

Seven Point Mind Training

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe



KHENPO NGAWANG DHAMCHOE

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Preface



The Vajrayana Booklets comprise the readings for the third year of The Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course. They concern another of the main traditions of Buddhism, the Vajrayana tradition. The Vajrayana is the third of our three main Buddhist traditions after the Hinayana (Theravada) and Mahayana. Vajrayana is also known as Tantric Buddhism because it emphasises the use of sacred texts and practices to transform ordinary experience into profound spiritual understanding.

There are three booklets in *The Vajrayana Booklets* series – *The Heart Sutra*, *Seven Point Mind Training* and *Buddhahood and a Vajrayana Path*. Whilst *The Heart Sutra* and *Seven Point Mind Training* are considered practices in

Mahayana, they are also foundational practices within Vajrayana.

These booklets are based on the recorded teachings of Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe is one of the most highly qualified Tibetan Buddhist Sakya lamas in Australia. He is highly respected in Australia and internationally for his profound knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, the clarity and inspirational qualities of his teachings, and his understanding of the western mind.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe has been a monk since 1971. At the age of nine, he entered the Sakya Monastery in Bir, India, and remained there for 10 years. When Khenpo was 19, the principal of Sakya College in Dehradun, His Eminence Khenchen Appey Rinpoche, asked the Sakya Monastery to send senior monks to join the Sakya College. Sakya College is one of the most famous Tibetan philosophical institutes in India. It was established by His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin and His Eminence Khenchen Appey Rinpoche.

Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe was chosen to join the Sakya College. He studied there for just over 10 years, from 1979 to 1990. In his sixth year he was nominated as the Discipline Master. This was a challenging role, as some of the monks, including his peers, were older than him. In Khenpo's seventh year he was appointed a Teacher's Assistant, and in the eighth year he studied for the degree of Kacho Pa – the equivalent of a Bachelor of Arts, requiring intensive study. In Khenpo's ninth and tenth years he studied for the degree of Loppon, equivalent to a PhD degree. At the same time, he taught and conducted examinations at the college.

In 1994 His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin appointed Khenpo as Resident Teacher at Sakya Tharpa Ling, a Buddhist centre in Sydney, following the passing of the 14th Gyalsay Tulku Rinpoche. In 2002, His Holiness bestowed on him the title of 'khenpo', or abbot, in recognition of his teaching ability. The bestowal of the term 'khenpo' recognises something considered rare and precious. His Holiness the 41st Sakya Trizin recognised Khenpo's special qualities and deep understanding of Buddhist philosophies, both in sutra and tantra, and held an Enthronement Ceremony in the Bir Monastery Northern

India, promoting Khenpo from the term Loppon to Khenpo in March 2002.

The term 'khenpo' has at least three meanings in Tibetan Buddhism: a scholar who has completed an extensive course of study in sutra and tantra, a senior lama who can give ordinations, and the head of a monastery. The khenpos have been the main channels for keeping the purity of Buddha's teachings alive from generation to generation within the Tibetan monastic tradition.

Since November 2015 Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe has lived and taught at Kamalashila Tibetan Buddhist Centre near Tilba on the south coast of New South Wales, although he travels to many countries to spread the Dharma.

From 2017 to 2019, Khenpo taught the first component of the Seven Year Complete Path for senior students which was coordinated by the International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu under the strict guidance of, and within the program developed by, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin.

In 2019, Khenpo began to develop The Autumn Buddhist Philosophy Course, a three-year program teaching the main concepts and practices of the three main traditions of Buddhism – Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. The inaugural program began in 2022.

There are many to thank for *The Vajrayana Booklets* but first and foremost we would like to thank Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe for his precious teachings which he has given so generously and diligently to his students over so many years. They have greatly helped his students to understand and to apply the Dharma in their lives to such good effect. These booklets were prepared over five years and with many hours of work by transcribers and editors. The best gift of appreciation we can give our teacher in return is to apply these methods in diligent practice of the Dharma.

*May the precious Dharma continue down through the ages
to guide countless beings on the Path.*

*Carole Kayrooz Emeritus Professor and Lael Morrissey,
November 2023*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Vajrayana Booklets is one of a series based on teachings by Khenpo Ngawang Dhamchoe. We have many to thank for their contributions to the series.

Seven Point Mind Training was transcribed by Linda McKeone and edited by Linda McKeone, Carole Kayrooz, Robert Garran and Lael Morrissey.

Lael Morrissey and Ulladulla Printing and Signage prepared the layout and design.

Seven Point Mind Training

Point 1: Preliminaries – a basis for Dharma practice

1. First, train in the preliminaries.

Point 2: The main practice – training in bodhicitta

2. Regard all phenomena as dreams.
3. Investigate the nature of unborn awareness.
4. Even the antidote is released in its ground.
5. Rest within the all basis, the essential nature.
6. In post-meditation, regard all beings as illusions.
7. Alternately practise sending and taking: these two should ride the breath.
8. Three objects, three poisons and three roots of virtue.
9. In all your activities, train with these words.
10. Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself.

Point 3: Transforming adverse conditions into the path of awakening

11. When the world is filled with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of awakening
12. Drive all blame into one.
13. Be grateful to everyone and everything.
14. Seeing delusive appearances as the four kayas is the unexcelled protection emptiness gives.
15. The best method entails four practices.
16. Whatever you meet, instantly join it with meditation.

Point 4: Blending mind with practice throughout your life

17. Practise the five powers, the condensed heart instructions.
18. The Mahayana instructions for transferring consciousness at death are the five powers, the way you behave matters.

Point 5: How to evaluate your mind training

19. All the Buddha's Dharma converges on a single point.
20. Of the two witnesses, attend to the principal one.
21. At all times, rely only on a joyful mind.
22. If you can practice even when distracted, you are well trained .

Point 6: The commitments of mind training

23. Always train in the three basic principles.
24. Change your attitude and be natural.
25. Don't speak ill of others' shortcomings.
26. Don't ponder the affairs of others.
27. Work with the stronger afflictions first.
28. Send away any hope for results.
29. Avoid poisonous food.
30. Don't be so constant .
31. Don't get riled by critical remarks.
32. Don't lie in ambush.
33. Don't strike at weak points.
34. Don't transfer a yak's burden onto a cow.
35. Don't aim to be the fastest.
36. Don't act with a twist.
37. Don't turn gods into demons .
38. Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your happiness.

Point 7: Guidelines for mind training

39. All practices should be done with one intention.
40. One practice corrects everything.
41. At the start and finish, an activity to be done.

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42. Whichever of the two occurs, be patient.
43. Maintain these two even at the risk of your life.
44. Train in the three difficult points.
45. Take up the three main causes.
46. Pay attention that these three things do not diminish.
47. Keep the three inseparable.
48. Train impartially in all areas; deep pervasive and constant training is crucial.
49. Always meditate on what aggravates you.
50. Don't be swayed by outer circumstance.
51. This time practice is central.
52. Don't make mistakes.
53. Don't fluctuate.
54. Train with your whole heart.
55. Free yourself through examination and analysis.
56. Don't make a big deal out of it.
57. Don't let being irritated tie you up.
58. Don't overreact.
59. Don't expect a standing ovation.

Introduction

There are over a hundred mind training teachings but one of the most popular is the *Seven Points of Mind Training* by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, which we use in this text. Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1102-1176) was a Buddhist meditation master who wrote down this system of training and put the points into practise. This book introduces *Seven Points of Mind Training* and it is this system we will explain.

Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje wrote:

*This essential elixir of instruction,
Transforming the five kinds of degeneration
Into the path of awakening,
Is a transmission from Serlingpa.
Having awakened the karmic energy of previous training
I was moved by deep devotion;
Therefore, ignoring suffering and criticism,
I sought out instruction on how to subdue ego-fixation.
Now when I die, I'll have no regret.*

Before we begin explaining the *Seven Points of Mind Training*, it's very important to set our intention. We need to have the right motivation to study the *Seven Points of Mind Training*. Right now our minds are so tiny, they are only big enough to look after ourselves. The greatest goal is to expand our minds so that we can help all sentient beings. Our minds need to be so big that we can reach out to all the realms of existence – the form realm, the formless realm and the desire realm. In the desire realm alone, we need to be able to help beings in the god realms and demi-god realms, those in the hell

INTRODUCTION

realms and animal realms, the hungry ghosts, as well as the human realm. We need to open our hearts to all sentient beings. We can help others by being leaders, guides on the path, or servants. Whether you think you will be a leader, guide or a servant to all sentient beings, the goal will always be the same. The right motivation is to study the *Seven Points of Mind Training* to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.

The teachings for the *Seven Points of Mind Training* originated from the Lord Buddha. Initially the Buddha was just like us. He had to go through the same kind of challenges in life that we go through. He used these challenges though to perfect himself. If we use our wisdom mind to face the challenges, the challenges will fan the flames of wisdom. If we use our ignorance mind to face the challenges, our response will be like water which will extinguish the flames of wisdom. Buddha, when he faced a challenge, used it to develop compassion. He did not just feel pity or sorrow for others but rather his heart became rock solid in his commitment to free all others from samsara. He spent three countless aeons practising the two accumulations of merit and wisdom and purifying all obstacles. His mind became clean, and, as a result, he attained awakened mind, perfect mind, buddhahood. You and I have an equal opportunity to perfect our minds. After the Buddha gained enlightenment, he turned the wheel of Dharma. I have often thought that the Buddha's teaching itself is like a wheel in that he passed it to his disciples and his disciples passed it to their students until one day you and I have received these teachings. One day you might pass these teachings to someone else.

In the Buddhist tradition the first step of any teaching is to first establish the authenticity of the lineage of the teaching. The lineage is an authentic whispered lineage, passed from master to master. There was no writing then so whatever was mastered and experienced was taught. Buddha himself taught what he mastered and experienced. The Buddha's teachings were passed to Maitreya Buddha, who passed them to Asanga then again from master to master till we reach the late 10th century when the teachings were passed to the great Indonesian master Serlingpa, or Golden Islander, also known as Dharmakirti. Serlingpa was a great Indian Buddhist teacher who passed this lineage to Atisha Dipamkara. Atisha actually received mind

training from two other great masters besides Serlingpa. He received the teachings from Dharma Rakshita and Jampey Nailijor. Atisha took almost 12 months to travel from India to Indonesia to receive these teachings with master Serlingpa, and spent 12 years learning every aspect of the training of the mind. Atisha brought this treasure back to India, and re-established these teachings in India.

When he was in his 70s, Atisha was invited to Tibet and so he brought this precious treasure with him. Atisha passed these teachings onto other great Tibetan Masters. The first great master to whom Atisha passed these instructions was Drom-tönpa, his closest disciple, an emanation of the Buddha of Compassion. Then he passed it to master Potowa, who passed this lineage to Geshe Sharawa. Geshe Sharawa then passed them to Geshe Chekhawa Yeshe Dorje, a 12th century Nyingmapa master. Geshe Chekhawa Yeshe Dorje also received teachings from Dromten Rechunga, one of Milarepa's disciples. These teachings, also known as pith instructions, are the most essential and practical instructions devised to show how a sincere Buddhist practitioner can transform adverse conditions into the path for enlightenment. I learnt of these teachings from my master Khechen Appye Rinpoche as part of this unbroken lineage.

All four schools of Tibetan Buddhism – Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelugpa – have benefitted from these teachings. These four schools came from the four lineages in India. The four schools aren't separate or contradictory, each school holds these four lineage practices. They are four schools to help the different tendencies of human beings. Belonging to one or the other is because of your karmic link and with what you feel comfortable practising. As we have seen, these mind trainings come from Atisha Dipamkara lineage, who was the lineage holder for the Gelugpa. If you follow the Nyingma school, you inherit the Padmasambhava lineage. Padmasambhava was the 8th century master who came to Tibet. The Sakyapa come from the great Indian lineage holder Master Virupa who was around the late 5th century. The Kagyupa derive from the great Indian master Naropa around the 9th century. Atisha was the lineage holder for the Gelugpa school in the mid 15th century.

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Our motivation in undertaking these practices is very important. According to the Mahayana teachings, whoever was interested in learning was put into three groupings. Those with small motivation were primarily motivated by fear of where they will go in the next life. The advice to them was to adopt the ten virtues and avoid the ten non-virtues. Those with middling motivation to undertake the practices wanted to free themselves from samsara. This is the Hinayana path of self-liberation. Those with great motivation wanted to free all sentient beings from samsara. This is the Mahayana path of liberation for the sake of all sentient beings.

Structure and source of this text

The seven points are broken into 59 pith instructions or sub-points. In this text the pith instruction are first listed under a heading for each of the seven points, then repeated again one by one with commentary (except for the first point, which has just one pith instruction).

The root text used here is *Seven Points of Mind Training* by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje.

