

# Part One: The Preparation

## 1. Making Life Meaningful

*Now that I have this great ship (boat) , a precious human life, so hard to obtain,  
I must carry myself and others across the ocean of samsara.*

*To that end, to listen, reflect, and meditate*

*Day and night, without distraction, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Making Life Meaningful" emphasises the profound importance of utilising the rare and precious opportunity of a human life to achieve enlightenment, not only for oneself but for all sentient beings. The central metaphor is that of life as a "great ship" or "boat" capable of carrying oneself and others across the treacherous "ocean of samsara," the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth characterised by suffering.

### Key Themes:

#### 1. Precious Human Birth:

- The passage begins by highlighting the rarity and value of a human life, particularly one with the right conditions for practicing the Dharma. This includes being born in a place where the Buddha's teachings are accessible, having the physical and mental faculties to practice, and possessing a natural inclination towards the Dharma. Such a birth is considered exceedingly rare and offers a unique opportunity to achieve liberation from samsara.

#### 2. The Imperative of Practice:

- Given the preciousness of this human life, the passage stresses the urgency of dedicating oneself to Dharma practice. If we waste this opportunity, it may be incredibly difficult to regain in future lifetimes. The only time we can be sure of is the present moment, so it is crucial to begin practicing now.

#### 3. The Practice of Bodhichitta:

- The text introduces **Bodhichitta**, the altruistic intention to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, as the ultimate objective of this practice. It stresses that our goal should be not just personal liberation, but the liberation of all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara. This aspiration requires dedication to listening to, reflecting on, and meditating on the Dharma, day and night, without distraction.

#### 4. Listening, Reflecting, and Meditating:

- The passage outlines a three-step process for making life meaningful through Dharma practice:
  1. **Listening:** Studying and absorbing the teachings of the Buddha, whether through reading, attending teachings, or other means of learning.
  2. **Reflecting:** After acquiring knowledge, one must contemplate and deeply think about the teachings; questioning and reasoning through them until they are fully understood. Reflection ensures the teachings are not accepted blindly but integrated with one's own reasoning and experience.
  3. **Meditating:** Finally, the teachings and reflections must be internalised through meditation, where they are assimilated into one's being, transforming knowledge into direct experience and realisation.

#### 5. The Ultimate Goal:

- The ultimate goal of these practices is to attain enlightenment, which is seen as the only truly worthwhile achievement in life. The passage stresses that without a firm determination to be free from samsara, all other efforts, such as meditation or prayer, are in vain. A practitioner must cultivate a strong desire to escape the sufferings of samsara, using the methods taught by the Buddha to do so.

#### 6. The Four Noble Truths:

- The passage references the Buddha's first teachings, the **Four Noble Truths**, as the foundation for understanding the nature of suffering and the path to liberation. The

Four Noble Truths outline the existence of suffering, its causes, the possibility of its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation. These truths urge practitioners to renounce worldly concerns and focus on liberation.

### **Conclusion:**

"Making Life Meaningful" is a powerful reminder of the precious opportunity that human life offers for spiritual practice and liberation. The passage encourages practitioners to seize this opportunity by dedicating themselves to the path of the bodhisattva, aiming not only for their own enlightenment but for the liberation of all beings. By listening to, reflecting on, and meditating on the Dharma, one can transform knowledge into wisdom and practice into realisation, making this life truly meaningful in the pursuit of the ultimate goal; enlightenment.

## **2. Abandon Attachment, Aversion and Ignorance**

*In my native land waves of attachment to friends and kin surge,  
Hatred for enemies rages like fire,*

*The darkness of stupidity, not caring what to adopt or avoid, thickens—  
To abandon my native land is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Abandon Attachment, Aversion, and Ignorance" explores the deep-seated mental and emotional habits that bind individuals to samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth characterised by suffering. It emphasises the need to transcend these habitual patterns, which are rooted in the three poisons: attachment, aversion, and ignorance.

### **Key Themes:**

#### **1. The Nature of the Three Poisons:**

- The passage begins by addressing the three core afflictions that keep individuals trapped in samsara: **attachment** to friends and kin, **hatred** for enemies, and the **ignorance** or "darkness of stupidity" that prevents clear understanding of what should be adopted or avoided. These poisons are particularly potent in familiar environments, where habitual relationships reinforce these negative emotions.

#### **2. Leaving the "Native Land":**

- "Native land" in this context symbolises more than just a physical place; it represents the familiar, habitual responses and mental patterns that we cling to. The passage suggests that to progress on the spiritual path, one must metaphorically "leave behind" these ingrained habits of attachment, aversion, and ignorance. This does not necessarily mean physically leaving one's home but rather transforming the way one interacts with familiar people and situations.

#### **3. Understanding Attachment:**

- The passage makes a clear distinction between love and attachment. Attachment is self-centred and based on the desire for personal happiness, whereas love is selfless and wishes for the happiness of the other, regardless of personal gain. Attachment is likened to grasping tightly, whereas love is described as holding gently, akin to cradling a day-old chick with care. This analogy highlights the need to cultivate a non-clinging, compassionate attitude toward others.

#### **4. The Challenge of Habitual Reactions:**

- The passage acknowledges the difficulty of changing habitual reactions, especially with those we know well, such as family and close friends. These relationships are often steeped in long-standing patterns of behaviour, making it challenging to see others clearly without the lens of past judgments. To overcome this, the text advises stepping back and viewing people afresh, without preconceived notions, and listening to oneself speak to become aware of unskillful patterns.

#### **5. Lojong Practice (mind training):**

- The teachings of **Lojong** are highlighted as a means to cultivate skilful responses in place of habitual, unskillful ones. The practice involves consciously examining and transforming one's reactions, especially when they are rooted in attachment, aversion, or ignorance. This process is likened to creating a new pathway in the mind; a road

that must be traveled repeatedly to become established.

**6. The Difficulty of Change:**

- The passage emphasises that changing deep-seated mental and emotional habits is challenging but possible. It compares this effort to forging a new path in a forest, where the grass initially springs back after each step, but over time, the repeated effort creates a clear road. Similarly, with consistent practice, new, skilful ways of thinking and responding can replace old, unskillful habits.

**7. The Role of Self-Responsibility:**

- The text underscores the importance of personal responsibility in this transformative process. While teachers can guide and encourage, ultimately, the work of changing your heart-mind lies with you. The Buddha's teaching that change is possible and that individuals must actively pursue it is highlighted as a central message.

**8. Transforming All Experiences into Practice:**

- Finally, the passage encourages viewing all experiences, even those involving difficult people or situations, as opportunities for practice. By changing one's attitude and responses, everything can become a help rather than a hindrance on the spiritual path.

**Conclusion:**

"Abandon Attachment, Aversion, and Ignorance" teaches that the key to spiritual progress lies in transforming deeply ingrained habits of attachment, aversion, and ignorance. By metaphorically leaving behind these habitual responses (particularly in familiar relationships) practitioners can cultivate a more compassionate, clear-minded approach to life. The passage emphasises the importance of consistent effort, personal responsibility, and the practice of Lojong in this transformative process, ultimately leading to liberation from the suffering of samsara.

### **3. Renunciation – Benefiting from Solitude**

*When unfavourable places are abandoned, disturbing emotions gradually fade;  
When there are no distractions, positive activities naturally increase;  
As awareness becomes clearer, confidence in the Dharma grows—  
To rely on solitude is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasise the transformative power of solitude and renunciation in the practice of a bodhisattva. The text advocates withdrawing from distracting environments and dedicating oneself to deep spiritual practice, highlighting the profound benefits that arise from solitude and focus on the Dharma.

**Key Themes:**

**1. Renunciation as a Foundation:**

- The foundation of this practice is renunciation; letting go of attachments and distractions that hinder spiritual progress. Renunciation is about both leaving behind physical environments and also involves an inner transformation; letting go of mental and emotional habits that bind one to samsara. This process involves recognising what in our lives is counterproductive to spiritual growth and choosing to abandon it in favour of practices that cultivate positive qualities and support the Dharma.

**2. Abandoning Unfavourable Places and Influences:**

- The text discusses the importance of abandoning "unfavourable places," which are not just physical locations but also environments and company that foster negative emotions such as anger, jealousy, and attachment. By avoiding these influences and seeking out solitary places or environments conducive to spiritual practice, one can more easily cultivate positive qualities. The influence of the company we keep is significant, and associating with those who share a commitment to the Dharma helps reinforce one's own spiritual aspirations.

**3. The Importance of Solitude:**

- The text emphasises that living in solitude (whether physical or mental) allows for the fading of disturbing emotions and the growth of positive qualities. In solitude, one is free from the distractions of worldly attachments and aversions and obligations of daily life,

which are often reinforced by interactions with others. By stepping away from these influences, the mind can become more serene, self-controlled, and clear, leading to a deeper understanding and confidence in the Dharma.

- In solitude, one can concentrate on taming the mind, identifying and eliminating defects, and cultivating inherent good qualities. This practice brings both immediate benefits and also accumulates spiritual merit that will influence future lives, leading to continued progress on the path to enlightenment.
- The sages and yogins of the past are cited as examples of those who sought out solitary places to deepen their practice. In solitude, they were able to focus entirely on the Dharma, leading to a more profound understanding and transformation. The text suggests that even a short period spent in a quiet, solitary place can lead to significant spiritual progress, such as replacing animosity with a desire to benefit others and developing a strong sense of impermanence.

#### 4. **The Transformation Through Regular Practice:**

- The text highlights the importance of consistent, regular practice, even if it is only for a short time each day. This regularity builds spiritual momentum, allowing for the gradual transformation of the mind. Over time, this steady practice can shift one's perspective from being caught up in the relative truth of worldly concerns to developing a profound certainty in the absolute truth of the Dharma.
- Reflection and meditation are emphasised as crucial aspects of the practice. Learning the Dharma is the first step, but it must be followed by deep reflection and meditation to truly internalise the teachings. As one progresses in these practices, the true qualities of the Dharma become clearer, leading to a natural decrease in the pursuit of worldly activities and a stronger focus on spiritual growth.

#### 5. **The Urgency of Practice:**

- The text conveys a sense of urgency, reminding practitioners that the time to practice is now, before the opportunity is lost. Distractions are ever-present, and if one allows time to slip by without engaging in Dharma practice, there will be regret at the time of death. The importance of making each moment meaningful through Dharma practice is underscored, as this is the path that leads away from samsara and toward liberation.

1. **Contemplating our precious human life so that we are grateful for our existence.**
2. **Contemplating impermanence and death so that we seize the opportunities of this life right now.**
3. **Contemplating karma (the law of cause and effect) so that we understand that our every action impacts ourselves and others.**
4. **Contemplating the suffering of cyclic existence (samsara) so that we are no longer entranced by worldly things and want to escape samsara forever.**
5. **Contemplating bodhicitta and helping all sentient beings out of samsara.**

#### **Conclusion:**

The text underscores the transformative power of solitude and renunciation in the practice of a bodhisattva. By abandoning unfavourable places and distractions, and by dedicating oneself to solitude and focused spiritual practice, one can diminish negative emotions, cultivate positive qualities, and deepen one's understanding of the Dharma. Regular practice, even in small amounts, is emphasised as crucial for steady spiritual progress. The text also highlights the urgency of practicing now, while the opportunity exists, to ensure that one's life is meaningful and directed toward liberation from samsara.

## **4. Reflecting on Impermanence**

*Close friends who have long been together will separate,  
Wealth and possessions gained with much effort will be left behind,  
Consciousness, a guest, will leave the hotel of the body—  
To give up the concerns of this life is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse stresses the central Buddhist teaching that everything in life, including our closest

relationships, wealth, and even our own bodies, is impermanent. This reflection on impermanence is essential for turning the mind toward the Dharma and away from the distractions of worldly life.

### **Key Themes:**

#### **1. The Nature of Impermanence:**

- The text emphasises that everything in life, from relationships to material possessions, is transient. Friends and family members will inevitably part ways, and all the wealth and possessions we accumulate will be left behind when we die. The body, described as a temporary hotel for consciousness, will eventually be abandoned as we move on to another existence. This recognition of impermanence is a powerful tool for breaking attachments to worldly concerns and reorienting our lives toward spiritual practice.

#### **2. Impermanence as a Motivation for Dharma Practice:**

- Reflecting on impermanence helps practitioners shift their focus from the fleeting nature of worldly pursuits to the lasting value of Dharma. Worldly concerns bring only suffering and disappointment, both in this life and the next. By understanding that all phenomena are impermanent and devoid of true, substantial existence, one can reduce the preoccupation with material success, relationships, and other temporary aspects of life. Instead, this understanding should inspire a deeper commitment to Dharma practice, which offers a path to liberation from the cycle of samsara.

#### **3. The Impact of Impermanence on Human Life:**

- The examples provided in the text, such as the changing seasons, the transient nature of our bodies, and the unpredictability of death, underscore the reality that nothing in life is stable or permanent. This understanding helps to dissolve the illusion of permanence and encourages practitioners to live with an awareness of the fleeting nature of existence. The text also reflects on the regrets that people often have at the end of their lives, particularly about the time spent accumulating wealth or pursuing status rather than focusing on what truly matters; relationships and spiritual growth.

#### **4. The Urgency of Practice:**

- The recognition of impermanence creates a sense of urgency in spiritual practice. Since death can come at any moment, without warning, the time to practice Dharma is now. The text reminds practitioners that the only thing we can take with us at death is our karmic imprints; the habitual mental patterns we have cultivated through our actions. Therefore, it is crucial to use the present moment to engage in positive actions and Dharma practice, as these will determine the quality of our future lives and our progress on the path to enlightenment.

#### **5. Practical Advice for Living with Awareness of Impermanence:**

- The text offers practical guidance on how to integrate the awareness of impermanence into daily life. This includes starting each day with the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings and ending the day by reflecting on one's actions, confessing any negative deeds, and dedicating positive ones to the welfare of others. The story of the Brahman Upagupta, who tracked his thoughts with black and white pebbles, illustrates the importance of mindfulness and the possibility of transforming one's mind through consistent practice.

### **Conclusion:**

This passage emphasises the importance of reflecting on impermanence as a means to deepen one's commitment to Dharma practice. By recognising the fleeting nature of all aspects of life (relationships, possessions, and even the body) practitioners are encouraged to shift their focus from worldly concerns to spiritual growth. The awareness of impermanence fosters a sense of urgency in practice, guiding individuals to live meaningfully and to prepare for the inevitable transition at death. Through consistent reflection and mindful practice, one can cultivate the qualities necessary for liberation from samsara and ensure that life is lived in alignment with the Dharma.

## 5. Valuing Good Friends

*In bad company, the three poisons grow stronger,  
Listening, reflection, and meditation decline,  
And loving-kindness and compassion vanish—  
To avoid unsuitable friends is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the profound influence our relationships have on our spiritual path. The central message is that the company we keep can either support or hinder our progress in practicing the Dharma, developing positive qualities, and ultimately achieving liberation.

### Key Themes:

#### 1. The Influence of Company on Spiritual Growth:

- The text highlights that just as a crystal takes on the colour of the cloth it is placed upon, we are deeply influenced by those we associate with. Suitable friends, who embody qualities like compassion, kindness, and a focus on spiritual practice, naturally inspire us to develop similar virtues. In contrast, unsuitable friends, who are immersed in worldly distractions and negative behaviours, can amplify our own negative emotions (such as hatred, attachment, and ignorance) while diminishing our commitment to Dharma practices like listening, reflection, and meditation.

