmakirti said,

For Buddha, from his love and affection point of view, whether somebody comes and give him a sandal-oil massage or somebody comes and chops a piece of his body, from Buddha’s point of view there’s neither attachment to the sandal-oil massager nor hatred to the chopper. That’s why Buddha is called free of attachment and aversion. This may be too much to swallow. But really, Buddha will make no difference. It’s true that for our ordinary conception it’s very difficult to buy. It’s hard to imagine, maybe, but it is something to think about. For Buddha the idea of attachment for reasons to call someone friend and the idea of rejection for reasons to call someone enemy is wrong. Maybe it is our delusion. Maybe our ego is playing a trick on us. May be. Think about it. That is how the enlightened beings thought and how they became enlightened. It’s a little hard to imagine, but don’t reject the idea. Think about it.

If that is the true reality for Buddha, it’s obvious I am wrong. My mind of perceiving somebody as ‘enemy’ and somebody as ‘friend’ is such a huge difference from a Buddha’s perceiving mind. Maybe this is called delusion, a total delusion. The sandalwood massage and the chopping is the example.

8. There is no permanence. If the perception that we have: enemy is enemy and friend is friend, were true, then friend and enemy have to be a permanent, a static friend or enemy. And that is not true. You know and I know, we all know. The friend of the early part of the life can be the most powerful enemy of the end of life. The friends that cannot separate for even two seconds, cannot stand each other even two seconds at the end of life. Don’t we see that? We do.

Not only that; where is the enemy coming from, if you don’t know anything about the person? I’m not talking about Milosevic or Saddam Hussein, I’m talking about my personal enemy and my personal friend. Every personal enemy might have been a personal friend before. You dealt with each other, you may have disagreed, you argued, got a fight, and you separated and became enemies. So it changes! Where is that permanent fixture of a static friend or enemy? Where? Show me one. If your ego can show me one, I will
believe you. But you cannot. You cannot! So the idea and suggestion of attachment and aversion is wrong. Let’s throw that challenge right in the face of ego!

If it were absolutely true that enemy is enemy and friend is friend, then they should remain as friend and enemy forever, but that’s not true. My experience contradicts this all the time, every day. Enemies become friends, and friends become enemies. Two good friends pull together and form a company, and then they disagree on how to divide the money, they fight and become enemies, and go to court. Two individuals pull together and start establishing a family, and then disagreement starts a divorce and puts the children in trouble. Those things happen all the time. I see all the changes that contradict this fixed thought of mine, so it is impermanent. It happens occasionally here and there and my mind perceives it in a certain way, but in reality it goes on changing. So what the hell am I doing here, making a big distinction calling ‘enemy’ ‘friend’ pull, push, attachment, aversion, so strong. Why? Is this right? No.

So, holding so much of a black and white way, like enemy and friend, holding it so tight, making ourselves miserable in life, is really meaningless. It is the wrong view. It is giving us wrong information. That is the second reason in absolute truth.

9. Everything exists in interdependence. Friend and enemy are of dependent nature. It’s just like this side and that side, our side and your side. Where is ‘our side’ if there is no ‘your side’? Your side is there because we created this side to be our side; it depends on the angle from which we perceive. If you’re here you perceive this side, when you’re there you perceive that side as this side. Do you see it? East depends on West; West depends on East. How can there be East if there is no West? Left and right is dependent rise. If you have no right cheek, there won’t be a left cheek. This is a very important point. Enemy depends on friend, friend depends on enemy. ‘You’ depend on ‘me’, ‘I’ depends on ‘you’. We are interconnected.

We are so much interconnected that every movement, every action we do, makes a difference to everybody. The movement of a butterfly in China makes a difference in the United States,
environmental-wise. Within that interconnection and interdependence, how can I make that separation between ‘friend’ and ‘enemy’? How can I? Is that idea entertainable? Certainly not.

This is the reality. We are dependently arising. Not only enemy and friend depend on each other, but you and me, each and every person is dependently arising. We don’t say it is empty, because you see it as dependent arising, as dependent nature. From that point of view, you cannot make that much of a big distinction. All of those, self and other, enemy and friend are ego manifestations.

So the idea of a permanent, static enemy and friend is absolutely wrong. How can you, ego, insist and push and bully me, the simple person, who tries to do my best to make it in life? How can you and push and bully me to a certain unwanted, uncalled for idea of aversion and attachment? Mr. or Mrs. Ego, you’re wrong! You are absolutely wrong. I have seen it with these nine points, that each point you raise is wrong!

These are the nine bullets to poke a hole in your ego. You can shoot one or another at your ego, inside. The true enemy is inside. The creator of trouble, the source of suffering, the destroyer of our joy, the destroyer of our virtue is inside. It’s called Ego.

How to use these points in daily life?

We’ve been going through these points one after another, but that doesn’t mean you have to go through them one after the other. If you are training your mind, you apply one or some of those to your mind and see how it works with your mind. This is not a prayer that you read from begin to end and then close and say, ‘My prayers are done today’. It’s not. It is the constant applying of it to your mind. When your mind reacts with separation, i.e. decides not to greet somebody the common way but greet one person nicely and the other one a little distant; if you having those troubles, then you should apply one or some of those bullets and see how it works. Right now we’re using this as a learning opportunity, for picking up, but when you’re having difficulties – and we all do have difficulties constantly – when our faces get longer and longer, these are the points to be applied.

Also I told you, applying these points that help yourself, is always done when you’re not tortured by emotions. What do we normally
do? When we have emotional problems, we immediately think, ‘What can be done better, what can be done better!?’ , but then when we’re not so much tortured by the emotions any more, we forget about it. A Tibetan dirty jokes says, ‘We won’t use the toilet when it’s not necessary to go there for the bigger way’. The thing is, when you’re really having an emotional problem you’re running here and there and you try to do whatever you could, but at the time you’re not attacked by the emotion, you forget about it. That somehow doesn’t work. Then it may even have the reverse effect, because you grasp something the last minute when you’re desperate. Sometimes it is the other way round. When you’re fine and you’re doing well you become a great spiritual practitioner, but when you have difficulties, when you’re desperate, there’s no spiritual way at all. That is perhaps not good. A great Tibetan teacher from the seventeenth century, an Amdo lama, called Guntang Jampelyang, said,

When your stomach is filled and you’re warm in the sunshine, then you look like a great practitioner, but when you have difficulties you’re worse than somebody who knows nothing about it.

These are the two extremes, one extreme of being desperate when you’re having difficulties and try to do anything whatever you could, and the other being the opposite. Or you can have them both. These are the faults of spiritual practitioners. It tries to tell you that constant, continuous effort is important, without extremes. That is to be remembered.

Five resolutions

When you keep on analyzing without any resolution, it becomes a little wild, a little crazy. Every analysis must have a conclusion, otherwise your life will be analyzing without anything for you to carry. We’re looking for a conclusion: out of these nine reasons you get five resolutions. Those resolutions are also the reasons why lojong has to be [based on] the exchange way of developing bodhimind.

What we’re doing here is not even yet the actual lojong or tonglen, but the groundwork for lojong. The basic groundwork is equality – equality between you and me. That’s what we’re working on, because in our mind, it’s always, ‘I am more important than you.’ We
will know it, if some crazy guy comes up with a gun over here and starts shooting – we will notice each one of us will be hiding behind another. That’s what we’re going to do! For sure! And that tells us how our mind is really functioning. Right now, each one of us is looking very seriously, you may be thinking, ‘That might not be true, I am quite good.’ You may be thinking that, but if somebody comes up here with a gun, we will know. So think about that.

If there is no ground of equality, of equalness between me and others established within our minds, then lojong and tonglen is a joke, to tell you the truth. It will be just a joke. The earlier Kadampa lamas used to say,

If you don’t have this equality established, no matter how much you breathe in and out, give and take, your ‘tonglen’ will be just like a pair of bellows.

What makes me consider myself superior and more important than others? It is attachment, my own attachment. That makes me hold on to me. Why am I happy to sacrifice my enemies? Because of hatred. You know, I talked to you before, that we don’t mind if our enemies have a little difficulty here and there. Sometimes we secretly wish for it a little bit. Why? Because we have hatred. So the bottom line of this really falls on attachment and hatred. None of us will think they hate anybody. But if you look through very carefully, you will find a couple of people, if they experience a little difficulty, you won’t mind it. You may even welcome that thought. This tells you, you still have hatred.

Resolution one: equalizing self and others

My first resolution, is that, no matter how other people are treating me, good or bad, from my point of view, I will not let my mind be controlled by attachment and hatred. I will make no difference between my needs and other’s needs. I would like to be able to do this – this will be my goal. I pray that I may be able to do this. I seek the blessings of Lama, Buddha, bodhisattvas, and from everybody, that I may be able to do this.

From my point of view, I would like to make sure that I will contribute to bringing joy and clearing suffering to each and everyone of those people. Not only I will contribute, but I will
do that equally to all. My ego’s idea of attachment and aversion is absolutely meaningless. Not only it is meaningless, it is the root of all troubles that I have.

Also, this thought or idea or emotion of mine makes sure that I will continuously remain in samsara in general and particularly that I’ll encounter the lower points of suffering.

Traditional teachings will tell you here, ‘This is the warden of the jail’, the one that makes sure you will not escape from jail.

This emotion that I carry around with me, makes sure that I remain in suffering. It is the warden of my jail. This particular emotion is the actual killer of me. It kills me hundred times a day in the hell realm. Even in my dreams it gives me trouble, it doesn’t let me have a nice dream, gives me nightmares. It makes sure that I have constant continuous suffering.

It’s true; if you have this problem, you can’t even sleep. Even if you fall asleep, all nightmares come. We all do that all the time.

It’s like a sickness within me. It is the cancer in my liberation life. It is the one I have to throw out. I should decide that I will not summit to this one, to this emotion, to this suggestion.

Not only that, looked from the opposite point of view, this mind of equality is not only important for my ultimate freedom, it is also the only path through which all the enlightened beings have gone beyond.

When I say the only path here, I mean it. I don’t mean Buddhism is the only path to become enlightened. I mean, this one is. Yes. As long as you keep on having attachment and aversion, you’re never going to be enlightened. No way. Whatever tradition you follow, whether Judeo-Christian or Hindu-Buddhist, as long as you have aversion and attachment, forget it. So when they say this is the only path, it is true. We can underline it three times. We have the choice. We have to see what we want to do. Buddha called this: the essence of the Buddhist practice. Look at the bodhisattvas; their main object, their main practice, their main idea, their main theme is to help, to serve, to dedicate to obtain enlightenment for the benefit of people. Now, to conclude:
I would like to conclude here that whatever people may do, good or bad, against or for me, from my point of view I would like to be completely equal to all. All these people are all great beings, great, wonderful friends. I depend for my total enlightenment on them. Whatever they do, from my point of view I would like to be free of attachment and aversion. I will help to bring them joy, to clear their sufferings. Whatever I can, I would like to do. May I be blessed to be able to do that.

You may visualize your Supreme Field of Merit like you do in the *Ganden Lha Gyema* and then pray.

Whatever power and strength my mind may have, I totally dedicate it to work in this way. May I be helped and blessed to be able to do that.

No one wants even the slightest suffering, 
Or is ever content with the happiness they have; 
In this we are all alike. 
Inspire me to find joy in making others happy.  
*Lama Chöpa, verse 56*

That is resolution one. In your practice you can keep on repeating this verse and think and visualize.

Light and liquid comes from the Supreme Field of Merit, purifies all negativities in general and in particular the obstacles to developing this point. It washes away all negativities completely from the crown, inside and outside and you are refilled with the great joy of equanimity.

Here you try to establish:

Whatever happiness and joy I am seeking, whatever suffering I’m seeking to avoid, all people are seeking the same thing. What I want and what they want is the same. There is no difference. What they don’t want and what I don’t want is the same, too, there’s no difference. As there is no difference in what I want and you want, why would I be superior to you? Why would I be more important than you? We are all the same. We’re all equal. Until I make a dent in my mind on this, I will stick to it.

*Resolution two: recognizing the faults of self-cherishing*
The idea of ‘me’! That ‘me, me, me’ business – look at that idea a little more carefully. This is the cause of suffering. Because of me, I cannot bear anything. If something good is happening to someone else, I can’t bear it, I get jealous. Any attention from other people should have been for me rather than for somebody else. If I’m not getting it, I’m unhappy about it. In other words, I should be the Buddha, but I’m not, so I’m not happy. I should be the richest person, but I’m not, so I’m not happy. I should be the most successful person, but I’m not, so I’m unhappy. All of those.

If you want an enemy that you really want to get mad at, here’s our true enemy. The enemy that’s manipulating you all the time to not being honest, not being straightforward, is making us suffer continuously. If you really want to get angry, get angry with ‘me!’ If you want to get even, get even with ‘me’!

Knowing this, is the second resolution. You should let go of this ‘me, me, me’ business. Let it go. Not only should you let it go, but you should get rid of it. You should terminate that mind completely. You should fire that thought and that idea of ourselves. Don’t fire her, don’t fire him, but fire this one, because it’s really the cause of all the trouble. One thing I can tell you here – each and every one of us, look back at the last month: any trouble, any misery, any pains that we go through, if we’re unable to sleep at night, tossing and turning, all of those worries, are caused by this idea, this thought of ‘me, me’. Every single trouble that we’re going through, mental problems, emotional problems, even physical illnesses – all of them are connected with this idea. If you find one that is not caused by the ‘me’ idea, I will bow to you ten times! But you’re not going to find it. I guarantee you, you’re not going to find it. Every suffering that we have had – just look at the last thirty days – is caused by this. You don’t even have to think about life after life – that is a long shot. Think of yesterday, or the day before yesterday. If you’re going to let ‘me, me, me’ go, then let it go now.

The idea of self-superiority is the doorway to all problems. It’s the same thing between nations and between individuals. If Milosevic wouldn’t think the Serbs are superior to the Albanians there would be no need for bombs on Belgrade. If Hitler wouldn’t have thought the Germans are superior to other Europeans in general and particular to the Jews, there would have been no reasons for Word War II. Between neighbors or between members
of the family it is the same thing. If you have agreement, you don’t have trouble. If you have disagreement you get into trouble. You don’t agree because you don’t think it is right or you don’t agree because you don’t want to submit, or you cannot take any more. Anyone of those reasons brings disagreement and disagreement brings trouble. Look into your life, look into what happens in society and judge by yourself what is right and what is wrong and then make a decision from there and go on.

I need not only equanimity and equality between me and people, but if I’m thinking that I’m superior, that I am more important, then I open the doorway for all trouble. (I don’t have to tell you, you know). There are zillions of different reasons why. Thinking of ourselves as superior is the real doorway to all our troubles. So, I decide this is not a good idea and I will not entertain this idea, not even a minute.

Seeing that the chronic disease of self-cherishing
Is the cause of my unwanted suffering,
Inspire me to put the blame where blame is due
And vanquish the great demon of clinging to self.

_Lama Chöpa, verse 57_

The chronic disease of self-cherishing, feeling ourselves superior, is the point where all our troubles are coming from. This is very hard to accept. However if you think carefully, your intellect and even your common sense will tell you that your thinking of being superior is wrong. It will also tell you, ‘But I won’t think that way. I will never think I’m superior.’ You may not think literally that way, but every action we do will tell you, ‘I want my happiness over yours. I have no hesitation to sacrifice you for my happiness’. This has been proven to us again and again. And we do it without thinking, without realizing. That is how our ego really influences us. Now you catch hold of the mindfulness: self-superiority is the doorway to all our sufferings. Be mindful of that. And when the problems come, remember. Be alert. That is how you go about it.

**Resolution three: the benefits of cherishing others**

You have to observe your ideas of ‘me, me, me, I’m the important one.’ If you change that mind, if you let that go, what’s going to come in? When you let this ‘me’ go, it will be replaced by another thought, which is the opposite of that, right?
When I lose the thought of considering myself the most important, then what will be there instead? Well, then I’ll think that we’re all the same. We are all the same. We have the same priority, we’re all equal.

And then, if possible the thought should rise,

It’s not me that has all the powers. It is the people who have all the powers. It is the people who make all the difference. It is the people that are most important, it’s not me.

You replace that ‘me’ by the people. People are important. If you consider that, this is the source of all our development. All our development comes out of that. Seeing that people are more important, is the doorway to get all our qualities, because automatically you will get rid of all your negative emotions, such as anger, attachment, etc.

Even if they turn out to be my own enemies, I should be able to consider them as more important than my own life. That’s what the bodhisattvas do, that’s why the bodhisattvas are so great! They understand where the problem really lies, where we went wrong, where we can correct. All the enlightened beings consider other people more important than ‘me.’ They keep on yelling and screaming it throughout their life, for generations, thousands of years: people are more important than me! We never got the message, were still not getting it. And that’s why we’re stuck. We never make progress because of that. Here, we have the opportunity, so we should pass a resolution.

From now on, I am going to consider people more important than me. At least I pray, I hope I will be able to do that. Please bless me to be able to do this.

If I can, I will look at the others as more important than I am. I will actually work for the benefit of the people, dedicating myself to the people’s benefit. That brings me joy. It is the doorway to bring me joy.

Cherishing beings and securing their happiness
Is the gateway that leads to infinite excellence.
Inspire me to hold others more dear than my life,
Even when I see them as enemies.

Lama Chöpa, verse 58
Helping others, serving, dedicating yourself to the benefit of others really is the great way to do. Look into your Christian tradition. Today the Italian monk, Father Pio, became a saint because he rendered service to others. Take Mother Theresa. We cherish her, smile at her, not because she is Miss Universe, but because she is dedicated to render service to others. Likewise we look at Mahatma Gandhi, we see him as a great teacher, not because he was a lawyer, not because he was rich or handsome, but because of the work he did, the selfless dedication, total devotion to people. That makes the difference. We look at his Holiness the Dalai Lama as a true leader today, a leader with no self-interest for whatsoever. That is why people like him. He could have easily gathered a lot of militant people to create some trouble to the Chinese, but he didn’t. He is committed to non-violence. He holds Mahatma Gandhi as his role model. That is the reason why we like him. These are the reasons. You can see it within your own history in the past, you see what is happening today and you will see it in the future too, that will not change. So what really makes you special? Judge yourself about yourself.

So far I’ve been thinking, ‘If I don’t do my thing, who is going to do my thing, I am the most important.’ Here you’re telling me, that others are more important than me, giving the examples of Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, the saints of the Christian tradition and all great beings of before. All those, who are considered to be great and wonderful examples, all of them have come from having this point of view.

We talked about Napoleon, Julius Caesar, and the Chinese Emperors. We don’t consider them the sort of beings we admire; they may be war heroes, or superior rulers, but we don’t really have that happiness and joy looking at their kindness and compassion and how helpful they have been. We have the great saints for that, like Saint Thomas, and the great artists, like Van Gogh. We look at their work, we remember their names, we imagine their faces, we appreciate it, and we feel joy.