Point 1: Preliminaries – a basis for Dharma practice

- 1. First, train in the preliminaries

1. First, train in the preliminaries

The preliminaries are important because our achievements in the future depend on the very first foundations that we lay down. Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje said that to be successful in the higher points of mind training, we need to be successful in the first steps. The first steps are four ‘turning away’ thoughts which turn us away from samsara to renunciation and liberation. These four turning away thoughts are precious human rebirth, impermanence, karma and suffering.

1. Precious human rebirth – If we examine our actions yesterday, today and tomorrow, most of us are caught up in this life. However, it is certain that one day we will die and we won’t be able to take our life with us. Currently we are caught up in sacrificing time and energy for things that will not help us. How can we make our life meaningful? If we want to turn our life around, we need to examine what kind of person we are. We need to recognise that we are capable people who have all the right conditions to attain liberation. We can then ask what can we achieve in this life? We can use the opportunity of this precious human rebirth to become like a Buddha. This will mean that we will be grateful for this life. A human can achieve things which other beings

cannot. This human birth offers a rare and very capable life, and knowing its value, we resolve to not waste or misuse this opportunity. We see this life as very fortunate, which protects us from being negative, miserable or depressed.

The opportunity of our precious human rebirth is based on time. Time is very limited, it cannot last and must run out. Time wasted never returns. One should constantly be grateful to have this moment to live this wonderful human life. This is the opportunity to do something valuable for oneself and for others. We do not know when we might have the opportunity again. Contemplating our precious human rebirth is the right medicine for our laziness in practising the Dharma. It turns us away from misusing our lives to making our lives very useful.

2. *Impermanence* – It's uncertain how long we will live. It is not logical to think we are going to be in this life for a long time. In this sense, life is like an autumn cloud. It passes quickly and has no substance. It's uncertain what will happen in it. Could we have predicted all the things that have happened to us six months ago? In Australia, in recent years, we have experienced drought, bushfires and the global pandemic. It was very difficult to predict these events. Appreciating the impermanent nature of our lives turns us away from laziness to diligence to focus on the Dharma.

It is good to think about what is most useful in the present, at the time of the death, and after death. The best way to live is to have a happy, positive life. A happy positive life is created by the wisdom mind. Wisdom is the most useful thing to us, nothing else can help us as much as wisdom. Thus, it is important that, while we live, we live with wisdom. At the time of death, regardless of how much time and effort we put into making material wealth, gaining fame, power, followers or family, we can't take them with us. The only thing that goes with us at the time of death is our mind. When we die with the wisdom mind, we can let go and accept the new.

In the future, it is the mind that directs us to a better life. People often ask who or what kind of phenomena choose your future birth. Buddhist philosophy says that you have the power to choose where you will be reborn. Why then would people choose to be born to a miserable life? This is because

they are in that particular mind, and appearance and reality are different things. The negative mind sees the miserable life as very attractive, feels drawn to it, and chooses that birth. Once born in that state, the reality is miserable. They are choosing this. However, the negative mind is not the right mind to choose the right things. For this reason, it is essential to have a right mind, because whatever right mind chooses is not going to be a mistake. The creator of the right mind is wisdom. If you have wisdom, it is the most useful in the present, at the time of death, and in future lives. The wisdom mind does not waste this precious time.

3. *Karma* – Next we investigate who or what created how we see the world, and what we experience in life. In Buddhism, we believe you are your own creator. The karma you create determines how you view this world and your own experiences. Furthermore, there is no deceiving karma for your own mind: whatever you create, the mind takes you to those results or consequences. We think that if no one knows we lie, we can get away with it. But from the Buddhist perspective, ultimately lying will make us miserable. Knowing this helps us to be honest with ourselves, to always be careful what we think, say and do, because these three create everything: our own life and our perception mind. Understanding karma, one takes very good care of one's thoughts, speech and actions.

No one will follow you at the time of death – only your karma. It's like the shadow that follows you everywhere. If we experience peace, happiness and joy, it is due to living a life of virtue. If we experience misery, it is caused by non-virtue. We think a nice house, a job, money will make us happy but only living a virtuous life will make us happy. If we really examine our thoughts, we will find that most of them are useless. It's much better to think about what is virtuous and non-virtuous and what helps you and what harms you. The point is to turn away from wrongdoing. If we disregard the law of karma, our lives will turn into misery. We need to turn our circumstances into the right causes and conditions to have the right result in the future.

4. *Suffering* – The Buddha taught that the way out of samsara is to realise that samsara is suffering. From morning to night, we are busy doing all sorts of things. It is important to investigate what we are creating with this

busy mind, and what's underlying it. We find that we are strengthening our desire mind, anger mind, jealous mind and arrogant mind: we are actually feeding and strengthening the mind which harms us. Our busyness and rushing increase our desire mind, which can never bring happiness. If we increase our anger, we suffer more. We tend to think everything we do is for our own benefit. In reality, what we are doing every day is hurting rather than benefitting ourselves. Therefore, Buddhists say the nature of samsara is suffering. Samsara is none other than defiled thought, defiled speech and defiled action. When we create these, we are creating more suffering for ourselves. As humans, it is impossible to live without desire mind, anger mind and ignorance mind, however, based on understanding the results of these three, we should practise reducing them. With less of these three, naturally you become happier with less suffering, and with more wisdom. We need to turn away from samsara towards renunciation and liberation.

Buddhists speak of three types of suffering in samsara – the suffering of conditions, the suffering of change and pervasive suffering. Recognising our suffering is the first step to wisdom. The suffering of conditions includes all the miseries of the lower realms, the suffering of birth, old age, sickness and death and the suffering of what we hold most dear. From beginningless time up to today, we are always preparing so that we can gain more, be more happy and secure our position. We are always focused on ourselves with a stingy mind. In reality, stinginess causes us to be bankrupt. There is the suffering of change which means that no matter what we have, what circumstance we are in, the situation will change. What was previously pleasurable becomes sorrowful, like a mother's grief at the death of her child. When you are happy, eventually it will change and you will become unhappy. Then, there is all pervasive suffering. All our present experience sets us up for suffering in the future. Every aspect of our existence brings with it the potential for future suffering. Deep down we fear life doesn't rest on solid ground and from the Buddhist perspective, this doubt is true.

Renunciation from samsara comes when you know samsara is full of suffering. It's like a bushfire you want to escape. You realise that the better place to go is to be free of your defiled mind. This will bring wisdom and

ripeness for liberation. No one has the power to change your mind. Only you can use wisdom to accept your conditions. We have to remember these four turning away thoughts of precious human rebirth, impermanence, karma and suffering. We need to investigate these thoughts to find the truth for ourselves. Buddhist philosophy has been accused of focusing on the negative or bad things. However, only when you know your weakness or your problem can you change it. Without knowing your own problem, you can't help yourself.

There is a fifth preliminary which we often talk about – that is, to cultivate bodhicitta, to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. There is a distinction between wishing bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta. Wishing bodhicitta is like planning for a journey – here you fervently want to attain awakening for the sake of all sentient beings, but you are not ready to engage in all the things you need to do to attain this. Engaging bodhicitta actually means getting in the car and going, that is, putting the wish into action. Now you engage in all the practices necessary to attain awakening for the sake of all sentient beings. These five preliminaries soften and ripen our minds to be ready to begin the training of the mind.

Point 2: The main practice – training in bodhicitta

Training in bodhicitta has two parts: training in ultimate bodhicitta and training in relative bodhicitta.

The main practice of the *Seven Points of Mind Training* is based in relative truth, in the compassion of exchanging meditation, but we need an understanding of absolute or ultimate truth to develop strong compassion. For this reason, Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje moves onto the ultimate or absolute truth. The ultimate or absolute truth has a preliminary part, a main meditative part, and a post meditative part.

Ultimate bodhicitta

- 2. *Regard all phenomena as dreams.*
- 3. *Investigate the nature of unborn awareness.*
- 4. *Even the antidote is released in its ground.*
- 5. *Rest within the all-basis, the essential nature.*
- 6. *In post-meditation, regard all beings as illusions.*

One needs to prepare to meditate, including being able to understand, recognise and stop the main obstacles to meditation, and the causes of poor quality or incomplete meditation. An uncomfortable cushion, noise or temperature are not obstacles to your meditation. They may be conditions interfering with your meditation, but the main obstacle is your own thoughts,

your wandering mind.

Meditation means the mind is focused in the present. Furthermore, Buddhist meditation means developing wisdom. To develop or familiarise the mind with wisdom there needs to be an object of meditation. Without an object, there is nothing to meditate on. To settle with the object, we first need to free the thoughts with breathing meditation. Thoughts never stop but we cannot have two thoughts at the same time. Focusing on the breath reduces your discursive thoughts. The inhalation and exhalation counts as one, repeated twenty-one times. This naturally calms and relaxes your mind. Don't expect too much and don't overthink your breathing. There is no need to think of where this breath comes from or goes to, no need to look for the reason, as these are distractions. Just focus on the in and out breaths. The result will take care of itself. Our purpose is to stop our wandering mind by focusing on our present breathing. Muddy water stops us seeing what is at the bottom. If you wish to see an object through muddy water, you need the water to settle, you need the dirt to sink, leaving clarity at the top. Then you see exactly what is there. In this way, we need to let this mind settle, to be undisturbed and to prepare your mind for absolute truth.

2. Regard all phenomena as dreams

This instructs us how to consider all things and events as dreamlike. We are being invited to think about all phenomena: external and internal, animate beings and inanimate objects as ephemeral. Without investigation, in ordinary mind, we think all objects are separate from us – trees, stars, and in relationships - our parents and children. Whatever we see, we think of as truly existent and separate from our mind, we think they are real, and grasp onto them as real. We want this or we don't want that.

We need to investigate this for ourselves but a word of caution – it's not possible to investigate if you are worried or concerned or have set views. We need to listen to the Dharma with no conditions, as if your mind is an empty bucket. You can fill the bucket with what you hear and then later sift through to collect the treasure.

Everything may seem real but it's an illusion. Through your investigations, you will realise that all phenomena are illusory. This realisation frees you. The mind which thinks of things as real, we call the defilement mind or delusion mind. This is like an illusion because, in the absence of the object, the mind fails to realise there is no object, instead perceiving the objectless as object. Without training, the mind does not realise that it is actually perceiving mind itself, rather than seeing the object.

In order to help understand this mind as delusion, think about the six objects: visual form, sound, smell, taste, touch and phenomena. These six objects are none other than your own mind. For example, when we look at a simple object, such as a candle, the way you and I see a candle is all from the same point of view. However, non-human beings, such as a dog, cat, or bird do not see that object the same way we do. They see totally differently to us, and also totally differently to each other. There is just one candle, but if there are six different beings, they perceive in six different ways. Then you have to ask the question, why are we seeing six different ways when looking at same object? The answer is that it is your mind which perceives phenomena. In this way, every phenomenon is your own mind.

Another example is when a person with faith and a person with no faith are in front of a shrine, they are not going to see the same things. A person who has no faith may feel uncomfortable, the person who values the path respects the shrine. This is not the phenomenon, it is the mind which perceives. Different age groups and genders can similarly see the world in different ways. These explanations help us understand what Buddha means by 'everything is the mind'. Without investigating these things, you may think 'everything is the mind' is a strange concept or belief system.

A further way to explain illusion mind is as dream mind or drunk mind. In both these mind states, there is no object, but the drunk or dream mind perceives objects. In the dream state, whatever we are dreaming does not exist, but we still perceive things. The drunk person sees things others cannot see. We can say our mind is like the dream mind, because we are not awakened yet. We call our mind the drunk mind because we are drunk either with the desire mind, anger mind, or jealous mind. Whatever you get drunk on, then

you see according to that. If you see with desire, you see things as beautiful. If you see things out of anger, objects are very unattractive. If very competitive, you get jealous of the object. Thus, how you see different phenomena depends on your mind.

If things don't really exist as we perceive them, questions are then asked such as why when we touch things are they solid? Why when we drink water does it quench our thirst? Or food remove our hunger when we eat? These can be proved as invalid reasons, which in fact do not prove these things are separate from the mind. To elaborate, in your dream you get thirsty, find water and drink it, and it quenches your thirst in the dream time. The same for food when you are hungry in a dream. Even though the water and food don't exist, you can still drink them and eat them, and they have the same effect as they do in your non-dream state. Something therefore doesn't need to exist in order to satisfy you. Likewise when we watch a movie or magical show, none of it is true, but it works for mind.

In this way, first we have to train to think everything is mind.

