

THE COMMENTARY ON  
*EIGHT VERSES FOR  
TRAINING THE MIND*

BY KHENPO SODARGYE



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## The Background of the Text

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This short text was paid high attention by many great masters throughout the history. H.H. Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche regarded this text as the principal instruction among all the Dharma teachings he imparted. In his life, he had taught this text dozens of times. Once His Holiness told his students, “To be a genuine Dharma practitioner, one must grasp the meaning of three commentaries, which are *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva* by Thogme Zangpo, the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* by Lama Tsongkhapa and the *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* by Geshe Langri Thangpa.” He required the sangha at Larung Gar to recite these three commentaries.

Patrul Rinpoche had a story about this text in his famous book *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*:

Once, Geshe Chekawa, who knew many teachings of both the New and the Old Traditions and who knew many texts by heart, went to see Geshe Chakshingwa. On his pillow he saw a small text, and when he opened it he came across this sentence:

*I will take defeat upon myself,  
And give the victory to others.*

“What a wonderful teaching!” Chekawa thought, and he asked Chakshingwa what the teaching was called.

“It’s *The Eight Verses of Langri Thangpa*.” said Chakshingwa.

“Who holds these instructions?”

“Geshe Langri Thangpa himself.”

Chekawa was determined to receive these teachings. First he went to Lhasa and spent some days circumambulating the sacred places. One evening, a leper from Langthang told him that Langri Thangpa had passed away. Chekawa asked who was the successor of the lineage and was told that there were two potential successors, Shangshungpa and Dodepa, but they could not agree on the succession matter.

However, they were not arguing out of competitiveness. Shangshungpa would tell Dodepa, “You are the older, you take the succession. I will serve you as though you were Langri Thangpa himself.” But Dodepa would answer, “You are the more learned. You shall be the successor!”

Although their disagreement about the succession was out of their pure perception of each other, Chekawa interpreted it as a shortcoming and considered neither of them to be the holder of Langri Thangpa’s teaching. He tried to find out who was its best holder, and everybody told him that it was Sharawa.

Sharawa was giving a teaching of many volumes to thousands of the Sangha members. Chekawa had listened to him for a few days, but did not hear him say a word about the teaching he sought.

“He seems not to have it either,” he thought, “but I’ll ask him. If he has this teaching, I’ll

stay. Otherwise I'd better move on." So Chekawa went to see Sharawa, who was circumambulating a stupa. He spread out a cloth on the ground and invited Sharawa to sit down for a moment saying, "I have something to ask you."

"Venerable Monk," said Sharawa, "what is your problem? Personally, I've always found all my answers on my meditation cushion."

"I read these words in a text: 'I will take defeat upon myself, and give the victory to others.' I liked them very much. Is this a profound teaching or not?"

"Venerable monk," Sharawa replied, "whether or not you like this teaching, it is the one you can only dispense with if you don't want to attain Buddhahood."

"Do you hold this teaching?"

"Yes. It's my main practice." Sharawa replied.

"Then I beg you, teach it to me." said Chekawa.

"Can you stay with me for a long time?" Sharawa asked. "If you can, I will teach it to you."

From him, Chekawa received guidance according to his experience in a continuous course of mind training that lasted six years. Through practicing it he was able to rid himself completely of every trace of selfishness.

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### **Some Words from Khenpo Sodargye**

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The *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* can bring tremendous benefits to the practice of both Sutrayana teachings and Tantrayana teachings. I give the teaching on this text on the request of a few disciples, and I am very grateful to them.

The words of this text are simple, but their meaning is profound. I have added some scriptural evidences and stories, so that you may get a better understanding. I wish I could talk more, but I regret to tell you that I, myself, have not practiced it so well and have had only a little understanding and relevant experience. Perhaps, relying on that small amount of experience, I can share a bit more of this topic with you. I believe that this text will be of great help to the majority of dharma practitioners, both in their practices and as a way to help them to behave properly.

Actually, only Bodhisattvas abiding on the first level or above, can fully perfect the practice of *Eight Verses for Training the Mind*. Nevertheless, we can do similar practices. With these pith instructions, and with the blessing of the guru, work with it in our mind continuum as much as we can, and gradually, we will veer to such a status in our spiritual practice.

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### **The Author of the Text**

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Kadampa Geshe Langri Tangpa was one of the two main disciples of Geshe Potowa, who was among the six senior disciples of Lord Atisha. Langri Tangpa once made an aspiration: May I benefit sentient beings in the appearance of a Bhikshu in all my lifetimes. Then Palden Lhamo (Glorious Goddess), a Dharma protector, also made an aspiration: As Langri Tangpa made such a wish, I also promise to protect and support him to accomplish all his activities. Because of this, the lineage disciples of Langri Tangpa all have Palden Lhamo as their Dharmapala.

Geshe Langri Tangpa upheld the pure precepts during his whole life. After practicing in a secluded place for a long time, he began to accept disciples and imparted Dharma teachings to them. It is said that he had over 2000 disciples as his retinue. He built the Langtang Monastery at the place called Langtang, so people named him “Langri Tangpa”. He never smiled in his life except on one occasion when a mouse tried to move a piece of turquoise on his mandala plate. The mouse was trying desperately to push the turquoise but could not manage, so he called over another mouse to come and help him and together they tried to move it. That made Langri Tangpa smile, which was the only time that he smiled.

He had a permanently gloomy expression, so people used to call him “Langthangpa Gloomy Face”. One of his disciples asked him not to be so gloomy, and he replied, “When I think about all the endless suffering in the samsara, and there is no happiness in the three realms, how could I ever possibly smile?”

Patrul Rinpoche once said, “When you meditate on the suffering of samsara, you should meditate it at all times, like Langri Tangpa, and thus arouse a genuine renunciation of samsara from the bottom of your heart.”

The detailed biography of Geshe Langri Tangpa can be found in the *Blue Annals*.

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### **The Title of the Text**

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The *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* is not a complete commentary. According to the defined structure of Buddhist scriptures originated in India, a special feature of a text is to have a homage verse at the beginning, and a dedication verse in the end. This feature is used to differentiate the Buddhist scriptures from non-Buddhist ones. The homage verse can tell if the text belongs to the sutra pitaka, vinaya pitaka or abhidharma pitaka, and what is the tradition and deity of the author, etc. But this text has no homage verse nor dedication verse, actually it is a lojong (mind training) among Langri Tangpa’s pith instructions on Dharma practice.

