

© B. Alan Wallace. All rights reserved.

## The Seven-Point Mind Training

### B. Alan Wallace Lecture Notes

The Seven-Point Mind Training taught in Tibet by the great Indian master Atīśa (982-1054), passed on to Dromtönpa (1005-1064), and first written down by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101-1175), is probably the single most widely taught and practiced original Tibetan text in the whole of Tibetan Buddhism. Focusing on the cultivation of ultimate and relative bodhicitta, it was a central practice of the ancient Kadampa Tradition and is embraced by all schools of Tibetan Buddhism today. In the most straightforward way, it helps us cut through our habitual, dualistic grasping and self-centeredness, and leads us to a realization of the essential nature of awareness and genuine altruism.

#### Introduction

- Our challenge: to maintain a vital spiritual practice in the midst of an active, often busy, way of life in the way, a practice that is truly spiritual and truly engaged.
  - The lineage: Maitriyogin + Dharmarakṣita + Serlingpa ->Atīśa -> Drom Tönpa -> Potowa -> Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (who wrote down these teachings) -> Serchil Buwa
  - The seven points of mind training
    - The Preliminaries: Foundational Dharma
    - The Main Practice: Cultivating Ultimate and Relative Bodhicitta
    - Transforming Adversities into the Path of Awakening
    - A Synthesized Practice for a Lifetime
    - The Criteria for Having Trained the Mind
    - The Pledges of the Mind Training
    - The Practices of the Mind Training
- 1) The Preliminaries: Foundational Dharma to ensure that our practice becomes genuine spiritual practice, leading to spiritual awakening: “*First train in the preliminaries.*”
- a) Precious human life of leisure and endowment
- i) Leisure (8 of them) = the time to engage in spiritual practice
    - (1) Recognize whether you have it or not; if not, why not?
    - (2) For what are you sacrificing leisure, the principal benefit of civilization?
    - (3) “Spiritual practice” is no antidote to overwork, fatigue, and nervous exhaustion. Create leisure first, to create space for spiritual practice.
  - ii) Opportunity (10 of them) = the opportunity to engage in spiritual practice
    - (1) What is real success? What is fraudulent success? The opportunity to learn and engage in spiritual practice = the endowment of human life. Nothing else works to bring about genuine happiness, or true success!
    - (2) The pursuit of hedonic happiness by way of the eight mundane concerns is like playing the lottery in order to get rich; or even worse, even if you win, you finally lose, and the winning isn’t what it’s made out to be.

- (3) What is real failure? To waste your human life
- iii) The preciousness of such a human life
  - (1) We take our lives for granted, but on what basis? We are betting our lives on our beliefs, so it behooves us to investigate the basis of whatever our beliefs and assumptions may be.
  - (2) There is nothing irrational in adopting one working assumption over another if the available evidence does not compel us to believe one way as opposed to another. Especially if the type of hypothesis we adopt has a major impact on our lives.
  - (3) His Holiness' comments on the criteria of valid cognition.
- iv) The rarity of such a human life
  - (1) Look around and respond with compassion to all those who are merely surviving (for awhile) or who are seeking happiness in ways that are hopeless (e.g. the eight mundane concerns, or through evil actions). Then cherish you own rare and precious opportunity.
  - (2) What do you assume about the reasons for your present opportunities? Is it just luck that you presently have a human life with its opportunities?
  - (3) David Finkelstein: a scientist must be skeptical, but in order to be skeptical of something, you must first notice it (and sometimes that's not so easy, especially when everyone around you assumes the same thing).
  - (4) If you squander such an opportunity, why should you ever get it again? There's nothing intrinsic or immutable about our present situation, not even our very identity as humans.
- b) Death and impermanence
  - i) The value of this life of leisure and endowment
    - (1) The possibility of bringing forth an ongoing state of joy without stimuli, welling up from exceptional mental health and spiritual awakening
    - (2) The possibility of a state of well being through good and bad times, through life and death
    - (3) The lottery-like nature of the 8 mundane concerns
    - (4) People's faith in the outcomes of those pursuits
    - (5) Lottery is the state penalty for those who are bad at math; frustration and disappointment are reality's penalty for those who are ignorant and bad at life.
    - (6) Alternative faith in your own spirit and the power of Dharma to unveil it.
  - ii) Taking personal responsibility for one's well being
    - (1) Not relying solely on external influences, e.g. God, politics, educational systems, drugs, society, etc.
    - (2) Example of HH and the tragedy of Tibet
    - (3) The fleeting nature of this life of leisure & endowment. Our human minds and bodies are "on loan."
    - (4) This meditation to counteract our natural tendency to view the unstable and fleeting as being stable and enduring
  - iii) Gross impermanence

- (1) That which ascends to a high position descends to the low; that which comes together is rendered asunder; that which is gained is lost; and that which is created is destroyed.
- (2) Goenka's comment
- iv) Subtle impermanence: momentary nature of all feelings and all composites
- v) Threefold meditation
  - (1) Inevitability of death
  - (2) Unpredictability of the time of one's death
  - (3) What is of value in the face of death?
  - (4) Definition of Dharma
  - (5) Milarepa: "The aim of my Dharma practice is to die without regret."
- vi) What assumptions do we have about the nature of death?
- vii) Who dies?
- viii) Three ways of dying
  - (1) Small, medium, and great capacity
  - (2) The centrality of continuity of maturation from life to life
  - (3) Can there be genuine happiness in the midst of the vast uncertainties of life?
  - (4) Meditation on death and impermanence as a remedy for attachment, anxiety, arrogance, and other afflictions.
  - (5) "The greatest of all discernments."
  - (6) The inspirer for Dharma and the purifier of Dharma.
- c) The miseries of samsāra
  - i) The first Noble Truth: "This is the reality of suffering. Recognize it!"
  - ii) The three types of suffering
    - (1) Blatant suffering: e.g., birth, aging, sickness, and death
    - (2) The suffering of change: Stimulus-driven pleasurable feelings as a temporary alleviation of prior suffering, but not genuine happiness.
    - (3) Pervasive suffering of fundamental vulnerability regarding the "closely held aggregates."
  - iii) The continuity of consciousness
    - (1) John Searle: "We would...need a much richer neurobiological theory of consciousness than anything we can now imagine to suppose that we could isolate necessary conditions of consciousness."
    - (2) Modern science has no means of detecting the presence/absence of consciousness and no compelling method for identifying its origins, its function, or its final outcome. It has only assumptions, but no science of consciousness.
    - (3) Critique of mind as emergent property theory.
    - (4) Buddhist view
  - iv) Theory of the causes and conditions for consciousness.
    - (1) Empirical evidence for continuity of consciousness
    - (2) Sobering view rather than euphoric perspective of continuity
  - v) The causes and conditions of suffering
    - (1) Anything in the world may act as a condition, but no object inevitably leads to misery