#### 2. The Dangers of Bad Company:

- Associating with unsuitable friends is compared to being led by a bad captain who steers his ship onto the rocks. Such friends both distract us from our spiritual goals and also erode the positive qualities we may have cultivated, particularly loving-kindness and compassion, which are central to the bodhisattva path. Over time, the influence of these negative associations can lead to the growth of the three poisons (greed, anger, and ignorance), causing a decline in our spiritual practice and an increase in suffering.

#### 3. Importance of Selecting Friends Who Support Dharma Practice:

- The text advises that we should seek out and associate with those who share our values and commitment to the spiritual path. Although these friends need not be Buddhists, they should be good people who embody qualities like integrity, honesty, and kindness. Being in the company of such individuals helps reinforce our own virtues and encourages us to continue our practice with greater dedication and joy.

#### 4. The Role of Spiritual Friends in Deepening Practice:

- Authentic spiritual friends are those who, like us, are devoted to practicing the Dharma and are detached from worldly concerns. Their example serves as a powerful motivator, helping us to see the inherent negativity of attachment and hatred and to develop a more profound love for all beings. Such relationships are essential for maintaining and deepening our practice, as they provide a supportive environment where positive qualities can flourish.

### Conclusion:

This teaching underscores the critical role that our friendships and associations play in shaping our spiritual journey. By avoiding unsuitable friends who distract us from the Dharma and by seeking out those who embody and inspire virtuous qualities, we can create a supportive environment that nurtures our spiritual growth. This conscious choice of companions helps us to avoid the pitfalls of worldly distractions and to stay focused on the path to liberation, cultivating the qualities necessary for realisation of enlightenment.

## 6. Relying on Spiritual Teachers

*Through reliance on a true spiritual friend one's faults will fade  
And good qualities will grow like a waxing moon—  
To consider him even more precious  
Than one's own body is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the profound importance of finding and cultivating a relationship with a true spiritual teacher on the path to enlightenment. The text underscores that such a teacher is not merely a guide but a vital source of inspiration, wisdom, and transformation, helping to

eliminate faults and cultivate positive qualities.

### **Key Themes:**

#### **1. The Role of the Spiritual Teacher:**

- A true spiritual teacher is seen as indispensable for spiritual progress. Through the guidance of a teacher, one's faults gradually diminish, and positive qualities, like compassion, loving-kindness, and wisdom, flourish. The relationship with a teacher is likened to the waxing of the moon, where positive qualities grow steadily under their influence. The teacher's role is to provide personalised guidance, ensuring that the disciple stays on the correct path and avoids common pitfalls in spiritual practice.

#### **2. The Teacher as a Living Example:**

- The teacher is a living embodiment of the Dharma, someone whose actions, speech, and thoughts are perfectly aligned with the teachings. They serve as a constant reminder of what is possible on the spiritual path and inspire their disciples by their example. This is why the teacher is considered more precious than one's own body, as they provide the means to attain liberation, which is far more valuable than any material possession or even life itself.

#### **3. The Importance of Faith and Devotion:**

- Faith in the teacher is emphasised as a crucial element of the path. Without faith, even the most profound teachings may not be effective. The text stresses that faith in the teacher opens the door to receiving their blessings and allows the disciple to fully benefit from their wisdom and guidance. This faith is not blind but is based on careful examination and the recognition of the teacher's genuine qualities and abilities.

#### **4. The Process of Finding and Committing to a Teacher:**

- The text advises that finding a true teacher requires careful consideration and discernment. One should listen to accounts of different masters, observe their qualities from a distance, and only commit to one in whom you have complete confidence. Once this commitment is made, the disciple should serve the teacher with devotion and diligently apply their instructions. The relationship between teacher and disciple is thus built on mutual respect and a shared commitment to the Dharma.

#### **5. Transformation Through Association with the Teacher:**

- Just as ordinary wood takes on the fragrance of sandalwood when placed in a sandalwood grove, so too does the disciple absorb the positive qualities of the teacher through close association. This transformation is gradual and profound, leading to elimination of ignorance and cultivation of wisdom. The teacher helps you navigate complexities of the spiritual path, avoiding unnecessary detours and mistakes.

#### **6. The Practical Benefits of a Teacher's Guidance:**

- The teacher provides practical advice that saves the disciple time and effort, helping them avoid the common mistakes that many make on the path. The teacher's guidance is seen as essential for making steady progress, especially in the early stages of practice. Without this guidance, the disciple may struggle unnecessarily, much like a blind person without a guide.

#### **7. The Teacher as the Embodiment of the Buddha:**

- The teacher is viewed as the embodiment of the Buddha, and thus, devotion to the teacher is seen as devotion to the Buddha himself. This view reinforces the importance of maintaining a deep, unwavering respect and commitment to the teacher, as it is through this relationship that the disciple can achieve enlightenment.

#### **8. Cherishing the Teacher Above All:**

- The ultimate practice of a bodhisattva involves cherishing the teacher more than oneself or anyone else. This level of devotion is seen as the root of all spiritual accomplishments. By viewing the teacher as a real buddha and maintaining constant devotion, enlightenment is brought within reach.

### **Conclusion:**

The teaching emphasises that reliance on a true spiritual teacher is not just beneficial but

essential for those on the path to enlightenment. The teacher acts as a guide, protector, and living example, helping the disciple to eliminate faults, cultivate positive qualities, and make steady progress on the path. This relationship, built on faith, devotion, and mutual respect, is the cornerstone of the bodhisattva's practice and the key to ultimate liberation.

## 7. Going for Refuge

*Whom can worldly gods protect*

*Themselves imprisoned in samsara?*

*To take refuge in the Three Jewels*

*Who never fail those they protect is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasised the crucial role of taking refuge in the Three Jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) on the path to enlightenment. This practice is portrayed as the essential entry point into the Buddhist teachings and a fundamental step for anyone aspiring to transcend the suffering of samsara and achieve liberation.

### Key Themes:

#### 1. The Need for True Refuge:

- People instinctively seek refuge in something that they believe will protect them from suffering and bring happiness. However, many turn to worldly gods, powerful figures, or material possessions, which are themselves trapped in samsara and cannot offer true protection. The text argues that only the Three Jewels, which are completely free from the bonds of samsara, can provide a refuge that is reliable and effective.

#### 2. Understanding the Three Jewels:

- The Buddha is described as the ultimate teacher, having realised the path to enlightenment and displayed the qualities of wisdom, compassion, and ability in their fullest form. The Dharma is the path itself, the teachings that guide one toward enlightenment. The Sangha comprises those who follow the Buddha's teachings, providing companionship and support on the spiritual journey. Together, these Three Jewels offer a comprehensive and unerring path to liberation.

#### 3. The Role of Faith in Taking Refuge:

- Faith is presented as the cornerstone of taking refuge. Without deep faith, the act of taking refuge is likened to planting a burned seed that can never sprout. Faith opens the heart and mind to the blessings of the Three Jewels and makes the teachings effective. There are different levels of faith (vivid, eager, confident, and irreversible) each representing a deeper commitment and understanding of the path.

#### 4. The Benefits of Taking Refuge:

- Taking refuge in the Three Jewels provides protection for the mind by offering methods to transform adverse circumstances into opportunities for spiritual growth. This practice helps to diminish the inner poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance, allowing the practitioner to connect with their true nature and progress toward liberation.

#### 5. The Refuge Precepts:

- After taking refuge, there are specific precepts to observe. Practitioners should avoid taking refuge in worldly gods or powerful people, abstain from violence, and avoid associating with those who live in a way that contradicts the Dharma. On the positive side, they should respect representations of the Buddha, honour the Dharma by treating scriptures with reverence, and respect the Sangha, including all fellow practitioners.

#### 6. The Universality and Depth of Refuge:

- The practice of taking refuge is universal within Buddhism, serving as the gateway to all teachings, whether in the Sutrayana, Mantrayana, or the ultimate teachings of the Great Perfection. It is not just a formal ritual but a profound commitment that should permeate all aspects of life. Practitioners are encouraged to remember the Three Jewels in all circumstances, whether they are experiencing joy, suffering, or danger.

#### 7. The Importance of the Teacher:

- The text also highlights the importance of the teacher, who embodies the Three Jewels



and provides direct guidance on the path. The teacher is seen as a living manifestation of the Buddha, and the relationship with the teacher is integral to the practice of taking refuge. The teacher's instructions help to clarify the path and ensure that the practitioner remains on track toward enlightenment.

#### 8. **The Motivation for Taking Refuge:**

- The motivation behind taking refuge should not be narrow-minded or selfish. Instead, it should be driven by the wish to benefit all beings, recognising that all beings have at some point been connected to us as family in past lives. This broader motivation aligns with the bodhisattva path, which is dedicated to the enlightenment of all beings.

#### **Conclusion:**

Taking refuge in the Three Jewels is presented as the foundational practice in Buddhism, crucial for anyone seeking to escape the suffering of samsara and attain enlightenment. This practice is deeply tied to faith, devotion, and the guidance of a qualified teacher. It requires a commitment to observing specific precepts and integrating the refuge into every aspect of life. By taking refuge, practitioners align themselves with the path to liberation, supported by the timeless wisdom of the Buddha, the guiding principles of the Dharma, and the supportive community of the Sangha.

## **Part Two: The Main Teachings, Illuminating the Path**

*After the seven topics of the preparation comes the second section, the main teachings, which explain the paths for beings of lesser, medium, and superior capacity.*

*First, the path for beings of lesser capacity (Small Scope)*

*This consists of rejecting negative actions out of fear of the suffering that permeates the three lower realms of existence.*

### **8. Valuing Virtue**

*The Buddha taught that the unendurable suffering of the lower realms  
Is the fruit of unvirtuous actions.*

*Therefore, to never act unvirtuously,*

*Even at the cost of one's life, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse focuses on the importance of understanding and respecting the law of karma, the cause and effect of actions, as central to the Buddhist path. Karma, as one of the four thoughts that turn the mind toward Dharma, is essential for the entire structure of Buddhist practice. Without a proper understanding of karma, the Buddhist teachings lose their depth, and the practice becomes mere therapy aimed at improving this life rather than a profound spiritual journey aimed at liberation.

#### **Key Themes:**

##### 1. **Understanding Karma:**

- Karma is the foundational concept that drives the Buddhist view of existence. It refers to the actions we take with our body, speech, and mind, and the consequences these actions create. Karma operates on the principle that virtuous actions lead to positive outcomes, while unvirtuous actions result in suffering. Karma extends beyond the current life, influencing countless lifetimes in various realms of existence, whether higher, lower, or human.

##### 2. **The Continuity of Consciousness:**

- The text emphasises that consciousness is a continuous stream that carries the imprints of all our actions across lifetimes. This continuity means that while our current identity may change, the karmic seeds planted by our actions will continue to bear fruit. The analogy of a mala is used to illustrate how each action (bead) pulls along the next, driven by belief in a 'self' that performs these actions. Liberation from this cycle requires cutting the thread of attachment to the "I" that performs actions.

### 3. **The Role of Virtue and Non-Virtue:**<sup>1</sup>

- Virtue is defined as actions that are beneficial to yourself and others, while non-virtue is anything that causes harm. The Buddha taught that unendurable suffering, particularly in the lower realms, is the result of unvirtuous actions. Therefore, the practice of a bodhisattva involves a steadfast commitment to virtuous conduct, even at the cost of one's life. This commitment is not just about avoiding harm but actively engaging in positive, beneficial actions.

### 4. **The Impact of Karma on Future Lives:**

- The text underscores the importance of our current actions in shaping future experiences. Every action we take leaves an imprint that will eventually manifest as positive or negative outcomes. This perspective encourages mindfulness in all actions, as even seemingly insignificant deeds can have profound consequences. It also highlights the importance of purification practices to mitigate negative karma and cultivation of positive actions to ensure a favourable rebirth.

### 5. **Embracing Suffering as a Path:**

- Suffering, while often seen as negative, is reframed in the text as an opportunity for growth and purification. It serves as a reminder of the impermanence of samsara and motivates the practitioner to seek liberation. The practice of *lojong*, or mind training, involves transforming suffering into a path of spiritual development, using it to cultivate qualities like patience, resilience, and compassion.

### 6. **The Infallibility of the Law of Karma:**

- The text affirms that the law of karma is infallible; every action will eventually bear fruit. This understanding discourages doubt and hesitation, which are seen as obstacles to spiritual progress. Instead, practitioners are encouraged to engage fully in virtuous actions and avoid non-virtuous ones, trusting in the Buddha's wisdom and the inevitability of karmic results.

### 7. **The Ultimate Goal of Liberation:**

- The ultimate aim of valuing virtue and understanding karma is to achieve liberation from samsara. This requires both avoiding negative actions and actively cultivating positive qualities that align with the Dharma. The teachings remind practitioners that every moment and every action is an opportunity to create the conditions for enlightenment, both for oneself and for all beings.

## **Conclusion:**

The practice of a bodhisattva involves a deep commitment to virtuous conduct, rooted in the understanding of karma and its effects. By recognising the continuity of consciousness and the inevitability of karmic results, practitioners are encouraged to live mindfully, transforming every action into an opportunity for spiritual growth. The balance between an understanding of emptiness and careful, ethical conduct ensures that the path to liberation is steady and sure, ultimately leading to the cessation of suffering for oneself and all beings.

*Second, the path for beings of medium capacity*

*This involves detaching yourself from samsaric pleasures, and redirecting your efforts toward*

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#### <sup>1</sup> **Ten Virtues:**

**1. Generosity** (Giving and sharing with others); **2. Morality** (Adhering to ethical conduct and refraining from harmful actions); **3. Renunciation** (Letting go of attachments and desires); **4. Wisdom** (Developing insight and understanding the true nature of reality); **5. Energy** (Making a persistent effort to improve oneself); **6. Patience** (Practicing tolerance and endurance in the face of difficulties); **7. Truthfulness** (Being honest and truthful in words and actions); **8. Determination** (Resolutely pursuing goals with a firm mind); **9. Loving-kindness** (Showing unconditional love and goodwill to all beings); **10. Equanimity** (Maintaining a balanced and even mind, free from attachment and aversion).

#### **Ten Non-virtues:**

**1. Killing** (Taking the life of any sentient being); **2. Stealing** (Taking what is not given); **3. Sexual Misconduct** (Engaging in harmful sexual behaviours); **4. Lying** (Deliberately deceiving others); **5. Slander** (Speaking in a way that causes division or harm); **6. Harsh Speech** (Using words that cause pain or harm); **7. Idle Gossip** (Engaging in meaningless and frivolous talk); **8. Covetousness** (Having a strong desire for others' possessions); **9. Ill Will** (Harbouring feelings of hatred and wishing harm on others.); **10. Wrong Views** (Holding incorrect beliefs that go against the teachings of Buddhism, such as denying the law of karma)

liberation.

## 9. Recognising the Truth of Things

*Like dew on grass, the delights of the three worlds*

*By their very nature evaporate in an instant.*

*To strive for the supreme level of liberation,*

*Which never changes, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the impermanence and ultimately unsatisfactory nature of worldly pleasures and achievements, urging a focus on the path to liberation through the practice of Dharma. The analogy of dew on grass, which evaporates in an instant, is used to illustrate the fleeting nature of the delights and goals of the three worlds (desire, form, and formless realms). Pleasures and achievements are transient and ultimately hollow, unable to provide lasting satisfaction or meaning.

### Key Themes:

#### 1. **Impermanence and the Futility of Worldly Pursuits:**

- Worldly pleasures, power, and status, though they may seem desirable, are inherently impermanent and ultimately unsatisfying. Just as dew disappears with the rising sun, so too do the joys and achievements of samsara fade away. The text highlights the futility of striving for power, wealth, and influence, which are all subject to decay and loss. Even the most powerful kings or successful generals will eventually lose their power, and all worldly achievements are ultimately meaningless in the face of death.

