

# Commentary on the Seven Points of Mind Training

*by Gyalse Tokme Zangpo*

Homage to the great Compassionate One!

Pure in the three trainings and with mastery of twofold bodhicitta,  
You spread the Sugata's teachings throughout the ten directions,  
As the crowning ornament among all holders of the teachings—  
Incomparable guru, at your feet I prostrate myself in homage!

The single path traversed by the buddhas of the three times and their heirs,  
A precious treasury that is the source of all benefit and joy,  
I shall here set forth, in response to the repeated requests of fortunate disciples  
And in reliance upon the guru's speech.

Individuals who seek to attain unsurpassable, complete and perfect awakening must set their minds upon enlightenment and then exert themselves in the cultivation of both relative and ultimate bodhicitta. As Ārya Nāgārjuna said:

If we ourselves and all the world  
Wish for unsurpassed enlightenment,  
Its basis is bodhicitta,  
Stable as the king of mountains,  
Compassion reaching out in all directions,  
And wisdom that transcends duality.<sup>1</sup>

The great precious, single divine lord Atiśa received instructions on cultivating bodhicitta from three main teachers: the guru Dharmarakṣita, who cut and gave away his own flesh, and realized emptiness purely through cultivating love and compassion; the guru Maitrīyogi, who was able to take others' sufferings directly upon himself; and the guru of Suvarṇadvīpa. Here, what follows is the tradition of the Suvarṇadvīpa guru.

There are many different ways of presenting this instruction, but the tradition of Geshe Chekawa follows seven points: 1) the preliminary teachings of the supporting instructions; 2) the main practice of training in bodhicitta; 3) how to bring adversity onto the path to enlightenment; 4) how to apply the practice throughout one's whole life; 5) the measure of mind training; 6) the commitments of mind training; and 7) the precepts of mind training.

## 1. The Preliminaries

The root text says:

First, train in the preliminaries.

This consists of three contemplations: i) on the difficulty of finding the freedoms and advantages; ii) on death and impermanence; and iii) on the trials of saṃsāra.

### **i. The Freedoms and Advantages**

For the first, we contemplate the following: to obtain this support for practising the Dharma, a human body with its freedoms and advantages, we must have accumulated the cause, which is abundant virtue. Among sentient beings, very few practice pure virtuous action, and this means that the resultant freedoms and advantages are difficult to gain. If we consider other beings, such as animals, we can appreciate just how rare it is to find the freedoms and advantages. Therefore, now that we have found these freedoms and advantages, we must not allow them to go to waste, but use them to practise the one pure Dharma.

### **ii. Death and Impermanence**

Meditate on how life is uncertain and there are many circumstances which can lead to death, so that we cannot be certain we will even survive the day. We must therefore put all our energy into the sacred Dharma right away.

### **iii. The Trials of Saṃsāra**

Consider how it is taught that virtuous and unwholesome actions result in pleasure and pain, and how we must therefore avoid all unwholesome actions and practise virtue as much as possible.

## **2. The Main Practice**

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

### **i. Ultimate Bodhicitta**

This consists of three sets of practices: the preparation, the main part and the conclusion.

As the preparation, take refuge and generate bodhicitta, then pray to the deity and the guru and offer the seven branches. Sit up straight and breathe in and out twenty-one times, without any confusion, omission or addition. This will help to make you a suitable vessel for meditative concentration.

For the main part, the root text says:

Consider all dharmas as dreamlike.

As this indicates, the whole environment and the beings within it, which we perceive as objects, are dreamlike. That is to say, they appear as they do because our own minds are deluded and not as a result of even the slightest factor aside from mind. We must therefore put a stop to our projections.

We might then wonder whether the mind itself is real, so the root text says:

Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

Mind itself is empty of the three stages of arising, remaining and ceasing. It has no colour, no shape, and so on. It does not abide outside or within the body. It has no fixed character at all and cannot therefore be apprehended in any way. Rest in an experience beyond thought. As you do so, if any thought of an antidote—such as considering that body and mind are empty—should arise, then as the root text says:

Let even the antidote be freed in its own place.

This means that we look into the essence of the antidote itself, and when we realize that it has no true nature, we rest with that experience. As for how to rest, the root text says:

Rest in the *ālaya*, the essence of the path.

Avoiding all the projection and absorption associated with the other seven types of consciousness, we must settle with lucid clarity in an experience that is beyond thought. We must not mentally fixate in any way on what has no fixed character at all.

As regards the conclusion, the root text says:

Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.