Lojong means observing and training one’s own mind, and is the most important practice in Buddhism. This text was composed on the basis of the bodhichitta pith instructions of Lord Atisha and Geshe Potowa. The eight verses in this text are eight key instructions of Mahayana practice. They look independent but are in a logic sequence, and form a complete lojong system.

For some beginners or those who don’t really want to put them into practice, the eight verses might seem simple. For the genuine Dharma practitioners, however, the practice of even

one of these verses is of great benefit. One can even attain enlightenment by just practicing one or half of the verse in his or her life.

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### **Verse 1: Always Hold Others as Dear and Precious**

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*By thinking of all sentient beings  
As more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel  
For accomplishing the highest aim,  
I will always hold them dear.*

Every genuine dharma practitioner should hold fully to an aspiration like this: “I will think of all sentient beings who inhabit the three realms and are wandering in samsara, they are more precious than the wish-fulfilling gem; for this reason, I am determined to work for the ultimate benefits and well-being of all sentient beings, who I will always hold as dear and precious. This I will do gladly.”

a. Why sentient beings are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel?

The wish-fulfilling gem can only grant us temporary benefits, such as the treasures of property and money. It does not have the power to grant us the greatest benefit, which is ultimate nirvana. For this, we can look to the countless sentient beings who, in themselves, comprise a sublime field of merit. If we plant the seed of Bodhi in this fertile field, it will bring to us a harvest of both temporary worldly happiness, in the near term, as well as the eventual, transcendent, ultimate happiness.

For instance, with respect to the paramita of generosity, which is one of the six paramitas: if there were no sentient beings, there would be no focus for the practice of giving, which would mean that there would be no way for us to carry out an act of generosity. As for the paramita of discipline, since disturbing emotions arise due to sentient beings, there would be no way for vowed discipline to be conducted to counteract disturbing emotions if there were no human beings involved.

Furthermore, in the case of the paramita of patience, as Shantideva has said: “Transcendent patience does not come to be, when harm is absent.” If there were no sentient beings feeling resentment, there would be no patience that could be practiced, nor would there be the merit of patience. The list goes on; the paramitas of diligence, concentration, and wisdom, can only be completed by relying on sentient beings. If there were no sentient beings, there would be no perfecting of the six paramitas and the ten thousand performances of a Bodhisattva, and so the attaining of unsurpassed Buddhahood would merely be a dream too far away to be reached.

We should, therefore, work to fulfill both the temporary aspirations and ultimate aspirations of sentient beings through our spiritual practices, which include, holding a caring and cherishing mind towards sentient beings in every minute, in every second, of everyday life. Practitioners with such qualities can be considered to have a true mind of loving kindness and great compassion; such a mind is the true manifestation of the spirit of Mahayana, known as

Bodhicitta.

b. The usual pitfall of ordinary dharma practitioners

The great Kadampa masters of the past, like Geshe Langri Tangpa, all had a noble morality and a virtuous personality. These are things that the Mahayana practitioners of today should endeavor to learn. Otherwise, the aspiration to become a Bodhisattva, or a Buddha, will only remain as empty words. It is a great pity that in today's society, most people, regardless of whether they are Buddhists or not, lack a noble personality, not to mention to have a Mahayana Bodhicitta mind!

Even among dedicated Buddhist practitioners, there are those who have shown extremely incorrect attitudes towards sentient beings. While, on the one hand, they may often treat sentient beings with anger and aversion, or may even act as if sentient beings were their enemies; at the same time, on the other hand, they may harbor in their mind, reverence and respect for the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Shantideva, in his *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, questioned this behavior by asking, "What kind of practice is it, then, that honors only Buddhas, but not sentient beings?" Instructions like– "You should only respect Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, but not sentient beings"– can never be found in any of the Buddhist teachings. Shantideva criticized this incorrect behavior by asking this question.

If one is unable to manage such a great deed as fulfilling the aspirations of sentient beings, and always holding them to be dear and precious, even though he may seek the Dharma everywhere, his practice will definitely not be rewarded with success. There is a story that illustrates this in the sutra:

Once upon a time, there were a father and a son who were in possession of a wish-fulfilling gem. One day, while they were on a journey, the father became tired and wanted to take a short nap. Before laying down, he said to his son: "Take good care of the wish-granting gem, and during my nap, be sure not to give it to anyone." Soon after, the father closed his eyes and fell asleep. A short while later, a band of thieves came walking up the road. Seeing the child sitting there holding the wish-fulfilling gem, they demanded that he give it to them. The child replied: "I cannot give it to you because just before my father fell asleep, he told me not to give the wish-fulfilling gem to anyone." One of the thieves reached into his pocket and pulled out a bag of candy and held one of the sweet morsels out to the boy. "The shiny stone that you are holding is useless to you, but these candies are sweet and you can eat as many as you like right now. Come on, let's make a trade." The child looked longingly at the bag of candy in the thieves' hand and after only a moment of hesitation, handed over the wish-fulfilling gem in exchange for the bag of candy. When the father woke up, and heard that the son had traded the wish-fulfilling gem of all the magical properties for a simple bag of candy, he was very upset and disappointed.

Dharma practice is the same: once you have abandoned its essential principal, even if you receive some minor sense of happiness, you will never realize its greatest benefits. For example, if you judge one sentient being as inferior and another as unattractive, if you feel anger or resentment towards them, then you have abandoned the Bodhicitta mind and your so-called spiritual practice will bring very little, if any, true merit.

When we read the biographies of great spiritual masters in India, the Tibetan region, or the Han region, either in the past or in the present, we find that their minds and behavior, without exception, explicitly display the kind of great compassion that cherishes all sentient beings and seeks to fulfill all of their aspirations. So here we can see that what this verse talks about is the ultimate, and the most sublime, pith instruction in Mahayana practice, that of benefiting sentient beings.