#### 2. **The Delusion of Worldly Attachments:**

- The text cautions against being ensnared by attachments to friends, enemies, possessions, and habitual tendencies. These attachments are seen as distractions that keep one trapped in the cycle of samsara. The practice of Dharma involves recognising the delusory nature of these attachments and turning away from them in favour of striving for liberation, which is permanent and unchanging.

#### 3. **The Practice of Dharma as the Path to Liberation:**

- Liberation from samsara is achieved through the practice of Dharma, which involves training in discipline, concentration, and prajña (wisdom). This practice leads to the realisation of the nonexistence of the individual 'self' and the impermanence of phenomena. The text stresses the importance of consistent Dharma practice, even if only for a short time each day, as this can gradually purify the negative actions of countless lifetimes and lead to progress on the path to enlightenment.

#### 4. **The Illusory Nature of Samsaric Pleasures:**

- Samsaric pleasures, while initially enticing, eventually lead to suffering and dissatisfaction. The text compares this to wrapping a strip of wet leather around your wrist; it may feel fine at first, but as it dries and tightens, it becomes increasingly painful. The only way to find true relief is to cut away the source of pain, which in this analogy is samsaric attachment.

#### 5. **The Inescapable Suffering of Samsara:**

- The suffering inherent in samsara is emphasised as an inescapable reality for those who remain attached to worldly concerns. Realised beings see no difference between the suffering of the higher realms and the lower realms, recognising that all of samsara is ultimately unsatisfactory. This recognition inspires a weariness of samsara and a strong motivation to seek liberation.

#### 6. **The Role of Wisdom in Liberation:**

- The text underscores the importance of prajña, or wisdom, in achieving liberation. Wisdom allows one to see through the illusion of 'self' and phenomena, recognising their emptiness. This understanding is crucial for breaking free from the cycle of karma and rebirth. Discipline and concentration are seen as necessary supports for the development of wisdom, making them essential components of Dharma practice.

#### 7. **The Importance of Renunciation: (see 3)**

- Renunciation of worldly attachments and concerns is presented as a deep and necessary teaching for those on the path to enlightenment. The text recounts the example of great practitioners like Milarepa, who renounced all worldly ties and lived in solitude to focus entirely on their spiritual practice. This renunciation allowed them to achieve profound realisations and ultimate liberation.

#### 8. **The Need for Genuine, Sustained Practice:**

- The text warns against trying to mix Dharma with worldly concerns, as this will only dilute the practice and hinder progress. True Dharma practice requires a full commitment to turning away from worldly distractions and focusing on the path to liberation. Those who can give up these concerns and dedicate themselves fully to the Dharma will find that their efforts lead to lasting, unchanging results, unlike the fleeting pleasures of samsara.

#### **Conclusion:**

The text highlights the transient nature of worldly pleasures and achievements, contrasting them with the lasting fulfilment that comes from the practice of Dharma. By recognising the delusion of samsaric attachments and committing to the path of discipline, concentration, and wisdom, practitioners can gradually free themselves from the cycle of suffering and achieve true liberation. The teachings emphasise the importance of renunciation, consistent practice, and the realisation of emptiness as key steps on the path to enlightenment.

*Third, the path for beings of superior capacity*

*This consists of meditating on emptiness and compassion in order to attain liberation beyond both samsara and nirvana. This section has three parts:*

1. The bodhichitta of intention, which is the evocation of supreme bodhichitta
2. The bodhichitta of application, which is the meditation and practice of the two aspects of bodhichitta
3. The precepts for training in those practices.

## **1. The bodhichitta of intention**

## **10. Valuing Others**

*If all the mothers who have loved me since beginning-less time are suffering,*

*What is the use of my own happiness?*

*So, with the aim of liberating limitless sentient beings,*

*To set my mind on enlightenment is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Valuing Others" explores a crucial aspect of the bodhisattva path in Buddhism, emphasising the importance of prioritising the welfare of others over one's own happiness. The verse reflects the deep-seated belief that true enlightenment and liberation from suffering can only be achieved by dedicating oneself to the well-being of all sentient beings.

#### **Key Themes:**

1. **The Impermanence of Samsara:** The passage begins by addressing the inherent impermanence and instability of samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth in which all beings are trapped. It highlights the futility of seeking happiness through outer acquisitions and material possessions, as these are fleeting and ultimately unsatisfactory. The realisation of samsara's impermanence leads to the aspiration for liberation, or Nirvana, which is the first level of spiritual aspiration.
2. **Bodhichitta: The Heart of Compassion and Wisdom:** The text introduces the concept of **Bodhichitta**, which is the awakened heart or mind that seeks enlightenment both for oneself and for the benefit of all beings. Bodhichitta has two essential aspects: compassion, which is directed toward alleviating the suffering of others, and wisdom, which is aimed at attaining ultimate enlightenment. Both are indispensable in the pursuit of the bodhisattva path. Without the aim of enlightenment, efforts to benefit others remain limited; without compassion, the pursuit of enlightenment becomes self-centred.
3. **The Burning House and Drowning Swamp Analogies:** The passage uses vivid analogies to illustrate the bodhisattva's motivation. One analogy compares samsara to a burning

house: even if one escapes, the desire to save loved ones still trapped inside compels one to return and help them. Similarly, escaping from the drowning swamp of samsara to dry land would naturally lead one to seek ways to rescue others who are still struggling. These analogies underscore the selfless nature of the bodhisattva's commitment to liberate all beings.

4. **Repaying the Debt of Gratitude:** The passage suggests that all sentient beings have, in some past life, been our mothers as well as close companions, thus establishing a deep karmic connection. Given this connection, there is a profound debt of gratitude that must be repaid. The greatest way to repay this debt is by striving for enlightenment, not for personal gain, but to liberate others from the suffering of samsara. This sense of interconnectedness and responsibility forms the foundation of the bodhisattva's practice.
5. **The Bodhisattva Vow:** The bodhisattva vow is a commitment to strive for enlightenment not solely for oneself but for the liberation of all sentient beings. This vow transforms one's motivation and approach to spiritual practice, shifting the focus from self-centred liberation to a collective aspiration for the enlightenment of all. The vow extends beyond humans to include all living beings, recognising the universality of suffering and the need for universal compassion.
6. **The Role of Sentient Beings in Spiritual Growth:** The passage emphasises that sentient beings are not obstacles to enlightenment but rather essential catalysts for developing virtues like loving-kindness, compassion, patience, and generosity. Interactions with others, especially in challenging situations, provide the necessary context for practicing and embodying these qualities. This perspective encourages practitioners to view adversities and difficult relationships as opportunities for growth on the path to enlightenment.
7. **Wish-Fulfilling Jewel - Precious Treasure:** The aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings is likened to a wish-fulfilling jewel, a rare and precious object. This aspiration is seen as the highest and most valuable motivation one can cultivate, surpassing even the attainment of personal enlightenment.

#### **Conclusion:**

"Valuing Others" teaches that the ultimate purpose of the bodhisattva path is not self-liberation but the liberation of all sentient beings from the suffering of samsara. By cultivating Bodhichitta (the union of compassion and wisdom) practitioners can develop the necessary qualities to genuinely help others. The passage encourages viewing sentient beings as essential to one's spiritual practice, as they provide the context in which virtues can be cultivated. Ultimately, the text calls for a profound transformation in motivation, where one's spiritual journey is driven by the desire to benefit all beings, making enlightenment a collective rather than an individual goal.

## **2. The bodhichitta of application**

Bodhichitta has two aspects, relative and absolute. Absolute bodhichitta is the realisation of emptiness attained by bodhisattvas on one of the supreme levels, or bhumis. Until that realisation dawns, the emphasis should be placed on relative bodhichitta, which, in essence, is the altruistic mind, the profound wish to benefit others and to be free of all selfish aims. If relative bodhichitta is practiced correctly, absolute bodhichitta will be naturally present mixed in with it, and will eventually be fully realised.

### **I. Relative bodhichitta**

Relative bodhichitta itself has two stages, the aspiration to benefit others, and the putting of that aspiration into action. The difference between the two is like the difference between wishing to go somewhere and actually setting out on the journey. The practice of relative bodhichitta consists of (A) the meditation practice of exchanging oneself and others, and (B) the post-meditation practice of using unfavourable circumstances on the path.

# A. The meditation practice of exchanging oneself and others

## 11. Practicing Kindness and Compassion

*All suffering without exception arises from desiring happiness for oneself,  
While perfect Buddhahood is born from the thought of benefiting others.  
Therefore, to really exchange*

*My own happiness for the suffering of others is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Practicing Kindness and Compassion" delves into a fundamental principle of Buddhist practice within the framework of the bodhisattva path. It emphasises the transformative power of shifting focus from self-centred desires to the well-being of others, a practice that leads to the ultimate goal of Buddhahood; enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

### Key Themes:

- 1. The Root of Suffering:** The passage begins by addressing the core reason for human suffering: the pursuit of personal happiness driven by egoistic desires. This self-centred approach to life leads to an endless cycle of unfulfilled desires and growing dissatisfaction. The ego becomes bloated, trapping individuals in a never-ending quest for material satisfaction, status, and power—an illusion that ultimately leads to deeper suffering and a greater distance from liberation.
- 2. The Illusion of Material Happiness:** Modern society often equates happiness with acquiring more possessions, gaining higher status, and achieving physical beauty. However, these pursuits are rooted in the "five poisons"—greed, aggression, pride, jealousy, and envy—all of which contribute to ignorance and suffering. The passage likens this pursuit to chasing a mirage in the desert, where people, in their desperation, are led further away from true happiness.
- 3. The Practice of Tonglen:** To counteract this cycle of suffering, the passage introduces the practice of **Tonglen**, a key practice in lojong (mind training). Tonglen involves the exchange of one's own happiness for the suffering of others. Practitioners visualise taking in the suffering of others—represented as dark light or smoke—and transforming it within themselves, allowing it to dissolve into their own Buddha-nature. This practice not only reduces the practitioner's self-cherishing attitude but also helps alleviate the suffering of others, fostering a deep sense of compassion.
- 4. Cultivating Compassion:** The text emphasises that true happiness arises from the thought of benefiting others. By practicing Tonglen and other forms of compassionate meditation, such as wishing others well (even one's enemies), practitioners develop selfless love and open their hearts to the suffering of the world. This practice is seen as a foundational challenge that leads to the ultimate achievement: realisation or awakening.
- 5. Practical Applications of Tonglen:** The passage provides detailed instructions for practicing Tonglen in various situations. Whether visualising oneself as a wish-fulfilling jewel or offering one's body as sustenance to harmful spirits, the practice is grounded in the principle of exchanging oneself with others—taking on their suffering and giving them one's happiness. This practice can be applied both during meditation and in everyday life, helping to cultivate the core qualities of a bodhisattva.
- 6. The Misconception of Higher and Lower Teachings:** The passage also addresses a common misconception that teachings on compassion and exchanging 'self' with others are less effective or "lower" than more advanced teachings such as the Great Perfection or the Great Seal. It clarifies that only through the development of relative bodhicitta (the compassion and love for others) can absolute bodhicitta—the realisation of the true nature of reality—arise. This underscores the importance of compassion as the foundation for all higher spiritual realisations.

### Conclusion:

"Practicing Kindness and Compassion" teaches that true happiness and enlightenment arise not from fulfilling one's desires, but from selflessly dedicating oneself to the well-being of others. Through practices like Tonglen, individuals can transform their self-centredness into compassion, alleviating both their own suffering and that of others. The passage emphasises that this practice is not only foundational but essential for those on the path to becoming a bodhisattva, leading to the ultimate realisation of Buddhahood.

## **B. The post-meditation practice of using unfavourable circumstances on the path**

To continue the practice of relative bodhichitta into daily life, it is necessary to make use of the adverse circumstances that one is bound to meet as fuel for spiritual practice. In the post-meditation stage, the practice is the training related to the bodhichitta of application.

**Adverse circumstances are considered under four headings:**

**(i) four things that you do not want to happen, (ii) two things that are difficult to bear, (iii) deprivation and prosperity, and (iv) hatred and desire.**

### **i. Using on the path the four things that you do not want to happen**

These four things are **(a) loss, (b) suffering, (c) disgrace, and (d) disparagement.**<sup>2</sup>

#### **a. How to use loss on the path**

## **12. Embracing Adversity**

*If someone driven by great desire*

*Seizes all my wealth, or induces others to do so,*

*To dedicate to him [or her] my body, possessions,*

*And past, present, and future merit is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

"Embracing Adversity" in the context of Tibetan Buddhism is about transforming challenges and difficulties into opportunities for spiritual growth. The practice of a bodhisattva involves taking even the harshest of adversities onto the spiritual path rather than avoiding or discarding them. This approach is rooted in the understanding that true spiritual progress often arises not in comfort, but in adversity.

The passage begins with a verse that illustrates the bodhisattva's radical compassion: even if someone wrongs them by seizing their wealth or inducing others to do so, the bodhisattva dedicates not only their material possessions but also their past, present, and future merits to the wrongdoer. This act of selflessness transforms what could be a source of suffering into an opportunity for spiritual advancement.

Tibetan Buddhism emphasises the importance of using every life experience, especially the difficult ones, as a means to advance on the path. The text argues that if everything in life went smoothly, one might be lulled into a false sense of spiritual progress. For instance, it is easy to be loving when everyone around us is kind, but the real test of our practice comes when we encounter people who are unkind or challenging. These moments reveal the latent negative emotions within us (such as anger or jealousy) providing us with the opportunity to address and overcome them.

Instead of viewing people who cause us harm or discomfort as enemies, the text encourages seeing them as teachers. These individuals, by triggering our negative emotions, show us where we still need to grow. This shift in perspective transforms adversities into spiritual exercises, much like using challenging equipment at the gym to build physical strength. Similarly, facing

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<sup>2</sup> The "four things that you do not want to happen": loss, suffering, disgrace, and disparagement. Their opposites are gain, pleasure, fame, and praise, and all together these eight are called the "**eight ordinary concerns**".

difficult people and situations helps us build spiritual resilience.

Moreover, the passage discusses the concept of the "self" and how attachment to it is the root of suffering. When someone insults or harms us, it is often the strong sense of "me" that feels hurt or offended. By recognising that this "self" is not as solid or real as it appears, we can begin to dissolve the anger and resentment that arise from such interactions. The text teaches that our real enemies are not those who harm us, but our own attachment to a false sense of self.

Ultimately, "Embracing Adversity" calls for a profound transformation in how we view and respond to challenges. Instead of reacting with anger or self-pity, the practice of a bodhisattva involves responding with compassion and understanding, recognising that these difficulties are opportunities for spiritual growth. By dedicating our merits to those who harm us and taking their suffering into our hearts, we not only purify our own karma but also move closer to enlightenment. This practice, though difficult, leads to a profound inner strength and a deepened capacity for compassion and kindness.

## **b. How to use suffering on the path**

### **13. Bringing Suffering onto the Path**

*If, in return for not the slightest wrong of mine,  
Someone were to cut off even my very head,  
Through the power of compassion to take all his negative actions  
Upon myself is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage, "Bringing Suffering onto the Path," is a profound exploration of how a bodhisattva responds to suffering, particularly when faced with harm or injustice. The core teaching here emphasises the practice of compassion and the transformation of suffering into an opportunity for spiritual growth.

