

An Introduction to Buddhism

Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute

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The contents of this document were collected for my **Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institute** class – *An Introduction to Buddhism* – and are intended for **classes and other education purposes only**.

The sources have sometimes been edited for these purposes. No audio or video recordings have been made. Any mistakes to the sources recited are my own. I have made an effort to ensure that all relevant sources are listed throughout this document. These contents are not available for bastardization by others.

The contents covered have been divided into 21 parts, listed on the next page, some with multiple sections. May it be of benefit to those on the path of Buddhism.

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An Introduction to Buddhism

This series is an introduction to the “**history**” (as we know it vs. stories), **purpose**, **key principles**, and **core practices** of Buddhism, including the early sources (Pali and scholarly insights, some Chinese, Sanskrit, Gandhari), the development into Theravada, Mahayana, Tantra, and Dzogchen views. Parts of some *key sources* have been included. Some “parts” have been divided into sub-parts. The sources used have been identified in each part. This is intended for educational use only and the source documents are recommended for more in-depth learning and practice. My purpose is to articulate the Heart Essence of Buddhism in general and its development over time. Here is a list of the parts covered:

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PART 1: An Introduction to the history, purpose, key principles, and core practices

HISTORY – A very brief history of the Buddha and Buddhism (see “*Genius of the Ancient World – The Buddha – BBC Video notes*”). This series is an introduction to the history (as we “know it” vs. stories), key principles, and core practices of Buddhism, including the early sources (Pali and scholarly insights, some Chinese, Sanskrit, and Gandhari), the development into Theravada, Mahayana, Tantra, and Dzogchen views. Parts of some of the Ikey sources *will be shared*.

- The Buddha lived approximately 6th century BCE.
- India at this time influences included the Vedas; end of classical Vedic period (500 BCE); early Upanishads (2-4). See map. Where born (Lumbini?)/lived (Shakya clan?) a “republic” (not a kingdom); asceticism(s) – 6 known (see chart in *Wikipedia.com*); the eastern region had strong ascetic movement, few Brahmins – ascetics; Middle Way between “extremes”.
- There was little or no interest in the life of the Buddha for 300 years.
- Stories prior to his awakening/realization/liberation/enlightenment are from other sources to illustrate his “intention”; we know almost nothing about his life before becoming the “Awakened One” (the Buddha).
- The Buddha’s teachings were passed on orally with multiple variations, if they survived at all:
 - The Buddha taught for 45 years and likely made some changes over time.
 - After his death, Buddhism divided into 18 known groups. Theravada is only one that survived (but not likely in its original form).
 - First evidence of “texts” begin about 250 BCE – Ashoka’s edicts, mostly about social and moral precepts, refer to some principles and perhaps titles to a couple of texts, but neither actual Buddhist text has survived. Alphabets were just being created in India.
 - Textual fragments of the Buddha’s teachings have been found in several languages including Gandhari (100 BCE to 200 CE), others later in various Prakrit languages, Sanskrit, Pali, and late 4th century in Chinese, but the originality is highly questionable across all of these.
 - Pali texts, claimed to be the authentic teachings of the Buddha, were said to be first written about 29 BCE most likely in Shri Lanka. They state that there was a *major redaction* of the teachings done at that same time, with no explanation; and they became canonized some centuries later (no date available), along with a *second major redaction* in 5th-6th centuries. Scholars are increasingly skeptical of any written texts prior to that time.

“Much of the material in the Canon is not specifically Theravadin but a collection of teachings that this school preserved. ...Scholars generally believe that the Canon includes several strata of relatively early *and* late texts, but with little consensus regarding the relative dating of different sections of the Canon or which texts belong to which era.” (Some scholars are trying to sort this out.)
 - The second “extensively redacted” in the 5th or 6th century CE is the same time that the commentaries of *Buddhaghosa* were written. Some scholars believe he may have been the source of this second redaction as well. Others assert that he would not have redacted the teachings! It became the core of the Theravada teachings, not the Pali Canon per se as often asserted.

- One 2-page manuscript 8th-9th C exists; one collection dates from late 15th C, but there is not much else before 18th C. Thus, there is very little that can be used to validate any positions.
- However, a cache of texts from Gandhara was found in northern Pakistan in early 1900s, carbon dated to 1st C BCE-2nd CE are now being translated. These are the actual oldest “texts”. The good news is that they have similarities with Pali, Sanskrit, and Chinese sources.

What Do We Know? *Factually*, very little! What has survived has been significantly modified in various ways by different groups of people, all still committed to the Path and Liberation from teachings thought to have been from the historical Buddha.

Another View: The Buddha was sometimes referred to as a “Brahmin”, the priestly caste of the Vedic tradition. Some assert that *most* of his followers were also Brahmins, but there were few Brahmins in that region, and most of those were ascetics with little influence. So the “priestly class” influence appears to be from later assertions. The Buddha is said to often referred to his *arhat* followers as Brahmins, even those who were not of that caste. The assertion of the Brahmins as the highest has been shown to be later. It is *not likely* that Brahmins would have been drawn to someone from a lower class, as the Buddha is usually described. He joined the *shramana* ascetic movement in Magadha, where his two teachers are said to have resided, where there were few Brahmins at that time. Their dominance appeared considerably later and back-filled into the stories.

The general focus of the movement was to attain liberation from the sufferings of life and into liberation! The Vedas conceptualize *Brahman* as the “cosmic principle”. Early Upanishads describe it as truth-consciousness-bliss and as the unchanging, permanent, highest reality, which may be from the newer early Upanishads, which scholars doubt the Buddha was exposed to given him living in the eastern region of Magadha where the Vedic culture was minor at that time.

- The Buddha’s first disciples may have been among his companions on his initial ascetic journey.
- The Buddha became known as “the Ascetic”, and his movement as part of “Shramana” ascetic practices.
- His key insight was a “middle way”, neither extreme nor indulgent.
- He practiced primarily as a “forest dweller” and with a simple life (later, donors donated land and some structures for him and his followers).
- There were no monasteries for several hundred years. The first “monasteries” were elaborately carved caves in central India around 3rd century CE, long after the Buddha.

What Did the Buddha Teach? Some scholars are trying to ascertain what might have survived during the years after his life. We know there was an effort to preserve his teachings, at least after he died and perhaps earlier. But that would have been a huge challenge without a written alphabet, the variety of people who became his followers with different languages and cultures in India. We are told that there was a gathering of his disciples who were still alive sometime after

his death (the First Council) to preserve his teachings and the monastic code, but many scholars are skeptical that it ever happened.

Even if it did, and if they (many being Brahmins) followed the model of the Vedas to memorize and recite the verses, the most knowledgeable followers of the Buddha were old. The Vedic system is based on training very young children to memorize and recite without even knowing the language (which turns out to be a good thing in an oral tradition; it is much easier to memorize sounds at that age).

Buddhism was also spread among the wide variety of languages in India at that time (and even today). Translation is always a problem. The “system” that was set up was focused on “elders”, who sometimes make mistakes. Younger followers would be unlikely to challenge “errors” they made in their guidance for chanting these verbal sources once a month (or sometimes twice) as a sangha. Chanting is still very popular among monastic groups.

The bottom line is that we don’t really know precisely what the Buddha taught. Nevertheless, among the surviving texts in several languages, there is a fairly remarkable consistency, albeit with many different variations and many unique texts. My view is pragmatic. We don’t necessarily have to know precisely what the Buddha taught in order to benefit from the teachings we have today. That appears impossible anyway. So, the following represent lists of some of the most common terms and principles of what we call Buddhism. I have added a **GLOSSARY** of terms that may be beneficial throughout this text. I have chosen to include it in the beginning so that it will help in understanding from the beginning of the text.

PURPOSE of Buddhism – “liberation from sufferings” (originally from Shramanic ascetics):

- **Life is filled with “Sufferings” (or other terms) – Causes of the problems in our lives (many lists!) in no particular order:**
 1. Samsara – the cycle of life, generally considered to be filled with sufferings (*dukkha*), unhappiness, discontent, and/or dissatisfaction
 2. Dukkha – unhappiness, discontent, dissatisfaction, sufferings of life (*samsara*)
 3. Attachment – desires, cravings, clinging, jealousy, greed
 4. Aversion – dislike, anger, hatred
 5. Poisons (several versions):
 - a. Originally: lust, hatred, & delusion
 - b. Later: hatred, greed, ignorance, lust, jealousy, arrogance
 6. 8 Worldly Concerns – 4 pairs of opposite extremes:
 - a. Gain vs. loss (or wealth vs. poverty),
 - b. pleasure vs. pain,
 - c. praise vs. blame,
 - d. fame vs. disgrace
 7. “Fires” – symbol of “getting burned” due to unreal expectations (see “poisons” above)

8. Fetters – [shackles] sources that bind one to *samsara*; one list of 10:
 - a. belief in a self or soul
 - b. doubt or uncertainty, especially about the Buddha's awakeness
 - c. attachment to rites and rituals (see Tibetan Buddhism)
 - d. sensual desires
 - e. ill will, hate or anger
 - f. lust for material existence, lust for material rebirth,
 - g. lust for immaterial existence, lust for rebirth in a formless realm [heaven]
 - h. conceit [pride or arrogance]
 - i. restlessness vs. calm, **peace**, contentment
 - j. ignorance of the “true nature of things” – as they are vs. appear
 9. Kleshas – mental or emotional states that cloud the mind and manifest in unwholesome actions, such as anxiety, fear, anger, jealousy, desire, depression, etc. [closest to “emotions” in the West]
 10. Afflictive emotions – see “kleshas” ... especially ignorance, attachment, aversion
 11. Mental obscurations – see “kleshas” ... especially anxiety, fear, anger
 12. Taints – mental defilements or sense pleasures, craving for existence, ignorance; the “5 taints”: sensual desire, ill will, dullness and drowsiness, restlessness and remorse, doubt
 13. Hedonism – a belief that pleasure is the greatest good
 14. Reciprocity – exchanging something with another for something desired in return (“Ill scratch your back if you scratch mine”).
 15. Selfishness – focus on oneself, egocentrism
 16. Nihilism – a belief that life is meaningless; pessimism, rejection, renunciation
 17. Permanence – unchanging, fixed; “life” (alternative explanations of meaning) continues after death of the body
 18. Karma – action, cause and effect (often linked with rebirth)
 19. Reincarnation/rebirth – after death, “consciousness” is reborn into another life form; evolved primarily *after* the time of the Buddha in the Upanishads and Hinduism
 20. Unwholesome actions – morally bad or wrong (lists vary)
 21. Wholesome actions – morally good or right (lists vary)
 22. Social/societal pressures (culture) – peer pressure, social or cultural rules and regulations or customs, more commonly in administrative laws today
- **Other needs and potential causes of sufferings, i.e., lack of control** (“the 40% solution”)
 1. Food, clothing, shelter, medicine (things monks were allowed; basic needs for survival); “Homelessness” – Indian lifestyles (Four Stages of Life: student, householder, forest dweller, renunciate or homelessness – some similarities with current homelessness globally which is *not* intentional)

2. Monastic ideal – varying degrees of support in different times and places (with some potential conflicts with Buddha’s apparent teachings ... later)
3. Survival (including procreation), wars, economics, climate change
4. Others beyond our control: ecology, global warming, fires, weather, earthquakes, volcanoes...

In Buddhism, all of these lists are said to cause suffering in our lives because of “our ignorance about the *true nature* of the world”. But there is a way out - Buddhism!

- **Goals**

1. Liberation – freedom from “sufferings” and their causes (appears to have been the Buddha’s original term, common among the *shramana* movement at that time)
2. Awakening – deep insight into the true nature of reality; *nirvana* (see below)
3. Realization – a lasting (or permanent) insight into the true nature of reality
4. Enlightenment – insight (experiential understanding) and/or wisdom (cognitive understanding) – a term from “Age of Enlightenment”, 17th-18th centuries in Europe, often associated with “reason” and “science”
5. Nirvana – lit. “blowing out”; extinction of the 3 poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion (specifics vary)
6. Perfection – *paramita*: highest, complete, perfect; “gone beyond”; quality of an enlightened being
7. Emptiness – a metaphysical view of “the ultimate” as beyond the conceptual; most often defined as “no soul or permanence”; everything is interrelated, interconnected and interdependent; and over time this view was divided into relative and ultimate views, with the first referring to a lack of a soul and independence, but today’s most common description as an understanding of “the way things appear” (the relative, perceptions and thoughts) vs. a view of “the way things really are” (the ultimate, “transcendent”)
8. Transcendence – the ultimate as transcending from this world to “beyond”, “the other shore”, “*nirvana*”, or totally beyond words or concepts (ineffable)
9. Rigpa, the ultimate as “pure awareness” – awareness of mind itself or awareness of awareness, also called “metacognition” in consciousness studies
10. Suchness – the ultimate as it is, beyond, ineffable
11. True happiness – seeing the true nature of reality beyond mental constructs
12. Altruism – unselfishness, doing good with no expectation of anything in return; lovingkindness and compassion

Key Principles

- **General structure: Four (Noble) Truths**

1. Life involves sufferings and other problems leading to unhappiness, discontent, etc. – hatred, lust or greed, etc. (see lists of “sufferings” above)

2. The cause of our sufferings is our ignorance or lack of understanding about the way things “really are”; we are deluded.
3. There is a way out! – “cessation”
4. This is the path: right (1) view, (2) resolve, (3) speech, (4) conduct, (5) livelihood, (6) effort, (7), mindfulness, and (8) meditation (or absorption or balanced awareness). [“Absorption” may refer to the four jhanas or higher jhanas. “Balanced” may be a reference to the “middle way” between extremes.] The original “middle way” may have just been that (balance or moderation); evolved into “morality, meditation, and insight”; then the Eightfold Path. (It is not clear if this transition occurred during the Buddha’s life or after.

- **Other Key Principles**

1. Impermanence – everything is changing, not lasting indefinitely
2. Interdependence – two or more things dependent upon each other (contingent or determined by each other)
3. Compounded – made up of parts
4. Wholesome actions – conducive to wellbeing, ethics, morality
5. Unwholesome actions – *not* conducive to wellbeing, ethics, morality
6. Morality – principles distinguishing between right and wrong or good and bad behavior; principles or values regarding conduct
7. Ethics – moral principles that govern behavior (similar to morality)
8. Karma & rebirth – actions and effect of actions (associated with ethics), sometimes “cause and effect” (evolved from vague Vedic principles later into more specific views with Hinduism)
9. Ahimsa - do no harm (especially injury or killing)
10. True nature – the way we are, regardless of how we experience ourselves or appear to be (consciously); *see* “emptiness”, “awareness”, “dynamism” – both-and, e.g., both existence *and* nonexistence, present *and* absent, being *and* not being (see “transcendence” above)
11. Middle Way (a path vs. “moderation”) – Buddhist Path based upon (1) sufferings and/or discontent, (2) the cause – ignorance of the true nature of things (see “true nature” above), (3) cessation of sufferings and/or discontent, (4) and the 8-Fold Path: right (1) view, (2) resolve, (3), speech, (4), action or conduct, (5) livelihood, (6) effort, (7) mindfulness, and (8) concentration leading to **peace** or mental calm (four *dhyanas* – see practices).
12. Habitual tendencies – actions imprinted in our mind and repeated with little or no thought, or being unaware
13. Equanimity – a state of mental calm and balance, regardless of external circumstances (final stage of the four *dhyanas*)
14. Cause and effect/conditions – a dual relationship where one is a cause on the other, stimulus and response (or both affect each other – interrelated, interdependent) initiated by an event or situation(s) or condition(s)

15. Intentional actions – actions done on purpose, with conscious thought, and driven by a specific goal or intention (see *karma* above)
16. Choices – an act of selecting or making a decision faced with two or more possibilities (accepted by Buddhism; denied by *some* scientists)
17. Buddhanature – all sentient beings have the *innate potential* to become a Buddha or have a pure-essence within, which is surmounted with attainment of actual Buddhahood (hence being impermanent)
18. Atman – principle of a “true self” or “soul” as an unchanging permanent essence; although one has a “relative self” or idea of being, one does not have a permanent essence such as a soul, largely replaced by “Buddhanature”.
19. Brahman – a *Vedic* term regarding the ultimate liberation much like *Samantabhadra* (the ultimate Buddha in the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, aka the “All Good”) contrasted with *atman* – the *potential* true nature of a being; *Brahman* and *atman* have strong parallels with Buddhanature even though they are not considered to be the same. (There are numerous variations in both Vedic/Hindu gods and tantric “yidam” forms.)
20. Tantra/deities/yidams – “deities” literally means “gods”, but these figures in Buddhism are considered to be Buddhas (Buddha-forms), not gods. Some consider them literally and others symbolically.
21. Emptiness – lack of a “permanent self”, i.e., impermanent, changing; also described as “empty mind”, beyond conceptualizing the ultimate (although Nyingma, especially Dzogchen, are more likely to use “awareness”, especially “pure awareness” (see below)
22. Awareness – ordinary sensory or mental perceptions (like mindfulness); *ability* to be conscious
23. Pure awareness – differentiating *reality as it is*, *rigpa* or transcendent experience, compared to the way that it *appears* to ordinary consciousness

