



# LAM RIM Graduated Path to Enlightenment

featuring Lama Tsongkhapa's  
“Foundation of All Good Qualities”  
& “Lam Rim Chenmo”

Commentaries by  
Geshe Tenzin Zopa

## *Editor's Note*

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The great Nalanda Pandit, Lama Atisha understood this well and with a mighty heart of mercy & compassion, set out to marshal the Buddha's 84,000 teachings found in hundreds of sutras and thousands of verses into a logical, sequential set of teachings to guide the spiritual seeker on the path, to emerge from ordinariness, to liberation and onto full Buddhahood. This manner of presenting the Buddhadharma came to be called Lam Rim, the Graduated Path to Enlightenment.

With a bodhicitta motivation and courage no less than that of Lama Atisha, our Resident Geshe, the Virtuous Friend Geshe Tenzin Zopa embarked on teaching Lama Tsongkhapa's two well-known Lam Rim texts – the concise “Foundation of All Good Qualities” and the epic treatise “Lam Rim Chenmo – the Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path”. This book chronicles the commentaries given by Geshela who energetically probed, prodded and provoked us in thought so as to initiate within each listener & each reader, a process of awakening – reflection – transformation - realisation. Geshela says “Samsara is all upside-down” and the Lam Rim aims to set us the right-way up. Only then is lasting happiness and perfect wisdom within our reach.

This book is dedicated to our Gurus HH Dalai Lama, Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Khenrinpoche Lhundrup Rigsel and Geshe Tenzin Zopa who are our lamps for the path to enlightenment, without whom we would be living meaningless lives that merely exhaust whatever positive karma we have. To these Upholders of the Teachings, we bow down.

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# FOUNDATION OF ALL QUALITIES

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# ***Foundation of all Good Qualities***

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## **Introduction**

We need to engage in the proper study of the Buddhadharma. Otherwise, even if we have the inspiration to meditate, it would be like a crippled person without limbs trying to climb a rocky mountain. We then need to apply the Buddha's teaching into our daily lives to gain experiential realisation of the teachings. Buddha was like us in the beginning. In many lifetimes, Buddha was born in the hell realm, in the animal realm, in the god realm, in the human realm. He was a king, a beggar, a family person many times over and totally overwhelmed by the delusions of ignorance, anger attachment, self cherishing, egoistic mind and grasping. Therefore, Buddha was very much like us.

Think of it - every being wishes only happiness and not suffering. And the wish is for lasting, ultimate happiness. However, this can only be achieved when one becomes a Buddha. Therefore Shakyamuni Buddha while on the Path, was inspired to obtain ultimate happiness, to become the perfected one, to become omniscient, to be able to see every living beings' mental state in order to effectively guide them.

Due to that, he cultivated the three principal aspects of the Path namely, renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. Firstly, he renounced worldly life. Then, he engaged into the supreme method called bodhicitta, the great compassion, unconditional love for all beings alike. He engaged in the teachings on dependent-arising (which is Right View) and emptiness/selflessness. All these are embodied in the Lam Rim teachings, the graduated path to enlightenment.

The Lam Rim is the roadmap to enlightenment. It is like a GPS which helps us find our way to the destination of Buddhahood. Without the map, our kneeling in front of the Buddha statues, scriptures, relics whilst enabling us to receive blessings, will not be enough.

### **How to study the Buddha's teachings**

The Buddha gave 84,000 teachings embodied in these three important aspects of the path (renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness) in order for us to overcome suffering and become like him. In his wisdom, the Buddha also gave advice on how to study the Teachings.

First, we need to cultivate the wisdom of listening to the Dharma (i.e. study Dharma) to be familiar with the roadmap to enlightenment. Secondly, Buddha advised to adopt the wisdom of contemplation (i.e. understand the meaning of the teachings through analysis and integration into one's daily life) and thirdly, to adopt the wisdom of meditation which is to habituate ourselves with the teachings.

Hence, the studying of Dharma is crucial and the starting point.

During the stage of contemplation, you will reach a point where you find an approach advised by the Buddha which you find really beneficial and one that you are able to keep in your heart. Keep familiarising your mind with this through meditation and use it repeatedly in your actions, speech and thoughts. Over time, the teachings will become so deeply embedded in your mind that it will become second nature to you. Right now, we often get angry or anxious. This is because we constantly think angry thoughts and thereby habituate with them. Replace these with virtuous thoughts instead! Through frequent contemplation, virtue will become a habit and that will be the sign of success of your meditation.

To help us gain some sense of faith and trust in these teachings, it is necessary to know the history of the Buddha's teachings.

### **Brief history of the Buddha's teachings**

Shakyamuni Buddha during the 1st Turning of the Wheel of Dharma at Sarnath, taught the 4 noble truths to those of the Theravadan inspiration. In the 2nd Turning of the Wheel at Rajgir (near Bodhgaya) he gave the Mahayana teachings suited to those practitioners who aspired to achieve great compassion/bodhicitta and wisdom realising emptiness. At the same time, Buddha revealed the teachings on Tantra at Amravati .

It needs to be understood that Buddhist Tantra is totally different from Hindu tantra . There is a misunderstanding of tantra even in Tibet. Buddhist Tantric deities are often depicted as wrathful and embracing consorts. Know that these are symbols representing the unification of compassion and wisdom realising emptiness. They have nothing to do with ordinariness. Buddhist tantric practice is about pure morality and discipline, so one should not mix this with practices of other faiths.

In the 3rd Turning of the Wheel at Vaisali, Buddha gave the clarification teachings on the various schools of emptiness based on Cittamatra school.

Subsequently, many Buddhist institutions were established and one of the greatest was Nalanda University. Many great pandits emerged from Nalanda including the renowned 17 Indian Buddhist Pandits like Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti, Kamalashila and Lama Atisha just to name a few. They were great scholars who spent their entire lives analysing the Buddha's teachings (some of them were reputed to have had direct teachings from the Buddhas) and meditated deeply until they were convinced of the assertions of the Buddha's teachings. Buddha said that one should not believe in his teachings based on blind faith but instead analyse the content and the benefits of the teachings as the means to attain liberation from samsara and only then, adopt

them. In this way, the Nalanda Pandits studied, contemplated and meditated on the teachings and upon gaining realisations they wrote Commentaries. Thus the writings of the Buddhist Pndits are valid teachings.

What we are studying here today is based on Lama Atisha’s work in setting out the Buddhadharma in an orderly, sequential manner (a graduated path to enlightenment, which in Tibetan is called “Lam Rim”). This was done when he was in Tibet. Lama Atisha granted the lineage of the Lam Rim to his heart disciple Dromtoenpa and Dromteonpa did the same to his trusted disciples. From that time on, the Lam Rim teachings flourished in Tibet.

In Tibet, there were two different Kadampa traditions: Dromtonepa established the earlier Kadampa tradition and later, Tsongkhapa started the new Kadampa tradition and composed several Lam Rim texts, including the text under study here, the “Foundation of All Good Qualities”.

Lama Tsongkhapa is the emanation of Guru Manjushri and lotus born Guru Padmasambhava. Tsongkhapa is said to be Rigsum Gampo – which means the emanation of the three Buddha-deities of Manjushri, Chenresig and Vajrapani representing Buddha’s wisdom, compassion and power.

Tsongkhapa himself lived the life of a celibate, fully ordained monk and gained full realisations of sutra and tantra as well. He is one of the best role models if one wants to learn more about Tibetan Buddhism.

### **Qualities of the Teacher and of the Student**

When starting out on studying Buddhism, it is important for both the teacher and the student to have certain qualities. In this way, there would be a greater chance of benefiting from the training.

In relation to the teacher, the best is to find someone like the Pandits perfected in the 3 higher trainings and have direct realisations into emptiness; one who lives life totally dedicated to benefiting others not only in a worldly

sense (like providing shelter, food and medicine) but to bring ultimate benefit right up to Buddhahood; who has genuine concern and affection towards his students to benefit them in an ultimate way (not like in ordinary school where one aims to help students get a certificate to get a job). A Dharma teacher's responsibility is to show the right and complete path to the student. For the Mahayanic teacher, he needs to have studied the 3 baskets of Sutra (discourse), Vinaya (moral conduct) and Abidhammakosha (science/metaphysics) and live a life in the 3 higher trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom.

In the Lam Rim texts, it talks about the 10 qualities that Mahayanic teachers need to have in order to lead students on the Path. The 10 qualities that a Dharma teacher ought to have are:

- The Teacher's mind stream should be subdued by ethics
- The Teacher should have stable concentration
- The Teacher needs to have the wisdom that pacifies self-grasping
- The Teacher should have more good qualities than the student
- Have perseverance
- Have great scriptural knowledge
- Have realisations into emptiness
- Is skilful at teaching
- Has pure and unconditional love
- Does not get discouraged

Thus if we want to be serious in our Dharma studies, one should find a qualified teacher and not simply attend just any talks by anyone and everyone to the point of getting ourselves into total confusion in the end. Even during the Buddha's time, this happened and that is why the Buddha set standards for one to be a Dharma teacher. As a minimum, the teacher should at least have a good understanding of the meaning of emptiness and be able to guide the students without faults, through right view and right method. A Mahayanic teacher must have genuine aspiration towards bodhicitta and



wisdom realising emptiness.

You however, are unfortunate to have only me who does not have such realisations and qualities but I will try my best.

Students/disciples also should have qualities if they are to derive benefit from Dharma training – there are five qualities:

- Honesty and non discrimination i.e. avoiding being friendly to some and hostile to others
- Having the wisdom to know right from wrong
- Yearning for the teachings
- Having great respect for the Guru
- Possess a virtuous motivation for studying Dharma

From the student's side, one should regard oneself as having a chronic, scary illness which cannot be cured by ordinary medicine (but this does not mean we should think we are hopeless and crazy, not like that). What this means is that we should understand our existence as a samsaric-being is one that is completely contaminated by delusion and karma, which locks us into the continuous 12 links of dependent origination i.e. the cycle of aging sickness, death, birth, aging, sickness death, without end until we do something about it.

The main sickness is the ignorant mind – not knowing the reality of “I” and of phenomena. This is even worse than being attacked by cancer. If we do not learn how to protect or rescue ourselves from this while we have this human body and at the same time, continue to allow ourselves to be totally influenced by ignorance, anger and attachment, our future life is the lower realms. Once born in those realms, the suffering is unbearable. As it is, some of our human-realm problems already seem unbearable, let alone those of a lower realm rebirth.

Therefore, we are seeking the ultimate cure. When we are sick, we look

for a proper doctor. From your young days till now, you have been seeking happiness and the cure for your problems.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge that we have a sickness (the samsaric, ignorant mind). Secondly, we have found the doctor (Shakyamuni Buddha). Thirdly, we have been prescribed the medicine which is the Buddha's teachings as found in the Lam Rim. To be cured, we need to take the medicine consistently until we are cured i.e. when become a Buddha. That is the attitude that we should have.

## The actual text of the Foundation of All Good Qualities

### *Verse 1:*

*The foundation of all good qualities is the kind and  
venerable guru;  
Correct devotion to him is the root of the Path  
By clearly seeing this and applying great effort  
Please bless me to rely upon him with great  
respect*

This stanza is about Guru Devotion. Some people mistakenly think that this teaching on guru devotion was created by the Lamas and that there is no teaching on Guru Devotion in the Buddhadharmā. This is incorrect. For countless lives until the Buddha attained enlightenment, he relied on Gurus to learn and progress on the Path.

In ordinary life, to learn a simple skill, we rely on a teacher. All the more so in the spiritual path, there is the great need for a teacher's guidance. That is why in the Lam Rim, the topic of Guru Devotion comes first. In the West, it is common to skip the topic on guru devotion perhaps because some people only want to hear about devoting to themselves rather than devoting to someone else.

One begins the Guru-disciple relationship after one has found the guru. When Asanga met his guru Maitreya, he had been in earnest Dharma

practice for 12 years. It is necessary to be thorough when searching for a qualified guru.

How does one search for the Guru? Initially, to discover whether a person is a qualified teacher, listen to his teachings and contemplate on them. Regard the potential teacher as a mentor, rather than as a Guru. Continue this over a period of time, observe and analyse.

How does one establish a relationship between guru and disciple? There are several ways. Having arrived at the point where you view the teacher as a qualified teacher (as explained earlier), one can then express to the person about one's full faith in him/her as the Guru and the Guru then accepts to be one's Guru. Another way, is from your mind: If you have conviction that a particular master is your Guru and you have a chance to listen to his teachings, at that point, the Guru-disciple relationship is established. Sometimes, on rare occasions, a Guru of high realisations is able to see who has the karmic affinity with him to be a disciple and upon meeting such a person, the guru-disciple relationship arises.

How does the Guru become the foundation of all our good qualities? Through our having correct devotion, which is through two ways, namely through thought and through action.

Devoting through thought means to remember the kindness of the guru and regard the guru as having qualities equal to the Buddha. No matter how you might think about the guru's behaviour towards you e.g. the Guru might say harsh words to you or misunderstand you, one should regard it as a teaching to you and not have a negative projection onto the Guru. If a disciple sees the guru acting in an imperfect manner, the disciple should think that oneself has imperfections and thus projecting those faults onto the guru.

You may ask, "If the Guru is enlightened, why does the guru have to go

through ordinary obstacles such as sickness?” One should not regard the situation in an ordinary way i.e. as the guru experiencing illness as a karmic consequence like an ordinary being. Instead, think that the guru is using his own body as a teaching to illustrate impermanence, to remind us to stop committing negative karma which has consequences. Thus, even if one’s Guru acts like a street dog - poor and wandering - for your own spiritual development, one’s faith should not be shaken. The day that one has conviction in the Guru being a Buddha despite his outer manifestations, that is the day one attains realisation in guru Devotion.

The last line of the verse requests blessings from the Buddhas for us to attain this spontaneous, unshakeable, everlasting conviction that Guru is Buddha under any circumstance. Without this conviction, there is no foundation, no root for enlightenment.

Devoting through action means to make offerings – not only material things but of service and best of all, of one’s Dharma practice. Any form of beneficial services to sentient beings e.g. being a hospice volunteer, sharing Dharma, offering inspiration to others, is an offering to the Guru.

The supreme devotion through action is to thoroughly practice the advice of the guru such as the 3 principal aspects of the path (renunciation, bodhicitta, wisdom realising emptiness) and living an ethical life. Milarepa was a renowned yogi, yet a materially very poor yogi, who expressed in his songs that although he had no gift to offer to his Guru, he made the best offering to his guru by living in accordance with Dharma advice of his Guru.

If we cannot succeed in guru devotion practice, no other realisations are possible.

In conclusion, first find the right guru. Find the qualities and see whether you have affinity or not. When observing the potential guru, remember that you are there to find qualities, not find faults in the potential guru. Thus,

one should not rush into finding a Guru.

### **Question & Answer Session**

**Question 1: There are oral transmissions by masters – (a) what are these transmissions (b) can an ordinary person who has received a transmission from a master, transmit to others?**

*Ans: Transmission of teachings or prayers is like transmitting a positive frequency to the listener. The transmission of Dharma can happen in a variety of ways. Sometimes, the mere rustling of leaves is able to awaken a positive inspiration. Some teachings are transmitted through the recitation of sutras and implanting the imprint of the teachings to the person's mind. The master who has received the transmission can transmit it to any person but the listener must be attentive and the transmission must be complete without missing any words, hiccupping, yawning and the like.*

*Whatever transmission is received by a practitioner, when that practitioner obtains the Path of Seeing (the 3rd of the 5 Paths of cultivation to enlightenment), all previous transmissions received and their meanings will be remembered. Our Guru Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche is one of the richest in transmissions, as he has received transmissions from all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions in order to be able to benefit others.*

*After receiving the transmission, one can with a virtuous motivation, offer the transmission to anyone. In the case of mantras, example Om Mani Padme Hum – the difference in the benefit of reciting a mantra before receiving a transmission and after a transmission, is 100 million times. This is due to the blessing of the transmission.*

**Question 2: Empowerments – what are these?**

*Ans: The Mahayana has two parts – the causal path (sutra/bodhisattva path) and the resultant path (tantra). In order to receive the empowerment, one has to have a firm foundation in Lam Rim [i.e. understanding morality, karma, refuge, renunciation, bodhicitta, emptiness etc]. Thus if one asks*

*you, "Are you ready to take this empowerment?" The answer lies in whether one is familiar with the Lam Rim teachings.*

*In the teachings it is said that it takes 3 countless aeons of merit to become a Buddha. In Tantra or Vajrayana, with Lam Rim foundation and by going through the different stages of practice which begins with an empowerment (permission to enter into the practice of tantra) and the cultivation of deity yoga which brings about the purification of death, birth and intermediate state, one can gain enlightenment in one lifetime.*

**Question 3: If we have Guru devotion, will seeing all our friends as Guru also help in our Guru devotion?**

*Ans: Yes. Once we have established realisations in guru devotion, you will find that everyone and everything becomes a Dharma lesson and thus you will gain immense benefit from that.*

**Question 4: Lam Rim is a graduated path – what order do the topics come?**

*Ans: In the Lam Rim, the first verse is the first topic which is Guru Devotion and it goes on. In the text we are studying, Lama Tsongkhapa wrote it based on Buddha's teachings and simplified it to enable us to understand the key points of the Buddhadharma. The Lam Rim is a structured method of presenting the topics to guide the student on the steps and things that need to be practiced to attain Buddhahood.*

**Question 5:**

**When Lama Atisha was about to pass away, his disciple Dromtoenpa asked who shall be my guru and Atisha answered "The Tripitaka". What does this mean?**

*Ans: The Tripitaka is made up of Sutra, Vinaya and Abidhammakosha. Yes the teachings of the Buddha are the ultimate Guru.*

## Verse 2:

*Understanding that precious freedom of this  
rebirth is found only once,  
Is greatly meaningful and is difficult to find again,  
Please bless me to generate the mind that  
unceasingly, day and night, takes its essence.*

The understanding referred to here is to know the teachings on the precious human rebirth (PHR); contemplate on it and habituate our mind and our lives with it.

The “preciousness” comes from the 8 freedoms and 10 endowments. Unlike other beings such as animals, hungry ghosts and even many human beings, we have obtained the precious life qualified by the 8 Freedoms and the 10 Endowments. Not all human beings have the precious human rebirth. It depends on whether one has these.

### **What are the 8 freedoms –**

1. Freedom from being born with wrong view which asserts the non existence of Triple Gem, karma, emptiness, of life and rebirths, nirvana, Buddhahood; which holds that there is no right and no wrong. If we assert such views, our life is not the precious human rebirth. A precious human rebirth is one where although we have not yet attained the spiritual attainment of nirvana, we have faith and conviction that if we practice virtue, we can attain it. Not all human beings have this view. Some people have great wealth but have no view of karma, nirvana, life and rebirth and thus, although they are rich, they do not have the



precious human rebirth. The precious human rebirth requires one being born as a human being, then meeting the complete Dharma which will enable one to become exactly like Buddha. The Lam Rim addresses 3 types of capability beings i.e. the small capability being (shravaka practitioners), middle capability being (pratyeka Buddha practitioners) and the highest capability beings (the Mahayanic Buddha practitioners).

2. Freedom from being born as animal i.e. in total ignorance. We look at pets and think they have good life. But the nature of being an animal is to be tortured by ignorance, fear and the loss of freedom to practice Dharma. Cause for rebirth here is maintaining a dull mind and not preserving ethics.
3. Freedom from being born as a hell being—which is an extreme experience, with no opportunity to study Dharma due to the intense suffering and this generates even more negative emotions thereby causing such a being to remain there. The cause for such a rebirth is committing the 5 heinous crimes; having strong delusions of ignorance, anger & attachment.
4. Freedom from being born as a hungry ghost - the specific suffering is of thirst and hunger. For us, going without water for 24 hours is a great torment. For this realm's beings, they suffer this way for aeons. The main cause for rebirth as a preta is miserliness; reluctance in helping others, in giving Dharma to others, in giving protection to others. Preta bodies are huge but their limbs are small and their throats thinner than straw, with the constant urge for drink and food. They see visions of lakes but when they reach there, the lakes are filled with iron liquids and thorns.

When we find out we have heavy illnesses like cancer, we should rejoice because we have prayed for long time to be able to engage in good spiritual practice, to be able to take on the suffering of others and give joy & virtues to them. Although illness brings discomfort, with mental transformation such as this, one can perform extensive merit and when we pass away, we gain higher rebirth and are able

to benefit even more beings. Tong (giving to others) Len (taking on unfortunate conditions of others) meditation is based on this.

5. Born at a time when Buddha's teachings still exist. There are so many unfortunate times where there has been no guidance on virtue and beings do not know how to practice and thus constantly accumulate negative karma. We are lucky to be born in a place and time with qualified dharma teachers, teachings, sincere Dharma brothers and sisters.
6. Being born in a place where there is no access to Buddha's teachings. There are many places in the world such as this.
7. Freedom from being born without full faculties such as intelligence. Without these, it would be difficult to engage in entire study, contemplation and meditation of Buddha's teachings.
8. Not being born in the demi-god realm and god realms. Whilst life in the god realms are luxurious, it is an existence that sees the constant exhaustion of good karma and without any interest in cultivating virtue to sustain the good karma. The cause for this is one committing only worldly virtue, rather than Dharma virtue. We need to differentiate between virtue and Dharma virtue.

If we engage in any conduct without any sense of renunciation, bodhicitta or wisdom understanding emptiness OR as a minimum, a fear of the lower realms; or the need to purify samsara; or the need to purify for the enlightenment for all, then our actions are not Dharma actions.

If we do good deeds or recite prayers just to be healthy, wealthy or have good reputation, there may be some virtue arising from it but it will not be Dharma virtue. And if our virtuous acts are not based on Dharma, they will not be the cause of liberation. They may bring temporary advantages and enjoyable results but not liberation from suffering.

When the karma to experience god realm finishes, the next heaviest karma will ripen and this is usually negative karma. The god-realm being sees its next rebirth and starts to experience the sensation of their next rebirth, thereby suffering tremendously. All the flowers they previously saw now appear totally decayed ; their radiant bodies fade; all friends abandon them. Due to distraction by sensual objects in the god-realm, there is not one moment of Dharma cultivation. Thus even though we humans have up and downs and life, we still have the inspiration and will to practice Dharma.

### ***What are the 10 endowments***

1. Being born human.
2. Being born place where there is Dharma
3. Being born with full faculties
4. Not being perverted by committing heinous crimes – killing mother or father, spilling blood of a Buddha or Arhat, causing a split amongst the Sangha.
5. We have faith in Triple Gem, karma, 4 Noble Truths. Although we may be born in a Buddhist family, we may not have the PHR if we do not have sincere faith. Faith is the mother which produces the wish to cultivate knowledge that leads to enlightenment.
6. Born at a time when the Buddha has come. The Buddha manifested birth 2600 years ago but dwells in us every single moment. By having this understanding we will tend to behave because we know that Buddha is always with us. Buddha's birth and deeds are teachings to us and if we remember the Buddha every single moment, we will have protection. Had Brahma not requested teachings from the Buddha, the teachings might not have come. Within our minds, we have 84,000 maras and negative emotions and for each defilement the teachings offer an antidote.
7. Born in the fortunate period when a Buddha has taught the Dharma.
8. Born at a time when the teachings.
9. Being born at a time where Dharma is being followed by people who have interest in its study and practice. The best way to repay the kindness

of the Buddha and the great mahasiddhas and masters is to explore the studies, familiarise with them and live in them.

10. Being born in a place where people are kind and support Dharma activities.

Our nature is to seek happiness. Until we become Buddhas, there is no ultimate happiness. Arhats are free from samsaric rebirth but have not purified all defilements. Thus we must use the human rebirth as the basis to actualise enlightenment. We need to overcome the 3 limitations of death, the intermediate state and rebirth and transform them into the 3 bodies of the Buddha, i.e. using death to achieve the wisdom-body dharmakaya; the intermediate state to achieve the sambhogakaya (the Buddha state in bodhisattva aspects) and rebirth to achieve the nirmanakaya i.e. like the aspect of Shakyamani Buddha, which is able to interact with sentient beings. Based on Mahayana teachings, Buddha attained enlightenment 3 aeons before but descended to our world to perform the 12 deeds, to teach the Path to human sentient beings and enable us to adopt that Path to benefit all beings.

To gain the precious human rebirth (PHR), one needs to create 3 causes namely (1) morality or ethics of avoiding the 10 non-virtues (2) engage in the practice of the 6 Perfections (3) having the aspiration to gain the PHR.

The 10 non virtues –

- 3 of body – killing, stealing, sexual misconduct
- 4 of speech – lying, harsh speech, divisive, gossip
- 3 of mind – covetousness, ill-will, wrong view

The 6 Perfections are morality, generosity, patience, joyous perseverance, concentration and wisdom realising emptiness and also engage in 3 higher training of morality, concentration and wisdom.

As you can see how difficult it is to avoid 10 non-virtues are, the likelihood of us gaining another human rebirth is highly unlikely. The PHR carries the

potential of Buddhahood.

Therefore, how does one extract the essence of this PHR?

- As a minimum, achieve the lower capability-being's path which is to purify the causes for rebirth in the 3 lower realms; to aim for another PHR to be able to engage in refuge practice;
- Better than that, achieve the middle capability being's path which is to renounce samsara and engage in the 3 higher trainings of morality/ethics, concentration and wisdom to attain nirvana;
- Best is to pursue the highest capability-being's path which is to engage into renunciation for oneself and all beings (including the renunciation of the self-centred peace of nirvana) to cultivate bodhicitta and the 6 Perfections to actualise Buddhahood.

The verse concludes with a strong prayer to the Buddha to have a sustained understanding of the teachings and the inspiration in our heart, day and night, to practice to perfection.

### **Questions and Answers**

**Question: Although we understand this PHR is precious, what can we do to remind ourselves about this?**

*Ans: remember death and impermanence. You can see for yourselves how many people suddenly pass away. We may be planning trip with friends or have a seemingly healthy life and suddenly, death comes.*

**Question : You can only give happiness when you have happiness; you can only give understanding when you have understanding – Geshela's comments please?**

*Ans: As for the 1st line - According to Mahayana teaching, the purpose of*

*one's life is to bring happiness to others, to liberate others from sorrow. Unless one's mind is clear and free from delusions, there is no way to bring happiness. Consider these words "compassion" and "renunciation" - The wish to free others from suffering is compassion ; the compassion towards oneself to be from of suffering is renunciation. Without renunciation, there is no way to give compassion to others.*

*As for the 2nd line – to show the right path to someone, one also needs to put effort into gaining understanding of the right path. For this, we need to have confidence and knowledge gained through exploring the scriptures, studying, contemplating and meditating on them well. Only then is the sharing of the knowledge beneficial to others.*

**Question : As there are different Buddhist traditions, how will those unfamiliar with Vajrayana be able to understand it?**

*Ans: Actually all the fundamental teachings of the various Buddhist traditions are the same. Guru is Shakyamuni Buddha and the 4 Noble Truths are the foundation teachings. What some people might think as "different" about Vajrayana are the topics of guru devotion and tantra.*

*Shakyamuni Buddha relied on Gurus to attain enlightenment. The reason why Vajrayana practitioners regard the master whom they have a guru-disciple relationship as Buddha is because the teachings they give is exactly the same as teachings given by the Buddha. Due to their devotion, the word they use for the Buddha, they likewise apply to the teacher.*

*As for tantra, misunderstanding can come about due to the view that Buddhist tantra is somehow associated with Hindu tantra. It is not. It is important to know the difference between Hindu tantra and Buddhist tantra. Hindu tantra has elements of enhancing attachment. Buddhist tantra on the other hand is to destroy attachment. Hindu tantra engages into esoteric, austere practices like spearing the body. In Buddhist tantra, one cannot abuse one's body, speech or mind (which includes the prohibition on activating desirous attachment). Using the basis of renunciation, compassion and emptiness*

*understanding, one mentally transforms oneself into the Buddha-deity for the purpose of subduing the delusions.*

**Question : A community of sangha refers to there being a minimum of 4 Sangha members – must they be physically together to be such a community?**

*Ans: It is not necessary for them to be together.*

**Question : If due to something I said, I caused the person to break samaya with his Guru, is it one of the 5 heinous crimes?**

*Ans: Not one of the 5 heinous acts. The five are killing mother, killing father, spilling the blood of a Buddha, spilling the blood of an Arhat, causing a split amongst the Sangha community.*

### *3rd verse:*

*This life is as impermanent as a water bubble  
Remember how quickly it decays and death comes  
After death, just like a shadow follows the body  
The results of black and white karma follow.*

Impermanence is one of the main teachings of the Buddha and particularly relevant to the small capability beings who seek to overcome this life's sufferings and the lower realms. As for those practitioners who aim for Amitabha Pureland, although they are usually classified under the Mahayana, if their motivation for being born in the Pureland is merely to be free from samsara and avoid suffering, rather than aspire to be in a conducive place to cultivate bodhicitta for the purpose of liberating all beings, then they would be grouped under the small capability beings.