The text begins with a verse that illustrates the bodhisattva's practice: even if one were to be unjustly harmed or killed, the bodhisattva would take all the negativity upon themselves, using the power of compassion to alleviate the suffering of the wrongdoer. This concept is deeply rooted in the idea that true compassion involves understanding and embracing the suffering of others, even when one is the victim of harm.

The example of Tibet is highlighted to illustrate this teaching. Many Tibetan lamas and practitioners endured imprisonment, torture, and suffering under oppressive regimes, despite having done no wrong in this lifetime. Remarkably, these individuals emerged from their ordeals not with bitterness or anger, but with a radiant sense of peace and compassion. This transformation is attributed to their deep practice of taking suffering onto the path, a concept they had internalised through their spiritual training.

A significant anecdote is shared about His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who, upon meeting a former political prisoner, asked about his greatest fear. The prisoner replied that his greatest fear was losing compassion for his tormentors. This response underscores the depth of his practice, as he managed to maintain compassion even in the face of severe cruelty, radiating love and understanding rather than resentment.

The passage challenges readers to reflect on their own responses to suffering and injustice. It presents two possible reactions: one can either succumb to anger, fear, and thoughts of retaliation, or one can choose to see the suffering person as deluded and in need of compassion. The latter approach involves taking the negative actions of others upon oneself and offering them all one's virtues and merits, wishing them happiness and peace. This practice not only helps to purify one's own karma but also serves as a means of spiritual growth.



The text further discusses how ordinary people, when faced with everyday challenges (such as rude behaviour or criticism) can either react negatively or use the situation as an opportunity to practice loving-kindness and patience. The passage reminds us that being a true Dharma practitioner is not about external appearances, such as wearing robes or having a shaved head, but about how one responds to daily life's challenges with compassion and wisdom.

The teaching concludes with a reflection on karma, emphasising that whatever suffering we experience may be the result of our own past actions. Responding with anger or fear only creates more negative karma, while responding with patience and love can purify it. By putting ourselves in the shoes of those who harm us, we can cultivate natural compassion, recognising that their harmful actions stem from their own inner suffering.

Ultimately, the passage teaches that the key to spiritual practice lies in how we respond to what happens to us, not in the events themselves. As taught by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, a bodhisattva always strives to return harm with help and benefit, embodying the highest ideals of compassion and selflessness.

## c. How to use disgrace on the path

### 14. Not Retaliated when we are Harmed

*Even if someone says all sorts of derogatory things about me  
And proclaims them throughout the universe,  
In return, out of loving-kindness,  
To extol that person's qualities is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Not Retaliating When We Are Harmed" is a profound exploration of how to respond with compassion and wisdom when faced with criticism, defamation, or harmful actions from others. It emphasises the practice of a bodhisattva by choosing not to retaliate when harmed, but instead to respond with loving-kindness and praise.

#### Key Themes:

- 1. Non-Retaliation and Compassion:** The text advises that when someone speaks ill of us or spreads harmful rumours, our natural inclination might be to retaliate with harsh words or actions. However, this only perpetuates a cycle of anger and negativity. Instead, the practice of a bodhisattva involves responding with kindness and highlighting the good qualities of the person who has wronged us. This approach both neutralises the conflict and also has the potential to soften the other person's heart, as they may not expect a kind response.
- 2. Self-Reflection and Acceptance:** When criticised, the first step is self-reflection. If the criticism is valid, it provides an opportunity for growth and self-improvement. If it is untrue, we are encouraged to let it go without letting it affect our peace of mind. The focus should be on cultivating a sincere attitude of non-retaliation and recognising that what is hurt in these situations is often our ego, which clings to self-importance and reputation.
- 3. Cultivating the Right Attitude:** The essence of this practice lies in cultivating the right attitude from the beginning. It involves overcoming the self-centred attitude that feels personally attacked and instead adopting an attitude of humility and compassion. Genuine spiritual practice, as described, is not about maintaining a good reputation or receiving praise but about dissolving the sense of a solid, unchanging 'self' and responding to all situations with wisdom and kindness.
- 4. Purifying Past Misdeeds:** The passage suggests that when we are defamed or dishonoured, it could be the result of our own past actions, such as having criticised or harmed others. Instead of responding with anger, we should feel gratitude for the opportunity to purify these past misdeeds. In this way, adverse situations become valuable opportunities to practice the teachings and advance on the spiritual path.
- 5. Practical Application:** Buddhism teaches that the real test of our practice comes not in formal settings like Dharma centres, but in everyday life; how we respond when faced with

criticism, harsh words, or challenging situations. The passage encourages us to see these moments as chances to apply the teachings in a practical way, to cultivate patience, humility, and compassion.

6. **Embracing Defeat and Offering Victory:** The text also references the fifth verse of Langri Thangpa's "Eight Verses for Training the Mind," which encourages us to willingly accept defeat and offer victory to others. This practice is about letting go of the need to always be right or to win in conflicts. True strength, the passage suggests, lies in the ability to step back, respond with kindness, and let go of the burden of defending the ego.
7. **The Illusion of Reputation:** Finally, the passage addresses the fleeting and ultimately meaningless nature of reputation and fame. It advises discarding concerns about reputation as one would discard something trivial and unnecessary. The great teachers of the past responded to slander and criticism with patience and kindness, understanding that reputation is merely an empty echo with no real substance.

#### **Conclusion:**

"Not Retaliating When We Are Harmed" teaches that true spiritual strength lies in responding to harm with kindness and compassion, rather than with retaliation. It encourages us to view criticism and adversity as opportunities for personal growth and purification, and to cultivate an attitude of humility and loving-kindness in all circumstances. By doing so, we can break the cycle of negativity, dissolve the ego's attachment to self-importance, and move closer to the bodhisattva ideal of selfless compassion and wisdom.

## **d. How to use disparagement on the path**

### **15. Respecting Even our Enemies**

*Even if in the midst of a large gathering*

*Someone exposes my hidden faults with insulting language,*

*To bow to him respectfully,*

*Regarding him as a spiritual friend, is the practice of bodhisattva.*

The passage "Respecting Even Our Enemies" presents a profound teaching on how to respond to criticism, insults, and humiliation with a mindset rooted in Buddhist principles, particularly the practice of **bodhichitta**.

#### **Key Themes:**

##### **1. Humiliation and Ego:**

- The passage begins by acknowledging the intense emotional response (especially anger and a desire for retaliation) that arises when someone exposes our faults publicly. This situation is particularly challenging when the criticism is made in a large gathering or a public forum, as it directly attacks our ego and self-image. The natural inclination is to defend oneself, often aggressively, **to protect the ego**.

##### **2. Viewing the Critic as a Spiritual Friend:**

- Instead of reacting defensively, the text advises an alternative approach: to bow respectfully and regard the critic as a spiritual friend. This perspective is based on the idea that anyone who reveals our hidden faults is doing us a great favour. By exposing our weaknesses, they provide us with an opportunity to see the ego clearly, in all its defensiveness and pride. This moment of exposure, though painful, is a chance to recognise and work on our faults, leading to spiritual growth.

##### **3. The Four Principles of Positive Training:**

- The text introduces the "four principles of positive training," which guide how to respond when we are harmed:
  1. If someone abuses you, do not abuse them in return.
  2. If someone gets angry with you, do not respond with anger.
  3. If someone exposes your faults, do not retaliate by exposing theirs.
  4. If someone strikes you, do not strike back.
- These principles emphasise patience, non-retaliation, and the practice of humility. They

align with the broader Buddhist teaching that winning and losing, praise and blame, are ultimately empty and have no inherent significance.

#### 4. **Transforming Criticism into an Opportunity for Growth:**

- The text encourages viewing criticism and humiliation as precious opportunities to practice patience and let go of pride. By not giving in to anger and by taking a humble stance, we not only avoid escalating conflict but also deepen our practice of bodhichitta. Criticism can serve as a catalyst for spiritual progress, pushing us to confront our attachments and aversions.

#### 5. **The Teachings of Great Masters:**

- The passage references teachings from Buddhist masters like Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who reminds us that genuine followers of the Buddha should never retaliate when harmed, and Jigme Lingpa, who views mistreatment and unjust criticism as opportunities to advance in meditation and practice. These masters highlight that adversaries and difficult situations are actually our greatest teachers, offering us the chance to strengthen our resolve and deepen our understanding of the Dharma.

#### 6. **Absolute Truth and the Nature of Dualities:**

- On the level of absolute truth, the passage suggests that all dualities (such as gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace) are ultimately empty. They have no real, lasting substance and should not be clung to. This understanding helps practitioners maintain equanimity in the face of both praise and criticism, seeing them as part of the same transient, illusory reality.

#### **Conclusion:**

"Respecting Even Our Enemies" teaches that when confronted with criticism, especially in a humiliating public context, the appropriate response is one of humility and gratitude. Rather than retaliating, practitioners are encouraged to see the critic as a spiritual friend who provides a valuable opportunity to recognise and overcome hidden faults. By adhering to the four principles of positive training, and by understanding the emptiness of dualities, practitioners can transform adversities into powerful moments of spiritual growth, embodying the true spirit of bodhichitta.

## **ii. Using on the path the two things that are difficult to bear**

The two things that are difficult to bear are: (a) being wronged in return for kindness, and (b) humiliation.

### **a. How to use on the path being wronged in return for kindness**

#### **16. Showing Kindness When we are Wronged**

*Even if one I've lovingly cared for like my own child*

*Regards me as an enemy,*

*To love him even more,*

*As a mother loves a sick child, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Showing Kindness When We Are Wronged" discusses the profound and challenging practice of maintaining love and compassion for others, even when they wrong us, especially in situations where we have previously helped or cared for them deeply. This teaching is rooted in the bodhisattva path, which emphasises unconditional love, patience, and the transformation of adversity into spiritual growth.

#### **Key Themes:**

##### 1. **The Pain of Betrayal:**

- The passage acknowledges one of the most painful experiences: being treated like an enemy by someone we have lovingly cared for, eg a parent who has nurtured a child only to have that child turn against them in adolescence. This betrayal can cause immense emotional pain and a natural desire to retaliate or feel resentment.

##### 2. **Expecting Nothing in Return:**

- The text advises that when we do good for others, it is a mistake to expect gratitude or any form of reciprocation. True bodhichitta, the mind of awakening, involves selfless

compassion without any expectation of reward. When someone we have helped responds with resentment, hatred, or harm, the practice of a bodhisattva is to love them even more, just as a mother loves and cares for a sick child with compassion and understanding.

**3. Transforming Hurt into Opportunity:**

- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche emphasises that encountering someone who hurts us is a "rare and precious treasure." Such individuals offer us an invaluable opportunity to eradicate our own defects, particularly the deep-seated ones that may not surface without such provocations. If we find it difficult to feel love and compassion for those who harm us, it is an indication that our minds still need transformation.

**4. The Role of Compassion:**

- The text highlights that people who treat us poorly are often doing so because they are inwardly unbalanced and their actions reflect their own internal struggles rather than something inherently wrong with us. Recognising this allows us to respond with greater sympathy and compassion, rather than anger or hurt.

**5. Seeing the Wrongdoer as a Spiritual Friend:**

- The passage references a verse from the "*Eight Verses for Training the Mind*," which suggests that when someone we have helped turns against us, we should see them as an excellent spiritual friend. This is because they provide us with the opportunity to practice one of the most challenging virtues: patient endurance, or forbearance. This quality is essential on the bodhisattva path toward awakening and cannot be cultivated without facing adversity.

**6. Transforming Adversity into Practice:**

- When someone we care about betrays or harms us, it presents a unique opportunity for spiritual growth. Instead of feeling hurt or seeking revenge, the bodhisattva path teaches us to be grateful for the chance to practice patience, tolerance, and compassion. The person who wrongs us becomes like a teacher, reflecting our own shortcomings and providing the conditions necessary for us to grow spiritually.

**7. Avoiding the Double Wound:**

- The text advises against harbouring resentment and replaying the hurt in our minds, as this only deepens our suffering and creates negative karma. Such thoughts do not harm the other person but only harm ourselves. Instead, the practice of patience and tolerance allows us to move on without creating further negativity.

**Conclusion:**

"**Showing Kindness When We Are Wronged**" offers a profound teaching on how to maintain love and compassion in the face of betrayal or harm, particularly from those we have cared for deeply. The bodhisattva path encourages us to see such individuals as treasures who provide us with the rare opportunity to practice patience, forbearance, and unconditional love. By transforming these difficult experiences into spiritual practice, we can progress on the path to enlightenment while reducing our own suffering and cultivating a more compassionate and resilient heart.

## **b. How to use humiliation on the path**

### **17 Respecting Those Who Disrespect Us**

*Even if my peers or my inferiors  
Out of pride do all they can to debase me,  
To respectfully consider them like my teachers  
On the crown of my head is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The passage "Respecting Those Who Disrespect Us" delves into the practice of maintaining humility, compassion, and a positive attitude even when faced with disrespect, particularly from those who are our peers or perceived inferiors. This teaching is an essential aspect of the bodhisattva path, focusing on the importance of transforming negative experiences into opportunities for spiritual growth.

## Key Themes:

### 1. **Dealing with Humiliation:**

- The passage begins by addressing the ego's natural response to being humiliated, especially by those we consider our peers or inferiors. When such individuals treat us with disrespect or attempt to debase us, the usual reaction is to feel hurt, angry, and defensive. However, the bodhisattva path encourages a different response: rather than retaliating, we should raise these individuals up, recognising them as teachers who reveal our own pride, arrogance, and attachment to self-image.

### 2. **Viewing Adversaries as Teachers:**

- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche emphasises that those who scorn or injure us, particularly those who lack our education, strength, or skill, should be seen as kind teachers. They provide us with valuable opportunities to practice humility and patience. This perspective transforms adversaries into spiritual allies who help us progress on the path to liberation by challenging our ego and self-centredness.

### 3. **Countering Pride with Humility:**

- The text advises that when others criticise us or fail to give us the respect we believe we deserve, instead of becoming upset, we should practice humility. The antidote to pride is to regard everyone, even those who disrespect us, as being above us. This practice, described as "carrying all beings above one's head," is a powerful way to counteract the ego's tendency to focus on personal happiness and recognition.

### 4. **The Role of Humour:**

- Humour is highlighted as a valuable tool in diffusing anger and humiliation. By not taking ourselves too seriously and seeing the lighter side of situations, we can reduce the ego's grip on our reactions. The ego detests being laughed at, so cultivating a sense of humour about our own flaws and the absurdity of taking offence can help us maintain equanimity.

### 5. **Cultivating Loving-Kindness:**

- The passage references the practice of the four **Brahma-viharas**; loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity. These qualities are developed by sending positive thoughts to ourselves, to those we care for, to those we feel neutral about, to those who challenge us, and finally to all beings. This process is especially important for Westerners, who often struggle with low self-esteem and need to first direct loving-kindness toward themselves before extending it to others.

### 6. **Understanding the Duality of Pride:**

- 'Pride' is not just about feeling superior; it can also manifest as feeling inferior. When we think we are the worst, stupidest, or most hopeless, we are still focused on "me, me, me." This is the inverse of ego clinging, where self-pity and low self-esteem become a form of self-absorption. The correct attitude is not to think of ourselves as inferior or superior but to focus on others and their well-being, making them the most important person in our interactions.

### 7. **Making Others the Focus:**

- The teaching suggests that when we are with others, we should consider them the most important person at that moment. This shifts our attention away from our own ego-driven concerns about how we are perceived and allows us to genuinely connect with and understand the other person.

### 8. **Self-Compassion as a Foundation for Compassion Toward Others:**

- The passage emphasises that true compassion for others begins with self-compassion. When we feel at peace with ourselves, we are less likely to be defensive or reactive when others criticise us. By cultivating inner peace and a sense of humour about ourselves, we become better equipped to handle external challenges with understanding and compassion.