3. Investigate the nature of unborn awareness

Understanding that objects don't exist separately from the mind, we must now investigate the mind that is grasping. We need to investigate whether that mind really exists or not. Looking closely at your mind, we find that the mind does not exist in a physical form, its nature is colourless, shapeless and designless. If it truly exists, it has to come from somewhere, however you will not find any place from which this mind originates. Further, if this mind really exists, we should find where this mind abides. Looking inside your body, or outside your body, or somewhere between, you will not find this mind anywhere. Then in the end, when this mind leaves, if you try to follow the trace of the mind that departs, you are not going to find where it has gone.

When we talk about the mind it is important to distinguish between the conventional or relative aspect of the mind, and the absolute reality aspect of the mind. Here we are not referring to the conventional aspect of the mind.

The conventional aspect of the mind arises, abides and ceases due to causes and conditions, and that is not negated here. When we say ‘absolute’ we mean independent and non-changing. From the absolute view, things cannot be created. Creation requires change, and changeability is not the nature of absolute: the absolute is unchangeable. This unchangeable mind never arises in the beginning, in the middle it never abides, and in the end, there is nothing to cease. Mind is unborn in the beginning. If mind is born in the beginning, we can tell its shape, size and colour. Mind cannot abide anywhere. It does not reside anywhere and it never ceases. The natural innate state of the mind is not-born, non-abiding and unceasing. The absolute therefore is said to be free from arising, abiding and cessation.

Here we are examining the most subtle, absolute state of mind. Mind’s luminosity, awareness and clarity is like the mirror which enables us to see the reflections. When you look into the mirror, you aren’t going to find the actual things you see, just mere reflections. Besides the reflections nothing exists in the mirror. This is the absolute reality.

The absolute is beyond object and subject, so we call the innate nature of the mind ‘non-dualistic’. All disturbances come when we create this dualistic mind. In the absolute non-dualistic state neither good nor bad exist, so the absolute truth is beyond good and bad, and the innate nature of the mind is undisturbed. In addition, there is no consensus on what is good and bad. Some things may be good for you, and bad for me, and vice versa. This means dualistic mind is the creation of the individual’s mind. When the dualistic mind is removed, what is left is the non-dualistic, and the non-dualistic mind is free from grasping anything. We call this absolute truth.

The sutrayana advises that we need to learn what is absolute truth from our teacher then use our own intelligence to analyse if it is true. Once you have certainty, you will have the precious Dharma. In order to meditate on absolute truth, you have to find and understand what to meditate about. Once you get it, you will be free. None of the masters understood this instantly; they all took time.

4. Even the antidote is released in its ground

Once we hear about absolute truth, or meditate on emptiness, we have the concept that everything is empty. We then grasp at the concept of emptiness, which in turn blocks us from resting in the absolute state. We need to free ourselves from the very concept of thinking of emptiness. The mind that thinks of emptiness is conceptual mind and will become a barrier to realisation. Investigate where that mind grasping at emptiness comes from in the beginning, in the middle where is this mind residing, and in the end where this mind departs to? Again, you will not find it. Emptiness is the natural state of mind. Absolute truth is beyond word and thought: no word can explain absolute truth and there is nothing about it that thought can comprehend.

We say 'completely free' or 'completely liberated' because there is nothing that holds you back. The great Indian master Nagarjuna stated that freedom or liberation is nothing but your mind freed from dualism. We need to let even the antidote, the concept of emptiness, be freed in its own place. Once it is free, simply rest in that state. There is nothing to fight or be confused about. It is a relaxed state of mind. If you have beliefs of solidness or emptiness, let them go. Don't genetically modify your mind by controlling, selecting or breeding these concepts. These beliefs and thoughts are simply passing memories.

5. Rest within the all basis, the essential nature

The all basis is the alaya, the essence. The simplest way to explain the alaya is as just mere awareness. Mere awareness means the eye sees a visual object, the ear hears sound, the nose can smell, et cetera, without the idea that 'this is form, sound, smell' et cetera. Once we label 'this form', 'this sound', and so on, we create thoughts, which then expand. For example, 'what do you think about this form? What do you think about this taste?' Then opinions form: 'I like this', 'I don't like that', or, 'it doesn't make any difference'. All gross thoughts come from this mere awareness, and distract the mind. Mere

awareness is not the problem: mere awareness is just seeing as seeing, just hearing as hearing. Mere awareness is a non-discriminating state of mind. A discriminating state of mind firstly will not understand what is emptiness, and, secondly, a discriminating mind is not the right foundation to meditate on absolute truth. For this reason, we must go back to the mere awareness, the non-discriminating mind that is neither grasping at anything, nor blocking or negating anything. The foundation to meditate on emptiness, the alaya consciousness, is free from rejection and invitation.

The alaya is non-grasping. It is mere awareness and clarity like a mirror or lake that accommodates reflections but does not discriminate. It is the principal mind which simply apprehends objects. It is open primordial awareness, the basis of all phenomena. The alaya is free from all elaboration. It's not the secondary mind, which describes objects and becomes the basis for grasping. It is free from the four extremes. It's also neither one nor separate. If we investigate, we can't find the existence of mind; but it isn't existent or not existent, it is not both existent and non-existent and it's not neither existent nor non-existent. When you rest in the alaya, simply rest in that state. Relax and meditate – there is no need to modify your mind. Leave it in its natural state, not proving or disproving anything. Absolute truth is the mind freed from grasping.

How do we put this into practice? First, we need to live an ethical life, listen to the authentic Dharma then contemplate what we hear. We need to familiarise ourselves by meditating on objectlessness. Then we will see that objective phenomena are not separate from the mind; they lack existence. All objects are none other than one's own mind. The external world is objectless. We will grow in certainty that appearance and reality are two different things. This truth will be your own truth, one that you have thought through and come to by yourself. Second, we will come to see that mind does not truly exist either. Subjective phenomena are not born, do not abide and do not cease. They are subjectless. If mind truly existed, we could show where it was in the past, where it is in the present and where it will be in the future. We would be able to say what colour and shape it is. If we reflect on the existence of mind, we will see it is unborn; it does not arise, it does not abide and it

does not cease. We need to familiarise ourselves with this by meditating on subjectlessness. This is the nature of mind. Third, you will realise that because of objectlessness and subjectlessness, everything is empty. You will have a wisdom mind that recognises objectlessness and subjectlessness and emptiness but this very antidote – thinking that everything is empty- needs to be analysed. That very antidote has become the main object to liberation. Where does this thought, this antidote, arise, where does it abide and where does it cease? It is conceptual mind and you are still grasping, this time at the antidote of emptiness. You need to analyse further. Now you have the right view.

The nature of mind is free from the four extremes. It is alaya, or mere awareness. There is no grasping, just mere clarity. If you keep going, one day there will be certainty about the view. You won't need to modify your mind. You won't need to prove or disprove anything. You will just leave your mind in its own natural state. Doing this again and again will help you to stabilise the view. This won't happen the first time or the second, you will have to repeat this again and again until you can stay in mere awareness, clarity without grasping.

6. In post-meditation, regard all beings as illusions

All perception is an illusion. After we meditate, all phenomena, animate or inanimate, are not other than my illusion mind. Others see things differently from you, showing that what we see has no independent existence. Other beings can't see what you see, non-humans can't see what you see. If we keep to the wrong view, we will not be free from our ignorance mind. It will keep us in samsara. Wisdom mind liberates us; the Dharma liberates us; but only you can use your wisdom mind.

This post-meditation point means that when you are not meditating, wherever we go, whatever we see, whether its animate or inanimate, whoever we meet, at that time, we remember that this mind is just illusion, it is not real. It can be useful to think: 'I'm watching a movie, or a magical show, nothing is really as I perceive it.' Nagarjuna taught that all the suffering we experience

comes from thinking everything is real. Between meditation sessions, you can be a conjurer of illusions.

In order to free ourselves from that suffering, one needs to realise that what we are seeing is not real. We need to constantly remind ourselves that whatever we see is an illusion. We will still experience pleasure and displeasure in our daily life, but with less intensity. We will regard the experiences of our lives in much the same way as we regard the after-effects of a bad or a good dream. When we have a nightmare, we are disturbed while we are dreaming. The moment we wake, it may still have some effect, but much less because we know it was a dream. Similarly, when you have a good dream it is very enjoyable, and you are attached to it; when you wake you can still feel enjoyment, but you don't become attached because you know it was a dream. If we treat every day of our life as we would a dream, we still experience pleasure and pain, but not unbearable pain and suffering. The enjoyment doesn't increase your desire mind, the pain doesn't bring you depression. People don't say, 'I'm depressed because I have had a bad dream.' Depression comes because we perceive things as real, and when we don't get those things we want, it leads to depression.

This completes the main practice on the ultimate or absolute bodhicitta.

Relative bodhicitta

7. Alternately practise sending and taking; these two should ride the breath.

8. Three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue.

9. In all your activities, train with these words.

10. Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself.

The main topic of the *Seven Points of Mind Training* is relative or conventional bodhicitta. Relative bodhicitta works for the good of all beings as if their good is your own. This main meditation has three parts: preparation, meditation, and post-meditation. The preparation is meditating on loving-kindness and compassion, which in Buddhism is based on wisdom. Loving-kindness and compassion arise out of this wisdom. When you generate genuine love to sentient beings, that mind is the creator of honest mind.

Conversely, the selfish mind creates the dishonest mind. The dishonest mind is like a drunk mind that is not in a position to see reality. To remove this drunk mind, we develop loving-kindness meditation.

Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is wishing all sentient beings to have happiness and the causes of happiness. Within the practice of relative or conventional bodhicitta, Shantideva said that if you want to help yourself and others, the ultimate way is to exchange oneself for others. With loving-kindness, the object is other sentient beings. While sentient beings sincerely wish for happiness, the reality is that, due to ignorance mind, they are constantly abandoning the cause of happiness. The ignorance mind sees something that is not truly the cause of happiness as the cause of happiness, and sees something that really is the cause of happiness as the cause of pain or discomfort. We also often confuse the condition with the cause of happiness, and fail to recognise the actual cause of the happiness. People think, 'I will be happy if I am rich, famous, or have a nice family'. Buddhism says all of these are mere conditions, not the actual cause to make you happy. There are many humans in the world who have everything but are not happy.

Buddha discovered that to have happiness, you need to have: a healthy mind, a positive mind, and a virtuous mind. Thus, the wish for others to have happiness and the cause of happiness is to wish for them to have the mind free from selfish desire mind, free from anger mind, ignorance mind, jealous mind, and from arrogant mind. In the absence of these, what is left is the clean and healthy mind: the real cause that brings us happiness. Not recognising this positive, healthy mind as the cause of happiness, people make this mind polluted and disturbed. The polluted and disturbed mind then looks somewhere else for happiness, but it is impossible to find. In this way, we continuously abandon the mind that would bring happiness, at the same time adopting the materialism which cannot make your mind healthy.

To practise loving-kindness is to sincerely wish others not to have material success, or to be famous, but simply wish them to have an honest mind, a

kind mind, a positive mind. These bring genuine happiness. We need to take baby steps with this. Think of one person who is most kind in your life. Our mother is the most kind of all sentient beings to us. You can think of your mother, whether alive or deceased. Remember her kindness to you and how hard it is to repay her kindness in your life. This is a method to train your mind in loving-kindness, a method that will help you love all sentient beings one day. Thinking these thoughts truly protects you from negative thoughts. Wish your mother to have the happiness of a higher precious rebirth, the happiness of self-liberation in arhatship and to ultimately attain buddhahood. The cause of happiness is to live a virtuous life. This will help to have a higher rebirth. A virtuous life and the realisation of emptiness will help you to attain self-liberation. These together with the realisation of all phenomena as empty leads to the attainment of buddhahood. Once you have established this loving-kindness to your mother, you can then move to your enemies and strangers and ultimately towards loving-kindness to all.

Compassion

Compassion is the wish to free all beings from suffering and the causes of suffering. To sincerely wish others to be happy, we must understand what makes them not happy. The thing that disturbs their happiness is mental, physical or emotional suffering. To be happy, we wish them to be free from suffering and the causes of the suffering. Without suffering and the cause of suffering, there is no reason not to be happy.

Suffering usually involves some change in what we experience, in our conditions, and at a deeper level, in the subtle and pervasive fact of our life. The suffering of change means that no matter where we find ourselves in life, no matter how pleasurable, this cannot remain as it is but is bound to change. The suffering of change is caused by our self-grasping mind. The suffering of conditions includes all the sufferings of birth, death, old age and sickness. It means that we will eventually be separated from those we love and not get what we want and get what we don't want. The suffering of conditions is caused by transgressions of the ten non-virtues. All pervasive suffering

means that we are always setting ourselves up for future suffering just by the very nature of creating karma for the future. All pervasive suffering is caused by a lack of understanding of emptiness and all phenomena.