Life is as fragile as a water bubble. When we talk about the impermanent nature of our life, a reflection on 3 points is needed:

1. understand that death is certain
2. the time of death is uncertain
3. only Dharma can help us at the time of death.

Although one might have a large family or wealthy with bodyguards and have access to expensive medicines, when death comes, only the mind that is subdued with Dharma, the mind that has imprints of kindness, ethics and virtue, will feel supported and protected from the unbearable fear of death. There is an urgent need for us to gain those positive imprints because we all have to face death and experience the dissolution of our five elements and consciousness.



It is not only at death do the elements dissolve. In fact, from the moment we were born, the dissolution of our elements already begin. Whenever we discover a wrinkle, we get disturbed; when we experience illness, we get disturbed. We cannot cope with prolonged cold nor intense heat. These are all signs of the gradual dissolution of our elements' ability to sustain life. The experience of the dissolution of the elements and consciousness at death-time can be fearful due to its intensity e.g. when the earth element dissolves, one feels as if mountains are crashing onto us! This is not actually happening but it is a mental projection which is influenced by past karmic imprints.

At the time of death, throwing karma is activated and connects one to the next rebirth. If a strong negative mind is present at death, it could lead one to the lower realms.

As we do not experience the dissolutions in a gross and extreme form while we are alive and well, we neglect preparing for inevitable death. Hence, Buddha advised us to understand the nature of death or else we will take it for granted, fail to extract the essence of life and not prepare oneself for the moment of death that is certain to come.

**In Lam Rim, one of the most forceful initiators to our engaging in practice is the meditation on death and impermanence.** We should not have any concept of the self being permanent. Yet, though we talk about impermanence, we constantly dwell on a vision for tomorrow (!) not remembering that death could happen at any moment, including at this very moment, on this very cushion.

Buddha manifested passing away at Kushinagar as an illustration of the fact that as long as one has the physical contaminated aggregates, these are in the nature of decay and there is no way for life to be permanent. You can think of many examples of many supposedly powerful people who are no longer with us.

Time of death is uncertain – We cannot think that “I’m healthy” or “I’m still young and will not die soon”. Many of our young friends who should still be with us, have passed away. Our relatives and friends plan for business projects and trips for the next 50 years but while holding onto those plans, they pass away, leaving behind only their names. We hear of people who are seriously ill in hospital yet remain alive, whereas their friends who are healthy and on holiday, die earlier. There is no way to know who will die, when and how.

Without much awareness, our lives pass us by. Due to not knowing the moment of death, when it arrives and at that time, one has not yet accumulated Dharma virtue, one faces that event with much fear, regret and delusion, which in turn will trigger one’s accumulated, existing negative karma and be thrown into a lower realm rebirth. Birth in the animal realm means that there is no opportunity to practice virtue. Rebirth into preta realm is worse as the suffering is much more intense, let alone the hell realm, where one is completely tormented by extreme suffering. We previously discussed that this precious human rebirth is rare, as if obtainable only once. If we do not use it to cultivate Dharma and virtue, there will be no opportunity to practice again.

**One of the most powerful practices to overcome the lower realm rebirth is to surrender oneself completely to the protection of the Triple Gem. This means practising taking proper refuge and cultivate the refuge vows.**

In order to qualify as an object of refuge such as the Buddha, one has to overcome the entire aspect of samsara; overcome gross and subtle defilements and delusions; possess only virtue and negate even the slightest of faults; possess perfect compassion and unconditional love for all beings; have omniscience. By taking refuge in the Buddha, one takes the vow to listen to the teachings and live one’s life according to them and never let our devotion be swayed.

**In order to establish genuine refuge, we need to**

- (a) generate irreversible faith; and
- (b) fear of the lower realms i.e. not superstitious fear but that which is based on the understanding of death & impermanence, karma and characteristics of the lower realms.

Participating in a Refuge ceremony does not necessarily make us Buddhists. For that to be, we need to have faith and reliance upon the Buddha due to understanding his qualities; we require a clear comprehension of the sufferings of lower realms and the causes for such rebirths. In this way, when we take refuge, our refuge will be genuine.

**Refuge in the Buddha :** Once we have taken refuge in the Buddha, it is wrong for us to take refuge in spirits and worldly gods, ancestors, nagas. Though culturally, we may continue to make offerings to worldly gods, we need to know that having respect and having refuge are different. One can carry on one's cultural and parental wishes for us to - for example - offer joss to worldly gods or ancestors out of respect but that does not mean we take refuge in them. In our heart, one should take refuge only in the Triple Gem. Or if our families want us to go to church, we can go out of respect and a wish to make them happy but it does not mean we have to abandon our refuge and convert to another faith.

Having taken refuge in the Buddha, one should respect all images of the Buddha – whether one regards the image of the Buddha as a poorly crafted, “faulty” image or not something we are familiar with or whose size is too small. We should avoid having aversion or criticism of any image of the Buddha. We can comment on the artistry of the Buddha image but cannot say “Oh, that Buddha is ugly; this Buddha's nose is too big “...etc. Every image of the Buddha is to tame our mind. If we are unable to keep a Buddha image, we can offer it to a temple or place it in a high clean place. Once we establish genuine faith in Buddha, there will be real interest in studying

Dharma. We make offerings to the Buddha to delight the Buddha and plant the seeds of generosity, thereby generating merits. However, the best offering is the cultivation of the teachings.

**Dharma Refuge** : This is the actual refuge which has two aspects. The conventional Dharma refuge and the ultimate Dharma refuge.

Conventional Dharma refuge refers to the Sutras, which contain the teachings of the Buddha. The ultimate/resultant Dharma Refuge is the realisation of lack of inherent existence or emptiness/selflessness. Whoever possesses the direct realisation on emptiness is an Arya being like the Arhats, like the Buddhas. Emptiness/selfless is the direct antidote to ignorance, the mistaken view of the existence of self and phenomena. By removing ignorance, all sufferings end. Right now, we take external refuge (causal stage) to enable us to actualise the resultant Dharma refuge.

In order to actualise the resultant the ultimate refuge, we first rely on the conventional Dharma refuge i.e. teachings. It is through these that we learn who we are, what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned and why there is no reason to have permanent clinging of self. Hence Dharma study important.

However one must know that the Buddha advised us never to blindly rely on this teachings but to listen well, then analyse the teachings, the same way a goldsmith checks gold - he cuts it, burns it, scrubs it before concluding it to be real gold. Likewise, the Buddha asked us to approach his teachings with a questioning mind. Only when one arrives at the point where one finds the teachings as logical, one then meditates on it deeply and habituate our lives with it.

Refuge in the Dharma includes paying respect to Dharma texts and even parts of pages or words which contain Dharma. So we should not place Dharma texts or scraps of paper with Dharma terms on the plain floor nor

on cloth that is made through great suffering (like silk made by silkworms) or on anything which was obtained dishonestly. Pay respects to them and when you see those, remind oneself of the qualities and benefits of the Dharma refuge.

**Sangha refuge** : The actual Sangha refuge refers to Arya beings, those practitioners who have gained the direct realisation of emptiness/selflessness – they can be monks, nuns or lay people and of course the Buddha and Arhats. Ordination is not a criteria to be an Arya being.

Not all conventional Sangha (monks and nuns) have direct realisation of emptiness but because of the vows they hold, if one offers respect from one's heart to the conventional Sangha, there will still be benefit to one's spiritual development. The ultimate sangha is about having realisations and in particular the direct realisation of emptiness. When you become an Arya being, any being who sees you, thinks of you, encounters you in person or even in dreams, gains much merit. But it is not easy to arrive at this Arya stage nor to meet Arya beings, so in meantime, there is the conventional Sangha to learn from.

Even though there may be “fake” monks in many countries, we must learn not to criticise them. In your heart, see them as the Sangha refuge, see all beings as Buddha and doing so is for your own benefit. If you meet a monk/nun on a one-to-one basis, in terms of personal relations, one must always have a fine line between oneself and Sangha so that one can continue to cultivate respect and refuge in Sangha. Having taken refuge in Sangha, we should avoid having negative friends such as those who distract oneself from cultivating Dharma and upholding refuge.

The last line of this verse “ After death, just like a shadow follows the body; The results of black and white karma follow” refers to the crucial and the common teaching amongst the various Buddhist traditions, of Karma.

### **There are 4 characteristics of karma**

1. Once karmic action is committed, the results are definite to come.
2. Karma multiplies unless purified. Example, if we intentionally kill (e.g. ants) and we do not purify the karma within something like 17 days, it is equivalent to killing one human being. Likewise, even small virtuous karma should be carried out due to the fact that karma multiplies.
3. We will not encounter results which we did not create the cause for. This flows from the fact that positive causes bring positive results; negative causes create negative results. Thus any problems we presently face are from the negative karma we committed in the past which was not purified. Like a polluted container, if one pours clean water into it and then drinks from it, one will fall sick. Similarly, we cannot expect to have happiness and be trouble free if we keep committing negative deeds!
4. Karma does not go away on its own accord i.e. without effort to purify negative karma, it will not cease on its own because the nature of karma is to ripen into the fruit/result.

We thus need to apply mindfulness to act as a guard overseeing all our actions of body, speech and mind. Introspection is another aspect of one's mind which acts like an inspector. Hence, introspection supervises the guard of mindfulness to ensure that it does not become numb and slack.

**With the help of mindfulness and introspection, we will be secure against negativities of body, speech and mind.**

**What is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned? Avoid the 10 non-virtuous actions:**

- 3 non virtues of body: Killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. For killing, it includes that of dengue mosquitoes! We are bothered by mosquitoes because we have killed many of them. We need to purify past karma and

avoid fresh causes in killing by keeping one's house clean or free of conditions that encourage mosquito breeding. Stealing includes taking things from a park without permission). Sexual misconduct has several aspects including having relations with someone already committed to another.

- 4 non virtues of speech – Lying (including white lies), harsh speech, divisive speech, gossip
- 3 of mind – covetousness, ill-will, holding wrong views. An example of wrong view would be not believing in the law of karma law, not believing in the Triple Gem, the 4 Noble Truths.

Having committed all the 10 non-virtuous, 3 kinds of results will arise: Taking the example of killing:

- Ripened result – e.g. killing will bring about birth in the lower realms
- Results similar to the cause – e.g. one's life will always be in danger from illness or harm
- Environmental result – e.g. born in a place where conditions to support life are few

One needs to know when an action is “complete” and will bring about the full karmic result. For this, these are the 4 factors which need to be present in relation to an action –

1. Intention
2. Object
3. The act
4. The intended result and a sense of satisfaction.

If all 4 factors are present, the 3 kinds of results will be experienced. If less than the 4 factors are present, there will still be karmic consequences but the results not be as intense.

Just as Mr John's karma cannot be wiped out by Mr Gary, similarly, mother sentient beings' karma cannot be wiped out by the Buddha. One needs to purify past negative karma and avoid committing new negative karma. Some practitioners do purification but do not resolve to stop committing new negative karma; or they focus on living their lives reciting prayers and go on pilgrimages but never take action to purify past karma. The result is to continue experiencing problems.

Wise practitioners engage in both purifying past negative karma and avoid new negative karma. One also needs to engage in virtuous deeds because even small karmic actions will multiply. If you save one ant's life, over time, it is like saving one human being's life. So much good karma comes from saving one life. We tend to engage in external things like attend Vesak events with great fervour but on other days, we live as if Buddha has given us a holiday from karma! (Laughter).

Is there any hope once we have committed negative karma? YES!! We can purify by applying the 4 Opponent Powers (prayers and reliance on Buddha alone is not enough). The Buddha taught in both Sutra and Vinaya teachings that all forms of negative action including heinous crimes, can be purified.

### **The 4 Opponent Powers are :**

1. Power of Refuge
2. Power of Regret (not to be confused with guilt). Regret is recognising one's negative actions and the disadvantages of negative action. We then need to understand that there will be consequences if we do not purify past negativities and we should supplicate the Buddha for blessings to help one purify one's mind.
3. Power of remedy – With a heart of sincere regret, recite prayers such as Vajrasattva mantra or meditate on the teachings. There are specific



antidotes to specific delusions example, the antidote to anger is patience; antidote to attachment is detachment through reflecting on the unattractive aspects of the object of attachment.

The most forceful remedy is the reflection on emptiness/selflessness. Meditate that every single existence, including negative karma (and virtue) are dependently-existing and merely labelled and is not solidly there, never to be changed.

Another example: When one is angry at another, we should think that we caused karma to encounter this difficult person. Hence, the problem does not lie in others but in oneself and negative emotions. One should analyse this way to find the true cause of one's emotions arising. Reflect how one moment of anger destroys countless aeons of merit and one moment of patience brings so much beauty to one's life. Alternatively, when we get angry, we can resort to viewing a Buddha's image or Kuan Yin image. Holy objects have this benefit of subduing the mind.

4. Meditation on the Buddha's teachings is the most effective way to purify the karma and more effective than mere recitation of mantra

Power of Restraint: Make a promise not to commit such negative karma again. The time frame of the promise ideally should be one's entire lifespan but since we might find that difficult to carry out, instead of promising entire lifetime, we can commit for a shorter time frame and stick to it i.e. not to get angry even at cost of one's life for that committed period of time. By accomplishing the act of avoiding the negative action for that period, the promise will be fulfilled and the purification complete. Have conviction in this.

## Questions & Answers

**Q: What is Geshela's view about the use of the Buddha's name in clubs,**

**pubs and airlines**

*Ans: Unless we know the actual motivation of the persons using the name, it is difficult to say or judge them. If one just uses the name for profit and business, then as Buddhists, we would say it is the wrong use. But if one uses it to create greater awareness of the Buddha, then it would not be negative. From the Buddha's side, he would not mind his name being used – as long as the motivation is positive, it's probably alright.*

**Q: What about reading Dharma books in the toilet**

*Ans: Again it depends on your mind when doing this act. If you are able to perceive every place as a pure place like the Buddha's mandala, then it is OK to read books in the toilet. But if you view the toilet as a dirty place, then it would not be proper to bring a Dharma book there. It depends on your mind.*

## *Verse 4*

*Finding firm and definite conviction in this,  
Please bless me always to be careful  
To abandon even the slightest negativities  
And accomplish all virtuous deeds.*

As a reminder, the Foundation of All Good Qualities contains the complete Lam Rim (the graduated path to enlightenment) which contains the teachings of the 3 scopes; the teachings from guru devotion, right up to the causes and methods for enlightenment.

The small scope practitioner's main practice is refuge and the goal is to avoid rebirth in lower realms and aim for higher rebirth.

For the middle scope, there are 2 types of practitioners – (1) Hearer practitioners (2) Solitary Realiser practitioners. Hearer practitioners are those who prefer to live a life practising Buddhahdharma through relying on discourse and a teacher to gain liberation. Solitary Realisers are those who first learn Buddhahdharma and then go to caves or jungles/isolated places to do their practice alone until they attain liberation. Their main practice is 3 higher trainings (morality, concentration and wisdom realising emptiness) based on the 4 Noble Truths and the 8 fold-path to overcome the effect of the 12 links and thereby overcome samsara.

The Great Scope practitioner refers to the Mahayanic practitioner, whose aims not only for liberation but for full enlightenment for oneself and all living beings. The Mahayanic practices will be discussed later. As an introduction, Mahayana categorised into 2 aspects – the causal yana/vehicle

(the bodhisattva path which seeks not only to overcome samsara for oneself but for all beings) and the resultant yana (tantra whose goal is similar to causal yana but whose practices include deity yoga and mantra) . The causal yana requires 3 countless aeons of merit to accumulate the merit needed for enlightenment; the resultant yana achieves 3 countless aeons of merit without requiring that span of time to do so.

In this Verse 4, “With this firm conviction...” refers to the conviction of what was taught in Verse 3 namely, impermanence and death, karma, the cause and results of karma and the need to purify.

Every single moment of our life requires full mindfulness in immersing our body, speech and mind into virtue, even through simple gestures. In Nepal, we travel to India by bus and notice that the Hindu Nepali bus drivers who drive past temples may not offer hand prostrations but when they see one red sindura mark (which is a symbol of their deity), they instantly pay homage. Such small gestures illustrate how momentary acts of respect and virtue that can arise. Likewise, we ought to supplicate Buddha to bless our minds to have morality/ethics to practice Dharma.

## *Verse 5*

*Seeking samsaric pleasures is the door to all  
suffering:  
They are uncertain and cannot be relied upon.*

Samsaric pleasures are deceptive. There are 6 faults of samsara –

- (i) Nothing in samsara is reliable including friends, loved ones, one's body, wealth, protection.
- (ii) Samsara is never satisfying. It cannot fulfil one's need to achieve lasting happiness; everything is temporary. Ordinary happiness is not real happiness but merely a reduction in the intensity of suffering. Even if one practises Dharma, if we do it only to fulfil worldly purposes, one will not gain satisfaction.
- (iii) Samsara forces us to repeatedly discard our bodies. We live our lives on the assumption that we will live till tomorrow or till the next year. This illustrates our strong grasping to permanence. We have been discarding our lives for aeons.
- (iv) Samsara requires us to repeatedly enter birth in the 6 realms. If we do not purify ignorance and cease the 12 links, we cannot be free from taking rebirth in 6 realms, to re-experience all the related sufferings.
- (v) Samsara causes us to remain in a fluctuating state. Even though we may have the precious human rebirth today, we do not know what our next life rebirth will be. In the past, we were god-realm beings but are now flung into a rebirth which has so much filth and suffering. With the precious human rebirth, we have met the Dharma but continue to

experience problems and are burdened with unstable conditions. We could be successful in business one moment and lose it all in the next. Situations are very shaky. Or one was rich but due to investments going badly, we become bankrupt. We were healthy in our youth but have now lost vitality and endure physical degeneration. Even at birth, where there is so much celebration and ceremony, that too will come to an end at death, where there will be no cake and no happy songs.

Thus, we need to request the Buddha to bless our hearts to realise and remember this.

(vi) Samsara causes us to be isolated from one another. Getting together is the start of separation. There is so much pain when one has to separate from loved ones. For me, my beloved father is gone; some of my Teachers have also passed away. The pain of separation is a torture.

Because of the above 6 faults, samsaric pleasure is deceiving because its true nature is suffering. Meditate on this. It will help us actualise liberation.

### **Questions & Answers**

**Q: What if we accidentally hurt an animal e.g. stepping on a frog.**

*Ans: Best is to recite Mani mantra and Medicine Buddha mantra. As regards the Mani mantra – each syllable relates to each of the 6 realms to bless them; as for the Medicine Buddha mantra – after reciting it, blow onto the animal and it will provide it the condition not to be reborn in the lower realms. Mentally generate compassion towards the animal and dedicate the prayers towards purifying all past negative karma and suffering and for it to have causes to attain enlightenment.*

**Q: If one is passing away, what is best prayer to do**

*Ans: Recite Medicine Buddha sutra and mantra. This practice is from the*

*Buddha's own sutra. Another prayer to recite is called the King of Prayers which is very beneficial for the recently deceased, as it guides the person's consciousness to a higher rebirth. Remember to dedicate.*

## *Verse 6*

*Recognising these shortcomings,  
Please bless me to generate the strong wish for  
liberation.*

We have now seen the shortcomings of samsara. To attain enlightenment, one needs to perfect the 3 essence teachings of renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness.

Renunciation is the mental attitude of detachment towards samsara. By seeing the suffering of the 6 realms, of our own existence, we can see the faults of samsara and engender the feeling of not wanting to be part of samsara any longer.

The small-scope renunciation is to detach from this life's samsaric existence and aim for higher rebirth. However, there is not a single realm of existence in samsara that has lasting happiness. This awareness then leads one to seek liberation from samsara totally, which is the middle-scope renunciation. The highest-scope renunciation is realising that not only oneself is trapped in samsara but that beings in all realms are similarly trapped. As all beings have been one's parents many times, the highest scope practitioner feels a responsibility to free all beings from samsara and lead them to full enlightenment.

This verse therefore illustrates the nature of the path to liberation, namely renunciation of samsara that is born out of understanding the sufferings of samsara and wanting to be free from it.



## Verse 7

*Led by this pure thought,  
Mindfulness, alertness, and great caution arise.  
The root of the teachings is keeping the pratimoksha  
vows;  
Please bless me to accomplish this essential  
practice.*

Guided by the inspiration to attain liberation, one engages in the practice of the pratimoksha vows. Learn about those vows, uphold them and live in recognition of virtuous acts and be vigilant in guarding one's mind to act within the boundary of the vows and not to allow one's ethics to lose strength.

**What are the pratimoksha vows? There are 8 different types –**

1. Full ordination monk vows (253 vows)
2. Fully ordained nuns vows (364 vows)
3. Novice monks and nuns (36 vows)
4. Lay vows – The 5 lay vows are against killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct and intoxication. These commitments are a lifetime commitment. One needs to take them from a person who possesses those vows and lives a life with those vows. The vow granting ceremony is not a mere ritual but involves the grantor of the vows being an upholder of vows and ethics and the person taking the vows having a good understanding of the vows and of karma.

In this way, one can preserve the vows purely. Without knowledge

and conviction, it will be difficult to uphold vows perfectly as karma can arise through action and through intent/thought.

How does the transgression of a vow occur? If one knows the 4 factors of karma which will bring about the full karmic result and still proceeds to do it. One is permitted to take only one vow or more and not necessarily take all the 5 vows.

By taking the vow for e.g. not to commit sexual misconduct, will relieve you of so much problems in life. If one is married or in a committed relationship, having sexual relations with another person, even in thought, gives rise to a breach of the no sexual misconduct vow. If husbands and wives can honour this vow, married life will be blissful and the purpose of being married will be fulfilled. Otherwise, we will be building up samsara within samsara! One can see the importance of mindfulness and introspection here. Physically, when we are near other people, we must make sure that we do not build up desire. Even though we do not have any intention to break vows, carelessness could cause it to happen. Verbally, we should not tease too much nor be too blunt. Be like the Buddha, never moving, always calm with a peaceful mind. Ordinary relationships go up and down; quarrels and accusations against each other are common. That is why the Buddha encourages us to have non-samsaric love.

It is urgent for us to take vows, so that at least in the next life, we can gain another human rebirth to continue practising Dharma. One of the causes for precious human rebirth is morality and the taking and upholding of vows.

Regarding the vow against intoxication, sometimes due to business requirements, entertaining may be needed. If taking this vow is difficult, at least take the vow of "I will try my best to avoid taking unless conditions do not allow me to refuse but I will ensure not to get drunk, which is the cause of many faults".

5. 8 precepts/ 1 day ordination vow: These are the 5 lay vows plus 3 additional vows of not indulging in idle entertainment, not having the afternoon meal and the non-use of high/luxury beds. Preserving the 8 precepts is one of the greatest liberators. It is not difficult to do. During the 8 precepts practice, be as mild as possible. Avoid swinging limbs when walking. Be mindful of one's conduct at all times. Avoiding afternoon food helps one to have a clear mind. If one has gastric, one cannot neglect the body – one needs a balanced approach. When one is on 8 precepts, one cannot consume thick liquid i.e. it must have no sediment.

One might wonder why some monastery areas are affected by earthquakes. It is because not all monks practice precepts well - they have studies, some have heavy work and doing all this without mindfulness can affect the precepts. At the same time, some monks may be old and unable to run yet they survive earthquakes because they earnestly practice precepts.

So it's all about karma. Here is a true story out of Taiwan: A major earthquake was predicted and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche advised as many people as possible to do 8 precepts. A Lama went to the TV station to lead the 8 precepts practice and the earthquake happened but it was a mild one and what the scientists predicted did not happen.

One of the best ways to engage in the path of liberation is the practice of the 4 Noble Truths. Buddha Maitreya said, "The suffering is to be known (the 1st Noble Truth should be understood), the causes are to be abandoned (the 2nd Noble Truth); Health (3rd Noble Truth of cessation) is to be achieved and the medicine is to be taken (i.e. the 4th Noble Truth of the Dharma path and vows to be practiced)". When studying the 4 Noble Truths, one should be familiar with its 16 aspects i.e. 4 aspects of each Noble Truth which are its characteristics; 4 aspects are the distortions.

### **The 1st Noble Truth of Suffering: Its characteristics has 4 aspects –**

1. Impermanence – because of being changeable;

2. Suffering – due to our aggregates being under the influence of delusion and karma
3. Empty – because the aggregates are empty of independent self-existence (we have an attitude that the “I “ are unrelated to the aggregates which is not so)
4. Selfless – “I” / aggregates are not established under its own power – it depends on causes and conditions and does not exist from its own side.
5. The 4 distortions in relation to the 1st Noble Truth –

(a) Our mental attitude towards our aggregates is that they are permanent

(b) We think our bodies are pure when they are filled with blood, pus, degeneration

(c) Grasping at aggregates as happiness – when we have a teh tarik, we think “Ahh pureland, perfect “. (Laughter)

(d) Grasping at the aggregates as a self – getting upset when someone says something wrong to us or pinch our skin etc.. we feel that the “I “ which is real and permanently existent is being harmed. If you want to perfect the realisation of the 1st Noble Truth, we need to abandon the 4 distortions.

**The 2nd Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering: The 4 characteristics are cause, source, strong production and condition**

1. Cause of suffering lies in the 6 delusions and 20 secondary afflictions and zillions of sub negative emotions
2. Source – They are the source of all suffering which occurs again and again
3. Strong production because they generate intense suffering

4. Delusions are the cooperative conditions to suffering

#### **The 4 distortions in relation to the 2nd Noble Truth**

- (a) Holding sufferings as being without a cause and that is why when we are sick or facing heavy problems, we ask “Why me?”
  
- (b) Some people make the accusation “After practising Dharma, all the problems arise; after chanting prayers, my business collapsed “ – they ask this way because they never learned the 4 Noble Truths. Sufferings came about from wrong & negative causes. If we committed right and positive causes, there will only be good results and never suffering. Just reciting a one-line prayer will not give us everything we want. After all, if we perform only 10% positive causes, how can we expect 100% perfect results? Some people complain that they have been practising for 20 years, yet still have problems and no realisations – they should analyse their lives honestly. It’s not so simple.
  
- (c) Holding suffering as being produced by one cause only.
  
- (d) Holding something as permanent but which is momentarily changing. We can see impermanence, that life goes up and down but we still grasp at permanence – when someone close you know dies, we are shocked. You are not convinced of impermanence. Note however that even our problems are impermanent.

#### **The 3rd Noble Truth of Cessation : The 4 characteristics of Cessation, pacification, perfection and definite emergence/evolution.**

- (1) Cessation is liberation from suffering and its causes are the application of the remedies.
  
- (2) It is pacification because it is separation from delusion forever.

- (3) The above two removes gross suffering and delusions. Perfection in pacification and cessation refers to completely removal of the delusions from the root
- (4) One enters a totally different aspect where one will never experience of suffering again.

#### **The 4 distortions in relation to the 3rd Noble Truth**

- (a) Holding liberation as non-existent because we are not convinced that there is liberation from samsara
- (b) Holding contaminated concentration as liberation – in other faiths like Hinduism, they too have meditative practices involving high levels of concentration but know that liberation is not just shutting down one's thoughts. Liberation has to be the pacification of delusions.
- (c) Holding certain aspects of suffering as liberation – performing esoteric practices/torturing one's body and regarding that as liberation. As Buddhists cannot abuse the body and that Dharma is about mind transformation and not about physical extremes.
- (d) Thinking that suffering can cease but will always recur.