### 9. **Lojong Practice and Mind Training:**

- The practice of **Lojong** (mind training) is central to this teaching. Lojong involves training the mind to respond skilfully and compassionately to difficult situations. When faced with

disrespect, instead of reacting negatively, we use the situation as an opportunity to practice humility, patience, and compassion.

### **Conclusion:**

"Respecting Those Who Disrespect Us" teaches that the true strength of a bodhisattva lies in the ability to transform disrespect and humiliation into opportunities for spiritual growth. By viewing those who scorn us as teachers, practicing humility, and cultivating loving-kindness and compassion, we can overcome the ego's need for recognition and approval. This practice not only helps us maintain inner peace but also allows us to connect more deeply with others, fostering a sense of universal compassion and understanding.

## **iii. Using deprivation and prosperity on the path**

### **a. How to use deprivation on the path**

## **18 Being Compassionate when Things are Difficult**

*Even when utterly destitute and constantly maligned by others,  
Afflicted by terrible illness and prey to evil forces,  
To still draw upon myself the suffering and wrongdoing of all beings  
And not lose heart is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the importance of compassion and the practice of tonglen, particularly in challenging situations where you may face destitution, illness, or maligning from others. The essence of this practice is to cultivate an attitude of embracing suffering, your own and that of others, turning it into a powerful tool for spiritual growth and developing compassion.

### **Key Themes:**

#### **1. The Practice of Tonglen:**

- The practice of tonglen involves visualising oneself taking on the suffering of others and in return giving them all one's happiness and positive qualities. This can be practiced both for others and for oneself when facing difficulties. By thinking of the suffering of all beings who are experiencing similar challenges, one shifts the focus away from self-pity and instead develops a sense of purpose and connection with the universal nature of suffering. This practice helps prevent despair and fosters a sense of inner empowerment and compassion.

#### **2. Embracing Suffering:**

- Suffering is not something to be feared or avoided, but something beneficial. It serves as a catalyst for motivation, driving the determination to be free from samsara. Suffering humbles and grounds us, acting as an antidote to arrogance and self-importance. The text emphasises that suffering can lead to spiritual growth, allowing you to develop patience, resilience, and a deep understanding of the human condition.

#### **3. Universal Connection through Suffering:**

- The text highlights the importance of recognising that suffering is a universal experience. By opening one's heart to the pain of others, one can avoid becoming isolated in personal misery. This practice encourages a shift in perspective, transforming suffering into an opportunity to connect with others and develop empathy and compassion. It is through this connection that you can cultivate a sincere aspiration to alleviate the suffering of all beings.

#### **4. Using Deprivation as a Spiritual Teacher:**

- Deprivation and hardship are seen as opportunities for spiritual development. When one faces extreme difficulties, it is an opportunity to wish for the suffering of all beings to come upon oneself, thereby freeing others from their pain. This practice, though challenging, is a profound way to deepen one's compassion and to make use of difficult circumstances as a means of spiritual practice. The teachings encourage viewing obstacles and suffering as teachers that spur one toward greater Dharma practice and realisation.

#### **5. The Power of Love and Compassion:**

- Love and compassion are portrayed as transformative forces that can bring about profound changes within yourself and in the world. Meditating on love has far-reaching effects, pacifying calamities and bringing about peace. The text suggests that by treating all beings with love and compassion, one not only benefits others but also enriches one's own spiritual journey, leading to the fulfilment of all aspirations.

### **Conclusion:**

The text emphasises that in the face of destitution, illness, or adversity, the practice of compassion, particularly through tonglen, is a powerful and transformative response. By taking on the suffering of others and giving them one's own happiness, one can transcend personal misery and develop a deeper connection with the universal nature of suffering. Suffering is not seen as an obstacle but as an opportunity for spiritual growth and the cultivation of love and compassion. This approach aligns with the bodhisattva's path of selfless service and the aspiration to alleviate the suffering of all beings.

## **b. How to Use Prosperity on the Path**

### **19 Recognising What is Truly Valuable**

*Though I may be famous, and revered by many,  
And as rich as the God of Wealth himself,  
To see that the wealth and glory of the world are without essence  
And to be free of arrogance, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the transient and ultimately empty nature of worldly wealth, fame, and status, advocating for the cultivation of humility and the use of one's resources for the benefit of others and the practice of Dharma.

#### **Key Themes:**

- 1. The Ephemeral Nature of Worldly Success:**
  - Wealth, fame, beauty, and influence are compared to fleeting phenomena like a flash of lightning, a dewdrop, or a bubble. These worldly achievements are temporary and devoid of true substance. No matter how much wealth you accumulate or how revered you become, these things are ultimately impermanent and cannot provide lasting happiness or fulfilment. At the time of death, all worldly possessions and status are left behind, and you are left to face death alone, without any external markers of success.
- 2. The Dangers of Attachment and Arrogance:**
  - The text warns against becoming attached to wealth, fame, or the good opinions of others. Such attachments can lead to arrogance, insecurity, and suffering. When one's sense of self-worth is tied to external factors, it becomes fragile and easily threatened. The text emphasises that it is important not to become conceited or proud, no matter how much you achieve in the worldly sense. Instead, you should recognise the emptiness of these achievements and maintain humility.
- 3. The Importance of Equanimity:**
  - A key practice for a bodhisattva is to maintain inner equanimity regardless of external circumstances. Whether you experience wealth or poverty, praise or blame, fame or insignificance, the response should be one of balanced equanimity. This involves neither clinging to pleasurable experiences nor rejecting painful ones but rather accepting both with an open heart and mind. The analogy of a boat gliding through the waves (riding smoothly when the sea is calm and remaining steady when the waves are rough) illustrates the ideal state of equanimity.
- 4. Using Wealth and Power for the Benefit of Others:**
  - The text highlights the responsibility that comes with wealth and power. A bodhisattva uses these resources for the benefit of others, not for personal gain. This includes providing for the physical needs of others (such as food, clothing, and shelter) and, more importantly, offering the gift of Dharma. The example of great bodhisattvas and religious kings is cited, who used their wealth to alleviate suffering and promote virtuous actions among their people, ensuring that no one in their kingdoms would be reborn in the lower

realms.

#### 5. **The Practice of Generosity:**

- Generosity is presented as a key virtue. Even small acts of generosity, when done with an altruistic mind, accumulate great merit. In contrast, miserly behaviour, whether from a rich or poor person, leads to negative karmic consequences, such as rebirth among tortured spirits. The text encourages the use of wealth to benefit others and to accumulate merit through generous actions. This is seen as the best way to make your wealth meaningful and to ensure that it contributes to your spiritual progress rather than being a source of attachment and suffering.

#### 6. **The Need for Humility:**

- The bodhisattva is urged to remain humble despite any worldly success. Recognising that wealth and glory are without essence helps to prevent arrogance and fosters a mindset of service and compassion. The ultimate goal is not to achieve worldly success but to progress on the path to enlightenment, which requires letting go of attachments and focusing on the welfare of all beings.

#### **Conclusion:**

The text underscores the transient nature of worldly achievements and the dangers of attaching your identity and self-worth to external success. Verse 19 advocates humility, equanimity, and the responsible use of wealth and power to benefit others. True value is found not in accumulating riches or fame but in cultivating virtue, practicing generosity, and progressing on the path to enlightenment. The practice of a bodhisattva involves recognising the emptiness of worldly concerns and dedicating yourself to the service of others, using whatever resources you have to promote the well-being and spiritual growth of all beings.

### **iv. Using hatred and desire on the path**

#### **a. How to use objects of hatred on the path**

#### **20. Giving Peace a Chance**

*If one does not conquer one's own hatred,  
The more one fights outer enemies, the more they will increase.  
Therefore, with the armies of loving-kindness and compassion,  
To tame one's own mind is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse focuses on the profound practice of taming one's own mind through the cultivation of loving-kindness and compassion, as opposed to engaging in the endless cycle of external conflicts fuelled by anger and hatred.

#### **Key Themes:**

##### 1. **The Futility of External Conflict:**

- The text emphasises that trying to overcome external enemies through aggression only leads to the creation of more enemies and perpetuates the cycle of conflict. Anger, when indulged, feeds on itself and grows stronger, leading to more suffering. The more you fight against outer adversaries, the more they will multiply, as hatred breeds more hatred. This is a reflection of how world conflicts and personal disputes can escalate when driven by anger and retaliation.

##### 2. **The Power of Inner Transformation:**

- True peace and the resolution of conflict come from within, by conquering the hatred and negative emotions that reside in the mind. When one's own mind is tamed and free from hatred, the concept of an "enemy" dissolves. This transformation is achieved through the practice of patience, loving-kindness, and compassion. These qualities serve as the "armies" that a bodhisattva uses to overcome internal adversaries and, by extension, external conflicts.

##### 3. **Befriending the Mind:**

- A central idea is that in order to cultivate these positive qualities, you must first make peace with oneself. This involves befriending the mind, forgiving oneself, and recognising



the inherent Buddha-nature within. The text likens this process to taming a wild horse; it must first be befriended and made to trust before it can be trained. Similarly, the ego, which often acts as an obstacle to spiritual progress, must be tamed through kindness and understanding rather than through force or self-criticism.

#### 4. **The Practice of Loving-Kindness:**

- The practice of loving-kindness begins with oneself and then extends to others. This involves wishing well-being and happiness for oneself, loved ones, neutral individuals, and even those with whom you have conflicts. This practice is seen as a powerful antidote to anger and a means of cultivating a more peaceful and compassionate heart. The text suggests that by regularly practicing loving-kindness, you can transform the mind from a state of self-centredness to one of expansive, selfless love.

#### 5. **The Consequences of Anger:**

- The text vividly illustrates the destructive power of anger. They recount stories, such as that of the Buddha in a previous life as a turtle, to demonstrate the long-term karmic consequences of acting out of anger. The story shows that even when faced with severe provocation, responding with compassion rather than anger can lead to positive outcomes, both in this life and future rebirths. Anger is identified as the true enemy that must be conquered to prevent the endless cycle of conflict and suffering.

#### 6. **The Importance of Skilful Means:**

- The teachings emphasise the importance of using skilful means in dealing with anger and other negative emotions. This involves recognising anger as merely a thought that can be neutralised with the right antidotes, such as mindfulness and understanding the emptiness of emotions. By turning the mind inward and applying these antidotes, you can dissolve anger and prevent it from manifesting in harmful actions.

#### 7. **The Impact of Emotional Control on the World:**

- The text suggests that the widespread turmoil in the world, including wars, famines, and natural disasters, is a reflection of the collective emotional states of beings. As long as attachment, aversion, and ignorance dominate human minds, these outer calamities will persist. Therefore, taming one's own mind is not only a personal practice but a contribution to the greater peace and stability of the world.

#### 8. **The Path of the Bodhisattva:**

- For a bodhisattva, the practice of transforming anger into compassion is essential. This path involves continually working to neutralise negative emotions and cultivate a mind of loving-kindness and compassion. The ultimate goal is to transform the self-centred ego into a vast, open awareness that places the happiness of others above one's own, leading to a state of inner peace unshakable by external circumstances.

### **Conclusion:**

"Giving Peace a Chance" emphasises the importance of inner transformation as the key to resolving external conflicts. The text teaches that the root of all conflict lies within the mind and that true peace can only be achieved by cultivating loving-kindness and compassion, starting with oneself. Through the practice of taming the mind and dissolving anger, you can break the cycle of hatred and contribute to a more peaceful and harmonious world. This practice is not only essential for personal spiritual development but also has profound implications for the collective well-being of all beings.

## **b. How to use objects of desire on the path**

### **21. Dropping Greed**

*Sense pleasures and desirable things are like saltwater—*

*The more one tastes them, the more one's thirst increases.*

*To abandon promptly*

*All objects which arouse attachment is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse emphasises the fundamental teaching that attachment and desire lead to suffering and discontentment. The teaching explores how greed is a pervasive and insidious force that

traps individuals in an endless cycle of craving, which hinders spiritual growth and liberation.

### **Key Themes:**

#### **1. The Insatiable Nature of Greed:**

- Greed is likened to drinking saltwater; the more you indulges, the thirstier you become. This metaphor illustrates that the pursuit of sense pleasures and material desires never leads to lasting satisfaction. Instead, it creates a perpetual state of longing that can never be fully quenched. The more you try to satisfy these desires, the deeper you fall into the cycle of craving, which only leads to more suffering.

#### **2. The Deceptive Innocence of Greed:**

- Unlike anger or hatred, which are often recognised as harmful, greed can seem harmless or even desirable because it is associated with pleasure and happiness. However, the text cautions that greed is the root of suffering, as it fosters attachment and clinging. This attachment creates a deep-seated dissatisfaction and unrest within the mind, making it difficult to achieve true peace and contentment.

#### **3. Attachment and Suffering:**

- The text emphasises that the root of suffering lies in attachment. When you become attached to people, possessions, or desires, the inevitable loss or change of these attachments leads to pain and suffering. This attachment is deeply embedded in the psyche, making it challenging to uproot. The solution is not to renounce all possessions or relationships but to cultivate an inner sense of non-attachment, where you can appreciate and enjoy what you have without clinging to it.

#### **4. The Importance of Letting Go:**

- "Letting go" is a central theme in overcoming greed. This doesn't mean abandoning everything outwardly but rather developing an inward sense of detachment. The practice of letting go involves recognising that nothing in the material world can provide lasting fulfilment and learning to release the tight grip on desires. This practice leads to greater freedom and peace of mind.

#### **5. Generosity as an Antidote to Greed:**

- Generosity is a powerful antidote to greed. By giving to others, you begin to break the cycle of selfish desire and opens the heart to compassion and kindness. The joy of giving, especially when it stretches beyond one's comfort zone, helps to counteract the greed-driven mindset of accumulation and self-centredness. This practice benefits others and brings a deep sense of contentment and joy to the giver.

#### **6. Contentment and True Wealth:**

- True wealth is found in contentment with what you have. The great saints and hermits of the past exemplified this by living simple lives, finding satisfaction in the bare necessities. The more you cultivate contentment, the less you are tormented by the incessant desires for more. This contentment leads to a deeper sense of fulfilment and reduces the suffering caused by endless craving.

#### **7. The Futility of Worldly Pursuits:**

- The text also highlights the futility of chasing after worldly achievements such as wealth, power, and fame. These are seen as transient and ultimately meaningless in the grand scheme of spiritual progress. The story of King Mandhatri, who despite attaining great power and wealth, still desired more and ultimately fell into ruin, serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked greed.

#### **8. The Endless Pursuit of Dharma:**

- While the text advocates for contentment with worldly possessions, they emphasise that you should never be content with your understanding and practice of the Dharma. Unlike material desires, the pursuit of spiritual knowledge and practice is boundless and should be continuously sought after. This pursuit leads to spiritual growth and the ultimate liberation from the cycle of samsara.

### **Conclusion:**

"Dropping Greed" teaches that the pursuit of material desires and sense pleasures is inherently

unsatisfying and leads to greater suffering. True contentment and freedom are found not in accumulating wealth or indulging in pleasures but in letting go of attachments and cultivating generosity, contentment, and a relentless pursuit of spiritual wisdom. By recognising the fleeting nature of worldly achievements and focusing on inner detachment, you can break free from the cycle of craving and move closer to spiritual liberation.

## II. Absolute bodhichitta

The practice of absolute bodhichitta consists of (A) the meditation practice of remaining in a state free of conceptual elaborations without any clinging, and (B) the post-meditation practice of abandoning any belief in the objects of desire and aversion as truly existing.