It is important to know that mind is both the result and the cause of suffering. The mind experiencing pain is the result of previous negative mind, and is also the cause of new difficulties. When you feel pain, that mind is the unhappy or angry mind, and due to this negative state, it is creating new pain in the future. This one mind is said to be 'dualistic', playing the two roles of experiencing the result of the past, and creating the cause of the future. In this sense, I am the victim of myself.

In the Madhyamika, there is one verse on the Homage to Compassion:

Compassion alone is first seed for the abundant harvest of Buddhahood;

Then water for its own growth,

And finally, what matters as a state of lasting enjoyment –

Therefore, first I praise compassion

Chandrakirti Madhyamakavatara

We have such a strong sense of self. This is the root of ignorance. From this sense as a seed, the sense of 'my' grows- my family, my wealth, my culture. From this we attach to these notions. Life after life, we experience this illusion. Our ignorance mind is the dictator of our mind. We ask how can we be freed? The only remedy is the wisdom mind.

Buddhist compassion is not simply feeling sad because another is suffering. Buddhist compassion is being willing to help to remove that person's problems. Compassion is a heroic and very determined mind, with actions based on wisdom. It knows exactly why the person is suffering, and exactly what caused the suffering. It is based on awareness that you create the positive environment to help the person feel comfortable. This positive environment helps reduce the person's pain. Next you advise in a skilful and positive manner. Not saying 'you did wrong things, you created bad karma so now you suffer'. Instead invite the person to go out and do something good with you. In this way, this person does some positive. By just doing the positive things they can feel less pain, and later, may feel that doing something positive is valuable. The intention: 'I want to help this person overcome the suffering

and the cause of suffering’ is the compassion which can change someone’s life.

Compassion is a universal concept, however in general usage, it can leave the person feeling miserable or fatigued due to the extent of the suffering of others. That kind of compassion is not useful compassion. Buddhist compassion is very different to this and unique, as it is based on the wisdom mind. Once you understand compassion correctly, your mind is the right mind to develop it. That compassion can free you from the suffering and the cause of suffering, and gives you the power to help others to be free from suffering and the cause of suffering. It’s a very useful kind of mind, not an ineffectual compassion.

In the beginning our compassion will be a seed, in the middle the seed will germinate in water, in the end the seed will keep regenerating season after season. Remember that compassion eventually led the Buddha to turn the wheel of Dharma. This can happen for us too – we can begin by just remembering loving-kindness and compassion in our everyday life.

Relative bodhicitta - pith instructions

7. Alternately practise sending and taking: these two should ride the breath

This is the main part of the meditation called ‘tonglen’ that is, training in the two – giving and taking – alternately. ‘Lojong’ means mind training. It is important to cultivate the four turning away thoughts also known as the four foundations then loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta before you begin to practise this pith instruction.

Generally, we can explore mind training using the analogy of yoga. People often train in yoga because their body is stiff, and not flexible, which impairs the free circulation of blood and oxygen. Due to that they experience pain, and other physical and mental issues. Upon commencing yoga, they realise their lack of exercise caused the stiffness, and this caused their disease. The yoga training causes them to stretch and become more flexible; energy starts

to flow in the body, circulating blood and oxygen. The body starts to get healthy and helps the mind to become clearer.

Mind training is the same. At first our mind is the inflexible, stubborn mind which is tense, which then causes distress. This distress causes stress, then stress causes us mental anxiety. Mental anxiety then brings us fear. These lead one to another, and are the disadvantages of not training this mind. This ordinary untrained mind is a very unhealthy mind.

Regardless of how stiff or inflexible your body is, doing yoga can loosen it up. This is because the nature of the body is changeable, nothing is fixed. The same applies to the mind when we do the correct training. Sitting in meditation is not training the mind. We need to train in the things which make the mind stiff or stressed: such as selfishness, greed, jealousy. This is done through practising generosity, giving and taking, such as sacrificing your comfort.

Training of the mind in giving

When we know the benefits of generosity it helps us to understand the importance of practising it. Stinginess is the opposite of generosity. This is where we love something so much, we regard it as 'mine', and don't want to share it. However, when we investigate the object of attachment in terms of the amount of joy and pleasure it brings us, then compare that to how much worry and concerns we have associated with it, then we see that when there is such a strong attachment it brings us less pleasure and more worries. Thus, one identifies there is more disadvantage than advantage to stinginess. When you start giving, you find you have nothing to lose. Thinking and acting in this warm-hearted way towards others is more valuable than any object you think will bring you happiness.

With this awareness of the disadvantages of not sharing, and advantages of sharing, we can do exchanging meditation.

When Buddhists refer to generosity, it does not mean commonly understood actions such as giving money, food, support or advice to someone. Here, generosity is something that comes from your heart to give, or to make something different. For example, from your heart thinking 'this person

lacks food, I want to give’ or ‘my friend has a difficult personality, I want to give help so that my friend will have less troubles from this’. It helps to think of generosity as your heart, not the action or objects, which bring the most happiness.

You are not losing something when you give to others, you are actually gaining more out of it because this giving makes your heart healthier, and with this you naturally become a more contented, happier person. Understanding the value of this giving inspires and encourages you to give, rather than to minimise or stop giving things.

You can give anything – your wealth, body, whatever virtues you have committed past, present and future. You can imagine that these are put in front of you. If you use them well, this creates virtue; if not used well they can cause difficulty for yourself and others. You can offer your body to the guru to use virtuously. Under his advice and guidance use this body to help others. You will find that you will receive far more benefit from giving than the receiver gets from you. You can give your wealth. If you use your wealth out of desire, anger, jealousy, you create non-virtue. Instead, use your wealth to give to others to create virtue. If you practise generosity, you will increase your wealth so that others can get benefit out of it. Each sentient being has been one’s mother, father, friend, sibling. Remember this and train your mind mentally to be generous. This is good enough in the beginning, but when you become more experienced, you can actually volunteer or give your wealth.

Training of the mind in taking

The taking in exchanging meditation mind training is the opposite of what it is in normal culture. Our normal culture is usually wanting to have the good things for oneself, and get rid of our rubbish. Here it is the reverse: I am going to give all my good things to you and take all your rubbish to myself. Think of a mother who is so kind and caring that she always takes all the difficulties for herself, giving all her good things to her children; helping her children to be less unhappy and become happier makes that mother very happy. The difficulty she takes from them doesn’t make her less happy; that difficulty increases her happiness because she loves her children so much. To do this

meditation you need to love everyone in this way. When you love everyone, then whatever you do that makes them happy, makes you happy. This is the greatest happiness, genuine happiness. The Buddha said that when you bring others happiness, that happiness is greater than when you do something that makes you happy yourself. This awareness makes it is easier to do exchanging meditation.

Often the best place to practise giving and taking exchanging meditation is not in the temple. In your everyday life, there are so many people who need your help, and this is therefore the best place to do mind training. First you practise mentally exchanging self for others, then practically you experiment with doing small things, and prove that this works for you. You then slowly build up from there. For example, if you are on a busy train and have a seat, you stand and offer your comfortable seat to someone who is standing. Physically you have some more discomfort, but mentally you're happier because you did something nice. A little harder could be if you are at a concert, where you have a very good seat. You see someone who got there late and is disappointed they didn't get such a good seat. That is a good opportunity to practise exchanging meditation and offer your seat to that person.

From an attachment point of view it is hard to do because you planned and arranged to be early to get the best seat, and it's very hard to give that to someone else. However, if you can do it you will feel happier, because you may have lost the good seat, but you didn't lose your noble qualities, you actually gained a noble quality. When you compare the value of the noble quality with the seat, which is the more valuable? These things prove that giving your nice thing or your comfort doesn't mean you lose, it rather brings you more happiness. Similarly, taking others' difficulties doesn't make more difficulty for you, it actually makes you happier.

Helping others is not taking advantage of them. It is always a win-win situation. Others' misfortune is not the cause of your happiness; it is an opportunity to help them, and also yourself. Be aware of these opportunities when they arise so you can practise taking and giving – practise exchanging mind training. Shantideva said that even if the entire world became your

enemy, they could not hurt you as much as your own defilements. When you have difficulties with someone, stay nice and kind and others will ultimately change. Take all defilements into yourself and retrain your mind to defeat your own inner defilements. By taking all their worst aspects of body, speech and mind, you are becoming a better person. As a beginner, you can reflect and see the value of this practice then practise it mentally. Later you can take action in the world. It doesn't always have to be in the order of giving then taking, its best to do what is comfortable for you. Search for opportunities to practise exchanging self for others.

This pith instruction refers to our normal breathing inhalations and exhalations being used as the path to gain happiness and to free us from suffering through exchanging. On the inhalation, imagine all sentient beings, all the difficulties they are facing, and the causes of the difficulties. Imagine these as a dark cloud, which enters through your nostril, and absorbs into your heart. This practice can make us feel uncomfortable because it is different to how we normally do things. This discomfort goes when we understand the meaning of taking the negatives of others, and absorbing them into our heart. We know that all beings have many problems, all from the one root, which is self-cherishing, – the selfish mind which is always concerned about oneself. In taking meditation, you are taking others' negatives as medicine to cure this self-cherishing disease you have. Taking others' difficulties goes straight to the heart of your own self-cherishing.

These two should ride the breath

For instance, with a snake bite, you need anti-venom made from another snake's venom. This doesn't double the poison and kill you; the anti-venom neutralises the poison you already have in you. In the same way, your self-cherishing is the venom that kills you, but when you take in others' venom it neutralises your venom. When we understand it as medicine that is helping you, then you are giving yourself treatment rather than punishing yourself to make others happy.

The Buddha has never taught anything as the path to punish yourself. The Buddha's path must be a comfortable path, and your practice must

be comfortable. The comfortable practice and comfortable path will lead you to a comfortable result. An uncomfortable path can only lead to uncomfortable results. Here, taking others' uncomfortable things does not make us uncomfortable, rather it is destroying our own selfish mind. If you are caring, you won't be able to bear others' suffering. Eventually, you will feel happy that you can take their suffering. Bodhisattvas seek out difficult people as they give much greater opportunity to practise generosity, patience, and virtue.

On the exhalation think about all the good things that you have in your life, all the good things you will do in the future, imagine they come out from your nostril, and unconditionally give all this to the other. Again, this is opposite to what we usually do and many people are not comfortable with it. Analysed from a karmic point of view, you cannot give your good karma to someone else. If karma existed physically like an organ you could give it to someone. However, karma is not other than your mind, and it is not possible to give your mind to someone else. The karma (or cause) that you accumulate has the power to bring the result. Giving is your seed of happiness. The person you give to is the soil you are planting your seed in. In this way, in giving, you are not losing.

The thing that made Buddha fully enlightened was that he was giving everything for sentient beings. We are still in samsara, and even though we don't want to be suffering, we continue to suffer because we are not giving, we always want more. Now we gradually understand that giving brings you more, not less. Even from a social point of view, if you give, it brings you more friends. If you give less, you have less friends in your life. Thinking in this logical manner when you breathe out imagine all the good things, and offer these to the other. Breathing out all your virtues becomes the condition for you and them to attain buddhahood.

When you visualise giving and taking, the prime thing you need to identify is the state of the mind. Your mind must be a healthy mind for you to be able to give the best things to others, and take their difficulties to yourself. Remember a healthy mind is not creating trouble in your life, rather it is resolving your troubles. We see how it is going to work from the subtle point

of view, not the simplistic idea that, ‘Buddhism says exchanging is good for you, I must take in suffering and give away my happiness’. Practising taking and giving without correct understanding can leave the practitioner feeling overwhelmed and miserable.

Exchanging meditation is done out of loving-kindness and compassion. Loving-kindness and compassion are the recycling machine where you put in junk and it is transformed into something new and useful. Breathing into your heart others’ suffering crushes your self-grasping mind, your ego. When you breathe out your good qualities and circumstance, it destroys your attachment mind.

It is important to do exchanging in stages. In the beginning stages, you are mentally exchanging self for others. As you see the benefits you become more mature, then one day you really can enact taking others’ suffering and giving your joy to others.

8. Three objects, three poisons and three roots of virtue

We can use the three poisons of desire, anger and ignorance as opportunities to transform into three roots of virtue. In pleasant situations there can be attachment, in unpleasant situations, aversion and in neutral situations where we don’t connect with anything or anyone, ignorance.

The first poison is desire. Whenever we go out, we can experience beauty with the five senses. When meditating, we can observe the beautiful environment, but it can so easily become temptation, craving, indulgence. If we meet a person with whom we have difficulties, this can disturb our mind. Out of that arises aversion mind. Some other activities lead to neutral or indifferent feelings. In this situation ignorance arises. When these objects or situations arise, normally these three poison minds – of desire, anger or ignorance – are the creator of non-virtues. These three poison minds are obstacles to practising Dharma. We know Dharma is important but we miss the precious opportunity to study and contemplate it. By missing opportunities to hear the Dharma, we waste our precious human rebirth.