#### **The 4th Noble Truth of the Path: Characteristics of the path, suitability, achievement and deliverance**

- (1) The path is Wisdom realising selflessness because it has the capacity to achieve the stage of liberation; to eradicate samsara
- (2) The Path is suitable because by being aware of disadvantages of delusion, it counteracts the delusion and contradicts its existence
- (3) Wisdom realising selfless is an achievement because it understands the nature of all phenomena.

(4) Wisdom (realising emptiness) is deliverance because it eliminates at the root, the delusion of ignorance.

#### **The 4 distortions in relation to the 4th Noble Truth**

- (a) Having no conviction in that the path can bring about enlightenment; no conviction in Lam Rim
  
- (b) Grasping at disbelief in wisdom realising emptiness as a path. Instead believing at merely offering joss is good enough to attain enlightenment; not realising that study, contemplating and meditation to gain such wisdom is necessary.
  
- (c) Grasping at certain meditative observations as a path – e.g. mistakenly believing that concentration alone is enough to gain liberation; that just having no thoughts and feeling in peace is liberation. As long as you do not discover selflessness, there is no way to attain liberation.
  
- (d) Thinking that no path can remove suffering forever. This is untrue and discouraging.

#### **Question & Answers**

**Q: In the practice of meditation, how many categories of mind will we come across?**

*Ans: As much as there are phenomena, there are that many types of mind. When we attain Buddhahood, we will be aware of them all. In brief, there are 6 primary consciousness and 51 secondary minds.*

## *Verse 8*

*Just as I have fallen into the sea of samsara,  
So have all mother migratory beings.  
Please bless me to see this,  
Train in supreme bodhicitta,  
And bear the responsibility of freeing migratory  
beings.*

Here begins the discussion of the path of the great-capability being, namely a practitioner who not only renounces samsara for himself but for all living beings as well. The path is such renunciation, cultivating bodhicitta and the wisdom realising the emptiness of self and of phenomena, followed by the practice of the 6 Perfections.

We are subject to sickness, old age and death. No one escapes death – Buddha manifested this, as so did Jesus, Shiva and the like. All manifest death. Death is certain; time of death is uncertain. Our loved ones are also subject to samsaric suffering.

The opening line of this verse recognises one's own situation and that all beings are in a similar plight. We are making supplication to the Buddha and Bodhisattva to be able to gain conviction of the harmful, negative impact of samsara.

The problem is that we enjoy samsara! (Laughter) Our conclusions of samsara are completely hallucinated due to the temptations of temporary pleasures. We see them as long lasting or permanent and we see them as happiness.



However, as we get older, we see our body decaying. We are dependently-existing but we see ourselves as independently existent. We forget we came about through causes and conditions and mental labelling. We simply do not see these facts. The moment we see ourselves as independently existing, we think all our happiness comes from our own effort and has nothing to do with others. Due to this, we develop a proud and self centred mind that does not care for others. Seeing ourselves as durable and independently-existing, we never realise the true nature of samsara. If we continue this way and if we do not gain a clear understanding of how deceptive and destructive samsara is, no compassion will arise, no bodhicitta will arise and one can never become a Buddha.

In order to have genuine compassion, one needs to fully understand how samsara ruins oneself and others. There is great benefit to understanding this point. You might think that we have enough problems and suffering, so why should one look at suffering more deeply? There is benefit to doing so because it will generate more compassion and unconditional love towards others.

As we are now studying the path of the great capability being, this involves securing freedom from samsara for all beings. This can only come about if we are able to develop the powerful altruistic attitude of bodhicitta. The moment we actualise bodhicitta for the first time, we become a Bodhisattva; when bodhicitta is perfected, one becomes a Buddha.

### **There are two methods to cultivate bodhicitta:**

(1) The 7 fold cause & effect; and

(2) Exchanging of self for others.

The 7 fold cause and effect came from one of the great Indian Nalanda pandits of the 7th century, Lama Atisha, who received it from Asanga and he from Maitreya Buddha. Lama Atisha then transmitted the teaching to his disciple Dromtoenpa and was eventually transmitted to Lama

Tsongkhapa, the author of this text.

Exchanging self with others came from another Indian Nalanda pandit – Shantideva received it from his teacher the great Nagarjuna, who received it from Manjushri. Nagarjuna was regarded as the 2nd Buddha who came into the world about 400 years after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha and was prophesied by the Buddha himself as being the one to secure the Mahayanic teachings and dispel all misunderstanding and ignorance in respect of the reality of existence.

Even today, the above teachings are being transmitted to many masters who then transmit to their disciples. Hence, both these methods of cultivating bodhicitta are alive and actively engaged in.

***(1) The 7-fold cause and effect (6 causes & 1 result)***

1. Recognise all beings as having been one's mother: One starts by analysing how we have had beginningless lives in the past. Due to the time gap between births and the great suffering experienced during births, our memories of past lives has been lost. Nowadays, despite Caesarian births, suffering for the child during child birth still arises. Coming into the world is due to karma and thus birth itself will be suffering. In this life, a person may be your loved one, yet in the next life he/she can become a stranger or an enemy; a father now can be a wife in the next life; samsara is upside down and that is why we need renunciation and liberation from it.
2. Remember the kindness of mother: For some people, a father or sibling may be regarded as the closest loved one. If so, think of all living beings as having been that loved one at some time in the past. We tend to thinking fondly of those who distract us with entertainment but dislike those who discipline us or give us advice to avoid non virtue. On the other hand, our mother - whatever temperament she may have - carried

us in the womb for 9 months, fed us first before herself, protected us from harm – the Sutra of Filial Piety sets this out very clearly. Hence, there is no excuse to disappoint one’s mother at all. Who you are today is because she gave you life. Buddha taught extensively how kind the mother is, no matter how cruel one might think one’s mother might have been. And every sentient being has given us such kindness. There is a documentary on life and rebirth (“Unmistaken Child”) – my sole purpose of having that movie done was also to bring about an understanding of reincarnation, without which there will be no conviction in karma and no refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, without which we are not even Buddhist.

3. Repaying the kindness – start with one’s own mother – if we can succeed in caring, serving and not disappointing your mother, you will be able to do the same for other living beings. One way to repay her kindness is to study/work hard & honestly, be an ethical person, be truthful, compassionate, conduct yourself properly so that people can be happy with you, learn ethics from you and this will reflect well on her too. It sounds like a simple thing but it is a Mahayanic practice. If we fail to repay the kindness of mother and living beings, Buddhahood can never be attained. When one goes home from work, even if one is a bad cook, offer to cook a meal for mother with love. Or bring her on a holiday. This would be much better than going home and straightaway complaining to mother or worse, complaining ABOUT mother (Laughter). Even if one has only 1 hour to spare, spend that time showing her care. Give mother some peace of mind. While she was carrying you in the womb, for 9 months, she had no peace of mind. Through your childhood, it was worse. She worried about you right up to adulthood, right up to this moment and she will not stop. If we fail in remembering this and repaying her kindness, achieving bodhicitta will be impossible.
4. Unconditional love: Samsaric love is no good because most of the time it is disappointing. Buddha never said not to marry but begs us to love

purely and unconditionally. If a wife's love to her husband is selfless and regards her husband as precious and supreme in the universe and the husband views his wife in a similar manner and combined with this, both of them uphold the 5 lay vows – at least the vow against sexual misconduct – that will be indeed a happy marriage.

Buddha did not prohibit sexual conduct, he only advised against sexual misconduct. One of the biggest problems in the world is about failed relationships. If we live ethically and guard against sexual misconduct, one's life will be peaceful and one will have loving relationships. As there are young people here, it is good to remember this advice. Both partners need to live ethically – don't rush into relationships – don't follow the desirous attachments but the Buddha's advice on how to sustain good relationships. Develop the heart of wanting happiness for others, for all sentient beings; be patient and gentle. Even enemies can be subdued through these means. We think that by fighting back, we can win but that does not work. You need the strength of humility, patience and compassion.

5. Great Compassion: If you want all sentient beings to be free from suffering and its causes and you aspire to work towards that, merely having kind heart is not enough. It is simply not enough. One needs to have great compassion. For that, one needs to train in the 6 Perfections.
6. Altruistic attitude: This is similar to great compassion but with an extra component of taking responsibility by oneself alone to free all beings from samsara. In an ordinary family situation, when someone needs to go for a medical check-up, we might think and hope that someone else in the family will do it. Whatever ability we have, we should think "I myself alone will do". Likewise the mind that takes on the responsibility to free all beings by oneself alone through training in the 6 Perfections.

Briefly, the 6 Perfections are generosity, morality, patience, joyous

perseverance, concentration and wisdom. For generosity, there is the generosity of giving material possessions; the generosity of protection; the generosity of giving Dharma.

Arising from engaging in these 6 causes, the result is bodhicitta, the inspired, engaged mind that aims for Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

For the 6 causes to be established in our heart, it depends on cause No: 1, which is remembering all beings as having been one's mother.

## ***(2) Exchanging of self for others***

1. Equalise self with others: We should treat others as equal to ourselves. All of one's happiness is dependent on other living beings e.g. one grain of rice on our plate is dependent on others (farmer, seller, the cook); our body's well-being is also dependent on others. Hence, there is no reason to be isolated from other living beings. Since others have contributed towards one's happiness, we should treat others as equal to ourselves. Meditate on this. Focus your mind on breath to subdue a strongly self-centred mind.
2. Learning about the disadvantage of the self-centred mind. Until now, we have only been concerned about ourselves. What good has that done us? Our situation remains filled with problems. We are dwelling in samsara's nest of poisonous snakes and bound by the darkness of ignorance. All our sufferings stem from our self cherishing mind. Letting go of the self-cherishing mind does not mean not caring for ourselves and not working to earn a living. Rather, we should be humble and value others and not solely focus on self-interests. If we get high on praise, sooner or later, we will fall down and feel very sore. Better to keep our mind balanced because samsara is unreliable.
3. Learning about the advantage of cherishing others. The moment you

care for someone, that brings happiness. When you share a spoon of rice with someone else in need, you feel a bliss within; if you see an old stranger and offer help, you feel some kind of happiness that comes right into your heart. This is the impact of kindness. Any happiness we have right now is due to our caring for others in the past. Avoid a grasping, jealous mind and instead rejoice for friends, enemies or strangers who receive happiness.

4. Actual exchanging of self with others. Change one's attitude. Instead of prioritising oneself, make caring for others most important.
5. Tong len: The meditation of taking and giving. Meditate by thinking "Whatever bad experiences others are having, may those ripen upon me; whatever merits and happiness I have, be theirs". One should not worry about becoming sick after meditating on taking on the sickness or suffering of others because karma is personal – i.e. unless you have the karma to have that sickness or suffering (which will come whether you do this meditation or not), merely praying for that sick person's illness to ripen upon you will not induce the illness. Instead, it is a powerful practice and your dedication will help that sick person a great deal. The power of your attitude can help him recover and strengthen your practice.

For tong len practice, there are various stages: When you breathe in, you should think that all sufferings are ripening upon me; and when you breath out, visualise all the happiness and goodness ripening on others. This will bring so much happiness to you. Check it out. However, some of us may not have strong conviction in how karma works – in that case, you can still do a milder version of tong len meditation. You can think, "May this gastric I'm suffering be sufficient to alleviate all the sufferings of sentient beings". Or if you feel this class is too long and your sitting is starting to hurt, think "May my discomfort be enough to relieve all the suffering of all beings". This will bring both virtue, as well as comfort to

you. Mind is powerful. Use it well.

When bodhicitta becomes effortless and is conjoined with the wisdom realising emptiness, one attains Buddhahood/full enlightenment. So you can see that Chinese Mahayana and Tibetan Vajrayana and its principal practices are the same. It is necessary for us to know that fact. Some people think that Vajrayana is some form of Hindu tantric ritual. It is not. It is based on the teachings of the Buddha.

## Verse 9

*Even if I develop only bodhicitta, but I don't  
practice the 3 types of morality,  
I will not achieve enlightenment  
With my clear recognition of this,  
Please bless me to practice the bodhisattva  
vows with great energy.*

Merely aspiring to develop bodhicitta is not enough. It is only with the engaged practice of vows, the 6 Perfections, the 4 ways of gathering disciples and living a life of Bodhisattva vows, that enlightenment is possible.

Successful bodhicitta practice requires 3 types of morality =

- (1) the morality of abstention from misbehaviour of body, speech and mind
- (2) integrating virtue into one's life.
- (3) working for the welfare of sentient beings.

(1) The morality of abstention from misbehaviour of body, speech and mind: Examples of misconduct of the body are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. Verbal misbehaviour are lying, harsh sarcastic speech, divisive speech like bad mouthing others, gossiping (if one must gossip, gossip about others' good qualities!); mental misconduct includes being cunning in getting what one wants e.g. putting on a smiling and gentle face but the heart is like a snake filled with thoughts to harm others.

If we continue this way, we will never become Buddha. We need to develop a positive mind towards others. If we have an enemy, we ought to know that it is due to our past karma which is now ripening. If that person is a very troublesome person, one should pity that person and feel compassion, then



one will have a mind similar to that of the Buddha, or Kuan Yin. Other forms of mental misconduct are depression, low self-esteem or thinking of suicide. All these are negative states of mind and obstacles to one's cultivation of bodhicitta. The bodhicitta mind is a courageous mind and any mental state that undermines the courage to be positive for oneself and for others is harmful. If we dwell on such, it is negative karma.

We come to the Bodhisattva Vows –avoiding the 18 root misbehaviours and 46 secondary ones . This is the ethical discipline that Kuan Yin has achieved).

### **Bodhisattva Vows**

Bodhicitta has two aspects (a) Aspiring aspects (wishing to attain bodhicitta) and (b) engaging aspects (taking the Bodhisattva Vows to engage in the acts of the 6 Perfections and actually doing them).

The Engaging Bodhisattva Vows - 18 root vows and 46 secondary vows

#### **18 Root Vows – here one commits to abandon:**

1. Praising yourself or belittling others (to make oneself look better).
2. Even though able, not giving material aid or teaching Dharma, due to selfishness
3. Not forgiving others but harbouring a grudge and holding it even when they apologise. Best practice is to hold them as one's first object of compassion.
4. Abandoning the Mahayana teachings by saying that some parts of the teachings are not Buddha's teachings and promoting one's own fabricated doctrine. Believing that worldly virtue is more valuable than cultivating bodhicitta.
5. Taking back offerings given to Triple Gem and using for own worldly purpose.

6. Criticising any of the 3 traditions of Buddhism. Although Mahayana aspires beyond liberation, it is for larger purpose of enlightenment without denying the value of practices of liberation.
7. Harming an ordained person – physically, mentally, verbally – causing them give up their robes.
8. Committing any of the 5 heinous crimes (killing mother, father, arhat, causing schism within sangha, wound a Buddha).
9. Cultivating and holding wrong view.
10. Destroying towns, country by fire, pollution, etc...any place inhabited by others
11. Teaching emptiness to those who are untrained. Must explain clearly and not use wrong, broad statements like all things are non-existent. Ensure that the listeners are ready to listen.
12. discouraging those who are practising Mahayana teaching and encourage them to only train in self-liberation.
13. Encouraging others to abandon their pratimoksha (lay and ordination vows) vows. Discouraging people from practising Bodhisattva vows, tantric vows.
14. Causing others to hold incorrect views that you might hold of Hinayana practice.
15. Declaring false realisations of emptiness.
16. Accepting gifts that have been stolen from Triple Gem.

17. Taking materials from (thereby causing distractions to) the practitioner of the calm abiding and giving them to someone else, as it might cause that practitioner to be distracted.

18. Abandoning bodhicitta.

**46 secondary vows – these relate to the practices of the 6 Perfections (generosity, morality, patience, enthusiastic perseverance, concentration and wisdom)**

(2) Integrating virtue into one's life. As mentioned, there is aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta. The difference between aspiring bodhicitta and engaging bodhicitta is planning a trip and actually going on it.

At the initial stage, we merely admire the qualities of bodhicitta and aspire to attain it. This is called aspiring bodhicitta. After developing stability in this aspiration, we will find ourselves ready to go the step further by actually entering the training in bodhicitta via taking the Bodhisattva vows and adopting the most famous of the Bodhisattva trainings i.e. the 6 Perfections/ the 6 Paramitas.

What are the 6 Perfections and how do we engage in them? The 6 Perfections are generosity, morality, patience, joyous effort, concentration, wisdom.

**Perfection 1: Generosity:** One needs to perfect this practice, in order to attain subsequent perfections. It is not possible to by-pass any of the 6 Perfections; there is a sequence in which each Perfections is to be practiced. Generosity is the mind of giving. Even if one does not perform the gesture of giving, we should have a mind of being able to let go of possessions, of self, etc for the sake of another.

We must train in this mind of sharing with others such that one day, one will be able to continuously, for 24 hours, give whatever we have including

our virtues and body. It does not mean that if we have only RM100 in our pocket, we should give away that RM100. First we create the karma within our mind with the thought, “May this RM100 be sufficient to cease the hunger of numberless sentient beings” and genuinely feel this in your heart. With that heart, you share 10 cents with a beggar. It will not harm one’s necessities. Happily share that 10 cents with the beggar without any expectation of return like gratitude and hold the thought “May he have the cause of liberating himself and all beings from suffering”. Otherwise, if you donate RM1 million but do it without an open heart and with an expectation of recognition or return or donate with a clinging mind, you would not have completed the practice of generosity.

There are 3 types giving: Giving material help (possessions, food, medicine etc); giving protection from fear; giving Dharma. The Buddha’s teachings are about helping others or at least not harming them and if possible, share knowledge of karma, respecting parents and living beings, with others.

**Perfection 2:** Morality or ethics. Avoiding the 10 on virtues that was previously discussed.

**Perfection 3:** Patience: There are 3 types:

(i) The patience of not retaliating when someone harms us. If we retaliate or have anger at others or oneself, one’s peace of mind and past good karma will be destroyed. The greatest negative emotion is anger or burning hostility. We can overcome this by remembering karma. The most effective way of cutting off harmful relationships is to generate compassion towards the person whom one regards as a harm-giver.

(ii) The patience willingly enduring suffering – e.g. for students, the patience of enduring the hardship of going to class, doing homework & exams, waiting for results. Even getting good marks can present problems if one is lacking in contentment.

For most of us, the day you discover the impermanence of life, will be one of the greatest sufferings. In our mind, we grasp and cling to our lives. Even though we say that everyone will die, we tend to think “I won’t die right this minute”. And then, we receive a medical diagnosis which states that we have only 6 months to live. Immense suffering arises right there. We say we know we will die one day but we are simply not convinced that death can come at any time.

The process of death can also be a period of suffering due to mind’s hallucinations operating at that time. How peaceful or scary the dying process is going to be for us depends on whether we have studied Dharma and integrated it into our lives or not. When one is dying and the various processes of dissolution occur, there can be much fear and mental confusion. As long as we have taken samsaric rebirth, we should regard suffering as part of the package. Hence we need to purify the karma by engaging in virtue.

(iii) The patience from having conviction in the Dharma.

**Perfection 4:** Joyous effort/joyous perseverance: In ordinary life, we have to force ourselves to do many things, even good deeds. In Dharma, we should not force ourselves but rather, engage in it with delight. For this, we need to learn about the advantages of Buddhist practice. Then we will do it happily. Otherwise, we will find all forms of excuses such as, “ the Dharma Centre is so far away”; traffic jams; it is a weekend and so on. If one generates a joyful mind towards attending a Dharma class, one will be bliss all the time. There are 3 types of joyous perseverance: Armour-like perseverance, joyfulness in virtue, perseverance for the welfare of sentient beings.

**Perfection 5:** Concentration. This is the stable state of mind which is able to remain in virtue for as long as you want. The virtue here is the engaging

in meditation in order to benefit others. Once one attains concentration, one will gain physical and mental pliancy which is blissful and useful to gain realisations. Whatever we do, whether meditating or doing school homework, we should motivate that for the sake of benefiting others, concentration will produce the results we seek.

My master Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche has not laid down to sleep for the past 30-40 years because he is in the constant state of meditation. Another of my masters, the late Geshe Lama Konchog, he too due to concentration, received no harm from the elements; he could even travel across the mountains without his feet touching the ground. He discouraged anyone to talk about such qualities of his because he said it was nothing to talk about. He is a present-day master and not someone from a 100 years ago. There are 3 types of concentration – for gaining pliancy; gaining higher qualities; for the welfare of all SB.

**Perfection 6:** Wisdom realising emptiness: The wisdom which realises the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena. Whatever we now perceive, we see as inherently and truly existing. This is mistaken view. There are 3 types of wisdom – (i) Wisdom understanding conventional phenomena (as illustrated by the relationship between cause and effect); (ii) wisdom understanding ultimate phenomena (seeing the ultimate nature of all existence which is that which is merely-labelled; there is nothing that exists other than in terms of a mental label onto a base. Even I, Tenzin Zopa, when I was in the womb, I was not Tenzin Zopa. I was only some cells which developed into a baby. When I was born, I was given the name Tenzin Zopa but that label can be changed anytime. “Tenzin Zopa” exists merely as an imputation onto the composition of aggregates. This analysis can go so deep that one will come to a stage that one will realise the “karcha” which involves refuting the object to be negated (inherent existence). Upon doing so, an empty characteristic of that object arises and is therefore a non-affirming negative. The word “negative” is used because that which earlier appeared is not as

it appeared. There is nothing that one can hold onto nor grasp at. It exists in one way and yet does not exist in another. When one realises this process, when one realises this non affirming negative, one realises emptiness i.e. the lack of inherent existence.

One's present mind is held captive by incorrect views, doubt and negativities. It is therefore vital for one to gain the understanding of the 2 truths i.e. conventional and ultimate truth; to know how things exist, yet do not exist in the manner we are accustomed to thinking. Things exist as merely labelled onto a valid base and not independently on their own.

(3) Working for welfare of sentient beings: This relates to the 4 ways of gathering disciples/benefiting others (i) practising generosity in every way (ii) speaking kindly and appropriately to benefit others. If one speaks softly but with sarcasm, it is still improper. If someone has a terrible illness and is depressed, and you keep saying to him "How pitiful you are", that too is inappropriate. Instead, encourage the person and offer whatever help one can do to help him. (iii): Fulfilling others' needs (iv) living according to Dharma because otherwise, even though one may be clever in teaching others, one cannot really benefit them.

## *Verse 10*

*Once I have pacified distractions to wrong objects  
And correctly analysed the meaning of reality,  
Please bless me to generate quickly within my  
mindstream,  
The unified path of calm abiding and special  
insight.*

Line 1 “..pacifying distractions” refers to calm-abiding meditation and line 2 refers to a correct understanding of the teachings on emptiness. Line 3 is a supplication to the Buddha to enable one achieve both calm abiding and correct analysis of emptiness in order to perfect one’s wisdom and gain special insight into emptiness/selflessness.

What is meant by calm abiding/samatha meditation? This subject is extremely important for the beginner as well as advanced practitioners. This single pointed meditation is the process of training in concentration and is a common practice of Buddhist and non Buddhists too. It is important for our happiness, higher realisations in spiritual practices and effective for the success of our ordinary-life activities (work, relationships).

Right now we have distracted, disturbed minds. We have excitement and laxity which are the two extremes of our mind. They act as formidable obstacles to our establishing concentration.

In terms of excitement, our minds fly around the world while attending class or doing work. Even though you are looking at me and trying to listen to my broken English, at the same time, you might be thinking “This is Sunday, I should be sleeping on my comfortable bed “ or you could planning lunch or dinner or thinking of office appointments or doing homework/



assignments right here this minute. (Laughter) There is no sense of focus or concentration on any one subject. As long as we have a second thought, all are included in the mental state of excitement. If we are this way, we cannot get the full benefit of doing anything. Instead, this makes our mind agitated. Due to our minds running in so many directions, it is not surprising that by the end of the day, we are exhausted. This is the folly of the excited mind, one of the greatest obstacles to our gaining calm abiding or single pointed concentration.

The challenge is to de-construct habits of distraction and establish focus. Our mindfulness is responsible for keeping the object in focus. If we are working on one thing, our mind should not drift to another. If while listening to a teaching, we start to feel pain or hunger after a very short time, it suggests we have limited concentration. When this happens, you should re-direct your attention to the teaching and withdraw one's focus from the discomfort or hunger. After a while, you will be able to overcome any discomfort. When you have single pointed concentration, you can remain for hours without pain, hunger or any discomfort to your body.

My late master, Geshe Lama Konchog who had full realisation of concentration, remained in retreat for 11 years without food. Sounds impossible? Through concentration, he did not depend on gross supplies (like food, shelter, clothes) to sustain the body throughout this time. Neither was he distracted by the sun or any of the elements. This master is a fantasy legend. He lived during our time and only passed away in 2001. He sustained his body through inhalation and exhalation and focused his mind on compassion. I share this story because I saw him do this with my own eyes. There are many others who live this way. Such is the power of concentration. One needs to abandon gross distraction.

One of the many benefits of concentration is the attainment of physical pliancy (a sense of lightness as if one were floating, which brings the sensation of bliss), which then leads to mental pliancy. That blissful mental state can

remain focused without distraction for years. My late master remained in concentration retreat for a total of 11 years. He spent 26 years in a cave but after those 11 years, he went down to the village for the purpose of giving teachings. His blissful mind and flexible body was such that he could use it in any manner required.

What is special about Buddhist calm-abiding/concentration meditation is that it directs the mind and body towards the cultivation of great compassion to benefit others, with a view to using it to perfect all qualities and attain Buddhahood.

When Geshe Lama Konchog passed away, there were signs of enlightenment e.g. relics were found amongst his ashes. Over one thousand pieces of relics. When his body was cremated for 3 days from morning to night (requiring wood and oil 3-4 more times than the average person's cremation), multi-coloured relics were later discovered. In the Buddha's teachings found in the root text of Guhyasamaja, the significance of relics, their meaning and how they come about are clearly explained. It is stated there, that relics are a sign of enlightenment. To actualise this, one's mind must be rooted in calm abiding, cultivating renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom realising emptiness. Great masters like Milarepa, Nagarajuna, Shariputra, all produced relics upon their cremation.

We need to understand the value of developing concentration. For us, while praying to Buddha, our minds wander and angry thoughts can arise; attachment can arise; visions of shopping malls can arise (Laughter). We think that there is a lot of happiness in relation to our senses can be found samsara but understand that they result in the exhaustion of one's merits. Think about it. Put effort into cultivating concentration instead.

First, establish pliancy of body & mind, pursue the cultivation of bodhicitta and wisdom to gain enlightenment. The distracted mind in samsara always experiences disappointment and unhappiness because samsara is in the

nature of the suffering of change (Buddha taught about the 3 general sufferings of samsara i.e. the suffering of suffering; the suffering of change and pervasive suffering). This habit of indulging in distraction should be abandoned to accomplish everlasting happiness.

The other challenge posed by our mind is laxity or laziness. If we are invited to a temple, we feel no great inspiration to go but if invited to the night club, full alertness springs up. Whenever virtue is to be done, the mind goes lazy, dull and sleepy. These common mental experiences come under the category of mental laxity.

How do we eliminate excitement and laxity? Overall, there are 5 faults that arise during calm abiding meditation and there are 8 antidotes to be applied to eliminate those faults.

1. Fault of laziness: The antidotes are faith, aspiration, perseverance, pliancy. Laziness comes about because one has no faith in Dharma, no faith in your own potential to be a Buddha, to benefit others. Aspiration – one should know the benefits of practice and taming our minds; know the benefit of doing virtue and avoiding non virtue. Perseverance – one needs sustained effort to attain concentration. It does not drop from the sky. Perseverance is a mind that delights in engaging in virtue. Pliancy – after having the first 3 qualities mentioned here, pliancy will naturally arise.
2. Fault of forgetting the object: Antidotes are recollection, vigilance, application, equanimity. Recollection is remembering the object of meditation. For instance, one might have decided to meditate on the tip of the Buddha's nose but suddenly, one notices the Buddha's eye blinking. This means the mind is already distracted, shifting from the nose to the eyes. Bring your mind back to the tip of the Buddha's nose. Or while meditating on the Buddha's nose, the Buddha says "Hello". This might bring joy to you but understand that it is a distraction

(Laughter). Bring your mind back to the tip of the Buddha's nose. Or after some time meditating, you feel pain in your limbs. Through consistent practice, you will be able to prolong your concentration.