Likewise the work of our thangka-painter here. In future generations we look at your Tsongkhapa thangka and become happy. We look at everybody who is working here, who is bringing this great tradition, this great teaching to the people, to their hearts. In the future when they remember those people who did teach, who de-
voted themselves, they will appreciate it and rejoice. That is because of your dedication to the Buddhadharma and in particular to the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and particularly to Jewel Heart. And the translation work. If that is not there, there is no way I can reach to the people. They will really rejoice that. That is all because of the dedication of everybody. If I say everybody I mean everybody! If I have to name them, there’s no end. Each and every one of you put their efforts in. And look, we have Hélène’s photo over there. We all appreciate her work. If you cherish others and dedicate your work to their benefit and consider other people more important than yourself and put your efforts in in the right way, people will cherish you.

At the same time I like to take the opportunity to thank each and everyone of you. What little you think you might have done, keeping the sound perfect, keeping the temperature in the room right, making the coffee, cleaning the dishes, selling the Buddha statues, participating in the organization and its activities, that participation of each and everyone of you, your contribution, makes things work.

Resolution four: conclusion of the above

If that’s so, if the people are more important than ‘me’, then I have to exchange. The idea of exchange is not that I switch with you nor do you switch with me, but my priority, what I had for myself, I like to switch for the people’s. What it really means here is: the priority I have for myself and the priority for other people, I am switching them. Actually I should have said, cherishing myself and cherishing others, but that doesn’t make sense, so I use the word priority.

Naturally, our thoughts, will say, ‘Well, that’s a great idea, but I will not be able to do that.’ We all will cry about that. We all will, because that’s not easy to let go of. All our life, and lives before that, we’re so used to ‘me, me, me, me, me, me!’ Even our spiritual practices are also for ‘me’. It’s not that easy to let go. So we are very afraid of doing this. I’m sort of talking about it nicely here, but it’s not going to be smooth. When you sit down and begin to think about it, you’re going to run away, probably take a 180-degree turn, because you’re going to have a big shock. All our pri-
priorities will be changed, all our thoughts will be changed. Can I do that?

Since I have been for life after life totally devoted to myself, considering my own needs having priority over others’ needs, am I able to change that? My priority is a very important priority for me, how can I switch it?

You know, the doubt will come up between my needs and other people’s needs. We have that doubt and if we’re really looking in our mind, we definitely see we don’t want to do that: my priority is the priority for me, you know. And if we make the exchange with others some kind of superficial thing, it doesn’t affect our mind. And we have to make this affect our mind! Affect here means that we feel that pinch of the difficulty to let it go, the pinch of the difficulty to let my priority go. I’m holding my priority for me and if I have to let that go, that is hard. So you have to really think on this till you feel the pinch! (I used to pinch close friends, so they started to call me the Pinchen Lama). Then the resolution where you have to reach to, is:

Even I get the pinch, still I will be able to do it and I can do it, I can switch it, I can make others’ priority more important than mine, I can do it!

In short, the naive work for their aims alone;
While Buddhas work solely to benefit others.
Having weighed those faults against Buddhas’ excellence,
Inspire me to change self-absorption to concern for others.

*Lama Chöpa, verse 59*

In brief, for all beings, for everyone, mostly for us ourselves, our needs are our priority. That is what we did so far. What the Buddhas did, is, people’s needs are their priority, they solely work for the welfare of others. The Panchen Lama, who wrote the *Lama Chöpa*, is referring to us, who hold our own needs as our priority, as childlike, naive. That means, immature. We really don’t know what is good for us, like a child doesn’t know what is good for him. To the eyes of the enlightened beings, holding our own needs as most important, which in other words means yelling and screaming about ‘me, me, me’, is childish. But those who are matured, like a Buddha, they know what to do. They hold the people’s needs as their priority. Who got benefited, the childish or the
Buddhas? There is no question, they got better, they became a buddha. So, when we think we do something for ourselves, for our own needs, we’re not really fulfilling our needs, we’re driving ourselves away from our needs. When we’re putting the priority of the people’s needs over ours, we’re working right. Not only working right, but working right for myself. So the bottom line is:

If I want to help myself, I should work for the people. I should have the people’s needs as my priority. That is how I can help myself. The Buddhas did that and they became a buddha. I looked the other way, so I still remain at the infant level, almost crying ‘mam, mam’.

When you understand who got benefited, what is the quality and what is the fault with this mind, unless you’re a fool, you can understand that you can exchange.

May I be blessed to be able to do that. Say the verse and do the visualization as above.

Resolution five: exchange self for others

The resolution you try to reach here is about the question of the priority. We’ve seen that holding my priority is causing all the problems, and that ignoring or rejecting or not caring for the needs of the people is also a problem.

Now if you’re going to exchange, you exchange between what and what? Self-cherishing, ego-service, self-priority over the needs of others – these are the one side. Cherishing the people, acknowledging the needs of the people, not being in ego-service but in the service of other living beings, that is the other one. We’re exchanging those two. Why?

What I have been doing so far has been creating a tremendous amount of difficulties, it didn’t help me. What the Buddhas have been doing, I’ve been unable to do so far. Let me do it once, let me change, and let’s see what happens. Buddhas have not been in the service of ego. Buddhas have ignored the demand of ego – self-priority. Buddhas have carried on people’s needs as priority, caring for the beings, working for the benefit of all others, and that brought a lot of benefit to them. When I see those two, my side and Buddha’s side, I pass a resolution:
Since cherishing myself is the doorway to all downfalls,
And cherishing others is the foundation of everything good,
Inspire me to practice from my heart
The yoga of exchanging self and others.

_Lama Chöpa, verse 60_

Self-cherishing or self-priority really brings you all the sufferings. We mentioned it before: _my, my_ brings all the trouble. And if you say, ‘Well, whatever you want is fine’, then there is no quarrel. If you say, ‘Whatever you want is not okay, whatever I want I want!’ then there is trouble. That is between two people. Basically this is really the point of developing the special equanimity/equality.

Look back into the root text: _Put all the blames on the one._ This is why I said before, you don’t blame everything to yourself, you blame your ego. It’s ego’s message that tries to tell you, ‘You got to do this just for yourself, to make yourself happy’. Shantideva says,

Whatever suffering there is in this world.
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 129

If all the injury,
fear and pain in this world
Arise from grasping at a self,
then what use is that great ghost to me?

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 134

If all these sufferings and difficulties and fears, if all the cause of trouble is coming from the ego, you still want to serve the ego? Put that question to yourself. Find out the answer for yourself. Shantideva refers to this one as a great ghost. The great master Padampa Sangye says,

We think somebody else made our happiness.
What you don’t understand is that it is caused by yourself. It’s really within you.

Regarding this point, it says in the _Wheel of sharp weapons_, vs. 49:

As it’s true what I have said about self-centered interest,
I recognize clearly my enemy now.
I recognize clearly the bandit who plunders,
The liar who lures by pretending he is part of me:
Oh what relief that I have conquered this doubt!

Here is my enemy, within me. Let me catch you know! You thief that comes hiding and robbed me, I caught you right handed.
You are the thief. You came as *me* and for *me* by *me* and you come with the sound of ‘me, me and me’. So I have no doubt you are the thief, you are the robber. I have no doubt you are the enemy. I got you now!

You know, if you are meditating, it is worth for me to spend time on this. Look inside, where all our negative thoughts are coming from. Who is really creating it? Who is the real culprit here? Who’s to be blamed? The books can tell you, Buddha can tell you, we can repeat it, I can say it – blame, blame, blame the one. We can say that, but who is really the one? *You* have to recognize it. *You* think, you meditate. *You* analyze. Our habitual pattern will always look for and automatically find the point of blaming somewhere else: either my mother, or the mother-in-law, boyfriend, former girlfriend, somebody else, maybe your own wife, or husband – whatever, we’re going to find it! The moment you find that – you should know – you’re wrong. This is the sign of wrongness. Somebody else is another person, who just like you, is trying to do the best they can.

So the enemy is within ourselves. The ego within ourselves is the cause of all troubles within ourselves, the creator of pain within ourselves, the protector of the hell within ourselves, the thief, the devil – our own ego. It is important to recognize that. If you don’t, you will shoot and kill yourself. It is not you, it is not me, it is my ego, your ego. So, ‘Put all the blame on the one.’

**Meditate on everyone as kind**

Actually, truly speaking, our survival is due to the kindness of other people, but we don’t appreciate the kindness of other people much. We appreciate the kindness of Buddha and God and all that. We appreciate their kindness so much, but what did we really get from Buddha, what did we really get from God, and what are we getting from the people? The same! But we are in the habit of being impressed by and appreciating the enlightened beings. Whether you’re following the Hindu-Buddhist tradition, or you’re following the Judeo-Christian tradition, we are appreciating the enlightened beings and their deeds. We do not appreciate the people, but the people have done the same thing.
Every survival of our life is due to other people’s kindness. Every food that we eat, every cloth that we wear, every place that we sit or sleep, it is because of the people’s kindness. Even in this building, we’re sitting here due to the people’s kindness. Those who have built and done up the building, those who put the floor down, and those who painted the walls, all of them, by their kindness, we are enjoying this. Every part of our life we look into, is due to the people’s kindness. Show me one pleasure in your life where the people are not involved. There is none.

The training of the mind here tells you, do not appreciate only what the Buddhas and Gods and enlightened beings did, but give credit to the people, appreciate the kindness of the people, the compassion of the people, the contributions that people made in our life. Meditate, give training to your mind, make your self realize that. That’s how you can really hold compassion. Otherwise we begin to make distinctions, because our ego will not accept this idea at all. Ego will say, ‘That is not my business. My job is to protect me, and to put down the others.’ The ego will normally tell you, ‘Do not appreciate anybody. You are the one who needs the most, you should be the winner, you should be the gainer, and everybody else should be the loser. This is the ego talk. Now you see the difference, how you can directly contradict the ego.

You know who is the most kind person? Your enemy. Your enemy will criticize you. Your critics will criticize you, and that way help you to correct. If you look in that way, it’s very helpful. If you can’t, I don’t blame you. But, if there’s somebody criticizing you, it’s always helpful because it’s an opportunity for us to correct, to make ourselves better. Whoever points out your problems, that one is the most kind. If they’re pointing things out to you quietly, you’re grateful. If they’re pointing it out as public criticism, still be grateful, because it’s an opportunity to see your problem. Like we need a mirror to point out to ourselves what is wrong on the face, just like that we can see our problems, our own reflection. Normally, when somebody reminds you, you get upset, don’t you? No point in getting upset. It’s not the fault of that person. If you get upset, you should get upset with your own ego’s behavior, not with somebody else.
Now I know that my sufferings are not created by people, either individually or collectively. I must remain very grateful to all. Shantideva says,

But what need is there to say much more?  
The childish work for their own benefit.  
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.  
Look at the difference between them!

_Bodhisattvacaryavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 130

Whatever joy there is in this world,  
All comes from desiring others to be happy

_Bodhisattvacaryavatara_, Ch. 8, verse 129

Then Shantideva concludes over here,

A Buddha’s qualities are gained  
From the sentient beings and the Conquerors alike,  
So why do I not respect them  
In the same way as I respect the Conquerors?

_Bodhisattvacaryavatara_, Ch. 6, verse 113

We get from the Buddha all enlightenment and we respect Buddha; we equally get enlightenment from the sentient beings, why do we respect Buddha and not all sentient beings? I gain my enlightenment from Buddhas and I gain my enlightenment from sentient beings equally. We do respect the Buddhas, we put them on the altar, we make offerings, but why don’t we do that to all sentient beings as we get benefit from them both, equally?  
Not only that. We pray to the Buddhas to clear our difficulties, to clear our obstacles, we seek enlightenment from Buddhas, we do all this. But if we think the Mahayana way, if we talk about bodhimind, if we think about dedication to all sentient beings and all of those, we are in fact dealing with all sentient beings.

Not a single person ever obtained enlightenment by simply praying to Buddha. Each and every enlightened being has become enlightened by caring for and serving and helping others. Therefore, all the sentient beings are the one who give us the enlightenment. Not the Buddhas who grant it us. It is something I have to work for and earn. What is the work? Work for the people. So it is wrong to ignore the people, it is wrong to ignore all sentient beings. Therefore I must meditate on everyone being kind.
I tried to show you each of those resolutions by quoting the Lama Chöpa, and by quoting Shantideva’s Bodhisattvacharyavatara. When you look into the quotations, you see you are pulled from all sides, but especially by those two text, (available in English and in Dutch, both). You can put them together and make sense of it.

Summary or review

What is Samsara? Samsara is the continuation of contaminated identity. That’s what it comes down to. The bottom line explanation of samsara is: living without choice, without freedom, living lives that are running continuously, one after another.

If you are out of samsara, you should have every freedom: freedom from living, dying, getting sick, and old age; free from dying and taking rebirth within the power of karma and delusion. You may take rebirth, but what then makes you do it, is going to be your compassion and your commitment, rather than negative karma and delusions. That is the difference between ordinary beings and extra-ordinary beings. We’re all ordinary beings, but when we get that freedom, we become an extra-ordinary being. When we are disconnected from the continuation of contaminated identity, then we are out of samsara.

Samsara is running like a clock: one little wheel moves, which pushes another and makes it go around. In Tibetan it’s called korwa which means ‘running around.’ Chandrakirti, the great Indian scholar, gives the example that samsara is like a dumbwaiter, on which the food is put and it goes up. When you’re bringing it up, you have to make a lot of efforts and really pull, but when you let it go, it goes straight down automatically. That’s an example for us who are in samsara – easy to go down, difficult to come up. That tells us, we are not free. We’re supposed to be circling, however, coming up is very hard, and going down is so easy.

What makes that happen? Attachment and aversion. They are the source, the root of all our sufferings. They make sure we remain in the low condition. They are like the prison guard, who is not guarding somebody from outside coming into prison, but guarding the people who are in there, making sure they don’t run out. Likewise attachment-hatred is the guard that makes sure that we don’t run out of the samsaric condition. Attachment and hatred butcher us, take us to the hell realms, kill us, kill our joy, our
happiness. Even during sleep, our nightmares are caused by them. So all problems are caused by attachment-hatred: 1) It is the root of all suffering. 2) It is the prison guard. 3) It is a killer. 4) Even our nightmares are caused by them.

Who is keeping them? Me! I am protecting my attachment and my hatred. I am doing it. What do we have to do? Let those dirty thoughts go. Let’s not entertain them, let go! Did you hear? Let it go. You hear a lot spiritual teachers telling you, ‘Let it go, let it go, let it go’, but many of them don’t tell you what you should really let go of. You should let go of the attachment. You should let go of the hatred. And more than that: where does attachment and hatred come from? It is ego. Let that ego go!

When you let that ego go, the vacuum has to be filled. What will you put in there? The commitment that I will work.

As much work as I will do for myself, I will equally work for other beings, too. The priority for me, and the priority for others, will have no difference. (That’s the equanimity/equality we talk about.) My commitment to help all sentient beings, and my commitment to help myself has the same standard, the same priority. It is equal. What are the reasons to do this?

- This is the only path through which all the enlightened ones have gone – Gate, gate….
- There’s not a single enlightened being who hasn’t done that. There will never be any other enlightened beings in the future that will not have that idea. So this is the path.
- This is the essence of the practice of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They have no other priority. They have nothing more important than this. That’s why they call it, ‘essence of the practice.’ This is the ultimate practice that they do. Their whole purpose, their whole goal, their whole life is totally dedicated for this, and only this – the equanimity, which makes my needs and other’s needs an equal priority.

_Tong-len - give and take_

Train alternately in the two, taking and giving. Begin taking with yourself. Mount the two upon the breath.
You are training your mind when you try to destroy your ego, try to destroy the mind that ignores all other people, and try to destroy the mind that thinks that you are the most important one.

What does our ego want? Ego wants you to be superior to everybody else; ego wants *me* to be the best of all. Whatever your profession may be. If you’re a businessman, you want to be the most prosperous, wealthiest, efficient – whatever, you know – the best of all. If you are a meditator, your ego would like to be the best meditator, and if you are an artist your ego would like you to be the best in your profession, and for that matter you would do whatever it takes to cut all your competition, whatever the cost may be. Your ego always demands a kind of supreme superiority. It labels all the people. The more you become successful, the more your ego’s demands will change. At the beginning, probably your ego simply wants to make it. And when you become a little more successful you want to cut your competition, and when you become even a little more successful, it wants to make you the universal king or something. There is no saying what ego wants because our mind is so strange and our desire doesn’t have any limit, so therefore it always increases and increases.

I’m referring to the Tibetan word *dak zhin* – *dak* means ‘self’ and *zhin* is ‘holding’. You may think that is self-cherishing. Ego definitely has a tremendous amount of self-cherishing, otherwise it won’t be the ego. But more than that, *dak zhin* is ‘holding tight to the self’.\(^{25}\) The aspects of *dak zhin* will tell you ‘make me superior, and make me better than anybody else, beat everybody up, and get me up there!’ It is ‘I want to be superior, and better than anybody else. I, I, I, I.’

Our ego is so interesting! Just watch your mind. Say, ‘What do I want, what do I want to take?’ ‘All the best!!! Whatever they have, I want!’ Right? And what do you want to give? ‘All the problems and the misery.’ That’s ego talking. It’s not you. You’re not a bad person, you’re a good, a wonderful person, you are kind, you have a compassionate nature. It’s not you. Then who is it? It is coming from inside me, from my deep mind somewhere. It is ego talk.

So, now here, whatever the ego wants we turn around and we do the opposite. If ego tells you ‘go up’ we make sure we go down. If ego tells you ‘go down’ we’ll go up. That’s how you have to treat your ego. So, if ego tells you ‘get all the best!’ all right, it is time for
us to take all the worst. And if ego tells you ‘give all the miserable things’ then, take all the miserable things. That is tong-len.

We are training our mind to be caring and compassionate, to be concerned with the well-being of others. If you are truly thinking that you wish other people to have pleasure, you are bound to enjoy that. And if you think people should suffer and I should enjoy, then it will never work. Never ever work! Right? So therefore, what do we do? We’ll take the worst of whatever people have, and we give the best of whatever we have. That is give and take.

Tonglen is basically based on the breath. The breathing system we have is inhale and exhale the air. That is basic human nature. We breathe in and out and if we stop doing one of them, we’re gone. Tonglen uses this basic human behavior to develop compassion and love: compassion-oriented breathing in and love-oriented breathing out. While breathing in and out you try to develop love and compassion; that is what it is.

Visualization is very important. It makes a big impact on our consciousness. About six months ago there was a big news announcement on the TV: the Harvard university scientists discovered that the best way to make an impact on the mind is visualization. (I was about to get up and tell them, ‘Hallo, Buddha has been talking that 2500 year ago…’). There are people who cannot draw a visual image. It does not matter, you can feel. I mean, you do have feelings. Otherwise, you are in trouble.

In your visualization you can do whatever you feel like doing. However, it is recommended to imagine people with a face and a name, actual living human beings. You may think, ‘That way we will only care about human beings, what about the others – my cat, my dog?’ In the tradition it is said that in reality this is your cat or your dog, but you visualize them with a human face and body. The reason for that is that it is easier to deal with human beings. And, it may also contribute to link up a certain good karma, so that the cat may become a human being in a next life.