Core Practices

1. Contemplation – we are advised to contemplate our practice and life experiences to better achieve “true understanding”
2. Morality/ethics – guidelines for “right conduct” (Eightfold Path and other sources), do good or at least do no harm to other “sentient beings” (5 Precepts, 10 Wholesome and 10 Unwholesome Activities)
 - a. Sentient beings – any being able to experience “feelings”, but definitions vary; in Buddhism generally – any being that experiences “suffering”, in Tibetan Buddhism – any being that experiences “happiness” and “suffering”, generally humans, animals, birds, fish, and insects; less common is any being with “consciousness”; but there are also “rankings” in the *Vinaya*. Science is not clear regarding lower life forms, such as mosquitos.
3. Mindfulness – numerous variations focused on attention on breath or some other physical, sensory, mental, or other “object”

4. Dhyanas/jhanas – calm abiding in four steps to deep mental calm: freedom from desire and unwholesome thoughts, discursive thoughts, blissful states, and perfection of equanimity (mental calm) and wakefulness
 5. Shamata – “calm abiding” while attentively focused on specific objects, concepts, or nonconceptual experiences (more common in Tibetan Buddhism) Altruism/generosity – engaging in generosity to others without expecting anything in return
 6. Four Absorptions – advanced meditations on infinite space, infinite consciousness, infinite nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception (sometimes later sources combined with *dhyanas* into a list of eight; some even add a prerequisite practice and “higher” concluding practice
 7. Six Perfections – practices on generosity (altruism), ethics/morality, patience, diligent/joyful effort, meditative concentration (4 *dhyanas*), and “wisdom” (discernment, understanding, insight)
 8. Four Immeasurables – practices on lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic “joy” (wellbeing), and equanimity (mental calm towards all beings)
 9. Lovingkindness (metta) – meditation and actions focused on the “happiness” for others (happiness – deep contentment and **peace**)
 10. Compassion (karuna) – the wish that all beings do not have “sufferings” and its causes; *tonglen* is a practice of taking the sufferings of others and sending out lovingkindness and compassion for them
 11. Seven-Point Mind Training – (Atisha) practices to move away from self-centeredness and towards compassion and generosity for others: (1) introduction, (2) main practices, (3) transforming adversity into the path, (4) applying the practice in your life, (5) mind training, (6) the commitments of mind training, and (7) the precepts of mind training
 12. Tantra – practices using *yidams* (Buddha-forms) as ideals; outer: peaceful *yidams* and wrathful *yidams* (latter also called Highest Yoga Tantra); inner: the “6 yogas”: (1) *tsalung* – channels, winds, and drops; (2) *tummo* – inner heat, (3) four blisses, (4) four empties, (5) clear light, and (6) *phowa* – transference of consciousness, (lists vary somewhat)
 13. Dzogchen (somewhat similar *Mahamudra*) – great perfection or great completion, also known as *Atiyoga*, is considered to be the pinnacle of all Buddhist teachings; practices emphasize a direct path to awakening by recognizing our pure, primordial nature, by focusing on simple calming contemplations leading to a direct immersion into awareness. All experiences are integrated with “pure awareness” of one's “true nature”, and may culminate in the attainment of a “rainbow body” at the time of death or cremation of the body, symbolizing full Buddhahood.
 14. Embodiment – practices are considered deeper than “conceptual” learning, until we attain or actually embody the experiential insight into the true nature of things.
- **Ideals** – key words used frequently in the early discourses of the Buddha
 - **Peace** – frequent among the key words used by the Buddha to describe his ultimate experience of enlightenment and practice; a state involving harmony, friendship, and

tranquility (see below) that is dependent on the wellbeing of individuals in all aspects of life – physical, social, mental, and spiritual

- Equanimity – **peace** of mind; a state of mental balance and even-mindedness that involves maintaining mental calm and steadiness regardless of external circumstances, considered to be profoundly significant in Buddhism because of its implications for personal wellbeing, ethical conduct, and spiritual development
 - Contentment – satisfaction and mental calm with one's own life (disregarding the Bodhisattva ideal of wishing "happiness" for *all* beings, which *is* included in some forms)
 - Tranquility – mental calm
 - Calm or mental calm – tranquility
 - Lovingkindness – attention and wellbeing for the happiness of others (see altruism below)
 - Compassion – wishing all others to be free from suffering and discontent, to have **peace**, mental calm, and contentment (together often labelled as "happiness")
 - Generosity – giving freely to others without expecting anything in return (see altruism below)
 - Altruism – generosity to others without expecting anything in return
 - Bodhisattva – one who is on the path to enlightenment and practices *bodhicitta* (see below)
 - Bodhicitta – literally "mind of awakening"; *bodhi* – awake or enlightened, *citta* – mind or heart essence, while generating lovingkindness and compassion for all sentient beings
- "Ultimate" terms
 - Ultimate – the highest, best, or most extreme (compared with others), though often used as being "absolute"
 - Absolute – viewed as independent, *not* relative or comparative; universal, complete, total
 - Vipassana/philosophy – various approaches to realizing understanding the "true nature of things", cognitive or nonconceptual
 - Dharmakaya – lit. truth body (no actual "body"), essence, transcendent or ineffable; sometimes good qualities such as **peace**, mental calm, contentment, lovingkindness, compassion, insight or wisdom; *also compared with Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya*.
 - Dharmata – the true nature of reality or "suchness"
 - Dharmadhatu – the "sphere" of ultimate reality
 - Clear light – lit. "clear" as in "is that clear?" and "light" as illuminating, thus "clear understanding"; other words used: pure awareness, innate nature of mind, luminosity, buddhanature, pure presence, conscious of the "absolute" (beyond conceptuality)
 - Pure awareness (*rigpa*) – awareness itself, the ability to be aware
 - Consciousness – being aware of perceptions as well as mental activity (thoughts, memories, emotions) – aware of mind itself as well as the world

- Tathata – suchness, the inexpressible nature of things or concepts
- Shunyata – emptiness or “empty of”; or voidness, openness, thusness, nothingness
- Prajnaparamita – transcendent wisdom (see “transcendent” below)
- Bodhicitta – awakened mind (see *Bodhicitta* above)
- Buddhanature – all sentient beings have the innate potential to become a Buddha or have a pure-essence within, which is eliminated with attainment of actual Buddhahood (hence being impermanent) (see *Buddhanature* above)
- Profound peace – *experiential* equanimity, mental calm, contentment
- Innate happiness – *eudaimonia*, contented happiness, wellbeing (without “things”, etc.)

PART 2: The Dharmapada

Introduction

The Dharmapada is sometimes considered to be the “Buddhist Bible”.

The verses below have been selected from *The Dhammapada: A New Translation of the Buddhist Classic with Annotations* by Gil Fronsda. The verses are numbered as in the text, but are written in sentence form for ease of reading. Occasional comments are added from other sources. This is my favorite translation and having a copy is highly recommended.

The Pali Canon (other canons are similar but vary in differing ways) is divided into three major “collections” or “baskets”: (1) monastic code (*Vinaya Pitaka*), (2) the teachings of the Buddha and some of his main disciples (*Sutra Pitaka*), and (3) the commentaries (*Abhidharma*). Different “canons” vary but are mostly similar. We will focus on the *Sutras*, specifically one of five sub-collections known as the section on Short Sayings, including the *Dharmapada*.

Some claim that this collection began during the life of the Buddha, but most likely they would have been created later in verse form for recitation, a practice that now appears to have started after the time of the Buddha. Nevertheless, the “content” is considered to be based upon the original teachings of the Buddha and at least some may have been “edited” into a verse format long before the creation of this collection. My key point is that they seem to represent the earliest documentation of the Buddha’s teachings, although we are likely never to know for sure. They are, nevertheless, quite beneficial in establishing a ground for learning and practicing Buddhism. “The verses point to a possibility of **peace** and freedom that I find breath-takingly simple...” (p. xix).

The chapters in the text are “collections” of independent verses organized into groups with some degree of “similarity”. Fronsda notes that the verses “emphasize the power of the human mind in shaping our lives, and the importance and effectiveness of a person’s own actions and choices” (p. xx, v. 1 & 2)). And we are “the shapers of our own destinies” (v. 380). To these he adds that “teachers can only show the way (v. 276) and “By oneself alone is one purified” (v. 165).

Fronsda also articulates two goals of Buddhism, first a focus “on attaining happiness and welfare in this life” and second that “liberation ... is a form of spiritual freedom” ... that “consists of a purification, ... the elimination or destruction of one’s mental defilements, attachments, and hindrances” (p. xxi). These are terms included in the “glossary” above.

The verses, as in most Indian texts, often use *negativa* to articulate a meaning. This comes from an Indian cultural view called “indirect language” – saying what something is *not* rather than what it *is*. This can make translation challenging because the meanings are not always opposites of their equivalencies in English. An example is “nirvana” (literally a snuffing out, like a candle), but represents “extinguishing” or “release”. As Fronsda explains, “nirvana may be indescribable in terms of our experience and language” and “the experience of the ultimate may not be one thing” (p. xxii).

Fronsda also identifies two key “moods”: (1) “energetic effort [as in] Rouse yourself! Don’t be negligent! Live the Dharma” (v. 168) and “vigilance ... a purposeful life in which one actively cultivates a high degree of self-mastery” (p. xxii), and (2) “the state of **peace** that comes from the fulfillment of the path”, along with “tranquility, rest, purity, happiness, and freedom” (p. xxiv), along with contentment and calm.

The verses are often presented in comparison to each other. There is also a strong tendency toward pragmatism – does it work or not? Is it helpful on the Path?

Fronsdal notes the monastic focus of these verses on renunciation, solitude, and monastic life, as well as a denial or rejection of the world. These teachings were primarily addressed to his primary audience, the ordained Buddhist community. Nevertheless, most are applicable to lay practitioners as well. The rejection of the world need not be considered to be as extreme as it appears to us. The principle focus here is on our “clinging”, our attachments to the world. But *samsara* is what is being rejected, not this world. *Samsara* refers to the cycle of life, generally considered to be filled with sufferings (*dukkha*). The *Dharmapada* is focused on replacing these experiences with happiness – **peace**, calm, and contentment. The overall message is avoiding attachments which lead to sufferings.

Verse numbers throughout the entire text are included in these selections for identification and comparison with other translations.

Section 1 – Chapters 1-10

Selections from Chapter 1: Dichotomies (comparisons)

[1] All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind. Speak or act with a corrupted (impure) mind, and suffering follows... [2] All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind. Speak or act with a peaceful (pure) mind, and happiness follows.

[19] One who recites many teachings, but being negligent, doesn't act accordingly... [20] One who recites but a few teachings yet lives according to the dharma, abandoning passion (intense desires), ill will, and delusion, aware and with mind well freed, not clinging in this life or the next attains the benefits of the contemplative life.

Selections from Chapter 2: Vigilance (energetic or joyful effort)

[21] Vigilance is the path to the Deathless (liberation); negligence the path to death [and rebirth]. The Vigilant do not die; the negligent are as if already dead.

[27] Don't give yourself to negligence, don't devote yourself to sensual pleasure. Vigilant and absorbed in meditation one attains abundant happiness.

[31] The (practitioner) who delights in vigilance and fears negligence advances like a fire burning fetters, subtle and gross. [32] The (practitioner) who delights in vigilance and fears negligence is incapable of backsliding and is quite close to Nirvana.

Selections from Chapter 3: The Mind (consciousness)

[33] The restless, agitated mind (monkey mind), hard to protect, hard to control, the sage makes straight (with intentional action).

[35] The mind, hard to control, flighty – alighting where it wishes – one does well to tame. The disciplined mind (though effort, joyful actions) brings happiness (**peace**). [36] The mind, hard to see (not a “thing”), subtle – alighting where it wishes – the sage protects. The watched mind (mindfulness, awareness) brings happiness (**peace**).

[42] Whatever an enemy may do to an enemy, our haters, one to another, far worse is the harm from one's own wrongly directed mind. [43] Neither mother nor father, nor any other relative can

do one as much good as one's own well-directed mind (lovingkindness, compassion, ethics, insight... through training the mind; the Noble Eightfold Path; 7-Point Mind Training...etc.)

Selections from Chapter 4: Flowers (a metaphor for something attractive)

[48] The person *obsessed* with gathering flowers (sensual desires), insatiable for sense pleasures, is under the sway of samsara.

[49] As a bee gathers nectar and moves on without harming the flower, its color, or its fragrance, just so should a sage walk through a village.

[50] Do not consider the faults of others or what they have or haven't done. Consider rather, what you yourself have or haven't done.

[52] Like a beautiful flower, brightly colored and with scent, so are well-spoken words fruitful when carried out.

[55] The scent of virtue is unsurpassed...

[58] As a sweet-smelling lotus, pleasing to the heart, may grow in a heap of rubbish discarded along the highway, [50]m so a disciple of the Fully Awakened One (the Buddha) shines with wisdom amid the rubbish heap of blind, common people.

Selections from Chapter 5: The Fool

[60] Night is long for one lying awake. Seven miles is long for one exhausted. Samsara is long for fools ignorant of the true Dharma.

[63] A fool, conscious of her foolishness, is to that extent wise. But a fool who considers himself wise is the one to be called a fool (arrogance).

[64] A fool associating with a sage, even if for a lifetime, will no more perceive the Dharma than a spoon will perceive the taste of soup. [65] A discerning person who associates with a sage, even if for a brief moment, will quickly perceive the Dharma, as the tongue perceives the taste of soup.

[68] A deed is good that one doesn't regret having done, that results in joy and delight.

[73] Fools will want unwarranted status, deference from fellow monks, authority in the monasteries, and homage from good families. [74] "Let both householders and renunciants believe that *I did this*. Let them obey me in every task". Such are the thoughts of a fool who cultivates desire and pride. (Arrogance)

Selections from Chapter 6: The Sage (wise person)

[76] Like someone pointing to treasure in the wise person who sees your faults and points them out. Associate with such a sage. Good will come of it...

[77] Let one such as this advise you, instruct you, and restrain you from ride behavior. Such a person is pleasing to good people, but displeasing to the bad.

[79] One who drinks in the Dharma sleeps happily with a clear mind (tranquil, mental calm). The sage always delights in the Dharma...

[81] ... A sage is not moved by praise and blame.

[82] ... A sage becomes clear upon hearing the Dharma.

[83] Virtuous people always let go. They don't prattle about pleasures and desires... The sage shows no sign of being elated or depressed.

[88] ... Sages should cleanse themselves of what defiles the mind.

[89] Those who fully cultivate the (7) Factors of Awakening, give up grasping, enjoy non-clinging, and have destroyed the toxins (poisons, afflictive emotions and mental obscurations, etc.) are luminous, and completely liberated in this life. (*The 7 Factors* are (1) mindfulness, (2) investigation of dharma, (3) (joyful) effort, (4) joy, happiness, contentment, (5) tranquility (**peace**), (6) concentration, and (7) equanimity [peaceful stability, calm abiding].)

Selections from Chapter 7: The Arhat

[90] For a "perfect one" (Arhat) at the journey's end (end of life or liberation), freed of sorrow, liberated in all ways, released from all bonds (afflictive emotions, mental obscurations, etc.), no fever exists (only **peace**).

[92] Like the path of birds in the sky, it is hard to trace the path of those who do not hoard (accumulations), who are judicious with their food, and whose field is the freedom of "emptiness" and "signlessness" (attributes of Nirvana such as empty of self, greed, hate, delusion; nothing to focus on, no signs to attain).

[96] Calm in mind, speech, and action, and released through right understanding (insight into the way things are vs. appear; 4 Noble Truths – samsara, cause, cessation, path), such a person is fully at **peace**.