If we have the proper causes and conditions for concentration meditation (including receiving the instructions and finding a conducive place), if we are able to receive the blessings from Buddha and one's teacher through one's diligent efforts at practice it is possible to achieve calm abiding/samatha within 6 months.

3. Fault of laxity and excitement: Vigilance/introspection is the antidote for both laxity and excitement. This is the aspect of the mind which oversees the strength of one's mindfulness. Mindfulness tries to focus on the object but soon, distracting thoughts creep in. Vigilance alerts mindfulness that this is happening, allowing mindfulness to resume its focus. Clarity and firmness in holding onto the object of meditation are two vital aspects which are achieved through mindfulness and guarded by introspection.
4. Fault of non application: The antidote is application. Excitement and laxity arise due to several reasons e.g. having no aspiration for practice due to worries and hardship. When laxity is present or one is feeling low or depressed, one should meditate on the precious human rebirth as it will uplift one's mind. However, if the mind is too excited to focus, calm your mind down by meditating on impermanence and death or on the sufferings of samsara.
5. The fault of over-application: Equanimity is the antidote. If we are meditating on the Buddha's overall face, over-application means our mind leaves the general appearance of the face and starts to go into great detail of each feature of the Buddha's face. If this happens, bring the mind to a balanced state through equanimity practice.



**There are 9 stages of the training using the 8 antidotes to overcome the 5 different kinds of fault (please refer to the diagram here).**

Correctly analysing the meaning of reality – one of the principle teachings on emptiness is the selflessness of person and of phenomena (i.e. aggregates/surrounding phenomena and events) or put in another way, the lack of inherent existence of self and phenomena. Whatever exists, exists dependently and not independently; from its own side. Fundamentally, since existence depends on the collation of many causes and factors. At the end of one's analysis for the purpose of finding out what existence really is, one realises that everything is merely labelled by mind. Nothing exists without being labelled by mind. But ordinarily, we think differently. We think that oneself and things exist independently/inherently. This mistaken idea is powerful and the root which gives rise to attachment, anger, jealousy, negative actions, samsara, obstacles to nirvana and the like. We do not have an understanding of the true reality of self and phenomena. Know that this self grasping at an independently-existing self and aggregates constitutes fundamental ignorance.

If we wish to be free from suffering and become a Buddha, the only thing that will help us achieve this is the elimination of the ignorance of not knowing reality. The words “lack of inherent existence” may sound tough to comprehend. What is this all about? Inherent existence means existence independent of factors such as causes and conditions and mental projections. As long as one perceives independent-existence within the “I”, we are suffering from the ignorance of not realising the reality of existence. The opposite of this, is the wisdom realising emptiness i.e. realising that “existence” arises in a dependent manner.

We normally regard existence as something created by god or appears independently without reference to any factors. In truth, self and phenomena exist dependently on causes & conditions, parts & particles and mental imputation. At the end of the day, everything exists merely by label imputed onto a valid base.

### **There are 3 criteria for the conventional existence of an object.**

1. The object should be “renowned among convention” i.e. accepted as a conventional fact. Example, this cup of mineral water – it is conventionally known to be a water-cup and not a Buddha. Look at it, it is a vessel able to hold liquid, there is liquid inside and sealed.
2. There is no contradiction with conventional valid cognition/ mind. E.g. back to water cup – everyone says there is water inside, I say there is stone. If due to ignorance, one insists that there are stones inside and refuse to drink it saying it’s stone, then one is said to be perceiving something against conventional valid cognition. We don not call a boat and “aeroplane” because conventional view says otherwise.
3. There is no contradiction from the valid cognition analysing the ultimate: A mind analysing ultimate truth i.e. the mind that realises that due to many factors, this water in the cup has come about, also agrees that this water-cup can be asserted as containing drinkable water.
4. Therefore remember, when we talk about the “I”, we have the view that the “I” exists right there, on its own, independent of causes and conditions, parts and mental labels. That is the mistaken “I”.

### **Using the 4 point analysis to examine the true nature of “I”/self**

#### **The 4 points are:**

1. Identification of what is to be refuted/negated
2. Determining the modes in which “I” could exist
3. “I” as one with aggregates
4. “I” as different from the 5 aggregates.

The object of negation is the “independent – I”, the inherently existing I, which is false. This is the object to be refuted through analysis. To do this, we first have to establish clearly the mistaken identity of the I. Once we do

this, we will know what is to be negated. What is the mistaken identity of the I? The independent-self called the “I “.

Once we are clear on this, we next ask ourselves, “What are the ways in which the “I”/self could exist?” It could either exist as one with the aggregates or differently from the aggregates.

One then checks from crown to toe, whether there is an inherently existing Tenzin Zopa or not. When my name is called, I tend to point to my chest. If that point in my chest is truly Tenzin Zopa, it means that even when I am in the womb of my mother, Tenzin Zopa would have already actualised. But this is not true because when I was in my mother’s womb, my mother had not named me yet. Also, right now, my name could be changed – I have someone who keeps calling me Mr Tan (and I do not correct him); for him Tenzin Zopa does not exist. Thus, “Mr Tan” or “Tenzin Zopa” are merely labelled. When we check carefully, we all exist as being merely labelled. But for this, we need an appropriate base to put the label on. If we point to a dog as a human person, that would not be a right base for a person.

Whatever label we use, we need to establish the 2 truths – conventional truth and ultimate truth. Then whatever name we give, we exist merely in that name. Even suffering exists in merely name, nirvana likewise, humans likewise. Because of that, nirvana is possible to actualise. Once the right base is identified and a right label is given, nirvana can be actualised. Once we have the right cause and condition to remove samsara, samsara can be empty.

People tend to enjoy samsara because they think that attachment brings bliss (without really checking to see that in fact, these are sufferings of change). Some people engage in extreme physical pain like piercing themselves, regarding it as bliss. Everything exists through mental imputation. If one can transform one’s mind, liberation and Buddhahood is right here.



We have a very strong and wrong concept of recognising the non-existing I, as an existent I. If someone says you are ugly – you immediately feel that there is a solidly, independently existing “me” right there. You feel the “I” as merged with the aggregates. Hence, when someone criticises you, you feel so hurt. Emptiness understanding can solve such suffering by applying the analysis of who we are. Since you point at the chest when called, one should find the I right there. (But is the total person on that point?) So we need to search. Is our hair the “I”? Is our body the “I”? We might think, “Perhaps I am my mental aggregates or thoughts”. But we have a multitude of mental factors and thoughts – anger, fear, faith, etc...does that mean that there are multiples of our self?! When you get food or buy things, we buy for only one person and not 2.

Therefore, if we search for the I as being merged with the aggregates or as something different from the aggregates, we cannot find it. If we try to find ourselves on the aggregates, since there are 5 aggregates, there must be 5 of me, which is crazy. Or if the “I” is one with the aggregates, we should be able to find the I within the aggregates themselves, which is not the case. Hence, the I is non-existent within the aggregates. Similarly, if we have a headache, look for where the headache lies. If one’s concentration is strong enough, one can eliminate that. Hence our mental imputation determines suffering or happiness. It is dependent on one’s mind.

One might then ask, “If everything is non-existent, who is creating karma and who is in samsara?” If one is non-existent, then one cannot become Buddha. Therefore, one needs to know that there is existent I and the non-existent I. The trouble is that we always focus on the non-existent I. What is the existent-I then? It is the non-inherently existing I or put another way, it is the dependently-existing I or merely labelled I. How does this merely labelled I come about? First there is the proper base of imputation of Tenzin Zopa (e.g. Tenzin Zopa’s base is a male, human body). The base came about through causes and conditions, there are aspects/parts of me (I am male, born in Nepal) and then comes the mental label Tenzin Zopa. So there is no reason to be bossy about being a person with a name – it is merely labelled.

To support the examination of the existence of a person being only one. Which one? Does it mean that if shave my hair or cut my nails, I am incomplete? No.

Chandrakirti said that if the aggregates were the self, it would follow that the self would be multiple; and if one were different from the aggregates, one would not have the characteristic of the aggregates.

The conclusion is that the self exists in relation to the aggregates but does not exist in multiples nor singularly. The self I is merely labelled on the aggregates; a mental imputation onto a valid base. Tenzin Zopa exists due to collation of various factors. When anger arises, remember there is no inherently existing I, so there is no I being hurt, thus there is no need to be angry.

After training in calm abiding concentration, one uses it to analyse emptiness e.g. through the 4 point analysis and thereby gain special insight into emptiness.

There will be a day when one will gain a sense of achievement of pliancy, both physically (feeling supple and light) and mentally (without grasping at permanence; not seeing of any enemies, attachment-objects nor strangers un-associated with you). You will see everyone positively. One's mind becomes awakened without being influenced by wrong conceptions and misunderstandings, ordinary environments become pure like the Buddha's realm, one will see all living beings as Buddha; all actions that one does is solely in relation to benefiting others and when this day arrives, this is the pliancy received through analytical meditation on emptiness, using calm abiding as a base and the label is vipassana/special insight.

Why is the insight "special"? Because at this stage, you have already attained the bliss of pliancy. You are able to activate the joy and potency to actualise enlightenment. This special insight is important without which one cannot

gain liberation, as one has not realised the reality of self and phenomena. Without both calm abiding and special insight, even nirvana cannot be achieved, let alone enlightenment.

## **Question and Answers**

### **Q: What is the Mandala mudra?**

*Ans: It is a practice of offering the universe and all things beneficial to the Triple Gem and sentient beings. This practice came from Buddha's time. The author of this text, Lama Tsongkhapa, was a great scholar who had profound knowledge of emptiness. However, just having knowledge does not mean one has direct realisation of it. Lama Tsongkhapa felt he had not gained direct realisation of emptiness and asked his tutelary deity Manjushri, why this was so. Manjushri explained that although Lama Tsongkhapa's intelligence and wisdom were supreme, he lacked the merit to gain direct realisation on emptiness and thus needed to make mandala offerings to the Buddha. Lama Tsongkhapa took the advice, went to a place called Wokachoeling for retreat. Using simple a stone base and pebbles as his mandala set, he offered millions of mandalas during that retreat. Through this, he gained direct realisation into emptiness. Such is the power of mandala offering to accumulate merits.*

There is a preliminary action to be done when offering the mandala – there is a nerve at the wrist which links to the heart chakra and when one rubs this nerve whilst focusing on bodhicitta, is said to help activate bodhicitta within oneself. Rub the mandala base 3 times clockwise which signify purifying the body, speech and mind; and rub the mandala base 3 times counter-clockwise to establish stable morality, concentration, wisdom. Within the mandala, one visualises the continents, sun, moon, precious items, virtues, everything to be offered up to the Buddhas and then to sentient beings.

## *Verse 11*

*Having become a pure vessel by training in the  
general path,  
Please bless me to enter  
The holy gateway of the fortunate ones:  
The supreme Vajra vehicle.*

Upon being familiar with the teachings and practices on renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness, we should then supplicate the Buddha to bless us to progress further, to gain the complete training and knowledge of the Buddhadharmā. Partial knowledge of the Path is not enough. We supplicate to actualise the entire stages of the Path up to the highest stage, namely the Vajra vehicle (Buddhist Tantra). In order for us to have the inspiration, courage and enthusiasm to pursue these full aspects of the Path, we require much merit and blessings.

Having met the Buddha already makes us the “fortunate ones”. However, there are several levels of good fortune. There is the “fortunate ones” of the small capability category; the “great fortunate ones” of the middle-capability category; the “greater fortunate ones” of the higher capability category and those who progress to the Vajra/tantra vehicle are described as the “extremely fortunate ones”.

The word “supreme “ in this verse means that although generally speaking, the Buddha’s Path is supreme, “supreme” here is used in the context of the Vajra vehicle being the swiftest means to enlightenment. You will remember the common path of the 3 scopes i.e. the small and middle capability beings’ paths enable one to attain self-liberation i.e. up to nirvana (which

is to be distinguished from full enlightenment); the Bodhisattva-yana which is able to bring one to full enlightenment but requires 3 countless aeons of cultivation to achieve that. The supreme vehicle of tantra however, can bring enlightenment within one short lifetime.

Acharya Tipithamala explains in the “Lamp for the 3 Modes Sutra” , “Having the same object but clearly defined; having many methods but having no difficulties; designed for those with sharp intelligence, the mantra vehicle is superior”.

Having the same object but clearly defined: All 3 yantras have the same motivation to enable the practitioner to obtain freedom from samsara; they have the same approach of cultivating wisdom and method. It is again relevant and useful to compare the 3 yantras:

The goal of the small and middle capability beings is to attain self-liberation from samsara; the goal of the higher capability being (the Mahayana) is to renounce samsara for oneself and all others and train in the common path of the small, middle and higher scope teachings to actualise enlightenment; the goal of the Vajra vehicle is to renounce samsara for oneself and others for all time and actualise enlightenment in the swiftest manner through engaging in the generation stage and completion stage practices. The Vajra vehicle is premised on the fact that the practitioner has full the understanding of and commitment to renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness. When one trains in this way, one’s enlightenment is expedited from the 3 countless aeons period to a much shorter period of 100 years, 3 years or even while sitting on this cushion. This is what is meant by “Having the same object (goal) but clearly defined”.

Having many methods but no difficulty: There are 3 yantras. The Shravakayana (Hearer) and Pratyekabuddha-yana (Solitary Realiser) are Theravadan approaches. The Mahayana consists of the Bodhisattva-yana (causal path to enlightenment) and Vajrayana (resultant path to enlightenment).

As the Vajrayana/mantra vehicle are based on the combined trainings of the small, middle and higher scope of teachings, enlightenment comes without difficulty – why is this so? Because the training in the Shravaka and Pratyeka paths require hardships such as restricting their bodies and minds through many vows e.g. the monastic communities, having to give up many temptations to the 5 senses. Then there is the enhanced training of the Bodhisattva paths, where in addition to undertaking the disciplines of the Shravaka and Pratyeka paths, there is the focus on the welfare of all living beings to the point of giving up even limbs and life; then comes the Vajra vehicle – where the delusions such as anger, attachment, ignorance and the rest of the negative emotions which are so difficult to control, are effectively overcome by using the delusions as part of the training. This facilitates the quick conquest of delusions and one’s progress on the path to enlightenment. Further, the common path requires a period of at least 3 countless aeons to attain enlightenment, whereas the Vajra vehicle if practiced correctly, can speed up one’s enlightenment to within one lifetime. In this way, the Vajra vehicle is said to have many methods but enables the achievement of enlightenment with ease.

Designed for those with sharp intelligence, the mantra vehicle is superior” – It is a must for a practitioner to have the firm understanding and practice of the 3 principle aspects of the Path (renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness) in order to practice Vajrayana effectively which is the superior method. The 13th chapter of the Vajrapanjara Tantra states that secret mantra/Vajrayana consists of several categories namely, action Tantra for the inferior, yoga without action for those above them, excellent for superior sentient beings and highest yoga for those above them. This refers to the 4 classes of tantra – Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, Yoga Tantra, Highest Yoga Tantra. When one sees textual references to “the Vajra Vehicle”, it is referring to the Highest Yoga Tantra category.

We hear a lot about tantra, we encounter superficial references to tantra and we see the term “tantra” in many books or on the internet. Yet there is

no clear understanding of what this is. We might even feel it is not relevant to Buddhism. There is some confusion surrounding tantra or Vajrayana. To clarify this, the bare term of “tantra” is used by Buddhists, as well as Hindus. However the meaning, the characteristics and the goal of “tantra” as taught by the Buddha and that of Hinduism are totally different. Even the motivation for tantra practice is completely different and the methods applied are; the attainments are also completely different! You must understand this.

The motivation for Buddhist Tantra is to eliminate and purify samsaric existence within oneself and all beings and actualise enlightenment; the motivation for Hindu tantra as I understand it, is to overcome this very life’s temporary experience of suffering. The Hindu motivation is to overcome the suffering of suffering and suffering of change. For Buddhists, the goal is to overcome the suffering of suffering , the suffering of change AND pervasive suffering as well. Without purifying pervasive suffering, we may attain higher rebirths including the god-states and attain the highest peak of samsara (4th stage of the Formless state of concentration) and remain there thousands and thousands of years but if we do not uproot karma and delusions (including their subtlest form), we cannot gain liberation from samsara, let alone attain enlightenment. Merely to have the urge to be free from the suffering of suffering, is something that even animals, hell beings and pretas have. Similarly with suffering of change – all beings hope for this, including free thinkers. However, as Buddhists, we need to be free from all 3 forms of sufferings and the entire aspects of samsara.

In terms of the practice, Buddhist tantra is totally founded on the principles of renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom realising emptiness. Any practice that claims to be tantra practice but which does not involve these 3 principles, means that it is NOT Buddhist tantra. Even if there may be the outward practices of chanting mantras and actions which take on the “appearance” of tantra, they are not part of Buddhist tantra if they are not firmly based on morality and the principles of renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness . Merely having a kind heart and chanting mantras to look religious and

impressive is not Buddhist practice and certainly not Buddhist tantra. Without putting effort to discover the actual thinking of the Buddha through the proper study of his teachings, many people think they are practising Buddhism through the outward actions of chanting prayers. If they are not careful, they are using the right method of prayers for the wrong purpose (worldly aims). The right purpose is liberation and enlightenment. The right method is Dharma practice which has as a starting point, renunciation towards the entire aspects of samsaric existence.

Let's say one has business problems – then one prays to Kuan Yin or Dzambala for wealth and to avoid business failure. If one recites prayers with such thinking, it is not Dharma practice at all. Why? Wishing for only this life's gains is a non-Buddhist motivation. To be Buddhist, it needs to be based on the 3 principle aspects of the path i.e. renunciation of samsara, bodhicitta and emptiness. Hindu Tantra, it is not based on these 3 principles. Hence, the need to be clear about what Buddhist tantra is.

Buddhist tantra will result in full enlightenment; Hindu tantra can actualise the highest state of the god realms and formless states like Brahma, Indra. Vajrayana is Buddhist tantra and completely different from Hindu tantra. Although some Chinese Mahayana practitioners assert that they do not practice tantra, in fact, they do. For example, the famous Om Mani Padme Hum and the long Kuan Yin mantra (Tar Pei Jou) - these are mantras and part of Vajrayana practice. The point is, it is not just a matter of the words but rather, the meaning behind the words and the practices. For example, the meaning of the 6 syllable mantra as taught in the Chinese Mahayana system is the same as that taught in the Vajrayana. It is simply due to the fact that the Mantra vehicle practices were well preserved in Tibet causing people to call it Tibetan Vajrayana. Hence, there arose the mistaken opinion that Vajrayana or the Mantra Vehicle is a Tibetan creation, rather than as part of the Mahayanic Dharma that originated from the Buddha himself.

There is a lot of misunderstanding in relation to Vajrayana. After the Buddha



passed away, for a period of about 400 years, there was confusion and misunderstanding as to whether Buddhist tantra was part of Hindu tantra and whether it was part of the Buddha's teachings at all. During that time, the first 2 yanas (Theravadan) were already well established in India, with many supporting institutions; the Mahayana at that time in terms of external labels, was on the decline and its Vajrayana practitioners had taken to doing their practices in caves and in forests, such that Vajrayana was seen less and less in open society, hidden from the normal world. It came to a stage where there was even criticism by followers of the first 2 yanas that the Mahayana was like a sky-flower i.e. a fantasy. Nagarjuna can be said to be the principal master who restored the Mahayana.

Tantra was taught by the Buddha himself and the realised beings after him. Tantra was taught by the Buddha in the form of a monk and also in the form of Vajradhara, the central deity of specific mandalas. All 4 classes of tantra were taught by the Buddha and not by ordinary masters.

Action Tantra was taught by the Buddha in the aspect of a monk while in the Realm of the 33 Gods on the summit of Mt Meru, as well as in the human world where Manjushri and other Bodhisattvas were the main disciples and listeners. Pungzang?? – were taught in the realm of Vajrapani Pureland; others teachings on this tantra were taught by Buddha himself through his blessings in activating Avalokitesvara, Manjushri and Vajrapani to speak and reveal tantra.

Performance tantra was taught in the Base and Essence Adorned with Flower Celestial Realm.

Yoga tantra – was taught when the Buddha arose in the centre of the Mandala tip of Mt Meru within the Desire realm

Highest Yoga Tantra – Maha Anuttarayoga tantra was taught by Buddha in the land of Orgyen, where the lotus born Padmasambhava was born, having

manifested the mandala of Guhyamasamaja.

In the Highest Yoga Tantra category, there are 3 main deities that are practiced namely Guhyasamaja, Heruka and Yamantaka. Guhyasamaja practice is the root of the Father tantra practices and focuses on the method/bodhicitta practices (its cultivation is said to be more effective in daylight hours); Heruka practice is the root of the Mother tantra practices and focuses on wisdom/emptiness practices (its cultivation is said to be more effective at night); Yamantaka (the wrathful form of Manjushri, the wisdom aspect of the Buddha is in the category of Father tantra; Vajrayogini is in the category of Mother tantra.

Guhyasamaja practice was taught to Indrabhuti by Buddha; Yamantaka practice was taught at time of subduing .... when Buddha was requested by Yamantaka consort Samundhi (there is another school which says that Kalachakra consort requested). Hevajra tantra was taught when the Buddha arose in the land of Maghada at the time of destroying the 4 maras. Hevajra tantra teachings was request by Vajragarbha and by Hevajra's consort. Having been requested by Vajrayogini, Buddha manifested as Heruka and taught it on summit of Mt Meru.

In conventional world, Mt Kailash is considered to be Mt Meru.

Shiva is the deity representing desire. Heruka is the Buddha form that eliminated Shiva as the embodiment of desire. To overcome Shiva, the Buddha manifested in a form similar to Shiva in order to be able to relate to that god-realm being, interact with him and finally subdue him. For Hindu practitioners, Mt Kailash is the main place of Shiva; for Buddhist practitioners, Mt Kailash is one of the main practice places for practitioners of Heruka. When requested by Vajrapani, Buddha taught the explanatory tantra i.e. the Grounds and Paths of Tantra. As for Kalachakra tantra which was requested by King Suchandra, a manifestation of Vajrapani, the mighty Buddha himself went to Dhanyakataka (Amravati) in South India and manifested the mandala

of the Dharmadatu and revealed the teachings of Kalachakra. HH Dalai Lama performed the Kalachakra Initiation at Amravati and if you want to know where that is, for those who saw the film “Unmistaken Child”, the ordination of young Phunstok Rinpoche was done by HH Dalai Lama there at Amravati. Whilst the Buddha was giving tantra teachings at Amravati, at the same time, the Buddha was giving Heart Sutra teachings at Rajgir. Therefore, you can see that although the Buddha appeared in many different manifestations, tantra was taught by the Buddha himself. This is to reassure you that tantra originates from the Buddha. For this purpose, I have explained the places where the Buddha taught tantra; who requested those teachings and what the Buddha taught.

In terms of tantric images, it is important to understand that tantric images are profoundly symbolic and act as subtle antidotes to delusions and faults.

## *Verse 12*

*At that time, the basis of accomplishing the two attainments*

*Is keeping pure vows and samaya.*

*As I have become firmly convinced of this,  
Please bless me to protect these vows and pledges  
like my life.*

This verse encourages the learner by advising that after being matured in the common path, one should be inspired into engaging into Tantra. How? On the basis of one's firm understanding and practice of the 3 principle aspects of the Path, one should search for a qualified tantric master i.e. not only qualified in intellectual knowledge but has obtained realisations in sutra and tantra and is living life upholding vows perfectly – whether individual liberation vows or Bodhisattva vows. You may request for an initiation from a qualified master who has the lineage of the initiation of the tantra you wish to practice it. Each initiation has different stages as there are the initiation-master activities and the disciple-activities.

The master's activities is for himself to self-generate as the deity through meditation, to consecrate all that needs to be consecrated, dispelling hindrances to the initiation and grant the actual initiation. When doing so, the master will guide the initiation participant on the motivation for engaging in tantra, as well as provide guidance on the visualisation of the self generation (of the deity) in order to receive the initiation, conduct the different stages of the initiation such as the 4 sub-initiations, granting the oral transmission of the deity's mantra, giving the practice-commitment to the disciple and conclude with the dedication.

The disciple-activities start with setting up the right motivation for tantric practice i.e. to secure the enlightenment for all beings and in order not to delay that state as that would mean sentient beings have to suffer much longer. One motivates to attain enlightenment for the sake of all beings. Right now, one has no ability to rescue and help sentient beings and for that reason, one must become a Buddha as soon as possible and thus require the tantra path to gain enlightenment in the quickest time possible. Since one does not know where one will be born in the next life, one needs to make full use of this lifetime to actualise enlightenment. To do so, this one needs to receive the permission to do the practice through this initiation.

Before going into the initiation hall, one needs to cleanse one's mouth and think that one is cleaning out all delusions and samsara in order to properly receive the initiation. Remain in silent respect for the master to begin. When the master arrives and ascends the initiation seat (throne), one should think, "This master is going to guide me to enlightenment". Then seat oneself quietly and shut one's mind from business, family matters and fully concentrate during the initiation and the master's instructions on visualisations, repetition of the vows and mantra etc.. in order to receive the initiation fully. There will be one part when the master asks the disciple to pledge the commitment practice. During that time one should feel that one has completely received the initiation and is now a child of Guru Buddha Vajradhara and of the family of that Buddha-aspect (the central deity of the particular initiation one is taking) and one is now permitted to engage in the practice of that Buddha aspect, maintain divine pride (i.e. keeping in mind the qualities of the Buddha), see all places as part of the Buddha mandala (Buddha's palace/residence) and see all beings as deities i.e. cultivating pure view in this way.

At the beginning and end of initiation, there will be mandala offering (symbolic gesture of offering the universe to the Buddha) from the students.

Generally, in the last session of any teaching by the master, one would not

prostrate to the master (to symbolise the opportunity to meet the initiation master again and receive teachings from him).

Vows given during an initiation will be Refuge vows, Bodhisattva vows and for Highest YogaTantra initiations only, tantric vows will also be given. One needs to uphold the vows and samaya purely i.e. live in accordance with the vows and advice of the master, having respect for him and viewing him as one's Guru, inseparable from the Buddha. Every now and then, one should supplicate to help oneself to keep vows purely.

## Verse 13

*Then, having realised the importance of the two  
stages,  
The essence of the Vajrayana,  
By practising with great energy never giving up the  
four sessions,  
Please bless me to realise the teachings of the holy  
Guru.*

The “2 stages” refers to the generation and completion stages of practice of Highest Yoga Tantra practice (which can only be learned and practiced after one receives a Highest Yoga Tantra Initiation). These 2 stages form the essence of tantra. How does one engage in this practice? We need to cultivate the 4 sessions i.e. to live perfectly in tantra throughout the 24 hours of a day. The 4 sessions: The first session starts at dawn between 3am – 5am (before sunrise) – if you can do this, you will feel fresh and without tiredness; the 2nd session is after sunrise and finish before noon; the 3rd session, starts in afternoon but should end before sunset; the 4th session starts after sunset and concludes before midnight. Whether one is cultivating deity yoga or meditating on the common path, it would be best if we are able to do so in accordance with these 4 sessions.

“Holy Guru” here refers to Shakyamuni Buddha, Tsongkhapa, our holy living Guru. We need to supplicate frequently because our practice is very fragile and unstable. We find countless excuses not to meditate but offer no excuses to go to the shopping malls. Such is our resolve at practice. Thus, we need to request for blessings often.

## *Verse 14*

*Like that, may the Gurus who show the noble path  
And the spiritual friends who practise it have long  
lives.*

*Please bless me to pacify completely  
All outer and inner hindrances.*

Although we do not have the merit to see the Buddha form directly, Buddha in his infinite compassion and skilful means, manifests as ordinary human gurus to teach us, face-to-face, to live amongst sentient beings and teach them. We should always remember to dedicate our practices and virtues for world peace. Peace can only happen if all beings practice compassion and forgiveness. Building more and more missiles will not ensure peace and only makes the world a more dangerous place. Whereas if we have more loving kindness and compassion, we won't require such weapons and will be able to actualise real peace. Good hearted people and true practitioners must live long. Pray to pacify all outer and inner hindrances because quite often, we suddenly feel low or get upset or discouraged easily. Hence, we must make prayers to cleanse our minds of such obstacles.