That is your object of meditation, that is your focus. Your friend, your companion and all the persons that you care for can be the most important ones, right in front of you, face to face if you want to. When I say ‘each and every person with a face and name’, you don’t have to keep on thinking, ‘Oh yeah, he’s here
and she’s here and he’s there’. Your major focus can be on one or two people but at the same time you think that all the space is filled up. What I normally very strongly object to, is to visualize nameless, faceless dots, but somehow it easily becomes that, otherwise you’d have to keep on remembering everybody, go through the names and think of their faces, and that’s going to be big trouble. So, if we do it the simple way, we think they are all there, and when you are specifically thinking of somebody, that person is there with a name and face.

1. The practice of tong-len on self – (Begin taking with yourself)

If you are afraid of taking somebody else’s pain, it is recommended to start with taking your own suffering. Like if it’s in the morning, you take the sufferings that you are going to experience in the evening, or your own suffering you are going to experience tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or next month, or next life. By taking your own suffering that would come up in a rather big way in the evening, a little earlier, it might not become so big. It is quite an easy way of doing it; taking it in advance so that you can handle it easily. And keep on training your mind in that way. It’s much easier to take my own problem on me than taking someone else’s. Don’t you agree?

While breathing in, you take your own suffering from yourself. For example, say to yourself, ‘I’ll take my own sufferings of this evening on me now, and tomorrow’s suffering, and next week’s, next month’s, next year’s, next life’s, and the sufferings of my lives thereafter.’ Take your own pain into yourself, make it come a little quicker, so you settle for a smaller problem rather than the heaviest of difficulties.

2. The practice of tong-len – general instruction

What you really want to do, is to make them happy. What makes them unhappy? The mental, physical and emotional sufferings they have. Normally that what our life is all about. When we have physical pain we go ‘auch auch auch’, when we have mental or emotional pains we show a long face. That indicates we’re not happy, we’re suffering. So, how happy you can make them by removing their pain. For that we do a mental exercise. That mental exercise is sort of lifting up their pains. The tool that you use is
your breath. The power of breathing the air in lifts their sufferings. You use the air-power of breathing out to give. The air-power is nothing but keeping on track. What you give is your joy, happiness, the cause of happiness, your virtue etc.

You breathe in from the left nostril. While breathing in you take their sufferings. You take them completely, without any fear, without any hesitation and you don’t leave anything out. Take them in when you breathe in.

When breathing out from the right nostril, you give all your happiness and the causes of your happiness, your joy, your compassion, everything. Without any attachment, without any hesitation, without any miserliness. It reaches them in the form of light, and all become happy and joyful.

When I’m telling you this here, you may not have that much difficulty. But when you begin to seriously think about it, you may get afraid. You may have a fear of taking or you may have a hesitation of giving. That’s the human nature – most human nature is ego-designed.

If you really look carefully into your mind, that equanimity that we developed yesterday and the day before, should make it easier for you. That’s why we put so much effort, time and energy, in trying to bring the equanimity about. It makes this easier.

When you begin to take the sufferings of people on yourself, your mind is going to have a tremendous amount of resistance. Actually it are two things. If you don’t think about it, everything is fine, you have the attitude of, ‘Whatever it may be, so be it.’ That is a very superficial level, so there is no problem. That is not serious enough either. When you begin to think seriously on this, then you get all the resistance. You’ll say, ‘Why? Why me? Why his? Why her’s?’ All of those. We began to see that yesterday with the questions on the motivation-level. And I’m glad to see this, because it is serious thinking, it is the beginning of seriousness. And in fact if I would not have seen these questions coming up, I would be thinking, ‘Oh, it is all going on a superficial level.’ So I was happy to see that.

Interconnection. One important difficulty you’ll get is, ‘Whether these people are suffering doesn’t make a difference to me, why should
That is the idea of not caring. Like the Kosovo-refugees are coming now, ‘That’s them not me, I’m comfortable in Nijmegen, why should I bother?’ That is worse then, ‘I need to help but I can’t.’

It’s interesting; the thought, ‘It’s a different person so I don’t have to do anything with him or her’ is not true. The husband has to help his wife, the wife has to help the husband, the mother has to help her children, and the children are supposed to help their parents too, whether they want to or not. You may say, ‘Well yeah, that’s is my mother, my father, they were supposed to bring me up and nurture me. It’s okay to help them because they were supposed to help me.’ Or you may say, ‘It’s my mother so I can’t look away.’ A lot of people think that way, ‘I don’t really like it but it is my mother so I can’t look away’. We are all related like that. It might not be your mother this time, but in a previous or a next life. It is very similar to the feelings some people have when they are divorced. ‘It’s my daughter’s father’ you say; you dislike him, you’re angry, upset, yet it is still ‘my daughter’s father’. You can’t cut that out, even when you’re dying to cut it out and tear it into pieces, still it’s your daughter’s father.

This is reality; the connections between people, between each other are so serious, so strong and so long. The change of lives made us not recognize each other, but we do have a tremendous amount of connections. The change of life made me Tibetan and you Dutch. Apart from that we have a tremendous amount of sameness or oneness, having dealt with each other so many times in our previous lives. We are very much connected, otherwise, you wouldn’t be here, I wouldn’t be here. We have a tremendous amount of connections and dealings with each other. And we put trust in each other, we consult each other, we try to gain some wisdom on each other. We try to bring in and solve some personal problems with each other and we also try to help the future generations. All those things we do together so we have a tremendous amount of connection. That’s why we are here. We happen to be karmically connected. And the so-called ‘all sentient beings’ we are not able to connect to right at this moment yet, we are very much connected to, too.

The whole idea of interdependence is reality. What is happening in Kosovo makes a difference for us here, too. You know, a couldn’t-care-less attitude has been taken by us, the human beings.
But the wise people of the last century brought this interdependence and so we begin to understand it. The connection is not only the environment, the major connection is the persons. If there are no persons, environment doesn’t mean much. It is like empty space, like as it used to be on the moon. What makes the difference is the interpersonal connection, that has an tremendous amount of importance. So Buddha has been giving that idea of interpersonal connection and how important it is, how relevant it is, how dependent it is and all of those. For two thousand five hundred years he has been yelling and screaming and we didn’t get the message. The whole idea of great compassion, responsibility and caring, all of them are based on the interpersonal relationship. The whole bodhimind, bodhicitta, caring, committing and all of them, are the most important, interpersonal relationship.

When I talk to you about interpersonal relationship, it is the language and expression that you are used to, you can easily understand and accept it. When I try to talk to you about bodhimind, then it is a foreign language, foreign subject for you and you will have all these barriers around. So think about ultimate personal relationship here. That’s not a perfect translation of bodhimind but that’s what it boils down to.

So there is a tremendous amount of connection. It is almost like hand and leg. If you got a thorn in your feet, your hand will go and take it out. No one is surprised of that, right? Our interpersonal connection is very much like that. If your leg is suffering from the thorns and your hands say, ‘I don’t care, I don’t have the suffering, the leg is suffering’, does that make sense? And when the left hand is getting something and the right hand says, ‘I don’t care, it’s you who’s suffering not me’? At the end, the legs will suffer, the hands will suffer. We know that, that’s why when a problem arises we address it straightway; don’t we do that? That is how we function. Likewise whether it is a personal problem or a group problem or an international problem, we should address it, talk about it and try to solve it together.

Okay, ladies and gentlemen, if you don’t care about other people it is a spiritual problem. If you don’t care about them, they don’t care about you, and we’ll all suffer and the problems will continue. Does that make sense?
Now, with this tonglen practice, giving and taking on the breath, are we really helping them? Yes or no? Yes, in the long run. And no, it’s not an immediate help for them, but it is helping you. At this moment we are not even taking their suffering, we are taking our own future suffering right now. So we are also giving our positive karma’s to ourselves first and we try to materialize that, so that we don’t have to suffer. Then we do the same with the persons that you care about, then with the persons they care about, then their family, children, their spouses and so and forth. That’s how you extend your practice when you go seriously. When you are going superficially – breathing all in, all out – it doesn’t matter. When you take in, you are taking in the first two of the four noble truths. And when you give, you are giving the last two of the four noble truths. And it is also important for a minute or so to think they have been freed of suffering. Particularly on the one-to-one-level that is very helpful. Particularly those of you who think you are healers – hands-on healer or faith healer or doing massage – if you use the tong-len give and take, the effect of the hands-on healing or massage is much better. You will notice yourself. You are not going to get extra sufferings or illnesses. If you afraid of it, I tell you, you are not going to get it. Unless it is a contagious disease, of course, airborne diseases we get anyway when we breathe together (laughs). I tell you one thing. You may do tong-len, but if any attraction comes in, particularly sexual attraction, that particular work you do, massage or whatever, might not be that helpful. When attachment or any one of those negative emotions come in, not only the effect will be less, but it really becomes worse: it will have practically no effect or an adverse effect. Otherwise this tong-len is a beautiful thing to do.

*Special give and take.* Before you take any suffering, either your own future suffering, or the suffering of the other person, the question really arises, ‘What do I do with this now, where am I going to put it within me?’ So you have to be prepared for that first. You need a garbage can or some place to be able to throw it. It will be a big concern for educated people like you. No problem. We have an enemy inside. His name is: Mister Ego. That is your target. This is actually called ‘special give and take’.
Collect your own negativities, which are the deeds of your ego, collect your negative emotions, which are the thoughts of your ego, and visualize your ego him- or herself in the form of whatever you dislike, a big spider or a heap of darkness. Collect all of it, don’t leave any part of your body or consciousness out, just collect it all, somewhere at the center of your body, at the heart level.

And what you are taking from them, is not only their sufferings, but also their causes of sufferings such as attachment, hatred and even their ignorance. All of them come in through the breath. It has an effect like a heating thunder on a rocky area or – as we see on television these days – NATO bombs hitting the Yugoslavian power station, or the cyclone in Oklahoma picking up everything. In that way it hits your ego, shreds it completely and destroys it. Not even a trace is left, nothing! So the purpose is: take, do the work and be gone. Gone is no problem; you throw a bomb and the target is gone. Like that, this is what you can do. You don’t have to keep what you took inside you and feel it and save it there and suffer. Not only you don’t have to do it, but you should not do it.

3. The practice of tonglen on a one-to-one basis

1). Visualize and connect. Visualize that person right in front of you, and think of the suffering that that person has, the disease that the person possesses. The mental, physical and emotional pain that the person is going through. When you really see your friend suffering, you really see that friend with unbearable pain, then tears will come. That sort of thing is true caring. It may not be great compassion but it is a true feeling of compassion. If you don’t feel anything when seeing the person you really love the most – your current girlfriend or whomever – then you have to change the focus and try to recollect your own sufferings that you went through. Think about when you experienced similar difficulties or other difficulties, ‘How unhappy I was, how much pain I went through, how much anxiety I had, and how many times I woke up in the middle of the night with a heavy heart, or sometimes even with a pain in the heart’. Think of that, and then try to understand that person is going through the same kind of pain. Everybody can say ‘poor little person’, but if you have no feelings it is not very good – it is out of touch. Being out of touch with compassion doesn’t
work, you have to have the feeling. You can only understand and develop that feeling, if you think about when you went through that or something like that. If you think that way, you get a better understanding of what the person is going through.

This particular feeling is not necessarily just for tonglen. It is even important to use within your family – the relationship between husband and wife, the relationship between children and parents, the relationship between every member of the family. If you don’t understand the other person’s problems, you have to sit down, settle down, and think about when you had that pain, how you felt. If you can remember that, then your attitude towards your family members will be different. You will no longer be that short tempered, snappy person. It will give you a better understanding of what other peoples’ pain is all about. Otherwise there is a danger for us, ‘Oh poor little people, oh they are all suffering’.

Once you have the feeling, once you can really appreciate and understand what the other person is going through, you have real caring coming up. You would like to give some kind of quick solution; right at this moment you would like to destroy that pain. ‘If I can do something about it, let me do it right now, and make that pain go away.’ That desire, anxiety and eagerness is what you need. Normally, when you see your child suffering tremendously, you will have the anxiety of, ‘What can I do?’ That type of anxiety you need. This is how you have to train your mind up to that level. And when you have that anxiety, that anxiety will say, ‘Let me take the pain, is there any way I can take it?’

2). Take. When you come to that level then you can visualize it. This is the time you’ll be able to visualize it. Take it and sort of lift it up by your own sincerity, by your own compassion, by the power of the truth, by the blessings of the enlightened beings. ‘I’m here now to take all the pains of that person.’ Take it in some kind of undesirable color and breathe it in. From right or left nostril or maybe both, doesn’t matter, breathe it in. Breathe it in – whatever that pain might be, including cancer, the pain itself, the cause of the pain, whatever it might be. In your visualization literally pick it up and bring it in. And like a powerful lightening it hits that mountain of ego, that heap of darkness you have at your heart level, and destroys it. That is the taking in.
3). **Give.** Then you give. You give love, affection, virtue, everything, without any hesitation. You give your own positive karma, your own body. Whatever the desire or need of the person may be, you give. You are giving three things: your body, your wealth, and your virtue. That’s the best that we have to offer, so we give that. And whatever the need of the individual might be, it becomes that form. That individual becomes free of pain and happy, just as you wanted them to be.

The moment you have any hesitation, the moment you attach a condition, it is not good. People appreciate people’s generosity. But when it is attached to a condition, then it becomes difficult for the people to accept it. I remember living in India, which is such a poor country. In the seventies and eighties America gave a lot of aid, but India didn’t appreciate it, India kept on saying, ‘We rather have trade than aid.’ They even forced the USA aid office to close. If aid is attached to a string you become a puppet that has to dance according to the thread. Even India can say ‘no’ to that. They are very proud of it, actually. And that is a good thing.

As the individual, there should not be any strings attached. The quality of generosity is: not looking for return, no attachment, not hoping to gain something back, not looking for gratitude, and certainly not looking for control, influence or power. That’s what it is. So when you give, give without any hesitation, without any reservation, just give.

To do tong-len on a one to one basis is very helpful. It is a tremendous opportunity, believe me. You can do this between the partners, you can do this between healer and patient, you can do that among yourselves, you can do this between the teachers and the students, you can do that with all sentient beings, you can do that as sick people and as caretakers. For the caretakers it is a great opportunity for practice. For the patients it is an opportunity to thank the caring people. For the therapist it is a good practice, a good opportunity to make the therapeutic work work better. For the patients it is a good way of expressing gratitude for the therapist.

After having motivated yourself by meditating on the previous points of generating the bodhimind up to here, you want to
take and give. You also evoke the power of the Supreme Field of Merit to make it work.

Therefore, supremely compassionate Lama,
Inspire me to take the bad deeds, imprints, and sufferings
Of all beings to ripen upon me right now
And to give to them my happiness and virtue
So that all beings may be happy.

*Lama Chöpa verse 61*

When you are reading these first three lines, you pray strongly to the Supreme Field of Merit that with whatever you undertake you may be able to release the pains of the person that you care.

1) You have the person visualized right in front of you and that person has suffering, let’s say he or she suffers from a tremendous amount of worry. You sit with that person and you watch the person.

2) Then open your heart, ‘I’m here now to take all the pains’. Visualize that you are collecting all the suffering from that person, the pains that person is experiencing. Also you collect the cause of the suffering. You lift everything from the person in the form of a color you don’t like – a heavy color, like dirty-laundry water. You take that person’s mental and physical problems, you completely lift them from that person in the form of air, and you breathe them in from your left nostril.²⁸

Breathe it in, without hesitation. Take it in completely. Take it into your heart of hearts, feel the pain. Like lightning it hits the heap of ego you have at your heart level and melts it, destroys it. And look at that person, think that he or she is becoming well and happy, free of pain.

3) Then, mindful of the last two lines of the verse, you give all your joy and happiness, all your virtue, your positive energy, love, affection, all of them, without hesitation, without reservation. Give it in the form of light of different colors. Breathe all that out from your right nostril²⁹ and give it to that person. Think that this person becomes absolutely happy and joyful. Even blissful.

4. The practice of tonglen expanded; body, wealth and virtues to all beings
From the traditional Buddhist point of view, your object of focus will change. First you can focus on one on the human level and whatever their sufferings are. You have to expand the object from one individual to three, four, or five and multiply that.

As a Mahayana practice, the focal point is all sentient beings. Just like great compassion, the focus here is on all sentient beings without leaving any single one out. All sentient beings with the physical appearance of the people, you know. Never think of nameless, faceless dots! At the beginning level we do give this teaching of just to visualize all sentient beings in that way, but at this level you must change that into beings with a name, with a face, and with all their difficulties, their normal egoistic character, such as they don’t listen to you, or whatever you tell them to do, they do the opposite, etc.

The traditional teachings here will tell you here that when you are focusing on the hell realms, you take the sufferings of the hell realm people completely. Either you do the hell realms in eighteen different ways or two, like the hot hell and the cold hell, or both hot and cold hells together. Whatever time you have, whatever is convenient for you is how you can do it. Then change to the hungry ghosts. Then change to the animal realm. Then to the demi-gods realm, the gods realm, all six realms or eighteen realms, whatever you want to. But begin with the persons you know and you recognize. Okay?

Visualize those suffering in the hot-hell realm. Visualize that rays of your body will manifest there as a cold shower or a rainfall that has a tremendous power and so the power of the heat will be reduced.

You take their sufferings, the heat, the fear, the pains etc. You take the causes of their suffering: the karmic cause as well as the delusion cause – in particular the anger and hatred – together with the imprints.

When you give your light, it goes out and reaches to the hell realms, and just by the touch of the light, it purifies the environment. Do not forget the environment. It is extremely important, equally important to the inhabitants. Purify the environment, because most hell realm people suffer because of the environment. So purify the environment, and take their hot
and cold sufferings. Bring that in. Take it in. Destroy your ego, hit it on that. Bring it in and destroy your ego. And then give. Empty the hell realm completely, even close the hell realm. All those people become free of suffering.

Similarly the cold realms. There your body’s light rays will manifest as powerful sunshine, something making them warm. Not only you give them those and separate them from the pains of being cold, but also you give your body to them and they become human beings. Also you transform your body into houses, not shabby old houses but good solid ones one doesn’t have to worry about. Transform it as food to satisfy them, give it as clothes to put on, medicine, whatever they need. And also you visualize that you manifest your body as a teacher giving them teachings. They almost become a buddha, are ready to become a buddha. To that level you bring it up.

Similarly you give food to the hungry ghosts, wisdom to the animals, weapons to the jealous gods, whatever their need is. What you have to do is fulfill their needs. These jealous gods are really badly in need of weapons. And you give the samsaric gods the material they enjoy, beautiful flowers. These are the needs of the different realms, except for the human beings.

For human beings is said that the human desires are so much, limitless, you cannot in blanket say what they want. So give to them whatever they want, whatever they desire; manifest your body in that form and give it to the human beings.

You give your wealth and your virtues. Body, wealth and virtues you give to your teacher, to the lamas and Buddhas, in the form of offerings. It has a good omens for them having a long life and prosperity of activity. You give all your virtues of past, present and future. You give your body and wealth of present and future, you can’t give the past, the past is gone.