In other words, we allow the experience of the meditation session to continue into the post-meditation. We carry out all ordinary daily activities in the knowledge that whatever appears—ourselves and others, the environment and beings—is just like an illusion and has no true reality.

## **ii. Relative Bodhicitta**

This has two parts: meditation and post-meditation. Regarding the meditation, the root text says:

Train in the two—giving and taking—alternately.

This is extremely important. As Ācārya Śāntideva said:

Whoever wishes to afford protection  
Quickly to both himself and others  
Should practise that most sacred mystery:  
The exchanging of oneself for others.<sup>2</sup>

And:

Unless I can give away my happiness  
In exchange for others' suffering,  
I shall not attain the awakening I seek,  
And even in saṃsāra I'll find no joy.<sup>3</sup>

And:

In order to allay harms done to me, therefore,  
And in order to pacify the sufferings of others,  
I shall give myself up to others  
And cherish them as I do myself.<sup>4</sup>

We begin by focusing clearly on our own mother from this life. From the time she carried us inside her womb, she cared for us unfailingly, so that we could encounter the Buddha's teachings and put them into practice. Her kindness is therefore exceedingly great. Not only in this life, but throughout beginningless time in saṃsāra, she has looked upon us with eyes of love, thought of us with affection, shielded us from harm, brought us benefit and ensured our well-being. Thus, her kindness is very great indeed. Considering that the one who did all this for us is now undergoing various miseries in saṃsāra, cultivate intense compassion. Think: "Now I shall benefit her in return! I shall eliminate all that harms her!"

What is it that harms her? It is suffering and its origin. Suffering harms her directly, while its origin harms her indirectly. So consider that you take both upon yourself. Take on all the suffering and its origin that exists in her being so that it arises in your own heart. Cultivate a strong wish for this to happen.

What is it that would benefit your mother? Happiness and virtue. So, without any selfish concerns, give away all your own happiness and virtue to your mother. Consider that as a result she immediately amasses all the favourable circumstances required for Dharma practice and is capable of attaining awakening. Generate an intense longing for this to occur.

Meditate in the same way while considering your father and others, before ultimately extending the practice to all sentient beings. After all, these sentient beings have been your mother and father throughout the course of beginningless time. They have benefitted you immeasurably and been incredibly kind. Yet all those who showed you such kindness are now being tormented by various sufferings in

saṃsāra. Meditate, therefore, on how wonderful it would be if they could be freed from their misery. Take on and absorb all their suffering and give them your own body, possessions and virtuous deeds of the past, present and future. Consider that, as a result, they are happy and their virtue increases. Generate intense longing that this may happen.

So that this mental exchange of self and other might arise more easily, the root text says:

These two are to be mounted on the breath.

As you breathe out, consider that all your own happiness and virtues goes to others. And as you breathe in, consider that all their non-virtue and suffering comes to you.

Second, concerning the post-meditation, the root text says:

Three objects, three poisons and three sources of virtue.

On the basis of the three types of object—pleasant, unpleasant and neutral—we experience the three emotions of attachment, aversion and dull indifference. There are many beings who experience these three poisons based on the three types of object, so here we consider that we take on all their three poisons. As a result, they gain the threefold virtue of being without attachment, aversion and dull indifference.

The root text advises how to inspire mindfulness:

In all activities, train by applying slogans.

This means that we should recite, "May all the negative actions and suffering of beings ripen on me! May all my happiness and virtue ripen on other beings!" And with this, we should feel intense resolve. So that we might be able to take others' sufferings upon ourselves, the root text says:

Begin the process of taking with yourself.

This means that by first taking on our own future suffering in the present, we will become capable of taking on even the misery of others.

### 3. Transforming Adversity into the Path of Enlightenment

The root text says:

When all the world is filled with evil,  
Transform adversity into the path of enlightenment.

As a result of unwholesome actions, the environment's resources become depleted, beings become unruly and so on. When many such forms of suffering arise, they can be transformed into the path of enlightenment through both intention and action.

### **i. Intention**

Intention itself has two aspects: transforming adversity into the path of enlightenment through relative bodhicitta and through ultimate bodhicitta.

#### **Transforming Adversity into the Path of Enlightenment through Relative Bodhicitta**

In the past when we experienced suffering we did not recognize self-grasping as the enemy, and, failing to recognize the great kindness of sentient beings, we blamed them. Now in order to highlight the fact that all suffering is the fault of self-grasping, the root text says:

Drive all blames into one.