## *Verse 15*

*In all my lives, never to be separated from  
perfect Gurus,  
May I enjoy the magnificent Dharma.  
By completing the qualities of the stages and  
paths,  
May I quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.*

We need to regularly supplicate to meet perfect enlightened gurus and not be separated from them. We should know the qualities of a Guru and search for such a guru (but without a grasping attitude). Remember the qualities that a Guru and a disciple should have.

The purpose of meeting and having a Guru is to enjoy meeting the Dharma – not to go for teh tarik or holidays together. The purpose of receiving Dharma is not to get brain-food but to gain realisations. Upon receiving Dharma knowledge, one should proceed to frequently contemplate on it, meditate on it so as to attain direct realisations. In that way, one will achieve enlightenment and become like the Buddha, like one's Guru and be able to benefit all beings.

The End of the Commentary on the Foundation of All Good Qualities



# OUTLINE TO THE LAM RIM CHENMO

by Lama Tsongkhapa

Commentary by  
Geshe Tenzin Zopa

## ***Outline from the Lam Rim Chenmo***

***(The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment)***

***by Lama Tsongkhapa***

***(Wisdom Publications – Volumes 1 to 3)***

***Extracts of the Commentary by Geshe Tenzin Zopa***

This section of the book reproduces the Outline found in the 3 volumes of the text the Lam Rim Chenmo (The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment), as well as extracts from the book. It presents a thorough overview of Lama Tsongkhapa’s extensive Lam Rim teachings and to encourage practitioners to undertake meditation retreats on the Lam Rim in reliance on the Outline.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa had taught this text at the International Buddhist College, Malaysia as part of its M.A. Program in Buddhist Studies in Aug 2010.

- The volumes and chapters are marked e.g. V1 Chapter 1, for purposes of referencing back to the texts.
- The actual Outline headings appear in bold font.
- Extracts of Geshela’s commentary appears in the passages in italics and marked with “GTZ”.

## V1 Chapter 1 – Atisha

**Showing the greatness of the teaching’s author (Atisha) in order to establish that it is of noble origin**

*It is worthwhile to note that whilst the text opens with the greatness of Lama Atisha as the author of the first Lam Rim text “Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment”, we also need to remember that this Lam Rim Chenmo text was written by Lama Tsongkhapa (1357-1493), who was born in Kham, Tibet, mastered the entire aspects of Sutra and Tantra and was the founder of the Gelug lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The Lam Rim Chenmo was written when Lama Tsongkhapa was 46 years of age, while he was at Reting Monastery in Tibet. Lama Tsongkhapa composed many writings on the Lam Rim (the Condensed, Small, Medium and Great Lam Rim texts), the most detailed one being this text. It combines Lam Rim with the lojong (mind-training teachings). Without Lam Rim understanding, it will be difficult to obtain benefit from Dharma practice. The Gelug tradition emphasises the study of Lam Rim, although it is also respected by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism. - GTZ*

**How Atisha took rebirth in an excellent lineage – Born of royal blood, Atisha was known by his other name as Dipamkarasrijnana.**

*“In the excellent land of Za-hor (Bengal) in the east*

*In the great city of Vikramanipura*

*In its centre is a royal residence*

*A palace extremely vast*

*Called Golden Banner*

*Its resources might and fortune*

*Were like that of the eastern emperor of China...*

*The king of that country was Kalynasari..who had 3 sons..*

*One of the (princes) had nine sons and the middle son...is our venerable guru Atisha..” – from Eighty Verses of Praise by the great translator Nag-tso*

*Due to Lama Atisha's past merits, he was drawn towards the great Buddhist institution of Nalanda University and in reliance upon the great scholars there, he received the complete teachings of the Profound lineage of Maitreya and the Extensive lineage of Manjushri and actualized the bodhicitta teachings from the lineage of Lama Serlingpa. Lama Atisha later passed his scriptural and experiential knowledge to his disciple Dromteonpa and this lineage was transmitted unbroken, right down to Lama Tsongkhapa - GTZ*

**How upon that basis he gained good qualities – Atisha gained:**

1. good qualities of scriptural knowledge.

*“At the age of twenty one  
He had mastered the 64 arts  
All forms of crafts  
The Sanskrit language  
And all philosophy” – Eighty Verses by Nag-tso*

2. good qualities of experiential knowledge by:

**(a) training in ethics:**

**- through upholding individual liberation vows:**

*“ ....You having entered the door of the shravaka vehicle  
Guarded ethical discipline as a yak guards its tail”*

**- through upholding Bodhisattva vows :**

*“ You having entered the door of the perfection vehicle  
Developed the pure wholehearted resolve and due to your  
Spirit of enlightenment, you would not desert living beings  
I bow down to You, intelligent and compassionate one”*

- **through upholding Tantric vows:**

*“Having entered the door of the Vajrayana*

*You saw yourself as a deity and possessed the vajra mind...*

*Because you had mindfulness and vigilance,*

*You had no unethical thoughts*

*Conscientious and alert, with no deceit or pretension*

*You were not stained by the faults of infractions”.*

**(b) training in concentration:**

- training in concentration common to sutra and tantra, attaining samatha/  
calm abiding

- training in uncommon concentrations, attaining stable generation stage

**(c) training in wisdom**

- common training in wisdom, achieving the union of calm abiding and insight

- uncommon training in wisdom, achieving the completion stage

*“It is clear that you achieved the path of preparation*

*In accordance with the texts of the mantra vehicle” – Nga-tso*

*If one’s purpose in pursuing the Buddha’s teachings is for enlightenment, acquiring mere scriptural knowledge is insufficient. One would also require experiential knowledge and for this, one needs to receive the blessings of one’s Teacher, receive and uphold Vows. Lama Atisha strenuously guarded his Vows, from the individual liberation vows, to the Bodhisattva vows of solely benefitting living beings, up to the tantric vows, engaging in deity yoga practice consisting of the meditation on the generation and completion stages. Lama Atisha showed that through this, one is able to attain the complete Path*  
- GTZ

Having gained those qualities, what Atisha did to further the teachings in:

(1) India – Lama Tsongkhapa says,

*“ In the palace of great enlightenment at Bodhgaya, (Atisha) upheld the Buddhist teachings three times by...using the teachings to vanquish non Buddhist philosophers...furthered the teachings through clearing away the corruptions of ignorance, wrong ideas and doubts and became the crown jewel of all Buddhist schools..”*

(2) Tibet – Due to the sincerity of supplication made to Atisha to journey to Tibet to restore the Buddhadharma which had declined, Atisha prayed to fulfill this mission. Lama Tsongkhapa says,

*“Based on this prayer, he (Atisha) furthered the teachings through... composing the Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment, a text that brings together the stages of practice, condensing all the key of the sutra and mantra vehicles...he established the practices of the Buddhist system that had disappeared, reinvigorated those that remained only slightly and removed corruption based on misconceptions...”*

## V1 Chapter 2 – Greatness of the Teaching

**Showing the greatness of the teaching in order to generate respect for the instructions**

**A. The greatness of enabling one to see that the teachings are free from contradiction**

*If one does not study the teachings of the 3 scopes (teachings for the small, middle and higher capability beings) and only study one school, one might find contradictions in the teachings of the 3 yantras (Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana). A thorough study will reveal no inconsistencies. If we adopt a judgmental attitude and disparage any of the 3 yantras, it will incur heavy negative karma because all are the Buddha's teachings. Through the study of all the 3 scopes, one learns what is to be adopted and what is to be eliminated. It is likewise important to comprehend the views of the different schools on the subject of selflessness/emptiness. For example, when one reads Buddhist texts which refer to inherent existence, one should realise that those texts are based on the Vaibashika school and not based on highest philosophical school of the Madhyamika-Prasangika - GTZ*

**B. The greatness enabling one to understand that the scriptures are instructions for practice**

*Teachings are not intended as mere brain-information. Buddhadharma is the medicine to transform the mind from a state of suffering to that of happiness; it is about the eradication of defilements; about transforming the impure to the pure. Specific teachings serve as direct antidotes to specific defilements. The Buddha and realised beings like Lama Atisha and Lama Tsongkhapa were precise in their teachings because their omniscient minds which directly realised emptiness, enabled them to understand the detailed*



*karmic condition of the entire world and of each living being and were therefore able to teach according to each being's disposition. If one is unable to integrate the Buddha's teachings into our lives as antidotes to defilements, then the Sangha's work remains unfulfilled. Reading books alone will not suffice because we need the blessings of the lineage practice to effectively engage in study, do virtue and engage in purification practices. This is why supplication to the Buddhas is vital - GTZ*

### **C. The greatness of enabling one easily to find the Conqueror's intent**

*When one studies the Buddhadharma well, one is able to soften one's heart and cultivate well. As beginners, we struggle to understand the words, let alone the meaning. Hence, the need to rely on a Teacher – the Guru. Some may think that Dharma books are sufficiently clear, so there is no need to rely on a Teacher. If we think this way, we are mistaken. We will be able to only acquire word-knowledge, not gain realisations. Qualified Teachers have both scriptural knowledge and realisations. Which form of knowledge is superior? Experiential knowledge is. Thus, by relying on the instructions of the Guru, it will be easy to gain the wisdom and understanding of the Buddha - GTZ*

### **D. The greatness of enabling one to refrain automatically from great wrongdoing**

*This happens because the minute we listen to or think of one of the Buddha's teachings, it causes us to pause and reflect, allowing it to act as antidote to our mistaken actions. Every teaching is antidote to eliminating defilements; every teaching has the method to enable us to gain realisations on the Path – from the 5 Paths to the two stages of the tantra path. By completing one's training in these, one is able to gain enlightenment - GTZ*

# V1 Chapter 3 – How to Listen to and Explain the Teachings

## How to listen to and explain the teachings

How to listen to a teaching in which both the teachings and its author are great

### 1. Contemplating the benefits of hearing the teaching

*The benefits of listening include these: Through listening, the ultimate nature of phenomena is understood, wrongdoing is overcome; that which is meaningless is eliminated (our samsaric lives seek temporary happiness and constantly engage in mistakes in relationships, livelihood, etc due to self-centredness); nirvana is attained (provided we are able to put effort to listen to small capability being teachings, one can at least gain higher rebirth; if we spend a bit more time to listen to middle capability being's path, one is able to obtain the nirvana of the Shravaka and Pratyekabuddha; if one puts even more effort, one can forgo residing in nirvana for one's own peace and instead gain Enlightenment to be the sunshine to all living beings). Listening to Dharma dispels the darkness of delusion. We often do not think of Dharma when things are going well. We only think of it when times are bad or we are in crisis – by then it is too late. Why? One faces problems when one's past good karma has been exhausted, where there is no more merit to offer us aid. Therefore, one needs to cultivate merit continuously. But understand that even to accumulate merit, one needs merit - GTZ*

### 2. Developing reverence for the teaching and the instructor

*It is stated in the Ksitigarbha Sutra that to receive blessing from teachings requires one to have faith in the teacher. If you are unsure about a particular teacher, you can maintain an open mind, listen attentively to the teacher and*

*hope that this open mind will become faith and conviction in the teachings and Teacher - GTZ*

### **3. How you actually listen**

#### **- Abandoning the 3 faults of a vessel**

*How to show respect while listening to teachings: Even though the Teacher asks you to sit at the same level as himself, you should seat yourself lower - at least 1 inch lower. Be disciplined – don't fidget while listening. One should not think, "I am here to develop my mind, so actions of my body and speech do not matter". Rather, have joyous enthusiasm that one has the chance to listen to Dharma and be respectful in conduct.*

*How to listen to the Dharma: Avoid being like 3 types of faulty vessels when listening to the nectar of Dharma i.e. being an upside-down vessel (which will not hold anything); a dirty vessel (holding worldly views & negative motivation); a leaky container (not making any effort to retain any of the teachings).*

*"Relying on the 6 attitudes" refers to regarding oneself as a sick person (afflicted by samsara-sickness); regarding the Buddha as the doctor whose precious advice will heal us from suffering; regard the Dharma as medicine (urgently needed to be consumed); regarding the Sangha as virtuous friends who support one's practice; having the enthusiasm to apply the teachings in one's life. We have been suffering samsara-illness for a long time but if we do not take the Dharma medicine, we will not be healed, In such a case, we cannot fault the doctor nor the medicine.*

*We do not have to become a monk or nun to practice Dharma. Everyone of us has equal potential to practice dharma and attain enlightenment. However, just reading and listening to Dharma, will not solve our problems. We need to integrate the teachings and transform our minds. If you see yourself or others doing virtue, acknowledge it and rejoice. The easiest way to obtain merit is through rejoicing at others' good deeds - GTZ*

**B: How to explain a teaching in which both the teachings and its author are great**

1. Contemplating the benefits of explaining the teaching

*The main benefit is that you are giving the path to total freedom!*  
– GTZ

2. Developing reverence for the Teacher and the teaching
3. With what sort of thoughts and behaviour should you explain the teaching
4. Differentiating between those to whom you should and should not explain the teaching

**C: How a session should be concluded in relation to both hearing and explaining the teaching.**

## **V1 Chapter 4 – Relying on the Teacher**

*This is one of the very important subjects, namely devoting to the Guru, who is the foundation of all good qualities. Without correct guru devotion, one will not even be able to attain worldly happiness, let alone enlightenment. The essence of the guru devotion practice is seeing the Teacher as Buddha, seeing the Teacher as possessing qualities equal qualities to the Buddha. “Correct devotion “ is not just smiling at the guru, speaking sweetly in front of the guru and misbehaving when the guru is not around. It is about implementing the teachings. From the start, we should make supplication to the 10 Direction Buddhas to grant blessings and inspiration for one to be successful in actualising the Lam Rim, the entire graduated path to enlightenment which begins with correct Guru Devotion - GTZ*

### **How to lead students with the actual instructions**

#### **How to rely on the Teacher, the root of the Path**

*Even to be carpenter or a tailor, one needs to rely on a teacher. Hence, for the spiritual path, one which we have not travelled before, one needs a teacher. The master Geshe Potowa said, “ Of all the instructions, not giving up the Teacher is the most important. Whatever happens, never give up the instruction of guru devotion”. With proper guru devotion as the foundation, the rest of the Buddha’s instructions can be effortlessly merged with one’s practice (including the complex instructions on meditations on emptiness). It is said that the Teacher is source of all short and long term happiness – this is because it is the Teacher who helps one to cultivate virtue and eliminate negative behaviour, thereby securing the precious human rebirth with the opportunity to meet qualified masters and continue one’s study of dharma and improve on one’s practices. At every single stage of the training on the path, one needs to rely on the Guru. The Guru is a critical factor to one’s happiness and enlightenment - GTZ*

## **A detailed explanation for developing certain knowledge:**

### *(a) The qualities of the Teacher*

*Whilst there are slight variations on this as between the texts of Vinaya, Sutra and tantra – here, we refer to the common view of the 10 qualities of the Teacher, namely:*

- 1. Being disciplined – the Teacher must possess and uphold at least individual liberation vows because in order to tame others, one needs to be disciplined. Like a horse trainer, without oneself being well trained, there is no way to train horses.*
- 2. Being serene – Having mindfulness, vigilance and good ethics.*
- 3. Being pacified – Possessing a mental state in which the mind remains peacefully withdrawn, turning away from negativities and engaging in good activities. One also needs to be trained in special insight to gain the wisdom understanding emptiness.*
- 4. Being learned in the Tripitaka – Vinaya, Sutra and Abidhammakosha (Buddhist metaphysics).*
- 5. Surpassing the student's knowledge*
- 6. Having enthusiasm to teach Dharma*
- 7. Having knowledge of the full scriptures and able to teach according to mental disposition of students.*
- 8. Possesses loving kindness i.e. the genuine wish to give teachings to students to liberate them from samsara. If one provides any instruction for only this-life's purposes, that is non-dharma and a cause of samsara. For a teaching to qualify as a Dharma instruction, as a minimum, it*

*must be to secure a higher rebirth; a higher purpose than this would be for the purpose of liberation and the highest purpose would be to attain enlightenment for the sake of all living beings. It is important to understand that there are differences between virtue, merit and dharma action.*

9. *Having skills in teaching.*

10. *Abandoning partiality i.e. this means having equal compassion for all beings. Note that even Theravadan teachings contain compassion. The Mahayana teachings however refer to great compassion which involves the added element of taking personal responsibility to lead all beings to liberation & enlightenment.*

*If a person has the above 10 qualities, then he is qualified to be a teacher - GTZ*

### **(b) The qualities of the disciple**

*Understand that whilst the Teacher is the conditional factor to all happiness, it is crucial for us to keep in mind that “the Buddha does not clean away negativities and suffering with water..” . There is no possibility for the Buddha to peel away the hardships that living beings go through. Likewise, he cannot transfer his knowledge to us. In order to receive ultimate benefit from having a Teacher and receiving teachings, it depends entirely on the disciple applying the teachings, purifying karma, increasing merits and putting effort into study and practice - GTZ*

### **(c) How the disciple relies upon the Teacher**

*Those endowed with 3 qualities of being non-partisan, intelligent and diligent, combined with having focus and having respect for the teachings and the teacher, is suitable to listen to the Teachings.*

*Be careful of Dharma pollution i.e. after studying Dharma, one becomes proud and more afflicted like being more impatient. One might even impute one own faults onto the Teacher. As beginners, it is wiser to mentally merge with the Guru in our heart but physically remain distant. Otherwise, one will start to see faults in the teacher due to one's own wrong mental projections and start accusing the Teacher of mistakes.*

*Having relied on a qualified Guru, the student should constantly remind oneself to view the Guru as Buddha and hold the view that the ways of the teacher are mere manifestations and not "inherent" habits e.g. if the Teacher shows a wrathful aspect, think that the Teacher is teaching oneself not to be angry; if one thinks the Teacher is manifesting desire, then his purpose is to show the faults of desire. In order to interpret properly, one needs to learn Dharma well and learn what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned.*

*Chandrakirti advises that in ordinary circumstances, we might feel that one's teacher is biased and partial. When such thoughts arise, we should check our mind and realise that faulty projections are a reflection of our own mind and further, the teacher is teaching me about the faults of partiality and for me to always have equanimity towards all.*

*When the Teacher praises us, we feel good; when Teacher scolds us, we think the Teacher has faults. This kind of thinking is incorrect. Whatever the Teacher manifests is an instruction to you. If you have partisan view, you will not discover the truth of the teachings. After all, even in terms of Buddha images, there are many manifestations of the Buddha. This is to subdue the various types of obstacles in the minds of sentient beings. If we do not understand this, we end up being critical of images which do not meet our expectations of what Buddha images should look like. Likewise, we buy a Dharma book and upon reading it, we find some of the teachings difficult to carry out. This then causes us to doubt or regret buying that book. Such an attitude is incorrect. As long as it is the Buddha's teachings, we should*



*respect it and make effort to learn it, as it is the experiential instruction of the Buddha.*

*“Non partisan” means non-biased but still requiring the need to be able to distinguish between good and false explanations.*

*“Intelligence: If one does not have the qualities of the precious human rebirth, one cannot study Dharma. If we feel somewhat lacking in wisdom, we need to engage in virtue and pray to Manjushri, so that one will awaken from the dark, ignorant, lazy state of mind into one which is active, vigilant and able to comprehend the profundity of the Buddha’s teachings.*

*“Diligence” – This is the consistent effort needed to studying Dharma. Even if doing so incurs great hardship, one should not be discouraged, as the fruit of this effort is peerless happiness - GTZ*

### **How to practice Guru Devotion**

- (i) How to rely in thought [remembering the kindness of the Guru and seeing the Guru as Buddha]
  - (a) A general indication of the attitudes needed to rely on the teacher
  - (b) In particular, training in faith, the root
  - (c) Remembering the teacher’s kindness and being respectful
  
- (ii) How to rely in action/practice [making offerings of material things, service and Dharma practice]
  - (d) The benefits of relying on the teacher
  - (e) The faults of not relying on the teacher
  - (f) A summary of the meaning of the previous five parts

## **V1 Chapter 5 – The Meditation Session**

**A brief indication of how to sustain the meditation - the actual way of sustaining the meditation**

- 1. What to do during the actual meditation session**
  - (a) Preparation**
  - (b) Actual session**
    - (i) How to sustain the meditation in general**
    - (ii) How to sustain the meditation specifically**
  - (c) What to do at the conclusion**
  
- 2. What to do in between meditation sessions**
  
- 3. (a) Restraining the sensory faculties**
  - (b) Acting with vigilance**
    - (i) The foundations upon which you act**
    - (ii) Acting vigilantly with respect to the foundations**
  - (c) Appropriate diet**
  - (d) How to practice diligently without sleeping at the wrong time and how to act properly at the time of sleep**

# V1 Chapter 6 – Refuting Misconception about Meditation

Refuting Misconceptions About Meditation

## V1 Chapter 7 - The Human Life of Leisure and Opportunity (the precious human rebirth)

**The stages of how the students train their minds after they have relied on the teacher**

*Gaining another precious human rebirth is not assured. As one's lifespan is uncertain and time short, the need to properly rely on the Guru and practice Dharma is urgent. The role of the Guru is to guide the disciple to discover and enhance the disciple's spiritual cultivation in order to optimize the disciple's precious human rebirth - GTZ*

### **1. A call to take full advantage of a life of leisure (8 freedoms) and opportunity (10 endowments):**

*What is meant by taking full advantage of the precious human rebirth (PHR) is for one to recognize that one's contaminated aggregates and samsara is suffering, renounce it totally and strive for liberation from samsara. If one only practices for the purpose of obtaining good health, long life and happiness in this-life, that is not Dharma because even animals do that. Look at ants – they struggle for 24 hours a day, working to gather conditions for this-life's happiness because even animals understand the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change. However, the PHR is more than an animal's life. By recognising contaminated rebirth, humans can use their PHR to be free not only from the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change but also pervasive suffering. Freedom from the first two types of sufferings is not liberation/nirvana. Liberation/nirvana is freedom from pervasive suffering and thereby also from the first two types of suffering. - GTZ*

## **a. The identification of leisure and opportunity:**

1. Leisure (8 freedoms) which include free from being born in the hell, hungry ghost and animal realms, free from being born as a long-life god, born with defective faculties, born in a place without Dharma, born in a place where a Buddha has not descended and having wrong views
2. Opportunity (10 endowments)
  - (a) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to yourself
  - (b) The five aspects of opportunity that pertain to others

*The 5 endowments in relation to self are being born human, being born in a place where Dharma is accessible, having complete sensory faculties, having not committed the 5 heinous actions and having faith in the Dharma. The 5 endowments one has in relation to others are being born at a time where a Buddha has descended, at a time where the Dharma is being taught, at a time where the Dharma remains, in a place where there are Dharma practitioners and there are Dharma benefactors. So, one would not have the precious human rebirth if one is deaf or if one is insane or mentally unstable and the like. One way to waste this precious human rebirth is to work only for this-life concerns, which are mere samsaric concerns - GTZ*

## **b. Contemplating the great importance of leisure and opportunity**

## **c. Contemplating the difficulty of attaining leisure and opportunity**

*We have been born in the lower realms unlimited times. Now that we have the PHR, we need to take advantage of it because it is difficult to gain another PHR in the future. To achieve it, one needs to live an ethical life, one of avoiding the 10 non-virtues - GTZ*

**Shantideva's quote from the Bodhicaryavatara:**

*“With behaviour such as mine  
I will not attain a human body again  
If I do not attain it  
I will commit sin and never be virtuous...  
If even a single moment's wrongdoing  
Causes you to abide in the Unrelenting Hell for an aeon  
It goes without saying that you will not enter a happy realm  
Due to sins heaped up since beginningless time”*

*If one takes rebirth in the lower the realms, the more likely one will accumulate negative karma, making the gaining of the PHR even more remote. If one does not cultivate virtue right now, one will incur a lower rebirth where there will be no opportunity to work towards gaining another PHR.*

*One might think that by having problems now, all negative karma is purified and hence, there is no need to cultivate virtue/positive karma. Yes, some negative karma is exhausted by experiencing hardship but unless one is a strong practitioner with good control over one's mind, the experience of suffering itself will cause one to be miserable and have a negative mind, which will obviously generate more negative karma. Similarly, experiencing sufferings in the lower realms will generate more negative karma and thus, getting out of the terrible realms becomes almost impossible. Therefore, unless we purify the root delusions (ignorance, anger, attachment etc) which gave rise to the negative action in the first place, we will continue to commit negative karma – GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 8 - The Three Types of Persons

*The three types of persons refer to the beings of the 3 scopes or the 3 types of capability beings –*

- *Those of the Small Scope/Small capability beings (who aspire for a higher rebirth such as a human, demi-god or god-realm rebirth)*
- *Those of the Middle Scope/Medium capability beings (who aspire to be Shravakas (Hearers) or Pratyekabuddhas (Solitary Realisers))*
- *Those of the Highest Scope capability beings (who aspire to attain Enlightenment for the sake of all living beings).*

*All scopes are Buddha's instructions and should be respected as such. Some of you have heard of the 3 Principal Aspects of the Path (3PAP). It is useful to note that all 3 scopes involve teachings on the 3PAP. It is not only a Mahayana teaching. However the goals of each of the 3 scopes differ:*

*The Small Scope teachings focus on renouncing this-life's aims; the method is abiding by refuge and karma; the wisdom is to eradicate thinking of only this life/temporary happiness. The goal is higher rebirth.*

*The Middle Scope teachings focus on how to stop negative actions and renouncing this life and future lives i.e. renouncing samsara totally. The method is refuge, karma and preserving individual liberation vows; the wisdom is the wisdom of selflessness of person. The goal is liberation/nirvana.*

*The Highest Scope teachings (the Mahayana) consist of Sutra teachings (the causal vehicle) and Tantra teachings (the resultant vehicle/the mantra vehicle/Vajrayana). The method is the total renunciation of samsara, the*

*cultivation of bodhicitta and gaining the wisdom realizing emptiness. The goal is full enlightenment.*

*The first two scopes can thus be regarded as the preliminary teachings of the Mahayana/Highest Scope - GTZ*

**How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity - How to develop knowledge of a general presentation of the path:**

1. How all the scriptures are included within the paths of the 3 types of persons
2. Why students are led in stages using the trainings of the 3 types of persons:
  - (a) The purpose of leading students by means of the paths of the 3 types of persons
  - (b) Why one guides students through such stages
    - (i) The actual reason
    - (ii) The purpose

## V1 Chapter 9 - Mindfulness of Death

### The actual way to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity

*Reflecting on death and impermanence is very important because human beings are very stubborn. The Buddha first taught us about the precious human rebirth for us to know our potential and then he taught death & impermanence in order for us to take full advantage of such a rebirth and not waste it away - GTZ*

Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with small capability beings - the actual training of the small capability being. Developing a state of mind that strives diligently for the sake of future lives through –

Mindfulness of death, reflecting that you will not remain long in this world –

- The faults of not remembering death
- The benefits of remembering death
- The type of mindfulness of death that one should develop
- How to cultivate mindfulness of death –
  - Death is certain – death cannot be avoided, life cannot be extended and constantly diminishes, little time for Dharma practice
  - Time of death is uncertain – life span is uncertain, cause of death are many and causes of life are few, one's body is fragile
  - At the time of death, nothing helps except Dharma – friends, resources/ possessions and body cannot help



*The problem with us is that we see that which is contaminated as pure; we indulge in our senses thinking all of it is happiness when it is actually suffering; we think that what we encounter is lasting but is actually impermanent. Instead, one should always think “I will definitely depart from this life where I will have to leave everything behind”. Due to not thinking about death, we boldly commit negative karma for the sake of this-life, samsaric aims.*

*There are many benefits to cultivating mindfulness of death e.g. we are able to eliminate attachment, ignorance, pride, negative actions. If we do not eliminate these, we cannot gain freedom and lasting happiness.*

*Death is certain – all living beings, even the great ones, have left their bodies, why not us? Our lives cannot be extended and is constantly being diminished. The longest lifespan is little more than 100 years, yet half our lives are spent sleeping, the other half spent securing livelihood and family, then the suffering of old age comes quickly with ailments like anxiety, sorrow, Alzheimer’s, mental instability. Unless we have a strong imprint of Dharma in our lives, there is no opportunity to practice Dharma. Thus we must use the little time we have to learn and practice Dharma.*

*Time of death is uncertain - We never think “I will die today”. We continuously focus on this life and prepare to remain in this life, rather than prepare for the next life which is certain to come. Some people are seen in the morning and are no longer alive in the evening; some children die before parents. Causes for prolonging life are few (even too much vitamins can bring harm) and those that end life are many. Life is fragile like a water bubble. Relying on doctors to prolong our lives is a fantasy used to distract ourselves from thinking about the reality of death.*

*At time of death, nothing helps except Dharma - We have spent our entire lives taking care of our bodies and yet it will cease. Family & friends and possessions cannot help us avert death. Inviting numerous Sangha to recite prayers or placing relics in one’s mouth at one’s deathbed may present*

*positive conditions for higher rebirth but cannot guarantee a higher rebirth. It all depends on the deceased person's karma at the time of death. Except for virtue or non-virtue, nothing else will follow you. Know this well and act accordingly - GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 10 - Reflecting on Your Future Life

(A continuation of “Training the mind in the path of the small capability being”)

Contemplating what will occur in your future life

1. Contemplating the suffering of hell beings – those of the great hells, of the adjoining hells, the cold hells and the occasional hells
2. Contemplating the suffering of animals
3. Contemplating the suffering of hungry ghosts – those with external and internal obstacles in relation to food/drink, and obstacles within food and drink

*We have committed numberless negativities which are causes for lower realm rebirths. Without a thorough contemplation on the sufferings of the lower realms, there will be no concern for it and no determination to be free. Hence, there is value to meditating on the lower realm sufferings to encourage oneself to practice Dharma - GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 11 - Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels

(A continuation of “Training the mind in the path of the small capability being”)

Relying on the means for achieving happiness in the next life - Going for refuge

1. Know the causes for refuge – fear of the lower realms and faith that the Three Jewels can save oneself from the lower realms.
2. Know the objects of refuge – Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
3. Know the manner of going for refuge.