[98] In village, in forest, in low land, in high land: delightful is the place where the arhat dwells (inside), and [99] ... not seeking sensual pleasure (desires, especially greed).

Selections from Chapter 8: Thousands ("lots")

[100] Better than a thousand meaningless statements is one meaningful (useful) word, which, having been heard, brings **peace**.

[101] Better than a thousand meaningless verses is one meaningful line of verse which, having been heard, brings **peace**.

[102] Better than reciting a hundred meaningless verses is one line of Dharma which, having been heard, brings **peace**.

[104] Certainly it is better to conquer oneself than others. For someone who is self-restrained and always lives with mastery (self-subdued) ... could turn conquest into defeat.

[106] Better than a thousand ritual sacrifices (Vedas and Hinduism) ... is one moment's homage offered to one who has cultivated herself.

[107] Better than a hundred year ... is one moment's homage offered to one who has cultivated himself (perfected his/her mind).

Selections from Chapter 9: Evil

[116] Be quick to do good, restrain your mind from evil...

[117] Having done something evil, don't repeat it (habit forming)...

[118] Having done something meritorious (good), repeat it (also habit forming)...

Selections from Chapter 10: Violence

[129] ... Seeing others as being like yourself (interdependent), do not kill or cause others to kill.

[130] ...Seeing others as being like yourself (interrelated), do not kill or cause others to kill.

[133] Don't speak harshly to anyone; what you say will be said back to you. Hostile speech is painful, and you will meet with retaliation (consequences).

[142] Even though well adorned, if one lives at **peace**, calmed, controlled, assured, and chase (monastics), having given up violence toward all beings, then one is a brahmin (arhat), a renunciate, a monastic (someone of worthy conduct and spiritual maturity, not the priestly caste - *Brahmin*).

[144] Like a good horse alert to the whip, be ardent and alarmed. With faith, virtue, effort, concentration, and discernment, accomplished in knowledge and good conduct, and mindful, you will leave this great suffering behind.

Section 2 – Chapters 11-21

Selection from Chapter 11: Old Age

[151] Even the splendid chariots of the royalty wear out (impermanence). So too does the body decay. But the Dharma of the virtuous (the Good) does not decay for it is upheld when the virtuous (the Good) teach it to good people.

Selections from Chapter 12: Oneself

[159] As one instructs others, so should one do oneself: only the self-controlled should restrain others. Truly, it is hard to restrain oneself. (Not easy to be the example; like living in a glass house.)

[160] Oneself, indeed, is one's own protector. What other protector could there be? With self-control one gains a protector hard to obtain.

[165] Evil is done by oneself alone; by oneself is one defiled. Evil is avoided by oneself; by oneself alone is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself; No one can purify another.

[166] Don't give up your own welfare for the sake of others' welfare, however great (contrary to some Bodhisattva vows). Clearly know your own welfare and be intent on the highest good.

Selections from Chapter 13: The World

[168] Rouse yourself! Don't be negligent! Live the Dharma, a life of good conduct. One who lives the Dharma is happy in this world and the next (literal or symbolic).

[169] Live the Dharma, a life of good conduct. Don't live a life of bad conduct. One who lives the Dharma is happy in this world and the next (ditto).

[171] Come, look on this world as a beautified royal chariot. Fools flounder in it, but the discerning do not cling.

[171] Whoever recovers from doing evil by doing something wholesome illuminate the world like the moon set free from a cloud.

[177] Fools don't praise generosity; misers don't go to the world of "gods". The wise rejoice in generosity and so find happiness in the hereafter (literal or symbolic).

Selections from Chapter 14: The Buddha (our views of him)

[179] The Buddha's victory cannot be undone; no one in the world can approach it. By what path would you guide him, who has no path (already on the "other side") and whose field is endless (vast). [180] The Buddha has no ensnaring, embroiling (strong) craving to lead him. By what path would you guide him, who has no path and whose field is endless.

[181] Even the "gods" envy the awakened ones, ... who are intent on meditation and "delight" in the **peace** of renunciation (of greed/grasping and attachment/clinging).

[183] Doing no evil (ethics), engaging in what's skillful (love and compassion), and purifying one's mind (insight/wisdom), this is the teaching of the buddhas. [185] Not disparaging others (right speech), no causing injury (do no harm), knowing moderation in food, dwelling in solitude (**peace**) and pursuing the higher states of mind (insight/wisdom), this is the teaching of the buddhas.

[186] Not even with a shower of gold coins would we find satisfaction in sensual craving.

Knowing that sensual cravings are (the cause) of suffering, that they bring little delight (**peace**),

[187] the sage does not rejoice even in divine pleasures. One who delights in the ending of craving is a disciple of the Fully Awakened One.

[190-191] When going for refuge ... with right insight, the Four Noble Truths: suffering (discontent), arising of suffering (cause, source), overcoming suffering (solution), and the Eightfold Path leading to the ending of suffering, this is the secure refuge; ... the supreme refuge, ... and one is released from all suffering.

[195-196] The merit of one with deep respect and admiration of the buddhas or disciples who have transcended their mental obscurations and afflictive emotions, and have passed beyond sorrow and grief (sufferings), gone to **peace**, and have nothing to fear, the merit of such respect and admiration can never be calculated (or even estimated). [A mix of several sources.]

Selections from Chapter 15: Happiness

[197] Ah, so happily we live without hate among people who hate. [198] Ah, so happily we live without misery among those with misery. [199] Ah, so happily we live without (greed) among those with (greed).

[201] Giving up both victory and defeat, those who have attained **peace** sleep happily...

[202] There is no fire like lust, no misfortune like hate, no suffering like the aggregates (body, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness ... or sometimes "self"), and no happiness higher than **peace**.

[205] Tasting the flavor of solitude and **peace**, one becomes free of distress and evil...

Selections from Chapter 16: The Dear (things dear to us)

[209] Practicing what one shouldn't, not practicing what one should, having abandoned the goal (liberation), clinging to what is dear, one comes to envy those who practice.

[210] Don't get entangled with what you long-for or dislike. Not (getting) what you long-for is suffering; so also is (getting) what you dislike. [211] Therefore, do not turn anything into something longed for.... Without longing or dislike, no bonds exist. {Middle Way]

Examples: [212] longing, [213] affection, [214] infatuation, [215] sensual craving, [216] craving.

[218] Anyone who aspires to the "indescribable", whose mind is expansive, and whose heart is not bound to sensual craving is called [a non-returner, no rebirth]. [Stream enterer, once returner, non-returner, Arhat]

Selections from Chapter 17: Anger (one of the six poisons)

[221] Give up anger, give up conceit, pass beyond every fetter. There is no suffering for one who possesses nothing, who doesn't cling to body-and-mind ["name and form" in 12 Links].

[223] Conquer anger with non-anger (or love and compassion); conquer wickedness with goodness; conquer stinginess with giving, and a liar with truth.

[231] Guard against anger erupting in your body (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct), be restrained with your body. Letting go of bodily misconduct, practice good conduct with your body. Similarly, [232] anger in speech (lying, harsh speech, divisive speech, gossip) and/or [233] mind (greed, hate, wrong view)... [234] The wise are restrained in body, ...speech, ...mind. They are fully restrained.

Selections from Chapter 18: Corruption

[236] Make an island for yourself. Be quick in making effort. Be wise. Unblemished with corruption removed, you'll enter the divine realm of the noble ones (*nirvana*). [238] Make an island for yourself. Be quick in effort. Be wise. Unblemished with corruption removed, you'll experience birth and old age no more.

[239] ... The wise person gradually, bit by bit, moment by moment, removes impurities (unwholesome actions, etc.).

[242] Bad conduct is corruption in a person (do good); stinginess is corruption in a giver (give generously), evil traits corrupt people (be good)...

[243] More corrupt than these is ignorance (or delusion), the greatest corruption. Having abandoned this corruption, (practitioners) remain corruption free!

[251] There is no fire like lust (attachment or greed), no grasping like hate (aversion), no snare like delusion ignorance of harming others), no river like craving (greed).

Selections from Chapter 19: The Just (pairings)

[256-257] One is not just who judges a case hastily. A wise person considers both what is and isn't right. Guiding others without force, impartially and in accord with the Dharma, one is called a guardian of the Dharma, intelligent and just.

[258] One is not wise only because one speaks a lot [sorry!]. One who is peaceful, without hate, and fearless is said to be wise. [259] ... having heard little, if one perceives the Dharma with one's own body and is never negligent of the Dharma, then one is indeed an upholder of the Dharma.

[261] It's through truth, dharma, harmlessness, restraint, and self-control that the wise one, purged of impurities, is called "an elder".

[262-263] Not through talk alone or by good looks does someone envious, stingy, and treacherous become a person of good character. But one with these cut off, uprooted, and destroyed, a person wise and purged of faults is called "of good character".

[264-265] Not by means of a shaven head (monastic), does someone dishonest and undisciplined become a renunciant. ... Someone who has pacified evil ... in every way, is ... called a renunciant (bhikku or contemplative or yogi).

[268-269] Not by silence does an ignorant fool become a sage. The wise person, as if holding a set of scales, selects what's good and avoids what's evil is a sage. Whoever can weigh these two sides of the world is called "a sage" (profoundly wise).

[270] Not by harming living beings is one a noble one. By being harmless to all living beings is one called "a noble one".

[271-272] Not with virtue or religious practice, great learning, attaining *samadhi* (deep concentration), dwelling alone, or thinking "I touch the happiness of renunciation unknown by ordinary people" should you rest assured without having destroyed the toxins (poisons, fires, fetters, taints, kleshas, hindrances...).

Selections from Chapter 20: The Path

[273] The best of paths is the Eightfold Path; the best of truths, the Four Noble Truths. The best of qualities is dispassion (able to think clearly or make good decisions, not influenced by passion or emotions); and the best among gods and humans is the one with eyes to see (insight, the true nature of mind). [274-275] This is the path for purifying one's vision; there is no other. Follow it, you will bewilder Mara (your inner demons). Follow it, you will put an end to suffering. This is the path I have proclaimed, having pulled out the arrows (demons; or having experienced the removal of the demons).

[276] It is up to you to make strong effort; (awakened ones) merely tell you how. Following the path, those absorbed in meditation (24/7) will be freed from Mara's bonds.

[277] All created things are impermanent. Seeing this with insight, one becomes disenchanted with suffering. This is the path to (awakening).

[278] All (compounded) things are suffering. Seeing this with insight, one becomes disenchanted with suffering. This is the path to (awakening).

[279] Inactive when one should be active, lazy though young and strong, disheartened in one's resolves, such a lazy, lethargic person doesn't find the path of insight.

[281] Watchful in speech and well-restrained in mind, do nothing unskillful with your body. Purify these three ; fulfill the path taught by the sages.

[282] Wisdom arises from spiritual practice; without practice it decays. Knowing this two-way path for gain and loss, conduct yourself so that wisdom grows.

[285] Destroy attachment to self as you could an autumn lily in your fist. Cultivate the path to **peace**, the Nirvana taught by the Buddha.

Selections from Chapter 21: Miscellaneous

[290] If, by giving up a lesser happiness (hedonism), one could experience a greater happiness (eudaemonia), a wise person would renounce the lesser to behold the greater.

[291] Those who seek their own happiness (ego, selfishness) by causing suffering for others are entangled with hostility, and they are not set free.

[292-293] The toxins multiply for the insolent and negligent who reject what they should do (for others) and do what they should not (for self). But the toxins come to an end for those who are mindful and alert, who are constantly well-engaged with mindfulness of the body, who don't resort to what they should not do but persist in doing what they should.

[296] Always wide awake are the disciples of Gotama, who constantly, day and night, are mindful of the Buddha ... [297] are mindful of the Dharma ... are mindful of the Sangha ... are mindful of the body ... delight in mindfulness ... delight in spiritual practice.

Section 3 – Chapters 22-26

Selections from Chapter 22: The Wrong or Bad (anger, hatred, etc.)

[306] Those who lie or do wrong and deny what they've done, share that same destiny.

[307] Many who wear the saffron robe have evil traits and lack restraint. They will live in sufferings.

[309] Misfortunes come to one who consorts with the spouse of another: demerit, disturbed sleep, disgrace, and other sufferings.

[312] A lax or corrupt act does not bear much fruit; it stirs up the dust of passions, greed, hate, and delusion all the more. [313] If anything is to be done, do it with joyful effort, ethics, meditation, and insight.

[314] A foul deed torments one later (karma, action and consequences). A good deed leaves no regret. Do good, or at least do no harm.

[315] Don't let a moment pass you by to do good.

[316] Those ashamed of what they should not be ashamed of and are not ashamed of what they should be ashamed of – upholding false views, go to states of suffering.

[317] Those who see something to fear where there is nothing to fear, and see nothing to fear where there is something to fear – upholding false views, go to states of suffering.

[318] Those who imagine evil where there is none, and do not see evil where it is – upholding false views, go to states of suffering.

[319] Those who discern the wrong as wrong and the right as right – upholding right views, go to states of bliss, happiness, and **peace**.

Selections from Chapter 23: The Elephant (metaphors have been omitted)

[320] Many people lack virtue, so I will endure abuse. [321] The best is one who endures verbal abuse. (Listen for any elements of truth. Embody compassion for their suffering.)

[322-323] Excellent are those who have subdued themselves (mental calm, **peace**, and contentment) with a well-controlled mind.

[326] In the past, this mind went wandering where it wished, as it liked, and as it pleased. Now I retain it mindfully with insight.

[327] Delight in vigilance (ethical actions) and guard your mind.

[328] If you find a wise and prudent friend of good conduct, travel the path together joyously and mindfully. [329] If you do not find such a friend travel alone (as a yogi). [330] It is better then to travel alone.

[331] Happiness is having friends when the need arises, having contentment with whatever one has, having merit at the end of one's life, and the abandoning of all suffering (liberation).

[332] In the world, respect for one's mother is happiness, as is respect for one's father, respect for yogis and monastics, as is respect for the masters.

[333] Happiness is a virtue lasting through old age, steadfast faith, attainment of wisdom, and not doing evil.

Selections from Chapter 24: Craving

[335] Sorrow grows like grass after rain for anyone overcome by this miserable craving and clinging to the world. [336] Sorrow falls away like drops of water from a lotus for anyone who overcomes this miserable craving and clinging to the world.

[339] With craving flowing mightily toward anything pleasing, the person of wrong views is carried away by lustful intent.

[343] Surrounded by craving, people run around like frightened hares. Held by mental fetters, they suffer again and again for a long time. [344] ... One who yearns to be passion-free should destroy their own craving.

[349] one who has agitated thoughts and intense passion, and who is focused on pleasure (hedonism), craving grows even more, making the fetter even stronger. [350] But those who delight in calming their craving thoughts, are always mindful, and aware of what is unpleasant, will bring an end to craving Mara's inner demons.

[351] One who is free from craving and attachment, passionless, and destroyed the arrows of non-virtue has reached the goal of a non-returner.

[354] The gift of Dharma surpasses all other gifts. The taste of Dharma surpasses all other gifts. The delight in Dharma surpasses all other delights. The cessation of craving conquers all suffering.

[355] Wealth destroys the foolish, but not those who seek liberation. Craving wealth, one ruins oneself as well as others.

[356-359] Weeds are the bane of fields; passion is the ruin of people. Generosity to those in need yields great fruit. Hatred is the ruin of people ... delusion is the ruin of people ... desire is the ruin of people; altruistic generosity, lovingkindness, and compassion bear great fruit.

Selections from Chapter 25: The Bhikkhu or Bhikkhni (monastics, but sometimes used for all serious practitioners)

[360-361] Restraint of the eye ... ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... speech ... mind ... in all circumstances is good, and one retrained in every way is freed from all suffering.

[362] One who is in control of their body, speech, composed, solitary, and contented is called a bhikkhu.

[363] Sweet is the speech of one who restrains the mouth, speaks insightfully, is not conceited, and illuminates the teaching in letter and spirit.

[364] One who dwells, delights, reflects, and recollects the Dharma does not fall away from the true Dharma.

[365] One dwelling in lovingkindness, and pleased with the Buddha's teachings attains happiness, the stilling of mental formation, the state of **peace**.

[372] There is no meditative absorption for one without insight. There is no insight for one without meditative absorption. With both, one is close to Nirvana.

[373] For one with a **peaceful** mind, who enters a solitary place and clearly sees the true Dharma, there arises a delight that transcends all mundane delights.