*The four noble truths*. What you really take is the first two truths: the suffering and the causes of suffering. The actual physical suffering is the truth of suffering. And the cause of suffering is twofold: the karmic cause and the delusion cause. The creator of our negative karma is our own neurosis. Take both of them in. And give the last two truths – the cessation and the path.
So you have not only a give and take practice emptying out all the suffering in the different realms and purifying all the environments, you also have the Four Noble Truths exercise together with this.

In short, I just briefly taught you the level one understanding of tonglen with give and take in rhythm with your breath, combined with the Four Noble Truths. That way you have the common with the medium level of freeing yourself from samsara working along with the development of love and compassion and the destruction of ego.

This first layer of tonglen has three main points, with three giving, and three taking.

1. First giving is body, second giving is wealth, and the third giving is all the virtues that we have accumulated from the three times – past, present and future.

2. Taking also, we have done with three points: first taking the suffering, second taking the cause of suffering, and among the cause of suffering, the major focus is on the delusions; third is taking the imprints of the delusions.

3. The three different ways of giving and of taking you mount on the breath.

I recommended to you, to combine them together with the verse [61] from the Lama Chöpa. When you say the verse three times, you practice the three different givings, three different takings.

I hope those of you who are practicing all of that, you do have some idea now. This is the first layer of tonglen, not the second etc. Actually, it goes up to the tenth, but the tenth is relevant only at the Buddha level, not here. These are the major points of tonglen. Read Pabongka’s Liberation in the Palm of your hand, day 17, 18 and 19, and also read the Sogyal Rinpoche’s Tibetan book of living and dying, Ch. XII30. Pick up any good information that you can get on it. Read. But that doesn’t mean every book that you read is absolutely true and correct and reality. Read many and draw your own conclusions. Informations are for you to collect, to make your mind up. And the decisions you make, by yourself, for your own good, using the best information available. And when you can’t make a decision, talk to others. That’s why you have groups. And group leaders should take care that there is a free information
flow. They should not make it very rigid, very square. I believe the
difference between the openness and the cult system is based on
this. In the sixties we fought for free information, in the nineties
we must preserve that. Openness is important, let the information
flow free.

B. PRACTICE IN BETWEEN THE MEDITATION SESSIONS

There are three objects, three poisons, and three roots
of virtue.

The three objects are friend, enemy and neutral people. You’re fo-
cusing on the people, and when you look at them, some you like,
some you hate, and some you don’t care for. That is what the
three objects are, and because of those three objects, you get three
poisons – attachment, hatred and ignorance. The three virtues are be-
ing free of those three poisons, so: attachment-free good work, ha-
tred-free good work, ignorance-free good work.

What do they tell you here? If the virtue is not attachment-free
it is considered to be not that correct. Likewise virtue that is not
hatred-free. It is hard to get ignorance-free, but try to get at least
attachment- and hatred-free. In other words, be free of the expres-
sion ‘what’s in it for me?’

When you’re raising any one of these three poisons, you should
think, ‘Ha! I’m getting this attachment. This attachment is ris-
ing with me. Okay, it’s not good for me, fine. Having this at-
tachment rise in me, I hope will substitute these people’s like,
dislike, and couldn’t care less, which, in fact, all are attachment.
I hope that this little attachment of mine will substitute every-
body’s attachment, so no one will have any attachment left an-
where.’

That’s raising the first virtue. Likewise, the second point, anger,
and the third, ignorance.

I’m getting angry, I’m raising anger here, I’m almost going to de-
velop hatred here. By raising this anger, may my anger may be
able to substitute anybody else’s anger so that that person will
not have any anger at all, forever. May I substitute every body
else’s anger and hatred, so that no one will have even the slight-
est anger and hatred.
Well, I have a couldn’t care less attitude because of my ignorance. As I’m having that, may it substitute for anybody else who may have ignorance. May my little ignorance substitute for the ignorance all the people of the whole world.

If possible, you should even think that it happened and be happy about it.

These are the little spiritual practitioners’ tricks. In reality it has not happened, but your positive karma builds up tremendously by telling yourself and thinking that it has happened, at least for a short period like a second. Just simply because you wished it that’s what has happened. It looks like it’s silly right at this moment, but actually, when you are developed well, simple wishing will make a big difference. Even just preparation will make a big difference.

This is actually telling us how we can deal with our life. This line and the following three you have to read together. This is what you do afterwards. First you learn, second you think about it, third you meditate, and then you keep that with you in life everyday. The three poisons will rise, and this is how you handle them.

This, in brief,
are the instructions of the post-meditation period.
Be mindful in order to admonish yourself.
Train yourself with the verses during all activities.

What do you mean by mindful here, mindful by what? Mindful not to forget the Mahayana training level mind. Check whether you are doing that or not doing that, check very often or warn yourself. In order to warn yourself keep mindful all the time, alert. I don’t like the word admonish. The example that I have is the accelerator. When you drive a car you have the gas, accelerator. As long as you push the accelerator, the gas goes and the car runs. That is the example, not reprimanding yourself. In order to remember to make your gas running all the time, what you have to do is stated by Shantideva:

In brief, for the sake of living creatures,
May all the harms
I have selfishly caused to others
Descend upon myself

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara._ Ch. 8, verse 165
By my having these difficulties, negative thoughts, negative emotions, may all sentient beings’ negative thoughts and negative emotions never exist.

And if you don’t remember it, sometimes may you say these words, like you are saying mantras. But don’t go downtown in the street just saying, ‘May I have all the suffering’ then people will think you’re crazy. The last line here refers to activities such as doing you daily chores, taking a walk or having fun. In other words, when you’re in the discotheque you are singing those lojong verses. What are you trying to remember? You are going back to the instructions of the post meditation period: keep yourself alert, be mindful, so that you will be warned. Train yourself.

If you keep on saying the words, it will remind you. That’s why the Tibetans keep on saying prayers, carry the mala; that makes you say at least OM MANI PADME HUNG. It is the training that we received. I’ve been trained that when I see the mala, I say mantra’s, but for a hippie-women who wears a mala as an ornament, it doesn’t work. A good example in the West is the wedding ring you wear; it gives you a message, it reminds you. So when you have these verses coming up in your head it will remind you of your attitude, of how you deal with problems. I’d like to quote Shantideva:

Why be unhappy about something  
If it can be remedied  
And what is the use of being unhappy about something  
If it cannot be remedied?

_Bodhisattvacharyavatara_, ch. 6, verse 10

That tries to tell you, if you are unhappy and in such a situation, what can you do, especially when no physical answer can be given?

This is the spiritual alternative that I can use, for myself and for others. For myself to remove my own pain or to remove others’ pain – hit on my ego. And let me give my own virtues to others and make them comfortable. This is an alternative, this is something for me to do; this is the spiritual answer.

*Generating the bodhimind.*

We’ve not yet completed the development of the bodhimind. With the practice of tong-len you keep on meditating that you are giving love and developing compassion. And when you wake up
from your meditative state, you begin to look whether it has actually happened or not. You begin to see that it is your meditation, it is your wish, but it has not actually happened. Then you think,

I am still the old me and you are still the old you. Yet, I do care, I do love, I am dedicated. So I have to go out of my world to do everything to be done. But to really do that I’m limited. I don’t know what to do. It’s like a handicap. What is going to effect, what is going to be more helpful? I need the knowledge of knowing that and I need the capability to do it. That is to be found at the total awakened state, the enlightenment level. Therefore, I need to be fully enlightened to fulfill this wonderful desire of mine.

When that mind comes in, you have bodhimind. First you may have it developed by wishing. Then you commit yourself and it will become the action-form bodhimind. Then, when you pick up the wisdom, it becomes absolute bodhimind.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Discussion on the topic equanimity/equality
Audience: I was reading *Becoming a Child of the Buddha* and I was talking to my mother about the part that says that if you really look at why your friends are your friends, it’s because they are nice to you and they build you up and if you look at why your enemies are your enemies it’s because they cut you down and hurt your feelings. So really having friends or enemies is, like, egocentric. It’s concerned with who’s nice to you and who’s mean to you.
Rimpoche: I won’t say that.
Audience: Or it’s self-cherishing, it reflects…
Rimpoche: I won’t say that. It doesn’t mean there’s no enemy and no friend. It doesn’t mean that at all. But we hold so tight onto these ideas, that is the problem. It doesn’t mean there’s no enemy, there’s no friend. That is reality. But it is my perception of how deep I want to put myself in that, that is the main point. That’s what we have to change. We’re not going to change friend into enemy, enemy into friend. We’re not going to do that. That’s not what exchange is all about. Exchange is all about how much am I going to put myself deep down in this, holding tight, blaming oth-
ers, blaming somebody else for all my difficulties – all of those. That is our problem.

Audience: If I’m going to see my brother, he’s so angry, but he’ll always say, ‘I’m not angry, everything’s fine’. But it’s like being around a force field and I just start wondering how to be with him.

Rimpoche: These sort of difficulties you find very often with a lot of people. What I’d do, is simply go with an open mind. And go with love of seeing my brother. I’ll go with love of being a sister, and I’ll listen. I will listen, I will not argue. I will listen. And what I will not do, is say, ‘I’m not angry, you’re angry…’ and blah blah blah – sit there and say I’m not angry. That is what I call passive-aggressive. I will not have that, I should not have that at all. Free of that, and with an open mind, and with true care and love of brother and sister I will go, and I will listen, as long as I can take it, and if I cannot, I’ll leave. Make sure that the matter doesn’t become worse. A funny way of answering, but that’s what I’d do. Maybe I’m wrong. I am not a psychologist, you know, that’s the thing. But I will go with an open mind, really, and love. And be free of everything, free of wanting anything and free of being passive-aggressive. That’s important, you know, because a lot of people do say, ‘I’m not angry. He lost it, and he got upset, and I sat there, and kept cool and watched it, and made sure that he got more and more angry all the time.’ That is passive-aggressive. It’s nothing great. They may think so, may project it as a great thing, but actually you’re hurting the person. So if you keep yourself free of that from the mind, then you hurt less. And when they don’t get hurt, they don’t scream.

Audience: If you look at criminals, it’s very hard to see their human face. How to train yourself in that?

Rimpoche: A very important and real question. It is the word ‘criminal’ gives you an understanding that there is something wrong with that personality. If you look beyond the word, certain activities have made them criminal, not all their activities. Among them you see many good people, you see people who work and learn and help other criminals, don’t you see that? The bad part, we have even ourselves. It may not be criminal but we’re broken a couple of laws here and there. We may not have been caught. We also have our bad side, but we are not labeled by our bad side. It is
the labeling that gives the different impression. See how unreal it is! If criminality were really some kind of fixed permanent thing, then everything the person did would have to be criminal. And the so-called good citizens, like ourselves, are not necessarily always good. That changes too. It is the labeling that makes it different.

Audience: Should we try to anticipate the future ripening of negative karma in order to modify conditions or impact, or should we just accept the karma as an opportunity to practice equanimity?
Rimpoche: You can do both. If it’s karma already ripening and you are already experiencing it, you can make the best use of that, such as with any suffering that you may have, you can say, By suffering this, may I be able to substitute other people’s suffering’. That’s one good way of using it. And that’s the Buddha’s wise advice, rather than sitting there saying, ‘What can I do, what can I doooool?! You can’t get out.

about ego

Audience: What is the relation between ego and personality?
Rimpoche: A very good question, again. In our perception we did not perceive ego separate from ourselves, or separate from our personality. That is because ego has completely overpowered our personality, our self. The moment you challenge your ego, then self, the personality, will begin to rise its head. Then you begin to see it. Not until then. That is the reason why Buddhism talks about the dualistic mind, the state of confusion and all of them. That is why the Wheel of sharp weapons talks about the enemy hiding, pretending to be myself.

Audience: When this real personality is not shown until ego is moving away, then how to imagine this real personality?
Rimpoche: You don’t need to imagine it, it is there. You may not see it clearly until ego moves away, but you do see it, inside. You see it as the push and pull: wanting to do something right and being unable to do it, intellectually you understand what needs to be done but felt from the heart you can’t. Or from your heart you know what is right but your information tells you not to. All this pull and push within yourself tells you that you have a conflict with your ego.
Audience: Instead of saying me and my ego, can’t we say there is a part of me which is a to be overcome and a part of me that should be nurtured?

Rimpoche: That’s fine. No problem with that. We try to nurture the true me, who is completely suppressed by ego all the time. I want the stress that point very clearly. That’s why I’m saying the ego is not me. Then who is it? It is the delusion, the real delusion. We think, ‘I’m the one that is getting hurt, my things….’ If that is not delusion, where is the delusion? If that is not ignorance, then where is the ignorance? If that is not the object of negation, then what is all that famous Buddhist talking about self and I and all this? The sentient being, the human being should not be negated!

We would like to destroy that ‘self’. I don’t want to be very gentle on that ‘self’. That ‘self’ has given us enough trouble. That is why we’re sitting here today. And we will continuously be here if we don’t deal with it. This is an opportunity for us to deal with this ego. So we may not have to be so very polite and so fearful.

On the other hand, when the Buddhists tell you about selflessness and emptiness and ‘no nose, no tongue….’ in the Heart sutra, it does not mean ‘no nose, no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue’. From the philosophy point of view it is ‘not this, not that’, but the bottom line is the ego. The object of negation of the self, the I, is the ego, nothing else. Not the sentient being, not the human being, but the ego. Let me make it clear. Don’t let the philosophers, trying to make a very philosophical point of the object of negation, fool us. It is the ego that needs to get out. Milarepa said,

I don’t know about prajnaparamita or transcendental wisdom. When you transcend from this place, this samsaric life, you really transcend. I do not know any thing about ethics or morals, but when you yourself behave really well in your mind, then you have all ethics and morals.

These are the words of a great sage. I think we need to pay attention to it.

Audience: You said that we have a feeling of being superior all the time. Since we have it all the time, it’s very difficult to recognize this feeling. How to learn to recognize it?

Rimpoche: Don’t worry. If a criminal walks in here with a gun, then we know who is hiding behind whom. That will tell you.
Audience: You told us that you can destroy your ego by taking on the suffering of others. Exchanging priorities. Does not that mean that your ego is already reduced? Because of the change of your focus, the change in priority.

Rimpoche: Yes, there is no doubt that the changed priority itself reduces ego. It does not mean that ego is completely cleared. There is still left, and it is not that easy to get rid of it.

about anger

Audience: I have a question about anger. Sometimes I wonder if on a certain level when it leads to a positive reaction, let’s say when I’m with a group of people and somebody makes a racist comment, and I get angry, I wonder that nobody else at the table got angry. If a collective thing happens, like in the sixties, people get angry, and therefore they protest the wars, and it’s not the anger that leads to picking up a gun to do something violent, but can anger ever lead to something positive on the surface?

Rimpoche: Oh yeah you can, if you’re at the bodhisattva level. At the bodhisattva level, anger can sometimes be useful, attachment can sometimes be useful. They’re bad, but can be made good. Then if you get into Vajrayana they will tell you about transformation of anger; that is totally different.

Audience: So then by that very nature it’s not really anger, it’s something else. Isn’t it?
Rimpoche: Yeah, but we don’t really know that yet. We’re still three years old, okay?

Audience: If you’re angry and you say, ‘May my anger reduce the anger of all other sentient beings’, does that help reduce your own negativity? You’re still angry and you still yelled at someone.

Rimpoche: If you’re really thinking, ‘May my anger substitute for every sentient beings’ anger’, and then look back to see where your anger is, you are probably not going to find it. You don’t challenge anger directly in that way. Instead, totally dedicate that your anger may substitute everybody else’s anger, and then you try to search your anger, you may not find much there. It gives you an indirect way of handling anger. I’m glad you raised that question. Right now, what we do is we say, ‘Ah! Here’s my anger, I have to challenge it!’ And if you keep on punching your anger like that, you
may have a problem. This may be another way of handling. It may be hinting that to you. Maybe, maybe not, there’s no fault if you try.

about compassion
Audience: Why is it that you start suffering of being burned out when you have a lack of compassion? Does it have to do with lack of compassion for yourself?
Rinpoche: Very much so. Very much so. You are not reaching to yourself. You are reaching only to ego. When you reach to yourself, you see your own condition. When you simply get in touch with ego and you don’t reach to yourself, all these problems come up. Remember, your ego pretends to be you and you perceive that. That’s our delusion. That’s our dilemma.

Audience: What is the difference between pity and compassion?
Rinpoche: Interesting. I don’t know how it is language-wise. But I feel that pity feelings is sort of being touched by helpless, hopeless seeking of someone’s else’s attention, like e.g. Indian beggars on the street that show their mutilated limbs in order to arouse that feeling. Real compassion does not look for that kind of feeling; compassion looks for the reality, the true nature, what really is. Compassion is a serious business. Compassion is caring, while pity is a temporary matter, seeking sympathy. If you think very carefully you’ll see the difference.

Audience: How to deal with the dilemma between care for yourself and care for others.
Rinpoche: I do not see any contradiction. Caring for others is caring for yourself.

about bodhimind
Audience: What is the difference between relative and absolute bodhicitta? And what exactly does the word relative mean in relative bodhicitta?
Rinpoche: It’s not so much the question of relative bodhicitta, but of absolute bodhicitta. When we say absolute bodhicitta we’re talking about bodhicitta with wisdom. In absolute sense it is true wisdom; since you call this one ‘absolute’ we have to call the other one ‘relative’. So the relative bodhimind is the true bodhimind.
Audience: When you focus on the sufferings of others, it gives you a better understanding of the causes of your own suffering. Realizing the sources of your own suffering already weakens the causes. Is that the case?

Rinpoche: Maybe, but the challenge is your addiction. You may realize it, but your addiction will make you do it – whatever it is that you are doing – again and again.

Audience: When you listen to these teaching, developing bodhicitta seems a very big thing, something so fantastic, very far away, hard to reach, to develop. When I hear about it I get even sad, thinking it’s impossible for me to reach that. What conclusion to draw from that? Maybe that Mahayana is not the right path for us, that it may be better to stay on the Hinayana? Or is it a stage in developing (this motivation in the right perspective)?

Rinpoche: That’s a very important question. When you look at it at first, just glance, you see only the personal needs and you do not really see what will really help us, what makes the personal needs to be fulfilled. That is hard to see at the beginning. I’m sure many of you have been a number of years in the practice: learning, studying, and pondering…. yet many of you will hear this particular way for the first time. May be this teaching about changing priorities gets your attention for the first time. It is absolutely true, all sentient beings’ needs looks like it is not my requirement. My requirement is to help myself. But, truly helping myself is helping all sentient beings. And if you don’t want to help others, care for others, you’re not going to be enlightened at all. So your achievement will be not the best. If you want to settle with less than best, that’s fine.

Now you may think it is very complicated, but please, don’t make it complicated, make it simple. At least, you wish to help all sentient beings, for which you do this and that. That is a very simple way of thinking. That simple way of thinking will have all the benefits of bodhicitta, yet is not that hard to think that way. At least for a minute you can think it. So why not take advantage?