The desire mind, the first poison, can take away the opportunity presented

by our precious human rebirth. Desire mind is both the creator of non-virtues, and also the creator of obstacles. However, we can use this desire mind to free our attachment. Slavery to the desire mind is like living under a dictatorship. Gradually you come to see that you are a victim of your desire mind, then this awareness extends to all others. You see that they are victims of their desire minds and with this awareness, you develop compassion towards others. Your own desire mind becomes a representative of all other desire minds. You can then take their defilements, bring them to yourself and turn them into medicine mind. Mind training is a very intelligent method to train our mind. We don't need to get rid of this desire mind. Rather we use this desire mind as a path to free this desire mind. Now, desire becomes virtuous. Desire becomes a favourable condition to practise Dharma. It's a beautiful technique.

The second poison is anger mind. When anger arises, it creates non-virtues. Also, it's an obstacle to Dharma practice. Anger mind brings harmful thoughts. Motivates harmful speech and action. Harsh language arises from anger mind. Harmful actions such as killing, bashing, hurting arise. All this comes from anger mind. When you're angry, you're not in the mood to practise Dharma, loving-kindness, compassion or bodhicitta. With this awareness, look at the entire world: to some degree, we are all under the control of anger mind. Out of compassion, you bring their anger, their non-virtues to you. Use their non-virtue as the antidote to overcome your own anger. This way, anger helps you understand consequences, allows us to develop compassion. The fully ripened result is the hell realm. Now we wish others to be freed from anger. That is virtuous. Wish that non-virtue to come to you. When you're doing something to help others, that's practising Dharma. Turn your poison mind into medicine.

The third poison is ignorance. This manifests as coveting mind, wrong view, idle talk; they are created by ignorance mind. Look at others, and you will see that out of ignorance they make mistakes and create suffering. With this awareness comes compassion. Others are at the mercy of ignorance, as you are. You can now wish them to be free from ignorance. This way, your compassion is a way to overcome ignorance.

In the past, your lack of wisdom created non-virtues. Now Dharma,

wisdom, gives an opportunity to use these poisons to create wisdom mind and develop bodhichitta. The idea is not to run away from these three poisons but to transform them into virtues by arousing your compassion.

9. In all your activities, train with these words

Whenever you move, sleep, eat or walk, you can chant words from the sutras or shastras to help remind you of Dharma. Doing so makes us a better practitioner. When walking, it is good to chant two lines by Nagarjuna from The Precious Garland.

May the non-virtues of others ripen on to me.

May my virtues ripen in them.

Khenchen Appey Rinpoche always chanted the four noble truths of the reality of suffering and its causes and the cessation of suffering and its causes. You can also recite the four immeasurable thoughts of loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity. Chanting in this way leaves imprints in your mind that develops your practice, develops patience, and makes you a better person.

There is a story of a Kadampa master who meditated on impermanence. He realised life is uncertain: we never know when we will die. He really felt the reality of death and came to view life as meaningless if all we do is get caught up in busyness. We will not be able to take our family, friends, wealth, status or possessions with us when we die. He held the mala, chanting over and over again that the activities we undertake in this life are unnecessary, unnecessary, unnecessary. This freed him from samsaric activities to focus on the Dharma.

10. Begin the sequence of sending and taking with yourself

Some of us, even though we practise loving-kindness, are still not ready to exchange with self for others straight away. This doesn't mean your urge is not good enough. It just means that you are not quite ready. This pith instruction means that, in this situation, you can begin by practising exchange

with yourself. Once you've experienced mastery of this, you may be ready to apply this to others. So, begin with yourself.

Whenever you are distressed or uncomfortable, use your problems to make you stronger. Normally, distress and discomfort lets us down and makes us depressed, but with mind training we use this as a path to make us stronger. Whenever you're facing challenges and difficulties, at that very time think that through these difficulties you can bring all future problems into the present. May all the problems that you are going to face in the future come to you now. This way, the problem that you're facing now becomes meaningful for developing you on the path and as a result you will become stronger.

When you're comfortable, experience joy and pleasant feeling; when you're successful, don't grasp on it, don't cling to it, instead give it to the future. Think that the act of giving to my future lives will help me in my next life and in future lives. You'll see the benefit develop in you, and at that point you will develop fresh eyes for viewing your challenges. If doing this practice works for you, it will work for others. Eventually you'll be ready to exchange with all sentient beings. Exchanging self for others is the highest part of *paramitayana* or the vehicle of the paramitas. The paramitas lead one to buddhahood. It's a complete form of mind practice.

Point 3: Transforming adverse conditions into the path of awakening

- *11. When the world is filled with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of awakening.*
- *12. Drive all blame into one.*
- *13. Be grateful to everyone and everything.*
- *14. Seeing delusive appearances as the four kayas is the unexcelled protection emptiness gives.*
- *15. The best method entails four practices.*
- *16. Whatever you meet, instantly join it with meditation.*

11. When the world is filled with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of awakening

At times, people are in a very miserable, awful state. They feel there is no hope or light at the end of the tunnel, and everywhere they look they see darkness. At that point it is helpful to remember that you are not the only one experiencing a miserable time. In our modern society, we are often so busy doing our own things that we become focused on our own small world, and don't know what is going on beyond that. In this state, one's own problems are magnified, appearing huge. When you look beyond your world you see the many people with the same, or even worse, problems. In Buddhism, that awareness is a very powerful method to turn around depression. We accept

that we have to bear this discomfort, we cannot remove it; instead we use it for valuable and meaningful things by wishing all beings in similar or worse unbearable pain, that all their pain comes to oneself, and that they then be freed from their suffering. This turns your pain into compassion, and at that moment your pain lessens. This is because the pain does not exist separately from your mind, and when you turn mind into compassion, the compassion perceives your own pain to be much less. We call this opportunity to train your mind 'misfortune turning into the enlightenment'.

When we understand mind training all our stress, anxiety, worry and concern become very useful. For example, the moment you are stressed, you don't get caught up with it, instead remember how awful the stress is, how uncomfortable the feeling. Then think about the millions of others who are experiencing the same stress or worse, how awful it is for them. You can now genuinely wish that they 'may be free from their stress'. Now your stress has become a useful stress. It doesn't bring you more stress, rather that stress turns into compassion and is used to resolve your stress.

Similarly, if you have fear or anger, do not get caught up in that state, instead think about the millions of beings experiencing great fear or anger, may they be free from that state.

From a mind training point of view every disturbing feeling is fortunate as it gives us a reason to practise. If we have no experience of these things then there is little reason to practise. It is not the good things which make us perfect, it is the bad things which make us perfect. With this understanding, bad things are not necessarily bad, and it is often better to have bad things than good things.

Negative states of mind are usually obstacles to practise Dharma. Now, with the right skilful method, we can transform our circumstance into the path of enlightenment. The mind can be good and bad. Negativity and positivity are actually two sides of the same coin. If you don't like the head, turn to the tail. It's the same coin. If you have designed your mind through karma negatively, you will see the world in that way. If you have designed your mind through karma positively, you will see the world in that way.

There are two methods – the conventional or relative method and the

absolute or ultimate method

Relative bodhicitta

12. Drive all blame into one

This pith instruction of driving all blame into one may seem difficult from a mundane point of view but from a logical point of view, it is not so difficult. Whenever you have sickness, unhappiness, people gossiping, or backbiting about you, you're at rock bottom and you think nothing more can go wrong. At that time, in our culture, we blame everyone else. We think all problems are caused by others. If we don't analyse this attribution of blame to others, if we're not honest, it appears that way. But if you investigate it, you will see that while others may create the conditions of what you're going through, the cause of your problems is actually your own grasping mind. Chandrakirti stated in four lines in the *Madhyamikavatara*, that the main object for the yogi is to meditate to free grasping of self and phenomena. Grasping self brings suffering. Grasping phenomena leads us to samsara.

All difficulties we face, arise from grasping mind. So the main object of meditation of the yogi is to free the self from grasping mind.

Dharmakirti also said, in the *Pramanavarttika* shastra, his largest and most influential work, that when we don't have the concept of self for others, we have attachment to self, aversion to others.

All the problems of the world come from the self-grasping mind. The root of the problems in the world is self-grasping mind. When you realise this, you'll stop blaming others and the world for your troubles.

What is the self-grasping mind? From the gross point of view the self-grasping mind means self-cherishing, 'I'm most important among everyone. I want to be a winner. I want the highest position. I want success.'

The greatest demon that causes troubles for everyone is the self-grasping mind. It is limitless in that it can harm me, you and everyone. When we understand this, the demon doesn't scare us. With this awareness, don't blame, criticise, complain to anyone. Instead subdue the self-grasping mind.

This is mind training.

13. Be grateful to everyone and everything

We are used to blaming others who we see as troublemakers but these people generally create your success. Consider this from both a karmic and a social point of view. From a karmic point of view, you need to be a big thinker to be a Dharma practitioner. You need to think of the past and future as well as the present. You need to think of yourself as well as others. If you take the case of others, you can't find a single being that's never been kind to you at some time and very possibly countless times. It's almost impossible to repay their kindness.

From a social point of view, we are Mahayana Buddhists. The Buddhist part is I want to be free from samsara. The Mahayana perspective is that I want to attain buddhahood. Mahayana says that without sentient beings, it is impossible to attain buddhahood. From that point of view, sentient beings are extremely kind to us. They help us to attain enlightenment.

We all want happiness. Where will we get more happiness? It will happen when we practise bodhicitta to all sentient beings. Sentient beings give us the opportunity to practise Dharma and reach enlightenment. We need to recognise that nothing else compares, in bringing happiness. All this comes from other sentient beings. Realising this gives us a reason for respecting other sentient beings and gives us so much opportunity to reach buddhahood. When you reach buddhahood, there won't be any enemies in your mind, there won't be any discrimination in your mind. Anyone and everyone is very important to you. This is the opposite chant to the Kadampa master who said over and over again that the activities of this life were unnecessary, unnecessary, unnecessary. Here we need to say over and over, 'helping sentient beings is necessary, necessary, necessary'. Sentient beings are necessary to attain buddhahood. That's how we transform negativity into the path to enlightenment.

When you have an infection, it's painful. At that point, somebody cuts the infection out. It will be painful, and you might be angry with that person. Actually, it's not their knife, it's your wound causing the pain. Yet we blame them. As long as you are free from the self-grasping mind, no one can cause

you suffering. From this point of view, self-grasping mind is the cause of all problems. The Buddha was just like us, but through skilful means and wisdom over aeons he reached the point of no grasping where he could not be harmed or disturbed.

Ultimate bodhicitta

14. Seeing delusive appearances as the four kayas is the unexcelled protection emptiness gives

Negative circumstances are mere perceptions of our delusion mind, like a nightmare. When you're awake, none of it is true. When I change negative mind into positive, it stops the nightmare. You might awaken from a dream of elephants coming to destroy your house. When you awake from this illusion mind, they don't exist to harm you. We need to turn negative mind into positive mind and awake from the dream to realise it was all delusion.

We might ask where illusion mind comes from? Illusion mind is itself mind. Now look at the nature of illusion mind, investigate. You won't find where it came from. So it's unborn. This unborn nature of our mind we call the dharmakaya. It's nothing other than the unborn state of mind. It is nothing whatever, but everything arises from it.

If it is unborn, it cannot cease to be. Mere awareness never stops or sleeps. It's always there in the play of energy in which the enlightened mind manifests. We call it *sambhogakaya* (unceasingness). As a bridge between the formless and the material world, sambhogakaya is the nonmaterial spiritual reality.

Although everything is by nature empty, it is not mere empty space. The play of phenomena appears endlessly like reflected images in the mind. This is *nirmanakaya* which never stays in the same place but it transfers, goes from one place to the next place. There's no permanent address. From their limitless compassion the buddhas manifest in any physical form in response to what beings need. They turn the wheel of Dharma. The nirmanakaya is like a boundaryless doctor.

The inseparable union of the three kayas is called the *svabhavakaya*.

If we understand deluded perceptions as the four kayas, undeluded wisdom

is simply present. If you use illusion in this right way, it's another method to introduce you to the nature of mind. Once you cleanse your false mind, transform it into the four kayas. The most powerful protector of mind is to realise absolute truth or emptiness. Once you know the true nature of illusory perception, that all is empty, there's no predator that harms you. It's our ignorance that causes all this drama. Once you free yourself from these dramas, you're free. We need to meditate constantly to put our difficult situations to good use.

Special practices

15. The best method entails four practices

There are four practices that are the best of methods – accumulation, purification, offerings to evil forces and offerings to Dharma protectors.