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## Verse 2: Consider Myself as the Lowest Among All

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*Whenever I'm in the company of others,  
I will regard myself as the lowest among all,  
And from the depths of my heart  
Cherish others as supreme.*

Wherever I am and whomever I interact with, I will view myself as the lowest of all and humble myself before them. From the depths of my heart, I will think constantly of benefiting others. By constantly holding others as superior to me, and treating them with reverence and respect, I will tame my pride and arrogance, and hold others above me.

a. The perfect examples of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

In Lama Tsongkhapa's *A Commentary on the Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*, there is such a line in the homage verse that says, "Constantly residing above all, but also as a servant to sentient beings." This is meant as a praise for Manjushri: although he is the teacher of all Buddhas, and is supreme among all sentient beings, Manjushri still attends to all sentient beings like a servant. And this is also the conduct of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and great spiritual masters, who, although filled with transmudane merits and virtues, still serve the world as servants. Just as Venerable Longchenpa said in his *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind on the Great Perfection*, "The guru's enlightenment is far beyond that of secular beings. In spite of this, he still attends to the world and carries out compassionate activities for the benefit of sentient beings. As Dharma practitioners, we need to follow this marvelous example."

b. Observe our mind and tame arrogance

This verse mainly teaches us that we need to observe our mind, and to make sure that it will not give in to feelings of arrogance or pride towards any other sentient being. There is a Tibetan adage that goes like this: "The peak of arrogance cannot hold the spring water of merits." Therefore, all people, even those who are already full of sublime merits, must be free of arrogance or pride, and constantly hold, in their mind, the aspiration to respect and benefit others. Only when we think of benefiting others single-mindedly, are we able to regard sentient beings as wish-fulfilling gems and revere them as supremely precious, in the way that we do towards Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and our supremely kind gurus.

For instance, Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's great vow is: "If hells are not completely emptied of suffering beings, I vow never to attain Buddhahood; and furthermore, only when every last

sentient being has been converted and saved, shall I achieve Bodhi.” If Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha had not seen sentient beings as superior and nobler than himself, he would never have made such a great vow. If he had set himself high above the others and acted like an emperor, how could he realize the perfect accomplishment of such a deep aspiration? In our everyday conduct and in our interactions with others, we need to, on the one hand, generate great Bodhicitta towards sentient beings, and on the other hand, to see ourselves as the lowest among all, and to truly think of benefiting others from the depths of our heart.

Lord Atisha, throughout his life, gave three great pith instructions for training the mind. First, examine the mind constantly; second, tame the mind with mindfulness and alertness; third, by constantly doing so, generate Bodhicitta in the mind stream. It is also recounted in Thogme Zangpo’s *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, that:

*In short, wherever I am, whatever I do,  
To be continually mindful and alert,  
Asking, “What is the state of my mind?”  
And accomplishing the good of others is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

From this we can see, the intention of Lord Atisha and Thogme Zangpo is exactly the same.

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### **Verse 3: Avert Afflictions as soon as They Arise**

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*In my every action, I will watch my mind,  
And the moment destructive emotions arise,  
I will confront them strongly and avert them,  
Since they will hurt both me and others.*

In every action and deed, every speech and behavior, of my everyday life, I will examine my mind, and as soon as mental and emotional afflictions arise, because they endanger myself and others, I will discover and confront them rapidly, and firmly avert them without delay.

#### **a. The root causes of afflictions**

As an ordinary being, everyone has mental and emotional afflictions. With respect to the root causes of these afflictions or defilements, both Sutrayana and Tantrayana have their own explanations. In Sutrayana teachings, the roots of emotional afflictions are unwholesome mental factors and ignorance. In Tantric teachings, the root cause of afflictions is dualistic clinging, which is further caused by the subtle karmic winds, or the three appearances of subtle semen, blood, and wind energy, upon which the habitual tendencies ride. As a result, Sutrayana tradition and Tantrayana tradition have different ways in counteracting mental and emotional afflictions: the Sutrayana way turns causes into Dharma practices, and the Tantrayana way turns results onto the path.

Lord Atisha inherited the intentions of Asanga, and Langri Tangpa carried forward the style of Lord Atisha. Lord Atisha used to point out that: “If someone seeks the Dharma but does not apply it in counteracting emotional afflictions, his practice will be in vain.” Our purpose of learning the Dharma and doing spiritual practices should be towards eliminating

mental and emotional afflictions, so what kind of antidote shall we use for this purpose? Here, Geshe Langri Tangpa's pith instruction is to observe and examine our mind in all kinds of activities, such as sitting, walking, lying down, and standing, for the purpose of seeing whether it is in a positive state, a negative state, or a neutral state.

If it is in a negative state, which one of the five poisonous afflictions has it given rise to? Does it have any coming and going? Does it have a shape, color or inherent nature? By repeatedly and carefully examining one's own mind stream in this way, a wise person will be able to counteract mental and emotional afflictions with mindfulness and alertness. When destructive emotions or bad thoughts arise, he will abandon them immediately, and confess to them with deep regret. But a person lacking in wisdom does the opposite: he is unable to tell what is right or what is wrong, and may even mistake one for the other. As a result, he will be unable to remedy the mental afflictions on his own.

Our mental and emotional afflictions arise within the mind. If the mind does not give rise to these afflictions, even if we encounter unfavorable conditions, such as illness or other physical disability, we will not be endangered by any affliction. Modern medical science and physiology also share the belief that suffering and happiness are determined mainly by one's mental state. If one is happy, the physical pain is lessened. . On the other hand, if one is caught up in mental suffering, the physical pain is felt even stronger. .

b. Destroy afflictions as soon as they arise

We should know that afflictions are manifestations of the habitual tendencies in our mind, and can be eliminated completely through certain remedies. For example, among the Han students of the fourfold assembly, some had an obstinate character with strong mental and emotional afflictions, when they first came to Larung Gar. After a certain period of time, by listening to the Dharma, reflecting and meditating upon it, they became more kind-hearted, had better personalities, and their wisdom increased gradually. Along with that, their mental and emotional afflictions decreased. However, once they paid less attention to the counteracting remedies, the old afflictions and habitual tendencies gradually rose up again. If they were able to keep practicing with diligence and perseverance, over the course of time, their minds would progressively become tamed, and the strong afflictions themselves would be brought onto the path. This was something that was experienced by every practitioner over the course of his or her spiritual practice.