(a) Going for refuge through knowing the good qualities of:

- the Buddha’s body, speech and mind (knowledge and bodhicitta)
- the Dharma
- the Sangha

*The good qualities of the Buddha’s body refers to his major and minor marks which inspire perfection; qualities of the Buddha’s speech refers to the Dharma which contains the antidotes to eliminate all suffering; qualities of the Buddha’s mind sees reality/emptiness directly, is omniscient and knows what is required to overcome the sufferings of all living beings.*

*The good qualities of the Dharma: Dharma is the actual refuge which eradicates all delusions and suffering through teachings on renunciation, bodhicitta and the selflessness of person and phenomena.*

*The good qualities of the Sangha: The Sangha Refuge refers to Arya beings i.e. those who have realized emptiness directly and not merely having good knowledge of emptiness. They are the Community who live in vows and inspire others to live the Path of liberation and enlightenment. They assist us in our refuge practices and those which lead up to enlightenment - GTZ*

- (b) Going for refuge by knowing the distinctions based on defining characteristics, enlightened activities, devotion, practice, recollection and how they increase merit**
- (c) Going for refuge through commitment**
- (d) Going for refuge through not seeking other refuges**

*“Other refuges” refers to things like worldly gods, nagas, trees, sun, moon. These have no power to lead us to liberation and enlightenment - GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 12 - Precepts of Refuge

(A continuation from Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels)

**Having taken refuge, the precepts of refuge are to be followed** – there are those from the written tradition of teachings (Compendium of Determinations) and oral tradition of teachings.

**a. The precepts as per the Compendium** – 2 sets - rely on excellent persons, listen to the sublime teachings, focus your attention properly on them, cultivate a practice that conforms with the teachings, do not excite your sensory faculties, take up precepts correctly, be compassionate toward all living beings, strive to make offerings to the here Jewels.

*“Excellent persons” refer to virtuous friends/Teachers/Sangha who uphold ethics and moral conduct - GTZ.*

**b. The precepts as per the oral tradition** –

(i) the special precepts – the proscriptive precepts and the prescriptive precepts;

*Having taken refuge in Buddha, one should not take refuge in worldly gods; having taken refuge in the Dharma, one cannot have a harmful attitude towards any living being; having taken refuge in Sangha, one should not associate with those who discourage one from practising Dharma - GTZ*

**(ii) the general precepts** –

- o Recall good qualities of the Three Jewels and repeated take refuge
- o Recall the kindness of the Three Jewels constantly and offer the first portion of food and drink to them
- o Establish other living beings in this practice by considering them with compassion

- o Whatever activity, make offerings and supplications to the Three Jewels and abandon worldly methods
- o Having understood the benefits of taking refuge, go for refuge 3x in the day and 3x at night - obtain vast merit, joy, concentration, purity, protection, reduce and remove all obscurations, counted amongst excellent persons, receive delight/approval of teachers and virtuous friends, included among Buddhists, worthy to uphold vows, will not fall into lower realms, not hindered by humans and non-humans, accomplish all things wished for and quickly achieve Buddhahood
- o Maintain your refuge and not forsake the Three Jewels even in jest or at the cost of your life

## **V1 Chapter 13 - The General Characteristics of Karma**

**Developing the faith/conviction that (following the law of) karma is the basis of all temporary happiness and definite goodness**

**Reflecting on karma and its effects in general - The actual way to reflect –**

**i. The certainty of karma**

**ii. The magnification of karma (it increases)**

**iii. Not experiencing the effects of actions that one did not do**

**iv. The actions/karma one has done will not perish**

*The certainty of karma means negative actions produce suffering results and virtuous actions produces positive results. The magnification of karma means small karmic causes multiply into great results. For example, if one kills one mosquito and fail to purify that act, then after something like 17 days, the seriousness is equal to killing a human being. Likewise, small virtues also multiply. There is no need to wait till you are a millionaire to do charity. A small flower offering to the Buddha will bring huge results. Whatever one experiences, one has accumulated the karmic cause for it. Karma committed will not perish on its own. Thus if one wishes to remove negative karmic seeds which will bring sufferings, one needs to engage in purification practices such as the 4 Opponent Powers practice - GTZ*



## V1 Chapter 14 – The Varieties of Karma

**Reflecting on the distinctions among the varieties of karma - The principal teaching of the 10 paths of actions and the effects of those actions**

### **1. Non virtuous actions and their effects –**

*The 10 paths of actions can be in relation to virtue or non-virtue. The 10 non-virtuous actions we must guard against are -*

*3 performed by one's body – killing, stealing, sexual misconduct*

*4 performed by one's speech – lying, harsh speech, divisive speech, idle speech*

*3 performed by mind – covetousness, ill-will and wrong view - GTZ*

(i) Actual paths of non-virtuous actions

(ii) Distinctions of weight

*Actions/karma vary in their “weight” or seriousness and this is determined by factors such as one's attitude when doing the act e.g. if an extreme delusion like anger is present in one's mind while killing an animal, the result will be extreme suffering; whether the 4 factors (of intention, object, action and completion) are present in relation to the act; whether the act was done in relation to the 5 potent karmic objects. The “weight” aspect applies to both negative or positive actions - GTZ*

(a) The weights of the 10 paths of non virtuous actions

(b) A brief discussion of the criteria for powerful actions/karma – strength in terms of recipient, support, objects, attitude,

(c) The types of karmic effects – fruitional/ripened effects, effects similar to the cause, environmental effects

## **2. Virtuous actions and their effects**

- (i) Virtuous actions
- (ii) Effects of virtuous actions

## **3. A presentation of other classes of karma – the projecting and completing karma; karma whose result will definitely or only possibly experience**

**Reflecting on karma and its effects in detail – the attributers of the fruitions/ results, the effects of the fruitions/results and causes of the fruitions/ results**

*If the karmic action was not complete (i.e. with the four factors present) and has not ripened into the result, applying the antidote/engaging in purification will help and one might not have to experience the full karmic result; however if the karma was completed and has ripened, then one cannot escape full karmic consequence of one's actions. Thus the importance of purification practices - GTZ*

## **V1 Chapter 15 - Cultivating Ethical Behaviour**

**How you engage in virtue and turn away from non-virtue after you have reflected on karma and its effects in general and in detail**

- a. A general explanation**
- b. In particular, a way of purification through the 4 powers**
  - o The power of eradication/ the power of regret**
  - o The power of applying remedies**
  - o The power of turning away from faults/the resolve to refrain from the non virtue**
  - o The power of the foundation/the power of going for refuge**

## **V1 Chapter 16 - The Attitude of a Small Capability-Being**

**(Up till now, the discussion has been on training the mind in the path shared with persons of small capacity)**

### **The Attitude of a Small Capability-Being**

**(b) The measure of the attitude of the small capability being**

**(c) Clearing up misconceptions concerning the attitude of a person of small capacity.**

*The main practice of the small capability being is Refuge and abiding by the related teachings on karma, guru devotion and renunciation of this life's samsaric existence and aspires for higher rebirth - GTZ*

## **V1 Chapter 17 - The Eight types of Suffering**

### **Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with the middle-capability being**

*The main practice of the middle capability beings relates to the 3 higher trainings of morality, concentration & wisdom, in order to attain liberation for oneself from samsara entirely i.e. renouncing both lower and higher rebirths. Liberation means freedom from the bondage of karma and delusion which bind us to samsara and samsaric birth and rebirth. To break free, one needs to know about suffering and the causes of suffering and how to eliminate them.*

*We now know the sufferings of the lower realms. However, the happiness of the higher realms should also be abandoned because they have specific sufferings too. We have repeatedly taken rebirth in various realms due to ignorance, desirous attachment and anger, creating the causes for being born up and down the realms. Thus we should not be attached to samsara and seek total liberation from it.*

*A middle capability being is called that because he seeks freedom from samsara but he is a practitioner who has not actualized the great courage to liberate sentient beings too (like the great capability beings of the Mahayana). However, the middle capability being is more courageous than the small capability being who does not even have the determination to gain freedom from samsara entirely but who only renounces this life's samsaric existence and aspires for better future lives.*

*Aryadeva advised that as long as we appreciate samsara, we will never be able to gain true renunciation. If we feel, “ I want to live tomorrow and enjoy my world tour; I want to live long to get myself a big house and more facilities”; or “ I aspire only for my children's education.” liberation cannot be attained - GTZ.*

## **Mental training**

- i. Identifying the mind intent on liberation**
- ii. The method for developing the mind intent on liberation - Reflection on suffering and its origin – the faults of cyclic existence/samsara:**
  - a. Showing the significance of the Buddha's asserting the truth of suffering as the first of the four noble truths**
  - b. The actual meditation on suffering - reflection on the general sufferings of cyclic existence and the reflection on the specific sufferings of cyclic existence**

Reflection on the general sufferings of cyclic existence - the 8 types of suffering – of birth, old age, illness, death, encountering what is unpleasant, separation from the pleasant, not getting what one wants and suffering of the 5 contaminated aggregates.

*In the “Descent into the Womb Sutra” the Buddha taught that even when in the womb, a baby suffers in terms of that environment, the smell, the limited space etc. From conception, all subtle 5 senses/aggregates arise and sufferings in relation to them are experienced right from that moment. To gain the realisation of renouncing higher rebirth, reflect on these 8 types of suffering.*

*Once you realise you are suffering, you must find the causes and the antidotes to them. The root cause is ignorance - the belief that one is inherently-existent or created by an external god-being - as these give rise to a sense of an independently existing “I”, to self-grasping. Once you see the fault of self grasping, once you adopt the practice of the 3 higher trainings to overcome this, you will realise that cessation of suffering is possible. Without applying the teachings of the Four Noble Truths, one's practice will be very shallow - GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 18 – The 6 Types of Suffering

(A continuation on the general sufferings of cyclic existence – the 8 types, the 6 types and the 3 types)

**Reflection on the 6 types of suffering – the fault of uncertainty, insatiability, casting of bodies repeatedly, repeated rebirth, repeatedly descending from high to low, of having no companions**

*Lama Tsongkhapa here refers to Mahamati's text "The Friendly Letter" which cautions us not to have a partial attitude (which arises due to the self grasping mind) towards other living beings i.e. categorising people into friend, enemy and stranger. In order to actualise the middle capability-being's goal i.e. liberation/nirvana, one has to discard the self-grasping mind. - GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 19 – Further Meditations on Suffering

(c) The 3 types of suffering – the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive suffering

*The sequence of the 3 types of suffering depends on which scope of teachings is being studied. In the small scope teachings, we start with the suffering of suffering. When studying the middle scope teachings, one begins with the suffering of change i.e. to see how change itself is a form of suffering whilst we are experiencing pleasure in samsara.*

*Suffering of conditionality (pervasive suffering) relates to suffering at a deeper and more subtle level. As long as defilements, afflictive emotions and karma operate, they give rise to pain, which leads to more negative karma being committed and certainty in rebirth in the 6 realms. When one is able to renounce all 3 sufferings, one attains the renunciation of middle capability being - GTZ*

(The above concludes “Reflection on the general sufferings of cyclic existence).

### **Reflection on specific sufferings -**

- **The sufferings of humans,**
- **The sufferings of demi-gods**
- **The suffering of the devas/god-realm beings of :**

**(i) the Desire Realm and the sufferings of dying and falling into the lower realms**

- **the suffering of anxiety**
- **the sufferings of being cut, gashed, killed and banished**

**(ii) the Form and Formless Realms**

*The suffering of the higher realms – human, demigod and god realm - differs*



*in intensity. It is not necessary for one to physically go to another realm. Depending on the intensity of one's karma, one can experience the various realms in this human rebirth itself. We might think that the god realm is great and something to aspire to. It is not. God realm beings also suffer by dying when their karma to be god-beings gets exhausted and they fall to the lower realms. Predominant neutral karma mixed with some merits will cause rebirth in god realm but this karma will finish, at which point, they go into the intermediate state for a moment and gain rebirth into the lower realms.*

*Then we might think the Purelands are god realms. They are not. A Pureland is a place where conditions are conducive for the study of Dharma but unless one actualizes great merit continuously, when the karma to remain in the Pureland finishes, one is reborn back into samsara. The moment we have a headache, we should understand karma and think "I must renounce samsara". This way, we use suffering on the Path. Plain fear involves a negative mind and an accumulation of negativities. When we refer to "fear" in Dharma e.g. fear of the lower realms, it should be based on reasoning e.g. on understanding how karma operates etc.*

### *Form and Formless realm beings*

*The fundamental karma of such beings is neutral karma mixed with some virtue. At the point of death, they raised prayers to be born in the god realms and this influences one's rebirth there. Though they escape gross suffering, they minds remain affected by afflictions and obscurations. Due to not being free from these, they cannot accumulate new virtue to sustain past virtues which are constantly being depleted and rebirth in the lower realms is inevitable – GTZ*

## V1 Chapter 20 - The Origin of Suffering

### Reflection on the process of cyclic existence in terms of its origin

#### How afflictions arise

*Delusions/afflictions are the root cause of all sufferings. A seed without moisture, soil and supporting conditions will not sprout. Likewise, delusions gave rise to negative causes being created in the past and present negative actions nourished those poisoned seeds, which has ripened into the fruits of our present problems and suffering. To make things worse, the suffering itself triggers a negative state of mind and thus creates fresh causes for more suffering.*

*In Dharmakirti's Compendium of Valid Cognition, he advises that although at the time of death, one may have generated much virtue in the past, if one's mind at that time is strongly affected by negative emotion, it can lead to one's lower rebirth; (whereas) if at death, the mind is virtuous, that will be very fortunate and can throw one to a higher rebirth. Through ignorance, we are not aware of our afflicted minds and are totally dominated by them - GTZ*

- 1. Identifying the afflictions**
- 2. The order in which the afflictions arise**
- 3. The causes of the afflictions**
- 4. The faults of the afflictions**

*In identifying the afflictions, sage Asanga in the Compendium of Knowledge defines delusions/afflictions as that which upon arising, disturbs one's mind stream, which is fundamentally clear. The delusions (of ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, doubt and wrong view) towards karma, refuge, inherent existence etc, distract one's subtle clear mind and brings about the mind that commits negative karma.*

*As for the order in which the afflictions arise – Dharmakirti states – when there is a self (self-grasping “I “), there is the concept of “others”; from that*

*comes attachment and anger and consequently all forms of negativities.*

*Therefore, once we eliminate self cherishing, self grasping will be eliminated. It is of greater benefit to eliminate self cherishing. Self cherishing is grasping at one's own interests over that of others; self grasping is the sense of a independent self (achieved through liberation).*

*The causes of the afflictions – there are 6 causes – latent tendency for delusions to arise, appearance of objects which give rise to delusions, influence of negative companions, listening to wrong teachings, being familiar with past delusions and having the 4 erroneous conceptions (by thinking that things are permanent, pure, happy and self- existent)*

*The faults of delusions – in the Ornament of Mahayana Sutra – it is stated that delusions are destructive - they destroy self, other beings, one's discipline and will secure one a rebirth without the 8 freedoms and 10 endowments. Delusions are the effects of previous suffering and the cause for future sufferings - GTZ*

### **How you thereby accumulate karma**

1. Identifying the karma that you accumulate
  - (a) Karma that is intention
  - (b) Karma that is the intended action
  
2. How you accumulate karma
  - (a) Accumulating karma for pleasant feelings
    - (i) Accumulating karma for the pleasure that comes from enjoying desirable objects – sights, sounds and the like
    - (ii) Accumulating karma for gaining bliss in meditative concentration, after your rejected attachment to sensual pleasures
  - (b) Accumulating karma for neutral feelings

*Vasubandhu explained that intended action is the physical and verbal action motivated by intention. Karma is both the intention and the action. Virtuous karma can be contaminated if it is done through delusions e.g. ignorance, attachment etc and will be the cause for samsara. Uncontaminated karma refers to action which carries the subtle imprint of delusion, which will not create the cause for samsara but will remain an obscuration to omniscience. The Arya beings attaining arhatship have purified contaminated karma but not uncontaminated karma. Only Buddha has purified both types of karma.*

*For those who enter directly into the Bodhisattva path, contaminated karma will be eliminated at the 3rd level of the Path of Preparation (there are 4 levels in this Path) but the subtle seed is still there. There is still the danger of being born into samsara. This seed will be completely purified at the 8th Bhumi/Ground. The application of the antidote that will eliminate the object of negation (i.e. the inherently existing I and inherently existing phenomena), is the wisdom realizing emptiness. Total cessation is obtained at the 10th Bhumi.*

*Vasubandhu said “When you have seen the truth (i.e. when you realise emptiness directly) you will not be impelled to rebirth..” This means that when you have seen the truth, you will not commit new karma for samsaric purposes (although you will still need to purify previously accumulated karma) - GTZ*

## **How you die and are reborn**

### **1. Causes of death**

### **2. The mind at death**

**(a) Dying with a virtuous mind**

**(b) Dying with a non-virtuous mind**

**(c) Dying with an ethically neutral mind**

### **3. Where heat gathers**

### **4. How you reach the intermediate state after death**

## 5. How you take rebirth

*Timely death is the arrival at the result of one's previous karma. However, one's actions can give rise to "untimely death". Untimely death is due to present circumstances, e.g. being reckless giving rise to an accident which causes death; carelessly not taking medicine thereby shortening one's life due to present circumstances. This itself is heavy negative karma as it creates the cause to shorten one's own life.*

*Sexual intercourse causes loss of life force and affects the indestructible drop. Thus the need to uphold vows well. For tantric meditative practice, the essence from one's body similarly cannot be released, as it too will affect winds within the body.*

*At time of death it is important to avoid a negative mind, as well as a neutral mind. When people are in a coma, it is a pitiful condition as it would be difficult to help oneself. All external help forms only 10% of conducive conditions. When someone dies, it is advisable to place holy objects on the deceased person's crown; instead of crying, chant prayers. Until the discharge of bodily fluids are observed, consciousness has not left the body. If the body heat dissipates from the crown to heart, this is a sign of higher rebirth; if from the feet, then it is likely a lower rebirth. If heat is still at the centre of the chest, consciousness is still within the body. Powa practice (transference of consciousness) only benefits the deceased person if his consciousness has left the body.*

*After the consciousness leaves the body, it enters into the intermediate state. Prayers from time of death up to 49 days, is helpful to this intermediate-state being (bardo being). The bardo will eventually encounter the karmically affiliated father and mother. The bardo being will see the future father and mother in union. If the bardo being is going to be female, it will be attracted to father's secret part and that consciousness will go through mouth of father,*

*dissolve into the sperm which then meets the mother's egg . At that point, the bardo being's consciousness appears (in this fused mass of seminal fluid and egg) in the form of the indestructible drop, which resides at the heart of the baby into adulthood – GTZ*

# V1 Chapter 21 - The Twelve Links of Dependent Arising

## The Twelve Links of Dependent Arising

### Reflection from the viewpoint of the twelve dependent arisings

1. The division into twelve factors
2. Abbreviated classification of the factors
3. The number of lifetimes required to complete all twelve factors
4. How their significance is summarized

*In Vasubandhu's Treasury of Knowledge, it is stated that ignorance is the root of all faults. In diagrams depicting the 12 dependent arisings (or the 12 links of interdependent origination), ignorance is represented by a blind man, who does not have the means to perceive the reality of existence; unable to discriminate between what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned; not having the understanding of right view – these are some of examples of ignorance.*

*There are two kinds of ignorance – (a) Confusion regarding karma (how negativities results in lower realm rebirths) and (b) confusion regarding reality/emptiness. In short, to be free from rebirth in lower realms as well as higher realms, one must realise emptiness/the true nature of reality.*

*The 12 links are:*

1. Ignorance
2. Compositional activities – potter moulding a pot - Karma and imprints.
3. Consciousness – illustrated by a monkey – 6 types of consciousness.  
*Primary and secondary consciousness.*
4. Name and form – drawing of a boat –
5. The six sources - drawing of a house
6. Contact – drawing of man and woman
7. Feeling

8. *Craving*
9. *Grasping*
10. *Potential existence*
11. *Birth aging*
12. *Death*

*These are then grouped into 4 sets of factors which explain how samsaric rebirth comes about :*

- *Projecting factors = 1. ignorance and 2. compositional factors and 3. consciousness*
- *Projected factors = 4. Name and form; 5. Six sources 6. Contact 7. Feeling*
- *Actualising (completing) factors = 8. Craving 9. Grasping and 10. Becoming*
- *Actualised factors = 11. Birth and aging; 12. death*

*Initial karma is created through the projecting factors and moves towards completion via the actualising factors. Interruption to the potency/completion of the 12 links can occur during the actualising factors. For example – the karma of killing: The projecting factors of ignorance, past imprints in one’s consciousness prepares the basis for the result of a hell rebirth. However, at time of death, there needs to be the actualising factors of (craving and grasping to anger) in order to connect the projecting factors to bring about projected factor of a hell rebirth.*

*The number of lifetimes require for the 12 links to be completed? Even between the stage of projecting factors and projected factors could involve aeons . The cycle of the 12 links could thus take a long time to manifest, if the 12 links are interrupted; or it could happen quickly. The shortest period is 2 lifetimes; the longest is aeons. The reference to two lifetimes is because when we accumulate virtue in this life, the result (from that particular virtuous action) will only be seen in next life. The actualising factors reinforce past virtuous karmic seeds and complete them in the form of the experience in*



*next life.*

*Nagarjuna describes the 12 links as “From the 3 (links 1,8, 9), arise 2 (link 2 and 10); from the 2 arise 7 (links 3,4,5,6,7,11,12) and from the 7 arise 3; the wheel of existence repeatedly turns”. We need to understand the \*\*16 aspects of the 4 Noble Truths to fully comprehend the 12 links - GTZ \*\*Refer to the Commentary on Verse 7 of the Foundation of All Good Qualities in this book for the 16 Aspects.*

## V1 Chapter 22 - The Attitude of the Middle Capability Being

### **The measure of the determination to be free (from cyclic existence) Dispelling misconceptions**

*How does one measure the resolve to be free from samsara? It is not enough to learn about 12 links. One needs to engage in the path of liberation to eliminate ignorance. This is achieved by adopting a practice which is the reversal of the 12 links, as well as the 3 higher trainings (of morality, concentration and wisdom). Even though this is the key practice of the Hinayana, Mahayana practitioners should also practice this (but without aiming for mere self liberation but rather the liberation of all beings). Pabongka Dechin Nyingpo explained that because the Bodhisattva practitioners care for others, they do not choose to remain in nirvana but instead, aspire to return to samsara to help beings (whilst being fully aware of the faults of samsara). Hinayana practitioners on the other hand, reflect on samsara, the 12 links and aspire to attain liberation from samsara and remain there - GTZ*

## **V1 Chapter 23 - Ascertaining the nature of the path leading to liberation**

**i) The kind of life through which you halt cyclic existence**

**ii) The kind of path you cultivate to halt cyclic existence**

**a. The certainty of the explanation of the three trainings:**

**1. The stages of disciplining the mind**

**2. Their results**

**3. The objects that they eliminate**

**b. The determination of the order of the three trainings**

*In order to attain liberation, one needs to eliminate the two causes of samsara – karma and delusion – and the method is the 3 higher trainings (morality, concentration and wisdom).*

*Through training in morality, one gains the precious human rebirth and weakens the potential to commit more negativities; through concentration one gains the clarity of mind and gradual eradication of delusions; through wisdom, delusions are fully eliminated and liberation is attained. Hence, wisdom comes from concentration, which in turn comes from morality - GTZ*

## **V1 Chapter 24 - The Nature of the Three Trainings**

*Morality or ethical discipline has 6 branches which include holding vows, avoiding the smallest misdeed, correctly undertaking pure discipline. There are 4 causes to break a vow/ethical discipline: Not knowing the vow, careless in upholding it (one needs mindfulness and introspection), disrespect (one must know the advantage of keeping vows) and delusions.*

*Concentration refers to the 4 meditative stabilizations.*

*Wisdom here refers to training in the knowledge of the 16 aspects of the 4 Noble Truths.*

*With conviction in having understood the first 2 Noble Truths (of Suffering and of its Causes), one should then uphold vows and abide by the Buddha's advice (the Path/the 4th Noble Truth) and in so doing , the 3rd Noble Truth of Cessation can be realized - GTZ*

## V2 Chapter 1 The Stages of the Path for Persons of Great Capacity

**Training the mind in the stages of the path for person of great capability/capacity**

- **Showing that developing the spirit of enlightenment (bodhicitta) is the only entrance to the Mahayana**

*The doorway to the path of the higher capability being is the renunciation of samsaric existence not only for oneself but for every living being.*

*The 3 principle aspects of the Path of the higher capability being are renunciation, bodhicitta and realization of the selflessness of person and of phenomena. These come with the practice of the 6 Perfections and the Bodhisattva vows. In the Mahayana path there are 2 aspects - (a) the causal yana and (b) the resultant yana (tantra path) – both of these are based on those 3 principles and vows.*

*In order to succeed in study of Lam Rim, we first pay homage to the compassionate Buddhas & Bodhisattvas. Having seen the faults of cyclic existence, one realises it is a pit of fire. However, if one only seeks to attain happiness for oneself, then one would be no better than an animal who wishes the same. Mahayana seeks happiness for self and others. All the past great beings like the Buddha and the 8 Great Bodhisattvas have trained in the Mahayana path. It is explained that for those who have attained and remain in nirvana (the Arhats) will find that the Buddhas will at some stage, awaken them from their meditative concentration and steer them to enter the bodhisattva path i.e. the Mahayana path. Since the ultimate purpose of 84,000 teachings of the Buddha are for one to attain enlightenment which requires bodhicitta, why not enter the Bodhisattva path from the beginning?*

*Bodhicitta is the entrance to Mahayana and here one learns how to develop*

*it and how to engage in the Bodhisattva deeds later.*

*Having knowledge of emptiness does not make a person a Mahayanic practitioner. One needs to have bodhicitta. If you degenerate in your cultivation of the Mahayana path, it will not be due to the decline of wisdom but rather the decline of bodhicitta. If a person gives up bodhicitta whilst on the Path, one will fall into the Hinayana path.*

*When does one become a Bodhisattva? The day one develops the heart and unshakeable resolve to enlighten every single living being. If at this point, one has not realised emptiness directly, one then becomes an ordinary Bodhisattva; however if at the point of generating such a resolve, one has already attained the realisation of emptiness, one then becomes an Arya Bodhisattva.*

*Bodhicitta is like the father (method) and the wisdom realising emptiness/selflessness is like the mother. A union of both gives birth to Buddhahood.*