The first is the practice of accumulating merits. We accumulate merit physically, vocally, and mentally.

The guru can literally transform your life, making you a better person. In this sense, the guru is more precious than your parents. The guru is a messenger delivering Buddha's message to you. He is the messenger of the Triple Gem. Hence you accumulate merit. The more time you invest, one day you'll get all qualities of the Triple Gem.

The second practice is purification. We have regret for our destructive actions and we resolve to improve. Then we try to restore through bodhicitta and the final is the power of the antidote, to think of emptiness or chant et cetera.

The third practice is to show respect when beings harm you, then they'll stop harming you. Shantideva said, we're so scared of negative spirits, but these demons, if you're really kind to them, they become your supporters, they can help you.

The fourth practice is to make offerings to Dharma protectors. When you practise Dharma, you will find obstacles but you can make an offering, or chant to the mahakala protector.

16. Whatever you meet, instantly join it with meditation

Whenever you face difficulties, you might feel low but it's better to think that there are so many like me facing these challenges. Usually, when you suffer, you think, 'poor me'. And you hurt yourself. When you face such a challenge, remember this method. 'I'm not the only person in this world facing this challenge. Some are worse off than me'. Use your own challenges to understand others' feelings and wish, 'May they be free from this state'.

Point 4: Blending mind with practice throughout your life

- *17. Practise the five powers, the condensed heart instructions.*
- *18. The Mahayana instructions for transferring consciousness at death are the five powers, the way you behave matters.*

What to do during your daily life

17. Practise the five powers, the condensed heart instructions

With this instruction, the main topic is conventional bodhicitta and the focus is on exchanging self for others. To do Dharma practice in our daily lives we need to ensure the teaching originates with the Buddha. Valid teachings come from Buddha to Atisha Dipamkara through the shastras; they will not deceive us, they will give us the result. When we practise Dharma not originating from the Buddha, the teachings will not be valid. Invalid Dharma will bring us invalid results. Therefore, as we have fortunate karma to meet the Buddhadharma in this life, make sure we don't make any mistakes. Because this is very rare and quite miraculous, it's worth putting extra effort into the Dharma taught by the Buddha and then by the Tibetan masters.

There are five benefits, strengths or powers that we should use to practise bodhicitta:

POINT 4: BLENDING MIND WITH PRACTICE THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE

1. *Power of the benefit or strength* – Buddhadharma is based on strength and you will receive the benefit from practice according to your mental strength. If you proceed according to the Dharma, at the highest level, you will receive benefit from now until enlightenment. At the next level, if that's too hard, you will receive benefit until the next life and the next, till you die – it might be from now until tomorrow. The important thing is to pledge that you will not part from the Dharma and never part from bodhicitta.
2. *Power of familiarisation* – the more you practise, the more bodhicitta will embed into your personality and your behaviour. Familiarisation just means getting used to bodhicitta. If you are doing retreat on the seven point mind training, you would do three or four sessions on it a day. If you are not on retreat, try to remember bodhicitta several times a day. It's important not to let your mind wander whilst you are doing this. Afflictions of the mind such as jealousy, hatred and ignorance come naturally. We are so used to these afflictions, but we have to change our habit such that it becomes the effortless habit of the two bodhicittas.
3. *Power of the white seed* – We always say to generate and cultivate bodhicitta but it's difficult to generate bodhicitta in us. We have to create the right conditions, so each day, we can do the Seven Limb Prayer – prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing requesting and dedication. We can also meditate on the four immeasurables. These practices create the right conditions to have bodhicitta born within us. We also need to purify all obscurations by remembering the ten non-virtues and practising remorse, the antidote is resolution, and reliance on the refuge.
4. *Power of the antidote* – Every single suffering that we have faced or will face from the past, present or future is created by the self-grasping mind. We create this self-grasping mind through conceptual thought. When we look into this mind and body, we think it is 'I' or 'me' but this is ignorant mind or conceptual mind. Once you know this mind, you come to see that there is no self and you will understand the nature of mind, the nature of bodhicitta. Now this conceptual mind becomes absolute bodhicitta. That's mind training. Once you know the nature

of mind and bodhicitta, you won't be grasping. Conceptual mind and bodhicitta are like two sides of the same coin. One can be flipped onto the other side.

5. *Power of the aspiration of prayer* – This power or strength means that we pray that from now on, until I attain full enlightenment, may I never part from the true bodhicitta.

What to do at death

18. The Mahayana instructions for transferring consciousness at death are the five powers, the way you behave matters

From the teachings of the *paramitayana*, we know that these five powers are summed up in bodhicitta. The five powers can occur in two stages. One can occur in our lifetime and the other at the time of death. *Phowa* is a Tibetan word meaning your consciousness. Phowa is the transference of consciousness from this life to the next. This pith instruction shows how. Timing is very important for phowa. The power of the white seed shows us that it is time to do it when you are very certain of death, in a few days perhaps or when the doctor tells you that you will die soon. It's a little like you are renting a house from a landlord but he says you need to move in two weeks. You would start packing straight away and look for a new place. It's time to give away all your material possessions. As a Dharma practitioner, you need to determine how you can invest your material wealth in a proper way. Whatever you have, you give it away. If you offer it to the guru, there is no self-interest, because the money will go to benefit all sentient beings, directly and indirectly, to gain enlightenment, such as through an offering to the Triple Gem, publishing a Dharma book, sponsoring sangha. You could invest in a charitable organisation. Of course you wouldn't give it to a guru who wants a Mercedes and lives in a waterfront house! The main point is not to be attached to your wealth. There is a Vinaya sutra that tells of a monk who only possessed one begging bowl, but he was very attached to it. In the next life, he was born as a snake in the bowl. It's the same if you are attached

to this body.

The power of the aspiration of prayer can be invoked by praying ‘may I never part from the two bodhicittas’. The power of the antidote reminds us that at the time of death we go through so much fear and uncertainty. We think death is the cause of many things. But the reality is that death is just an event. Death does not cause the fear and uncertainty. When we investigate for ourselves, we will find that it is our self-cherishing mind that causes us problems now and at countless times in the past. We will also face the same problems countless times in the future. It is time to abandon the self-grasping mind. The power of benefit means that you train yourself to remember the two bodhicittas now and in the future, in the bardo and in the next life. Then you will be guided to the best future life and continue in the Dharma teachings. The power of familiarisation means that you need to get used to the two bodhicittas throughout the day and night and particularly before bed. We have an old Tibetan saying that when you’re poor if you don’t build a toilet, you won’t know where to go to the toilet. It’s the same with bodhicitta. If you don’t practise the two bodhicittas at the time of death, it’s hard to remember. Before you go to bed, remember bodhicitta mind, then one day death will come and because you are familiar with it, bodhicitta will be easy to remember. It’s much easier if you have done it throughout your life and it is a habit.

Once you have gathered these five powers and you are almost at the time of death and about to enter the bardo, you will have little mental or physical energy left. It’s best to die in a meditation posture. If you can’t sit in the meditation posture then lie on the bed lion style on your right side, right hand down and ring finger on your left hand closing your left nostril. Your left leg will be straight; you can practise exchanging meditation at that time. When breathing out, think of all the virtue you have committed in this life, send it out to all sentient beings so that they get benefit. When you inhale, bring all the suffering of dying people to you so that they become part of your path to enlightenment. Eventually your mind will slow down, your breathing will slow and you will think that this dying is all your own perception free from the four elaborations. It is only your mind. Exhale at death and your

death becomes a path to enlightenment. I recommend that you practise this when you go to sleep, then it will be familiar when death comes. Your life becomes meaningful.

There is a story about Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje. When he lay dying, he thought 'May I be born helpful to sentient beings. May I practise the Mahayana and practise tonglen to attain enlightenment'. Another story says that when Buddha was in hell, he wanted to help his fellow weak companion and shield him from the blows of the demons. He took his suffering onto himself and, as a result, he gained a higher rebirth and ultimately enlightenment. Another story is of a son who committed negative karma and subsequently wanted to bring all the pain of others onto himself. As a result, he eventually attained enlightenment.

All mind training must be based on true bodhicitta. As long as whatever we do is done to attain buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings, then everything is included, nothing is missing. People are often very busy trying to participate in everything, afraid they will miss something. This means they don't miss any of the junk out there, but they do miss the very important things. By practising bodhicitta, you miss nothing, you're getting all the Buddhadharmas.

You don't need to be very educated or knowledgeable to be a Buddhist practitioner, or commit your whole life to going into retreat. Simply bring your mind to true bodhicitta as often as possible. We can start by trying to remember bodhicitta three times a day: once in the morning, once in the middle of the day, and once in the evening. Bodhicitta mind is the best of all the great minds, and this bodhicitta mind is nothing other than your own mind. We are so fortunate because we have a choice to live in the miserable state of mind, or in the greatest state of mind - bodhicitta.

Point 5: How to evaluate your mind training

- 19. *All the Buddha's Dharma converges on a single point.*
- 20. *Of the two witnesses, attend to the principal one.*
- 21. *At all times, rely only on a joyful mind.*
- 22. *If you can practice even when distracted, you are well trained.*

This requires us to examine our reason or purpose for practising Dharma. The reason you take medicine is to remove sickness or disease. Dharma practice is the medicine to remove the self-grasping mind, because all our trouble and disease comes from the grasping at self. The only thing to uproot this self-grasping mind is one's own Dharma practice. Listening to the teachings, reciting prayers, or closing your eyes with no thoughts is not the Dharma. The Dharma to uproot self-cherishing is wisdom. In order to practise wisdom, you first need to develop wisdom.

So much of what we do is fighting for self. If this self truly existed then it is worthy of fighting for. During Christmas, Santa Claus is everywhere, but if you research history, there was never any Santa Claus, there is nothing more than a made-up story. This self we are so attached to is like a Santa Claus. When you search you can't find it anywhere. Not finding self is wisdom. This is the truth we need to familiarise ourselves with, and the familiarising process is Dharma practice.

This is not simply negating, saying 'I'm Buddhist, I'm not accepting self'.

Buddhism is scientific: you research where the self is. Researching and not finding self anywhere is realising the absolute nature of the self. With familiarisation, attachment is not going to arise, as there is no creator of the self-interest. Similarly, aversion is not going to arise based on a thought that someone hurt me, because as there is no me, there is no one to be hurt. There is no worry about getting sick or going to die, as there is no 'I' to die, 'I' has never been born. We see that many problems we create associated with 'I' are naturally going to resolve once you have awareness of this nature of the self. The purpose of Dharma is to discover the absolute self.

19. All the Buddha's Dharma converges on a single point

There have been so many teachings of the Buddhadharma – the vows, the 84,000 discourses, the Tripitaka – but they all have one purpose, which is to tame the self-grasping mind. Different schools emphasise different aspects of taming the mind. The Hinayana use discipline to avoid desire and they have many vows to free the grasping mind. They try to provide no indulgence to their minds. The Mahayana talk about loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. When you constantly think about others there is no chance to think about yourself. In Vajrayana, you always remember the deity, whatever practice you do, and therefore, there is no time for the self-grasping mind. The sole purpose of all Dharma practice is to tame the self-grasping mind.

In all my years in the west, people have gained peace as a result of the Dharma, but this does not mean they are able to understand and tame their self-grasping mind. We are surrounded in the west by an environment that emphasises self-importance. Buddhism comes along and tells you the self is not important. This is very hard for most people. When you investigate the Dharma without bias, with your logic and scientific mind, you will be able to understand the Buddha's teachings. You need to ask yourself 'Is the Buddhadharma reducing my self-grasping mind. Is it helping me or not?' If you practise but don't tame your self-grasping mind, then this effort is wasted. Even though there are thousands of different types of medicine, they all have one purpose, to remove disease. All of the 84,000 discourses have this one

purpose: to free the self-grasping mind. The purpose of mind training is to free the self-grasping mind. If we stay with the importance of self, with the wrong view, we are literally grasping at nothing.

Dharma is the wisdom to understand absolute truth. It is not about methods of hearing, reading or chanting. Maybe you can meditate for a long while but it doesn't mean you are a better Buddhist. The real Dharma is the wisdom to understand absolute truth, and its only then you won't be grasping. You can check you are progressing by the way in which you have more or less of a self-grasping mind. If your self-grasping has diminished, this will prove to you your Dharma is progressing.

20. Of the two witnesses, attend to the principal one

You are the best person to judge your progress. What others see of you are your speech and action, but only you see your own mind. Others might infer from your actions in the same way that if they can see smoke they infer there is fire, but only you know it is there. It is the same thing with your speech and actions. Nagarjuna in a letter to a friend said there are three types of persons; he likened them to mangos. One might be green on the outside and look unripe but inside is ripe. This person seems dishonest but actually is honest. Another person looks yellow and orange on the outside but inside they are not ripe. Similarly, some people seem nice but they really are not nice. The third type of person is ripe on the outside and ripe on the inside.