Here, "*the moment destructive emotions arise, I will confront them strongly and avert them*" means that, as soon as a disturbing emotion, such as anger, arises in our mind, we must extinguish it immediately and avert it without delay. As is recounted in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

*When emotions become habitual, they are hard to get rid of with antidotes.  
Therefore, with mindfulness and vigilance, to seize the weapon of the antidote  
And crush attachment and other negative emotions  
The moment they arise is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

If the disturbing emotions are not severed as soon as they arise, they will endanger ourselves and others. For instance, when we meet a bad person, we should, at the very

beginning, contemplate that this person, like all sentient beings, has Buddha nature; therefore, he or she should be treated as our equal. If we did not give rise to this thought or visualization, from the very beginning, by the time we have begun to quarrel and have reached the height of our anger, it would then be virtually impossible for us to counteract the disturbing emotions through mindfulness and alertness. His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche has also said that: “If a disturbing emotion is not counteracted as soon as it arises, by the time it grows to any extent whatsoever, it will be very difficult for it to be subdued.”

Although it is mentioned in the unsurpassable Great Perfection (Dzogchen) that: “Carry afflictions onto the path, the inherent nature of afflictions is Bodhi itself, and all phenomena are pure and equal”, as ordinary beings, our perception of things is nevertheless defiled. The only thing we can do, perhaps, is to make an aspiration in our heart, and pray that we will reach the spiritual state in which afflictions can be taken onto the path, and all phenomena turn out to be pure and equal, as quickly as possible. At the same time, in our conduct, we should act based upon the Sutrayana perspective of the causal stage, and destroy the five poisons, which are attachment, anger, ignorance, arrogance, and jealousy. Otherwise, merely an instant of anger is enough to destroy the merits that we have accumulated and to endanger both ourselves and others; an instant of strong attachment is enough to ruin our vowed discipline, as well as that of other people.

Therefore, we should examine our mind, from time to time, and periodically avert our own negative thoughts. In earlier times, whenever the great Kadampa masters gave rise to bad thoughts, they would stop eating and drinking, and would scold themselves, or even beat themselves, in order to subdue mental afflictions. This pith instruction may sound easy, but it is extremely profound. Every Mahayana practitioner should rely on this pith instruction, and constantly and diligently observe their three doors of body, speech and mind.

c. Pay more attention to our speech

Here, what should be particularly emphasized is that we need to pay attention to our own speech, and refrain from talking about the faults of other people. In *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, it is stated that:

*If, impelled by negative emotions, I relate the faults  
Of other bodhisattvas, I will myself degenerate.  
Therefore, to not talk about the faults of anyone  
Who has entered the Mahayana is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

If we talk about other people’s faults, we have transgressed the vows of the Bodhisattva. Most of the people here have taken the vows of the Bodhisattva, and are practitioners who have generated the Mahayana Bodhicitta, so it is very likely that what they do, and how they behave, are in keeping with the skillful methods of Bodhisattvas intended to help sentient beings. Therefore, we should not make comments carelessly, nor mention the faults of others. The Buddha articulated that: “Very few people can understand the predispositions and capacities of sentient beings, other than Buddhas.” If we were Buddhas, we could point out the faults of others directly, but everyone may observe yourself: “Have I attained Buddhahood, yet?”

Perhaps, someone would ask in return: “Khenpola, you asked us not to mention the faults

of others, but why, in class, do you mention our faults every day?” The answer is that “It is permitted in specific situations. However, every time I mention your faults, I’m very concerned that you would suffer from disturbing emotions on hearing this, so I speak as little about them as possible, or try to remind you in relatively mild ways. Meanwhile, however, I’m afraid that you would not recognize your own faults, and so I feel that I have to talk about them. This is different from simply pointing out the faults of others. For so many years, I have never aroused a conflict with a disciple, by mentioning one’s faults in class. On the contrary, many people are able to see more clearly what their own faults are, and put an end to these faults in their mind stream”.

However, when ordinary people speak about the faults of others, they are not doing so out of altruistic compassion but are rather merely being driven by their own disturbing emotions. This both destroys the source of their own merits and deepens their prejudice towards other people. It is like a frost of obstacles laying on the crops of their own practice, and also sows discord preventing harmonious union within the Sangha. Such behavior brings no benefit whatsoever, neither to themselves nor to any others. Therefore, when doing the mind-training, we must, from time to time, examine every part of our speech and conduct, what we do and how we behave, and gradually learn to subdue our obstinate characters, so that our mind continuum will grow ever gentler.

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#### Verse 4: May I Cherish This Precious Treasure

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*Whenever I see ill-natured people,  
Or those overwhelmed by heavy misdeeds or suffering,  
I will cherish them as something rare,  
As though I’d found a priceless treasure.*

Great numbers of beings, who have a negative disposition or an unpleasant character, and who are constantly oppressed by negative habits and sufferings, accumulate bad karma endlessly, endangering both themselves and others. When I, as a practitioner, meet such beings, may I consider them as precious as a rare treasure, so that they may become a special object of the patience practice.

This instruction is exceedingly precious. If a Mahayana practitioner has not fully developed such a merit, attaining Buddhahood in a single lifetime is impossible, and even the ordinary worldly accomplishments will be virtually out of reach. Therefore, we should value highly, this marvelous pith instruction of the Mahayana practice.

a. Ill-natured people in degenerate time

In this degenerate time, most sentient beings seem to be of a very negative disposition: wicked, depraved, rough, and unreasonable. Their continuum is filled with unwholesome understandings, bad thoughts, and wrong views. Regardless of this, we must determine the correct way to treat them. Obviously, it is not right if we respond to the depraved dispositions of these beings with contempt and aversion and remain aloof from them. For detailed elaborations on these instructions, you may refer to *The Way of the Bodhisattva*.