[376] If one is friendly by habit and skillful in conduct, one will have much happiness and **peace**, bringing an end to suffering.

[378] **Peaceful** in body, **peaceful** in speech, one **peaceful** in thought who has rejected the worldly desires and cravings is called "one at **peace**".

[381] Filled with dharma and pleased with the Buddha's teachings, one attains happiness, stilling mental formations, the state of **peace**.

Selections from Chapter 26: The Holy One

[384] With calm and insight, one reaches the other shore and all fetters fall away.

[385] For one untied and free of distress (at **peace**), neither "beyond", "not beyond", nor "both beyond-and-not-beyond" exist.

[391] Whoever does no evil through body, speech, and mind and is restrained, I call a Holy One.

[A list of those worth of being called a "holy one"]:

[395] One robed in discarded rags, lean, alone in a forest, absorbed in meditation

[396] One who has nothing and does not cling

[397] One who has cut off every fetter, does not tremble, is unbound and beyond attachments

[398] One who cut hatred, craving, false views, latent tendencies (habits), and ignorance is awakened

[399] One who without resentment endures abuse, is patient

[400] One free from anger, craving and is devout, virtuous, without craving, subdued

[401] One who does not cling to sensual craving

[402] One who realizes the end of suffering and becomes emancipated

[403] One who is wise, of profound insight, and understanding what is and is not the path and has reached the highest goal

[405] One who has given up violence and neither kills nor causes others to kill

[406] One who is peaceful among the violent, not clinging among those who cling

[407] One who lets lust, aversion, hatred, pride and hypocrisy fall away

[410] One who has no longing for this world or the beyond

[411] One who has no attachments, is free of doubts, and realizes Deathlessness (transcendence)

[414] One who has passed beyond this troublesome road, difficult path, samsara, delusion, has crossed over to the other shore, gone beyond, is meditative, calm, free of craving or doubt, without clinging, released into Nirvana

[415-418] One who has given up lust, craving, human existence, liking and disliking, is at **peace** without attachment to the world

So what have we learned? What is the “heart essence” of the Buddha’s teachings?

PART 3: The Teachings of the Buddha

Section 1: Bhikkhu Bodhi Wisdom Interview

Noble Truths, Noble Path

Structure, patterns, logic of the arrangement not clear in the Pali collection:

Nikayas: Not in organization for study

- Digha Nikaya – Long Discourses: popular audiences, inspire faith & devotion and attract converts
- Majjhima Nikaya – Middle Length Discourses: Buddhist community, new monastics, doctrines and practices
- Samyutta Nikaya – Connected Discourses: major doctrines of Early Buddhism to generate insight, for doctrinal specialists and accomplished meditators
- Anguttara Nikaya – Numerical Discourses: for elder monastics charged with teaching recruits and laity
- Khuddaka Nikaya – Minor Collection: variety, most voluminous (includes the *Dharmapada*).

Noble Truths, Noble Path is based (mostly) on **Samyutta Nikaya** rearranged to mirror the 4 Noble Truths:

- Focus is on “the ultimate good”, liberation (nirvana)
- Human condition, 4 Truths, rebirths, predicament & roots, path
- Ch 1 – selections from the 4 noble truths, the most concise summary of dharma
- Ch 2 - dukkhas (sufferings arise from 5 aggregates – form, feeling, perception, intention, consciousness)
- Ch 3 – six internal sense bases (senses, including mind)
- Ch 4 – 12 links of dependent origination (ignorance at the root, craving in the middle, old age and death at the end; mode of origination vs. mode of cessation)
- Ch 5 – path/practices (4 establishments of mindfulness, 7 factors of enlightenment, and understanding the noble eightfold path)
- Ch 6 – nirvana (the goal: cessation of lust, hatred, and delusion)

Three aims underly the Buddha’s teachings: (1) well-being and happiness in this life (ethics), (2) ...in future lives (karma and rebirth), and (3) liberation, achieved by moral conduct, concentration, and insight [training the mind]. This book takes us straight to the heart of the Buddha’s teachings: the Four Noble Truths (doctrine) and training (understanding the nature of things and removal of the mind’s hindrances and fetters, practice).

Below is a summary of selections from the book, which is based upon the *Samyutta Nikaya*.

Chapter 1: The Four Noble Truths – The Matrix of the Teaching

The Buddha treated the 4 Noble Truths as only suitable for those who were “ripe” enough to understand them clearly and directly. He would usually begin with generosity and morality [1st two of the 6 Perfections]. Then he would explain the workings of karma and rebirth, the faults of sensual pleasures and the benefits of renunciation, instilling respect for the contemplative life.

Only then would he reveal the 4 Noble Truths (“the special Dharma teaching of the Buddha”): suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path, which lead “to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to liberation, to nirvana”.

In the *Khandahasutta* the Buddha uses the “**aggregates**” to illustrate the 4 Noble Truths:

“What is the noble truth of suffering? The five clinging-aggregates ... form ... feelings ... perception ... volitional [intentional] activities ... and consciousness clinging-aggregates. This is called the noble truth of suffering”.

“And what is the noble truth of the origin of suffering? It is craving, causing renewed existence [rebirth], accompanied by delight and lust, delighting here and there, i.e., craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for non-existence. This is called the noble truth of the origin of suffering”.

“And what is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering? It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, it’s giving up, relinquishment, freedom from it, non-attachment. This is called the noble truth of the cessation of suffering”.

“And what is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering? It is just this noble eightfold path, that is right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is called the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. These are the four noble truths”.

Numerous others emphasize the need for “**exertion**” [joyful effort and persistence in the 6 Perfections].

Chapter 2: The Five Aggregates – The Meaning of Suffering in Brief

In his first discourse the Buddha declared, “In brief, the five clinging-aggregates are suffering”. Thus, the range of dukkha is not confined to experiential pain and distress, but extends to all aspects of our being. In this sutra, however, the Buddha did not explain what is meant by the five aggregates, nor did he analyze them at length. The *Khandha Samyutta* contains some 150 sutras on the five aggregates, groupings into which the Buddha classified these constituents of experience: material form, feeling, perception, volitional [intentional] activities, and consciousness.

The Buddha replies to a question, “Whatever form there is – whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near – this is called the form aggregate”. And for the other four aggregates.

The content of the five aggregates are as follows: **form** – a material substance (earth, water, fire, air – the four material properties of matter; *earth* – solidity, hardness or softness and supporting the other elements; *water* – liquidity, binding the material particles; *fire* – heat or absence, coolness “ripening” matter; and *air* – expansion or contraction.

There is also a category of “derived from” that includes all kinds of matter derived from the four elements. This includes the “space” element, the five sense faculties, and the sensory objects – visible form, sound, odor, and taste. (Touch?)

Feeling arises through contact, the encounter of consciousness with an object through a sense base [eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body], which can include mind cognizing purely mental objects

[thoughts, memories...]. Feeling in Buddhism is strictly pleasant, painful, or neutral, not “emotions” (likely considered a complex phenomenon involving several aggregates. [?])

Perception, which also arises through contact, consists of the six types – visual, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile objects, and mental objects. Perception involves singling out the distinctive qualities of the object that serves as the basis for identification, designation, and recognition. Some sutras assert that the singling out and grasping may lead to the “dangers” of “raw perception” due to a tendency to create and posit inappropriate labels, resulting in our distorted, biased, and deceptive view of the world.

There are six kinds of **volitional activities** or intentional actions related to visible forms, sounds, odors, tastes, tactile objects and mental objects. This is the cause of **karma**: “It is volition that I call karma; for having willed, one acts through *body, speech, and mind*”. Later texts expanded this to all mental functions that don’t fit the other three, such as thoughts, examination, unwholesome states such as greed, hatred, and delusion, and wholesome states such as mindfulness, kindness, compassion, and insight.

Consciousness includes six kinds – eye, ear, nose, tongue, body [touch], and mind. The distinction between consciousness and perception is not clear, inextricably linked. I [Bhikkhu Bodhi] would stipulate that *consciousness* is the factor that “illuminates” an entire sensory sphere, making it accessible through a sense faculty, while *perception* is the factor that of sense objects illuminated by consciousness, distinguishing and labeling them and organizing them into an intelligible world under an array of concepts.

The Buddha places the aggregates in such a major role because among ordinary people, the aggregates serve as the primary basis for **clinging**, based upon distorted cognition of **fundamental ignorance** [the way things *appear* vs. the things *really are*]. The five aggregates comprise all the things we take as “mine”. They also serve as the grounds for identification, our sense of personal identity, “I” and “self” or “worldling”.

The problem that arises is that the five aggregates also serve as the basis for pleasure and enjoyment. Each can be regarded from three perspectives: the enjoyment it yields, the danger inherent in it, and the way of escape or release from it. We cling to our body for happiness and pleasure; we crave pleasant feelings, seek out agreeable objects of perception, launch projects or enjoyable activities, and hold consciousness as the precondition for all experience of pleasure. The “danger” is that each aggregate is impermanent, unable to give enduring satisfaction, and subject to change.

As a result, the Buddha included the five clinging-aggregates into the noble truth of “suffering”. They change and fail to meet our expectations. Thus, to cling to the aggregates is to cling to *dukkha* (suffering). Thus, the escape or release is “the removal and abandonment of desire-and-lust” for each of the aggregates. Those who follow his teaching and practice become “liberated by wisdom”, being released from our attachment to the aggregates.

[Note: this asserts that one *is attached or clinging* to one or more of the aggregates, which may not necessarily be true. Otherwise, *cessation* itself would not be an option. While it is likely that we all have *some* attachments or clinging, it is also likely that there are others to which we have only moderate or no attachments or clinging. In some sources, the Buddha references the problem as *strong attachments*, and he also notes that some forms of clinging are perfectly fine and even beneficial, such as seeking liberation itself!]

The Buddha also relates the aggregates to our view of “self”, to which we cling and identify. He asserts that there is no such being (*anatman* or *no-self*), only our deluded attachment to the idea. Contrary to the popular misconception, the Buddha does not explicitly state “there is no self”. Rather, he takes a more pragmatic approach that the things assumed to be a self, fail to measure up to the criteria of true selfhood, not a blanket denial of a self. It is the five aggregates that are not the self. One argument is that a “true self” should be invulnerable to pain and suffering. Another is that a true self must permanent and a source of lasting happiness, yet the aggregates are all impermanent. The third is that therefore the self also cannot be a source of lasting happiness. Thus, the Buddha advocated penetrating these with insight to remove the cognitive delusions of permanence, pleasure, and self. [At the same time he does at times use the idea of *impermanent* forms of pleasure and self, such as the joy and happiness experienced during some forms of practice.]

Having this realization, one becomes *disenchanted* [disappointed, disillusioned, not what was expected], leading to *dispassionate* [not influenced by strong emotions, able to be rational and impartial], and one becomes *liberated* [free from social conventions or traditional ideas]. One has *transcended attachment* to forms, feelings, perceptions, volitional activities [some sources use “thoughts”], and consciousness [although we still experience them].

“The perfectly enlightened one is liberated by *non-clinging* through disenchantment with form [etc.], through dispassion and cessation...”

And “perception of the impermanent, developed and cultivated, eliminates all sensual lust, lust for form, for existence, all ignorance, [and] demolishes all conceit [for] “I am” [a permanent “self”].

Chapter 3: The Six Sense Bases – The Channels through Which Suffering Originates

“Sense bases” occur in pairs – external and internal. The external bases are the sources are the objects being perceived. The internal sense bases are the senses through which mind gains access to the world, consciousnesses, leading to sufferings. This “conditionality” underlies “the 12 links of dependent origination” and, thus, the lack of any autonomous subject of experience.

The resulting “mind-base” is ambiguous. Although it is as if described as an internal mental organ [the brain?], no such organ is described. The “mind-base” might be taken as the “passive subliminal flow of the mind” from which “active reflective consciousness” emerges, and its “external base” as the mental objects apprehended by thought, introspection, imagination, reflection, and meditative contemplation.

While the five aggregates seem to have been advanced primarily to show the objective source of deluded notions of “mine”, “I”, and “self”, the six **sense bases** have a closer connection with “craving” in the heart of the classical formula of the 12-links of dependent origination: sense bases > contact > feeling > craving.

Since “craving” is said to be the “origin of dukkha, craving nurtured by feelings [pleasant, unpleasant, neutral], from “contact” with the six sense bases, we must change our perspective on sense objects and the feelings they provoke. The requires that we control our reactions to the inputs of the senses, a practice called “restraint of the senses”.

Together with moderation in eating and devotion to wakefulness, restraint of the senses is said to constitute the foundation for the destruction of the influxes. Especially critical is not to grasp at the “signs and features” of the object. When we grasp at these – the attractive and

repulsive aspects – we begin mentally provoking our desires that entangle us in **the web of craving and aversion**. The Buddha instructs us to see how “feeling” is merely a conditioned state that arises through a complex process involving the sense bases, consciousness, and contact.

Sometimes simply discerning the source of the feeling is sufficient. Feelings are correlated with one of the three root defilements: **pleasant feelings trigger lust, painful feelings trigger hate, and neutral feelings trigger delusion**. These consume the mind like “everything is burning” with the fires of “birth, old age, and death”, only to be repeated over and over again. While the sutras on the five aggregates emphasize contemplation on “non-self” [or interdependence], the sutras on the six sense bases emphasize contemplation of “impermanence”.

Overtaking the view of an independent “self” is only one of the five lower fetters [belief in a “self”, uncertainty about Buddha’s awakens, grasping at rites and rituals, sensual desires, and ill will] eliminated in the first stage of “stream-enterer” [once- returner, non-returner, and Arhat]. Cessation of craving only occurs upon becoming an Arhat.¹

Craving results in “enjoyable” feelings as being permanent. All such experiences must be seen as impermanent, changing, without attachment. Then, ignorance is abandoned and clear knowledge [insight] arises. “The Tathagata does not delight in mental objects, is not delighted with mental objects, does not rejoice in mental objects. ...The Tathagata dwells happily.” [No attachment, no aversion! Calm, peace, contentment...]

Section 2

In the Buddha’s Words and Noble Truths Noble Path – Bhikkhu Bodhi

The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha – selected notes

26 Ariyapariyesana Sutta – The Noble Search Ananda

- Ignoble search: birth/acquisitions, ageing, sickness, death, sorrow, defilement
- Noble search: Nirvana – unailing, deathless, sorrowless, undefiled supreme security
- Left into homelessness – seeking what is wholesome, sublime **peace**.
- Alara Kalama² – “nothingness” [3rd infinite absorption].

Not cessation, **peace**, or Nirvana, but *only* nothingness.

- Uddaka Ramputta¹ – direct knowledge, neither-perception-nor-nonperception
 - Not disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, **peace**, direct knowledge, Nirvana, *only* neither-perception-nor-nonperception [4th infinite absorption].
- Still searching for what is “wholesome” and “sublime **peace**”, to a delightful grove and clear-flowing river, village for alms.
- This dharma I have attained is profound, hard to see, hard to understand, **peaceful** and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, experienced by the wise. It is hard to see

¹ The higher fetters are: lust for material existence or rebirth [form realm], lust for immaterial existence or rebirth [formless realm], conceit [pride or arrogance], restlessness [excitement, disquietude], and ignorance [delusion].

² These two “teachers” have been challenged by some scholars. One note is that the Buddha rejected these 3rd and 4th of the (higher) absorptions, but he is said to have attained enlightenment from a memory of the very 1st jhana as a child.

this truth, stilling of all formations, acquisitions, destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, Nirvana.

- Deer Park companions: deathless has been attained, go forth into homelessness [already had], “the Tathagata does not live luxuriously, nor has he given up his striving and reverted to luxury”, enter through direct knowledge; they attained the unaging, unailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, Nirvana, unshakable, our last rebirth.
- Five sources of sensual pleasures: forms, feelings, sounds, odors, tastes, tangibles (wished for, desired, agreeable, and likeable).
- Four jhanas (multiple versions are included in these notes):
 - First: accompanied by applied and sustained thought, rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.
 - Second: Stilling of applied and sustained thought, self-confidence, singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration.
 - Third: Fading away of rapture, abides in equanimity (mental calm), mindful and aware, still feeling pleasure in the body/pleasant abiding.
 - Fourth: abandoning pleasure and pain, disappearance of joy and grief, purity of mindfulness due to equanimity [mental calm].
- Absorptions (higher jhanas):
 - Infinite space
 - Infinite consciousness
 - Nothingness
 - Neither-perception-nor-nonperception
- Cessation of perception and feeling, taints are destroyed by seeing with wisdom, beyond attachment to the world; confidently stands, sits, lies down, out of the Evil One’s range.