And besides, if you have such a motivation, every action you do will be a direct cause for enlightenment, and if you don’t have such a motivation it is not a direct cause for enlightenment, then it is simply a nice little positive action. It may contribute to getting free of samsara or it may even be simply a worldly dharma. So our
opportunity is really rare and once we have that opportunity why not grab it? That is my thought. Is it clear to you?

Don’t feel sad. But on the other hand, if you do feel sad about it, it is touching within yourself and that itself is an indication it works. It is the indication that you have a connection. Not only an indication, it is going to work for you. It is said:

When there is smoke there is fire, when there is a seagull standing, there is water,
when you feel sad, or feel happy or even if you dislike it,
it is the indication that you have a connection.

It is a great strong hope. And my sincere suggestion here is: don’t give up! Certainly, it looks very ideal; it doesn’t really look like it is real at all. However, when Buddhas become fully enlightened, it is that Buddha that becomes enlightened, not the beings he worked for. That means, when you’re working that way, even though you think you’re working for them, who is benefiting? Yourself.

You remember, there’s the transition from the common with the lower level to the medium level and then to the Mahayana level. And when you think, ‘I need to get out of samsara, what can I do?’ the idea immediately comes, ‘It is not the question of what I do but of what I can do for others.’ Remember, president Kennedy said, ‘Do not ask what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country.’ That is a famous statement. Just like that, when you start working for the benefit of others, you benefit. If you don’t, you’ll be beating yourself, saying, ‘What can I do, what can I do?’ You get stuck there. So, in order to get ‘un-stuck’, this is what you do.

Audience: Say I feel aversion to this, while thinking, ‘Well, I do not really have the motivation for that yet’, is that a sign I should go back to the earlier points, like embracing life as if?

Rimpoche: You go both ways. It is absolutely necessary to go back, because if without establishing the ground level, common with the lower and common with the medium level, you jump into the Mahayana, there will be a problem, for sure. But on the other hand, Tibetan Buddhism is such, it’s not only geared towards total enlightenment, it is geared towards total enlightenment within this lifetime, which is the vajrayana quality. So it is harder at the beginning, but once you start getting progress, you get much faster, much better than by slowly moving. And it is definitely in your own advantage to
do this, because our opportunity is limited, life is not endless, our fa-
cilities are not permanent.

about tonglen

Audience: How do I know I can start practicing tonglen. There are
people who are not in Buddhism for very long time yet, maybe
beginners, maybe people in the Lam Rim group but are not at
Mahayana level yet. How do you know it is the right time to start
this practice?
Rimpoche: You don’t have to be Buddhist to practice that, forget
about it. The point is, if you are not scared you can do it. If you are
scared, don’t do it, even if you are Buddhist for fifty years.

Audience: If we attempt to do this practice, I understand the bene-
fit of training our own mind, but, will it actually benefit the person
who’s suffering?
Rimpoche: Good question. If you keep on doing it quite a lot, it
will have an effect. Particularly if you’re a healer. I’ve said this a
number of times. If you try to heal a person, you know, hands-on
healers, or masseuses, or faith healer or whatever – if you do that
type of healing then that meditation will definitely have an effect
on that person. It will be different than without it. But if you do it
once and then say, ‘Is that making a difference?’ it may not, be-
cause we’re not really used to it. So you need to repeat it a number
of times. Even if you are a writer, and you write with the idea of
tonglen, you’re writings will make a difference. If you’re a teacher,
and you teach with that motivation, your teachings will have a di-
fferent effect on the people whom you are talking to. I’m not nec-
essarily talking about a person who teaches Dharma. I’m talking
about normal, usual good old American school teachers.

Audience: In reference to what you just said. Can you help som-
one who is not in close proximity? If they’re in another part of the
country and they’re sick, even if you are sort of a healer, will it
have any benefit?
Rimpoche: I believe it is a matter of the capability of the individu-
al. If the individual has a strong capacity, even if they are not phys-
ically present, they can. If you are a weak person, even if you are
physically present, it is a little difficult to have an effect.
Audience: If this works, how do you keep your taking someone else’s suffering from being the root of your own sense of self-importance – you know, lots of people make it the business of their lives to go around feeling like they should solve everybody else’s problems. How do you keep yourself from getting into that kind of pit?

Rinpoche: Good question. Did I say you can take somebody else’s suffering? I sort of did because of her question ‘will that have an effect?’ and I said it can. Sort of I said it. But right now our real business over here is training our mind to be able to take that. I did not really openly state that you can take everybody’s suffering; I didn’t. And you raise a very important point. There are a bunch of people who really claim that they can solve everybody else’s problems, like those ghost buster type of guys. How much of an effect they have is really anybody’s guess, I think. You cannot totally ignore them completely and neither can you totally buy it. My point over here is training myself to be able to take it. I will train myself to be able to make a difference to the other person by my meditative power. It is my training and that’s for me. And I’m not claiming, even during this teaching, I’m not claiming you can do it. I’m stating that if a person is strong enough and capable enough I think they can make a difference to the other person. I don’t think it depends on how good the healer is, whether the person gets totally cured. We’re talking about the healers, right? So that’s about it. As meditative training of the mind, I’m talking about the training of my mind rather than I am actually, physically, professionally doing it as a healer making money. I’m not talking about that. I think it is important to make that clear. I think your question is very good.

Audience: If you are doing tonglen for yourself and taking on your own suffering, do you recommend that you visualize a duplicate of yourself from whom your taking the suffering, or is your actual physical body sitting there, the meditator then some other imaginary aspect of yourself taking the suffering away?

Rinpoche: Both. Which ever is easier for you. Both are permissible. It has to be very relaxed, open. We don’t want to impose another rigidity. So do whatever is convenient.
Audience: You know I’m listening to what you say and I’m thinking what happens when you imagine someone else’s suffering or I imagine my own suffering and what do you do with that suffering, when you imagine it so well that it becomes real to you and then your frightened? What’s the antidote to that fear?

Rimpoche: That’s why you begin with yourself. That’s the verse that says ‘Begin taking with yourself.’ It’s true. Taking your own suffering is less frightening and threatening than taking somebody else’s. Whether it actually materializes and has an effect to the individual or not is a different question. If it materializes, what you should do, is a different question, again.

Audience: If someone has a disease, like let’s say cancer, do you imagine taking the actual cancer or do you imagine taking their suffering?

Rimpoche: Both. The cause of the suffering which is the cancer and the suffering itself, both.

Audience: (About the light that you breathe out)

Rimpoche: The light can come from anywhere, inside from the belly button, or from the chest. If it’s uncomfortable to visualize the light coming out through the nose, it can come out of any part of the body, any hair pores; it can come out any place. It’s not a big deal. It is a simple projection. You have to remember, it’s a mental exercise; nothing really physically there.

Audience: (question in the context of healing practice). You said, that when negative emotions come in while doing tong-len, the effect would be worse. I was wondering why?

Rimpoche: Because of your attachment. If you are practicing tonglen, and you rise attachment, the effect that shows is much stronger. It’s not that tonglen is bad, but it becomes more sensitive.

Audience: Is there something to do to help avoid that?

Rimpoche: Not to have attachment. Not to think about it. If, when you’re doing a healing or a massage, attraction comes in, block it, try to avoid it, think about compassion. Physically, practically, you know it yourself, compassion sometimes helps attachment to grow because we’re not really clear with compassion. The
difference between attachment and real love is very difficult to make; where you draw the line is very difficult to see. More or less, you’ll have to learn it by your own personal experience, because there is a very gray area. If compassion doesn’t help you, meditate Tara or something, think light and liquid are coming, but draw the attention away. Don’t let the attachment develop and then try to heal the person. Together, it doesn’t work very well.

Audience: You feel it’s important to endeavor to relieve other people’s suffering, as part of doing that, relieving your own suffering and understanding that in yourself, is therefore an act of humility, knowing you need to help other people to help yourself.

Rimpoche: Truly speaking, yes. Relieving other people’s suffering is actually a way to relieve your own suffering. However, in your own practice and visualizations, If you think ‘I’m going to do that cause I want to relieve my own suffering’ I think your motivation has slightly gone wrong. That’s why it’s not recommended. I mean, you may turn it around once but don’t turn it a double round. It’s a little tricky there. Okay?

II. TRAINING IN ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA

Relative bodhimind is the true bodhimind; whether it is in prayer form or action form. I like to remind you of that. The absolute bodhimind is the wisdom-oriented bodhimind; it is like the icing on the cake. That’s why you say relative bodhimind is the true bodhimind. Now we are going to the absolute bodhimind, the wisdom part of the bodhimind.

Having attained stability, be shown the secret.

Having attained stability. Stability of what? Stability of bodhimind, the ultimate, unlimited, unconditioned love and compassion. When that becomes stable with you, we can talk about the secret part of it, not until then. When the relative bodhimind becomes stable with you, we talk about absolute bodhimind, which is wisdom – the wisdom of emptiness. Emptiness combined with compassion becomes the essence of wisdom. So, the essence of compassion is wisdom; the essence of wisdom is compassion. That’s the real, absolute method.

How do you know whether you have attained stability? We have been talking about doing tong-len, taking the suffering.
We’ve given nine reasons and five resolutions why the thoughts coming from the ego are not true. If you keep on using those reasons, you gradually get the idea that indeed ego’s talk may not be true. At first you don’t doubt it; you know exactly what is good and what is not good for you. When we keep on talking about it, you start to think, ‘Might be true, might not be true.’ When you keep on pondering to see what is happening within yourself, what is happening to your emotions, what your emotions suggest you, how they exaggerate – when you keep on thinking along those lines, you begin to realize that what ego makes you believe might in reality not be true, doesn’t seem true. That is how you judge if you are making progress on that. Progressing bit by bit, you get that feeling much stronger. Also you remember it more often. You begin to realize that your doubt may be true, that it is really true. So you make better progress. Yet you have to put in a lot of effort; it doesn’t come automatically. When you don’t need to put much effort in, when even while relaxing, while not considering the subject, the understanding comes, when the understanding is there without much effort, then you’re stabilized on that. That is called ‘having attained stability’.

When you have that established, your negative emotions can’t attack you, actually. Negative emotions attack us, because we think, ‘I’ve been undermined, I have been ignored, I have been not treated well, I did not get the opportunity, I am not happy…’ Look for yourself; all of those negative emotions – anger, attachment, hatred, jealousy – are simply there because that ‘I’, the ego, is not happy one way or another. E.g. when you try to do something and you can’t do anything, you first get angry, then depressed, and finally you become crazy. True or not true? Watch yourself and watch your friends who are having emotional problems. There is no one who says, ‘I’m having emotional problems because I am happy’. Really beating your negative emotions, I think, comes at being stabilized in bodhimind. That is what it means ‘having attained stability’.

*Be shown the secret.* This is referring to the absolute bodhimind. The absolute bodhimind is only shown to the people who have stabilized this relative bodhimind.
What is the secret? The secret is three things: the objects which we focus on, the mind that focuses on them, and the focusing person itself, what you’re thinking.

The object that you’re focusing on is whatever it may be – you’re looking at somebody’s body, you’re analyzing somebody’s mind, that is your object. Let’s say the body. When you look at somebody, that somebody appears as a solid existence. We perceive and conceive a solid existence, because there is something tangible, something we can get a hold of, something we can catch, someone we can make responsible, we can punish, we can make to pay for it, or whatever. The solid-ness that we see is not true. There is nothing solid in there.

One reason is, if you’re going to search that solid thing from top to bottom, you’re not going to find a single little thing of which to say, ‘hey, this is it.’ What you’re going to find is, that, put together, there is something you can see and communicate with. It comes up collectively. Let me make it a little more clear. We see this person, Mr. A. If you don’t think anything, you can see Mr. A is very solidly standing there. But when you’re going to search that Mr. A – which one is it? Is Mr. A’s body Mr. A? Or is Mr. A’s mind Mr. A? Or is Mr. A’s name Mr. A? When you begin to check it that way, neither the name, nor the body, nor the mind is Mr. A. Yet, Mr. A is there – how come? The combination of body, mind and name together is the true Mr. A. If one of them is missing, it ceases to be Mr. A. If you change the name to B, it becomes Mr. B, it’s not Mr. A any longer. If Mr. A died, then the body that you see, is Mr. A’s dead body rather then Mr. A. If Mr. A’s body is not there at all, you won’t even perceive him; the mind is intangible. So the solid-ness of Mr. A comes in only collectively. Likewise, there is nothing solid.

The perceiver, the person who is perceiving, who’s making all this analyzing and who is drawing the conclusion, i.e. the worker, the doer, is also not there, is also collectively existing, just like the object. Even the perceiving mind itself is not solid.

A. Practice in the Mediation Session

1. Emptiness of phenomena

Consider phenomena to be like a dream.
If you understand what I just told you, it helps you tremendously to see that everything we have to deal with and how we function, is just like a dream. We’re dreaming. It’s just like a dream in the night. When you dream, the dream person comes, the dream person talks, makes deals, makes decisions. The person does all this, but it’s a dream. Our life is just like that; we are in the same condition. If you understand that, then who is angry with whom? Then what is the big deal?

*All phenomena are like a dream.* What do phenomena do with us? We can see them, smell them, hear them, feel them. What you are seeing, feeling, hearing etc. is the object. What is perceiving or understanding is the mind inside.

Whatever you perceive, whatever you understand – and you are perceiving, you are understanding – is not necessarily true. We don’t perceive the truth. Our perceptions are not overall true; they are partly true. When I see you and I say, ‘I see you’, it is true; I did see you. Did I really see you? Yes I did, I really saw you. But did I see all of you? No, I did not. If I did, it would be impossible for you to lie to me. People lie to people and you buy the lie and get cheated; that happens. That is because you don’t perceive all truth – neither seeing nor hearing, touching or smelling. There is some true part in it, but the whole truth we didn’t get to know.

Take us functioning here today; you can see me, you are listening. I’m talking to you etc. Whatever is happening, you are advised to consider to be like a dream. In a dream you see people, you talk, you love, you like, you hate, you fight, you do all of that and when it’s over it’s over. For us, whatever is happening here is real and really happening. The great beings see it as a relative truth, not true in absolute sense. Because when it’s over, there is no difference between this experience and a dream. In reality there is nothing absolute there. Isn’t that interesting?

What is happening here now, is happening because of the conditions being right. It did not happen because in absolute sense it is. If it would be absolute no one could do anything. No one could organize, no one could participate, no one could put those together nor separate them. It would be a permanent status. That is called absolutism. We know that is not true. Us being here today is possible because you organized it, because I came here and talked,
and because you have come here and participate. If any one of them is missing it doesn’t function, it is not there. If we did not organize it, it did not happen. If I were not talking here, somebody else might have been here but not me talking. If you had not participated you wouldn’t be here either. Because there is no absolutism, everything is possible.

Look and see that all phenomena are like that. The thought, ‘I’m not good enough’ is also like that, i.e. is not true. How many people torture themselves thinking, ‘I’m not good enough’, for whatever reason. What are you talking about? Are you crazy? Who is good enough? No one. ‘Good enough’ and ‘bad’ are dependent. They are dependent just like this meeting is. The conditions being right, the meeting took place. You do certain things, the conditions are provided and you become good enough. That keeps on changing because it depends on the conditions.

The idea of all phenomena being like a dream is given here to try to defeat the thought of absolutism. It is a little more then the impermanent ‘I’. Normally, on the subject of emptiness I give you the idea impermanence, changeability and all this. Today I’m giving you a little more than that. I am giving you the conditions. Who provides the conditions? Yourself. That is the freedom. You are looking for freedom – this is really what it is. When there is absolutism there is no freedom, because that is a rigid system of what is or is not. I guess that’s good enough to give you an idea of this line: all phenomena are like a dream.

2. Emptiness of the mind

Analyze the nature of the ungenerated awareness.

What an interesting translation. I better stick with the Tibetan, that says, ‘Analyze the unborn nature of the mind’. Why are they saying unborn? Because mind does not truly exist. It is there because of collectivity. That is the nature of ourselves, the nature of the human being, the nature of any individual being. It does not exist truly. But it does exist relatively because we exist collectively and that is good enough to be able to exist.

3. Emptiness of emptiness

Even the antidote itself is naturally free.
The antidote is referring to the emptiness itself. The emptiness itself is empty. Not only the external objects which you perceive, the internal mind who perceives, but also the antidote itself is not static. So, not only you, the object of my anger or my attachment, and me, the person who’s getting angry or attached – not only you and me are empty, but even the antidote itself, the emptiness, is also empty. So, why spend so much energy on that wild goose-chasing business? Wild goose chasing, yeah, that’s what it is.

Here they talk about ‘naturally free’, that means it is conditioned. Free means that you can change the conditions. That’s why it is called freedom. If you can’t change them there is no freedom. In the West there is freedom, but that does not mean lawlessness. Even our normal society will tell you this.

4. Space-like emptiness

Focus on the nature of the basis of all31 the entity32 of the path.

The basis of all – rigpa she – is ‘the entity of the path’. Yes. It is saying: there is nothing, things do not exist, they are empty, yet, if you understand emptiness, you are liberated, if you do not understand emptiness, you are stuck in samsara. The way you obtain freedom is through understanding emptiness. If you don’t, you’re stuck in samsara. So we call every existence that we have here, interdependent existence. I keep on saying that we exist relatively, which means we exist interdependently. Where does the interdependent existence comes from? It comes from emptiness.

Therefore focus on the nature of the basis of all. What does the nature of the basis of all do? It will allow you to function. And if you understand the emptiness of it, it makes you free. If you don’t, it provides you the base on which you continue to suffer.

Where do all our activities – birth, death, living, functioning, dealing, talking, agreeing, disagreeing, anger, all of them – come from? They’re coming from their nature of being empty. If their nature would not be empty, you could do nothing. When there’s empty nature, there is room, room for movement, for change, for conditioning, for joy, for suffering. Do you see it? So all existing activities are projected from the empty nature.
How we perceive is like looking into the mirror. When you look in the mirror you see what is reflected there and you can use the reflection to do whatever you want to, e.g. to put on lipstick. You can do it; it serves that purpose. But at the same time we know that we are not out there, in the mirror, we are here and so we direct the lipstick towards ourselves and not in the direction of the mirror. You see what I mean?

All activities are coming out of that empty nature – that is what Tsongkhapa means. Emptiness is in essence existence. And existence is in essence empty. You can’t separate these two. If you separate them you use the lipstick on the mirror.

B. PRACTICE IN BETWEEN THE MEDITATION SESSIONS

Between the sessions be an illusionist.

Between the sessions means everyday life, everyday functioning. In everyday functioning you know: everything is naturally empty, naturally pure, yet it is functioning. This is interesting: you can see it, perceive it functioning, yet it is free and pure. Pure, free, yet functioning happily. This is a total different perception now.