On the level of intrinsic nature and ultimate truth, sentient beings and the Buddha are exactly the same; but in terms of manifest appearance, sentient beings are oppressed by afflictive emotions, and enjoy no freedom of either their body or their mind, which explains why they have acquired such negative dispositions. In other words, because sentient beings have accumulated so much negative karma in the countless eons of their previous lives, and are now so heavily oppressed by this karma or these misdeeds that they are devoid of freedom, and thus, have further developed extreme and terrible dispositions.

Nevertheless, we must be convinced that most sentient beings, especially those who have -their trust in the Buddha, or those who are the practitioners of Buddha-dharma, would like to conquer their own mental afflictions, yet, influenced by the force of their karma, although they have not been able to act on this beautiful wish. As an example, people who are frequently seized by strong anger, often feel deeply the suffering caused by this anger. When their anger subsides, they feel anguish, and struggle in their mind, stung by a strong sense of remorse. They may think, "Next time, I will not behave like this." However, the next time that they encounter a situation that provokes them, history repeats itself, and thus, again and again, they remain greatly and endlessly tortured by such afflictions.

Being laden with karma accumulated since beginningless time, if these sentient beings cannot sever these afflictions at their root in the course of this life through enthusiastic perseverance and practice, their next life will be one that is even more pathetic, more miserable, and one in which they have even less freedom. Eventually, they will fall into three lower realms and suffer countless, endless, and unfathomable misery.

Particularly in this day and age, the majority of beings, due to a lack of freedom in their bodies and minds, tend to do harmful deeds to other living beings. These actions may take place at any time, in any place and often without any reason. We practitioners, if our mental afflictions have not yet been removed, are still mortals that can be affected by external conditions. Inevitably, we will have to face harm from evil beings, and endure pain and anxiety. How should we, then, react to such situations? We should react using the key instructions given here. This verse has some resemblance to the second instructions of this text, but this one provides us with further illustrations on the pith instruction of deeper practice.

b. Cherish them as something rare

Although there are all kinds of sentient beings who may have strong attachments, strong anger, strong ignorance, strong arrogance, or strong doubt, we cannot let aversion or aloofness towards them arise within ourselves. Actually, it is impossible for us not to interact with them, which has been explained in the first verse of this text. And in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, it is also mentioned that:

*For a bodhisattva who desires the joys of virtue,  
All who harm him are like a precious treasure.  
Therefore, to cultivate patience toward all,  
Without resentment, is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

Whenever sentient beings harm us, we should give rise neither to aversion nor to anger, on the contrary, we should receive them as a great jeweled treasure. This instruction is easier

said than done. It is very difficult to even contemplate this, let alone to carry it out in action. However, we must first understand the reason behind, and progressively learn how to put it into practice. All things are difficult before they are easy. Habits become second nature by getting used to them, little by little. Before long, we begin to act in these ways naturally. For instance, when we first tried to learn to use a computer, we might have been confused by its complicated operating procedures, but once we grew skillful on it, using a computer became a convenient way to do our work. When we begin to practice this spiritual instruction, we may also feel that it is difficult to become accustomed to. But if we keep trying, with the blessing of our guru combined with our own constant practice, we will finally find ourselves capable of applying it freely in our association with different kinds of people.

As was said by Shantideva: “Even if I cannot develop compassion towards all such people, who, through the arousal of disturbing emotions, set out to try to kill me, and so forth, I should at least refrain from being angry.” And once, Venerable Dromtonpa asked Lord Atisha: “If people beat me, curse me, or try to kill me, what should I do?” To this, Lord Atisha replied in a way that was fairly close in its meaning to Thogme Zangpo’s answer to this same question,

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

c. An inspiring example of Garcho Rinpoche

There was a well-renowned lama called Garcho Rinpoche in Qinghai Province, who was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution. Every time he was persecuted, he would make the aspiration in his heart like this: “Today, may I practice patience for the sake of all sentient beings.” Thus he exhibited “-excellence in motivation”. During the persecution, when people were beating him, insulting him, or slandering him, he rested in a state of emptiness, free of conceptualization, and practiced the patience paramita. This was truly “excellence in action”. And when the persecution was over temporarily, he dedicated, quietly: “By the virtue of this practice of patience, may all those who have beaten me and cursed me, and all sentient beings, obtain Buddhahood.” This again, was “excellence in dedication”.

When the Cultural Revolution was over, there was a freer political environment for religious beliefs. Many of the people who had participated in the lama's persecution went to see Garcho Rinpoche to confess and repent. However, he always replied leniently: “You have nothing to confess. Without you, I would not have been able to practice the paramita of patience, and that was a supreme convenience. Therefore, I do not hate you at all. Instead, I owe each of you gratitude. So, please, forget about the confession!” This was the unique and virtuous deed of a Mahayana Bodhisattva!

It is indeed quite true that those who try to harm us are like a wish-fulfilling jewel, for they are the indispensable assisting factors for attaining Buddhahood. The Buddha has said that only those who have accomplished patience can become true Bodhisattvas. This is the standard being set for Mahayana practitioners, no matter whether it is in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, or in this text, *Eight Verses for Training the Mind*.

Therefore, when facing a bad person, we should repay their kindness with gratitude, just as we did to our precious and kind lama. For we Mahayana practitioners, foes are the inexhaustible treasures that help us perfect the merit of the patience paramita. So we really ought to cherish them constantly, as a precious treasure rarely found.

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### Verse 5: Take Loss and Defeat Upon Myself

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*Whenever someone out of envy  
Does me wrong by attacking or belittling me,  
I will take defeat upon myself,  
And give the victory to others.*

Whenever other people, out of jealousy or other afflictive emotions, mistreat me with abuse or slander, or even if they mistreat my lama, my relatives, or my friends, may I take upon myself the sufferings, losses, and defeats, and offer to others the happiness, benefits, and victories.

a. The proper attitude to other's attack

In order to acquire the last two line of this verse, Geshe Chekawa had been following Sharawa for six years. He practiced these instructions throughout his life, and eventually completely eradicated the clinging to the "I" and to the "mine". Many of us received the entire transmission of the *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* without any difficulty, so we should truly cherish it!

This verse may seem quite easy to understand in its literal sense; however, its real intended meaning is very profound and vast. If practitioners can continue to practice it earnestly and diligently, they will definitely eliminate all clinging to the self, and achieve an extremely high spiritual status of the path.