Speaking and actions don't necessarily represent you. What represents you is your mind. The only person who can see your mind is you. You are the most reliable witness of yourself. So you must check to see if what you are doing is genuine. One master advised that when you are in a social environment check your speech and actions. When you are by yourself, check your mind. This means whatever you do, do your best. You can't do better than that. Always check yourself.

21. At all times, rely only on a joyful mind

Normally when facing difficulties and obstacles, our mind becomes disturbed, but from the perspective of mind training all these difficulties become the perfect conditions to practise. When you are going through a difficult time, rather than feeling self-pity, use the opportunity to practise exchanging oneself for others. Remind yourself that you are so fortunate to have this method to turn misfortune into fortune, to turn this opportunity into joy. It's a little like cow manure, which many of us think is very smelly, but if you grow plants and vegetables organically, cow manure is one of the best fertilisers. It will help you grow a healthy garden.

The idea is to turn negative circumstances into bodhicitta mind so that you can gain enlightenment. Milarepa faced many challenges. At first he misused these opportunities, but later, after receiving a blessing from Marpa, he practised turning misfortune into bodhicitta mind to gain enlightenment for the sake of all. Milarepa learned how to transform his difficulties.

22. If you can practice even when distracted, you are well trained

When people criticise or blame you, it's easy to get upset. But once you practise mind training, you see that criticism and blame are great opportunities to increase bodhicitta mind. You can think to yourself that many others have received criticism and you can now take all their criticism to you. Equally, if someone praises you, don't get attached to their praise, instead, you can offer it to others. You will gain great equanimity. It's a little like a professional jockey. His or her horse can run very fast but they never fall off. Similarly, great meditation practitioners, because they are always vigilant, can always keep on the right path.

Point 6: The commitments of mind training

- 23. *Always train in the three basic principles.*
- 24. *Change your attitude and be natural.*
- 25. *Don't speak ill of others' shortcomings.*
- 26. *Don't ponder the affairs of others.*
- 27. *Work with the stronger afflictions first.*
- 28. *Send away any hope for results.*
- 29. *Avoid poisonous food.*
- 30. *Don't be so constant.*
- 31. *Don't get riled by critical remarks.*
- 32. *Don't lie in ambush.*
- 33. *Don't strike at weak points.*
- 34. *Don't transfer a yak's burden onto a cow.*
- 35. *Don't aim to be the fastest.*
- 36. *Don't act with a twist.*
- 37. *Don't turn gods into demons.*
- 38. *Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your happiness.*

23. *Always train in the three basic principles*

As a Mahayana practitioner, especially a Vajrayana practitioner, we have three vows. These vows are the path. If you don't damage these principles you will eventually gain liberation. If you do damage these principles, you will create obstacles to the path. The first principle then is to preserve the three vows. The three vows are pratimoksha, bodhicitta and mantrayana.

Pratimoksha is the list of rules governing behaviour for Buddhists. *Prati* means towards and *moksha* mean liberation from cyclic existence. The lay vows are to refrain from killing, stealing, false speech, sexual misconduct and using intoxicants.

As humans, there are many ways to create problems, however all the mistakes come from these five. There are three aspects to killing: to kill out of ignorance, to kill out of desire, and to kill out of anger. If you commit killing, understand the state of your mind. A very destructive mind leads to destructive action. Without destructive mind and action you are not going to take anyone's life. It is also impossible for the destructive mind to create something good. It's not logical. With this reasoning we understand why we should not commit any killing.

We need to be very careful with stealing, as stealing can be direct or indirect. In the west people say that there are no free things, that everything belongs to someone, so whenever you take something without permission you are stealing. This can include ideas, wealth, time, opportunity, possessions, and fame. Until we think of it correctly, we think we have gained some benefit when we take something for free. The reality is while you may have what you want, is that thing going to make you happy or not? Again, the state of the mind that steals is not the positive mind, it is the negative mind. And something good, like even mundane happiness, is not going to come from negative actions. For this reason, we should not steal.

The third is sexual misconduct, which is being dishonest with your partners. Some people think they can have relationships with many people, and while they may get some satisfaction, in the end they destroy their morality, their ethical conduct. When there is no ethic or morality in your life, there is no

value in you, like a car without an engine. Ethical behaviour is the source or foundation from which all our happiness comes, so when there is a lack of ethical behaviour, happiness is not going to come.

Fourth is not telling lies. This does not refer to a 'white lie', but to negative lies, or to taking advantage of someone. Here again is the idea that happiness cannot come from negative mind. Not only that, people lose trust in the person who lies, and look down on them because of their propensity to lie. When you tell lies you downgrade yourself, so therefore you should not tell lies.

The fifth is intoxication with drugs or alcohol. These days we have alcoholic drinks with a very low content of alcohol. I do not have the power to authorise you to have these drinks, but my logic mind says if you drink really low alcohol content drinks that do not affect your mind, then it is safe. When intoxicants affect the mind there is a danger. We have all seen that a person who is a nice person when they have no alcohol can change if they are drunk. Their personality changes and they make lots of mistakes, and every mistake has a consequence. So therefore, by not drinking you avoid making mistakes and experiencing their consequences.

These five are the mind training of samaya. If you keep these five precepts every day you can consider yourself to be a good human being, and that is sufficient to be happy.

The second principle is bodhicitta which is the mind that strives towards loving-kindness and compassion for the benefit of all sentient beings. It is the wish to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. The third principle is the mantrayana – the commitments made during the esoteric aspects of Vajrayana Buddhism.

24. Change your attitude and be natural

Sometimes we are patient with loved ones and impatient with others, but this is not mind training. The mind training practice is for the benefit of all sentient beings, not just for your loved ones. Your own discriminating mind is the cause of your suffering in this instance. The aim of Mahayana is to

free all beings from suffering, so the training is to treat all sentient beings as equal. We don't need to change our behaviour or our speech. We need to change our mind. You may speak nicely and act friendly but you don't have the necessary qualities. If you change your mind you will naturally change your speech and actions. This instruction means not to put too much effort into changing your speech and actions, rather put effort into changing your mind.

25. Don't speak ill of others' shortcomings

It's always important to remember that we are Mahayana practitioners and so we must help all others. We need to be mindful at all times not to make negative comments about others. If you say such things, you will break your commitments, create your own suffering and contribute to others' suffering.

26. Don't ponder the affairs of others

It's best not to criticise others but rather to help others. Even if you see mistakes, it's your mind that sees these mistakes. Buddha was free from this perception. If you feel irritated by others' actions, you could say that this person helps you to see your negative mind or jealous mind.

27. Work with the stronger afflictions first

Always examine yourself to see if you have a desire mind, a jealous mind. If you can't see this for yourself, ask a friend. They have to be honest. Sometimes you have to examine yourself. Other times, ask others. It's like when you are ill, sometimes you know what is wrong and at other times you have to ask a doctor. When you ask others about your afflictions, it's good to think that they are your doctor. When you have found the symptoms, use your Dharma training. If you think of all the 84,000 defilements, it's a cause for humility. The Buddha fixed himself, others did and you can too, but first work with your strongest defilement.

28. Send away any hope for results

As a Mahayana practitioner, don't expect any benefit in this life. Mind training is to attain buddhahood, not just to return to samsara. We should not aim for benefits in this life or the next but rather we should aim for enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

29. Avoid poisonous food

Good food helps health but if mixed with poison, it can take your life. Bodhicitta if practised in the right way can lead to enlightenment but if you grasp onto it, you can be reborn in samsara. Don't grasp onto bodhicitta, but remember that bodhicitta itself is absolute. It is the alaya consciousness, mere awareness, that is free from the four extremes of existence.

30. Don't be so constant

When someone causes you difficulties, don't hold it in your mind. When you hold negativity in your mind you are not helping yourself.

31. Don't get riled by critical remarks

Don't allow yourself to get enraged.

32. Don't lie in ambush

This means that when someone who we dislike or who has hurt us experiences a misfortune, we take advantage of the situation and launch our attack. This we need to avoid.

33. Don't strike at weak points

Here we use strategies to strike at others' vulnerabilities but, with this faulty logic, we end up hurting ourselves more. We undermine our own integrity with this action.

34. Don't transfer a yak's burden onto a cow

If you give some work or worries to someone who is unable to handle it, you can harm them.

35. Don't aim to be the fastest

We don't have to compete against others to reach our goal. We can simply achieve our goal by ourselves. This is the precept of non-competitiveness.

36. Don't act with a twist

If we do something with an ulterior motive, we are acting with a twist. It's best to be genuine without worrying if our actions are viewed in the way we want them to be or have been acknowledged in the way we want.

37. Don't turn gods into demons

Don't turn your practice into a pretext for thinking you are special or better than others. It's the complete opposite to what is intended.

38. Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your happiness

All these pith instructions have a similar theme and that is not to get riled by critical remarks and don't take revenge. It's best not to practise for short term benefit and not to compete among Dharma practitioners or anyone else. Be straight and honest with others. It's best not to use others to carry your load

POINT 6: THE COMMITMENTS OF MIND TRAINING

as they might not be as strong. If you do mind training in the wrong way, it will bring more harm than benefit. When you are virtuous, don't be arrogant as this will cause you obstacles. This is why we dedicate all our virtues to others.

Point 7: Guidelines for mind training

- 39. *All practices should be done with one intention.*
- 40. *One practice corrects everything.*
- 41. *At the start and finish, an activity to be done.*
- 42. *Whichever of the two occurs, be patient.*
- 43. *Maintain these two, even at the risk of your life.*
- 44. *Train in the three difficult points.*
- 45. *Take up the three main causes.*
- 46. *Pay attention that these three things do not diminish.*
- 47. *Keep the three inseparable.*
- 48. *Train impartially in all areas; deep, pervasive, and constant training is crucial.*
- 49. *Always meditate on what aggravates you.*
- 50. *Don't be swayed by outer circumstances.*
- 51. *This time practice is central.*
- 52. *Don't make mistakes.*
- 53. *Don't fluctuate.*
- 54. *Train with your whole heart.*
- 55. *Free yourself through examination and analysis.*
- 56. *Don't make a big deal about it.*
- 57. *Don't let being irritated tie you up.*
- 58. *Don't overreact.*
- 59. *Don't expect a standing ovation.*

As an overview of how these precepts apply to us, we come from a culture and society in which there is a lot of competition. Then when we come into Dharma, you must always remember what kind of intention we had at that time. The good Dharma student maintains that intention all the time, regardless of how long they have been in the Dharma. Many people first come to Dharma really believing Dharma can help them. They genuinely take refuge. But over time they use Dharma as a weapon to harm others: feeling like a better student than others, judging others as not good enough, competing, gossiping, et cetera. This point commits us not to compete. Think of those who know more than you, who have practised longer than you, or who sit longer than you. Thinking in this manner destroys this self-defilement, this defilement mind. The only purpose for the mind training is to defeat this defilement mind. As these are the precepts of the mind training, if you use Dharma to make others feel bad then you are breaking the precepts.

39. All practices should be done with one intention

The main training is exchanging self for others. In Vajrayana, the ground to purify is the cherishing of self and therefore we will be caught in samsara, the purifier is the actualisation of bodhicitta which can take out the sufferings of others by loving-kindness, compassion and wishing for enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. This becomes the fuel for the flame of bodhicitta. The result is that eventually we will defeat self-grasping mind. As a practitioner, we have so many daily activities that are useless or even harmful. All these activities can be turned into mind training practice. We can be mindful throughout the day and use triggers to remember to exchange oneself for others. For example, when consuming food we can offer the pleasant taste of the food to others. If the taste is unpleasant we can accept others' unhappiness and anger. This is the ground to purify. Here the purifier is the taste which becomes the condition to practise exchanging self for others. Another example could be dressing where you dress up nicely but then start thinking 'Oh aren't I proud'. Instead when you wear beautiful things you can say 'May all beings have this beauty'. If you don't like what you are wearing,

remember all others who can't wear what they want for whatever reason. Yet another example is when travelling, give your enjoyment to others, thinking, 'may all others have this enjoyment'. Each and every activity becomes the condition or cause or path of exchanging self for others.

40. One practice corrects everything

When we do mind training practice, exchanging self for others, it's generally not going to be a smooth ride. There'll be obstacles, difficulties, challenges. Normally, this negative condition discourages us, but this pith instruction encourages us to view this very obstacle as a path, to think about how we can use it as a path to gain enlightenment.