During the meditative level you see the reality of the real freedom; when you are not in the meditation session, things will function differently. The individual who really understood this, has gone beyond the law of physics. For that person the walls don’t block. Any normal thing that blocks us doesn’t block them. What we normally call miracles or magic, is reality for that person. You can see them walking through the walls. That person is not crazy. When this person reaches beyond the law of physics everything is possible. It is just like the magician showing you magical things. He will somehow confuse you. A good magician is able to cause a piece of chocolate to be seen as a camel. Either a certain substance or mantra power makes your eye get confused. You know it is a piece of chocolate but you still perceive it as a camel. So you are perceiving with understanding. It’s just like watching a movie: fighting, killing and all this is going on on the screen and to a certain extent we even get upset, but then you remind yourself, ‘Hey, it is just a movie, relax’. That is what it is about, perceiving reality differently. In whatever is happening there, you can involve, you can function, you can entertain, you can get all of them done, yet you have an understanding that is a movie. Right? That’s what it is,
like an illusion. The traditional teachers will tell you everything is a lie. The deeper point of a lie we perceive when it’s busted; the lie cannot cheat you anymore. The solid-ness we’ve been projecting, is shown in its true nature. It’s a lie, a total lie. We have seen the end of that. That is why you break the law of physics.

Therefore, first during the session is covered and after that, everything is not seen that solid [any more]. It moves; the walls move. When you’ve been able to practice and do that, you can walk through the walls. That’s really true. You can walk through the walls thereafter because they don’t block you. You go beyond the law of physics by this level. Then everything is really like a magicians’ show.

In short, how do you see the emptiness of yourself? You see it by seeing how you are existing interdependently. If you are going to search for emptiness, you’re going to find zero. So in order to look for emptiness, you search for how you exist, and when you see that you exist dependently, you begin to see the beginning of emptiness. Emptiness is the base of interdependent functioning; interdependence is the basis of emptiness. In this text it’s called ‘the basis of all’, remember? If you really understand that, what will happen? Then, when you’re out of the meditation-session, you see everything just like a magician’s trick.

Take a grown-up person watching kids of four, five, six, worrying about something. For the kids it is extremely important. They’re arguing, fighting, ready to kill, to that level they go. But to the grown-up person observing, it’s a child’s action, not really a big thing, right? When you get to that level, every thing which normally bothers us will become like that: a grown-up person looking over the shoulder of a three or four year old kid, at whatever they’re doing. Between the sessions, be an illusionist – that’s what they tell you. So don’t take everything so seriously. Be a little happy-go-lucky. What’s wrong? Have a little freedom. Enjoy life a little bit. Don’t be so serious.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

On emptiness and interdependence.

Audience: If freedom is the freedom to create conditions than that also implies dependency. For instance, I have the freedom to go
here but you also have the freedom whether or not to come. I decide to come here to attend your teachings but if you decide not to come, the teachings won’t take place. So, I may have this freedom but I still am dependent on the conditions someone else creates.

Rimpoche: Absolutely sure. That is the dependent arising; that is exactly what it is about. If freedom would be a permanent phenomenon or an independent one, there would be nothing to change. Not only the external things are established by the conditions that you can choose to provide; also the internal mind that is functioning rises just like the external conditional rise. That is the reason why this text says: analyze the nature of ungenerated awareness.

Audience: Freedom exists within conditional rise.

Rimpoche: Yes, freedom exists within that. This is very interesting. It is a very important phenomenon we are dealing with. If your perception of freedom is total independent freedom, then there is no freedom. How can it be? Your view of freedom, my view of freedom, my choice of freedom, her choice of freedom – it will be different for everyone. If it should be established as we want it, there would be totally different things happening. We do want freedom. Now, this is interesting – we want to run naked outside, it is free, yet everybody will tell me I’m crazy if I do so. So, freedom also has its limits. I can’t exactly do what I want to do. We have to accept freedom with conditions. This is a very simple way of looking at it. If there is nobody in my hotel room, I run naked. Yeah, I do. I do run naked between my bed and my toilet. Nude. If you don’t believe it come and look through the window. But then there is limitation, too. Whatever freedom I have to do so, is because the walls, curtains so and forth allow me to. If the conditions are not there and I run naked, everyone would think I’ve gone crazy. So, freedom is freedom with a limit. It is very hard to draw the lines. That is what relativity is all about; that is what depending on the conditions is all about.

Audience: Emptiness is the basis of all; understanding this enables you to get liberated. I don’t get the connection between these two.

Rimpoche: Emptiness is the basis of all, which provides you that you can work, you can improve and you can change. If emptiness were not the base then the base had to be a fixed one. And if
something is fixed, how can you change? You have to go and change the base itself.

Open space gives the architects freedom to do whatever they want to do. The open canvas gives the artists freedom to do whatever they want to do. If the canvas is already drawn on, you either destroy that or go and do something else. It’s very funny. In one way the emptiness is very difficult, on the other hand it is everywhere, in whatever we do, in however we function. That is all about it. If you want this to be complicated, give it all kinds of philosophical explanations and logical twists and turns, go back and forth and make complicated as much as possible, go ahead and do it! But if you really want to affect yourself, help yourself understand and gain freedom, I think this is all about it.
Point Three: Bringing Unfavorable Conditions into the Path to Enlightenment

When the vessel and its contents are filled with negativities, transform these unfavorable conditions into the path to enlightenment. Immediately apply whatever you meet to meditation. Posses the four preparations, the supreme method.

Whether we are on the spiritual path or not, we encounter a lot of difficulties. But if you’re on the spiritual path you may even notice a little bit more difficulties. Not because the spiritual path creates difficulties, but because you pay attention you probably notice a little more.

What we are told here is, when we have difficulties, they are the result of negative karma that we either individually or collectively created. The consequences of collectively created negative karma are that we will have sufferings in our environment: environmental problems and problems of the people living there. The translator chose to call it ‘vessel and contents.’

The Four Preparations

1. Striving in virtuous practices when suffering occurs

What shall we do, when there are so many difficulties? Whatever difficulties we may get, we try to utilize them. We try to turn all obstacles into help. The question is: how? For that, the four preparations are given.

First of all, we try to help, like improving the environment, and trying to help the people. We should avoid all physical toxins, and
eating wrong food. Sometimes, even if we do our best we can’t help. When we are under those circumstances, what shall we do? Then whatever is harmful to ourselves, we turn into a teacher, a guide, a reminder. We make the best use of it. We cannot avoid experiencing negativities, but we can make the best use of it. You think,

When we are not careful, we have these consequences. These consequences are nothing other than the result of our negative actions, and therefore, blame falls on our negative actions. I will commit myself to avoiding creating negativities in the future.

I have this problem of illness. Why do I have it? Because I hurt other beings. From now on, I should commit myself, that I should not even hurt a fly.

This is a general way of taking advantage out of sufferings. Usually, if we have sufferings and problems we say, ‘What can I do? Oh, my god!’ We scream and yell, but it’s not going to help much. A doctor may come and give you some morphine injection that may help you for a short period, but that’s about it. By yelling and screaming what are you going to get? Nothing. And you create not only trouble for yourself, but you also create difficulties for the people around you. The choice that we have is: accept it. Accept the sufferings, acknowledge that they are the result of our negative karma. Therefore, if you don’t like the result, you should avoid creating the cause. Acknowledge that your sufferings are the result of your bad karma and if you don’t like that, avoid what causes it. That is number one.

I want you to remember here it are the great practitioners, that really practice this, not necessarily the beginning level people like ourselves. They constantly try to put body, mind and speech into positive actions. And they will pray,

If it’s better for me to be sick, may I be sick; if it is better for me to get well, may I be well; if it is better for me to die, may I die.

They do not pray to make it, but they pray for what is best. So what they are trying to tell us is: No hope, no doubt. Whatever may be best for everybody, but no hope, no doubt. Everyone of us will try to keep our hopes up. It is a normal saying in our society: ‘Do not give up hope; keep your hopes up!’ What I mean is:
Point three: Bringing Unfavorable Conditions into the Path to Enlightenment

not every condition is necessarily favorable for a great practitioner. I believe the first action is: free yourself of hope and doubt. Every positive action, whatever you do, should be free of those two, so that it really becomes good and wonderful.

True dharma practitioners are free of hope and doubt. This point is a hard one and it is not appropriate at this moment to tell you that everybody should do it. But on the other hand, if I would try to tell you that this is not meant for us, than for whom is it? I just wanted to throw that in here. If you look really deep down, you will see that it is for all. It will create a little inspiration here and there. Hope and doubt create much more trouble than anything else. If you could let go of that and say, ‘Whatever is good and best for me’, and be satisfied – if you are (a) free of dissatisfaction and (b) free of doubt and hope – then that is the best way to live. This freedom is called the ‘city of joy’. That is why the mind-training is referred to as a ‘city of joy’. What makes us unhappy and miserable are hope, doubt and dissatisfaction.

I’m thinking in Tibetan, and that is why I use the word ‘hope’, in Tibetan mwā. When you take a close look at the Western ideas and culture, I really don’t think it is right to translate it here as ‘hope’. I think we should rather think of it as a wild, imagined desire.

You have to remember that these teachings were given in the eleven hundreds, and that they were very important. People practiced and followed without any questioning and nobody analyzed suitability and status like we do in the West. At that period hope was not hope to remain alive, nor hope to have a comfortable life; they were talking about hoping to become a king or a queen or a powerful general, like Julius Caesar; a wild imagined desire. An imagined desire for freedom of expression, or freedom of whatever – nothing wrong with that. But having a desire to become Bill Gates or Rockefeller, that is a wild imagined desire. Bill Gates and Rockefeller may be a little too extreme, but the bottom line is that you want to go beyond your means and beyond your needs and that gives you trouble! In a way it may be the way that you can function in the modern society, but on the other hand, if we go completely beyond our means, then we have a lot of difficulties, right? That is what I mean, wild, imagined, goose-chasing hope. I am sure this will raise a lot of questions, a
lot of doubt, but I will be happy to talk about it. You know why? This is nipping ego in the bud.

Now number two. While suffering may develop the thought,

Sincerely, with one hundred percent honesty, deep down from the bottom of my heart, may my experiencing of this suffering substitute so that no one has to go through those difficulties.

A great teacher called Kacha Panchen said,

If I enjoy life, I dedicate it. I rejoice in my virtue which created my joy, and I dedicate it, so it will be helpful for every sentient being, so that the space full of sentient beings will enjoy the same thing.

If I suffer, I enjoy my suffering so that nobody else has to suffer. May the ocean of suffering dry up, so that there will be no more suffering left.

These are the bodhisattvas’ way of looking at their life. They don’t yell, they don’t scream, they don’t scratch their chest. When we have sufferings, we should try to accept them that way. When we enjoy, we should also accept that. You don’t have to run away, you don’t have to feel bad or guilty about it. When you enjoy your life, you dedicate that, and when you suffer you don’t scream but you make use of it.

Many people think that the result of our spiritual practice is that when we die, we should die peacefully. It’s not necessarily so. When I was a kid, about ten or eleven, there was a very famous teacher called Muchog Rimpoche, a contemporary of Pabongka Rimpoche who was almost like him, too. Almost everybody was Muchog Rimpoche’s disciple too. Muchog Rimpoche got sick just before he died, and he was in my father’s monastery, Tengi-li, which used to be right in the front of our house in Lhasa. Somehow Muchog Rimpoche had such a big a pain before he died; four or five days, day and night, he was screaming. You could hear him through the street, sometimes you could even hear it at our house. There’s no doubt that Muchog Rimpoche is a fully enlightened being. Definitely, no question, a fully enlightened being. You know, all of those great Tibetan teachers at that time, like Pabongka Rimpoche, Muchog Rimpoche and Kangsar Rimpoche, were tak-
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ing teachings from each other, so, no question. But Muchog Rimpoche was for four or five days screaming. What was happening, he’s actually taking the suffering of other people, and he was trying to use that. When he had such an experience of pain, it did not necessarily mean that he had a bad death. I thought I should mention that, because it’s sort of a unspoken understanding in the West that you should die smoothly. No pain is great, no doubt, but is it a great spiritual-practice result? Maybe not. I’d just like to throw that to you, so that it will make you think a little bit.

The earlier Kadampa teachers used to think and say.

If people despise me, I like it.
If they praise me, it will grow my pride.
If they despise me, it shows all my faults clearly, so I have an opportunity to correct.
I will be happy if I suffer.
I am not happy if I enjoy, because if I enjoy too much, I will exhaust all my good karma.
If I suffer, I exhaust my bad karma. I enjoy that.
Sufferings are due to the kindness of the gurus.

We have a very, very interesting life today. We have plenty of suffering, and plenty of comfort, so we do have a great opportunity to utilize them in our daily life. When you have sufferings, don’t blame yourself, don’t blame other people, blame your ego and use it as an opportunity to exhaust your negative karma. When you enjoy, think that you deserve it, because it is the result of your own good karma. Rejoice in whatever you have, it will re-build your good karma. These are a little bit of the tricks for how we play in our life.

Remember, in one of those Three Principal of the Path translations, I think it is Professor Thurman’s, it says ‘turn off your interest for this life.’ It doesn’t mean turn off your interest for this life; the real idea is the attachment to comfort. We can not give up attachment to comfort, so we put all our efforts trying for comfort, for something right now. That is the problem. So this is a very important point for all practitioners from the beginning to the end. I’d like to share that with you. It’s not only at the lojong level, but even at the beginning level.
If you look at our *Odyssey to Freedom*, from the beginning – the guru devotional practice and the appreciation of human life – up to total enlightenment, this is an important point to be remembered. Because of our attachment to comfort, we do not appreciate nirvana; instead, we’ll probably look for a comfortable mattress or something. The comfort is the problem, even in the Theravadin level. In common with the medium level, attachment to comfort will make you create the cause of suffering continuously. If you look at the Mahayana level, attachment to comfort makes you sacrifice the well-being of other people. Our second noble truth is the creation of the cause of the first noble truth, which is really the attachment to comfort.

I’m glad I’ve been able to share that with you. Sometimes we hesitate to speak because people have a very strong attachment to that comfort, so when we try to say that’s not very good, a lot of people dislike it. However, it is a principal point, so if we keep our mouth shut all the time, it won’t do any good. We want it to be of service, so it’s important to mention it.

2. **Purifying the unwholesome**

Now this is applicable to all of us: purification. Purification is a method for neutralizing negative karma – purifying our negativities with the four powers, like in Lamrim. We are talking here about the four R’s: recognition, regret, non-repetition and re-direction.

**Recognition.** Regret is considered important, for if you have no regret there is no reason for you to purify. But for an army general who keeps on saying, ‘I have killed a lot of people, I am winning the war, I am doing great!’, for that general there is no reason for regret, because he thinks he is doing great. So, you first have to recognize what you are doing.

Traditionally this is called the power of the base. That is: taking refuge and generating bodhimind. When you recognize that you are doing something wrong, and you have regret, you have to do something too. Now let us think about this. When you do something wrong, you reprimand yourself. Reprimanding is a very strong word in one way. When someone else reprimands you it is not so easy to take. The result is mixed; some people will take it nicely, but other people will not take it kindly. But when you reprimand yourself, what do you do? A lot of people will take a guilt trip, go into the guilty feeling and put themselves into the
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hopeless and helpless position. And then they cry, go into depression. We do all this, right? That is wrong. What should you do? When you reprimand yourself, you go on quietly and purify. You invoke the Supreme field of merit and you take refuge to them. Try to compensate by taking refuge for if you have hurt them. Generate love and compassion to all living beings, to all the people to compensate them.

Regret. When you have recognition, regret will come. If you do not feel regret, you do not feel you have to purify. If from your point of view you think you are doing great, then why do you have to change? When the general is winning the war, there is no reason for him to change his course. Recognition will give you regret.

Regret is one thing; guilt is another thing. Guilt is meaningless, it is fear that somebody down the road somewhere to punish you. Most people are afraid of that. Do you know what the reality is? Whether somebody down the road is going to punish you or not; you are punishing yourself right at this moment, ‘I am not worthy! I am ashamed of myself. I cannot face people anymore. I am terrible. Nobody should see me….’ all of them. So what are you doing? Making money for the therapist! (That is a joke). Anyway, that way you are punishing yourself. Remember everything is impermanent, remember everything is changing, remember that all is dependent and remember that it depends on the conditions; also remember that the conditions are made by you and by nobody else. That is why you do not have to think it is hopeless. Even this commentary tells you: ‘Do not let yourself be driven by hope’; it does not tell you you should let yourself be driven by hopelessness either.

Non-repetition. When you have regret, the thought of non-repetition comes automatically.

Re-direction. That is the anti-dote action: meditation on bodhi-mind, meditation on emptiness, saying mantras, making generous offers, saving lives, etc. etc. All those are antidote actions.

When the four powers are applied, all negativities are being purified. But that does not mean that everything is gone if you do it once! It means that constant, continuous, regular efforts, day after day, week after week, month after month, make a big difference. When you do it day after day, week after week, month after month, then sometimes you will do it well and other times
you will not do it well. Sometimes you think about what you say, and sometimes you come to the end of your prayer and think: have I finished already? It is not only you; we all do that; I do that. Do not feel bad about it. If you can think, meditate, of course that is great. But if the words just go without thinking, it is better to do something than nothing. At least you have fulfilled your commitment and then there are other occasions that you will think about it, and it provides you the opportunity. So remember, even when it is fast, even if it goes without thinking, it is better than not saying it at all.

The earlier great masters were so good and so kind; they provided a line for everything. For the purification it says in the seven-limb prayer: ‘I purify all my deluded actions’. If you can apply the four powers at that moment, then that is great. And even if you cannot think, and you just say, ‘I purify all my negativities’, then that will do. It does not look very serious, but if you do something day after day, then it becomes serious by itself. It makes a big impact on the personality. It hurts the negativity, it challenges the ego. Even though you think it is doing nothing, it is like singing children’s songs or something, even then it makes a contribution. And when you build it up, it gets somewhere. I am talking about all your general practice. When there is a hole in the ceiling and you put a bucket underneath the water is not going to come pouring down, but it will drip. If you look into the bucket after half a day or so, there will be quite a bit of water in there. After a few days or a week you will have to empty the bucket, otherwise it will overflow. This is the example. Doing something every day is very important! Sometimes, when we expect you to do things alone and you cannot do it, occasionally a couple of people meet up in a place like this and say their prayers together. Sometimes that works better, if you do not feel like saying your prayers alone. Discipline of a group of people who meet at a convenient time in the day can be helpful. Now, here in Nijmegen, you have additional rooms here and there, unlike before, so, if you can meet and say your practice together sometimes, that can give you a little inspiration and encouragement. And it can give you a little discipline too. Just because there is another person who does it with you, it is not that easy to freak out or drop out, you know. But I am not saying that it is compulsory.
3. **Making offering to the spirits**

I am not very sure how much of the third and fourth preparation is relevant to us, but I might as well mention them. The third action is giving torma offerings to the evil spirits. It is actually an attempt to bribe them. You give them something and try to make friends with them and say: ‘Hey, do not bother me, get out of here’.

4. **Making offerings to the protectors**

This is asking the protectors for help. There are a lot of protectors, divided into two categories: samsaric and non-samsaric protectors. You know, in vajrayana there is no shortage of figures. The four faced Mahakala alone has seventeen different appearances. And the six-armed Mahakala has also so many appearances... countless. Dharma King Chögyal also has five appearances. Of Palden Lhamo it is said that she has a hundred thousand names. And then there is Vaisvarana. Mahakala, Dharma King Chögyal and Vaisvarana are known as the protectors of the three levels – the lower, medium and mahayana level. These are commonly known as the non-samsaric protectors.