It is common that other people, out of impure motives such as jealousy, attachment, anger, ignorance, or carelessness, may revile and slander us or those related to us, such as our vajra lama, vajra peers, parents, relatives, and friends, in unjust ways. In fact, there are two types of personal attacks. One is the actual personal attack, and the other is the non-factual or unjust personal attack. For example, I have kept my vowed discipline pure and clean, but other people say that I haven't; or I did not steal anything, but someone accuses me of theft; or I am not a tirthika, but someone says I am. All these are non-factual or unjust personal attacks, which means that the attack is based on something that does not accord with the facts. And a factual personal attack means that what has been said does correspond to the facts, although the nature of the verbal attack is, in itself, a misdeed.

Usually, for common people, a factual personal attack is something that can be endured to some extent, but a non-factual or unjust personal attack is just too much of a torture to be endured. Ordinary people usually take those who slander them to be their biggest enemy; however, for Mahayana practitioners, slander and revilement are like the wish-fulfilling gem, a precious treasure that bestows merits, and an opportunity to swiftly attain Buddhahood.

Geshe Potowa used to say that: “When people slander you, that is the greatest kindness to you.” We must examine our mind to see whether it can give rise to such beliefs. On the spiritual path to Buddhahood, practitioners of the Great Vehicle would even give away their own wife and children, their own body, to all sentient beings; so slander and being reviled are no big deal, are they?

In the past, there was a great master who was imprisoned for six years, due to other people’s jealousy, but he said: “This is my own karma”, and he faced this situation with peace. Another example that we are all familiar with is Milarepa. In his last years, when a Geshe offered poisoned yogurt to him out of jealousy, Milarepa, who viewed everything as dreams and illusions, calmly drank the yogurt. These are the precious qualities that a Mahayana practitioner ought to have, and a vivid illustration of how afflictive emotions can be brought onto the path.

b. Make efforts on putting the teaching into practice

It is a pity that most practitioners today have an excessively strong sense of self-attachment, and have almost reached a point where they will not yield even an inch to others. Isn’t this the complete opposite from genuine Dharma practice? What’s more, although some people have spent long years of practice in retreat, they still fly into a rage whenever they encounter even minor adverse conditions. If they continue with this kind of behavior, it would not have been of much benefit, even had they meditated in mountain caves throughout their whole life. Sakya Pandita, in his *Treasure of Good Advice*, said that:

*Even in the forest, malicious people deteriorate,  
Even in the city, noble people remain serene;  
One sees that forest animals are wild and ferocious,  
But the best horses are well-disciplined in town.*

As followers of Buddha, we must have a refined personality, and it is only when we make this the basis of our practice, that we can have some achievements.

There is a Tibetan saying which addresses the fact that in peaceful times, when we can enjoy the sunshine with a full stomach, and everything is going well, all seem to be good practitioners who have no mental afflictions, but as soon as difficulties arise, when food and clothing are scarce or when there is thunder and rain, our practice is gone. This is a picture that we often see among practitioners.

To overcome this kind of difficulty, we need to cultivate and maintain a pure vision in our mind, view all phenomena as dreams and illusions, and view all sentient beings as having Buddha nature. “Now, overwhelmed by their heavy negative karma, they try to hurt me, but indeed, they have no choice, just as patients fall ill even if they do not want to. Therefore, I must treat them with great compassion.” When we open our mind in this way, it will be relatively easy for us to tolerate harm from others. Once this stage has been achieved, we can further contemplate that all manifest phenomena can be turned onto the path. This understanding will increase our merit in practice and in spiritual realization, and thus, we will generate a grateful mind towards all sentient beings.

People often say: “Take small losses for the sake of big gains”, and that: “Failure is the

mother of success". From the viewpoint of secular people, we can learn lessons from failure and loss, so that we can have better gains and successes in the future. From the perspective of Buddha-dharma, in order to attain Buddhahood, we should offer all peacefulness and happiness to others, so as to achieve the ultimate enlightenment. In the *Song of Victory*, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said: "In order to benefit yourselves in the long term, the pith instruction is to benefit others in the short term." Therefore, we should, without the least hesitation, take upon ourselves all the faults, losses, and sufferings of others, and dedicate to others all our merits, victories, peace, and happiness.

In our everyday life, if we often notice other people's faults, over the passage of time, we could end up feeling that no one on this earth is truly kind-hearted. On the other hand, if we make a point to look at other people from the positive side, and continually reflect on their benevolence towards us, we will gradually become accustomed to this good habit, and gratitude towards others will arise within us.

Just like that a person with the illness of jaundice sees white snow mountain as yellow, which is obviously white in the perception of a healthy person, every phenomenon is a projection of our own mind. Having understood this true reality, we should put it into our practice. In the Dhomang Monastery, there is a Khenpo named Lekshey. In his eyes, everyone is good. He never looks at other people's faults. Even though he recognizes that faults exist, he says: "It is not right to talk about other people's faults. Maybe these are the skillful methods used by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to help sentient beings, and have extraordinary secret intentions." So he never argues with other people.

As the saying goes: "Man struggles upwards, water flows downwards." The upper place, on the spiritual path of Dharma practice, is the aforementioned conduct of great spiritual masters, who take upon themselves all the suffering, loss, and defeat, and offer to others all the peace and happiness, benefit and victory. We should not be like a Bodhisattva at the beginning, and then like an ordinary person in the middle, and a demon at the end, being overwhelmed with an ever growing ego-fixation, and falling into the miserable realms.

c. The importance of integrating Dharma teaching into our minds

If our spiritual practices are not compatible with how we behave as human beings, even though we may look like excellent practitioners who have been in retreat in the mountains for ages, we may still find ourselves inept at getting along with others when we leave our seclusion. We may even find our own practices useless at critical times, such as when we encounter difficulties and we cannot overcome them. If this is the case, on the one hand, it could destroy other people's faith or confidence towards the Buddha-dharma, and on the other hand, we ourselves might be frustrated by repeated setbacks in our spiritual practice, and lose our enthusiasm on the path.