Whatever suffering we experience is the fault of our own grasping at a self; others are not to blame:

If all the harm within the world  
And all the fears and sufferings  
Derive only from clinging to a self,  
What need have I for such a demon?<sup>5</sup>

Throughout beginningless time we have clung to a self where there is none. And, in order to care for this self, we have accumulated the karma of harming others and so on. This is how the sufferings of saṃsāra, such as those of the lower realms, arise. *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

O mind, you have spent countless ages  
Pursuing your own interests,  
And yet this great exertion  
Has brought you only suffering.<sup>6</sup>

Since it is self-grasping that brings about suffering, we must view this self-grasping as the enemy. The mind that clings to a self where there is none has engendered all the suffering that we have experienced in saṃsāra throughout beginningless time until now. It is this that causes all our attitudes of jealousy towards superiors, contempt towards inferiors and rivalry towards equals. It is this that prevents us from becoming liberated from saṃsāra and that brings about all the suffering of harm from human and non-human interaction. As *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

This is the one who, hundreds of times  
In cyclic existence, has done me harm.  
Now, remembering these grievances,  
I shall crush your selfish attitude.<sup>7</sup>

Whenever self-grasping occurs, examination will show that there is no self at all. By questioning why we cling to such a self, we can abandon self-grasping just as it arises. Strive then to prevent this grasping of self-cherishing from occurring again in future. As *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

The time when you could harm me  
Has passed and is here no more.  
I see you now! Where will you hide?  
I'll crush you in all your arrogance.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, since whatever harms we face are the fault of this demon of self-grasping, we must do whatever we can to tame it. As Shawopa said: "Today, in this short life, subjugate this demon, I beg you."

Someone whose intentions and actions are directed towards securing their own well-being warrants the name of 'layperson'; while someone whose intentions and actions are directed towards the benefit of others is worthy of the name of a Dharma practitioner. Let us therefore avoid and adopt according to Geshe Ben's tradition. For it was Geshe Ben who said, "Now I shall hold the spear of the antidote at the gateway of the mind. If it is vigilant, I shall be vigilant too. If it is relaxed, I shall relax as well."

Viewing self-grasping as the enemy and avoiding it is what Shawopa called "the Dharma of exorcising the demon."<sup>9</sup> So that we might regard self-grasping as the enemy and embrace the cherishing of others instead, the root text says:

Meditate on the great kindness of all.

Generally speaking, all beings have been our kind parents in the course of beginningless time. They were thus very kind to us in the past. In addition, the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment also depends on sentient beings. As *Introduction to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

Given that a buddha's qualities are gained  
In dependence on ordinary beings and buddhas alike,  
What sense is there in honouring only buddhas  
While not respecting these ordinary beings?<sup>10</sup>

For someone training to accomplish buddhahood, buddhas and sentient beings are equal in the extent of their kindness. We must therefore cultivate intense love and compassion for sentient beings; we must take on their negativity and suffering, and

give them our happiness and virtue. Should we encounter harmful people or non-human beings in particular, let us consider how these harmdoers have been our mother repeatedly throughout beginningless time. At those times, they did not shy away from unwholesome actions, suffering and gossip in order to secure our well-being. This brought them various forms of suffering in saṃsāra. Now, through the power of delusion, they do not recognize us, dear relatives from the past. Indeed, inspired by our own bad karma, they commit the negative act of harming us, which will only lead them to further suffering in the future. Consider, therefore, how they have long endured suffering for our sake and how they will continue to do so in the future, and cultivate intense compassion for them. Think: "In the past, I only did them harm. Now, I shall dispel all their hurt and bring about their benefit!" And meditate intensively on *tonglen*—giving and taking.

Do whatever you can to benefit visible beings, such as humans or dogs, directly. Even if you cannot do this, at least make the wish that they might be free from suffering, gain happiness and swiftly attain enlightenment. Make this heartfelt aspiration and even recite it aloud. Generate the intention that whatever virtuous acts you perform from now on will be for their sake.

If the harmdoer is a god or a spirit, think: Throughout beginningless time, I have consumed your flesh and blood, so now in return I offer you my own flesh, blood and so on. Mentally dissect your body in the presence of the harmdoer and surrender it by thinking and even saying aloud, "Eat my flesh and bones! Drink my blood!" Consider that the harmdoer's hunger and thirst are pacified through the consumption of your flesh. Unadulterated bliss fills their body and mind, and they master twofold bodhicitta. Imagine that you offer your body to all the gods and spirits that consume flesh and blood in just the same way and that they all become satisfied, happy and virtuous.