36 Mahasaccaka Sutta – Rose-Apple Tree & 4 Jhanas

- Rose-Apple Tree: I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome state, I entered upon and abided in the first jhana, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. Could that be the path to enlightenment? Then, following that memory, came the realization: “That is indeed the path to enlightenment”. I thought: “Why am I afraid of **that pleasure that has nothing to do with sensual pleasures and unwholesome states?** ... I am not afraid.”
- Continues with the story of eating boiled rice and porridge [no girls] and his 5 companions left.
- Four Jhanas:
 - First: “I entered upon and abided in the *first jhana*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.
 - Second: With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, I entered upon and abided in the *second jhana*.
 - Third: With the fading away as well of rapture...I entered upon and abided in the *third jhana*...
 - Fourth: With the abandoning of pleasure and pain...I entered upon and abided in the *fourth jhana*...But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and

remain. My concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability" [calm, tranquility].

95 *Canki Sutta* – approaching the dharma with faith, practice, and attainment

- A householder investigates him in regard to three kinds of states: greed, hate, and delusion. He comes to know that there are no such states in this venerable one.
- Then he places faith in him, visits him, pays respect to him, gives ear; he hears the dharma, memorizes it [no texts!], examines the meaning, gains a reflective acceptance, zeal springs up, he scrutinizes, strives, realizes the supreme truth and sees it with wisdom. "The final arrival at truth lies in the repetition, development, and cultivation of those same things".
- "What, Master Gotama, is **most helpful for the final arrival at truth?**" **Striving, scrutiny, application, zeal, reflective acceptance, and examination of the meaning.**

63 *Culamunkya Sutta* – The unanswerable questions

- Ten questions (other versions have some additional questions):
 - Is the world eternal or not, finite or infinite?
 - Is the soul the same as the body or not?
 - After death, does a Buddha exist or not? Both? Neither?
- Buddha responded by asking if he *ever* declared he would answer these questions. He then compared it with a man wounded by an arrow smeared with poison who refuses to have it removed until he gets detailed responses to a long list of questions, and then points out that these *cannot* be answered. "Remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and what I have declared as declared". He then elaborates:
 - "Why have I left that undeclared? Because it is unbeneficial, it does not belong to the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to **peace**, to direct knowledge, to liberation, to Nirvana.
 - "What have I declared? 'This is suffering, this is the origin of suffering, this is the cessation of suffering, this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.
 - "Why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, leads to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, **peace**, direct knowledge³, liberation, Nirvana.

39 *Maha-Assapura Sutta* – Gradual training to becoming a "recluse"

- Conduct and livelihood – purify body, verbal, mental conduct and rest contented; livelihood purified, clear and open, flawless and restrained, not laud ourselves and disparage others,
- Restraint of the senses – guard the sense doors, practice restraint,
- Moderation in eating – neither for amusement nor for intoxication, physical beauty and attractiveness, only for endurance and continuance,

³ Insight – experiential understanding: the states to be *comprehended* with insight are the five aggregates of clinging to the body (form), feelings, perceptions, mental-formations, and consciousness. The states to be *abandoned* are ignorance and the desire for "becoming" (rebirth or heaven). And the states to be *experienced* are suchness and liberation. The states to be *cultivated* are mental calm and insight.

- Wakefulness – purify our minds of obstructive states,
- Mindfulness and full awareness – always act in full awareness of activities,
- Abandoning hindrances – abandon covetousness, ill will and hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt; abide with mindfulness, inwardly **peaceful**,
- Secluded from hindrances, sensual pleasures, and unwholesome states, [Four Jhanas]
 - Abide in the 1st jhana, accompanied by sustained thought, rapture, and pleasure born of seclusion,
 - Stilling applied and sustained thought, abide in the 2nd jhana, with self-confidence and signlessness of mind, without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration,
 - With fading away of rapture, abide in the 3rd jhana, in equanimity [mental calm], mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body,
 - Abandoning pleasure and pain, joy and grief, abide in the 4th jhana, with purity of mindfulness due to equanimity, pervading body and pure mind.
- Concentrated mind is purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and imperturbable, liberated from the origin, cessation, and the way, leading to the cessation of the taints and suffering
- A bhikkhu such as this is called a recluse, a brahmin, washed, attained to knowledge, a holy scholar, a noble one, an arhat:
 - A recluse has quieted unwholesome states that defile, bring renewal of being, give trouble, ripen in suffering, and lead to a future birth, aging, and death,
 - A brahmin has expelled evil unwholesome states... and lead to...,
 - A bhikkhu has been washed of unwholesome states that defile,
 - One attained to knowledge has known evil unwholesome states that defile...,
 - A holy scholar – unwholesome states have been streamed away,
 - A noble one – unwholesome states are far away,
 - An arhat – unwholesome states are far away.

40 Cula-Assapura Sutta – What makes one a “recluse” (core list)

- A recluse needs robes, almsfood, resting place, and medicinal requisites; has abandoned covetous, ill will, anger, resentment, contempt, insolence, envy, avarice, fraud, deceit, evil wishes, and wrong view, purified of these, liberated from them. Gladness is born in one, rapture, tranquility, and “pleasure” with concentrated mind.
- One abides imbued with **lovingkindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity** above, below, around, and everywhere, pervading the all-encompassing world, without hostility and ill will, and thereby gains internal **peace**.
- A non-recluse is covetous, a mind of ill will, anger, resentful, contemptuous, insolent, envious, avaricious, fraudulent, deceitful, has evil wishes, and wrong view.
- “If anyone goes forth from homelife into **homelessness**, and by realizing with direct knowledge here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are **taintless** with the destruction of the taints, then one is already a recluse because of the destruction of the taints”.

8 Sallekha Sutta – Benefits of virtue (4 jhanas, 4 absorptions and long lists to eliminate)

- **First jhana** – secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, but still with discursive thoughts, one abides with rapture and joy.

- *Second jhana* – having abandoned discursive thoughts, but still with rapture and joy, one abides with inner tranquility, harmony, and concentration.
- *Third jhana* – having abandoned rapture and joy, but still feeling pleasure in the body, one abides in mental calm (equanimity), mindful and fully aware.
- *Fourth jhana* – having abandoned pain and pleasure, one abides in purity of mindfulness of mental calm (equanimity).
- *Infinite space* – surmounting perceptions of form(s), abide in **peace** of space.
- *Infinite consciousness* – beyond infinite space, abide in **peace** of consciousness.
- *Nothingness* – aware that there is nothing, abide in **peace** of “nothingness”.
- *Neither-perception-nor-nonperception* – abide in **peace**.
- The text continues with extensive lists of “effacements” – removal of detrimental qualities of mind, identifying causes of conflict, and giving means to restore harmony and mutual respect.

117 Mahacattarisaka Sutta – the Noble 8-Fold Path

- **Right views:**
 - Right view affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.
 - Right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor on the path.
 - One has faculties of wisdom; mind is noble, taintless.
 - One makes effort to abandon wrong view, mindfully abandons wrong view, and mindfully abides in right view; this is right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.
- **Right intention:** One understands right vs. wrong intention.
 - Right intention affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.
 - Right intention that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor on the path.
 - Noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor on the path.
 - One makes effort to abandon wrong intention and enter right intention; this is right effort, mindfulness, and right view.
- **Right speech:**
 - Right speech affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.
 - Right speech that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor on the path.
 - Desisting from the four kinds of verbal misconduct, abstaining from them.
 - One makes an effort to abandon wrong speech, and enter upon right speech; this is right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.
- **Right action:**
 - Right action affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.
 - Right action that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.
 - Desisting from bodily misconduct, mind is noble, taintless, possesses the noble path.
 - One makes effort to abandon wrong action with right view, right effort, and right mindfulness.
- **Right livelihood:**
 - Right livelihood affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in acquisitions.
 - Right livelihood that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor on the path.
 - Desisting from wrong livelihood, abstaining, refraining, abstinence; mind is noble, taintless, possesses the noble path.

- One makes effort to abandon wrong livelihood with right effort, right livelihood, and right mindfulness.
- **[Right effort, mindfulness, and concentration are only listed above but not described.]**

10 Satipatthana Sutta – The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

- **Contemplation of the body as body:**
 - Breathe in/out, long/short, experiencing the whole body, tranquilizing the bodily formation, understanding each experience.
 - Contemplate the body internally, externally, both; **or** contemplate the nature of each; or mindfulness that there is a body to the extent necessary for **bare knowledge** [sensory experience; direct knowing; making up stories; “seeing clearly” - insight] and mindfulness, not clinging to anything in the world.
 - Contemplate the body internally, externally, both; **or** the body arising, vanishing, or both; **or** “there is a body” as necessary for **bare knowledge** and mindfulness, without clinging to anything in the world.
 - Contemplate the four postures: walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; body as a body internally, externally, both.
 - Full awareness when going forward, returning, looking ahead and away, flexing and extending limbs; awareness when wearing robes, carrying outer robe and bowl; eating, drinking, swallowing, and tasting food; defecating and urinating; full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent ... independent, not clinging to anything in the world.
 - Foulness of body parts – body from soles of feet up and down, skin and all internal and external body parts ... abides independent, not clinging to anything.
 - Review the body elements – earth, water, fire, and air; internally, externally, both, not clinging to anything in the world.
 - Nine charnel ground contemplations – on seeing a corpse (deceased), fate of this body; contemplate the body as a body internally, externally, both; same nature as animals eating others; deterioration is omitted (can only be imagined).
 - Contemplate the body or mindfulness that there is a body to the extent necessary for **bare knowledge** and mindfulness.
- **Contemplation of feeling**
 - Contemplate pleasant, painful, and/or neither; worldly and unworldly.
 - Contemplate feelings as feelings internally, externally, both; **or** the nature of their arising and vanishing; **or** mindfulness of feeling, not clinging to anything in the world.
- **Contemplating mind**
 - Contemplate mind affected by lust or not; hate or not; delusion or not.
 - Understand contracted mind, distracted mind, exalted mind, surpassed mind, concentrated mind, liberated mind.
 - Contemplate mind as mind internally, externally, both; **or** its nature of arising, vanishing, or both; **or** that there is mind to the extent necessary for **bare knowledge** and mindfulness. Abide without clinging to anything in the world.
- **Contemplating mind-objects (phenomena)**
 - Contemplate sensual desires in me or not, how they come to be, are abandoned, and future *non-arising*.

- Ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, or doubt are present or not, arising and abandoning, and future non-arising.
- Contemplate these internally, externally, both; **or** their nature of arising, vanishing, or both; **or** there are objects necessary for **bare knowledge** and mindfulness. Abide not clinging to anything in the world.
- Or Contemplating the Five Aggregates
 - Contemplate mind-objects as mind-objects in terms of the five aggregates internally, externally, both: material form – origin, disappearance; feeling ... ; perception ... ; mental formations ... ; mind-objects (consciousness) ... ; not clinging to anything in the world.
- Or Contemplating the Six Sense Bases
 - With eye one understands forms, ear/sounds, nose/smells, tongue/flavors, body/tangibles, and mind/mind-objects (thoughts, memories) ... and the arising, non-arising, and abandoning of the fetter, one contemplates them internally, externally, and both; and one abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.
[“Independent” usage?]
- **Contemplating the Seven Enlightenment Factors**
 - **Mindfulness** enlightenment factor – mind-objects as mind-objects in me or not; the arising of this factor and how it comes to fulfillment by development.
 - **Nature of reality investigation** enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - **Energy** enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - **Rapture or happiness** enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - **Tranquility or calm** [body and mind] enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - **Concentration** [focus, calm] enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - **Equanimity** [reality as it is(?), mental calm⁴] enlightenment factor... in me or not, arising or not, come to be, and comes to fulfillment.
 - Understanding how each comes to be, comes to fulfillment, and one abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.
- **“This is the direct path for the purification of beings”** (Seven to one years, seven to one month, half a month, seven days).

Section 3

The 12 Links of Dependent Origination

Chapter 4: Dependent Origination – The Origination and Cessation of Suffering

“When this exists, that comes to be; with the arising of this, that arises. When this does not exist, that does not come to be; with the cessation of this, that ceases”. [Interdependence, very common in science, cause and effect.] Dependent origination goes deeper than the sense bases > contact > feeling > craving part of the description.

⁴ **Unshakable calm** – unwavering or neutral in the face of the Eight Worldly Concerns: gain/loss, pleasure/pain, praise/blame, and fame/disgrace.

The traditional explanation is as follows: Because of fundamental *ignorance*, one engages in various *volitional activities* [intentional acts or karma] – wholesome and unwholesome bodily, verbal, or purely mental actions – that generate karma with the potential to produce a new existence [rebirth]. At death, these activities propel *consciousness* [not “soul” as in Hinduism] into a new existence. This begins when consciousness arrives at a new embodiment, bringing forth a fresh assemblage of bodily and mental phenomena, which are collectively designated as *name-and-form* [adapted by the Buddha from Vedic philosophy, here as the physical and cognitive sides of sentient existence.] As name-and-form matures, the *six sense bases* take shape and begin to function. When the sense-bases encounter their corresponding objects, *contact* occurs. This gives rise to *feelings* – pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral – which trigger corresponding responses [like, dislike, neutral]. *Craving* arises with desire for the pleasant and avoiding the unpleasant. When one obtains an object of [strong] desire, one relishes and holds to them tightly; *clinging*, intensified craving, wanting more and continued existence. One then engages in a fresh round of volitional activities that create the potential for another *existence* – which may be in the desire realm, subtle form [god realm], and formless god realm. Then the new existence begins with *birth*, followed with *old-age-and-death* and all the other manifestations of dukkha.

The texts say that the “fool” does not eliminate ignorance or craving and remains in the cycle of death and rebirth, along with all of the karma from previous lives. The “sage” eliminates the presence of ignorance and craving and is freed from future existence [avoiding the question of any previous negative karma, or is it eliminated in the process of “eliminating the presence of ignorance and craving”?]. From another angle, ignorance and craving jointly function as the roots of the entire process of samsara [this life].

The sutras do not offer such a detailed account but provide different perspectives. The task of a buddha is to penetrate this law and fully comprehend it, and then elucidate it for others. [It is not clear precisely *how* the Buddha accomplished this, although there are several less detailed explanations.]

Accordingly, dependent origination offers a dynamic perspective on non-self that complements examination of the five aggregates, showing how rebirth and karmic causation occur *without* an underlying subject, a substantial self, passing through the progressive stages of life and migrating from one existence to the next. [Nevertheless,] dependent origination served the Buddha as a “teaching in the middle” between the view of *eternalists* [permanent existence] and *annihilationists* [no continued existence].

In *Kaccanagotta Sutra* the Buddha explains it thus: “‘All exists’ is one extreme. ‘All does not exist’ is the second extreme. Not having approached both extremes, the Tathagata [Buddha] teaches the Dharma by the middle: ‘With ignorance as condition, volitional activities come to be; with volitional activities as condition [source], consciousness... [etc.] Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. But with the cessation of volitional activities; with the cessation of volitional activities, cessation of consciousness...[etc.]. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering’.

In the *Nagara Sutra*, after a description of the 12 Links, the Buddha focuses on “name-and-form”. “Through thorough attention, there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is consciousness, name-and-form comes to be; with consciousness as condition, there is name-and-form’. Then this occurred to me: ‘When what exists does consciousness come to be? By what is consciousness conditioned?’ Then there took place in me a breakthrough by wisdom: ‘When there is name-and-form, consciousness comes to be; with consciousness as condition there

is name and form... *This consciousness turns back*; it does not go further than name-and-form... With the cessation of consciousness, there is cessation of name-and-form... Cessation, cessation – thus for me, in regard to things unheard before, the eye arose in me, knowledge arose, wisdom arose, clear knowledge arose, light arose”.

[Thus, *cessation of consciousness* is the way! This is found in most advanced forms of meditation – advanced forms of mindfulness, jhanas, the higher absorptions, shamata, advanced forms of vipassana, the dissolution of yidam practice into emptiness, zazen, trekcho, togal, etc. There are variations, to be sure, but they are essentially the same in the ultimate forms of meditation – mental calm, peace, contentment.]