Sometimes, there are many obstacles. Obstacles can discourage and demotivate us – desire, anger, jealousy, ignorance can all cause us to stop practising Dharma altogether. At that moment leave it all sitting there while you think of countless others and remember that some are the same, some are better and some are worse – but you won't find one single samsaric being who doesn't have any issues with life. Everyone experiences obstacles. In the past, if I try to fight this negative feeling, it makes me feel worse. Now, with mind training, you can turn it around by saying to yourself, 'I am so fortunate to hear this mind training. I can use this path to develop loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta. I don't need to be disappointed. I can do this exchanging'. In this way, just knowing that when you face difficulty you can use the path to help others, is the antidote to remove your difficulty. Even if you're not successful, at least you know, in future you can change this.

41. At the start and finish, an activity to be done

When you awake and when you go to bed, remind yourself to cherish others more than yourself. Normally we think only about ourselves when we wake and go to sleep. Most of us are not living in a dictatorship but actually we are under a very ruthless dictator, the self. We will remain in suffering if we try to keep pleasing the self. Every samsaric being is stuck in samsara's suffering

because they are trying to please the self. If we look at the great bodhisattva masters for inspiration, they were determined to please others rather than please themselves. The result is that every bodhisattva and buddha has great happiness for others. You can decide that today you are going to do more to help others. Even though others will gain from your help, you will get more benefit out of it than others. Keep checking yourself during the day and before you go to sleep; ask yourself how much success or failure you have had in your effort to wish others to have more than yourself. If you have had success, wish for others to have success in that way as well. If you didn't do well, don't blame yourself, simply promise to do better tomorrow. Purify it. Confess it. Then go to sleep. Even if you do one good thing, that's good enough! Remember Buddha didn't just sit on a cushion and achieve enlightenment, he spent three countless eons practising like this. It's not a lottery, where, if you close your eyes, one day you'll reach enlightenment. You must begin from today by doing just these simple things.

42. Whichever of the two occurs, be patient

Sometimes success in your career or home life can carry you away so much that you abuse or disrespect others. It's important not to fall into this situation. If successful, be grateful and feel more responsibility to work towards the benefit of others. If unsuccessful, remember you are a human being and no matter how you feel, your situation is nowhere near as bad as those in the hell realm or the hungry ghosts or even those sentient beings in the animal realms. Remember to wish that they be free from that terrible state. Remember how the Lord Buddha helped his fellow sufferer in the hell realms. As a result, he gained enlightenment. Read about the bodhisattvas who often had terrible lives, but used their terrible situation to exchange themselves for others.

When you're unsuccessful, you have low self-esteem, you're discouraged. At that time, there's no need to think, 'I'm the lowest of the low'. At that very moment, remember that we are human beings. Compared to animals' suffering, hungry ghosts' suffering, hell beings' suffering, our terrible situation is nothing compared to theirs. Use this terrible condition to bring others'

terrible condition onto me, 'May they be freed from that terrible state'.

43. Maintain these two even at the risk of your life

If you practise virtue it will lead to a positive result. If you have joy in others' success, practise kindness towards others, and have the right view, if you tell the truth, and try to reconcile divisions between others, and practise meaningful and skilful speech, if you practise generosity and protect and rescue life and are a faithful person, then you can expect to experience the positive result of these actions.

However, if you practise non-virtues, it will lead to suffering. If you covet others' success, have harmful thoughts towards others, and have wrong views, if you tell lies, use idle talk and divisive and harsh words, if you kill or steal or practise sexual misconduct, you can expect to have a negative result. Your refuge vows and bodhicitta vows should be kept even at the cost of your life. Dharma is hard to find so we need to cherish the Dharma, which is our virtuous mind.

Life is impermanent. Once we've lost life, we'll find it again. It's not that difficult. But the Dharma is very hard to find. We should cherish the Dharma as more important than our life. I'm not saying build a library, or a temple. Dharma is your positive, virtuous mind. This virtuous mind is more positive, more valuable, than your precious life.

44. Train in the three difficult points

At the beginning, it is difficult to remember the antidotes that can be used for defilements; in the middle it is difficult to stop the defilements; in the end it is difficult to uproot the defilements. In the beginning the difficulties caused by defilements can overpower us. Desire, arrogance, anger, jealousy and pride can be so hard to overcome. Strength, vigilance and mindfulness are needed as the antidotes to the defilements. In the middle, you begin to see that defilements and antidotes are two sides of the same coin. Defilements can be turned around. In the end, if you remain vigilant, defilements never

arise. In the beginning, we must keep ethical by adopting the virtues. In the middle, we can stop the defilements with shamatha and in the end, we can uproot defilements with vipassana. Nagarjuna said in a *Letter to a Friend*, we are not heroes if we try to defeat others but we are heroes when we defeat our own defiled mind. We need all three – ethics, shamatha and wisdom – to practise mind training.

45. Take up the three main causes

There are three chief causes of taking up the Dharma. The first is the right teacher or guru, one who teaches faithfully according to the sutras and shastras. The second is faith in the Dharma and the third is the right conditions or facilities to practise the Dharma – that is, the right place to stay, the right food to eat and the right clothes to wear. If you have all these, you can rejoice that you are so fortunate. Wish that all others could gain the same fortune to take up the Dharma.

46. Pay attention that these three things do not diminish

Faith and devotion are needed to achieve enlightenment. Drogmi Lotsawa said that if you have the mind of faith, even if your guru is wrong, then you can still gain enlightenment. Enlightenment comes about through your genuine and deep devotion. Your faith might degenerate to the guru, or you might degenerate in your practice in mind training and the heart of mind training – which is exchanging self for others, the highest and complete practice. Your vows might degenerate – with pratikmoksha, where you do not practise the ten virtues; with bodhicitta, where you give up on other sentient beings; and with mantrayana, where you do not practise seeing every being as the deity, and hearing every sound as the Dharma and all action as the concerted effort of the bodhisattvas.

Honour the treasure. The guru is the lord of the treasure. One must have genuine devotion and respect for the guru. In olden times, a Tibetan asked a question of her guru: ‘Why are there so many meditators in Tibet, but not

many gain realisation?’ The guru said, ‘That’s true. The reason is, Tibetans don’t have respect and devotion for their teachers.’

Sakyapandita said, if you look at a sadhu, you may notice their physical appearance – messy hair, smoking marijuana, they look a bit dodgy, a bit strange – but they are someone who has devotion to see and respect a yogi, they will gain liberation. It’s a little like the western saying, never judge a book by its cover.

If you have faith and devotion, you will achieve three things. If not, you will not.

Domilosova said, even this teacher may commit non-virtues and end in the hell realms. But if you always think the guru is like the Buddha, you’ll get the Buddha’s blessing.

47. Keep the three inseparable

Body, speech and mind are to be kept together.

Body, speech and mind – all three lead to right conduct. Practise the virtues. When your mind parts from the virtues, your mind is negative, also your speech and body.

48. Train impartially in all areas; deep pervasive and constant training is crucial

The objects of mind training are both animate and inanimate, it is offered to all without discrimination. It is pervasive in that we wish happiness for all others. We engage in positive action in mind training; we don’t just wish to train the mind.

Deep, pervasive and constant training is crucial.

When you do mind training, the object is animate and inanimate things. You need it to be pervasive. When you see a nice place, wish every place is a nice place for others. When you see an unattractive place, wish every place is a nice place for others.

Exchange not just in thinking, but in actions. Whenever there’s an

opportunity, try to do a little bit.

49. Always meditate on what aggravates you

Whoever provokes resentment, you need to turn them into a VIP. Think that they are like your heart, 'As much as I love myself, I love them'. If you think at night a ghost has frightened you, really it's your mind that has frightened you. The main cause of suffering is your mind. You need to change your own mind.

Sometimes, people cause us difficulties. When you're at home, think of that person. Think of how their action is causing negative karma to themselves. Thinking this will allow you to generate love, compassion, bodhicitta, towards them. Then you're not seeing them out of anger or negative thoughts, but with love, compassion, and bodhicitta.

When you don't have this love, compassion, and bodhicitta, but you're selfish or angry, then you'll only see how they'll hurt you.

Do exchange. Take their misery to you, bring all your good fortune to them.

We talk about doing exchanging meditation to help others but in the beginning, it makes you perfect. Because of that, in future, you'll help them to perfection.

50. Don't be swayed by outer circumstance

Sometimes you might think you need favourable circumstances to practise Dharma. You can use these thoughts as the condition to mind train. When you think you don't have the facilities to practise the Dharma, think how others don't have the facilities. Offer the facilities to them in your heart.

51. This time practice is central

We now have a precious human rebirth but it is sad when we think how much time we have wasted. We must leave this life with the treasure of the Dharma. How can we collect this treasure? We must not waste this opportunity to

practise helping others rather than self-cherishing. Practise what your teacher has taught you and practise compassion.

From beginningless time until now, how many times have we had precious human rebirth? There's no way we can count them. All this time, all these form aggregates, this planet is not big enough to contain it. Think of all the steps wasted. This time, we have a chance, we have the knowledge. We've met great masters, Sakya Trizin, the Dalai Lama, it's not easy. Just hearing the name of the Buddha, you gain merit. Just hearing the name of Dharma, you need to have had so much merit. Within the Dharma, we have found Mahayana teachings. So we have found four rare things. This is far more precious than any precious object.

This is the right time to practise Dharma. We are on a treasure island. Make sure we don't leave empty handed. Leave with a bagful of treasure at the time of our death.

The most important practice is exchanging self for others.

52. Don't make mistakes

There are six mistakes or wrong practices that the Dharma practitioner can make:

1. To not accept your circumstances or to be intolerant by seeking the perfect conditions for practice. The practitioner if their circumstance is not perfect may easily give up and go back to the easiness of samsara.
2. To not have a sincere wish to practise the Dharma. Here you are looking for a short-term benefit not a long-term outcome.
3. To not experience bliss with Dharma and to wish for worldly success.
4. To have compassion for those who are poor but not for those who don't practise.
5. To help others to mundane success but not give the real help that eases defilements.
6. To feel joy at others misfortune but not to rejoice in their virtues.

Don't engage in the six wrong practices.

53. Don't fluctuate

Mind training should not be based on how you feel on a particular day. It's not appropriate to take your medicine on the days you feel like it; you need to take it every day to get well. The Dharma has this requirement to end your suffering.

54. Train with your whole heart

Don't hesitate with mind training practice.

All mind training is self-development, to make yourself a better person. You are your own object of meditation.

When thought comes, when you say something, when you act, check what you're going to do. If it is against the points of mind training, it won't help you. You must review your own thoughts, speech and action at the gross level.

If your life is very busy, it will take longer, you need to analyse more: 'If I keep thinking, saying, doing this, where will I end up'.

If you don't look after yourself, there's no one else out there who will. Others may say, 'I'm here for you', but what they can do is limited. Even if Buddha is in front of you, what he can do is very limited.

You must take full responsibility for your own life. Don't examine others. You should examine yourself. That's more important than what others do.

55. Free yourself through examination and analysis

Liberate yourself by examining and analysing at the gross and subtle levels. Examine yourself to free yourself. Don't judge and examine others. You are your own doctor. If you're perfect, you're in a position to perfect others. If not, you're not.

56. Don't make a big deal out of it

When you do good things, don't boast and don't expect anything out of it. If you do you are really saying by this that you want others to see you doing it and to affirm your importance. The more you build yourself up in your own self-identity, the more you will have troubles in the future.

57. Don't let being irritated tie you up

Don't be small minded or sensitive. If the way that another looks at you or upsets you, train yourself to understand that you are not the centre of the universe. If you think you are the centre, you will develop bad thoughts, speech and action towards others. We live in a self-jungle where we are constantly thinking, 'What about me'. This can only lead to suffering.

If you always think about 'me', you're letting yourself down. Therefore, you should try not to be sensitive.

58. Don't overreact

Don't do something because others think you are great and you want to be a Dharma star. The real cause of happiness is in doing things for others.

59. Don't expect a standing ovation

Don't expect others to praise you.

When you do good things for others, make sure, you don't do this because they'll say, 'You're great, thank you'. Then you're not being genuine. You're doing it to prove you're important for them. You're trying to be famous, to be a Dharma superstar. You're making a mistake; others are not the cause of your happiness. The cause of happiness is unconditionally helping others.

Don't rely on others to make you happy. When you help them, do it genuinely out of love and compassion.

Concluding verses

*This essential elixir of instruction,
Transforming the five kinds of degeneration
Into the path of awakening,
Is a transmission from Serlingpa.
Having awakened the karmic energy of previous training
I was moved by deep devotion;
Therefore, ignoring suffering and criticism,
I sought out instruction on how to subdue ego-fixation.
Now when I die, I'll have no regret.*

These concluding verses are from Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, who wrote the text that these commentaries are based on.