Thus, since all faults arise from self-cherishing, recognize it as the enemy. And since all benefit and happiness comes from sentient beings, view them as close allies and do whatever you can to help them. As Langri Thangpa said: "No matter which profound Dharma texts I consult, I find the message is the same: all faults are one's own and all qualities belong to brother and sister sentient beings. Given this crucial point, the only conclusion is that we must give all profit and victory to others and take all loss and defeat upon ourselves."

### **Transforming Adversity into the Path of Enlightenment through Ultimate Bodhicitta**

The root text says:

Meditating on delusory perceptions as the four kāyas  
Is the unsurpassable *śūnyatā* protection.

Whenever we experience mental afflictions or suffering caused by harm from the

outer environment or beings within it, these afflictions and sufferings are delusory perceptions of our own mind. They thus lack even the slightest true existence. Such relative appearances are comparable to a dream in which we are burnt by fire or drowned in water. It would be an error to mistake what is unreal for reality. All phenomena ultimately lack true reality, so look into the essence of any mental affliction or experience of suffering. Since it does not arise from anywhere in the beginning, it is the unborn dharmakāya. What is unarisen does not cease, so it is the unceasing sambhogakāya. Since what neither arises nor ceases does not remain in the interim, it is the non-abiding nirmāṇakāya. And since these are indivisible in essence, it is the svabhāvikakāya. Viewing delusory perceptions as the four buddha-bodies in this way is known as the instruction on recognizing the four kāyas.

Whatever harms us also proves to be very kind, since it inspires our training in the two types of bodhicitta. The harmdoer highlights how we are without an antidote and how we fail to notice the onset of the mental afflictions, so they are like an emanation of the teacher or buddha. Should you undergo intense suffering as a result of a serious illness like leprosy, think: "Were it not for this suffering I would be caught up in preparations for this life. But this has caused me to remember the Dharma when I had failed to do so. It must therefore be the activity of the guru and the Three Jewels."

In short, we must arrive at the heartfelt conviction that just as bodhicitta arises in dependence on the guru, twofold bodhicitta can also develop based on harmdoers and suffering, and these are therefore equivalent.

## ii. Action

The root text then refers to the special practice of accumulation and purification that transforms adversity into the path:

The fourfold practice is the best of methods.

### 1. The Practice of Accumulating Merit

When suffering befalls you and you think how joyful you would be were the suffering to disappear, contemplate the following: "Not wanting to suffer but wishing to be happy is a sign that one must accumulate the causes of happiness." So we must make offerings to the guru and Three Jewels, venerate the saṅgha and offer tormas to the elemental spirits. In short, we must put our energy into gathering the accumulations physically, verbally and mentally. We should take refuge, generate bodhicitta, make a maṇḍala offering to the guru and Three Jewels and pray to them fervently, without any hope or fear, saying: "If it is better for me to be sick, bless me with sickness. If it is better for me to be healed, bless me with recovery. If it is better for me to die, bless me with death."

## 2. The Practice of Purifying Negative Actions

If we do not wish to suffer, this is a sign that we must abandon the cause of suffering, which is negative actions. To feel regret for the harmful actions we have committed in the past is the power of *repentance*; to vow never to repeat them even at the cost of one's life is the power of *restraint*; to take refuge and generate bodhicitta is the power of *support*; to meditate on emptiness, recite special *dhāraṇīs* and mantras and so on is the power of *antidotal action*. Thus we should confess our misdeeds properly by means of these four powers.

## 3. The Practice of Offering to Harmful Influences

Offer tormas and make heartfelt prayers, saying, "Since you support my training in bodhicitta, you are very kind. Please continue: cause all the suffering of sentient beings to ripen on me!" If you are not able to do this, offer tormas, cultivate loving kindness and compassion, and command them by saying, "Through whatever I do to assist you now and in the longer term, do not obstruct my Dharma practice!"

## 4. The Practice of Offering to the Dharma Protectors

Offer tormas to the Dharma protectors and request them to pacify any circumstances that might hinder Dharma practice and to create favourable circumstances instead.

In order to integrate one's immediate circumstances onto the path, one should do as the root text says:

Whatever you encounter, apply the practice.

Should you experience intense suffering as a result of sudden illness, harmful influences, encountering an enemy, or the like, consider how there are innumerable cases of such suffering in the world and feel compassion for all those affected. Draw all this suffering into your own or consider how this harm assists your training in bodhicitta. Reflect on how it is comparable to the guru's kindness. Should you see someone in distress, immediately take their suffering upon yourself. And whenever you or another experience a strong mental affliction cultivate the heartfelt wish to take on the mental afflictions of others.