- (2) Delusion, attachment, and anger as the real causes — check necessary causes with your own experience!
- (3) Only mental states *turn into* suffering; the rest are catalysts.
- (4) Without purifying the mind, the world will always be unsatisfying.
- vi) The causes and conditions of genuine happiness
  - (1) All manner of things *may* or may *not* lead to pleasure
  - (2) Not mistaking the outer symbols and rituals of happiness for the real thing.
  - (3) Buddhist hypothesis: glimpses of genuine happiness are to be found in a balanced, virtuous mind.
  - (4) Sustained, genuine happiness is to be found when the internal veils of afflictions and obscuration are dispelled.
  - (5) The very source of our yearning for genuine happiness lies at the ground of our being, and that yearning can be satisfied only by that very ground.
  - (6) Is it possible to be attached to a Guru or the Dharma?
  - (7) “Just do it!” And note the “instant gratification.”
  - (8) Developing knowledge of Dharma and skill in choosing which Dharma for which occasion.
- d) Actions and their consequences
  - i) Cf. Freud’s premise that “in mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish...everything is somehow preserved and...in suitable circumstances... it can once more be brought to light.”
  - ii) If there is continuity of experience (consciousness) and rebirth, are there meaningful, causal relationships among those rebirths?
  - iii) Types of *karma*
    - (1) Physical, verbal, and mental (with grasping)
    - (2) Virtuous, non-virtuous, and neutral
    - (3) Ten non-virtues: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, slander, abuse, idle gossip, avarice, malice, and wrong views.
    - (4) Ten virtues
  - iv) Effects of *karma*
    - (1) The fully matured effect (type of rebirth)
    - (2) The effect similar to the cause (tendencies)
    - (3) The environmental effect (external animate & inanimate)
  - v) Four characteristics of full *karma*: Intention, preparation, performance, and completion (satisfaction in the completed deed)
  - vi) Propulsive and completing *karma*
  - vii) Four laws of *karma*
    - (1) The invariability of positive/negative *karma* -->joy/sorrow
    - (2) The natural increase of *karma*
    - (3) If a deed is not committed, its effects will not be experienced
    - (4) Karmic seeds never lose their potency
    - (5) The Four Remedial Powers
      - (a) The power of remorse (not guilt)
      - (b) The power of turning away from misconduct
      - (c) The power of reliance
      - (d) The power of applying the antidote

- (6) The purification of *karma* through dreams, and the possibility of total purification through the above powers.
- viii) Karma and grace
- ix) Living and dying without guilt or remorse
- 2) The Main Practice: Cultivating Ultimate and Relative Bodhicitta
  - a) The immediate preparation: “*Once stability is achieved, let the mystery be revealed.*”
    - i) The stability of faith: belief, appreciation, and aspiration
      - (1) Faith from theoretical understanding & practical experience as a source of inspiration
      - (2) Faith in the *validity* and *efficacy* of a path, not its doctrinal “purity.”
      - (3) “The price of freedom is constant vigilance.” Impurity comes not from alien traditions but from our own minds.
    - ii) The stability of the attention
      - (1) Mindfulness & introspection and mental health: Psychiatrist David Galin: “it is more damaging to a person’s integration to be out of touch with the dimensions of ‘personal’ reality through loss of self-monitoring than to be out of touch with the externals through sensory loss or paralysis.”
      - (2) Attentional stability and education: William James: “...the faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will...An education which should improve this faculty would be *the education par excellence*. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about.”
      - (3) William James: “The subjects adhered to become real subjects, attributes adhered to real attributes, the existence adhered to real existence; whilst the subjects disregarded become imaginary subjects, the attributes disregarded erroneous attributes, and the existence disregarded an existence in no man’s land, in the limbo ‘where footless fancies dwell.’... Habitually and practically we do not count these disregarded things as existents at all... they are not even treated as appearances; they are treated as if they were mere waste, equivalent to nothing at all.”
      - (4) Consciousness --> continuity --> transmigration --> *karma* --> liberation
        - (a) Extrasensory perception & paranormal abilities
        - (b) Bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality as unstable, limited portents of awakening
      - (5) The disaster of increasing technological control over the environment, with no control over our own minds. There is likewise the imbalance of constantly looking for new sources of external resources to fulfill our hedonic desires, while ignoring the inner resources of our own minds.
      - (6) Approaches to attentional balance.
        - (a) The control model: attention with grasping, e.g. a Buddha image
        - (b) The release model: settling the mind in its natural state
        - (c) The wilderness ideal: let it be, don’t manage it and don’t pollute it!
        - (d) Who controls and who releases?
    - iii) Unveiling the mystery of the nature of consciousness

- (1) Not obscuring the mystery with illusions of knowledge (historically, the primary obstacle to discovery): the certainty that consciousness is a product of the brain, with no knowledge of the necessary or sufficient causes of consciousness
  - (2) *First Bhāvanākrama*: “Because the mind moves like a river, it does not remain still without the foundation of śamatha. The mind that is not established in equipoise is incapable of knowing reality. The Lord, too, declared, ‘The mind that is established in equipoise discovers reality.’”
  - (3) *The Dhammapada*: “All phenomena are preceded by the mind, issue forth from the mind, and consist of the mind.”
  - (4) *Ratnameghasūtra*: “All phenomena are preceded by the mind. When the mind is comprehended, all phenomena are comprehended...By bringing the mind under control, all things are brought under control.”
- b) Ultimate Bodhicitta
- i) The non-inherent nature of apprehended objects: “*Regard all phenomena as if they were dreams.*”
    - (1) Anton Zeilinger:
      - (a) “One may be tempted to assume that whenever we ask questions of nature, of the world there outside, there is reality existing independently of what can be said about it. We will now claim that such a position is void of any meaning. It is obvious that any property or feature of reality “out there” can only be based on information we receive. There cannot be any statement whatsoever about the world or about reality that is not based on such information. It therefore follows that the concept of a reality without at least the ability in principle to make statements about it to obtain information about its features is devoid of any possibility of confirmation or proof. This implies that the distinction between information, that is knowledge, and reality is devoid of any meaning.”
      - (b) “In quantum physics the notion of the total information of the system emerges as a primary concept, independent of the particular complete set of complementary experimental procedures the observer might choose, and a property becomes a secondary concept, a specific representation of the information of the system that is created spontaneously in the measurement itself.”
    - (2) Physicist Roger Penrose: “one needs a theory of consciousness, in effect, to explain the physics that we actually perceive going on in the world.”
    - (3) Physicist Andre Linde: “Linde explains, “The universe becomes alive (time-dependent) only when one divides it into two parts: an observer and the rest of the universe. Then the wave function of the rest of the universe depends on the time measured by the observer. In other words, evolution is possible only with respect to the observer. Without an observer, the universe is dead.”
    - (4) Stephen W. Hawking: Every possible version of a single universe exists simultaneously in a state of quantum superposition. When you choose to make a measurement, you select from this range of possibilities a subset of

histories that share the specific features measured. The history of the universe as you conceive of it is derived from that subset of histories. In other words, you choose your past.

(5) John Archibald Wheeler:

(a) “It is wrong to think of that past as ‘already existing’ in all detail. The ‘past’ is theory. The past has no existence except as it is recorded in the present. By deciding what questions our quantum registering equipment shall put in the present we have an undeniable choice in what we have the right to say about the past.”

(b) For a measurement to take place, a true observation of the physical world must impart *meaningful information*, signifying a transition from the realm of mindless stuff to the realm of knowledge. Rather than thinking of the universe as matter in motion, one may regard it as information being processed. Information, the referent of information, and a conscious subject who is informed are all mutually interdependent.

(6) Physicist Nick Herbert: “The source of all quantum paradoxes appears to lie in the fact that human perceptions create a world of unique actualities—our experience is inevitably “classical”—while quantum reality is simply not that way at all...Since physics assures us that our lives are embedded in a thoroughly quantum world, is it so obvious that our experience must remain forever classical?”

(7) Occam’s Razor: “It is vain to do with more assumptions what can be done with fewer assumptions.”

ii) The non-inherent nature of the apprehending mind: “*Examine the unborn nature of awareness.*”

(1) *Kevaddha Sutta*:

(a) “Where do earth, water, fire and air no footing find? Where are long and short, small and great, fair and foul—Where are ‘name and form’ wholly destroyed?” Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all-luminous, that’s where earth, water, fire, and air find no footing, there both long and short, small and great, fair and foul—There ‘name and form’ are wholly destroyed. With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed.”