### A. The meditation practice of remaining in a state free of conceptual elaborations without any clinging

#### 22. Embracing the Non-dual

*All that appears is the work of one's own mind;*

*The nature of mind is primordially free from conceptual limitations.*

*To recognise this nature*

*And not to entertain concepts of subject and object is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse is a deep and intricate exploration of the nature of mind, highlighting the Buddhist understanding of the mind's dualistic and non-dualistic aspects. This subject is particularly challenging because it delves into concepts that are beyond ordinary conceptual thought, requiring a shift in perception to truly grasp the teachings.

#### Key Themes:

##### 1. Dualistic vs. Non-dualistic Perception:

- The text contrasts our ordinary, dualistic way of perceiving the world with the ultimate, non-dual nature of mind. In our daily lives, we operate on a dualistic level, constantly categorising experiences, people, and objects into likes and dislikes, friend and foe, pleasant and unpleasant. This dualistic thinking traps us in samsara, the cycle of suffering, because it is based on the fundamental delusion of a separate, autonomous self (the "I").

##### 2. The Nature of Mind:

- The ultimate nature of mind is described as primordial pure awareness, which is inherently free from conceptual limitations. This means that the true nature of the mind is not bound by the dualistic thinking that characterises our ordinary consciousness. Instead, it is empty of inherent existence, yet luminous and aware. This emptiness is not a void or blankness but a spacious, cognisant awareness that transcends all concepts of existence and nonexistence.

##### 3. The Illusory Nature of Perception:

- The text emphasises that all perceptions and experiences are the work of one's own mind. What we perceive as reality is actually a mental projection, filtered through our senses and shaped by our thoughts, judgments, and past experiences. This constructed reality is not a true representation of what actually exists; rather, it is a subjective interpretation that we mistake for the objective truth.

##### 4. The Concept of No-Self (*Anatman*):

- The Buddhist teaching of *anatman*, or no-self, is central to understanding the non-dual nature of mind. The "self" that we cling to and identify with is an illusion; a construct of the mind. When we investigate the self, whether through the body, mind, or name, we find that it cannot be pinpointed as a singular, independent entity. This realisation is crucial for breaking free from the delusion that sustains samsara.

##### 5. Mindfulness and Beyond:

- Mindfulness is an important practice in observing the mind and its thoughts. However, even mindfulness operates on a dualistic level, where there is an observer (the mindful

self) and the observed (thoughts, emotions, etc.). The ultimate practice, however, is to transcend this duality and recognise the non-dual nature of mind, where there is no separation between subject and object. This state of pure awareness is beyond conceptual thought and cannot be grasped by the ordinary mind.

#### 6. **The Empty and Luminous Nature of Mind:**

- The mind is described as empty because it has no inherent, independent existence; it is not a tangible entity that can be grasped. At the same time, it is luminous because it is aware and knowing. These two aspects (emptiness and clarity) are inseparable in the true nature of mind. Recognising this nature leads to liberation from the delusions that cause suffering.

#### 7. **The Practice of Non-Conceptual Meditation:**

- The text encourages the practice of meditation that is free from conceptual elaboration, where one rests in the natural state of mind without clinging to thoughts or concepts. This practice leads to a direct recognition of the mind's true nature, which is beyond dualistic thinking. The union of calm abiding (shamatha) and insight (vipashyana) is essential in stabilising this realisation.

#### 8. **Compassion and Wisdom:**

- The wisdom of recognising the non-dual nature of mind must be coupled with compassion. Even though, from an ultimate perspective, there are no inherently existing beings to save, the relative suffering experienced by sentient beings is real. Therefore, a bodhisattva works tirelessly to alleviate this suffering, even while understanding that both the helper and the helped are empty of inherent existence.

#### 9. **Realising Non-duality in Everyday Life:**

- The text suggests that realising the non-dual nature of mind is not just an abstract concept to be understood but a living reality to be embodied in everyday life. This involves maintaining awareness of the mind's true nature in all situations, not just during formal meditation practice. The ultimate goal is to integrate this awareness into all aspects of life, transforming every moment into an expression of enlightened activity.

#### **Conclusion:**

"Embracing the Nondual" is an advanced teaching that challenges practitioners to go beyond their ordinary, dualistic ways of perceiving and interacting with the world. It invites a profound shift in understanding, where one recognises the illusory nature of the self and the world and awakens to the mind's true, non-dual nature. This realisation, coupled with compassion, leads to the path of the bodhisattva, where one works for the liberation of all beings while remaining free from the delusions that bind them to samsara. The teaching is a call to see beyond the surface of reality and to live from the depth of true, non-dual awareness.

## **B. The post-meditation practice of abandoning any belief in the objects of desire and aversion as truly existing**

### **i. Abandoning any belief in the objects of desire as truly existing**

#### **23. Recognising the Illusion**

*When encountering objects which please us,  
To view them like rainbows in summer,  
Not ultimately real, however beautiful they appear,  
And to relinquish craving and attachment, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

This verse addresses the practice of overcoming attachment to desirable objects by recognising their impermanence and illusory nature. This teaching is crucial for those on the bodhisattva path, as it helps to relinquish craving and cultivate a more liberated and compassionate way of living.

#### **Key Themes:**

##### **1. Impermanence and Illusion:**

- The text emphasises that all phenomena, no matter how beautiful or desirable, are

impermanent and ultimately illusory. Like a rainbow that appears in the sky, these objects are momentary and will eventually disappear. Recognising this impermanence helps to loosen the grip of attachment and craving, allowing you to appreciate beauty without becoming ensnared by it.

2. **The Nature of Attachment:**

- Attachment arises when we begin to identify with and cling to objects, people, or experiences, believing that they will bring us lasting happiness. This attachment is based on the mistaken belief that these things have an inherent, permanent existence. However, the text points out that this is a delusion. The objects of our attachment are not truly ours; they are fleeting and beyond our control.

3. **Appreciation Without Grasping:**

- The practice involves learning to appreciate the beauty and joy of objects, people and relationships without clinging to them. This means seeing things as they are (temporary and transient) and not as permanent fixtures that we can possess or control. By holding everything lightly and with an open hand, we can experience life more fully without the suffering that comes from grasping and attachment.

4. **Generosity as an Antidote to Grasping:**

- Generosity is highlighted as a powerful antidote to the grasping mind. When we give freely, without attachment, we begin to loosen our hold on material possessions and cultivate a sense of freedom and lightness. This practice benefits others and also helps us to develop a mind that is less attached and more open.

5. **The Illusion of Ownership:**

- The text challenges the notion of ownership, reminding us that we do not truly own anything; not even our own bodies. At the end of life, we leave everything behind, and the attachment to material things only brings pain. Recognising the illusory nature of ownership helps to diminish the hold that possessions have over us.

6. **The Role of Mindfulness:**

- Mindfulness plays a crucial role in recognising and overcoming attachment. By being aware of our thoughts and feelings, we can catch ourselves when we start to cling to something and remind ourselves of its impermanent nature. Mindfulness helps us to see through the delusions of the mind and develop a more balanced and equanimous approach to life.

7. **Cleaning the Mind:**

- The text uses the metaphor of cleaning a room to describe the process of clearing the mind of clutter; old habits, judgments, and attachments. Just as we would clean a room to prepare for a guest, we must clean our minds to make space for wisdom and compassion. This involves letting go of the mental junk that we have accumulated over time and creating an environment conducive to spiritual growth.

8. **The Role of Teachers and Inner Wisdom:**

- While external teachers and guidance are important, the text emphasises that true wisdom ultimately comes from within. As we mature spiritually, we must learn to trust our own inner wisdom and rely less on external authorities. The process of spiritual growth involves recognising the unity between ourselves and the teachings, understanding that the true guru is within.

9. **Living with Appreciation and Joy:**

- The goal is to live with an innocent mind that appreciates the beauty and joy of objects, people and relationships without becoming attached to them. This means embracing the impermanence of all things and finding contentment in the present moment, rather than constantly seeking to acquire more.

**Conclusion:**

"Recognising the Illusion" teaches that true freedom and happiness come not from acquiring and holding onto things but from letting go of attachment and recognising the impermanent and illusory nature of all phenomena. By cultivating mindfulness, generosity, and an open-hearted

approach to life, we can experience a deeper sense of peace and contentment. This practice is essential for anyone on the bodhisattva path, as it helps to overcome the delusions that keep us trapped in samsara and opens the way to true liberation.

## ii. Abandoning any belief in the objects of aversion as truly existing

### 24. Letting Go of Illusion

*The various forms of suffering are like the death of one's child in a dream:*

*By clinging to deluded perceptions as real, we exhaust ourselves.*

*Therefore, when encountering unfavourable circumstances,*

*To view them as illusions is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

- In this verse, Thogme Sangpo suggests that all experiences (whether good or bad, pleasant or painful) are illusions. Everything in our lives is a projection of our mind, a fabrication that we believe in so deeply that it causes us suffering. Like the death of a child in a dream, these experiences feel very real to us, but ultimately, they are not. The suffering, joy, and all other emotions we experience are not inherently real; they are merely our mind's interpretations and projections.
- When we dream of losing someone dear to us, the pain feels real, but when we wake up, we realise it was just a dream. Similarly, in our waking life, we are trapped in a continuous cycle of deluded perceptions that we take as real. Thogme Sangpo's teaching is about waking up from this dream of ignorance, understanding that all phenomena, including our perceptions, are like a movie; engaging, but ultimately not real.
- Karma also plays a significant role in how we perceive and interpret events. Our past actions influence our current experiences, shaping how we view the world. The experiences we have, both good and bad, are filtered through the lens of our karma, further reinforcing the illusion.
- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche notes that by contemplating the empty nature of all phenomena during meditation, we can begin to see the dreamlike nature of life even outside of meditation. This realisation helps us approach life with wisdom, seeing the emptiness of all things and responding to challenges with compassion and equanimity.
- Recognising that everything is an illusion doesn't mean becoming detached or indifferent. Instead, it means understanding that our attachments, aversions, and the stories we create about our lives are not as solid or permanent as they seem. This understanding allows us to let go of the tight grasp we have on our experiences, whether they are pleasurable or painful.
- To live in this awareness is to be free from the bondage of ego and delusion. It is to navigate life with a light touch, appreciating beauty without grasping, experiencing pain without despair, and understanding that all of it (our whole life) is like a rainbow, beautiful yet ephemeral, and ultimately, an illusion.

### 25. Practicing Generosity

*If those who wish for enlightenment must give away even their own bodies,*

*How much more should it be true of material objects?*

*Therefore, without expectation of result or reward*

*To give with generosity is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

- In the verse on practicing generosity, the focus is on the importance of giving without expectation or attachment, an essential practice for those on the path to enlightenment. Generosity, or *dana* in Sanskrit, is the first of the six transcendent perfections, or *paramitas*, that guide a bodhisattva's journey. The essence of generosity lies in the act of giving, whether it is material goods, time, or service, with an open heart and without any expectation of reward or recognition.
- Generosity begins with the simple act of sharing what we have, not only material possessions but also our time and attention. This act of giving counters the tendency to cling and grasp, which is a source of much of our suffering. The joy of giving is in both the act itself and in the intention behind it. When we give with a pure motivation, we cultivate an open, joyful heart, which is the foundation of a compassionate and altruistic life.

- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche emphasises that true generosity is complete in itself and does not seek any reward. When we give out of sheer love, devotion, or compassion, the act of giving becomes an expression of our inner wealth and freedom. The act of generosity is most powerful when it is free from the concepts of giver, receiver, and the act of giving, which makes it a transcendent practice leading to enlightenment.
- Generosity is also about letting go of attachment to material possessions and recognising their impermanent nature. By giving freely, we both help others and purify our own minds from the grasping tendencies that lead to suffering. The ultimate form of generosity is giving the Dharma, as it offers others the path to liberation; the greatest form of wealth.
- The story of the miserly man who learned to give, beginning with small acts of generosity, illustrates that even those who struggle with giving can cultivate this quality through gradual practice. By starting small, one can eventually develop a heart that delights in giving without reservation.
- In essence, practicing generosity is about cultivating a mind of non-attachment, where the act of giving is free from ego and self-interest. This pure form of generosity is what transforms it into a *paramita*, a transcendent perfection that leads to the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

## 26. Practicing Discipline

*If, lacking discipline, one cannot accomplish one's own good,*

*It is laughable to think of accomplishing the good of others.*

*Therefore, to observe discipline*

*Without samsaric motives is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

- In the verse on practicing discipline, the focus is on the essential role of discipline in the path of a bodhisattva. Discipline (ethical conduct) is the bedrock upon which all spiritual practices are built. Without a foundation of discipline, it is impossible to achieve personal spiritual growth, let alone be of genuine benefit to others.
- Discipline is the framework that supports the entire structure of Dharma practice. Just as a garden must be prepared before it can yield crops, the mind and actions of a practitioner must be cultivated with discipline before any other virtues can take root. The five basic precepts (refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants) are the starting point. These are not arbitrary rules but timeless principles that guide us toward living harmlessly in the world.
- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche emphasises that discipline is the foundation for all Dharma practice, supporting the cultivation of positive qualities across all levels of practice, from the basic ethical precepts to the more advanced vows of the Mahayana and Vajrayana paths. Without discipline, the mind remains unruly, and the path to enlightenment is obstructed by the negative karma generated by unethical actions.
- The verse reminds us that practicing discipline is not about seeking approval or merit but about aligning our actions with the truth of the Dharma. True discipline is an internal commitment to live in harmony with the principles of the Dharma, regardless of external recognition or reward. It is about being true to oneself and one's path, knowing that discipline is the source of both personal happiness & the ability to genuinely benefit others.
- In practicing discipline, we ensure that our actions, speech, and thoughts are aligned with the Dharma, creating a vessel in which the teachings can flourish. This disciplined approach leads to a peaceful and self-controlled mind, free from the turmoil of negative emotions and actions. Discipline, when observed with sincerity and without samsaric motives, becomes the foundation for all other practices and the key to progressing on the path to enlightenment.

## 27. Practicing Patience

*For a bodhisattva who desires the joys of virtue,*

*All who harm him are like a **precious treasure**.*

*Therefore, to cultivate patience toward all,*

*Without resentment, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

In the verse on practicing patience, the text emphasises the importance of cultivating patience

as an essential quality on the path of a bodhisattva. Patience is not just about enduring difficulties or harm without anger; it is about welcoming these challenges as opportunities to transform the heart and mind. When someone causes harm or circumstances provoke anger and resentment, these are seen not as obstacles but as precious treasures that allow us to practice patience and develop the virtues necessary for enlightenment.

There are three types of patience to cultivate:

1. **Patience with Harm from Others:** When others harm us, it is essential to remember that this harm is the result of our own past negative actions. The person causing harm is themselves driven by delusion, and their actions will lead to their suffering in the future. By responding with patience, we can purify our own past negative actions and accumulate merit. This person, far from being an enemy, is actually a spiritual friend who offers us the opportunity to practice and grow. Understanding this allows us to cultivate compassion rather than resentment.
2. **Patience with Hardships in the Dharma:** Practicing the Dharma often involves enduring hardships like illness, hunger, or extreme weather. These difficulties are not to be resented but accepted joyfully, as they help purify past negative karma and lead us toward ultimate buddhahood. Just as a condemned man might gladly endure the loss of a hand to save his life, we should embrace these temporary sufferings for the sake of long-term spiritual progress.
3. **Patience with Profound Dharma Teachings:** The deepest truths of the Dharma, such as the nature of emptiness and the uncompounded nature of primordial wisdom, can be challenging and even frightening to accept. True patience involves facing these profound teachings without fear and embracing the reality that all phenomena are empty by nature. Rejecting these truths can lead to downfall, but by accepting them, we open the door to ultimate liberation.