All these methods for bringing adversity onto the path put a stop to both hope and fear. Yet even if we ultimately arrive at a path that is without hope and fear, to train with a view of friends and enemies right now is like straightening a crooked tree, as Langri Thangpa would say.

## 4. Applying the Practice throughout the Whole of Life

The root text says:

The essence of the instruction, briefly stated,  
is to apply yourself to the five strengths.

### Five Strengths

The five strengths are as follows:

1. The strength of *impetus* is to create a powerful impetus in the mind, by thinking again and again, "From now on, for this month, this year, throughout my life, and until I attain enlightenment, I shall never part from the two kinds of bodhicitta!"
2. The strength of *familiarization* is to train repeatedly in the two types of bodhicitta.
3. The strength of *wholesome seeds* is to accumulate merit as much as possible so that bodhicitta may arise and increase.
4. The strength of *revulsion* is to reflect, whenever thoughts of self-cherishing occur, on how this has been the cause of various sufferings throughout beginningless time and how even in this life it is responsible for suffering, negative actions and Dharma's failure to develop as one would wish. And with this, to cast away thoughts of self-cherishing.
5. The strength of *aspiration* is to make an aspiration after every virtuous deed, such as, "From now until I attain enlightenment, may I never part from the training in twofold bodhicitta! May I transform any adversity that arises and make it a support for this practice!" Make offerings to the guru and Three Jewels and to the Dharma protectors. Offer tormas and pray that this may come to pass.

These five strengths are said to constitute a practice that brings everything together into a single *hūṃ*.

### For the Moment of Death

One might wonder about the instructions for the moment of death according to this tradition, so the root text says:

The mahāyāna advice for transference  
Involves the same five strengths. Conduct is important.

When someone who practises this teaching contracts an illness that is certain to

prove fatal, the practice of *wholesome seeds* is to offer all one's possessions to the greatest possible source of merit, such as the teacher or the Three Jewels. This should be done without any clinging or attachment.

Then the strength of *aspiration* is to offer the seven branches to the guru and Three Jewels and to make fervent prayers of aspiration such as, "Grant your blessings so that during the *bardo* and in all my future lives, I may continue to train in twofold bodhicitta! Grant your blessings so that I may encounter a guru who teaches this instruction!"

The strength of *revulsion* is to think: "Thoughts of self-cherishing have forced me to suffer in the past, and unless I can be free of them in the future they will continue to prevent my happiness. Even though I have cherished this body of mine, still it suffers. If I examine, there is nothing in either body or mind that is graspable as self." With this understanding, one abandons self-grasping.

The strength of *impetus* is to cultivate the strong intention again and again that one will train in twofold bodhicitta during the *bardo*.

Then the strength of *familiarization* is to recollect the ways one has trained in twofold bodhicitta in the past.

The particular conduct is to lie on one's right side, with the right hand supporting the right cheek. With the little finger of that hand, close the right nostril and breathe through the left. Then, with love and compassion as a preliminary, train in giving and taking as you breathe in and out. After this, consider that everything within saṃsāra and nirvāṇa including birth and death is only a mental projection while mind itself is not truly existent in any way. Then rest in this state of understanding, without clinging to anything at all. Thus, one passes away while combining and meditating upon the two types of bodhicitta. It is said that although there are a great many instructions for the moment of death, none is more wonderful than this.

## 5. The Measure of Mind Training

The root text says:

All teachings share a single purpose.

The purpose of all the teachings of the greater and lesser vehicles is to tame self-grasping. This means that Dharma practice is meaningless—no matter how much one does—unless it functions as an antidote to self-grasping. If the Dharma does function as an antidote to self-grasping that is a sign that mind training has developed in one's being. This is the real indication of progress in the Dharma, so it is likened to the bar on the balancing scales that weigh practitioners. The root text says:

Of the two witnesses, rely upon the principal one.

Others might say, "This brother is an example of the saying that one in whom the Dharma has arisen is a fine practitioner." Not meeting others' disapproval is indeed a form of testimony, but do not take it to be the most important. Ordinary people in this world cannot read minds, so they might be satisfied with glimpsing a fraction of outer conduct. The principal witness, therefore, is an unembarrassed look at one's own mind. To examine oneself thoroughly with an honest mind and have no cause to feel ashamed is a sign of having trained the mind. So generate the antidotes and make an effort not to discredit yourself.

The root text says:

Always maintain only a joyful attitude.