(b) Nyananada Bhikkhu: In nirvana, the four elements have no basis, for the familiar categories of “name and form,” subject and object, mind and matter vanish with the disappearance of ordinary, conceptually conditioned consciousness. This is a corrective to the common notion that the four elements can cease altogether somewhere—a notion that has its roots in the popular conception of self-existing material elements. The Buddha’s formulation of the question and the concluding line are meant to combat this misconception.

(2) The *Sūtra of the Questions of Kāśyapa*: “Kāśyapa, the mind does not exist inside, nor outside, nor is it observed between the two. Kāśyapa, the mind is unanalyzable, undemonstrable, non-appearing, unknowable, and without location. Kāśyapa, even the Buddhas have not seen, do not see, and will

not see the mind. Kāśyapa, even if the mind sought, it is unfindable. Whatever is unfindable is unobservable. Whatever is unobservable does not arise in the past, in the future, or in the present.”

- (3) Nāgārjuna states in his *Commentary on Bodhicitta*: “The mind is a mere label, and it is nothing other than a label. Recognize awareness as a mere label. Moreover, a label has no intrinsic nature. The Jinās do not find it inside, nor outside, nor in-between those two. Thus, the mind has the nature of an apparition, and the nature of the mind does not exist as a type of color or shape, as something apprehended or as an apprehender, as a man, a woman, or a neuter and so forth. In short, the buddhas have not seen it and they will not see it; they truly see it as having the nature of being without an intrinsic nature.”
- (4) *The Vajra Essence*:
- (a) “If you do not know how to distinguish between the mind and pristine awareness, you will confuse the mind for pristine awareness, which will unfortunately lead to obstacles to achieving the state of liberation. So know how to distinguish them! As for the mind, there is the *deluded mind that clings to appearances*, the *mind that seeks the path by way of negation and affirmation*, and the *mind that takes consciousness as the path*.
  - (b) The deluded mind that clings to appearances is the ordinary mind of sentient beings who do not seek the path and who do not see an entrance to the authentic path.
  - (c) The mind that seeks the path is said to take the mind as its path, for in this case, the mind observes the mind, thoughts are observed with a conceptual mind, and one seeks the path of merely arousing pleasure and pain through intellectual fabrications and the acceptance and rejection of virtue and vice.
  - (d) As for the mind that takes consciousness as the path, the experience of unceasing, ordinary consciousness, which is the ground of the mind, is not the realization of the view. As a result of such practice, outer appearances are reduced to an ethically neutral state, and since those appearances are taken to be real, reification is not counteracted. Inwardly, your own body appears to be ethically neutral, so the fixation of reifying the body is not counteracted. And since both outer and inner appearances are taken to be ethically neutral and substantially existent, you do not transcend the mind, so that, too, is called the *mind*. Even if that were called *pristine awareness*—like giving a boy’s name to an unborn fetus—the characteristic of ascertaining pristine awareness in itself would not have been realized. Unawareness is failing to realize saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as great emptiness, and the terms *awareness* and *unawareness* are known conventionally by way of their respective functions.
  - (e) Pristine awareness first establishes everything included in the phenomenal world of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as emptiness. The reflections of the planets and stars in the ocean have no existence apart

from the ocean, yet they are of the same nature as the play of the ocean. Likewise, rainbows in the sky have no existence apart from the sky, yet those appearances are of the same nature as the play of the sky. In the same manner, pristine awareness is actualized by correctly recognizing that things appear even though nothing exists from the side of appearances, and that all appearances of the physical world and its sentient inhabitants have no existence apart from the ground *sugatagarbha*; yet those appearances are of the same nature as the play of the ground *sugatagarbha*.

- (f) Like the dawn breaking in the sky, without needing to meditate, you comprehend saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being totally subsumed within great enlightenment. Without need of examination, there is the self-awareness, without grasping, that the whole of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is like the reflections of the planets and stars in the ocean. Without need of modification, there is natural liberation in the absolute space of the ground, the great purity and equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Without need of objectification, there is a spacious dissolution into the great expanse, with no object, obstruction, or intentionality. In this way you experience and gain mastery over the inexhaustible ornamental wheels of the body, speech, mind, enlightened qualities and enlightened activities of the jinas and jinaputras of the three times.
  - (g) Ultimately, simply by identifying the *dharmakāya*, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, you gain power over the life force of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. This is not talking about receiving empowerment through such things as water and symbolic pictures that are used as methods to awaken the mind. Rather, you know you have obtained the empowerments of the jinas and jinaputras and the oral transmissions of all the writings that emerge from primordial consciousness, pristine awareness. Thus, you have already simultaneously obtained all empowerments and oral transmissions. Therefore, recognize the importance of not mistaking the mind for pristine awareness.
- (5) Padmasambhava:
- (a) “Astonishing! The ongoing cognizance and luminosity called “the mind” exists, but does not exist even as a single thing. It arises, for it manifests as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and as a myriad of joys and sorrows. It is asserted, for it is asserted according to the twelve *yānas*. It is a label, for it is named in unimaginable ways. Some people call it the mind-itself. Some non-Buddhists call it “the Self.” The *Śrāvakas* call it personal identitylessness. The Cittamātrins call it “the mind.” Some people call it “the middle way.” Some call it the perfection of wisdom. Some give it the name “*tathāgatagarbha*.” Some give it the name “Mahāmudrā.” Some give it the name “ordinary consciousness.” Some call it the sole *bindu*. Some give it the name “*dharmadhātu*.” Some give it the name “the ālaya.” To introduce this by pointing it out directly, past consciousness has disappeared without a trace. Moreover, future realization is unarisen, and in the freshness of its

own present, unfabricated way of being, there is the ordinary consciousness of the present. When it stares at itself, with this observation there is a vividness in which nothing is seen. Awareness—direct, naked, vivid, unestablished, empty, limpid luminosity, unique, non-dual luminosity and emptiness. It is not permanent, but unestablished. It is not nihilistic, but radiantly vivid. It is not one, but is manifoldly aware and luminous. It is not manifold, but is indivisibly of one taste. It is none other than this very self-awareness. This is a real introduction to the primordial nature of being. In this the three embodiments of the *buddhas* are indivisibly complete. As utterly unestablished emptiness, it is the Dharmakāya. As the clear radiance of emptiness, it is the Sambhogakāya. Appearing everywhere without impediment, it is the Nirmāṇakāya. Simple, singularly complete, it is the Svabhāvakāya. To introduce this by pointing it out forcefully, it is your very own present consciousness. When it is this very unstructured, self-luminous consciousness, what do you mean, “I do not realize the mind-itself”?