And then there are the samsaric protectors. There are so many of them! There are five kings and their retinues, and then almost every lama has his own protector, and so has every monastery and every organization. Also every village, every mountain, every river has its own protector. It is almost like with the native Americans, where every mountain and every state and every place is a holy this and a holy that. And I am sure you have had it as well – in the medieval period in Europe or before I am sure you had the same thing.

Every government has its own protector. Even the early administrations of the Tibetan Government had their own protector. And the administration of the Dalai lama has its own protectors. And sometimes these protectors were at war! So it is a very tricky area. Sometimes these protectors help and protect, sometimes they try to gain influence over you, and since they are all samsaric protectors they function in the same way as human beings do, they play their own politics. That is what we saw the last two or three years, anyway. Some people are so totally dedicated to a certain protector, that they end up in arms and fighting! It is not the first
time, it has happened in Tibetan history as well. But it was intense this time.

Over all you are better off when you rely on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, generate your positive work and you rely on your own activities than when you rely on spirits here and there.
Point Four: How To Integrate All Our Practices

How to integrate all your practices into one practice which you really do everyday for the rest of your life. The essence here is to apply the five forces.

The five forces of life

In brief, the essence of the instruction is to apply the five forces.

1. The force of motivation.

From today, until I die or until I become enlightened, I will never let my mind be controlled or influenced by ego, attachment, or hatred.

Ego is the real thing, hatred and attachment are the by-products, the result of ego. Make up your mind strongly. Put your foot down and make sure, remind yourself, everyday, all the time of this.

I will always remain with this great mind of ultimate love-compassion.

2. The force of familiarity. That is the force of getting used to it. Meaning your mind is getting used to both kinds of bodhimind: relative and absolute. In other words, you remind yourself of bodhimind all the time. Always remember training your mind, try to bring it up very often, meditate on those lojong points. Sort of train your mind, so that lojong always comes up. What happens to me – and I’m not blowing my own trumpet – is, whenever I fall asleep, I find myself saying, ‘Migme tsewei terchen chenrezig...’ Even if I’m doing a White Tara retreat or something, if I wake up, I hear my-
self saying, ‘Migme tsewei terchen chenrezig...’ That is because I’m so used to it, my mind has been trained to automatically turn to the Migtsema. Just like that, train yourself so that whenever you have difficulties, you straight away get to lojong.

3. The force of the white seed. That is, accumulating merit and doing purification, in order to develop your own bodhimind. It’s the effort that you put in. Those who have developed the bodhimind already try to maintain it, and those who are able to maintain it try to grow it better. For this you use all six paramitas: generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, concentration, application of wisdom. You have knowledge of these six paramitas from the Lamrim. It is just a matter of applying them to everything you do. So it might not be out of place to mention them here. The six paramitas are tools, or instruments that you apply everywhere, whether in spiritual or material matters.

4. The force of rejection. Reject ego. Always maintain an antidote against ego, against the self-supremacy of ‘I am the most important’ A feeling of self-supremacy is really an invitation to all troubles, and is an activity of ego. Ignoring others is another invitation for inconvenience, trouble and misery. Ignoring people causes unhappiness in the other people. These are the activities of the ego. Always point towards ego; that’s your target. You remember, during the cold war all the Russian missiles were pointed towards the West and all the western missiles were pointed at the Russians. This force is to be always alert and focus in that manner on ego.

5. The force of dedication. Every good thing you did, even saving the life of a little red ant by you avoiding by stepping on top it, should be dedicated to develop and become powerful in your own love-compassion, bodhimind.

All our positivities, whatever we have done, we dedicate to gain, develop and maintain both relative and absolute bodhimind.

These are the five powerful forces in life. These five are really considered to be the true practice. Apply those five as your daily chore. Practice does not really have to be done at a certain period of time where you say, ‘This is my time for practice, so, do not disturb
me’; that is not necessarily that great. You should carry on with it every part of the day, with everything you do. If you do this, you’ll become quite good.

The five forces of death

The Great Vehicle instructions on transference are those very five forces, cherish this behavior.

The text says, ‘These are the five forces for life, now there’s five forces for dying or death.’ This is what they call \textit{phowa}: transferring your consciousness. Many of you are very aware of phowa, right? You have heard, thought and talked about it. Some lamas come and give you a phowa transmission, give you phowa training, and you keep on saying Hi! Phat! And when you keep on saying that for a long time it affects you. It hits all your energy up to your crown and sometimes it creates a hole, true! But this phowa is different. This is a very interesting phowa, done by the application of five forces. The names are the same, but over here the fundamental principle is freedom of attachment.

1. \textit{The force of the white seed}. Attachment is such a funny thing, you have no idea. Anything that is possible to have attachment to, get rid of it. Get rid of it long before death. Utilize your own property or your own belongings for the best way that you want.

   Traditionally it is recommended that you dedicate it to accumulating merit such as making offerings, looking after people that you want to look after, and dedicating it to a positive cause. In old Tibet they dedicated their money to the great teachers, the great monasteries, and they would then do pujas for upcoming important days for you. For example, when somebody in the family died they would spend an amount of money to ask different Rimpoches to pray for them immediately, then do rituals, then do weekly prayers, then the forty-ninth-day prayer and yearly prayers. And the monasteries would do all these rituals. I am talking about old times.

   Nowadays, you do whatever needs to be done. In other words; you can take nothing with you, and it is better that you manage these things before you die. Some people are earmarked with a chronic disease and they are labeled with: you are going to go. Some people have not been diagnosed and have not been told that
they are going to go. But we all go, and nobody will ever know who goes first. So it is always better to prepare yourself in that way, especially when you posses a lot. Better make things clear; do not let your loved ones fight over it, they can become enemies for that. No matter whether you have a lot or just a little bit of money, it is yours, you should make your decision. That does not mean you have to give it away straightaway, but make it clear. You are not going to take anything with you, that is for sure. Make it clear and make it as useful as you can. But make it legally right. You know what? The day before yesterday I got a phone call from Allen Ginsberg’s estate manager and he was telling me that Alan thought he had made every decision. He did decide where everything was supposed to go, as far as he was concerned he made it very clear. But the estate manager now says that he did everything legally wrong, so nothing is valid now. That is why I said make everything legal. For Allen, he made up his mind and gets the total benefit of it. Whether everything goes where it is supposed to go or not, I do not think that is a big issue for him personally. But to make it more effective for us you should know that in the future you can make it that way, but do it legally right. So the idea is to make it absolutely clear that you have taken care of what you needed to take care of. That way you do not need attachment and you do not have to worry. Clear it so that you are like a bird sitting on a rock ready to fly; nothing holding you back.

In the seventeenth century, there was a teacher called Guntang Jampelyang, the greatest teacher available at that time. In the huge monastery, there was one monk who had been there ever since childhood, till about the age of seventy. He went to every prayer meeting, he never missed, and he loved butter tea. In fact, he had a tremendous attachment to the butter collected out of the butter tea, which is second class butter, but anyway. When he fell sick and couldn’t even get up, he still would not miss the prayer meeting because he wanted that butter. There was no hospital in old Tibet in the seventeenth century, so he got two younger monks helping him every morning so he could come to the prayer meeting and could bring a huge bowl and get those butters out of the tea. He was very sick, about to die, but for weeks and months he wouldn’t die, because of the morning prayer to collect that butter. Later on, he had some kind of little bag made, put his bowl there
and wore that on his neck and then two people literally lifted him up, and brought him to the prayer meeting.

Guntang Jampelyang was told by the other monks what he’s doing. Guntang Jampelyang said, ‘Oh yeah, yeah, I wanted to go and see him.’ Guntang Jampelyang was very well known, very famous, and so when Guntang Jampelyang was going to see him, everybody was shocked and surprised and he himself thought, why is he coming to see me? Why me? Guntang Jampelyang went in there and said, ‘How are you feeling?’
He said, I’m not so bad.’
‘I heard you go every morning to the morning prayers.’
‘Yes, yes, I won’t miss my sha for anything.’(That is the butter tea, and butter.)
‘Yes you’re right, that taste is so good,’ and blah blah blah.
And then he said, ‘Incidentally, what I learned is in the pure land of Tushita, the Maitreya’s pure land, they have such great sha over there, far better than we do.’
He got a little shocked. ‘You’re kidding right?’
‘No, no, I’m not kidding.’
‘Really?’
‘Yes.’
‘Did you read it, or did somebody tell you or do you know by your experience, or what is it? Where did you get the information?’
He said, ‘I know.’
‘Okay, I’ll buy it.’
Two days later he died, went to the pure land to collect the sha! What happened? Attachment. Attachment holds you back...

Another story. I can tell you sort of from my own personal experience; it happened in the sixties. I have a great teacher called Gomo Rimpoche, the author of this book Becoming the Child of a Buddha. He was a great Vajrayogini practitioner, a very interesting guy, I have taken a lot of teachings from him, he’s a wonderful person. Sometimes he irritated you like hell, but, he’s great, you know. He didn’t have a large number of students, sixty, seventy people – a very strong group. Gomo Rimpoche told me the story personally.

There were two, old, old Tibetan noble family members who moved to India in the fifties, and then moved to Missoori in India. They stayed two blocks away to Gomo Rimpoche, and learned the
practice from him. Gomo Rimpoche taught them, they came to
the conclusion of the dying period. It was the time for them to die,
so, Gomo Rimpoche worked with them through the uncommon
inconceivable practice of the Vajrayogini, and they fixed the date
when they’re going to die. They had an old attendant they brought
from Kalum Pong, in North India, near Bhutan, so they bought
return tickets for the train, for this guy to go back to Kalum Pong.
All of those were done. Everything fixed, the date came, and Go-
mo Rimpoche’s just waiting till somebody will come and run in
and say so and so died. He kept on waiting, waiting, waiting, and
nobody’s came. He said, ‘One of them is supposed to die, and
there’s a time for him to go, but nothing happened.’ Rimpoche
couldn’t help it, but went to their house, to see what’s happening.
He said, ‘There are a lot of people here, what happened?’

‘So and so got very sick and suddenly has been moved by an
emergency vehicle to the American Hospital.’ There was a hospital
called American Hospital.

Gomo Rimpoche said, ‘By hook or crook, I’ve to get to the
hospital and see what’s happening.’ He went to the hospital, but
he looked like a little funny person, so they didn’t allow him in at
first. He said, ‘By hook or by crook I have to get in.’ So he talked
to those guys in the intensive care unit, and finally somehow got in
there, and he asked them, ‘What happened?’

He said, ‘I did that meditation exactly how you told me, I went
through it during the training and it was exactly happening. But
today all the dying stages are coming upside down. What’s sup-
posed to come first comes later, and what comes later comes first.
That’s what happens.’

Then Rimpoche said that suddenly these people came and took
him to the hospital. He said, ‘So I’m not dying now, what’s hap-
pening?’

Rimpoche looked around and said, ‘What are you thinking, are
you thinking about your old Tibetan home, are you thinking about
your family?’ He went through every possibility of any attachment
that holds you back – nothing. Then suddenly he noticed the man
was wearing some interesting a little different shirt. He said,
‘Where did you get that shirt from?’

‘Rimpoche, Isn’t this a nice shirt? I got it and I really liked it so
I wanted to wear it today.’
So he had a strong sort of hang-on of an attachment for that shirt. Rimpoche immediately noticed it and said, ‘Please give me that shirt, you must give me that shirt.’

‘I just wanted that for when I’m dying. I’d like to wear it.’

He was not giving it. He didn’t mind giving everything else, but not the shirt.

Rimpoche begged and begged and finally the man said, ‘If you say so. You want it now, or you can take it later?’

Rimpoche said, ‘Now’.

He took it off, Rimpoche tore that shirt into pieces, and half an hour later, he’s gone. So, attachment holds you back. Those are two stories, an ancient one, and a present one.

2. The force of prayer and dedication. What you do is making offerings, particularly the seven limb offering. Pray to your guru, pray to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, pray to your Supreme field of merit. Pray wish, and dedicate all your positive karma so that you’ll always have love and compassion as your guiding principle in life.

May I not be separated from these two great minds, relative and absolute bodhimind, within this life, in my future lives and in the bardo periods. Particularly in the future lives may I encounter great teachers who can show these two paths to me, and may I have information about this available. May I be able to practice this, to complete it and become enlightened.

3. The force of rejection. Reject negative emotions, and maintain remembrance of it. Maintain remembrance and guarding alertness – the two mental faculties that can protect you. Whatever is the ‘you’ that you know, you cannot give up your identity, you have a very strong attachment to your identity, that is your physical body. We do have a tremendous amount of attachment to our physical identity. No matter how horrible it might be, no matter how old, fat, ugly, thin, we think it is great. When someone tells us we are looking good we thank them and we like it. That shows that we have attachment. Very strong attachment actually. And when you have that and you cannot let that go, it is difficult sometimes.

So if there is anything that you are attached to and that is going to hold you back, try to make it not available. That does not mean that everybody should think that they are going to die. As long as
you can live, this life is wonderful. Even one day, one hour is valuable. But when you come to the point of no return, then, in my personal opinion it is no use to be hooked up to some machines, breathing like a vegetable, If there is no possibility of coming back, then it is time to go.

4. The force of motivation.

No matter, whatever I do, wherever I go, even in my death, my bardo, my next life, all of those, I will not give up the practice of the two bodhiminds.

5. The force of familiarity. That refers to what you are doing during the dying stage. It is the physical way of dying and the mental way of dying.

The physical way is just that they tell you how the Buddha died and you can try to copy it, I believe it is not that important. He died lying on his right side, they call that the lion-posture. And actually they also recommend you to block your right nostril. That is simply a recommendation, you really do not have to do it that way.

The mental way is this: when you breathe in and out, remember give and take, tonglen. Many people already do this tonglen while they are talking, sitting or walking. It really is not necessary to say, ‘I am doing tonglen now, you get out of here’. Some people find it very hard and difficult to take the negativities of the other and to destroy the ego within themselves. It is hard, difficult, frightening, but that is because you are not used to it. When you get used to it you will find that it is good and relaxing and joyful. You will even feel happy. I wanted to tell you that, too. So here the recommendation is to do tonglen on the breath even at the time of death.

These are the five powers of dying. This is how you transfer your mind This is the lojong phowa, the love-compassion phowa, the Mahayana phowa. The Lama Chöpa has the same phowa. We have talked here about doing it at the time of death, and I believe that when you keep remembering that and do it very often, that you will remember it when the time comes. Some people may not be able to think about it at the time of death, they may just be able to take refuge, or think about the Buddha or any other enlightened
being. They are all fine. Absolutely fine and good. You do not have to force yourself to do this or that; whatever comes of those positive options is fine. The Buddha guaranteed to the followers of the Buddha that if they think about him at the time of death that their future life is not going to be in a lower realm. That is for the followers of the Buddha! Do not try to make someone who is not a Buddhist think about nothing but the Buddha at the time of death! Do not do that! You may be doing a disservice to that person. Remember that, okay?

In general, get used to meditation on love and compassion. Whenever you fall asleep, you should switch over to the love and compassion meditation. Even if you’re in the middle of something else, when you fall asleep, you’re thinking of love-compassion, when you realize what’s happening. That means your mind is really tuned into the love-compassion oriented mind.

Today we have covered the important parts of daily life and the dying period. What we gave you is five plus five – ten forces. How you live, how you die. Simple.
Combine all the Dharma into one intention
Whatever Buddhadharma you see, Hinayana, Mahayana Vajrayana, as long as it is the teaching of the Buddha, based on the Buddha’s personal experience, it is meant to challenge and destroy the ego. Every practice that you do must challenge and go against the ego. In other words, any Dharma that does not challenge your ego but actually helps you to boost your ego, to let your ego grow, it is the sign of no-good Dharma.

It is also important to see whether or not it fits to the ideas of the people. It is important to consider whether people like or dislike any Dharma teaching, discussion, meditation, practice, ritual, mantra or whatever, and whether it suits them. However, it is not necessarily good to make it ‘tailor-made’. Anyone who ever teaches you anything, if that thing does not challenge your ego, it is not that good. That is important to remember.

Of the two witnesses, rely on the primary one.
There are two witnesses: the other and yourself. The most important one is yourself. If you do funny things and you think, ‘How embarrassing it will be if anybody else came to know’, that is using others as protection. But most important is, ‘If I do this I’ll be embarrassed for myself.’ That is relying on the primary one; yourself. You know, we are in a habit of cheating ourselves all the time. And we know it does not make any difference to anyone but ourselves. I can cheat myself and eat chocolate or drink a glass of beer, but to whom does it make a difference? To me. I am cheating myself. That is how it works in the Dharma, too. So, relying on yourself as witness is the most important one.
Always rely on mental happiness alone.

No matter whatever difficulty you get, whether people challenge you even if it is not your fault, whether people blame you, you get sick, or whatever happens: if it good it is good, if it is bad, it’s okay; act like a donkey! That sounds very funny and it doesn’t literally mean to act like a donkey, but refers to the attitude of those people who can say, ‘If I have difficulties that is fine; it is a good opportunity for me to practice tonglen, it is a good opportunity for me to purify my negativities, whatever it is, it is good’. Rather than going crazy, ‘How can I get rid of it, what can I do, is it better for me to do this or is it better for me to do that!’ they have the attitude of ‘Not a big deal’. Also, even if some joy and happiness are there, do not be too high up, do not fly in the air. In other words: try to be free of emotional things. Ready to cry, ready to fly – get out of that; be a little stable. Aches and pains and discomforts happen in life. Dislikes and accusations coming from people, is part of life. Not a big deal. And when you very happy, that is also fine. There is no place that you can fly to, there is nothing else to do up there.

So, no matter whatever it may be, rich, poor, happy, joy, suffering, sick, don’t be shaky. Be stable, solid. If you have difficulties, remember they are impermanent, they’ll move, and moreover, it’s a good opportunity to get rid of negative karma. If you are at the peak of samsara, remember, that’s also impermanent. Whatever goes, it comes; whatever comes, it goes. It’s always moving, so be stable. Don’t be too emotionally unstable. A lot of people get easily upset and it is not necessarily that great. If you go like this: 😞, you get into trouble. Appreciate whatever you have, because it’s good karma; it will benefit you. So, be stable, always be happy. That is what it means: maintain happiness all the time. It does not mean: keep on smiling all the time like the Japanese do.

The measure of being trained is to no longer regress

Your training was: from the preliminaries, from the importance of life, up to the absolute bodhimind. And if you do not regress, then that means that you are trained. For example, we say: ‘Life is extremely important’. You know it, but you may think it is worthless. That means that you have regressed.

How do you know you’ve been trained? Right now, I’m protecting my ego, wherever I hear my ego gets hurt, I’m alert, ready
to hit like a porcupine. But if training, I’ll think, ‘Even if I’m getting my ego hurt, so what?’ If you begin to realize that, no matter whatever’s happening, no matter whatever is being thrown at you, it’s not affecting you, it’s a sign of getting trained. And the measure of being trained is to no longer regressing.

**To be trained is to possess five signs of greatness**

What are the five signs of greatness?