Chapter 5: The Path and the Way – The Practices Leading to the End of Suffering

Ignorance and *craving* are considered to be the roots of dukkha. Thus, to reach cessation of dukkha, ignorance and craving must be extracted. The Buddha described the *noble eightfold path* as “the way to the cessation of suffering”. While this is the best-known program of practice, the sutras offer various sets of formulations on the way to the goal. These are grouped into seven sets involving 37 constituents:

- The four establishments of mindfulness (*satipatthana*)
- The four right kinds of striving
- The four bases for spiritual potency
- The five faculties
- The five powers
- The seven factors of enlightenment
- The noble eightfold path

These are closely interwoven, overlapping, such as “mindfulness”, “energy” or effort, concentration, wisdom, and culminating in *equanimity* (mental calm, peace, contentment). The practices are said to “lead to going from the near to the far shore”. But the Buddha offered many practices conducive to happiness and well-being for those content to remain dwelling on “the near shore”, who seek the temporal good rather than the final good, such as generosity, reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and patience. These include practices such as the six recollections, the four immeasurables [lovingkindness, compassion, altruistic joy, and equanimity], the four means of sustaining a wholesome relationship [giving, pleasant speech, beneficial conduct, and equality of treatment]. All of these are regarded as the basis for moral and psychological well-being and as prerequisites for world-transcending realization but are not sufficient themselves to attain liberation. That requires tranquility and insight, concentration and wisdom.

Only 3 of these are included in this book: *the four establishments of mindfulness* – the fundamental contemplative practice, *the seven factors of enlightenment*, and *the noble eightfold path*. We begin with a concise outline of the mindfulness practices.

The four establishments of mindfulness (Satipatthana Sutra) serve as the first enlightenment factor from which the other six emerge, culminating in the factor of *equanimity*. The 37 practices serve as *aids* leading to the “other shore”. [Mindfulness = focused attention]

- Contemplation of the body (changing nature):

- (1) mindfulness of breathing – in/out, cutting through discursive thinking, noting whether long or short, entire body, calming the mind and body;
 - (2) mindfulness of postures – walking, standing, sitting, lying down, noting it as living matter subject to our willful intention;
 - (3) mindfulness of clear comprehension – daily activities like walking, looking around, bending and stretching, dressing, eating, speaking, going to the toilet, and so forth with “clear comprehension” moving to the forefront and mindfulness in a supporting role;
 - (4) analytical contemplation of the body’s real nature as the direct antidote to sensual lust – the unattractive nature of 31 bodily parts ... various organs, tissues, and bodily fluids [later versions add the brain];
 - (5) analytical contemplation of the four physical elements to counter the body as “I” or “mine” – earth (solid), water (liquid), fire (temperature), and air (air itself or empty spaces);
 - (6) nine charnel ground contemplations on stages of disintegration after death (imagined or with pictures) to surrender our clinging to the body – list not included here.
- Contemplation of feelings: (not emotions) pleasant – nourishes greed and attachment, unpleasant or painful provokes aversion and neutral sustains our delusion (apathy and complacency), noting their transient nature.
 - Contemplation of mind: observing 16 states of mind in pairs, with and without the particular mental state – (1/2) lust [strong desires], (3/4) aversion, (5/6) delusion, (7/8) aversion, (9/10) cramped/scattered mind, (11/12) developed/undeveloped, (13/14) surpassable/insurpassable, and (15/16) concentrated/unconcentrated ... seeing the uninterrupted change of mental states brings to light the impermanence of the mind.
 - Contemplation of phenomena (*dharmas*), (the most complex and diverse category):
 - (1) *the five hindrances* – attachment to sensual desires, unwholesome hatred, laziness or sleepiness, anxiousness and worry, skeptical doubt;
 - (2) *the five aggregates* – form, feelings, perception, mental formations (or volitional activities), and consciousness;
 - (3) *the six sense bases* – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching;
 - (4) *the seven factors of enlightenment* – mindfulness, contemplation, effort, joy or happiness, calm, concentration, and equanimity, culminating in “clear knowledge and liberation”;
 - (5) *the four noble truths* – suffering or dissatisfaction, the cause (craving or ignorance of “the true nature of things”), cessation of suffering or dissatisfaction, and *the eightfold path*⁵:
 1. Right View⁶ – (a) understanding the Four Noble Truths; mastering self-discipline of body, speech, and mind (actions have consequences); and (b) deeply knowing the true

⁵ This list is from *Innate Happiness* by Khenpo Drimed Dawa.

⁶ These two parts are often described as (1) relative and (2) ultimate; or sometimes as the “way things appear” and the “way things are” respectively. But “relative” means “compared to” the others, whereas “ultimate” is the “highest” or the pinnacle”. Using Mt. Everest as an analogy, it is considered to be the highest mountain. However, if it was the only mountain, yet still the same height, it would no

nature of reality through direct experience beyond intellectual knowledge, names and labels.

2. Right Intention or Effort – develop thoughts of detachment from strong desires and aversions, embrace a simple life and follow the path, building thoughts of love and compassion for all, qualities of the *heart*; reject harm, violence or hatred.

3. Right Speech – don't lie, be divisive, use harsh words, or idle talk; but speak the truth with loving speech, reconcile or harmonize, use pleasant words, and engage in meaningful talk.

4. Right Conduct or Actions – built upon universal love and compassion for all. The Buddha taught “for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world.” This also includes no killing, no stealing, not sexual misconduct, no lying, no greed.

5. Right Livelihood – abstain from work that brings harm to others or products that may cause harm (killing, weapons, poisons, intoxicants, prostitution, etc.). See right conduct above.

6. Right Effort – joyful or energetic will including (a) keeping unwholesome actions, talk, or thoughts from arising, (b) getting rid of those present, (c) helping wholesome actions, talk, or thoughts to arise, and (d) perfecting wholesome actions, talk, or thoughts already arisen; guarding the sense doors and sensory restraint.

7. Right Mindfulness – awareness of feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, neutral), be aware of mind (strong desire or not, hatred or not, delusion or not, distraction or concentrated), know how thoughts come and go, are developed, suppressed, destroyed, and so on.

8. Right Concentration – developing the four stages of the *jhanas* – cultivated states of mind from meditation, and may go beyond into the further stages of the four formless absorptions leading to equanimity (mental calm).

Thus, attaining realization that *permanently* uproots the defilements and brings liberation from sufferings.

Chapter 6: The Unconditioned – The Goal

The “unconditioned” is a designation for nirvana, largely described in negative terms (Indian indirect languages). Thus, the goal is a series of negations. In the Nikayas, the goal is still described largely in negative terms: the unconditioned, uninclined, unaging, undisintegrating, and so forth, as well as “the *destruction* of lust, hatred, and delusion”.

This gives rise to the question whether it is simply the eradication of defilements or a transcendent state or dimension that entails the destruction of the defilements. One short text speaks of two forms – *nirvana with residue* (the destruction of lust, hatred, and delusion by a living arhat). The other is *nirvana without residue*, “all feelings, not being delighted in, will become cool right here”.

longer be the “highest” as there would be no other with which to compare. Therefore, “ultimate” is just one part of the relative; or everything is relative.

But other sutras speak of nirvana as a state that is “unborn, unproduced, unbecome, and unconditioned, where no conditioned phenomena of the world are to be found” ... There is “no coming, no going, no standing still; it is unchanging, without arising and perishing, without support,” pointing to a *transcendent, ever-existent state* of liberation from birth and death.

The sutras never identify nirvana with consciousness [as in some other sources], which they *always* treat as conditioned phenomena, arisen in dependence on the sense bases and objects. Nirvana is known and seen by a constellation of mental factors occurring in a state of consciousness in which wisdom plays the dominant role. Thus, *consciousness* that realizes nirvana is *conditioned*, while *nirvana itself is unconditioned*. The path that leads to the unconditioned brings together concentration and insight in harmonious balance. Here, the practitioner “turns the mind away from these things and focuses on the *deathless* element. Thereby one reaches either “the destruction of the influxes” (mental defilements) – an arhat – or a non-returner (liberation in the next life).

Each of the many sutras end with “Meditate, do not be heedless. Do not be regretful later. This is our instruction to you.” Thus, speculations about the final goal give way to the need for practical application. What prevails above all else is the effort to realize the goal in one’s own experience.

“What is the unconditioned [or the destination]? *The destruction of lust, ... hatred, ... delusion.* ... And what is the path leading to the unconditioned? *Mindfulness directed to the body*”.

Related Books by Bhikkhu Bodi

The source of notes for this document are primarily taken from *Noble Truths, Noble Paths – The Heart Essence of the Buddha’s Original Teachings*.

A somewhat earlier, and more detailed book, is *In the Buddha’s Words – An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon*.

For those interested in a “deeper dive” into the early teachings of the Buddha found in the Nikayas, Bhikkhu Bodhi has made the following online course available:

Training – “Learning Dharma Well”

This collection of free videos and list of the source texts from a college course presented by Bhikkhu Bodhi: The *Majjhima Nikaya, Middle Length Discourses* – a systematic, organized format for training. The videos and list of the source texts are available at:

<https://bodhimonastery.org/an-extended-study-of-the-majjhima-nikaya.html>

PART 4: A Meditator's Life of the Buddha: Based on the Early Discourses

– Bhikkhu Analayo

Chapter 1 – The Motivation to Go Forth: (on the path to liberation): There are two versions describing this event at alternative ages. Some scholars doubt that this actually happened, but became part of the stock of stories about the Buddha's early life. What follows leads to "the motivation to go forth".

While sitting under the Rose Apple Tree, as a youth, while visiting a planting (or plowing) festival, Siddhartha tired of the event and wandered away and sat under a rose-apple tree, relaxing into a state of mental calm and contentment. Then, years later, sitting under the Bodhi Tree he recalled this event. Then later still he describes it to his followers (one of the two versions).

"I went under a rose-apple tree and sat down cross-legged. Secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from evil and unwholesome states, with [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation, with joy and happiness born of seclusion, I attained the first absorption and dwelled in it." [The first jhana...]

Continuing in summary form: (1) uninstructed worldlings are subject to disease... and I am myself subject to disease...; (2) ignorant worldlings are subject to old age... and I am myself subject to old age...; (3) worldlings are subject to death... and I am myself subject to death.... On being healthy, youthful, even alive, worldlings are proud, conceited, and negligent... and because of sensual desires, their ignorance grows and they do not cultivate the holy life.

Another text in a Chinese version states the whole world was without essence, out of order, and without peace. Being conceited they do not give up craving. Because of lack of vision, they hold onto it with their ignorant minds. Do not quest for the darkness of dukkha! I contemplated it all and my mind did not delight in what leads to suffering and pain. By becoming still, one sees what is challenging and is able to endure it.

Chapter 2 – Moral Conduct: This chapter addresses fear and dwelling in "seclusions". A sound foundation in moral conduct is necessary for meditation practice to be successful. Observance of the precepts can become a way of making a gift of fearlessness to others. Pledging to refrain from harm on others do not need to fear sickness or death, through being free from regret. With a mental attitude of lovingkindness and compassion, with empathy for all beings (including insects), one purifies one's mind.

The practice consists of six reflections regarding one's morality: (1) not deficient, (2) defective, (3) not defiled, and (4) not corrupted; (5) widely altruistic, and (6) I am well endowed, inclined, undertaking, and upholding it.

Chapter 3 – Obstacles to Concentration: We need a clear recognition of the mental conditions that are obstructive – in essence: sensuality, ill will (intention), harming (action) and their absence. [Another core list includes hatred, greed, and delusion.] The Buddha describes his approach of homelessness, avoiding sensual pleasures and abiding in "a mind that is at peace within". A "remote and secluded place" is more of a challenge today, although they can be found; but they can also be in your home and, most importantly, in your mind itself! Any place one can "constantly dwell with inner tranquility and mental unification in the attainment of concentration". However, "excessive thinking is not conducive to concentration". "Even just conceptual reflection with an attitude of lovingkindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, or

equanimity will have an effect on our mind and their meditative cultivation will leave an impact on others”.

Chapter 4 – Absorption: (Note that this term is being used to refer to the four jhana practices, not the “higher absorptions” of the “infinite space, concentration, nothingness, etc.) The most common summary describes the attainment by way of four levels: (1) joy and happiness of seclusion, (2) joy and happiness of concentration, (3) happiness devoid of joy, and (4) deep equanimity (mental calm). We will examine this method a bit later in some detail.

Chapter 5 – the Immaterial Attainments: (Note that this brief description is also of some question. The four are found independently in the Vedas, but never as a “set”. The Buddha is said to have mastered the 3rd and 4th practices (would have had some other teacher than the two said to have taught these), but the Buddha-to-be found them unhelpful to his goal of liberation. Somewhere, likely *much later* – most likely in early first century Theravada tradition, these may have been restructured. The four are: the sphere of boundless (or infinite) (1) space (sky), (2) mind consciousness, (3) nothingness (or emptiness), and (4) “neither perception nor nonperception” (very similar to Dzogchen). Bhikkhu Analayo suggests that he took a diversion at this point of not succeeding through these four before coming to the full realization possible from these “attainments”, that being “true emptiness, the realization of the supreme peace of Nirvana”. Why, then, are these not emphasized in the teachings? Why do they seem to appear with sources most known in the later sources such as Buddhagosa?

Chapter 6 – Forceful Control of the Mind: This is shown not to have been effective, being replaced by a “gradual process” required to change the habit patterns [known to require extensive repetition].

Chapter 7 – Breath Control: Many methods of breath control are mentioned in the Sutras and was likely a significant part of the practice(s) of the Buddha himself. It appears he may have learned this initially during his extreme ascetic experience, prior to liberation. Nevertheless, he continued a more moderate form of “mindfulness” practice in both his teachings and personal practice after his liberation and throughout the remainder of his life, although the mode of practice changes substantially. The focus is on being *aware of the breath* as it naturally flows in and out. One such practice is “breathing in 16 steps” (“in” phase is listed here) found in the *Samyukta-agama*, among many others: (1) breathe in long, (2) in short, (3) whole body in ... as it really is, (4) calming bodily activity, (5) experiencing joy, (6) experiencing happiness, (7) experiencing mental activity, (8) calming mental activity, (9) experiencing the mind itself, (10) gladdening the mind, (11) concentrating the mind, (12) liberating the mind, (13) contemplating impermanence, (14) contemplating eradication, (15) contemplating dispassion, and (16) contemplating cessation. (The latter three are also found as contemplating dispassion, cessation, and letting go in another source.

Chapter 8 – Fasting: After the extreme forms of fasting during his ascetic period, the Buddha had a shift in perspective into two stages – (1) bare recognition of the affective tone as pleasant, painful, or neutral and (2) whether the experience of such feeling has wholesome or unwholesome results, *not* whether it is pleasant or unpleasant at the moment of the experience. Analayo notes: “Happiness is mental after all. Searching for it via sense experiences is therefore a detour. Searching for happiness within, by establishing a wholesome condition of the mind, is more straightforward and more meaningful than trying to do so through sensual gratification”.

Chapter 9 - Finding the Path: During his search for liberation, the future Buddha is said to have thought to himself, “Why am I afraid of that happiness which is a happiness apart from sensuality and unwholesome states?” leading to the bold declaration that there is no need to be afraid of happiness! Thus, in the four jhanas we find “happiness” in the first two, only to be transcended into different more subtle forms in the third and fourth. These wholesome types of happiness can support progress to awakening. The decisive criterion is its wholesome or unwholesome repercussions [hence *tantra*] in each of the “three trainings”: ethics/morality, meditation/concentration, and insight/wisdom. We encourage wholesome types of happiness and leave behind unwholesome ones.

Chapter 10 - Determination: The Buddha’s realization of Nirvana is noted in a context of his determination in several sources. He is said to have sat for long periods of time, which was not necessarily a challenge. In contrast to the Jains, who asserted that happiness requires going through pain, the Buddha asserted that true happiness of liberation did not depend on experiencing pain; even someone who lives in luxury and surrounded by sensual pleasures like the king of the country could at the same time be making progress to liberation. The importance of keeping one’s own motivation clearly in mind is the guiding force – right view with wholesome thoughts, doing no harm, wholesome speech, action, and livelihood.

Mindfulness and the four jhana practices with mental calm, wholly peaceful and sublime feelings (being aware of feeling as pleasant, painful or neutral), not obsessing the mind in all four jhanas. The Buddha is said to have disciplined himself to ignore these sensations and impulses which ordinarily issue in desire or aversion. In summary, sit with determination and awareness.