Practicing patience in these ways is crucial for a bodhisattva. By transforming negative emotions like anger and resentment into patience and compassion, we cultivate the qualities necessary for enlightenment. As Shantideva teaches, anger can destroy countless acts of virtue, while patience and love lead to enlightenment. Thus, even those who harm us can be seen as benefactors, providing the precious opportunity to practice and grow.

The verse reminds us that true patience is free from resentment. It is a state of mind that sees adversaries not as enemies but as teachers who help us develop tolerance, a quality essential for Buddhahood. In this way, patience becomes a powerful tool for transforming the mind and cultivating the joys of virtue on the path to enlightenment.

## 28. Practicing Diligence

*Merely for their own sake, even shravakas and pratyekabuddhas*

*Make efforts like someone whose hair is on fire trying to put it out.*

*Seeing this, for the sake of all beings,*

*To practice diligence, the source of excellent qualities, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

In the verse on practicing diligence, the text emphasises the crucial role of diligence in the path of a bodhisattva. Diligence, or joyous effort, is the driving force that enables one to develop all the paramitas, including generosity, discipline, patience, meditation, and wisdom. It is the quality that propels us forward on the path to enlightenment, ensuring that we do not fall into laziness or complacency.

The practice of diligence is divided into three aspects:

1. **Armour-like Diligence:** This is the determination and courage to persist in one's practice, regardless of the obstacles or difficulties encountered. It is like wearing an armour of fortitude that protects against the four demons; negative emotions, attachment to comfort, physical sickness, and death. This kind of diligence is essential for maintaining consistent effort on the path, ensuring that one does not give up or become discouraged.
2. **Diligence in Action:** This involves the actual application of one's determination through the practice of the six paramitas and other meritorious activities. It is about taking immediate and sustained action without procrastination, feeling joy in the opportunity to



practice and progress on the path. This type of diligence helps to overcome laziness and ensures that one's practice is steady and purposeful.

3. **Diligence that Cannot be Stopped:** This is the unrelenting and insatiable energy to work tirelessly for the benefit of all beings. It involves engaging in every possible way, day and night, to help others, whether directly or indirectly. This kind of diligence is marked by a deep commitment to the welfare of others, with no expectation of reward or recognition.

Each of these aspects of diligence has its opposite in corresponding forms of laziness:

- **The Laziness of Comfort:** This manifests as a desire for ease and idleness, leading to neglect of Dharma practice. The antidote is to meditate on death and impermanence, realising that time is precious and limited.
- **The Laziness of Discouragement:** This occurs when one feels overwhelmed by the path and doubts one's ability to reach enlightenment. The antidote is to strengthen one's resolve by reflecting on the benefits of liberation and enlightenment.
- **The Laziness of Misplaced Priorities:** This happens when one becomes preoccupied with worldly concerns and neglects the deeper aims of spiritual practice. The antidote is to recognise that worldly pursuits are ultimately causes of suffering and to refocus on the true priorities of the Dharma.

Diligence is vital because it sustains and empowers all other qualities on the path. Without it, bodhichitta (the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings) and the activities of a bodhisattva cannot take root and grow. The Buddha and great saints of the past serve as inspiring models of diligence, demonstrating the immense effort required to achieve enlightenment.

For a bodhisattva, the practice of diligence is not just about personal liberation but about carrying the burden of all beings and working tirelessly for their ultimate happiness. This requires a heroic sense of purpose and a willingness to face challenges with courage and determination. The text also highlights the importance of being aware of laziness, in all its forms, and countering it with diligence. Whether it is the gross laziness of avoiding practice, the subtle laziness of self-doubt, or the busyness that distracts from deeper practice, diligence is the key to overcoming these obstacles and progressing on the path to enlightenment.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche encapsulates the essence of diligence as the joyous effort and active determination to carry out positive actions, without any expectations or self-satisfaction. This kind of diligence is essential for awakening and developing all the paramitas, and for achieving the ultimate goal of enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

## 29. Practicing Concentration

*Knowing that through profound insight thoroughly grounded in sustained calm,  
The disturbing emotions are completely conquered,  
To practice the concentration which utterly transcends  
The four formless states is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

In the verse on practicing concentration, the text highlights the importance of cultivating a deeply focused and tranquil mind as a foundation for profound insight. Concentration, when developed through practices like shamatha (calm abiding) and vipashyana (clear insight), is crucial for overcoming the disturbing emotions and attaining true liberation. The practice of concentration is not just about achieving a state of mental calm; it is about using that calm to gain deep insight into the nature of the mind and reality itself.

### **Shamatha and Vipashyana:**

Shamatha is the practice of calming the mind and developing a focused, one-pointed concentration. Initially, the mind is like a restless monkey, constantly jumping from one thought or sensation to another. Through sustained practice, the mind becomes more stable, focused, and calm. This is like putting water on blotting paper, where it soaks in and stays in place, as opposed to pouring water on wax paper, where it simply runs off.

Once the mind has been tamed through shamatha, it is ready for vipashyana, which involves investigating the nature of the mind and reality. This is where the practice moves beyond simple concentration and delves into understanding the true nature of thoughts, emotions, and

phenomena. Vipashyana is about questioning and examining the mind itself: What is a thought? Where does it come from? Who is thinking?

This investigation reveals that everything we experience (our thoughts, emotions, perceptions, and even our sense of self) is ultimately insubstantial and empty of inherent existence. This recognition leads to a profound insight into the nature of reality, transcending the dualistic notions of subject and object.

### **The Four Formless States:**

The text also refers to the four formless states (the realms of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception), which are advanced meditative absorptions. These states are rarefied and can be mistaken for ultimate liberation. However, they are still within the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth and are not the final goal. In the Tibetan tradition, the emphasis is not on these states themselves but on using the stability and clarity of mind achieved through shamatha to develop vipashyana.

### **The Nature of the Mind:**

Through the combination of shamatha and vipashyana, one can realise the empty and luminous nature of the mind. When examined closely, the mind is not a solid, independent entity. It is like space; present everywhere but without any inherent characteristics. This realisation of the mind's empty nature is a crucial step on the path to enlightenment.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explains that once the mind is calmed and clear, it can be used as a tool to gain insight into the nature of reality. This insight is not just intellectual understanding; it is a direct, experiential realisation of the mind's true nature, which is beyond conceptual thinking. This realisation is what ultimately liberates us from the cycle of samsara.

The practice of concentration, therefore, is about more than just achieving a peaceful mind. It is about using that peaceful mind to penetrate the nature of reality, to see through the illusions of dualistic thinking, and to awaken to the true nature of the mind and all phenomena. This is the practice that leads to the complete transcendence of the four formless states and the realisation of ultimate truth.

## **30. Practicing Wisdom**

*In the absence of wisdom, perfect enlightenment cannot be attained*

*Through the other five perfections alone.*

*Therefore, to cultivate wisdom combined with skilful means*

*And free from the three concepts is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The verse on practicing wisdom addresses the essential role of wisdom in the path to enlightenment. It emphasises that without wisdom, the other five perfections (paramitas) (generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, and concentration) cannot lead to complete enlightenment. Wisdom, in this context, refers to the deep, experiential understanding of the empty nature of all things, a realisation that transcends ordinary conceptual thinking and dualistic perceptions.

### **The Role of Wisdom:**

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche highlights that the practice of wisdom is the key to transforming the other perfections into true paths to enlightenment. While the other paramitas accumulate merit, they remain bound by conceptual thinking if they are not accompanied by wisdom. The key point here is that actions performed with the belief in a truly existing self (the subject), an act (the action), and an object (the recipient) continue to bind one to samsara, the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

For example, giving a gift, even with the best intentions, still involves the three concepts: the giver, the act of giving, and the receiver. Without wisdom, this act, though meritorious, perpetuates the cycle of samsara because it reinforces the belief in the inherent existence of these three aspects. Wisdom, therefore, is essential to see through these illusions and recognise that ultimately, there is no inherent giver, no act of giving, no inherent gift, and no inherent recipient. This realisation is what transforms ordinary actions into transcendent ones.

### **The Three Concepts and Emptiness:**

The text discusses the "three concepts" that must be transcended: the subject (self), the object

(other), and the action itself. Wisdom is the understanding that all these concepts are empty of inherent existence. The practice of wisdom involves cultivating this understanding, leading to the dissolution of the ego and the realisation of non-duality. This realisation is described as a "brilliant sun rising in the sky," dispelling the darkness of ignorance and transforming all actions into expressions of ultimate truth.

Without this wisdom, the practice of the other paramitas remains incomplete, as they are still tied to the conceptual mind and the dualistic notions of self and other. When wisdom is cultivated and integrated into the practice, it frees these actions from the constraints of dualistic thinking, allowing them to become true vehicles for enlightenment.

### **Stages of Developing Wisdom:**

The practice of wisdom is outlined in stages. It begins with hearing and studying the teachings, reflecting on their meaning, and finally meditating on them to integrate their truth into one's being. The process of developing wisdom involves moving from an intellectual understanding of emptiness to a direct, experiential realisation. This progression is crucial, as it allows the practitioner to gradually deepen their insight and overcome the more subtle forms of ignorance and attachment.

The wisdom that arises from meditation, particularly the understanding of emptiness, leads to a spontaneous and boundless compassion for all beings. This compassion is not driven by a sense of self or other but arises naturally from the recognition of the non-dual nature of reality. The practice of wisdom ultimately unifies the relative and absolute truths, leading to a state where compassion and emptiness are seen as inseparable.

### **The Ultimate Realisation:**

The text concludes by emphasising that the realisation of wisdom is the ultimate goal of all Mahayana and Vajrayana teachings. It is the culmination of the path and the essence of the bodhisattva's practice. The realisation of wisdom is both an intellectual achievement and a profound transformation of one's entire being. It leads to a state where all actions are free from the constraints of conceptual thinking and are instead expressions of the ultimate truth.

In this state, the practitioner sees no difference between self and others, and all actions are motivated by a spontaneous and boundless compassion. This is the true realisation of the paramitas and the path to enlightenment.

In summary, wisdom is the crown jewel of the bodhisattva's practice, the key that transforms the other perfections into true vehicles for enlightenment. Without wisdom, the path remains incomplete, bound by conceptual thinking and dualistic perceptions. With wisdom, the practitioner transcends these limitations and realises the true nature of reality, leading to ultimate liberation.

## **31. Examining Oneself**

*If I do not examine my own defects,  
Though outwardly a Dharma practitioner, I may act contrary to the Dharma.  
Therefore, continuously to examine my own faults  
And give them up is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The verse on examining oneself emphasises the critical importance of self-awareness and self-examination on the bodhisattva path. It highlights the need to continuously reflect on one's own faults and to address them, rather than merely projecting an outward appearance of being a Dharma practitioner. The practice of examining oneself is essential for genuine spiritual growth and for aligning one's actions with the true principles of the Dharma.

### **The Importance of Self-Examination:**

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's commentary underscores the necessity of continuously looking inward to recognise and address one's own shortcomings. He emphasises that without this introspection, one's actions, even if outwardly aligned with the Dharma, may still be driven by delusion and negative emotions. The primary focus should always be on refining and correcting one's own mind rather than on observing the faults of others.

This practice is not about self-criticism in a harsh or punitive sense. Instead, it involves a constructive and honest acknowledgment of one's flaws and challenges. The metaphor of using

a mirror to check for dirt on one's face aptly describes this process of self-examination. Just as a mirror reveals the dirt on the face, regular introspection allows one to see where their thoughts, words, and actions may be misaligned with the Dharma.

### **Avoiding the Pitfall of Pretending:**

A common challenge in the practice of Dharma is the tendency to adopt an outward persona of a "perfect" practitioner while ignoring or suppressing inner conflicts and faults. This tendency can lead to a disconnect between one's external behaviour and internal reality. The verse warns against this kind of pretence, which can lead to self-deception and hinder genuine spiritual progress.

Gyalse Thogme, in his teachings, points out the dangers of overlooking one's own faults while being quick to discern those of others. This behaviour not only hampers one's progress but also perpetuates a cycle of delusion and ego-centrism, which is contrary to the principles of the Dharma.

### **The Path of Mindful Awareness:**

To truly practice the Dharma, one must integrate the teachings with their own mind. This involves a constant and mindful awareness of one's thoughts, actions, and intentions. It is through this ongoing process of self-examination that one can identify negative patterns and apply appropriate antidotes, such as patience in the face of anger or clarity in moments of confusion.

The ability to observe and transform one's own mind is not just beneficial for personal growth but is also essential for effectively helping others. A bodhisattva's ability to guide others depends on their own inner clarity and stability. Therefore, the practice of self-examination and the continuous effort to align one's mind with the Dharma are fundamental aspects of the bodhisattva path.

### **The Four Basic Downfalls:**

The text also outlines four basic downfalls that one must train to avoid:

1. Praising oneself and disparaging others out of desire for wealth or prestige.
2. Failing to give what one can to those in need out of miserliness.
3. Abusing others verbally or physically out of animosity or failing to forgive those who have sought forgiveness.
4. Criticising or rejecting the Mahayana teachings out of ignorance or hypocrisy.

These downfalls are crucial to recognise and avoid, as they can significantly hinder one's spiritual progress. The antidote to these downfalls is to maintain a constant awareness of one's motivations and actions, ensuring they align with the principles of the Dharma.

### **Conclusion:**

The practice of examining oneself is about maintaining a vigilant and honest awareness of one's inner state. It is a process of continually refining and correcting one's thoughts, words, and actions to ensure they are in harmony with the Dharma. By doing so, a bodhisattva not only purifies their own mind but also becomes more capable of guiding and benefiting others. This practice of self-examination is essential for anyone on the path to enlightenment, as it fosters the development of true wisdom and compassion.

## **32. Abandoning Criticising Others**

*If, impelled by negative emotions, I relate the faults*

*Of other bodhisattvas, I will myself degenerate.*

*Therefore, to not talk about the faults of anyone*

*Who has entered the Mahayana is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The verse on abandoning criticism highlights the importance of refraining from speaking ill of others, especially those who have entered the path of the Mahayana. This practice is not merely about avoiding negative speech but about cultivating a mindset that respects and values the inherent potential in all beings, recognising their Buddha-nature.

### **The Harm of Criticising Others:**

Gossip and denigration are recognised as non-virtuous actions that create disharmony and often serve as a way to deflect attention from one's own shortcomings. When we criticise

others, especially fellow Dharma practitioners, we may think we are pointing out their faults, but in reality, we are reinforcing our own negative emotions and delusions. This behaviour both harms the person being criticised and also degrades our own spiritual progress.

The Buddha's teachings remind us that it is inappropriate to disparage others because all beings possess the potential for Buddhahood. By recognising this, we cultivate respect and compassion for everyone. The verse advises that if someone is abusing their position or acting unethically, we should speak out, but with careful consideration, ensuring our actions are motivated by compassion and the desire to protect others, rather than by negative emotions like anger or jealousy.

### **Respecting All Beings:**

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's commentary further emphasises the importance of seeing all beings as possessing the Buddha-nature. This view fosters respect and compassion, making it inappropriate to criticise or find fault with others. He also warns against the dangers of sectarianism and encourages a nonjudgmental, pure vision that sees all Dharma traditions as valid expressions of the Buddha's teachings.