Actually, in adverse circumstances, it is even more important to bear in mind these pith instructions given in this text, and whenever mental afflictions arise, immediately subdue them using the pith instructions, like a warrior on the battlefield, who swiftly draws out his weapon on meeting an enemy, and destroys him without delay. But if we know only a little of the instructions, and only carry out a few practices in a superficial way, or even if we have paid no

attention to the instructions and merely recite heart mantras, speculate on bindus every day, and then think of ourselves as Buddhists, then such behaviors will not bring genuine benefits to our own continuum.

The Kadampa masters, in the past, put extraordinarily high value on the last two lines of this verse. If we copy them down on a piece of paper, and stick it in some noticeable place in our home to remind ourselves from time to time, for sure that will be of great help to our practice. From the biographies of Kadampa masters, we can see how virtuous their minds were and how pure their behaviors were. If we read more of their biographies, our faith in Dharma practice would increase, and we would be filled with diligence and enthusiastic perseverance, so that we would carry ourselves whole-heartedly onto the path of mind training.

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### Verse 6: View Those Who Harm Me as Spiritual Teachers

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*Even when someone I have helped,  
Or in whom I have placed great hopes  
Mistreats me very unjustly,  
I will view that person as a true spiritual teacher.*

When someone that I have benefited, or helped, or in whom I have placed great concerns and hopes, mistreats me in extraordinarily unjust ways, I will sincerely regard that person as my true spiritual teacher, without the least bit of resentment.

a. Cherish the opportunity to practice patience

Every one of us might run into a situation like this: someone that we have helped with manpower or money, or have assisted with the study and practice of Buddha-dharma, and in whom we have placed great hopes, does not react to us with gratitude, but instead harms us in various unjust ways. In Mipham Rinpoche's *The White Lotus: The Great Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha*, there are many these kind of stories that in his causal stages, the Buddha had saved someone with the risk of losing his own life, but that person did not react to him with gratitude, but instead did terrible harm to him. Given these situations, the Buddha practiced patience and perfected this paramita.

Similar cases have become ubiquitous in the current society. What attitudes should we take towards such people? We should regard them as true spiritual teachers, no different from our vajra guru, and we should seize every one of these opportunities to practice patience. This is genuine Dharma practice!

To most people, this is something very difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, we still need to reflect the benefits of being patient, and put it into practice as much as we can; if we give rise to anger in such situations, then all of our practice is nothing more than a sham! As is mentioned in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

*Even if one I've lovingly cared for like my own child  
Regards me as an enemy,  
To love him even more,*

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

These are the fundamental attitudes that we should fully hold towards Dharma practice. When others harm you for no reason at all, not only are you not provoked, but you also generate great compassion towards them; you dedicate all your merits to them and view them as spiritual teachers – that is the way of a real practitioner. If you gnash your teeth with hatred and boil over with rage toward someone who has taken your belongings, that is not the way of a true practitioner, and is an even further deviation from the path of a Bodhisattva.

b. A story of Khenpo Sodargye

To view those who harm us, as being no different from our own guru is something very difficult to do. Khenpo Sodargye shared his story during his teaching:

Several years ago, I brought back a statue of Manjushri from India, but unfortunately, the statue was stolen by someone who knew me very well. Since my childhood, I have always had a tremendous faith in Manjushri. What’s more, it had taken a lot of trouble to get the statue through customs. Therefore, I had made up my mind to enshrine this sacred statue as my field of refuge, to which I could, with great care, make offerings. That statue had supreme blessing powers, and I would not have sold it even if someone had offered me millions of RMB—I am so attached to Manjushri!

Later, when the stewards heard that it had been stolen, they asked me whether I would like to have the theft investigated, or whether I would like to seek help from the police. I knew who had stolen it, so if I had sought help from the police, it would not have been difficult to get the statue back. However, at that time, I thought: “If we make enquiries, everyone will know who is the one who stole the statue. Buddha statues were meant to benefit beings, but if this would arouse the afflictions of the thief, I’d rather give the statue to him as a present, even if I was the only one that knew about it. In the end, this seemed like the best opportunity for me to practice patience.” So, I declined the kind offer of the stewards, and the whole thing was thus settled.

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**Verse 7: Secretly Take Upon Myself All Their Sufferings**

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*In brief, directly or indirectly,  
I will offer help and happiness to all my mothers,  
And secretly take upon myself  
All their pains and suffering.*

No matter whether directly or indirectly, I will offer happiness and benefits to all the sentient beings that have been my loving mothers. I shall secretly take upon myself all my mothers’ pains and suffering.

a. View all living beings as my mothers

The verse has taught us the paramount pith instruction on the path of Bodhisattvas. All Mahayana practitioners, no matter whether engaged in Sutrayana practices or Tantrayana practices, should meditate on and practice this pith instruction. Without it, we cannot call

ourselves Mahayana practitioners.

It is recounted in *The White Lotus: The Great Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha*, that Buddha Shakyamuni, over hundreds and thousands of eons, discarded self-attachment, and carried out the compassionate activities of benefiting sentient beings by giving them happiness and taking upon himself their sufferings. We, too, should follow the steps of the Buddha. This is something we should seriously reflect on.

As is stated in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*:

*If all the mothers who have loved me since beginningless time are suffering,  
What is the use of my own happiness?  
So, with the aim of liberating limitless sentient beings,  
To set my mind on enlightenment is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

All living beings have been my mothers since beginningless time, and while they were my mother, they have loved me as much as my mother in this life has. To make sure that their child has enough to eat, they would rather go hungry themselves. When their child is sick, the mother has no appetite for food and drink, and if it were possible, she would rather exchange the cure of her child with her own life. Not only do the mothers of human beings act in this way, but even ferocious beasts, like tigers and lions, are full of love for their children. There are detailed elaborations on this in Patrul Rinpoche's *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

Now since all sentient beings, who have been my father or mother, are suffering in samsara, or are being oppressed by the intolerable sufferings of the hell-realms, how can we, their own children, seek only our own personal happiness. What is the meaning of such a practice? So, every one of us must, with the great compassion, offer all of our happiness and benefits without a trace of miserliness, directly or indirectly, to all of our loving mothers.

b. Benefit all living beings directly or indirectly

Since my mothers, from beginningless time, are suffering unmeasurable pain in the cyclic existence of the three realms, I secretly aspire to take all their sufferings upon myself, and quietly offer all my peace and happiness to them.