- (b) There is nothing here to meditate on, so what do you mean, “it does not arise due to meditation”? When it is just this direct awareness, what do you mean, “I do not find my own mind”? When it is just this uninterrupted clear awareness, what do you mean, “the nature of the mind is not seen”? When it is the very thinker of the mind, what do you mean, “it is not found by seeking it”? When there is nothing at all to do, what do you mean, “it does not arise due to activity”? When it is enough to leave it in its own unstructured state, what do you mean, “it does not remain”? When it is enough to let it be without doing anything, what do you mean, “I cannot do it”? When it is unified, indivisible clarity, awareness, and emptiness, what do you mean, “it is affirmed and unaffirmed”? When it is spontaneously self-arisen without causes or conditions, what do you mean, “I can’t do it? When the arising and release of thoughts are simultaneous, what do you mean, “they do not occur together”? When it is this very consciousness of the present, what do you mean, “I do not recognize it”? The ultimate nature of the mind is certainly empty and without basis. Your mind is intangible like empty space. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!
- (c) Empty and void but not a nihilistic view, self-arisen, primordial consciousness is original, clear consciousness. Self-arisen and self-illuminating, it is like the essence of the sun. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind! Awareness, primordial consciousness, is certainly unceasing. Uninterrupted awareness is like the current of a river. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind! The dispersing thoughts of ideation are certainly not being grasped. This intangible dispersion is like a hazy sky. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind! Recognize all appearances as self-appearing. Self-appearing phenomena are like reflections in a mirror. Is it like that or not?—

observe your own mind! All signs are certainly released in their own state. Self-arising and self-releasing, they are like clouds in the sky. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

- (2) *The Vajra Essence*: “This ground is present in the mindstreams of all sentient beings, but it is tightly constricted by dualistic grasping; and it is regarded as external, firm, and solid. This is like water in its natural, [370] fluid state freezing in a cold wind. It is due to dualistic grasping to subjects and objects that the ground, which is naturally free, becomes frozen into the appearances of things.”
  - (3) Science writer K. C. Cole (*The Hole in the Universe*): “Like water freezing into ice and releasing its energy into its surroundings, the ‘freezing’ of the vacuum liberates enormous amounts of energy...As simply as water freezing into ice, the inflated vacuum froze into the structure that gave rise to quarks, electrons, and eventually us.”
  - (4) Physicist Henning Genz (*Nothingness: The Science of Empty Space*):
    - (a) “Real systems are, in this sense, ‘excitations of the vacuum’—much as surface waves in a pond are excitations of the pond’s water...the properties of the physical vacuum define the possible excitations—the possible systems that can emerge from the physical vacuum...The vacuum in itself is shapeless, but it may assume specific shapes. In doing so, it becomes a physical reality, a ‘real world.’”
    - (b) “Maybe quantum mechanical fluctuations initiated not only the *stuff* our world was made of prior to inflation but also space-time itself. Maybe the true *vacuum*, the true *nothing*, of philosophy and religion should be seen as a state wholly innocent of laws, space, and time. This state can be thought of as nothing but a collection of possibilities of what might be.”
  - (5) Dalai Lama: “Any given state of consciousness is permeated by the clear light of primordial awareness. However solid ice may be, it never loses its true nature, which is water. In the same way, even very obvious concepts are such that their ‘place’, as it were, their final resting place, does not fall outside the expanse of primordial awareness. They arise within the expanse of primordial awareness and that is where they dissolve.”
- i) The non-inherent nature of all phenomena: “*Even the antidote itself is liberated in its own state.*”
- (1) *The Vajra Essence*: “The ground is unmoving throughout the three times, and it does not change for the better or the worse, so it is called *immutable*. Because it is endowed with the seven qualities of the indestructible *vajra*, it is called *vajra*. These are its seven qualities:
    - (a) invulnerable to all karmas, mental afflictions, and habitual propensities
    - (b) indestructible by any objects or contributing conditions
    - (c) real, for it abides as the originally pure intrinsic nature of the great, primordial ground of the whole of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*
    - (d) incorruptible, for it cannot be contaminated by any good or bad qualities

- (e) immutable, for it is unfluctuating and unmoving throughout the three times
  - (f) totally unobstructable, for it can pierce even the most subtle cognitive obscurations in the absolute space of ultimate reality, which transcends causality
  - (g) invincible, for it cannot be transformed by either *samsāra* or *nirvāṇa*
- (2) *The Vajra Essence*: “Never, even for an instant, have you been separated from the originally pure ground, free of conceptual elaboration; but by failing to recognize it, you have not apprehended your own nature for yourself. As a consequence, you have been deluded by grasping to the true existence of the constant stream of joyful and painful appearances. Now with great wisdom you recognize manifest primordial consciousness, and by apprehending the profundity of your own state, you are self-liberated. This is like recognizing the wish-fulfilling gem and honoring it, which then frees you from poverty.”
- (3) Padmasambhava’s parable and its meaning
- (a) The parable: In the center of the land of Orgyen dwelled the vastly wealthy and powerful King Ākāśagarbha with his Queen Vimala-prabhinimanojñā, his son, Prince Kiraṇa, who was immature and foolish, and his wise minister Sūryanaśim. On one occasion the prince went to a great festival and became entranced by the spectacle of an illusionist’s apparitions. As a result, he became deluded, forgot his identity and his home, and wandered for years as a vagrant, suffering miserably. Eventually, when the kingdom was falling into decline, he came to beg at the door of the minister Sūryanaśim, who identified him and tried to persuade him that he was the prince. Prince Kiraṇa, feeling himself to be merely an unworthy beggar, did not believe him, and refused to enter his father’s palace. The minister told him what had happened to him and challenged him to examine his own identity, his parents, and his birthplace. The prince was stunned at what he didn’t find, and asked the minister to reveal to him his actual nature and personal history. The prince was then enthroned. “In an instant, while not discarding his identity as a beggar, he stopped living in the manner of a beggar. The misery of being a vagrant disappeared by itself, and the kingdom and all his subjects without exception came under his rule. And they lived in great joy and happiness.
  - (b) The meaning:
    - (i) King Ākāśagarbha = not falling to the extremes of *samsāra* or *nirvāṇa*
    - (ii) Vimala-prabhinimanojñā = dwelling with the displays of the luminosity of your own mind
    - (iii) Prince Kiraṇa = neither realizing nor being deluded by the momentarily arising expressions of the creative power of your own mind
    - (iv) Minister Sūryanaśim = the spiritual mentor with realization who teaches out of compassion

- (c) Padmasambhava: “Just as the prince did not know he was a prince and became a beggar, you fail to recognize your own mind-itself as the *dharmakāya*, and you wander in the cycle of existence. Just as the minister recognized the prince and brought him to the seat of royalty, the spiritual mentor identifies your mind-itself as the *dharmakāya*; and upon becoming freed from the suffering of the cycle of existence, you achieve the excellent qualities of a *buddha*.”
- ii) Releasing the mind in a state of non-grasping: “*The essential nature of the path is resting in the substrate.*”
- (1) The ultimate substrate: the union of ultimate nature of reality (*dharmatā*) and the ultimate nature of the mind (*cittatā*)
  - (2) The distinction between “minor emptiness” and “great emptiness.”
  - (3) Sera Khandro: Four Kinds of Open Presence
    - (a) Regarding the view of open presence, the great, uniform pervasiveness of the view transcends intellectual grasping to signs, does not succumb to bias or extremes, and realizes unconditioned reality, which is like space.
    - (b) Regarding the meditation of open presence, just as the water of the great ocean is unfathomable, whatever arises is none other than the nature of ultimate reality. Just as water is permeated by limpid luminosity, in ultimate reality there is no *saṃsāra* or *nirvāṇa*, no joy or sorrow, and so forth, for one realizes that everything dissolves into uniform pervasiveness as displays of clear light.
    - (c) Regarding the pristine awareness of open presence, just as the supreme mountain in the center of this world system is unmovable, pristine awareness transcends time, without wavering even for an instant from the nature of its own great luminosity.
    - (d) Regarding appearances and the mental processes of open presence, all appearing phenomena are naturally empty and self-illuminating. They are not apprehended by the intellect, not grasped by the mind, and not adjusted by awareness. Rather, they dissolve into great uniform pervasiveness, so they are liberated with no basis for acceptance or rejection, no distinction between luminosity and emptiness, and no ambivalence.
    - (e) To summarize all these points, the Great Perfection of ultimate reality is the great, universal basis of *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa*, and the three paths, as well as the great absolute space that encompasses *saṃsāra*, *nirvāṇa*, and the three paths. Truly perceiving its character and nature of being is the view; and when you see your own nature, you gain mastery over the great, original, primordial ground of being. By holding your own ground within yourself, pristine awareness awakens to its own nature; and meditation—without wavering from great uniform pervasiveness, free of conceptual elaborations—is devoid of any objective referent. When a water drop merges with the ocean, it is indivisible from the ocean; and the one space on the outside and inside of a broken vase cannot be differentiated, but extends into a single, all-pervasive space.