*Does it mean that for those who follow the Shravaka and Pratyekabuddha paths have no chance to enter the Bodhisattva path? Not so. For such practitioners, the Buddha will awaken them. Likewise, as Arhats have the wisdom realising emptiness of self but not of phenomena and have not yet fully developed bodhicitta, they have attained liberation but not enlightenment.*

*As a mother and father are needed to have a child, for a practitioner to give rise to Buddhahood, the practitioner needs to accomplish both method and wisdom. Only this will secure enlightenment. Use calm abiding concentration to analyse the faults of the 2 extremes (nihilism and true existence) and pursue this meditative analysis even at the stage where one is approaching the actual realisation into wisdom realising emptiness.*

*Maitreya stated that the wisdom (realizing selflessness) prevents the practitioner from falling into samsara but he requires compassion to prevent*

*himself from falling into the extreme of peace (nirvana). Lama Atisha's emptiness view was that of the highest philosophical school (Prasangika) and his guru Lama Serlingpa held the lower Citramatra view, yet, Lama Atisha's enlightenment was mostly influenced by Lama Serlingpa through his instructions on bodhicitta.*

*With bodhicitta, even giving a small amount of food becomes a Bodhisattva act. Without bodhicitta, offering the universe, is not Bodhisattva deed. Engaging in tantra without bodhicitta is also not a Bodhisattva deed. Without bodhicitta, purifying an immense amount of negative karma and accumulating a vast amount of merit over countless aeons will not secure Buddhahood.*

*Bodhicitta can consume and dispel heavy negativities. The potential of all other virtues to produce happiness result are limited (and may only produce their fruit once) and is nothing compared to bodhicitta, whose deeds done produce results that will never cease - GTZ*

- **How to develop bodhicitta**
- **The development of the spirit through the 4 conditions**
- **The development of the spirit through the 4 causes**
- **The development of the spirit through the 4 strengths**

*The 4 conditions are having conviction in the power of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas; having the aspiration to be a Buddha; having the wish to cultivate bodhicitta to preserve it to remove the suffering of beings; understanding the difficulty required to develop it.*

*The 4 causes are an unbroken lineage (otherwise it will not lead to enlightenment); being sustained by a teacher (& being devoted to the teacher); live a life of compassion; not being discouraged by the difficulties of samsara.*

*The 4 strengths are the wish to attain enlightenment through one's own power, others' powers (i.e. through showing compassion to others), being familiar with teachings; applying the teachings - GTZ*



## **V2 Chapter 2 - Compassion, the Entrance to the Mahayana**

### **The stages of training in the spirit of enlightenment (bodhicitta).**

*Great Compassion brings about bodhicitta which is the entrance to the Mahayana. There are two main methods to cultivate bodhicitta:*

*(1) 7 fold cause and effect or the 6 cause and 1 effect*

*– descended from Lama Atisha*

*(2) Self exchanging with others – Shantideva*

*Unconditional love is wishing all beings to have happiness.*

*Compassion is wishing all beings to be free from suffering & the causes of suffering.*

*Great compassion or altruism is the whole hearted resolve to take on the responsibility to free all living beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment by oneself alone.*

*Bodhicitta is actually engaging in the act of liberating beings and striving for enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings.*

*It is said that compassion in the beginning is like fertile soil to a sprout; compassion in the middle is like moisture needed for the sprout to flourish; compassion at the end is like the fruit.*

*One should not expect that compassion will come just because you think yourself as kind person or that one has been Buddhist for many years. It's not easy as that. It requires the consistent engaging in merit in order to create the causes and conditions to attain compassion - GTZ*

**The training in bodhicitta based on the seven cause and effect personal instructions in the lineage descended from Lama Atisha**

**Developing certainty about the order of the stages**

- a. Showing that the root of the Mahayana path is compassion – the importance of compassion in the beginning, in the middle and at the end**
- b. How the six other personal instructions are either causes or effects of compassion**
  - How the first 4 instructions – the recognition of all living beings as your mothers through the development of unconditional love – these act as causes of compassion**
  - How the wholehearted resolve and bodhicitta are the effects of compassion**

## V2 Chapter 3 - The 7 fold cause-and-effect instructions

The gradual training – (1) training the mind to be intent on others' welfare (2) Training the mind to be intent on enlightenment (3) Identifying bodhicitta, the fruit of the training

(1) Training the mind to be intent on others' welfare – Establishing the basis for developing the attitude of being intent on others' welfare and how to develop this attitude.

*Establishing the basis for developing the attitude of being intent on others' welfare:*

- a. Achieving impartiality toward living beings
- b. Having affection for all beings through:
  - Cultivating a recognition that all beings are your mothers
  - Cultivating a remembrance of their kindness
  - Cultivating the wish to repay your mothers' kindness

*The foundation preparation for compassion is:*

- *Achieving impartiality towards all living beings – immeasurable equanimity – free from partiality towards enemies, friends and stranger. Train in equanimity towards the stranger first; then towards a loved one; then towards the enemy. Constantly think of how every living being wants happiness and not suffering – we should train this way.*
- *Having affection for all beings – cultivation of love and then compassion – for love, wish all beings to be happy and have causes of happiness; for compassion – seek their freedom from suffering and the causes of suffering*

*The 6 causes and 1 effect are:*

- (1) Recognise all beings as having been one's mother*
- (2) Remembering the kindness of mother*
- (3) Wishing to repay that kindness*
- (4) Cultivating love*
- (5) Cultivating compassion*
- (6) Cultivation of whole hearted resolve – great compassion - taking responsibility for enlightenment of others*
- (7) Bodhicitta*

*The hardest aspect of this method is recognising all beings as having been one's mother. We need to meditate on past and future lives, which are infinite. Reflect on how each human rebirth depended on father and mother and how much protection one has received from mother – GTZ*

### **How to develop this attitude**

- a. The cultivation of love**
- b. The cultivation of compassion**
- c. The cultivation of wholehearted resolve**

## V2 Chapter 4 – Exchanging of Self and Others

**The training in bodhicitta based on the exchanging of self and others instructions in the lineage descended from Shantideva**

*Shantideva in the Bodhicaryavatara wrote:*

*“ Whatever worldly joy there is  
Arises from wishing for others’ happiness  
Whatever worldly suffering there is  
Arises from wishing for your own happiness ”*

*As between the attitude of cherishing self and cherishing others, choose cherishing others. All our failures in life is due to cherishing self first and not cherishing others. Buddhas came about through cherishing others. Learn to put ourselves into others shoes and think of the best for them.*

*Exchanging of self and others through meditation – this does not mean that you become others and others become you. It means for us to negate hostility, negate attachment, negate indifference, yet remain renounced in attitude; to take on the suffering of others and giving everyone the best one has - GTZ*

*Shantideva goes on to say:*

*“ Self-cherishing has harmed me in all my myriad lifetimes in cyclic  
existence.  
You, O Mind, though you spent countless eons  
Through such great hardship  
You have accomplished only suffering ”*

*Whatever good we have given to ourselves. Thus we should change and immediately do for others starting from now. The self cherishing mind comes*

*from the self grasping, egoistic mind. Now we need to regain control of the mind - GTZ*

- 1. Contemplating the benefits of exchanging self and others and the faults of not exchanging self and others**
- 2. The ability to exchange self and others if you accustom yourself to the thought of doing so**
- 3. The stages of meditating on how to exchange self and others**

**The measure of producing the spirit of enlightenment**

## **V2 Chapter 5 – The ritual for adopting bodhicitta – the 6 preparatory practices**

**How to adopt bodhicitta through its ritual - Attaining that which you have not attained**

- **The person before whom you adopt bodhicitta**
- **The persons who adopt bodhicitta**
- **How to take part in the ritual of adopting the spirit of enlightenment – (a) Preparation (b) The actual ritual (c) The conclusion**

*The ritual for adopting bodhicitta refers to engaging in the 6 preparatory practices which include going for Refuge, cleaning the place of practice, setting up offerings, reciting prayers like the 4 Immeasurables, the 7 Limb Practice and make Mandala offering - GTZ*

## **V2 Chapter 6 - Maintaining the Spirit of Enlightenment (bodhicitta)**

**Maintaining bodhicitta and not weakening what you have attained –**

**(1) The training in the precepts that cause you not to weaken your bodhicitta in this lifetime**

**(2) The training in the precepts that cause you to not separate from your bodhicitta in future lifetime as well**

**(1) The training in the precepts that cause you not to weaken your bodhicitta in this lifetime**

- **The training in the precept to recall the benefits of bodhicitta in order to increase the strength of your enthusiasm for it**
- **The training in the precept to generate bodhicitta 6 times each day in order to increase the actual bodhicitta – (i) Not giving up your development of the aspirational bodhicitta (ii) training to increase the aspirational bodhicitta**
- **The training in the precept not to mentally abandon the living being for whose sake you develop bodhicitta**
- **The training in the precept to accumulate the collections of merit and sublime wisdom**

**(2) The training in the precepts that cause you to not separate from your bodhicitta in future lifetime as well**

- **The training of the precept to eliminate the 4 dark practices which weaken bodhicitta**
- **The training in the precept to adopt the 4 positive practice which prevent bodhicitta from weakening**



*The method of repairing bodhicitta if you do cause it to weaken*

*Maintaining bodhicitta requires persistent training in precepts not to separate from it in one's present lifetime and future lifetimes through:*

- *Remembering the benefits of the Bodhisattva practice*
- *Remembering bodhicitta 6x a day*
- *Making sure one's action is according to the vows.*
- *Not abandoning living beings. Every living being is a cherished one; none can be beyond your concern in terms of that person's welfare. Think, " My enlightenment is dependent on this being".*
- *Constantly engaging in meritorious deeds*

*In order not to separate from bodhicitta in future lives, eliminate :*

- (i) *the 4 dark practices (deceiving holy beings & teachers; making a person regret doing virtue; scorning those who adopt the Mahayana; dealing with other sentient beings in a deceiving manner in order to gain benefit for oneself),*
- (ii) *adopt 4 light/positive practices (avoiding lying to others; being sincere and honest; honour and respect holy beings/bodhisattvas; helping others as much as one can by leading them towards the Mahayana path)- GTZ*

## **V2 Chapter 7 An Introduction to the 6 Perfections**

**How to learn the bodhisattva deeds after developing bodhicitta**

- i. The reason why you must learn the training after developing bodhicitta**
- ii. Demonstrating that you will not become a Buddha by learning either method or wisdom separately**

## **V2 Chapter 8 - Training in the Mahayana: Precepts and Perfections**

*The term “enlightenment” differs depending on the practice-level, as there is the enlightenment of the Shravaka, of the Pratyeka-buddha and the Samyaksam-buddha. From the Hinayana perspective, the attainment of the Shravaka and Pratyeka state is enlightenment; for the Mahayana, only the attainment of the Samyaksam-buddha state is regarded as enlightenment - GTZ*

**Explanation of the process of learning the precepts - How to train in the Mahayana in general**

- 1. Establishing the desire to learn the precepts of bodhicitta**
- 2. Taking the vows of the Conqueror’s Children after establishing the desire to learn the precepts of bodhicitta**
- 3. How to train after taking the vows – (a) What the precepts are based on (b) How all precepts are included in the 6 perfections – (i) A discussion of the main topic, the fixed number of perfections (ii) An ancillary discussion of the fixed order of the perfections**

- (i) A discussion of the main topic, the fixed number of perfections**
  - a. The fixed number of perfections based on high status**
  - b. The fixed number of perfections based on fulfilling the two aims**
  - c. The fixed number of perfections based on perfecting the complete fulfillment of others' aims**
  - d. The fixed number of perfections based on their subsuming the entire Mahayana**
  - e. The fixed number of perfections in terms of the completeness of paths or method**
- (ii) An ancillary discussion of the fixed order of the perfections**
  - a. The order of arising**
  - b. The order in terms of coarse and subtle**

## V2 Chapter 9 – The Perfection of Generosity

**The process of learning the perfections – How to train in the bodhisattva deeds in general – Training in the perfections that mature the qualities you will have when you become a Buddha**

*The process of learning the perfections has 2 parts –*

*1. Training in the perfections that will mature the qualities in you to become a Buddha – training in relation to oneself*

*2. Four ways to gather disciples – training in relation to others*

*The 6 perfections are –generosity, morality, patience, joyous perseverance, meditative stabilization (concentration), wisdom.*

*The 4 ways to gather disciples in order to ripen their potential through Dharma –*

*(i) generosity (ii) kindly speech in teaching disciples (iii) working on helping them to cultivate virtue to attain enlightenment (iv) consistency of one's own behaviour through training in morality – GTZ*

**How to train in the perfection of generosity**

**a. What generosity is.**

**b. How to begin the development of generosity**

**c. The divisions of generosity – How everyone should practice it; the divisions of generosity relative to particular persons; divisions of actual generosity**

**Divisions of actual generosity**

- **The gift of teachings**
- **The gift of fearlessness**
- **Material gifts -**

**(i) The generosity of actually giving material things; How to give away material things – the recipients of giving, the motivation for giving (what kind of motivation is required; what kind of motivation must be eliminated) ;**

**(ii) The generosity which is just mental**

*What is the Perfection of generosity? It is the virtuous attitude adopted by the Bodhisattvas of giving physically, verbally and mentally for the benefit of others without any attachment and free of grasping towards one's identity (the "I") and possessions. You can see how great the benefits of the Bodhisattva attitude are. With such an attitude, even giving a spoonful of rice is a cause for enlightenment. Always remember the disadvantage of cherishing self and the benefits of cherishing others. When we pray, we should not pray for ourselves but for others. When we die, if we really want to dedicate well, dedicate everything for the benefit of others.*

*In Asvagosha's Compendium of Perfections, it is explained that there are- 2 causes of generosity – (1) understanding impermanence and (2) compassion (bodhicitta). Through generosity, one will have all the resources & conditions needed to practice the Bodhisattva deeds and attain enlightenment. Those who do not cherish others are childish; those who practice cherishing others are wise. When practising generosity with the mindset of the bodhisattvas, attachment will not attack us. Thus one needs to know the difference between practising generosity in accordance with Bodhisattva attitude and those without.*

*One needs to know the faults of stinginess and protect oneself against it. If upon being offered great gifts, you feel it is going to develop attachment within you, it is best not to accept such gifts; however if it does not build up grasping to the gift, then it is alright to receive the gift. If one finds it difficult to practise generosity, start with giving something from one's right hand to one's left hand – offer whatever one has strong grasping towards. In respect of one's body, before going to bed, dissolve oneself as a wish-fulfilling gem*

*for the benefit of others. Upon waking up, think of oneself merging with the person who offered the gem the night before and resume your ordinary form. This practice is a useful one because at the time of death, it will help one to let go of one's body and family. Otherwise, clinging to them will lead one to the lower realms.*

*When giving, one should do so without any sense of loss. Avoid clinging. Otherwise, the fear of loss creates more troubles. Think, "All these things are yours (sentient beings) anyway". Whatever difficulty one experiences, should think that one experiences it for others with the thought, "How lucky I am to be able to do this". That's how good intention and prayers work – it sends a frequency of goodness which helps other sentient beings. Everything – including all of one's karma, merit - everything can be transformed through an understanding emptiness and offered to Buddhas and sentient beings.*

*When giving, do not worry about whether it will be used in the way you intend. If you think this way, there will be all sorts of excuses not to give (on account of not being able to be sure about how the gift will be used. It will harm the virtue of your giving and enhance your grasping. Giving with partial thought likewise affects the virtue of giving.*

*Generosity relates to giving (i) possessions/material things (ii) fearlessness through giving protection. In the aspect of protection through vows, if one's vows are shaken and one gives refuge to others, there will be no protection conferred) and (iii) giving Dharma.*

*How to give away material things – there are 4 aspects – the recipient, one's motivation, how to give and the type of things to give.*

*The recipient: For example, when making offerings to the Sangha, if you doubt whether the Sangha you are giving is a real sangha, there will be no merit to your giving. There is a discussion about giving to bogus monks or to monks who eat at odd times and are thus suspected of not following "rules" – firstly, how do we know whether a monk is a fake monk or not? We cannot*

*read minds nor see Buddha even if he is in front of us. Thus it is better for us to know how deceptive appearances can be and to hold pure view. Secondly, the monk might be sick and therefore has to eat at odd hours. Finally, at the end of the age of the Buddhadharma, one will not be able to even see a piece of the monk's robes. Therefore, even if a person is not a genuine monk, his wearing robes enables us to offer respect to the robes prescribed by the Buddha. Giving with a sincere heart and viewing that person as a Sangha will result in the merit of giving to Sangha. In respect of other persons, if you give with a partial mind of attachment, aversion or indifference, or worse, with an attitude of wanting status & reputation, one actually accumulates negative karma through such giving.*

*One's motivation for giving – one should not have the worldly view of giving for the purpose of getting something in return such as enlightenment. Instead, one is giving to others, things that one has been keeping in trust for them and it is through the kindness of the recipient which enables one to attain enlightenment. When you offer rice to a beggar and he throws it in the dustbin, do not get angry. Rather, one should still think how kind that beggar is as he has enabled me to give and thereby create causes for my enlightenment.*

*The story of Aryadeva – how he regretted giving one of his eyeballs to a spirit-being in disguise. Had he given it without concern of whether his gift would be used the way he intended, he would have been able to regenerate his lost-eye. However, due to his regret, he remained blind in one eye. When one feels regret after giving, one should realise that one's heart is not fully developed in generosity. One should thus firm up one's practice and offer again.*

*What motivation should be eliminated? Judgmental thoughts, assumptions, pride, giving with arrogance; giving wanting praise; giving without joy and with regret; giving with partial thought; giving wanting something in return; giving with the worldly expectation to become Buddha. All are bad views! - GTZ*

## **V2 Chapter 10 – How to Give**

**How to give – How not to give; how to give**

**Things to give:**

**a. Brief presentation of the things which are and are not to be given**

**b. Detailed explanation of the things which are and are not to be given**

- **About inner things which are and are not to be given – inappropriate giving from the viewpoints of – (a) time (b) purpose (c) of the one who asks for something**

- **About outer things which are and are not to be given – inappropriate from the viewpoints of (a) time (b) of the gift (c) of the person (d) of material things (e)purpose. How to give outer things.**

**What to do if you are unable to give**

**Relying on the remedies for the hindrances to generosity**

- **The hindrance of not being used to generosity**
- **The hindrance of declining fortune**
- **The hindrance of attachment**
- **The hindrance of not seeing the goal**



## V2 Chapter 11 – The Perfection of Ethical Discipline

**How to train in the perfection of ethical discipline.**

**a. What ethical discipline is – Chandrakirti's Explanation of the Middle Way Commentary states:**

*"It is called ethical discipline because it does not acquiesce in the afflictions, because it allows no sins to arise, because it is coolness since it quells the fire of regret or because it is that upon which the excellent rely since it is the cause of happiness. Moreover it is characterized by seven abstentions. These are motivated by three qualities – non-attachment, non-hostility and correct view. Therefore, ethical discipline is explained as the 10 paths of action in terms that include motivation".*

*Morality or ethics is the attitude that turns your mind away from harming others and from the sources of such harm. What harms others? Our delusions – anger, attachment, ignorance etc. Ethical discipline does not allow negative emotions to arise and this enables one to die without regret. It is so important because it is the foundation of all happiness - GTZ*

**b. How to begin the cultivation of ethical discipline –**

*Until one becomes a Buddha to benefit beings, one's practice is not fulfilled. This in turn depends on one's ethical discipline. If one cannot achieve one's own welfare through ethics, how can one accomplish the welfare of others. Even in ordinary life, due to our ethics, we have happiness. So if we want happiness, we need to take more vows. In Nepal, some of the locals feel pity for us monks as they perceive us as being stuck in the monastery all the time which to them is such a suffering life. When we tell them we are happy, they are shocked.*

*One needs to continuously practice mindfulness and have a mind of restraint against negative emotions with the recognition on the consequences of negative actions. Even for the small scope practitioner, without ethical discipline, its goals cannot be attained - GTZ*

**c. The divisions of ethical discipline**

- **The ethical discipline of restraint**
- **The ethical discipline of gathering virtue**
- **The ethical discipline of acting for the welfare of living beings**

**d. How to practice**

## V2 Chapter 12 – The Perfection of Patience

*Of all the delusions, anger is amongst the most dangerous and powerful in destroying merits and obstructing future merit - GTZ.*

**What patience is** – It is (1) disregarding harm done to you (2) accepting the suffering arising in your mind stream and (3) being certain about the teachings and firmly maintaining belief in them.

*Shantideva delivers powerful logic in the Bodhicaryavatara by giving an illustration. He said:*

*Undisciplined persons are as limitless as space  
You could never overcome them  
If you conquer the single mental state of anger  
It is like vanquishing all your enemies.*

*By removing anger within oneself, one can eliminate all concepts of enemies and suffering. If we want to overcome obstacles and sufferings in relation to others, changing our external circumstances will not help; rather we should transform one's own mental attitude from hostility to that of compassion and in so doing, one will be able to transform one's own suffering - GTZ.*

### **How to begin the cultivation of patience**

*Firstly, understand the benefits of patience and faults of anger. Bodhisattvas who have gone beyond always remind themselves of the benefits of patience. A person who has patience will not have enemies and will have a mind of contentment. There will be no regret at the time of death and rebirth in the higher realms assured. By training in patience and sharing this practice*

*through example, great benefit will be conferred to all beings. Patience is the best approach.*

*All the major and minor marks of the Buddha came from patience. Harmony within the family and society comes from patience. World peace comes from patience practiced by everyone. One needs to work hard at patience. Good things require effort. If we focus on doing merit but never control our anger, it will result in either little or no merit being gathered. Anger is not just loud shouting - it includes depression, sadness/aversion, no tolerance to samsaric suffering. When you are a patient person, you are a happy person and people will not be able to irritate you nor want to disturb you. Worse than fire which destroys possessions, anger destroys merit. If one doesn't control anger, one can even kill one's own guru or commit suicide or take drugs.*

*Buddha never gets angry because he has perfected patience. Any scolding by Buddha is based on compassion; not the delusion of anger - GTZ*

**The divisions of patience – (1) Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you (2) Developing the patience of accepting suffering (3) Developing the patience of certitude about the teachings.**

*Chandrakirti taught - “You cannot measure the results of anger, just as you cannot measure the water in the ocean with a scale. Therefore, for projecting unpleasant effects and damaging one's virtue, there is no sin greater than a lack of patience”.*

*Let go of grasping and afflictive emotions. When we see for ourselves that anger is unjustified, suffering emotions cease; when you do not get praise, you will not feel hurt; When faced with danger, anger likewise is of no help although self protection is necessary so that we do not enable others to harm us and thereby create negative karma. A fully developed Bodhisattva can take such harm, generate compassion towards the harm giver and dedicate*

*that merit towards the harm-giver's enlightenment. For us, we would not be able to do this, so self protection in the face of danger is advised – GTZ*

**(1) Developing the patience of disregarding harm done to you** - (i) Stopping impatience with those who harm you (ii) Stopping dislike for harm-givers' attainments and delight in their troubles.

**(i) Stopping impatience with those who harm you**

(a) Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with who cause you to suffer

(b) Stopping impatience with those who prevent your praise, fame or honour and with those who have contempt for you or say offensive and unpleasant things to you

(a) Stopping impatience with those who prevent your happiness and with who cause you to suffer –

(i) Showing that anger is unjustified

- Showing that anger is unjustified on analysis of the object (whether he/she has self control); on analysis for either adventitiousness or inherency; on analysis of whether the harm is direct or indirect; on analysis of the cause that impels the harm-givers;
- Showing that anger is unjustified on analysis of the subject
- Showing that anger is unjustified on analysis of the basis – analyzing the cause of harm and where the fault lies and analyzing your commitment

(ii) Showing that compassion is appropriate

(b) Stopping impatience with those who prevent your praise, fame or honour and with those who have contempt for you or say offensive and unpleasant things to you –

(1) Stopping impatience with those who prevent 3 things - praise, fame or

honour:

- Reflect on how praise and so forth lack good qualities
  - Reflect on how praise and so forth have faults
  - The need to delight in those who prevent praise and so forth
- (2) Stopping impatience with those who do 3 things to you – have contempt for you, say offensive things or say unpleasant things to you

**(ii) Stopping dislikes for harm-givers' attainments and delight in their troubles.**

**(2) Developing the patience of accepting suffering –**

- (a) The reason for you to accept suffering;  
(b) the way to develop acceptance:

- **Reject the idea that when suffering comes, it is totally unpleasant**
- **Reflect on the advantages of bearing sufferings' hardships such as – the crucial benefits of liberation; of dispelling immeasurable suffering (due to accumulated negative karma)**
- **How it is not difficult to bear suffering if you gradually grow accustomed to it, starting with the small**

**(c) A detailed explanation from the viewpoint of the bases**

*How can one be angry at sentient beings who have sacrificed so much for us? The advice to develop patience of accepting suffering is based on the fact that we encounter many difficulties in our lives. If we can deal with the suffering, if we can apply our knowledge of karma, of purification, of emptiness, generate renunciation we will be able to create the causes for happiness. It is suffering that makes us strive towards the eradication of samsara and aim for liberation and enlightenment- GTZ*

**(3) Developing the patience of certitude about the teachings**

## V2 Chapter 13 – The Perfection of Joyous Perseverance

### How to train in the perfection of joyous perseverance

*This is a crucial teaching for the development of spiritual practice. This form of perseverance is not the ordinary feeling of being forced to do something. Instead, it is the willing, joyful learning of Dharma, learning the benefit of Dharma and the faults of not practicing it; happily integrating daily life practices for the purpose of sentient beings. In this way, joyous perseverance is Dharma (whereas mere perseverance is not necessarily Dharma) - GTZ.*

*(a) What joyous perseverance is - It is the attitude of delighting in virtue. We should constantly think of the benefits of joyous effort. Without this, one can fall into laxity or mental laziness which is a major obstacle to our actualising enlightenment for the sake of all beings.*

*Even if one has patience but not joyous perseverance, it would not be enough. One may protect past virtue on account of patience but the process of merit accumulation will be slow. When one adds joyous perseverance, happiness is expedited. Through it, one can eliminate the contaminated aggregates and actualise the 3 kayas of the Buddha. The text highlights that one who has joyous perseverance is not brought down by adversity and is able to sustain one's bodhicitta while training in the path. Like the rarity of the utpala flower – which only blossoms when Buddha descends – if one practices joyous perseverance, one's Dharma efforts can be perfected - GTZ*

**(b) How to begin the practice of joyous perseverance**

**(c) The divisions of joyous perseverance**

**(d) How to practice**

**The divisions of joyous perseverance – The actual divisions and the method of developing joyous perseverance**

## **The Actual Divisions**

*a. Armour-like joyous perseverance - This prevents a leakage of efforts in the practice of the 6 Perfections. All 3 types of joyous perseverance help us to accumulate the two collections of merit and of wisdom realizing the selflessness of person & phenomena- GTZ*

**b. Joyous perseverance of gathering virtue**

**c. Joyous perseverance of acting for the welfare of living beings**

## **The Method of developing joyous perseverance**

### **i. Eliminating unfavourable conditions that prevent joyous perseverance**

*Unfavourable conditions are (i) not entering the path even though one can do so due to procrastination, delay, laziness or being attached to inferior activities and (ii) not entering because of being discouraged - GTZ.*

#### **- Identifying factors incompatible with joyous perseverance**

*Incompatible factors are procrastination, ignoble activities and discouragement (or self contempt) - GTZ*

**- Employing the methods to eliminate the incompatible factors: Stopping the laziness of procrastination; Stopping attachment to ignoble activities; Stopping discouragement or self-contempt (for this – one needs to stop being discouraged about the goal; about the means to attain the goal; knowing that wherever you are is a place to practice)**

**ii. Gathering the forces of favourable conditions: Developing the power of aspiration, the power of steadfastness; the power of joy; the power of relinquishment**



**iii. Based on the elimination of unfavourable conditions and the accumulation of favourable conditions, being intent on joyously persevering**

**iv. How to use joyous perseverance to make the mind and body serviceable**

*This includes setting the bodhicitta motivation that “whoever sees me, hears my name, scolds me, likes me, dislikes me, ignores me, may I be cause to eliminate the sufferings of such a person and of every single living being” - GTZ*