When we perceive faults in others, it is often a reflection of our own imperfections. The analogy of a white conch appearing yellow to someone with jaundice illustrates how our impure perception can distort the way we see others. The verse teaches that every action of enlightened beings and bodhisattvas has a deeper meaning, often beyond our immediate understanding. Therefore, we should refrain from criticism and instead cultivate faith and pure vision, which are essential for genuine Dharma practice.

### **The Importance of Harmony and Pure Vision:**

Maintaining harmony within the sangha is crucial for the preservation of the teachings. This involves both refraining from criticism and also actively cultivating respect, kindness, and openness toward all Dharma practitioners. In the Vajrayana tradition, this practice extends to maintaining harmony with vajra brothers and sisters, as any discord can hinder spiritual progress and obscure the attainment of realisation.

Milarepa's words, "The world all around is the best of all books," remind us that everything we encounter can be a teaching if we maintain pure vision. The verse concludes with an emphasis on the importance of setting right our own defects rather than proclaiming those of others. This approach preserves the purity of our practice and maintains the integrity of the Dharma.

### **Conclusion:**

The practice of abandoning criticism is a profound aspect of the bodhisattva path, one that involves more than just refraining from negative speech. It requires a deep respect for the potential in all beings and a commitment to maintaining harmony within the sangha. By cultivating pure vision and compassion, we not only protect others from harm but also safeguard our own spiritual progress, ensuring that our Dharma practice remains authentic and effective.

## **33. Not Profiting from Dharma**

*Offerings and respect may bring discord*

*And cause listening, reflection, and meditation to decline.*

*Therefore, to avoid attachment*

*To the homes of friends and benefactors is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

Thogme Sangpo's verse on not profiting from the Dharma is a powerful reminder of the potential dangers that come with receiving offerings, respect, and adulation, particularly for those who hold positions of spiritual authority. This verse warns against becoming attached to the material and social benefits that can come with being a respected Dharma practitioner or teacher.

### **The Danger of Attachment:**

The verse begins by pointing out that offerings and respect, though well-intentioned, can lead to discord and cause the essential practices of listening, reflection, and meditation to decline. This happens when a practitioner becomes attached to the comfort and admiration that such respect and offerings bring. The result is a distraction from the true purpose of the Dharma path, which is to cultivate inner wisdom and compassion.

Thogme Sangpo, as a respected lama himself, is cautioning his fellow practitioners, especially those who are in positions of authority, to be vigilant. The verse is particularly relevant today, as many young incarnate lamas and spiritual leaders are recognised and elevated to positions of great respect at a very early age. While the intentions behind these recognitions are often good, there is a real danger that these young lamas may not yet be fully prepared for the responsibilities placed upon them. The adulation and expectations of their followers can lead them to become complacent, or worse, arrogant.

#### **The Impact on Practice:**

When a practitioner becomes preoccupied with receiving offerings and respect, their practice can suffer. The time and energy that should be devoted to studying, contemplating, and meditating can instead be consumed by performing rituals, attending to the needs of benefactors, and maintaining social status. This is particularly dangerous for those who are new to the path, as it can lead to a weakening of their foundational practices.

This issue is not unique to contemporary times; it has been a concern for centuries. However, the modern context, with its global reach and the pressures on young lamas to travel and support Dharma centres worldwide, exacerbates the problem. The verse serves as a cautionary note for both the lamas and their followers to stay focused on the true purpose of the Dharma and not be distracted by the external trappings of respect and material offerings.

#### **The True Practice:**

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's commentary emphasises that the essence of Dharma practice is not in the accumulation of wealth or social status, but in the cultivation of inner wisdom and compassion. The verse calls on practitioners to avoid attachment to the homes of friends and benefactors, which can symbolise the comfort and security provided by material wealth and social connections.

Instead, the practice of a bodhisattva is to remain detached from these external comforts and to stay focused on the inner work of listening, reflecting, and meditating on the Dharma. The ultimate goal is to attain liberation, which requires letting go of all attachments, including those to respect, offerings, and social status.

#### **The Modern Context:**

In the modern context, where Dharma centres rely on external funding and the presence of recognised lamas to sustain themselves, the pressure on young lamas to perform and meet expectations is immense. This can lead to a situation where the true purpose of the Dharma is overshadowed by the need to maintain the centre's financial and social standing.

The verse encourages both lamas and their followers to resist these pressures and to prioritise the authentic practice of the Dharma. This means focusing on inner cultivation and avoiding the distractions of wealth, respect, and social status. The ultimate aim is to keep the Dharma pure and to ensure that the teachings are passed down in their true form, untainted by the temptations of worldly gain.

#### **Conclusion:**

Thogme Sangpo's verse on not profiting from the Dharma is a timeless reminder of the dangers that come with spiritual authority. It calls on practitioners to stay focused on the true purpose of the Dharma and to avoid becoming attached to the material and social benefits that can come with respect and offerings. In doing so, practitioners can maintain the purity of the Dharma and ensure that their practice leads to true liberation.

## **34. Giving Up Harsh Speech**

*Harsh words disturb the minds of others  
And spoil our own bodhisattva practice.  
Therefore, to give up rough speech,  
Which others find unpleasant, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

#### **The Impact of Harsh Words:**

The verse on giving up harsh speech highlights the profound impact that our words can have on others and ourselves. Words are powerful; they can either heal or harm, uplift or bring down. Harsh words, in particular, have the potential to disturb the minds of others and disrupt our own

practice as bodhisattvas. As practitioners on the path, we must be mindful of the language we use and the tone in which we speak.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche emphasises that harsh words are often the root cause of conflicts and wars, leading to long-lasting feuds and resentment. This lack of tolerance and patience can escalate into large-scale devastation, illustrating the far-reaching consequences of something as simple as speech. Parents, in particular, should be aware of the lasting impact their words can have on their children. A single harsh remark, spoken in anger or frustration, can leave deep emotional scars that may affect a child throughout their life.

### **The Responsibility of Speech:**

As beings with the capacity for language, we bear the responsibility of using our speech wisely. Words can cause more harm than physical actions because they strike directly at the heart and mind. The old saying, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never harm me," is, as the Tibetan saying suggests, misleading. Words can tear our hearts to pieces, leaving emotional wounds that can take much longer to heal than physical injuries.

As practitioners, we are encouraged to speak truthfully, ensuring that our words are trustworthy and do not deceive others. However, truthfulness alone is not enough; our speech should also be kind and beneficial. Even when we must speak critically or offer difficult feedback, it is crucial to check our motivation and ensure that our words are meant to help, not to harm.

### **Avoiding Excessive Speech:**

In addition to avoiding harsh speech, we should also be mindful of excessive or meaningless chatter. Idle talk can distract both ourselves and others from more meaningful activities and can dilute the power of our words when we do need to speak. Sometimes, the best form of communication is silence, particularly when it is a noble silence that fosters reflection and inner peace.

### **Practicing Compassionate Speech:**

A bodhisattva's practice involves using speech to benefit others, bringing them closer to the path of liberation. This means speaking in ways that open people's minds, make them happy, and gently introduce them to the Dharma. The Buddha exemplified this approach by tailoring his teachings to suit the capacities and receptivity of his audience, always aiming to lead them toward greater understanding and compassion.

Nagarjuna, in his *Letter to a Friend*, categorises speech into three types: words that are like honey (helpful and pleasing), words that are like flowers (honest and true), and words that are like excrement (harmful and false). As practitioners, we are encouraged to cultivate speech that resembles honey and flowers, while abandoning speech that resembles excrement.

### **The Consequences of Negative Speech:**

Engaging in harsh speech or gossip can lead to significant negative karma. It not only disturbs others but also derails our own progress on the path. Criticising others, especially those who are also on the Dharma path, can create a mountain of negativity for ourselves. Instead, the bodhisattva's way is to use speech constructively, to guide and inspire others toward enlightenment.

### **Conclusion:**

Giving up harsh speech is a vital aspect of the bodhisattva path. By being mindful of our words, we can avoid causing harm to others and ensure that our speech aligns with our intention to benefit all beings. Harsh speech both disrupts the minds of others and also undermines our own practice. Therefore, we should strive to speak with kindness, truthfulness, and compassion, always considering the impact our words may have. Thus, we uphold the integrity of the Dharma and support the spiritual growth of ourselves and others.

## **35. Cutting Negative Emotions**

*When emotions become habitual, they are hard to get rid of with antidotes.*

*Therefore, with mindfulness and vigilance, to seize the weapon of the antidote*

*And crush attachment and other negative emotions*

*The moment they arise is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

### **The Challenge of Habitual Emotions:**

Negative emotions, when they become habitual, can be deeply ingrained and difficult to uproot. The key to overcoming these emotions lies in cultivating mindfulness and vigilance. Mindfulness, in this context, refers to being fully aware of our thoughts, feelings, and actions in the present moment. Vigilance is the ongoing watchfulness that checks in on our state of mind, ensuring that we stay on track and do not fall into the trap of negative emotions.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche provides a powerful analogy: when the mind is distracted, we might not even notice a mosquito bite, but when the mind is quiet and calm, we feel it immediately. Similarly, a mind that is stable and concentrated is better equipped to recognise and address negative emotions as soon as they arise.

### **The Power of Early Intervention:**

The importance of catching negative emotions in their early stages cannot be overstated. When emotions are just beginning to surface, they are like wisps of cloud in a clear sky; insubstantial and easy to disperse. However, if left unchecked, these emotions can quickly build up, leading to a cascade of thoughts and feelings that are much harder to control. The key is to recognise these emotions immediately and apply the appropriate antidotes before they take root.

Shantideva, in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, likens negative emotions to enemies that must be repelled. Unlike human enemies, these emotions have no retreat; and they can be vanquished simply by recognising them for what they are. The moment an emotion arises, we must be ready with the antidote. This is the essence of Dharma practice.

### **The Role of Mindfulness:**

Mindfulness is the path to liberation, as the Buddha taught. It involves a quality of being present, aware, and conscious of what is happening within and around us. The Buddha recommended starting with awareness of physical movements; knowing when you are standing, sitting, walking, and so on. This awareness should then be extended to feelings, sensations, and finally to the mind itself. What is the mind doing at this moment? How is it interacting with external phenomena?

The more conscious we become, the better equipped we are to deal with negative emotions as they arise. The practice of mindfulness allows us to see these emotions clearly, in the moment they appear, and to apply the necessary antidotes before they gain momentum.

### **The Importance of Vigilance:**

Vigilance works hand in hand with mindfulness. It is like a guardian that checks in periodically to ensure that the mind is not straying into negative territory. If everything is running smoothly, vigilance recedes, only to return later for another check. But when vigilance detects a problem (such as the emergence of anger, greed, pride, jealousy, or attachment) it steps in to remind us to apply the antidote.

This approach requires ongoing practice and dedication. Habitual emotions like anger or greed can create well-worn neural pathways in the brain, making them hard to break. But with consistent mindfulness and vigilance, we can interrupt these patterns and transform them.

### **Applying the Antidotes:**

The Buddha's teachings provide a wide range of antidotes for negative emotions. For instance, when anger arises, we can practice patience; when greed emerges, we can reflect on the impermanence of all things. The goal is to become so attuned to our inner state that we can catch these emotions early, before they have a chance to take hold.

As Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explains, through the practice of shamatha (calm abiding), even a person with strong emotions can gradually develop self-control and inner calm. When the mind is stable and relaxed, habitual tendencies fade away, and altruism and compassion naturally expand.

### **Ignorance of holding onto a permanent "self"**

The ignorance of believing in a permanent 'self' leads to the erroneous distinction between self and others, which is the root cause of all suffering. By realising the emptiness of both, we can transcend dualistic thinking and cultivate true wisdom and compassion.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explains that the root of all suffering and negative emotions is the fundamental ignorance of believing in a permanent, inherently existing 'self.' This mistaken belief



in an 'I' creates a dualistic perception that separates 'self' from 'other,' leading to attachment to oneself and aversion to others. This duality is the source of all the afflictive emotions such as attachment, greed, anger, jealousy, and pride.

The concept of a permanent 'self' is a delusion; both the self and others are empty of inherent existence. When we cling to the idea of a fixed 'self,' we also falsely perceive 'others' as separate and distinct entities, which fosters division and conflict. The recognition of the empty nature of both 'self' and 'other' is crucial for overcoming this ignorance. By understanding that both are merely constructs without true, independent existence, we can dissolve the dualistic thinking that underlies all negative emotions.

Rinpoche emphasises that when we recognise the emptiness of 'self,' the distinction between self and others vanishes, and we begin to see all beings as equal in their essence. This realisation naturally gives rise to compassion and the wisdom that all beings are interconnected and share the same nature.

### **Conclusion:**

Cutting negative emotions at their root is a crucial practice for any bodhisattva. By cultivating mindfulness and vigilance, we can recognise these emotions the moment they arise and apply the appropriate antidotes. This practice both prevents negative emotions from taking hold and also helps us transform them into wisdom and compassion. Through consistent effort and dedication, we can gradually free ourselves from the habitual patterns that keep us trapped in samsara, and move closer to the ultimate goal of enlightenment.

## **36. Being Mindful**

*In short, wherever I am, whatever I do,*

*To be continually mindful and alert,*

*Asking, "What is the state of my mind?"*

*And accomplishing the good of others is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The essence of the text is the critical importance of continual mindfulness and self-awareness in the practice of a bodhisattva. This verse 36 emphasises that true Dharma practice involves being constantly aware of the state of one's mind, recognising and addressing negative emotions such as anger, pride, greed, attachment, and ignorance as soon as they arise. This mindfulness should extend beyond formal meditation into all aspects of daily life, where it is crucial to observe and guide one's thoughts, words, and actions to ensure they align with the principles of compassion and altruism.

A bodhisattva's practice is fundamentally about transcending self-clinging and dedicating oneself to the welfare of others. This requires cultivating a pure mind, free from attachment, hatred, and self-centred motivations. The texts highlight that even the grandest actions are meaningless without pure intention focused on benefiting all beings. True Dharma practice is not about external appearances or actions but about the internal cultivation of selflessness and compassion.

By regularly examining our thoughts and motivations, you can reduce your attachment to worldly concerns and increase your confidence in the teachings. This ongoing self-examination and mindfulness help ensure that your practice remains authentic and effective in leading you toward enlightenment and in benefiting others. Ultimately, the practice of a bodhisattva is to cultivate a pure, altruistic intention in everything you do, ensuring that all actions are directed toward the good of others and are free from self-clinging.

## **37. Dedicating on Behalf of Others**

*Dedicating to enlightenment*

*Through wisdom purified of the three concepts*

*All merit achieved by such endeavour,*

*To remove the suffering of numberless beings, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

The verse "Dedicating on Behalf of Others" centres on the importance of dedicating the merit of one's virtuous actions for the benefit of all beings. This dedication should be done without attachment to the deluded, ignorant concepts of a doer, an action, or a recipient, reflecting the

realisation of emptiness. By following the example of great bodhisattvas like Samantabhadra, Manjushri, and Avalokiteshvara, one can emulate their vast aspirations and actions, enhancing the power and efficacy of the dedication.

Dedication serves as the final seal in the practice of a bodhisattva, ensuring that the accumulated merit lasts until enlightenment is attained. If not dedicated properly, merit can quickly dissipate, like a drop of water evaporating on a hot stone. The goal of dedication should not be limited to worldly achievements. It should focus on the ultimate aim of attaining full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Using verses from great masters, such as those from *The King of Aspirations for Excellent Conduct* or prayers from Lama Mipham, adds strength to the dedication. Actions performed without pride or regret, and dedicated with a pure intention, carry an unhindered energy that propels one toward swift progress on the path to enlightenment.