Likewise, in the identification within yourself of the dharmakāya, pristine awareness that is present in the ground, there is nothing to be altered and nothing else with which to engage.

- iii) Post-meditative practice: “*Between sessions, act as an illusory being.*”
  - (1) The impure illusory body
    - (a) Padmasambhava: “Consider that since these things, which are without permanence, stability, or immutability, have no inherent nature, they are like illusions.”
    - (b) The mirror practice of praise and abuse
    - (c) Your body and mind and you are simply dependently related events, but apart from these mere illusory, delusive appearances, there is no real body, mind or person.
    - (d) Regard your own and others’ speech as being like echoes.
    - (e) Regard all mentation as being like mirages.
    - (f) Imagine being abused, etc. (or stage it with your Dharma friends...), and realize the illusory nature of the abuser, the abuse, and the abused.
    - (g) Regard all the eight mundane concerns, all situations of attachment and anger, in the same way, and equalize them with insight.
  - (2) The pure illusory body
    - (a) Cultivate a pure vision of all physical appearances as being embodiments of enlightened consciousness, all sounds as the voice of the enlightened ones, and all mentation as the enlightened mind.
    - (b) Imagine your own body as being of the nature of pure light, devoid of inherent existence, and your own speech and mind as utterly pure.
      - (i) William James: For the moment what we attend to is reality.
      - (ii) If everything exists in dependence upon its conceptual designation, then we may influence the reality we experience by choosing what and how we wish to engage in such designations.
      - (iii) The fusion of intelligence with spiritual intuition (primordial wisdom) as the swift path to enlightenment, while intelligence alone will suffice but take immensely longer.
      - (iv) The emergence of primordial consciousness through the cultivation of virtue and through the cultivation of pure vision.
      - (v) At all times behave as if you were merely an apparition, like a character in a lucid dream.
      - (vi) Be on guard against reification and decontextualization at all times, for this is the basis of all self-centered craving, all anger and hatred, and all pride and jealousy.
      - (vii) Dzogchen: “All things appear, but are non-existent.”
- b) Relative Bodhicitta
  - i) “*Alternately practice giving and taking.*”
    - (1) Buddha: “Wisdom without compassion is bondage. Compassion without wisdom is bondage.”
    - (2) A dialogue with the Buddha: “How can one become one with God?”  
“Cultivate the four divine abidings.”

- (3) Atīśa: “Only the Tibetans know how to develop bodhicitta the without cultivating loving-kindness and compassion.”
- (4) H. H. the Dalai Lama: “My religion is cultivating a good heart.”
- (5) The distinction between loving kindness and attachment
- (6) The meditative cultivation of loving kindness
  - (a) Meditate on the effects of hatred, anger (including the righteous sort) and of patience.
  - (b) “May I remain free of animosity, affliction, and anxiety, and live happily.” (Buddha: “One who loves himself will not harm another.”)
  - (c) Recalling another’s acts of kindness and virtues that inspire affection and respect, wish, “May this good person be happy and free from suffering.”
  - (d) Then consider a dearly loved friend, a neutral person as a dearly loved friend, and finally consider a hostile person as a neutral person.
  - (e) Meditate until all such barriers vanish.
- (7) Countering resentment
  - (a) Dissolve the caricature of the enemy by recalling his inoffensive qualities and behavior
  - (b) If the enemy is overwhelmingly negative, cultivate compassion.
  - (c) Refuse to compound the enemy’s harm to you by harming your own mind.
  - (d) Recognize that the absent enemy is not hurting you, it is your own mind that is doing the harm.
  - (e) Recall the forbearance of the holy beings of the past (e.g. Tenzin Choedrak, Kungo Barshi, Palden Gyatso).
  - (f) Consider the benefits of loving kindness: one sleeps in comfort; one wakes in comfort; one dreams no evil dreams; one is dear to human non-human beings; one’s mind is easily concentrated; the expression on one’s face is serene; one dies unconfused; and if one achieves nothing higher, one reappears in heaven as one who wakes up from sleep.
  - (g) Consider the identitylessness of the enemy and the dependent origination of the resented event.
  - (h) Give or receive a gift from the enemy.
- (8) The near-enemy of loving-kindness is attachment, for like an enemy it masquerades as a friend; malice is its far enemy; its proximate cause is seeing loveableness in beings; it succeeds when it make animosity subside, and it fails when it produces selfish affection.
- (9) The destructive effects of anger on mental balance.
- (10) Tenzin Zangpo’s advice: compassion, then śamatha
- (11) The dangers of śamatha without compassion
- (12) The distinction between compassion and hatred.
- (13) Relationship between compassion and insight into emptiness
- (14) How can we bear compassion? H.H. the Dalai Lama: “Sometimes compassion becomes unbearable without the wisdom of emptiness.”

- (15) Realization of emptiness may be discovering the greatest treasure or discovering the greatest loss.
- (16) Dependent origination and compassion
- (17) The need to cultivate abiding, rather than episodic, compassion. (Cf. Tibetan yogi watching a film on the genocide in Tibet: “I’m not seeing anything here that I’m not aware of already, constantly, with respect to all sentient beings.”)
- (18) The meditative cultivation of compassion
- (a) Contemplate the advantages of compassion and the disadvantages of the lack of compassion.
  - (b) Focus on a person who is wretched and miserable, wishing, “If only he could be freed from this suffering!” Or focus on an evil-doer, even though he is happy (cf. Geshe Rabten: “An evil-doer is more worthy of compassion than a person who is physically impaired.”)
  - (c) Focus on a dear person
  - (d) Focus on a neutral person
  - (e) Focus on a hostile person
  - (f) Continue practicing until you break down the barriers.
  - (g) The near enemy of compassion is grief; cruelty is its far enemy; the proximate cause of compassion is to see the helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering; it succeeds when it makes cruelty subside, and it fails when it produces sorrow.
  - (h) Tibetan yogi Gen Thuthob: In the cultivation of compassion, first empathetic sorrow arises, but when compassion takes over, the sorrow is left behind, and one is constructively focused on alleviating others’ suffering, rather than simply suffering with them.
- (19) The actual practice of “giving and taking,” or *tonglen*:
- (a) Imagine first your own mother in the space in front of you, then gradually other sentient beings, and first of all cultivate love and compassion for them.
  - (b) Recall your mother’s kindness from the time you were in her womb, and recall the suffering to which she is still subject.
  - (c) Take on the responsibility of bringing her all manner of happiness and protect her from all harm.
  - (d) Imagine taking all your mother’s suffering and its causes into your heart.
  - (e) Thinking, “I shall bring about complete joy for my mother,” offer all your possessions, virtues, and happiness to her without reservation, yielding everything she needs for her temporal and ultimate happiness.
  - (f) As a result, imagine her attaining perfect Awakening. (Dharma: the greatest gift)
  - (g) The measure of success is actually being able to take on her suffering without regard for yourself.
- ii) “*Mount them both upon your breath.*”
- (1) DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE: Don’t be dismayed if your mind becomes clouded and obscurations seem to increase: not a bad sign.