1. **To be a great bodhisattva.** You understand that the essence of the Buddha’s practice is bodhimag, both relative and absolute, and you focus on that. The needs of others have priority over your own personal needs. If you are always able to focus on that, then you become a great bodhisattva.

2. **To be a great holder of the discipline.** When you understand the cause and effect of positive and negative actions, you purify your negativities, and you protect yourself from negative actions, you become a great moral person. Morality is tricky word. A lot of people think traditionally about the sexual part of it. I do not think that is the issue here at all. Your sexual orientation is what your sexual orientation is, so what? Buddha’s point of morality is one who protects himself from the negativities, from negative actions, from hurting anybody, including yourself.

3. **Being able to take hardship.** This is being able to take even hardship in order to destroy your ego, in order to challenge your negative emotions. It means you can make some sacrifices, you’re able to bear little difficulties. Such as yourselves. It is such nice weather today, you could be walking in Nijmegen, or be sitting on the bank of the river and have a nice glass of beer, but instead you are sitting here cross-legged and do this great sacrifice order to destroy your ego and cut down your negative emotions. So being able to bear little difficulties. Remember, Guntang Jampelyang has said,

   When your stomach is filled, and you have nice little sunshine, then you become a great practitioner, you talk about dharma, you talk about compassion… But if you have a little uneasiness in life, you run up and down. That is the sign of the foolish person.

4. **To be a great practitioner.** Your actions are always dedicated and trying to do positive work; that is called being a great practitioner.
You see, a great practitioner does not mean saying your prayers or sadhanas, it really means that you are really practicing: changing your actions, the daily things you do, into the nature of positivity. Okay?

5. A great yogi or yogini. Yogi or yogini means: one who practices the Mahayana path all the time, who has something to think, to meditate, to work with, to focus on, to turn around. It is to practice, meditate, think about the bodhimind. It is activity, think regularly, meditate regularly, practice regularly. When you are able to do that you become a great yogi or yogini.

You are trained when able even when distracted

If even when you’re not focused you don’t lose yourself to your addiction to negative emotions, if even when you’re not paying attention you can protect yourself from falling into the hands of the negative emotions, it means you’re really well trained. You Dutch people, you are so used to ride on bicycles, even when there is almost no road you manage to get through. When you are so used to that, it doesn’t matter whether it is a slope down or up, whether you are thinking or talking, whether there are cars or busses overtaking or cutting across. Likewise no matter what you are dealing with in life, when you are trained you can bring this bodhimind about wherever you are going; whether you are focused or not, whether there is traffic or not, whether you are going up or down, you manage. That is the sign of being trained, that is what they are talking about. It means that even when you are distracted, you can still manage.
Point Six: 
The Commitments of Mind Training

What we are following here is actually based on the system that Pabongka Rimpoche used in his teaching in eastern Tibet of Tsongkhapa’s Lamrim Chenmo. Gomo Rimpoche also seems to base on that.

1. Constantly train in the three general points.

1. Do not ignore even small broken commitments.
2. Do not insult anybody, not even a ghost.
3. Do not make a distinction.
   
   That means, when big people say something bad to you, you cannot bear it, when small people say something bad you can bear it because they are small. Too strong attachment to a friend and too strong hatred towards an enemy, that also falls under this point.

2. Change your attitude, but remain natural.

If you look into your way of thinking, your way of dealing with your life and you see a big change due to training do not announce that, do not say, ‘I have changed my attitude’ Do not even let people know, behave yourself normally as though nothing has happened; that is how it is.

3. Do not insult others.

Do not call anyone ‘fatty guy’, ‘dumb one’, do not say ‘that stupid or blind guy’– those things. Do not use this lojong practice against ghosts. If you want to help a ghost, with the desire of helping, let’s say there is somebody with a spirit on him, and you decide to help both the person and the spirit, then you may meditate the lojong. But you should not use lojong to help the person and to kick out
the ghost, to harm the ghost in order to protect the man. Remember that he ghost is also another sentient being. This is not very relevant to us, but it is very relevant to the vajrayana practitioners who do a lot of rituals. Likewise, when talking to people, always try to talk kindly, nicely, gently. If you become angry, if you use harsh words, and if you manipulate people, then it is not very good. Not very good in the short run and not very good in the long run. It creates the same. It creates the cause of anger for nothing. So this particular advice here tells you not only not to act harsh to the ghosts etc, but also in dealing with human beings to be gentle, always gentle.

4. Do not think about other people’s affairs.
Do not poke your dirty nose into other people’s affairs, in particular when there is a problem. That is what it means. A lot of people do not think about their own problems, but like to talk about other people’s problems. That is poking your dirty nose into other people’s affairs.

5. Initially, purify whatever infliction is the strongest.
In other words, whichever negative emotion is very strong with you, deal with that one first. If your problem is anger, try to deal with that first. Likewise with attachment, but do not try to deal with two or three of them at the same time, you will be unable to cope, that is what they tell you.

6. Give up all hope for a reward.
If you are doing something good for someone and hoping to be rewarded, it’s not good. Even if you are seeking enlightenment for the benefit of others, do not think ‘I want enlightenment’ or ‘I won’t do this’. If you want enlightenment, you want enlightenment for the benefit of others and not for your own benefit, that is what it is talking about.

7. Avoid poisoned food.
It does not literally mean poisoned food. Let us say that I am saving a life, then I just want to save that life. And that is fine. ‘I want to save a life because others will know I saved a life, so that others will say, ‘Oh, he is great, he saved somebody’s life.’” – the moment I get that motivation, it has become a poison in my virtue. Why poison? Because it kills my liberation. Saving a life is then no longer saving a
Point Six: The Commitments of Mind Training

life, it becomes publicity, propaganda for me and so it becomes a worldly dharma. That is the effect.

8. Do not hold a grudge.
If somebody harms you and you do not forgive, you are waiting for an opportunity to get back at that person, that’s holding a grudge. You are advised to avoid that.

9. Do not respond to malicious talk.
I think you can understand this one. When somebody is telling you some rumors, you know the kind of thing, and then you do the same thing. Do not.

10. Do not lie in ambush.
You know the robbers that wait for travelers in some corner where they cannot get through and then suddenly they come and rob you. That is old Tibetan style. If somebody harmed you, then waiting for the opportunity to repay, that is what you have to avoid.

11. Do not strike to the core.
That means, do not push the button. If you want to help a person by pointing out the problem then that is different, but when you want to insult and harm the person by pointing out his faults and pushing his buttons it is bad. Do not do it.

12. Do not put the load of a dzo on an ox.
A dzo and an ox look the same and almost function the same. When you get the blame, you very cleverly avoid it by putting the blame on someone else – don’t do that, that is what they tell you.

13. Do not aim to win the race.
What it means is, if two people worked together, and have achieved something, do not be quick to say: ‘I did it!’ because we did it. Do not take all the advantages. Do not say ‘I did it.’

14. Do not use perverse means.
What they are really talking about is this. You want to take the benefit and credit for yourself, and therefore you let the small people get some credit and then you take the major credit yourself. You give the others the small credit so that you can take the major, big credit. Do not do it.
15. Do not turn the gods into demons.

It is a Tibetan saying: if you have troubles with your protector, then your helper has turned into your enemy. That is a bad enemy because they know all your weaknesses. If you have an external enemy then that is okay, because they have to guess what your weakness is, they have to study. But if you have a friend turned into an enemy, then they know all your weaknesses. In other words; if you practice a lot of what you have here, and it reduces your negativities, it is great. But if it builds up your pride or anger or something, then that means that the friend has turned into an enemy.

16. Do not seek [other’s] suffering as a means to your own happiness.

That speaks for itself.
Point Seven:
The Advice regarding Mind Training

*Review yourself.* What we did with this lojong business, was a little of how to train your mind, so after this, we have to be aware. After hearing, reading, learning, practice, meditating, when the same circumstances appear to you, do you take a different attitude? Do you feel differently? Does it help you not to lose it? Does it help you to understand better? Does it help you to consider the other person’s point of view? We always consider our point of view, but we fail to consider other people’s points of view – that is our problem. When we improve ourselves, we will also be able to see the other person’s point of view, and we’ll be more willing not to hit the ceiling immediately, but to give consideration, and try to think about it. When that is happening, it is helping the individual. When that’s not happening, then it doesn’t help. That’s how you review yourself. Is there a little improvement, for you?

In one way, it’s difficult to review, but in another way, it’s a easy to understand. You know how you react to the other person, so accordingly, you will receive the same thing from the other person, too. When you are rough and rude and tough to somebody, and you try to be nice and kind to everybody else, the person will automatically treat you the same way. If you’re getting a little rough treatment from your companion, you know you are treating your companion in a rough way, too. That is the clear sign. It is true, if you’re nice to the other person, no matter how long, or how much they can go, eventually they have to be nice to you. When you have compassion, when you have love for other people, they can not harm you, they cannot do bad things for you.

*Compassion protection.* There is a story. One of the early Tibetan Kadampa lamas, took his residence in a place called Penbo, north of Lhasa, and meditating there. The local ghost, the spirits there, then
had a meeting and they decided to destroy this meditator. They said, ‘Unless we destroy him now, later he will destroy us’. So, somebody among those ghosts volunteered, ‘I’ll take care of him.’ He went there to harm that person.

That meditator was crying. ‘What’s he crying for?’ The ghost became to know that he’s worrying about sentient beings, including these ghosts, that he’s having compassion, worrying about their suffering, and he’s crying. So he couldn’t harm him and he went back. He came back another day to harm him, and he’s crying, same thing. He repeated this a number of times. Then one day, on another meeting, the leader of these ghost people said, ‘Hey, you’re supposed to take care of that person, he’s still there, what happened?’ He said, ‘I went there, and he’s worrying about us, and crying, so how can I harm him? If somebody cares about us, then how can we harm him?’

The leader said, ‘All right, I’ll take care of it.’ And he went there, and the same thing happened. The leader hesitated, and repeated it a couple of times, and then at the next meeting he said, ‘He’s right, he’s only worrying about us, let us not harm him.’

Love-compassion is the method to receive good treatment from other people. It is the method for protection. Je Tsongkhapa has said when he praised the Buddha,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{You're great because you know how to defeat the evil forces.} \\
\text{All by yourself, you've been able to defeat the evil forces} \\
\text{without having a single weapon in your hand. Who else do we know besides you? Who else do we praise?}
\end{align*}
\]

Compassion, caring, love, these are the keys for your own protection.

If you look in the Buddha’s life story, just before Buddha become enlightened under the tree, in Bodhagaya, what happened was the evil forces had the last attack on Buddha, just before he became enlightened. That is, first, they tried to seduce him. And that didn’t work, so then they tried to attack him with weapons, but all the weapons changed into flowers. So that didn’t effect him either. Finally they gave up, they couldn’t help it.

So the question is, what made Buddha not to be distracted by the evil force? When they finally attacked with all their forces, even indulging all their weapons throwing at the Buddha, then what
made the weapons change into flowers? It is the love that Buddha had by meditating on love-compassion. Not only meditating. You know, you can keep on meditating love-compassion and do nothing in your daily life. You can visualize having love, love, love, and visualize having compassion, compassion, and nothing else will happen.

There is one more story that I want to put in there, before I conclude this. There was a teacher, in Tibet, just near the Nepal border, so the student goes to him and says, ‘I’d like to be near you.’ So he says, ‘Very good.’ ‘I’d like to meditate.’ ‘Fine.’ ‘Where should I meditate?’ ‘Up in the mountains, a cave up there somewhere in the mountains.’ ‘So what should I meditate?’ ‘Up to you.’ ‘What is the most difficult?’ ‘Most difficult. Buddha says, there is no such heavy negativity such as anger. There is no such difficulty to practice such as patience.’ So he said, ‘I’d like to meditate on patience.’ He said, ‘Okay, fine, go up there, meditate patience.’ So he goes up there, months go by, and one day he sent another person. He said, ‘would you go up there? There’s somebody up there meditating on patience, go up there and insult him whatever you could, and then come back and tell me what happens.’ The guy goes up there, and sees the meditator sitting there, and he says, ‘What are you doing?’ ‘I’m meditating.’ He said, ‘You are meditating? You?’ ‘Yes, don’t you see it, I’m meditating here.’ He already got irritated. ‘You? My foot you! Meditating what?’ He said, ‘I’m meditating on Patience.’ ‘Oh my god! You! My foot! You meditating on patience?’ And then you know that bad language Tibetans have, you know, ‘eat your own shit’. He said, ‘How dare you to say that?!”’ And he started throwing rocks, and whatever and chasing that guy out, all the way down.
That’s meditating compassion only through mental activities, and when actual practice comes, you start chasing the person with stones, so that won’t help. That’s not meditation on love. Yet, by meditating on love-compassion, you will get yourself used to the kindness and compassion, and that will influence your life. That’s how you will be guiding yourself in that, and after a little while it has to be a practical thing. The mental exercise helps by putting the individual in the right direction, and when actually, the practical level comes, you’ll be able to do it, you’ll be able to protect yourself, help yourself, even if you lost it little bit, it doesn’t matter. Better late than never.

What makes my life worthwhile? Keeping the commitments and following the advice. It’s mentioned at the lojong level, but it’s in all your vows, whether it’s a refuge vow, bodhisattva vow, or vajrayana vow. I don’t mean what you call sadhana-commitment. I don’t mean that at all. I mean commitments like these lojong commitments. Keeping those makes life worthwhile. Why? Because they cut you out of negativities. By cutting you out of the negativity you build a tremendous amount of positive karma. I’m not going to explain the advice. We’ve run out of time and besides, it’s good to leave something for a next time. You can read the Gomo Rinpoche’s commentary, *Becoming a child of the Buddha’s*.

1. Perform all yogas with the one.
2. Apply the one to all perverse oppressors.
3. Do the two activities, one at the beginning and one at the end.
4. Be patient whichever of the two occurs.
5. Guard the two at the risk of your life.
6. Train in the three difficult ones.
7. Obtain the three principal causes.
8. Cultivate the three without deterioration.
9. Possess the three without separation.
10. Train in purity and impartiality with respect to objects.
11. Cherish all of the encompassing and profound trainings.
12. Meditate constantly on the special cases.
13. Do not look for other conditions.
14. Practice the most important right now.
15. Avoid the distorted understandings.
16. Do not be erratic.
17. Train continuously.
18. Attain liberation with the two, investigation and analysis.
19. Do not boast.
20. Refrain from retaliating.
21. Do not act impetuously.
22. Do not wish for gratitude.

CONCLUDING THE TEACHINGS

We have reached the end of this seven point mind training. One of the most important points was at the beginning level, where we spent a lot of time talking about equanimity. I talked about three different layers of equanimity. These are most important because they deal with every day life, how we deal with different people, talk to them, give them cold shoulders or give them nice warm hugs. It’s so important. Buddhism’s great, Tibetan Buddhism’s wonderful, but it has to deal with my everyday life, it has to make a difference to me, the Joe Blow in New York.

To conclude, the essence of lojong is bringing the bodhimind and becoming a bodhisattva. Try to develop that. That will help. That will make a difference for your life. That is the real art, which will really make you happy. It is a long shot. But, the first and foremost thing of it is training yourself to develop some compassion, to develop some love, to try to help yourself, to treat yourself with this love and compassion. That will help. That will make a difference for your life. That is the real art, which will make you really happy. I believe that is the key.
Notes

1. The aspiration to become a buddha for the benefit of every living being.
2. The Stages of the Path, by Je Tsongkhapa.
3. The ‘Lamrim’ in the Kagyu tradition, by Gampopa.
4. Rimpoche in Nijmegen: ‘When I was thinking about the program for this retreat, entitled Compassion and Wisdom, I thought it might be good to teach lojong. For a number of years now I’ve talked here about love and compassion, but I mostly talked on the basis of the seven stages of development of the bodhimind. This year I’m going to emphasize on the exchange stages of development of the bodhimind, which works very well with these lojong teachings, because they’re based on it.’

5. Rimpoche: ‘The basics of the lojong are common not only to the Gelugpa’s system, but to Sakya, Nyingma, and Kagyu as well. It’s accepted by Marpa and Milarepa, and emphasized by the early Sakya lamas.’


7. Gomo Tulku (1922-1985), an accomplished Buddhist master born in Tibet, was recognized at age five by Pabongka Rimpoche and confirmed by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama to be the reincarnation of a highly realized Tibetan yogi. Holder of many rare lineages of initiations, Gomo Tulku taught and inspired many students in Europe in the final year of his life.

8. To be found in the Jataka stories.

9. Dhutsi is nectar: dbu is devil or evil and tsi is medicine. Nyingbo means essence.

10. 1) The evil of form [or the aggregates [Skt. skandhamaṇḍa]; 2) the evil of death [Skt. mrtuyapatiṁana]; 3) the evil of delusions [Skt. kleshaṁana]; 4) the evil of heavenly demons [Skt. devaṁana].

11. See Gelek Rimpoche, Lam Rim Teachings, Ch. 1.

12. Also see Nam-kha Pel, Mind training like the rays of sun, pg. 10.

13. The use of the word ‘ego’ throughout this teaching is not equal to the use of this word in psychology/ psycho-analysis, where it means the healthy personality that is aimed at. Here it points to the self-created image of an independent ‘me’ that governs my life.

14. Literally the ‘iron era’ as opposed to the ‘golden era’.

Rimpoche skipped the points 3 and 6.
See page 5. Also see page 43.
See page 25.
For an overview of interlinking the five stages and the lojong text, see Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Universal compassion*. 
7-11 is the name of an American shop.
In Tibetan the three layers carry the same name, but different connotations. Dutch possible equivalents are for the first level ‘onpartijdigheid’; for the second level ‘gelijkmoedigheid’ and for the third level ‘gelijkstellung’.
Commentaries to these five verses are available in Gelek Rimpoche, *Guru devotion; how to integrate the primordial mind*; Dalai Lama, *Union of Bliss and Emptiness*, and in Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Great Treasury of Merit*.
This line is usually linked with the exchange stage point: advantages of cherishing others. See e.g. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Universal compassion*. Rimpoche did not specify its place, but sort of joined them together: ‘Put all the blame on the one. Meditate on everyone as kind.’ So the placing here remains somehow arbitrary.
Often translated as self-grasping.
Gomo Tulku: If we are unable to take even our own problems upon ourselves, obviously we will be unable to take others’ suffering. *Becoming a child of the Buddhas*, pg. 28.
Questions to be found on page 101ff.
For using the left or right nostril, also see page 92.
See previous note.
See the list of literature on page 159. In Sogyal Rimpoche’s book you find a very practical series of tong-len meditations.
The ‘basis of all’ or ‘foundation of all’ is a synonym for emptiness. Ref. Geshe Rabten, *Advice for a spiritual friend*, pg. 50.
Or essence.
In the *Foundation of All Perfections* translated as ‘mindfullness and awareness’. 
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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, Gelek 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, Gelek 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, Gelek 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. Gelek 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: in Nijmegen, Den Bosch, Tilburg, Arnhem, Utrecht.
- Malaysia: in Kuala Lumpur, Gerik and Panang, and in Muar.
- Singapore

www.jewelheart.org


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.