## **V2 Chapter 14 – The Perfection of Meditative Stabilisation and Wisdom**

*Meditative stabilization or calm-abiding/concentration meditation can be attained with various types of motivation. It can even be attained without renunciation towards samsara or to attain liberation. However if it is engaged in for the welfare of living beings, it can produce the fruit of full enlightenment – GTZ*

### **How to train in the perfection of meditative stabilization**

**a. What meditative stabilization (calm-abiding) is – It is the virtuous mind that single pointedly abides on its object without being distracted to other things.**

**b. How to begin the cultivation of meditative stabilization**

*Firstly, gather the conditions for such a practice such as determine the appropriate time, a suitable place, acquire the basic necessities & obtain the instructions from a qualified master. With these and personal effort, it is possible to actualise calm-abiding within 6 months. If on top of these, one has bodhicitta and wisdom, one's life becomes suited to the Bodhisattva's deeds.*

*To fully achieve calm abiding, one must avoid the 5 faults and apply the 8 antidotes:*

- 1. Laziness – the antidotes are- faith, aspiration, perseverance, pliancy.*
- 2. Forgetting the object – the antidote is recollection*
- 3. Laxity and excitement – the antidote is vigilance*
- 4. Non application –the antidote is application*
- 5. Over application – the antidote is the mind of equanimity*

*Through the force of hearing correct Dharma, it helps to attain mental stability  
Through the force of reflection, one attains the 2nd stage of mental stability  
Through the force of recollection, one attains the 3 & 4th stages*

*Through the force of vigilance, one attains the 5 & 6th stages*

*Through the force of perseverance, one attains the 7& 8th stages*

*Through the force of complete familiarity, one achieves the 9th stage/ level of single pointed concentration. In the text Lines of Experience, Lama Tsongkhapa says that “concentration rules supreme above all minds “*

*– GTZ*

### **c. The divisions of meditative stabilization**

**d. How to practice** – *It must always be kept in mind that the purpose of engaging in calm abiding practices is to actualise wisdom realizing the selflessness of person and of phenomena- GTZ*

### **How to train in the perfection of wisdom**

**a. What wisdom is** – **It is a consciousness that distinguishes the nature, quality and particular attributes of existing things.**

*Contemplate on the benefits of generating wisdom and the faults of not doing so. The definition of emptiness in all 3 scopes is the same but the different philosophical schools explain it differently.*

*Nagarjuna says, “ Wisdom is the root of all visible and invisible good qualities”.*

*Without wisdom realising emptiness, there can be no liberation. Wisdom functions like the eye. If one is able to apply the wisdom realizing emptiness when engaging in generosity and the other perfections, those practices become the most effective. Otherwise, there is still benefit to be derived from them but the depth of virtue is shallow as compared to that done with wisdom realizing emptiness. For example, if we do not practice generosity with wisdom, it will create the causes for an increase in wealth but not the causes for one to gain liberation nor enlightenment.*

*In ancient Tibet, before the time of Lama Tsongkhapa, there was a stage where due to a long gap in time between visiting great Buddhist Pandits and due to the influence of local practices, there arose the idea that if one practiced tantra, one could not practice vinaya; or if one practiced sutra, one could not practice tantra. All these were treated as contradictory to each other. This was totally mistaken view. Learning the Lam Rim covers Hinayana, Mahayana, tantra teachings.*

*When studying Buddha's teachings, you need to keep in mind that there are the definitive teachings and the interpretative teachings. The 4 schools of Buddhist philosophy came about not because of there being any contradictions in the Buddha's teachings but due to the different mental dispositions of living beings. When we read scriptures, one needs to go to the level where none of the words of the Buddha contradict each other. All are of one essence, one taste, one meaning, one Path, one philosophy. For instance, there is a line from the Buddha which goes, "Father and mother should be killed"; and in the Heart Sutra, there are the famous verses referring to there being "... no nose, no eyes, ears, no taste.." – all these sound confusing. These clearly need to be interpreted. "No nose" means no inherently-existing nose and likewise with the other aggregates. So one should understand the meaning due to whom the Buddha was giving the teaching to- GTZ*

**b. How to begin the generation of wisdom – [ Apply the understanding of the emptiness of person and of phenomena to all actions]**

**c. The divisions of wisdom:** *We need to cultivate such that without rejecting conventional existence, one can see ultimate nature – GTZ*

- The wisdom that knows the ultimate
- The wisdom that knows the conventional
- The wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings

- How to practice

*Ascertaining the emptiness of the “I or self using the 4 point analysis:*

- 1. Identify what is to be refuted or negated i.e. the self or I. Analyse how one grasps onto the “ I”.*
- 2. Determine the modes in which the “I” could exist i.e. it has to be either one with the aggregates or different from the aggregates*
- 3. Examine the possibility of the I existing as one with the aggregates – if the aggregates were “merged” with the self, it would follow that there would be many selves (Chandrakirti)*
- 4. Examining the possibility of the “I “existing as different from the 5 aggregates –if so, the I should be totally unrelated to one’s aggregates (Nagarjuna) e.g. one would not be able to say “My leg hurts” since the I and the body are “different”.*

*When ascertaining the emptiness of self and phenomena [phenomena refers to aggregates and all other outer phenomena), understand that all come about from 3 things – cause and conditions; parts and particles; mental labels/imputation onto a valid base. For something to be a valid base, it must be accepted by conventional society as serving that purpose (e.g. a pot is a label onto something that can contain liquid and put to the fire etc.) and should not be contradicted by cognition analysing the ultimate (emptiness) i.e. those practitioners who have reached the Path of Seeing - GTZ*

## **V2 Chapter 15 – Helping Others to Mature - The 4 Ways to Gather Disciples**

### **a. What are the four ways to gather disciples**

*The 4 ways to gather disciples to mature them into Dharma –*

- 1. Practice generosity*
- 2. Use pleasant speech, clear expressions, be free of anger, be genuine when teaching disciples*
- 3. Work according to the purposes of the Buddhadharmā, e.g. helping them cultivate virtue to attain enlightenment for all*
- 4. Maintain morality and consistent ethical behaviour - GTZ*

### **b. The reason they are stipulated as four**

### **c. Their functions**

### **d. The need for those who father to a following to rely on them**

### **e. A somewhat elaborate explanation**

## **V3 Chapter 1 – Serenity (Concentration/Calm Abiding) and Special Insight**

### **How to train in the last 2 perfections of concentration and wisdom**

*It is taught that without training in serenity and wisdom, one cannot be liberated from samsara. Serenity means drawing your gross and subtle senses inwards, gaining stability & clarity of mind and physically feeling light and relaxed. When that is conjoined with the wisdom realising emptiness, one is able to attain special insight (into emptiness).*

*After attaining physical and mental pliancy, one eliminates all aspects of gross mind. Mental concentration can be on outer objects or inner objects like compassion. While meditating, reflect on the teachings of the Buddha and apply analytical concentration to obtain insight into emptiness/the absence of inherent existence (emptiness) – GTZ*

- a. The benefits of cultivating calm abiding and special insight**
- b. How calm abiding and special insight include all states of meditative concentration**
- c. The nature of calm abiding and special insight**
- d. Why it is necessary to cultivate both**
- e. How to be certain about their order**

*Train in concentration first, followed by wisdom but this is not an invariable rule, as it can be that one trains in wisdom first. As regards how to train in serenity, adopt the 9 stages of mental training with the application of the 8 antidotes to the 5 faults. As regards how to train in insight, through learn the Prasangika view and perfect one's understanding of the lack of inherent existence/emptiness - GTZ*

## **V3 Chapter 2 – Preparing for Calm Abiding**

**How to train in meditative serenity – (a) Relying on the preconditions for calm abiding (b) How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis.**

*The measure of one's successful cultivation is when you achieve physical and mental pliancy. For the Buddhist practitioner, when you actualize physical and mental pliancy you are able to reject the highest peace of the Desire realm and that of the Form and Formless realms and go beyond that to achieve liberation and enlightenment - GTZ*

**(a) Relying on the preconditions for calm abiding :**

- 1. Dwelling in an appropriate area**
- 2. Having little desire**
- 3. Being content**
- 4. Completely giving up many activities**
- 5. Pure ethical discipline**
- 6. Completely getting rid of thought of desire etc**

**(b) How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis**

- 1. Preparation**
- 2. Actual practice – Meditative posture and meditative process**

*Meditative posture is discussed because it helps one to quieten one's mind to become inward-drawn and focused. There are few postures that can be adopted - the Vairochana posture of the lotus-position is usually advised but the position is up to you. The key is to adopt a position that you will be able to sustain without drowsiness or distraction arising. Alternatively, the seated Maitreya position or the Milarepa position of sitting cross legged with a belt strapped across the chest which holds up one knee.*



*As regards the meditative process, mere knowledge of the technique is not enough. Blessings from the oral tradition of instructions from a qualified master is advised - GTZ*

### **How to develop flawless concentration:**

**a. What to do prior to focusing the attention on an object of meditation**

**b. What to do while focusing on an object of meditation –**

**(i) Identifying the object of meditation upon which your attention is set**

**(ii) Who should meditate on which objects**

**(iii) Synonyms of the object of meditation**

**(i) Identifying the object of meditation upon which your attention is set**

**(a) A general presentation of the objects of meditation :**

**1. The objects of meditation themselves**

**a. Universal objects of meditation – Discursive images (worldly/unimportant images); Non-discursive images; The limits of existence ; the achievement of your purpose**

**b. Objects of meditation for purifying your behavior – Ugliness, dependent arising, differentiation of constituents; inhalation and exhalation**

**c. Objects of meditation for expertise – The aggregates, the constituents, the sources, dependent-arising; what is and is not possible**

**d. Objects of meditation for purifying afflictions**

**2. Who should meditate on which objects**

**3. Synonyms of the object of meditation**

**Identifying objects of meditation for this context**

## V3 Chapter 3 – Focusing Your Mind

**How to focus your mind on the object of meditation**

**(a) The flawless method – *Mindfulness and introspection to hold the object of meditation and maintain the clarity of visualization – GTZ***

**(b) Eliminating flawed methods**

**(c) The length of sessions**

*The great master Kamashila advised that it is better to have short sessions with depth rather than long sessions with distractions.*

*Generally, divide the day into 4 sessions (about 2 hours each – starting from dawn at 3 am and end before sunrise; resume after sunrise and end before noon; continue after lunch and end before sunset; resume after sunset and end around 9pm) . Focus on the pre-determined object of meditation. If the object changes in any way, it is a failed concentration and one should go back to the original object of meditation – GTZ*

## **V3 Chapter 4 – Dealing with Laxity and Excitement**

**What to do after you focus on an object of meditation :**

**(1) What to do when laxity and excitement occur**

**(2) What to do when laxity and excitement are absent**

**(1) What to do when laxity and excitement occur**

**a. Using the remedy for failing to recognize laxity and excitement –  
Defining the characteristics of laxity and excitement; the method for  
developing vigilance that recognizes laxity and excitement**

**b. Using the remedy for failing to try to eliminate them even when they  
are recognized – Intention and the way it stops laxity and excitement;  
the underlying causes of laxity and excitement**

## V3 Chapter 5 – Attaining Calm Abiding

**The stages in which the mental states develop –**

**(a) The actual stages in which the mental states develop**

**(b) The process of achieving them with the 6 forces –** (1) *The force of listening to Dharma* (2) *the force of reflection* (3) *The force of recollection* (4) *The force of vigilance* (5) *The force of perseverance* (6) *The force of complete familiarity – GTZ*

**(c) How the 4 attentions are involved in this**

**The measure of successful cultivation of calm abiding** - A presentation of the dividing line between accomplishing and not accomplishing calm abiding:

**1. A presentation of the actual meaning**

**2. The marks associated with attention and the elimination of doubts on this**

### **V3 Chapter 6 – Calm abiding as part of the Path**

*Cultivating concentration is for the purpose gaining insight into emptiness which will overcome afflictions and end suffering. Some Buddhist practitioners think that Hindu sadhus have wonderful concentration and due to this, give up Buddhist meditation. One needs to first learn the characteristics of the Desire Realm concentration and that of the Form and Formless realms. After knowing this, you will aspire to higher levels of concentration - GTZ*

**A general presentation of the way to proceed along the path on the basis of calm abiding**

**A specific presentation of the way to proceed along the mundane path:**

- (a) The need to achieve calm abiding before proceeding on the path bearing the aspects of calmness and coarseness**
- (b) On the basis of calm abiding, the way to freedom from attachment to the desire realm.**

## V3 Chapter 7 – Why Special Insight is needed

### How to train in special insight

*Kamalashila states that merely gaining a focused mind without using it to attain wisdom to abandon delusions is not a Buddhist practice. Therefore, one needs to use concentration to meditate on lack of inherent existence - GTZ*

## V3 Chapter 8 – Relying on Definitive Sources

### Fulfilling the prerequisites for special insight

- **Identifying scriptures of provisional meaning and definitive meaning**
- **The history of commentary on Nagarjuna's intended meaning**

*When preparing to cultivate insight, study in particular, the 4 schools of Buddhist philosophy on emptiness. When studying texts like Heart Sutra, do so within context of Madhyamika-Prasangika school. Masters Nagarjuna and Aryadeva are sources for the Madhyamika - GTZ*

## V3 Chapter 9 - The stages of entry into Reality

*Reality is the total extinction of the concept of the independent existence of self and phenomena. The moment the grasping to inherent existence is eliminated, ignorance is eliminated. There are 4 Buddhist schools of philosophy on the topic of emptiness/selflessness. The 4 different schools are::*

*Vaibashika – this has 18 subdivisions (of which the Theravadan school is one of them)*

*Sautrantika – Sutra followers*

*Cittamatra – Mind Only school*

*Madhyamika – This has two sub-schools i.e. the Madhyamika Sautrantika and the Madhyamika Prasangika. The highest school is the Madhyamika-Prasangika.*

*All followers of the 4 schools are proponents of Buddhist tenets i.e. they accept the 3 Jewels as the ultimate object of refuge and do not assert any other object of refuge.*

*The Vaibashika school asserts that self and external objects are truly and inherently existent and do not assert a self-cogniser. Self-cogniser is the consciousness that is able to see/is able to be aware of itself. This the Vaibashika refute.*

*The Sautrantika school assert that self and phenomena are inherently existing but it accepts the concept of the self-cogniser. They assert that the mental continuum can be divided into object and subject i.e. an observer and its object of observation.*

*The Cittamatra school is one of the Mahayana schools which does not assert inherent existence of any external object because they say that external objects are the mere ripening of mental imprints but asserts the self-cogniser to be truly and inherently existent.*

*The Madhyamika – Sautrantika school draws a distinction between inherent existence and true existence. The M-S does not accept inherent existence but accepts true existence. They agree the mind projects mental labels (hence there is no “inherent” existence) but assert that there must be a truly-existing base for the label to be imputed upon.*

*Up to this point, we can see that the first 3 schools have concepts of either inherent existence or of true existence.*

*Now we come to the Madhyamika-Prasangika who assert that there is no distinction between the terms true existence and inherent existence. They are the same and neither exist even nominally. The M-P assert the lack of inherent existence. All things are merely labeled onto a base.*

*The obstacle to liberation is the attachment to samsara; attachment to one’s own concerns. Hence by realizing the selflessness of person, one is able to liberate oneself from samsara and achieve nirvana.*

*The obstacle to omniscience is the subtle grasping to self and to phenomena. Hence by realizing the selflessness of person and of phenomena, one is able to eliminate even subtle ignorance.*

*The Prasangika’s view is that the lower schools have not realised emptiness yet. When the Shrivaka and Pratyekabuddhas attain nirvana, they only actualize the selflessness of persons but not the selflessness of phenomena. As such, the Madhyamika-Prasangika hold the view that Pratyekabuddhas and Shrivakas realise emptiness at a grosser level and not at the subtle level, which in turn means that the root of ignorance is still there. Hence, while Shrivaka and Pratyekabuddhas may have actualized liberation, they are still affected by the obscuration to full enlightenment – GTZ*



**How to determine the philosophical view of emptiness –**

**(a) the stages of entry into reality**

**(b) the actual determination of reality (see under Chapter 10)**

## V3 Chapter 10 – Mis-identifying the object to be negated

The actual determination of reality

Identifying the object to be negated by reason:

(a) Why the object of negation must be carefully identified

(b) Refuting others systems that refute without identifying the object to be negated:

Refuting an overly broad identification of the object to be negated –

- Stating others' assertions;
- Showing that those assertions are wrong – Showing that those systems contradict the unique feature of the Madhyamika – Identifying the distinguishing feature of the Madhyamika

*Madhyamika-Prasangika (M-P) system identifies all the following as objects of negation i.e. objects to be refuted, as they arise due to wrong/mistaken view: True/inherent existence, substantially existing, permanently existing, existing by no-cause, existing by other-causes. All these should be negated.*

*The perceptions of us ordinary beings are confused. For example, when I see you, I see you as inherently existing “out there”. This is because we do not think about how you came about as a result of cause & conditions, aggregates and my mental projection of who you are onto all these factors. We fail to see that all things come about as a dependent-arising. We totally forget or are ignorant about the lack of inherent existence.*

*We tend to sway to believing in one of two extremes, which is to be avoided if we are to succeed in our cultivation of the Path. We either believe that things exist inherently (substantialism) or that nothing exists at all (nihilism.) The M-P view denies both of these and explains that things do exist but exist in*

*a dependent manner and not independently nor inherently. Once we have direct realization of dependent arising and the lack of inherent existence, ignorance is eliminated and the cycle of the 12 links ceases.*

*M-P further advises that one needs to fully understand the two truths. If upon our establishing conventional truth, ultimate truth disappears, then our understanding or wisdom is not reliable - GTZ*

## **V3 Chapter 11 – Dependent-Arising and Emptiness**

- **How those systems contradict this distinguishing feature of the Madhyamika**
- **How a Madhyamika responds to those who negate the distinguishing feature of the Madhyamika**

*Chandrakirti explains that dependent arising is “emptiness”. The views to be negated are substantial existence and that nothing exists (nihilism) - GTZ*

## **V3 Chapter 12 – Rational Analysis**

- **Showing that the Madhyamika position does not eradicate conventional existence**
- **You cannot eradicate conventional phenomena by refuting them through investigating whether they are capable of withstanding rational analysis**

## **V3 Chapter 13 – Valid Establishment**

**You cannot eradicate conventional phenomena by refuting them through investigating whether valid cognition establishes them**

*Only the Arya who have realised emptiness directly have right view - GTZ*

### **V3 Chapter 14 – Conventional existence**

*Conventional existence refers to things that exist dependently on causes and conditions, on parts and particles and mental imputation upon a valid base. There is no independent existence – GTZ*

### **V3 Chapter 15 – Production is Not Refuted**

**You cannot eradicate conventional phenomena by refuting them through investigating whether they are produced in one of four alternative ways**

**A refutation of all four parts of the tetralemma is not a legitimate critique of conventional phenomena**

*Production of conventional phenomena itself is not refuted because it is dependent on causes and conditions; parts and mental imputation but inherent/true existence is refuted - GTZ*

### **V3 Chapter 16 – Not Negating Enough**

**Refuting an overly-restricted identification of the object to be negated.**

*The debate between the M-Prasangikas and the M-Sautrantikas is that the M-P assert that the M-S do not negate enough. To achieve full negation, one needs to negate the existence of an object from its own side, without any concept of there being any residue of “true existence” of that object (M-Sautrantikas assert that the base truly exists)- GTZ*

## **V3 Chapter 17 – The Actual Object to Be Negated**

*The actual object to be negated is the belief in inherent existence – GTZ*

**How our system identifies the object of negation:**

- 1. The actual identification of the object to be negated**
- 2. When to add qualifications to others objects of negation**
- 3. Whether to add the qualification “ultimate” to the object of negation**

## **V3 Outline Chapter 18 – Misinterpretations of the Sautrantika/Prasangika Distinction**

**Whether to carry out that refutation with a Sautrantika procedure or with a Prasangika procedure - The meaning of Sautrantika and Prasangika**

**The refutation of others’ positions – what others believe:**

- 1. The first misinterpretation**
- 2. The second misinterpretation**
- 3. The third misinterpretation**
- 4. The fourth misinterpretation**

## **V3 Chapter 19 – Refuting Misinterpretation of the Sautrantika/Prasangika Distinction**

**Refuting those positions:**

- 1. Refuting the first misinterpretation**
- 2. Refuting the second misinterpretation**
- 3. Refuting the third misinterpretation**
- 4. Refuting the fourth misinterpretation**

## **V3 Chapter 20 – Our interpretation of the Sautrantika/ Prasangika Distinction**

**Setting forth our own position – The actual refutation of autonomous argument**

- 1. The subject of an autonomous syllogism is not established – What Bhavaviveka believes and Refuting that (the meaning is incorrect and the example cited is inappropriate)**
- 2. Demonstrating that the reason also is not established**

## **V3 Chapter 21 – Our Critique of Sautrantika Does Not Hurt Our Own Arguments**

**Why the faults we find in autonomous arguments do not apply to us  
Which system to follow so as to develop the view in your mind stream**

## **V3 Chapter 22 – Analysing a Chariot**

**How to use that procedure to generate the right philosophical view within  
your mind stream**

**How to determine that there is no self in the person - Actually determining  
that the self lacks intrinsic existence – Giving the example :**

- 1. Showing that the chariot exists imputedly, without intrinsic existence**
- 2. Eliminating the objections to that**
- 3. How to establish the chariot under various names**
- 4. The advantage that you find the view quickly by using this example**

## **V3 Chapter 23 – The Person Lacks Intrinsic Nature**

- (1) Showing what the example illustrates – the example illustrates how the person lacks intrinsic nature:**
- a. The refutation of the position that the self is one with the aggregates**
  - b. The refutation of the position that the self is different from the aggregates**
  - c. How those arguments also refute each of the remaining positions**
  - d. How the person appears like an illusion based on that refutation**
- (2) Teaching that what the self owns is also thereby established as lacking intrinsic existence**

## **V3 Chapter 24 – Objects Lack Intrinsic Nature**

**How to apply those lines of reasoning to other phenomena**

**How to determine that there is no self in phenomena:**

- (a) Refutation of production from self**
- (b) Refutation of production from another**
- (c) Refutation of production from both self and another**
- (d) Refutation of causeless production**
- (e) How to infer that intrinsic production does not exist**

**How to eliminate obscurations by becoming accustomed to those views**



## V3 Chapter 25 – Special Insight requires analysis

### Classifications of insight

#### How to cultivate insight:

(a) The refutation of other systems – the first to the fourth refutations

(b) The presentation of our own system – (i) Why both stabilising meditation and analytical meditation are necessary (ii) Overcoming objections to that

## V3 Chapter 26 – Uniting Special Insight and Calm Abiding

A summary of the key points for sustaining special insight and calm abiding.

### The measure of achieving special insight through meditation

*Insight is when the power of analytical meditation itself is able to induce physical and mental pliancy - GTZ*

### How to unite calm abiding and special insight

In Ratnakarasanti's Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom, he said: "The attainment of insight lies in the attainment of physical and mental pliancy [calm-biding concentration]...Until you develop [this] this attention is an approximation of insight; when pliancy does develop, this attention is insight".

*One trains in calm abiding meditation to gain physical and mental pliancy/suppleness in order to use it to develop special insight into emptiness. Upon achieving such physical and mental pliancy, if one can direct one's mind in analytical meditation on emptiness, one can effectively refute the object of negation, namely inherent existence - GTZ*

## V3 Chapter 27 – Summary and Conclusion

### How to train specifically in the Vajrayana

*After training in the Lam Rim and having gained stable understanding of the teachings of the 3 scopes including bodhicitta and adopting the Madhyamika-Prasangika view of emptiness, one should enhance one's understanding of emptiness by negating the lower schools' views of emptiness, even if it takes 3 countless aeons. If one then seeks to achieve enlightenment in this lifetime, one must proceed to practice in a most intensive way, the resultant vehicle of the Mahayana teachings, namely tantra.*

*Tantra was taught by the Buddha at Amravati. There are 4 classes of tantra – Action Tantra, Performance Tantra, Yoga Tantra and Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT). Only the HYT has the generation and completion stages of practice. The generation stage involves the 3 kayas practice transforming death, intermediate and rebirth into the Path. This practice can also be done during the time of sleeping, dreaming and waking up. Just before going to sleep, with proper motivation and supplications to the Triple Gem, one draws one's mind towards full concentration on Dharma and transform it into the Dharmakaya; while remaining in that meditation, transform that into the sambogakaya and upon getting out of meditation, to meditate on transforming oneself into the nirmanakaya. In that way, even if one dies in one's sleep, it would be highly meaningful as one's mind was focused on Dharma practice. The completion stage is what makes it possible to enable practitioner to attain enlightenment in one brief lifetime. One will be able to obtain the full teachings on these practices upon taking the appropriate initiation from a qualified master - GTZ*

### **A concluding message from Geshe Tenzin Zopa**

*“ The motivation for doing the Outline in this way is not only to let the reader have a full overview of the Buddha’s teachings but also to feel encouraged; that it is possible to practice the Path in a systematic and complete manner. However, you may find that despite the outline and the short commentary, many things may still seem unclear to you. Therefore, for a deeper understanding of the teachings, I urge the reader to read and study the actual Lam Rim Chenmo - it will inspire you to treasure, to practice and to uphold the Lam Rim. Whilst studying the Lam Rim Chenmo, it is always good to integrate it with the lojong (mind training) teachings and apply them into one’s daily life. Only then will you be able to taste and truly enjoy the Dharma. Right now, one may not enjoy it as much because the teachings are not yet experiential and that is due to one not applying them in everything one does.*

*Regard the Lam Rim and Lojong as one’s right and left hand respectively and there will be no doubt of success in your spiritual cultivation”.*

*\* The End \**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*The sponsor of this book has requested anonymity and rejoices in the publication of this Lam Rim book and also rejoices in LDC students and all those who have even a tiny interest in studying Dharma. How rare. Live long practitioners and may the Buddhadharma flourish!*

*With gratitude and thanks to Wisdom Publications whose 3-volume book “The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment” provided the Outline and verses appearing in the second part of this book.*

## HOW TO TREAT DHARMA BOOKS

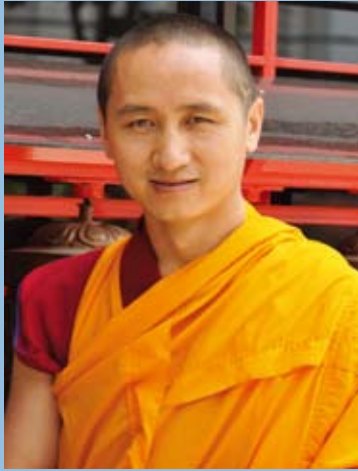
*Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha. They have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation.*

*Therefore, they should be treated with respect – kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk and should not be stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separated from other mundane materials. Other objects, including statues and stupas, should not be placed on top of dharma books and materials. Licking the fingers to turn pages is considered negative and will create negative karma.*

*If it is necessary to dispose of written dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash.*

*When offering dharma texts to the fire, first recite the mantra OM AH HUNG, then visualize the letters of the texts to be burned absorbing into the syllable AH and the AH absorbing into you, transmitting their wisdom to your mind stream. After that, as you continue to recite OM AH HUNG, you can offer the texts to the fire.*

*Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche has specifically advised that photos or images of holy beings, deities and other holy objects should not be burned and instead placed with respect in stupas or other high clean places so that they do not end up on the ground.*



## **Biodata of Geshe Tenzin Zopa**

Geshe Tenzin Zopa holds a doctorate in Buddhist Philosophy from Sera Jey Monastic University in South India and is a master in Tibetan Buddhist rituals. He is currently the Resident Teacher at Losang Dragpa Buddhist Society, Malaysia and was for a long time, the Director of the Tsum Valley Project (in the Himalayan region), which provides Buddhist study and practice facilities and accomodation for the community in the Valley. Geshe Tenzin Zopa is the principal and focal point of the award winning film titled “Unmistaken Child” which chronicles the search for the reincarnation of his great master.

Geshe Tenzin Zopa has a contemporary style of teaching which he combines with the ancient wisdom derived from his years of philosophical studies and debate, thereby benefitting everyone who has met or heard him teach. Geshe Tenzin Zopa is the face of a dynamic and socially engaged Buddhism in the 21st century.

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