- (2) Focus especially on those who have committed great evils.
- c) Post-meditative practice
  - i) *“Three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue.”*
    - (1) When the three poisons arise with respect to the three types of objects, regard with compassion all those who are subject to the same afflictions.
    - (2) Imagine taking all those afflictions upon yourself, praying that others may have your roots of virtue to free them from those afflictions.
  - ii) *“During all activities, train with phrases.”*
    - (1) “May the suffering and its causes of all sentient beings ripen upon me!”
    - (2) “May the causes of my well-being ripen upon all sentient beings!”
    - (3) Practice until you obtain signs of success, as in the case of Maitriyogin.
- 2) Transforming Adversity into an Aid to Spiritual Awakening
  - a) In dependence upon relative bodhicitta: *“When the physical world and its sentient inhabitants are enslaved by vices, transform adversities into the path of spiritual awakening.”*
    - i) All adversity arises from misdeeds done in the past, and when you think nothing can be done to remedy them, they arise as obstacles.
    - ii) Chen-ngawa: If you have the will to practice in the face of physical and mental suffering, they become blessings from the objects of refuge; so apply all suffering to the two types of Bodhicitta.
    - iii) Relative bodhicitta of aspiring for spiritual awakening
      - (1) Distinguish between your true enemy—self-centeredness and self-grasping—and your true friend—concern for others.
      - (2) The impossibility of releasing self-cherishing as long as we are banking on the eight mundane concerns for our happiness.
      - (3) Can we trust that there is some power in the universe that will bring us what we need if we don’t grasp after it with self-cherishing?
      - (4) Self-acceptance or recognizing internal enemies? cf. Flu.
  - b) *“Blame everything on one culprit.”* Self-grasping.
    - i) Sāntideva: VIII, 134: “If all the harm, fear, and suffering in the world occur due to grasping onto the self, what use is that great demon to me?”
    - ii) From identification of self to identification of others, to attachment to self to aversion to others, and from them, all problems.
    - iii) This has *always* been our fundamental problem, and it will remain so until we identify our true enemy.
    - iv) Sāntideva: IV, 34: “How can I take delight in the cycle of existence when constant, long-lasting enemies, who are the sole cause of the perpetuation of a mass of adversities, fearlessly dwell in my heart?”
    - v) Sāntideva: VIII, 130: “Enough of much talk! Note the difference between the fool who seeks his own benefit and the sage who works for the benefit of others.”
    - vi) Ben Künkyen: I stand at guard at the gateway of my mind with the spear of antidotes in hand. If my adversaries press in, I press back; if they lighten up, I lighten up. Cf. Mao Zedong’s guerrilla warfare tactic.
    - vii) Analogy of self-centeredness to bearing a bundle of thorns on a naked back.

- viii) The degree to which self-grasping diminishes is the degree to which your spiritual practice has been effective. Put it to the pragmatic test!
- c) Nondually cherishing sentient beings: “*Meditate on everyone as being very kind.*”
  - i) Especially cultivate love and compassion for those who harm you, and practice *tonglen*.
  - ii) The cultivation of love: regarding all sentient beings as your own kin, look upon them with affection, hold them with kindness, protect them from harm, and provide them with happiness.
  - iii) The cultivation of compassion: They harmed me solely out of delusion, but in the past they have served me, and due to their mental afflictions, they continue to wander helplessly in the cycle of existence.
  - iv) Repaying the kindness of others by means of the practice of *tonglen*.
  - v) The spiritual value of the wide range of human experience.
- d) In dependence upon ultimate bodhicitta: “*By meditating on delusive appearances as the four embodiments, emptiness is the unsurpassed protection.*”
  - i) Ascertain that all phenomena, including those that inflict harm, are solely delusive appearances to your own mind. Ultimately no phenomenon has its own inherent existence; all are like apparitions emerging from space.
  - ii) Both the aggressor and I are simply non-inherent awareness; and there can be no harm from one to the other, just as the space in the east cannot hurt the space in the west.
  - iii) The absence of inherent existence of everything, including your own mental afflictions, is the *dharmakāya*.
  - iv) That which is unborn is unceasing, and that unceasing luminosity is the *sambhogakāya*.
  - v) That which is unborn and unceasing is also nonabiding, and that nonabidingness is the *nirmāṇakāya*. DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE: the empty, reflection-like nature of phenomena is the *nirmāṇakāya*.
  - vi) The non-inherent nature of all phenomena, as they are not established in any of the three times, is the *svabhāvakāya*: the indivisibility of the three embodiments.
  - vii) By recognizing that your own mind is unborn, unceasing, and nonabiding, you may ascertain that it is free of all impurities and is none other than the four embodiments.
  - viii) Regard all thoughts as expressions of the four embodiments.
  - ix) Be grateful to those who harm you, for their “kindness” spurs you on to practice; *they show you how far you have matured*; cf. Milarepa’s uncle; HHDL on the invasion.
  - x) Therefore, the benefit of enemies is just like that of your spiritual mentor and the Buddha, so regard them as emanations of the Buddha.
  - xi) View illness in the same way, as a spur to practice and not simply as an obstacle to mundane pleasure.
  - xii) Adversity gives rise to a spirit of emergence and to compassion, so view all types of adversity as emanations of your spiritual mentor.
  - xiii) In this way, your whole life becomes Dharma practice.

- e) A special practice for accumulating merit and purifying obscurations: *“The best of methods is to have four practices.”*
  - i) Accumulate merit
    - (1) The means to develop beneficial habitual propensities, which nurture one’s spiritual maturation.
    - (2) Counteract mundane hopes and fears by yearning that all situations, agreeable and disagreeable, may lead you to spiritual awakening.
  - ii) Purify vices by means of the four remedial powers
    - (1) Remorse for past wrong-doings
    - (2) Resolve to turn away from misconduct
    - (3) Support: taking refuge and cultivating compassion
    - (4) Engaging in purifying practices
  - iii) Make offerings to spirits
    - (1) Do “spirits” exist as anything other than figments of certain people’s imaginations? Cf. Newton & Dūdjom Lingpa.
    - (2) Science has no objective means of detecting the presence or function of consciousness (human or otherwise), so how could it possibly make any empirical judgments about the existence of spirits?
    - (3) Make gifts to those who harm you out of gratitude for their aid to your spiritual practice.
    - (4) If you can’t do that, offer gifts with loving-kindness and compassion, praying that they stop afflicting you so that they won’t have to suffer the karmic consequences of their deeds.
  - iv) Make offerings to the Dharma Protectors
    - (1) H.H. the Dalai Lama: Let the Buddha himself be your Dharma protector. Who has more power to protect your practice?
    - (2) Let your cultivation of relative and ultimate Bodhicitta protect your practice. Here is the true refuge.
- f) Post-meditative yoga: *“Whatever you encounter, immediately apply it to meditation.”*
  - i) Whatever adversity strikes, apply it to the cultivation of Bodhicitta.
    - (1) In the case of illness, getting mugged, robbed, and all other misfortunes and disappointments, consider that the whole world is this way, so cultivate compassion, imagining taking on everyone else’s suffering in addition to your own.
    - (2) Do the same in the event of mental afflictions arising in your mind, imagining others to be freed from those afflictions and abiding in joy.
    - (3) All practices of transforming adversity into the path are designed to counteract mundane hope and fear.
    - (4) As long as you indulge in mundane hope and fear, you will not be able to transform adversities into the path.
    - (5) DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE: Eventually by the power of Bodhicitta, we will be free even from the hope of accomplishing Bodhicitta and the fear of not doing so.
    - (6) Langri Thangpa: by training in this way with regard to friends and enemies the crooked tree of the mind is made straight.