His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said that, if we can give peace and happiness to others directly, this would be the best. However, if we could not, we should aspire to offer all our peace and happiness to sentient beings, and to take upon ourselves all their hurt and suffering. If we meditate in this way progressively, by the time we reach a certain point, we will be able to directly take in the sufferings of sentient beings, and directly offer them happiness and peace.

So this is an indirect offering: If we are not now sufficiently qualified to give them peace and happiness directly, we should aspire in our heart, that all our peace and happiness be dedicated to all of our mother beings since time without beginning, and aspire to be of benefit to them to the best of our ability.

And what is a direct offering? It is to save the lives of living beings scheduled to be slaughtered and to release them again into freedom. Now, the time has come in which life-release is very much needed to help sentient beings. Not only should every one of us do life-

release, but we should also, as much as possible, persuade others to do the same. Among monastics, some people do life-release very often, each time saving and releasing several hundreds of millions of living beings. The merits of this life-release are indeed inconceivable, and the future fruits of it are also inconceivable.

Life-release is different from other virtuous actions. When doing other virtuous deeds, if one's motivation is impure, the action only leads to very petty fruit. However, life release is different. Even if one saves and releases lives with impure motives, or even with wrong views, its corresponding result is unailing. Life-release directly benefits sentient beings. Therefore, I wish that, each year, we could release more captive animals than that of the previous one.

c. Pray to the guru for more blessings

As was mentioned earlier, Langri Tangpa's *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* is easy to understand in its literal meaning, but indeed, it is very difficult to truly combine that understanding with real practice.

The excellence of the instruction revealed in this verse lies in that it teaches us to exchange our own happiness and benefits, for the sufferings of others. The exchanging oneself for others spoken of here, is a little bit different from the one taught in the fifth verse. The instruction in the fifth verse is the one on the practice of the Bodhicitta; but the instruction taught here is the one on the practice of the Four Immeasurables. The Four Immeasurables are the foundation of Bodhicitta. If we build this foundation well, the other key instructions will be easier to master.

Now that we have received this pith instruction, we should use it as much as possible in our daily lives. If we cannot master the practices of this pith instruction, no matter how much we meditate on the Great Perfection, all of these efforts would be in vain. They would be completely meaningless. Therefore, we must develop faith in this instruction, and keep practicing it. This is the pith instruction of the practice of a Bodhisattva.

Dharma practitioners, on the basis of their own learning, meditating and practicing, should also supplicate to their guru more, and spontaneously, the guru's blessings will be infused into their hearts. In this way, they will master all the key instructions of both Sutrayana and Tantrayana quickly, and will be able to carry all the manifest appearances of phenomena onto the path, and the natural wakefulness of mind will exert itself. To awaken the primordial nature of the mind, without the blessings of the guru, is impossible. When giving the transmission and teachings of Manjushri Great Perfection, His Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche said, "When you supplicate, by perceiving your root guru as being no different than Manjushri, you will definitely accomplish Great Perfection."

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**Verse 8: All Things Are Like Illusions**

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*I will learn to keep all these practices  
Untainted by thoughts of the eight worldly concerns.  
May I recognize all things as like illusions,*

*And, without attachment, gain freedom from bondage.*

May all my practices and actions, in the past, present, and future, be undefiled by the eight worldly concerns, be untainted by wealth or fame; and through recognizing all phenomena as like illusions, may I eradicate all the clinging to true existence within my mind. May I be released from the bondage of the four extremes and concepts, and attain the ultimate liberation.

a. Stay away from the eight worldly concerns

If our mind is contaminated by the eight worldly concerns, even though we have practiced virtuous deeds, the fruit of these deeds will not be excellent. On the contrary, only merits undefiled by the eight worldly concerns are merits imbued with the Mahayana prajna. Worldly people have no intention of keeping away from the eight worldly concerns, and that is why they cannot obtain the ultimate wisdom, or the ultimate liberation. Many Dharma practitioners practice in anonymity, delve in listening, reflecting, meditating, and serve the Three Jewels diligently and conscientiously, not for fame or wealth. This indicates that they know the harms of the eight worldly concerns, and are learning to keep away from them. But, some practitioners still have a deep love of prestige and self-promotion, and this reveals that their practice is far from enough, that they need to learn more about the harm of the eight worldly concerns, to realign their objectives, and to work harder!

One time, a patron was coming to visit the great Kadampa Geshe Ben Gungyal. Before the patron arrived, Geshe Ben Gungyal cleaned the shrine room, and decorated the Buddha statues. However, when he suddenly discovered that his motivations were impure, and that he was only trying to impress his patrons, he immediately took a handful of ashes and put them on the offerings. Later, Padampa Sangye praised that those ashes were the best offering to the Buddha in Tibet! This is because Geshe Ben Gungyal transcend his worldly concerns, and moreover, he recognized that all phenomena are like dreams and illusions, devoid of any true, independent or intrinsic existence.

b. View all phenomena as illusions

If we refer to relevant instructions in *The Thirty-Seven Practices of a Bodhisattva*, they are the stanzas that follow:

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

*The various forms of suffering are like the death of one's child in a dream:  
By clinging to deluded perceptions as real we exhaust ourselves.  
Therefore, when encountering unfavorable circumstances,  
To view them as illusions is the practice of a bodhisattva.*

When afflictive emotions arise, such as attachment or anger, we should directly examine the nature of these emotions, so that we will not be deluded by these phenomena, and that we will be released from bondage and achieve enlightenment.

This verse addresses the Dharma practice from the highest perspective. The instructions

given in *Finding Comfort and Ease in the Nature of Mind on the Great Perfection* are exactly the instructions given here. If we recognize that all phenomena are like dreams and illusions, we will have made this human life meaningful.

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### **Postscript**

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*This lojong text was composed by Geshe Langri Tangpa, who is regarded as the emanation of Buddha Amitabha. Sarva Mangalam (May all be auspicious)!*

Khenpo Sodargye gave this teaching to his Han Chinese disciples at Larung Gar in the year of 1998, and the written commentary in Chinese was completed on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998.