Through the force of training the mind well, we can be confident that we will be able to integrate any adversity we might face into the path of mind training. This is a measure of having trained the mind. So whatever negative circumstances arise, cultivate joy. And train yourself so that you have no hesitation in taking on the adversity of others as well.

The root text says:

If this can be done even when distracted, you are proficient.

A skilled rider will not fall from a horse even when distracted. Similarly, whenever adversity arises, such as sudden harm from people, if we do not feel anger but transform the adversity into a support for mind training, this is a measure of having trained the mind. Make an effort, therefore, and train to reach this level.

These various measures of mastery are all signs of having trained the mind, but this does not imply that there is no need for further training. Continue to make an effort and train the mind even after these signs arise.

## 6. The Commitments of Mind Training

The root text says:

Train constantly in three basic principles.

The three basic principles are 1) not to transgress the mind training commitments, 2) not to be reckless, and 3) not to fall into partiality.

1. Avoid telling yourself that you are a practitioner of mind training who can ignore lesser precepts. Instead, with the intention of training the mind, guard all the precepts you have taken, from the vows of individual

liberation through to the commitments of the Vajrayāna, and do not allow them to decline.

2. Avoid all forms of reckless behaviour intended to demonstrate to others that you have no self-cherishing, such as chopping down powerful trees or befriending lepers. Take care not to conflict with the example of the masters of the Kadam tradition founded upon the teachings of Geshe Dromtönpa at Radreng Monastery.
3. Avoid all forms of partiality, such as tolerating abuse from human beings but not from non-human beings, respecting the powerful while disrespecting the weak, and loving one's friends but hating enemies. Instead apply the training universally.

The root text says:

Change your attitude, but remain natural.

Transform your attitude from one of self-cherishing to one of cherishing others, while ensuring that your actions of body and speech are in harmony with those of our Dharma companions. It is said that all mind training practices should involve "making great progress but with few outward indications." Mature your mind, therefore, in a way that is imperceptible to others.

Don't speak of injured limbs.

Do not say unpleasant things about others, whether this is pointing out disabilities such as blindness or spiritual flaws such as compromised ethical discipline.

Don't ponder others' flaws.

Whenever you see faults in sentient beings in general or especially in those who have entered the door of the Dharma, attribute this to your own impure perception. Think that there is no certainty<sup>11</sup> that the person has such a flaw and put an end to your critical patterns of thought.

Train first with the strongest destructive emotions.

Check to see which is the strongest destructive emotion in your mind and, combining all practices into an antidote to that emotion, address it first.

Abandon any expectations of results.

Let go of all selfish concerns, such as seeking to gain wealth and respect in this life, happiness in future lives as a god or human being, or gaining nirvāṇa for oneself, as a result of practising mind training.

Give up poisonous food.

Abandon all virtuous activity that is contaminated by clinging to things as real or thoughts of self-cherishing, just as you would avoid food that is laced with poison.

Don't be so loyal to the cause.

Avoid holding grudges based on the harm others do to you and refusing to let go of resentment.

Don't lash out in retaliation.

When others speak ill of you, do not respond with harsh words intended to hurt. And do not label misfortune as a just reward.

Don't lie in ambush.

Do not dwell on the harm others do to you while waiting for an opportunity to retaliate.

Don't strike a vulnerable point.

Do not act in a way that causes pain to the minds of others, such as by exposing people's hidden faults or reciting the "life-force mantras" of non-human beings.

Don't transfer the ox's burden to the cow.

Avoid the negative behaviour of deviously transferring to others any responsibility or blame that is rightly yours.

Don't be competitive.

Avoid any thoughts and actions focused on acquiring through various means possessions that are held in common.

Don't misperform the rites.

To take on others' defeat out of a wish for one's own ultimate happiness or to train the mind in order to pacify demons, harmful influences and sickness is just like practising a mundane rite in order to avert misfortune. We must avoid such selfish concerns. Mind training that involves a partial attitude and which is understood as a beneficial method for dealing with demons and harmful influences is no different from shamanic ritual. To qualify as Dharma it must function as an antidote to mental afflictions and ordinary thoughts.

Don't reduce gods to demons.

Worldly people, when their own gods are displeased and cause them harm, say that the god has been reduced to a demon. Like that, if the practice of mind training leads

to an increase in pride and arrogance, the Dharma has become non-Dharma. Mind training must discipline one's character. If one's character only becomes puffed up with pride, the Dharma has failed to hit home. This is like performing a ransom ritual at the western door when a demon is causing trouble at the eastern door. The medicine needs to be applied directly to the site of the illness. Let us abandon self-cherishing and act as the most humble servant to all.