3) A Synthesis of Practice for One Life

- a) *“To synthesize the essence of this practical guidance, apply yourself to the five powers.”*
- i) The power of resolution: Never to be separated from the two Bodhicittas.
  - ii) The power of familiarization
    - (1) Never to be distracted from that training
    - (2) Śāntideva, VI: 14: “With familiarization, there is nothing whatsoever that does not become easier.”
  - iii) The power of positive seeds: Constant devotion to your spiritual practice in all its diversity & richness.
  - iv) The power of revulsion
    - (1) Revulsion for self-grasping and self-cherishing, which have brought us suffering for countless lives.
    - (2) DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE: “Hit the pig on the nose; clean the lamp while it is still warm.”
  - v) The power of prayer
    - (1) Pray never, in all your lives, to be separated from the two Bodhicittas, from genuine spiritual mentors, and from the Dharma.
    - (2) Tibetan aphorism: “Do not rely on the individual, rely on the Dharma. Do not rely on the words, rely on the meaning. Do not rely on the provisional meaning, rely on the definitive meaning. Do not rely on mundane consciousness, rely on primordial consciousness.
- b) *“The Mahāyāna teaching on transferring consciousness is precisely these five powers, so your conduct is crucial.”*
- i) The power of positive seeds: Give up all your material goods to your objects of refuge with a sense of fearlessness regarding the hereafter.
  - ii) The power of prayer: disclose all misdeeds, take refuge, make offerings, and ask for blessings to sustain the two Bodhicittas during the Bardo and future lives, to meet with spiritual mentors, and to be led by them on the path of joy.
  - iii) The power of revulsion: Self-grasping is the source of all misery, so determine not to latch onto a body in the Bardo, but let your mind dissolve into space.
  - iv) The power of resolve: to recall the two Bodhicittas in the Bardo and to train in them.
  - v) The power of familiarization: the constant practice of the two Bodhicittas.
- c) Final advice on dying
- i) Adopt the “sleeping lion” posture.
  - ii) Relative Bodhicitta: cultivate love & compassion and conjoin *tonglen* with your breathing.
    - (1) Ultimate Bodhicitta: Consider, “All of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* consists of delusive appearances. The mind-itself has never been other than the Dharmakāya, so there is nothing in me that can die.
    - (2) Alternate the practices of relative and ultimate Bodhicitta as you die.

- (3) If you cannot do that, identify your mind-itself as the Dharmakāya, perceive the character of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as neither to be accepted or rejected, and rest in reality-itself, in the state in which the mind-itself is not transferred. Atīśa: there is no more wondrous counsel on dying than this.
- 4) The Criteria for Having Trained the Mind
- a) “*The whole of Dharma is synthesized in one aim.*” Namely, subduing self-grasping.
- i) All hearing, thinking, and meditation is aimed at eliminating grasping onto the self, which, upon examination, has no existence whatsoever in and of itself.
- ii) Examine: do all your physical, verbal, and mental activities enhance or diminish self-grasping? If they reinforce self-grasping, all your spiritual practice is heading for the eight mundane concerns and your self-aggrandizement in this life. In that case, your whole practice is misguided. If they attenuate your self-grasping, that is the real point of your study and practice.
- iii) Once we release self-grasping, we have the opportunity to begin to realize our actual nature—primordial awareness.
- b) “*Maintain the chief of two witnesses.*”
- i) Others may praise you as an exemplar Dharma practitioner, but they are not the chief witnesses, for they see only small portions of your overall behavior, and they do not fathom the depths of your heart and mind.
- ii) Distinguish between mundane concern over “what the neighbors think” and meaningful regard for others.
- c) “*Constantly resort to a sense of good cheer.*”
- i) Once you have gained the taste of Dharma through your mind-training, whatever adversity strikes, be content to respond to it with the practice of the two Bodhicittas, without being discouraged, hassled, grumpy, or frustrated. That is a criterion of success in this practice.
- ii) Observe throughout the course of the day exactly what situations erode your sense of good cheer, and learn to apply the two Bodhicittas to them.
- iii) Śāntideva (VI, 10): “If there is a remedy, then what is the use of frustration? If there is no remedy, then what is the use of frustration?”
- iv) By cultivating a sense of welcome towards all types of felicity and adversity, you will accept everything with gladness. Consequently, your meditative experience and realizations will never collapse. That is a criterion of success.
- v) Whatever troubles you experience as a result of your *tonglen* practice, consider that you are indeed taking on the miseries of others, and take satisfaction in that.
- vi) In short, if all adversities arise as aids to your practice, without disgruntlement, that is a sign of success.
- vii) Whether or not something arises as an adversity depends not simply on the nature of the event, but on our own appraisal of it. This, in turn, depends on

what we value most—the pursuit of spiritual awakening or the satisfaction of our mundane desires.

- viii) Even illness, disgrace, and death itself are not intrinsically instances of adversity. Begin applying the practices to small adversities, then increase your range.
  - ix) Faith is a great boon to this practice—not blind belief—but a kind of faith invokes a deep reality into our experience.
  - x) Bodhisattvas are known by their conduct.
- 5) The Pledges of the Mind-training
- a) “*Always practice the three principles.*”
    - i) “*Do not contravene your commitments to training the mind.*”
      - (1) Not being dismissive of vows or ethics.
      - (2) Not regarding this mind-training to be all that is needed, while being dismissive of other teachings.
    - ii) “*Do not have a sense of bravado in your mind-training.*” e.g., seeking out dangerous people or situations in order to demonstrate the potency of your practice.
    - iii) “*Do not have an uneven mind-training.*” e.g., bearing harm from humans but not non-humans, respecting some while despising others, loving some and hating others.
  - b) “*Change your priorities, but stay as you are.*”
    - i) Mentally practice *tonglen*, without ever disengaging from practice, but let your physical and verbal conduct remain as it was.
    - ii) Don’t verbally express your virtues to others, or radically alter your behavior; rather, while bringing about a great change in your mind, do not draw others’ attention to your practice or progress.
    - iii) Potowa: “*Let your mind mature spiritually without others knowing of it.*”
    - iv) The radical difference between modern Western custom and Buddhist tradition regarding this point.
  - c) “*Do not speak of others’ limitations.*”
    - i) The reference is to not speaking of others’ spiritual or mundane faults.
    - ii) When is it legitimate to speak of others’ faults? Never?
  - d) “*Think nothing of the other side.*”
    - i) Regarding other sentient beings in general, especially Dharma practitioners, and most especially your own Dharma companions, it is never appropriate to dwell on their faults.
    - ii) Limitations of the “black-box” approach to knowing someone’s mind; underdetermination.
    - iii) Attention, reality, and pure perception.
  - e) “*Abandon all hope of rewards.*”
    - i) Abandon all hopes of gaining high status in this life, respect, fame, magical powers of healing, fortunate rebirth, your own liberation, and even your own perfect enlightenment.
    - ii) As soon as such ambition arises, forces seem to arise that obstruct its fulfillment.
  - f) “*Avoid poisoned food.*”