Chapter 11 - Recollection of Past Lives: This principle is *not* found in the early discourses and appears to primarily be a later addition to the commentaries of the Theravada tradition. Two versions of the *Samyukta-agama* have the Buddha stating “There is only one path ... namely the four *satipatthanas* – contemplating the body, feelings, mind, and the dharmas”, built upon basic mindfulness.

Chapter 12 - The Divine Eye: This is a concept of being able to perceive with a “mental eye”, again found in later discourses and commentaries. Unlike this approach found in those sources, the *Ekottarika-agama* describes the analysis of the five aggregates of clinging (form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness) and dependent arising (the 12 Links) as the hub around which the wheel of *samsara* revolves. The key principle is “interdependence”.

The chief points are: (1) identification of “craving” as the chief culprit, (2) insight that “consciousness” does not go beyond its *conditioned interrelationship* with “name-and-form” [the aggregates, listed above], and (3) the realization that the solution to *samsara* requires “cessation of ignorance” (or delusion), which is then the core of our delusions.

Chapter 13 - Awakening: Three “influxes” need to be eradicated: (1) sensual pleasures, (2) craving for a permanent existence, and (3) ignorance or delusion. These “sustain the karmic flow”. The Tathagata (Buddha) is said to have discarded all the influxes forever and continually delights in “secluded dwellings” and not the company of humans”. [Sounds a lot like heavens or Pure Realms.]

The question then is how to remove the “influxes”. The *Sabbasava Sutra* presents 7 practices: (1) seeing the Four Noble Truths, (2) restraining the “sense doors” (sense organs), (3) using “requisites” properly, (4) enduring hardships(!), (5) avoiding what is dangerous and unsuitable,

(6) removing the unwholesome, and (7) cultivating the awakening factors. Each is related to removal of the “influxes”.

To cultivate the “awakening factors” (perhaps the most common practice approach), begins with (1) mindfulness, (2) investigation of dharmas, (3) energy, (4) joy, (5) tranquility, (6) concentration, and (7) equipoise (each in dependence upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, leading to liberation). The *Samyutta-nikaya* has a range of parallels to the *Satipatthana Sutra*. Our next text will look into this practice of the Awakening Factors in more detail.

Chapter 14 – The Decision to Teach: Shortly after his awakening, the Buddha is said to have described his decision to teach (there are alternative, and conflicting, stories about this). From the *Ekottarika-agama*:

Now this Dharma of mine is profound, to understand it is difficult, to comprehend it is difficult, to be able to realize it is difficult, which cannot be done by [mere] reflection. It is peaceful and sublime, to be realized by the wise capable of distinguishing its meaning, of practicing without becoming weary, and of gaining delight.

Only later is the bodhisattva ideal of lovingkindness and compassion emerge in the commentaries of the tradition, yet several sutras include references to one or both, along with the merit of altruistic motivation.

Chapter 15 – The Two Extremes (to be avoided): There are two principle views within this concept: (1) existence and non-existence (or permanence vs. nihilism) and (2) self vs. no-self. They are related to each other. The first is philosophical and related to whether there is life after death (reincarnation or “heaven” or similar variation) or not, a complete cessation, period. The Buddha advocated a “middle way” (or perhaps more accurately a “third alternative” beyond either of these). The nihilists reject a “self”, and hence concur with non-existence (after death). The alternative view (most common among all religions) is that there is some continuity through a “soul” – rebirth, a heaven, or Brahman (ultimate reality). The “self” in this case is roughly equivalent to a “soul” – the non-material essence or spiritual part of a person, which may include one’s identity, personality, memories, etc. The actual self is the soul, while the body is only a mechanism to experience the karma of that life. Thus, if one sees a being then there is a “self-conscious” identity residing in it (the soul), and a “physical representative” (the whole body of the being, which is observable) in the world.

In contrast, in the doctrinal perspective, the middle path is also “dependent arising”, which stays aloof from the two extremes of existence and non-existence. This middle path can be found by contemplating the process of conditionally arisen phenomena and the cessation of this process, leading to letting go of the “self” notion. Being free from conceit of a self, *dukkha* just arises and ceases, without creating the repercussions that it did earlier.

Another use of the middle path is establishing “balance” between one’s meditation practice which is neither striving too much nor becoming too slack.

Elsewhere, the two extremes are framed as philosophical views of relative vs. ultimate.

Chapter 16 – The Four Truths: (1) The first is *dukkha* (sufferings) – old age, sickness, death, dislikes, the five aggregates of clinging: form, feelings, perceptions, mental formation, and consciousness; “unsatisfactory” experiences. (2) The second is (are) the cause(s) – the arising of grasping and craving (lust); the root being our delusion or ignorance of impermanence. (3) The

third is the eradication or cessation of *dukkha* in such a way that it will not arise again. (4) The fourth is the path, which consists of eight elements: *right* (1) view, (2) thought or resolve, (3) speech, (4) conduct or actions, (5) livelihood, (6) effort, (7) mindfulness, and (8) concentration. All of these path elements are found in numerous other sources/lists, and are sometimes in alternative order. The main point is that these have been identified that one needs to realize oneself as being true.

Chapter 17 – The Three Turnings: These three (1) to be understood, (2) to be implemented, and (3) carried to successful completion, applied to each of the four truths. An example (3rd and 4th are reversed for a more logical ending) is (1) *dukkha* is to be understood completely, (2) craving is to be eradicated completely, (3) the path to the cessation of *dukkha* is to be cultivated completely, and (4) cessation of *dukkha* is to be realized completely.

Chapter 18 – Honoring the Dharma: In ancient Indian sociocultural context, one should pay homage to something or someone superior. There may also be an element of humility in those being honored, for example, those begging for food. The Buddha adopted an attitude of remarkable humility, in a culture with high regard for a teacher. In one example the Buddha described how one can become a refuge to oneself by undertaking the practice of the four *satipatthanas*, namely mindful contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and dharmas. Through that, one can become a refuge for oneself. Thus, the Buddha directed attention away from himself and towards the dharma and its practical implementation through mindfulness.

Chapter 19 – Teaching: The Buddha taught based on his own practical experience. The Buddha remains equanimous and not affected by how his teachings are received, compassion with equanimity. When confronted with the anger of others, he did not display any anger. He once described it as “One who slays anger get to sleep in peace; the mind of one who slays anger gets to be without sorrow”. What one really needs to slay is the “enemy within”, our ego.

Chapter 20 – Seeing Through Views: At the time of the Buddha (and ever since!), numerous views, philosophical or otherwise, have been in play. Within the Buddha’s teachings there are a number of such views. One example is the tetralemma: black, white, both, neither (as a generic example). This can be elaborated as self, other, both, neither. Another are four kinds of deeds: wholesome, unwholesome, both, neither. The Buddha used this model at times to offset traditional Indian views and open their understanding, such as our senses and their objects; subjective experience (“insight”), not-self, etc.

In *Samyukta-agama* the Buddha finished a presentation with what are views: *dukkha*, arising of *dukkha*, cessation of *dukkha*, and path to cessation. Then, “Having such knowledge and such vision, all views, all clinging, all rebirths, all views of a self and what belongs to a self, and underlying tendencies to being bound by attachment to the conceit of a self, [all these] have truly been exterminated, appeased, and become cool; and he has become liberated in this way”. Speculative views are replaced by direct vision through seeing things “as they really are”. The Buddha as a Tathagata is one who has “thus gone”, completely beyond speculative “views” and realized the true “vision” of Nirvana.

Chapter 21 – Dwelling in Emptiness: The Buddha’s role as a Tathagata, “a thus gone one”, and his full awakening had gone beyond identifying with the five aggregates and thereby beyond being identified with them. This leads to “emptiness”. It is said that he often dwelled in emptiness. In the *Madhyama-agama* he states to Ananda, “Whatever is not present, I therefore see

as empty; and whatever else is present, I see as truly present. Ananda, this is call truly dwelling in emptiness, without distortion". Dwelling in emptiness requires seeing things as they really are. The *Culasunnata-sutra* proceeds from that to perceptions of the forest, earth, first three immaterial spheres, to "signlessness". At the peak of emptiness, "one knows that this is empty of the influx of sensual desire, existence, ignorance. Yet there is this non-emptiness: this body with its six sense-spheres and the life faculty".

He sees forms that are pleasing and displeasing, without giving rise to lustful desire. The mind remains empty of lustful desire in any situation. Compassion naturally arises in his willingness to teach others. The true nature is to learn to remain free from *reacting* to sense input with desire and aversion in any situation. The challenge is to make sure that qualities from practice carry over into daily life situations. In the absence of attachment and desire, there are no reactions of dejection or elation. This is the balance of "dwelling in emptiness".

Having smashed the net of craving on the night of his full awakening, the Buddha had gone not only beyond old age and death (conceptually) but also beyond reifying and conceptually proliferating the raw data of sense experience, bare experience as it is. The instructions simply require one to limit sense experience to what is actually experienced! When thoughts arise, this is not a problem for one devoted to "dwelling in emptiness". This does not require keeping the mind void of any thought, but to ensure that no unwholesome thoughts arise.

Chapter 22 – Daily Conduct: Practices are intimately related to daily life. Practice leads to everyday actions, diminishing defilements and gradually emerging from *dukkha*. "The Buddha kept his robes not for the sake of ownership, adornment, but to protect himself against mosquitoes and gadflies, as well as the impact of wind and sun, and out of modesty".

"His walking is such that it is not to be too quickly nor too slowly, with feet not too far apart nor too close, but walking in an orderly and balanced manner, exemplifying the balance of his mind."

He also ate in an orderly manner, partaking just to maintain his bodily health. He consented to experiencing the taste, but did not consent to being defiled by the taste. The challenge is to avoid craving and clinging. At noon, after his meal (one daily after collecting the alms), he put away his robe and bowl, washed his hand and feet, and went into a hut for meditation. He did, apparently, sometimes nap during the day, according to the needs of his body.

Chapter 23 – Old Age, Disease, and Death: His body was still subject to these. The freedom he had won was a "mental one". He still had to put up with painful feelings.

The Buddha opted for "signless meditation", not giving attention to signs of progress, etc. In signlessness, one no longer matches experience with concepts. The mind "steps back" from involvement of "experiencing". His signlessness is certainly informed by his realization of Nirvan, along with desirelessness and emptiness.

Facing his own mortality and that of others. When his two chief disciples, Sariputra and Mahmogallana, passed away he was clearly aware of the loss and openly addressed it with mindful recognition of the loss, but with no grief. He encouraged his disciples not to feel grief as well, keeping in mind that whatever is born will inevitably pass away. He advocates mindfulness practice as the best preparation for one's own last moments, as well as for being with others who are sick or on the verge of death.

Chapter 24 – The Final Meditation: In the Buddha’s final meditation, he advised followers to cultivate silence, followed by the four jhanas, the four infinite spheres, with cessation of feelings and perceptions, after which he “entered his final Nirvana”. He then reversed the processes to the beginning, then once again the jhanas endowed with vision and **peace** of imperturbability (unable to be upset or excited), “entered final Nirvana.” [Entered final Nirvana twice?]

Chapter 25 – Conclusion: Buddha gave instructions to be mindful of five qualities and make an effort to cultivate them: (1) confidence, (2) morality, (3) learning, (4) generosity, and (5) wisdom. An alternative list includes: (1) confidence, (2) energy, (3) mindfulness, (4) concentration, and (5) wisdom. In reliance on “these five”, cultivate the sex recollections: the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha; one’s own morality, generosity, and qualities similar to those of *devas*.

In modern times, asceticism is no longer of general appeal as for the Buddha. However, some initial trust is necessary to dedicate oneself to actual practice. Assuming a momentary awakening rather than a thorough transformation of mind that leads to a total absence of defilements becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Lack of confidence will stop one from pursuing the practices that can lead to awakening. Initial trust enables one to engage seriously in the path of practice.

“Dwell with one’s whole being at peace, transcending the worries caused by misfortune and extinguishing all distress and affliction, being quickly able to realize and gain the truth of the essential teachings. This is called the supreme recollection”.

And from the *Samyukta-agama*:

A noble disciple recollects with the Tathagata as the object fully awakened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, a well-gone one, a knower of the world, a supreme person, a tamer of persons, a teacher of devas and humans, a Buddha, a Blessed One”.

The noble disciple does not give rise to the entanglement of lustful desires and does not give rise to a mind of anger or delusion. The mind gains delight in relation to the Tathagata and in relation to the right teachings of the Tathagata. The mind becomes joyful. The body is pleasantly clam. One experiences happiness. The mind becomes concentrated. The mind is not obstructed and has entered the stream of Dharma up to Nirvana.

In a way this is a mode of overcoming the hindrances by dint of inner joy that comes from recollection easily leads to the type of happiness and tranquility that can then be harnessed to progress to liberating insight.

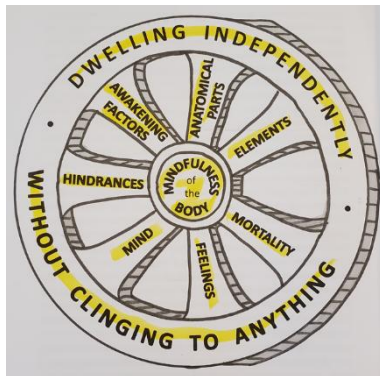
PART 5: Satipatthana Meditation: A Practice Guide – Bhikkhu Analayo

Section 1

Establishment or presence of **mindfulness**: body, speech, mind, and key principles (5 Hindrances and 7 Wakefulness Factors), along with insight into impermanence with “bare awareness” (pure awareness), to calm the mind.

In this book, Analayo articulates an integrated view of core concepts as noted in “10 Satipatthana Sutta – The Four Foundations of Mindfulness” and “118 Anapanasati Sutta – Mindfulness of Breathing+” summarized in The Teachings of the Buddha Part 3 above.

The notes below summarize some of the key points from this book - *Satipatthana Meditation*. Below is what Analayo describes as “The Wheel of Satipatthana Practice”:



The Hub of the Wheel: mindfulness of the body

The Seven Spokes of the Wheel: Contemplations of –

The body:

1. **Anatomical parts**: skin, flesh, bones → non-attachment (optional: not beautiful/not sexually attractive)
2. **Elements**: earth, water, fire, wind → empty of a “self” [soul]
3. **Mortality**: skeleton, and this in-breath may be my last → impermanence

Feelings:

4. **Pleasant, unpleasant, neutral** → impermanence and conditionality

Mind:

5. **Mindful, lustful, angry, deluded ... or not** → impermanence, *dukkha* (“sufferings”), empty

Dharmas:

6. **Hindrances and antidotes**:

- a. **Sensual desires**: impermanence of pleasant feelings, anatomical parts
- b. **Anger**: impermanence of unpleasant feelings, emptiness
- c. **Laziness and inactivity (sloth and torpor)**: joy of present moment, inhalation of the last breath
- d. **Restlessness and worry**: joy of the present moment (again), relax and let go on exhalation
- e. **Doubt**: investigation

7. **Awakening factors**:

- a. **Mindfulness**: the common foundational factor
- b. **Investigation, energy, joy**: three energizing factors
- c. **Tranquility, concentration, equipoise**: three calming factors

The progression of insight: seclusion → dispassion → cessation → letting go

The Rim of the Wheel: Dwelling independently without clinging to anything

Chapter 1 – Mindfulness: This gives an overview, primarily focused on mindfulness of the body. The goal is to stay in the present moment, alert and attentive to an “object” of attention (physical or mental), i.e., focused attention (sometimes used as synonymous with “awareness”). In general, one remains open-minded and broadly receptive. It is also related to “clearly knowing” – fully alert, full awareness, etc. – including a sense of intensity or energy, rather than just mental calm.

Mindfulness of the body is a common focus. It may include awareness of the position, bodily activities – proprioceptive awareness – a recognized aspect of our awareness. This is applied in knowing bodily activities, aware of what we are doing. Standard examples include lying in bed, sitting standing, walking, talking.... At times “whole-body awareness” is the focus. Another relates to awareness of breathing. A key factor is “volition” or intention. It also includes an awareness of the context of outer circumstances through our six sense-doors (five senses and mental awareness). Finally, this can yield a sense of inner contentment as a source of joy.