Don't seek others' misery as crutches of your own happiness.

Avoid wishing that others suffer as a means to your own happiness. Do not think, for example, "If my close relative or friend were to die, I would get their food, wealth, books and so on," "If my patron were to fall sick and die, I would have the chance to accumulate merit," "If my meditator colleague were to die, I would have the chance to accumulate merit by myself," and "If my enemy were to die, I would no longer be harmed and would have the chance to thrive."

## 7. The Precepts of Mind Training

We must train in methods that ensure mind training does not diminish but strengthens and improves. The root text says:

Do everything with a single intention.

Carry out all activities, such as the yogas of eating and dressing, purely with the intention of benefitting others.

Counter all adversity with a single remedy.

If through practising mind training we experience illness, fall prey to demons and harmful influences, become subject to slander or find that our mental afflictions increase, so that we no longer wish to train the mind we can consider how many people in the world experience similar difficulties. As we feel compassion for them, we can aspire to take all their problems on ourselves and meditate on giving and taking (*tonglen*).

Two tasks: one at the beginning and one at the end.

In the morning create the right impetus by thinking, "Today I shall not part from twofold bodhicitta!" Then maintain mindfulness and awareness accordingly during the day. In the evening when preparing to sleep review the day's activities. If you acted in a way that is contrary to bodhicitta, spell out your faults, confess, and resolve not to repeat the faults in future. If your actions were in accord with bodhicitta, rejoice and aspire to continue in a similar vein.

Whichever of the two occurs, be patient.

Should you accumulate followers and a wealth of possessions, do not let them become a cause of arrogance. Instead recognize their illusoriness, and aspire that they become a means of benefitting others. Should you become so destitute that you are (as the saying goes) lower than everything but water, recognize that this too is illusory. Take all the hardships of others upon yourself and do not be discouraged.

Keep the two, even at your life's expense.

Unless you keep the commitments of the Dharma in general and mind training in particular you will not experience happiness in this or future lives. So guard them more dearly than your own life.

Train in the three difficulties.

When mental afflictions arise, it is difficult to notice them in the beginning, difficult to avert them in the middle and difficult to interrupt their continuity in the end. Recognize them, therefore, when they first arise; strengthen the antidote so as to abandon them in the middle; and make every effort to ensure that they do not arise again at the end.

Acquire the three main provisions.

The most important provisions for Dharma practice are meeting a good teacher, practising authentically with a workable mind, and gathering the conditions conducive to Dharma practice. When these three are complete, rejoice and make the aspiration that others may similarly gain all three. Should the three be incomplete, consider that many others in the world also lack these prerequisites and are unable to practise Dharma authentically as a result. Feel compassion for them. Cultivate the heartfelt aspiration that their lack of these provisions may ripen on you and that they may come to possess them all.

Cultivate the three that must not decline.

Since all the qualities of the great vehicle depend on devotion to the guru, this devotion must not decline. Mind training is the quintessence of Mahāyāna Dharma, so enthusiasm for its practice must not decline. And maintenance of the precepts of the greater and lesser vehicles, from the minor ones onward, must not decline.

Keep the three inseparable.

Ensure that your body, speech and mind never deviate from virtue.

Apply the training impartially to all.  
It is vital that it be deep and all-pervasive.

Mind training must be applied to all sentient beings and insentient objects equally and without partiality. You must apply the techniques to everything that arises in the mind. This should not be mere lip service but deep competence.

Meditate constantly on those who've been set apart.

There are some for whom we find it difficult to feel love and compassion, and they should be the special focus of meditation: rivals, regular companions, those who harm us without provocation, and those who dislike us for karmic reasons.

Don't be dependent on external conditions.

Do not rely on gathering all the right conditions, such as food and clothing, protection against human and non-human forces, good health and so on. If you cannot gather these conditions integrate that very situation onto the path by means of the two types of bodhicitta.

This time, practise what's most important.

All the physical forms we have adopted throughout beginningless time have been to no avail. Now, in this lifetime we must accomplish what is most important. More important than the affairs of this life is the Dharma. More important than Dharma study and teaching is practice. More important than other forms of practice is training in bodhicitta. More important than training through scripture and reasoning is assiduous practice based on the guru's instructions. More important than other forms of conduct is remaining on one's seat and practising. More important than avoiding objects is to apply the antidote. These are the most important things to put into practice.

Don't misunderstand.