- i) Acting out of self-interest, while not regarding self-grasping as the enemy and without rejecting self-cherishing.
- ii) Whatever Dharma you practice while grasping onto the true existence of phenomena acts perpetuates your *saṃsāra*, you die in *saṃsāra*, and suffering is induced.
- g) *“Do not indulge in self-righteousness.”*
  - i) Avoid flaring up in indignation and resentment at the misdeeds of others.
  - ii) Attend closely to the circumstances under which others’ vices emerge, and the influences that have led to your own virtues, such as they may be.
- h) *“Do not engage in malicious sarcasm.”* Whether your words are true or not, avoid harsh speech directed toward anyone, dear or not.
- i) *“Do not wait in ambush.”* Avoid holding a grudge and retaliating when your target is off guard, and avoid seeking out others’ faults.
- j) *“Do not load the burden of a dzo on an ox.”* (a *dzo* is a cross between a yak and an ox). If there is an undesirable task or responsibility that is rightfully yours, do not deviously shift it to someone else.
- k) *“Do not flatter to get on top.”* Flatter neither yourself nor others.
- l) *“Avoid pretense.”* e.g., any kind of practice in which your inner motivation is at variance with your outer conduct.
- m) *“Do not bring a god down to the level of a demon.”*
  - i) If you serve a mundane god, it may help you, but if you show disrespect, it will retaliate like a demon.
  - ii) The mind-training is for subduing yourself, but it is corrupted if it results in a sense of superiority, a sense of being an outstanding Dharma practitioner, while regarding others as inferior.
  - iii) Regard yourself as the least of servants to all.
  - iv) We practice to overcome our afflictions. Be well, not proud.
- n) *“Do not take advantage of another’s misfortune.”*
  - i) E.g., taking satisfaction in another’s misfortune.
  - ii) Gladly anticipating a relative’s death so that you can get your inheritance.
  - iii) Meditate rather on your actions and their consequences.
- 6) The Practices of the Mind-Training
  - a) *“Practice all contemplations by means of one.”*
    - i) Transform all tasks, duties, and concerns into this Seven-point Mind Training, with its emphasis on the two Bodhicittas.
    - ii) Overcome the division between mundane pursuits and Dharma, not by making Dharma mundane, but by elevating the mundane to Dharma.
  - b) *“Respond in one way to all dejection.”*
    - i) Dejection may come from lack of confidence in the practice, thinking, “I get sick due to practicing, people despise me, and my afflictions, such as self-grasping, are actually growing stronger.”
    - ii) Recognize such disillusionment, and consider that many meet with discouragement while living in ways contrary to the Dharma, and practice *tonglen* towards them.

- c) *“There are two tasks, at the beginning and the end.”* Cultivate bodhicitta at the beginning of the day, then maintain it with introspection, and finally dedicate the merits at the end of the day.
  - i) D. *“Bear whichever of the two occurs.”* In the midst of felicity and adversity, continue practicing, noting the relativity of both.
- d) *“Guard the two at the cost of your life.”* Regard the two Bodhicittas as more precious than life itself.
- e) *“Practice the three austerities.”*
  - i) (a) Remembering the remedies for mental afflictions, and (b) averting and (c) cutting off the flow of mental afflictions as soon as they arise.
  - ii) Know the defining characteristics of afflictions in theory and in daily experience.
- f) *“Adopt the three principle causes.”*
  - i) Following a qualified mentor.
  - ii) Devoting ourselves to all stages of the practice
  - iii) Cultivate the outer and inner conditions for fruitful practice, including faith, intelligence, and zeal; *tonglen*.
- g) *“Cultivate three things without letting them deteriorate.”*
  - i) Faith and reverence for your spiritual mentor.
  - ii) Enthusiasm for training your mind.
  - iii) Conscientiousness concerning your precepts and pledges.
- h) *“Maintain three things inseparably.”*
  - i) Bodily virtue, e.g. service to the mentor, offerings to the Three Jewels, and circumambulations.
  - ii) Verbal virtue, e.g., reciting verses of refuge and reciting texts.
  - iii) Mental virtue, e.g., cultivating the two Bodhicittas.
- i) *“Meditate constantly on the distinctive ones.”*
  - i) Those who compete with you, whom you resent, those who harm you for no apparent reason. It is here that your spiritual practice can fall apart, so especially cherish them.
  - ii) The *karma* from deeds relating to your spiritual mentors, parents, and *bodhisattvas* is especially intense, so practice well with regard to them.
- j) *“Do not depend on other factors.”* For other practices, external conditions may be necessary, but here you need no other support, for all circumstances arise as aids to your practice.
- k) *“Now practice what is important.”* Take advantage of this precious human life by prioritizing:
  - i) Spiritual practice over mundane pursuits.
  - ii) Practicing Dharma over talking about it.
  - iii) The cultivation of Bodhicitta over other practices.
  - iv) Your mentor’s personal guidance over teachings of the scriptures and logic.
  - v) Inner practice over changing the place you live.
  - vi) Those who hear the Dharma are rare; among them, those who deeply ponder the Dharma are rare; among them, those who sincerely practice the Dharma are rare; among them, those who persevere in the practice are rare. Therefore, spiritual maturation and awakening are rare.

- l) *“Make no mistake.”*
  - i) Mistaken forbearance: not bearing the tribulations of Dharma, but only those of mundane concerns.
  - ii) Mistaken desires: not for spiritual maturation but for mundane goals.
  - iii) Mistaken experience: striving not for the experience of hearing, thinking, and meditating, but for various outer and inner mundane pleasures.
  - iv) Mistaken compassion: pitying Dharma practitioners who undergo hardships, but feeling no compassion for those who dwell in suffering and the causes of suffering.
  - v) Mistaken priorities: for the mundane affairs of this life instead of spiritual practice.
  - vi) Mistaken satisfaction: not rejoicing in the virtues of sentient beings and Buddhas, but rejoicing in the misfortunes of your enemies and those you despise.
- m) *“Do not be erratic.”* Occasionally practicing the mind training, but then losing faith and just engaging in recitations. Focusing on this life alone, engaging in nonvirtue and mental afflictions, then again becoming concerned about the hereafter and practicing Dharma.
- n) *“Practice with total conviction.”* Check out the practice first, see whether or not it is beneficial, and if it seems truly authentic, totally commit yourself to it.
- o) *“Free yourself by means of investigation and analysis.”*
  - i) Investigate which mental affliction is strongest in your mind-stream, and forcefully counteract it with the appropriate remedies.
  - ii) Investigate the objects in dependence upon which that affliction arises, and with the remedies see if you can decrease that affliction or eliminate it altogether.
  - iii) Don the armor against that affliction with the resolve never to be overwhelmed by it again.
- p) *“Do not try to make an impression.”*
  - i) Not on the basis of your kindness to others, your practice, knowledge, discipline, or your great associates.
  - ii) Otherwise your practice will not counteract your afflictions.
  - iii) Aphorism of Domtönpa: “Do not place great hopes in people. Pray to the divine.” Let your primary prayer be for the sake of your spiritual practice and maturation.
- q) *“Do not be bound by distemper.”* When others physically harm you, abuse you, do not retaliate verbally and do not foster resentment, for that indicates that your practice has not been counteracting self-cherishing.
- r) *“Do not be temperamental.”* Flaring up at any little adversity is a source of irritation for your companions and damages your own health.
- s) *“Do not yearn for gratitude.”* Do not expect others to reward you by helping you, expressing their thanks to you, and so on.

### Summary

- This practice of the two Bodhicittas for a lifetime, during meditation sessions and following them, calms all beings, removes dissention, and brings happiness to

everyone. It is especially pertinent during this era of the five degenerations—adverse conditions, evil dispositions, short life, powerful afflictions, and false views—when there are so many obstacles to spiritual practice. Without a practice such as this, no other practice will lead to success.

- Practicing this during period, when the Dharma is endangered, brings greater merit than practicing in a *buddha*-field for an eon. So relate everything you do to this practice, integrating your mind with Dharma.
- Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche: “There exist many teachings, profound and vast, such as Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen. But our capacity is small, we are without perseverance and lack sufficient respect and devotion to be freed through teachings such as these. Nevertheless, if we practice this Mind Training, we will experience great benefits. It is an extraordinary instruction, the very essence of the bodhisattva teachings, and has been praised again and again. Therefore let us practice it without distraction.”