There are six forms of misunderstanding to be avoided:

1. Misplaced *patience* is to bear any difficulties related to outdoing one's enemies and protecting one's friends but not the sufferings related to Dharma practice.
2. Misplaced *intention* is to feel no interest in pure Dharma practice but to take an interest in the glories and riches of this life.
3. Misplaced *relish* is to fail to savour the taste of the Dharma through study, reflection and meditation but to savour the taste of worldly pleasures.
4. Misplaced *compassion* is to fail to cultivate compassion for wrongdoers but to cultivate it for those who endure hardship for the sake of the Dharma.
5. Misplaced *pursuit* is to fail to encourage one's dependents to pursue the Dharma but to encourage them to pursue the means of increasing the glories and riches of this life.

6. *Misplaced joy* is to fail to cultivate joy for the happiness and virtues of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa but to rejoice when rivals suffer.

Avoid these six mistaken forms of practice and take to heart the six unmistaken forms.

Don't be inconsistent.

Avoid the kind of sporadic practice that can occur when one does not yet have confidence in the Dharma. Train your mind single-pointedly and without interruption.

Train wholeheartedly.

Devote yourself entirely to the mind training and practise emphatically.

Gain freedom through discernment and analysis.

Determine which of your mental afflictions is the strongest and make that the focus of intensive effort. Investigate whether or not that affliction arises whenever you come into contact with a potentially provocative object. If it does arise, apply an antidote to overcome it, and make every effort until it no longer arises.

Don't be boastful.

Do not boast about how kind you are to others, how long you have strenuously practised the Dharma, or how learned and disciplined you are. There can be no boasting when you meditate on cherishing others more than yourself. As Radrengpa put it, "Don't have high hopes for human beings; supplicate the deities instead."

Don't be irritable.

Do not retaliate even if others humiliate you in front of many people and do not be annoyed. If we practitioners do not make the Dharma an antidote to self-grasping our patience can become more fragile than a baby's skin and we can feel even more irritable than the demon Tsang Tsen. This does not qualify as Dharma, so ensure that Dharma functions properly as an antidote to self-grasping.

Don't be temperamental.

Do not change your expression from cheery to depressed at the slightest provocation, because this will only upset your companions.

Don't seek acknowledgement.

Do not expect words of thanks or fame and renown for benefitting others or practising the Dharma.

Train well like this throughout your entire life, cultivating twofold bodhicitta in meditation sessions and the periods in between. Then you will gain the confidence of mastery.

## Conclusion

The essence of the nectar-like instructions  
for transforming into the path of awakening  
the five prevalent signs of degeneration  
was passed down from the one from Golden Isle.

At this time when the five signs of degeneration—in time, beings, lifespan, mental afflictions, and view—are widespread, there are few circumstances conducive to happiness and many that provoke suffering, including harm from humans and non-humans. Being entangled in negative circumstances such as these can become a support for mind training. Then, no matter how many negative circumstances one might face, the practice of mind training will ensure that virtue only increases.

This pithy advice from the teacher of Suvarṇadvīpa is like a nectar that turns poison into medicine. It is superior to any other instruction. With knowledge of how to train the mind in this way, the body of the mind training practitioner becomes 'the city that is the source of happiness', because it brings about all one's own and others' joys in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. By applying this to all undertakings and training the mind well, your mind will merge with the Dharma, and it will not be long before you attain the perfect goal for both yourself and others.

The root text says:

When karmic seeds left over from former trainings were aroused in me,  
I felt great interest, and so, without regard for suffering or disparagement,  
I sought instructions on subduing ego-clinging.  
Now, even in death, I shall have no regrets.

Chekawa, the lord of yogis, says that he trained his mind thoroughly and, in his wisdom, came to cherish others more than himself. He freed himself entirely from the thicket of selfish concern and thereby gained this level of confidence.

Through the kindness of the Dharma Lord by the name of Drakpa,  
I well received the precious treasury of this oral transmission,  
Through the power of this revelation requested by faithful disciples,  
May all beings come to master the two types of bodhicitta!

*This succinct commentary based on the words of the aural lineage of Seven Points of Mind Training was composed in response to repeated requests from Drakpa Gyaltsen, a yogi of the supreme vehicle, by the monk Tokme in his retreat place, the dharma fortress of Ngulchu.*

| Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2018.

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  4. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 136
  5. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 134
  6. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 155
  7. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 154

8. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VIII, 169
9. 'gong po 'gong rdzong gi chos.
10. *Bodhicaryāvatāra* VI, 113
11. *nyen med*. The translation here is tentative.



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