Chapter 2 – Satipatthana: The satipatthanas are commonly combined into a purified practice in the *Anapanasati-sutra* (see notes on 118 *Anapanasati Sutta – Mindfulness of Breathing*+ earlier). Contemplation of the body includes three parts are the body parts, elements, and corpse decay. The first deconstructs projections of beauty and sexual attractiveness (self or other). The second reveals the empty nature of material existence (impermanence.) And the third drives home the mortality of the body (self and other). The focus is on understanding its true nature, as it is, removing attachments.

Contemplation of the dhammas includes the “awakening factors” and “hindrances”, monitoring the mental qualities that obstruct and those that lead forward. The seven contemplations are: anatomy of the body, elements, death, feelings, mind, hindrances, and awakening factors. The first three relate to the body and the last two to the dhammas. Analayo recommends adopting “open awareness” of whatever happens at any sense-door, based on remaining grounded in “whole-body mindfulness”. Experientially, there is both a “felt sense” and a “mental awareness”. Whatever happens is “impermanent” as well.

The practice is described in four qualities: (1) diligence, (2) clear knowing, (3) mindfulness, and (4) freedom from desires and discontent. *Diligence* is the effort to sustain interest. *Clearly knowing* is awareness of impermanence, the changing nature of the present moment. Four domains emerge.

The first domain is that the quality of *mindfulness* is grounded in awareness of the body. With insight into *dukkha* and not-self we become increasingly free from *desires and discontent* regarding the world.

The second domain is the arising and passing away, e.g., the arising of anger and it’s passing away. The experience is impermanent, as are *all* experiences. Awareness of change points toward emptiness. We are increasingly learning to let go. It is meaningless to try to control.

The third domain concerns being mindful just for the sake of knowing and mindfulness itself. We just rest in open awareness of whatever happens without choosing or rejecting. This is the practice of “just being mindful”, bare awareness. (Mindfulness is not listed in the seven individual contemplations. However, the instructions include that one (1) knows, (2) examines,

and (3) compares. It is not so much that we *do*, but something we *are*. We practice continually being mindful.

The fourth domain is the gist of the whole practice, the “world of experience”, to cling or not to cling. Even a moment of independence is a foretaste of liberation. What really counts is the degree to which we can dwell without clinging to anything [vs. “*contact*” in the 12 Links].

The key aspects of *satipatthana* may be summarized as: (1) diligently contemplate internally and externally, (2) clear know arising and passing away, (3) be mindful just for the sake of knowing and mindfulness [training for elsewhere], and (4) independently, without clinging to anything. At the heart, keep calmly knowing change (impermanence) and never cling to anything. [Note: vs. modern complexity]

Chapter 3: Anatomy – First of the 7 spokes; anatomy of the body

The first “spoke of the wheel” is deconstruction of the perception of the body as sensually alluring, without clinging. The problem is not about “beauty”, but sensual desires. Sexual desire can get out of hand – rape, child pornography, etc. – inappropriate situations, leading to sensual indulgence. This is closely related to our sense of identity, gender, etc. and finding “joy” in it. In general, sensual desire falls under the *five hindrances* (desire itself is not necessarily a hindrance). It is worthwhile cultivating the mind to wholesome joy and happiness, a refined happiness, an intimacy within. Developing aversion towards the body or not taking care of it can also become an obstacle.

The anatomy may be simplified as skin, flesh, and bones. The practice involves scans of each. It suffices just to know that they are there. Move with skin from head to feet, then flesh from feet to head, then bones from head to feet. Generate a general sense of the whole body. An evaluation as impure, dirty, or not beautiful may be added.

Another starting point is mindfulness of one’s relationship towards our body – attraction or aversion. The overall aim is to be free from “sensual desire”, aversion, or disgust. If necessary, one may go deeper into the nature of the body and any attachment or aversion we may have. We gradually learn to dwell independently without clinging to anything. It may be applied to our body, or that of others.

We may examine more fully our mindfulness and clear knowing of the body. We may move on to just being aware of the body, open to just being aware of the present moment, an undirected mode of practice, recognizing the impermanence and change.

Chapter 4 – Elements: the Four Elements is the second spoke of the wheel. These are earth, water, fire, and air or wind. The earth element represents “qualities”, hardness, resistance, and stiffness. The water element represents liquidity, wetness, and cohesion. The fire element represents temperature. The wind element represents motion, vibration and oscillation. They are also linked to body parts. The main thrust is to realize that none can be truly considered to be “mine”. They are empty of a true “self”. We no longer take the body so personally and relate to it without self-investment. As in Chapter 3, one scans body related to these qualities, leading to an awareness of the whole body. It may be extended through walking meditation, walking without the notion of a “walker”.

We know from science that this body is mostly empty space. The four elements are superficial representations of our perceptions, not reality. They too are subject to change, impermanence. The

elements are mere symbols for these qualities. They are not something we can fully “control” or “own”. “Not-self” is indeed “empty” of a “self” (as permanent and substantial). Yet, the “emptiness of things” is filled with causes and conditions. We can influence in some cases, but we are not in full control.

As a general pattern, selfishness and cruelty lead to suffering, just as kindness and generosity lead to happiness. A whole range of unwholesome reactions have their foundation in [hedonic] selfishness. The *brahma viharas* (four immeasurables) are the natural flourishing that emerges once a diminishing of egoism has been brought about through insight into emptiness. Cultivating insight into emptiness is quite different from dissociating and becoming disconnected.

The mind of an arhat is free from aversion and irritation; it does not take things personally. Earth can exemplify what is wholesome and productive of welfare for us and others. Water, which adapts to wherever it flows can train us to be flexible and adaptive to outer circumstances. Fire can warm our heart for the lonely and desolate. Wind can keep us moving, progressing on the path to liberation.

We develop mind like space, which is not “established anywhere”. [Note that Buddhism was not aware of the biological nature of mind/brain, nor science]. *Space* can represent “emptiness” that can be developed with the help of the other elements. *Matter* is for the most part just space. Space is always there. It leaves no landing place for the reactions of others or our own reactivity to that. [As a model]

Open up to being aware of the “empty nature” of the present moment, undirected practice. Our practice with anatomy has already imbued our practice with a sense of non-attachment, moving toward a sense of “freedom” – rooted in “whole-body” awareness. Our connectedness to others and our environment gives rise to compassion.

Chapter 5 – Death: the 3rd spoke in the wheel represents the cessation of life as we know it with the decay of our corpse as if left in a charnel ground. The instructions compare our body to the stages of decay of a corpse. The Pali version is open to our imagination and not necessarily what we have “seen”. We might only choose one stage of the decay.

“Death”, which is inevitable, too often causes fear or even terror. Seeing a dead body may cause us to be repelled. “The future Buddha realized the inappropriateness of this type of reaction. As a result, all his intoxication with being alive vanished.” The combination of old age, sickness, and death drove his quest for awakening, after which he proclaimed that he had realized the deathless”. [Vs. “enlightenment”] Nevertheless, “his body was still subject to passing away; but he was no longer affected by death, his own or others”. This led him on a quest for “what leads beyond death”?

Analayo suggests a practical approach. Start with imagining a skeleton, still held together by sinews. The “earth element” represents the solidity of our body, our skeleton. Contemplate your skeleton. It will eventually disintegrate. With cremation, the remains become dust, perhaps with a few solid remnants. Analayo goes on to suggest we *not cling to anything*, gradually letting go of them.

Another exercise is a visualization of death based upon the breath. The Buddha recommended bringing death directly into the present moment, noticing that we might die right after this

breath. The present breath might be our last. Do this carefully and gradually. Breath connects us to life, but it is impermanent and insubstantial. You will begin to cultivate genuine wisdom.

Furthermore, the death of another we know may can become an entry to facing our own death. As a practice, cultivate relaxing and letting go of each breath, training to face the moment of inevitable dying. Previous work with “nonattachment” helps prepare us for this. One helpful tool is remaining in the *present moment*. Even if this breath is not the last, it is one breath closer.

Fear and agitation may arise. “This is too much; I am not able to handle this”! Immediately let go and relax, calming the mind and reassuring ourselves that we are able to face the reality of our own mortality, overcoming any agitation that may arise.

Preparation for death is not only preparation for dying, but also a way of coming fully alive! It encourages us to be completely with those we meet, giving full attention with no regrets. It helps prioritize our life. Let go of clinging to possessions. Forgive those who have wronged us by apologizing quickly. Visualizing your “skeleton self” leaves little room for “me” or “mine”.

Another approach is based upon the four elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. As death approaches the body feels heavy (earth), the mouth dries up (water), our extremities feel cold (fire), and breath (wind) becomes shorter and weaker. Familiarizing ourselves with this can also help calm our view of the process, which is in some form inevitable.

Chapter 6 – Feelings: the fourth spoke is the contemplation of *feelings*, the affective tone or hedonic quality (but not emotions): pleasant, painful, or neutral. Pleasant feelings tend to lead one to “desire and clinging, pleasure and more”. Painful feelings tend towards aversion and irritation, wanting it to stop and disappear. Neutral feelings tend towards boredom and a search for something more entertaining. These can lead to ignorance or being ignored. Mindful recognition helps untangle the complexity, making it easier to cultivate an appropriate response. Pleasant feelings tend to attract, unpleasant feeling tends to rouse resistance, and neutral feeling tends to trigger search for something else.

Feeling is where “craving” can arise. Developing awareness of feelings helps mindfully pause before being carried away by our reactions. One practical approach is to do a body scan. First, scan for pleasant feelings, head to feet. Then reverse upward scanning for painful feelings. Finally, scan again from head to feet for neutral feelings. At times one may combine all three. Analayo suggests watching for smoothness or roughness, throbbing or pulsing, pressure or lightness, tension or ease, or any other type, without getting involved in the details, only their hedonic tone – pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Then remain aware of the whole body.

One can examine other sensory experiences as well – sounds, smells, tastes, touches, etc. At other times one may not be able to sense any feeling, even neutral ones. Simple note that. The purpose is to understand the way feelings impact the mind.

Some feelings may become more intense. In this case it may be helpful to be aware of the whole body. Notice parts that are *not* being present. Notice the “push” or intensity of the feeling. Once noticed, it is ok to react and notice relief of the feeling.

The Buddha found that while some forms of pleasure are commendable, others should be avoided. Feelings are evaluated according to their repercussions rather than their affective tone. For example, the *Culavedalla-sutra* presents the first absorption (jhana) as an example of pleasant

feelings that do not stimulate sensual desire. And the fourth absorption (*jhana*) exemplifies feelings that do not stimulate ignorance.

Thus, pleasant feelings of a worldly type are those related to sensuality. Those of an unworldly type are the joy and happiness of deep concentration. Even more unworldly is the happiness of liberation.

Worldly pleasant feelings are those that lead to an increase of sensual desire. Unworldly pleasant feelings lead to a decrease in sensual desire. A mind that is fully liberated is forever free from sensual desire. Consequently, the joy of liberation is the supreme type of “unworldly pleasant feeling”.

Feelings are also *impermanent*. Appreciation of the changing nature of feelings does require an intentional effort. Once we establish that *felt sense of impermanence*, thoughts no longer need to be seen as a distraction from contemplation of feelings. As long as we stay *rooted in awareness* of the whole body and attuned to this directly *felt sense of change*, they will gradually lose their power.

In whole body awareness, with a sense of impermanence, we are aware that “there is feeling”.

Noticing the push of feelings for some reaction discloses their conditioning impact on the mind. Sustained contemplation reveals *the body* to be a recurrent source of painful feelings, whereas *the mind* in the present moment yields a subtle type of pleasant feeling. Any feeling can serve as an entry into the direct experience of impermanence.

Section 2

Chapter 7 – Mind: the fifth spoke of the wheel corresponds to the third *satipatthana*, and is a contemplation of mental states. These include “a mind with lust ... anger ... delusion ... contracted mind ... and distracted mind” ... as well as their opposites. The main thrust is continuous inward monitoring of “how is the mind”? What really counts is how the mind *reacts* to what happens (outside or inside).

Lust, Anger, and Delusion. The initial focus is on lust, anger, and delusion – their presence or absence ... desire, aversion, or delusion. Lust (or desires) includes pleasant worldly feelings. Anger represents painful worldly feelings. Delusion arises from neutral worldly feelings. The task is to discern the underlying mental current, the condition of the mind, through mindfulness. We step back from previous stages and allow our awareness to become more comprehensive, more open to what is taking place outside. Then we focus inwardly on the body and feelings ... the mind. This is a peripheral awareness, monitoring the condition of our mind. What is the state of your mind right now? Honest and clear recognition is important, especially unpleasant feelings or displeasures.

The *Anangana Sutra* gives importance to recognizing the absence of a defilement, which necessitates recognizing the presence *and* absence. This includes the “hindrances” and the “awakening factors”. Defilements should be recognized, but without aversion. (Realize that a defilement is in the mind and smile!) Recognize we are *not* experiencing lust, anger, or delusion as well.

Cultivating a habit of rejoicing in wholesome conditions of the mind will make meditation so much more attractive and turn it into something that we look forward to.

Higher States of Mind. The remaining four pairs are less concerned with defilements. Here, one knows when “mind has become *great*” or not, “*surpassable*” or not, “*concentrated*” or not, and “*liberated*” or not. The first may be cultivated through the four immeasurables. In general, this category could be one of *opening the heart*, then *cultivating tranquility*.

The first attainment is that of the first absorption (*jhana*). The second attainment is “unsurpassable”. This requires meditative experience to recognize whether it can be taken further beyond the second absorption (*jhana*). The third attainment of “concentrated” is based upon monitoring mindfulness, deepening tranquility, and attainment of the third absorption (*jhana*). And the last distinguishes between mind that is liberated (fourth absorption – *jhana*) or not. When fully liberated one has also cultivated *tranquility* and is liberated from “selfing” or ego.

Another interpretation is that “great” or not reflects the opening of the heart. “Surpassable” or not is recognition whether meditation can be taken further or not. “Concentrated” or not is a deepening of mental tranquility. “Liberated” or not reflects the absence of a sense of a “self”.

Opening the Heart to lovingkindness and compassion. Begin each session by setting your intention, such as, “May I progress on the path to liberation, for my own benefit and for the benefit of others”. This links to “right intention” of the Eightfold Path. An altruistic disposition (without any expectation of anything in return) is particularly beneficial. We are also practicing for the benefit of others.

Skillful Use of Labels. This is not about avoiding labels. Thoughts may be wholesome or unwholesome. The Buddha saw no danger in having such thoughts. Yet he also saw that excessive thinking will tire the body and mind and become an obstruction to deepening concentration. A simple guide is whether “mindfulness” is present or not. Well established, mindfulness is open, receptive, flexible, alive, centered, and calm. Notice these markers during practice.

Open Practice. In “open awareness” (or whole-body awareness) we recognize the embodied presence of mindfulness as a baseline. Loss of embodied mindfulness can alert us to any loss of mental balance. Significant distractions include experience of lust, anger, or delusion. When noticed, they may vanish, but keep a lookout for any recurrence.

Impermanence. Mind constantly changes. “Clear knowing” is a recognition of this impermanent nature of feelings, perceptions, and thoughts as they arise, persist, and pass away. Those who have attained “full awakening” have gained control over the mind. “Now” is not innate or unchangeable, but a product of “conditions” (which can be used in training our mind!). Insight into impermanence, *dukkha*, and not-self must be cultivated. Body, feelings, and mind are impermanent, incapable of lasting satisfaction. Dukkha includes not getting what we want, our inability to control things completely. There is no self in complete control.

The main thrust of contemplation of the mind is our degree of accuracy of the condition of our mind. We learn to keep an eye on what happens within. *Sati* (mindfulness or awareness) alerts us to the presence or absence of lust, anger, and delusion and enables deeper levels of concentration and insight, revealing the impermanent nature of all mental events.

Chapter 8 – Hindrances: the sixth spoke of the wheel is the contemplation of “dharmas”, specifically the *hindrances* and *awakening factors*. The difference between the third and forth *satipatthana* is a direct working with “conditionality”, especially *dependent arising* based on *feelings*

and *craving*. All things are impermanent. We are not in complete control of our mind. This leads to the “five hindrances”: (1) sensual desire, (2) anger, (3) laziness and inactivity [sloth-and-torpor], (4) restlessness-and-worry, and (5) doubt. First, we recognize the presence or absence of each, then the “flavor” of the conditions that led to the (a) arising, (b) conditions that can lead to its removal, and (c) those that can prevent its recurrence.

We can determine the degrees of strength. In a weak occurrence, we can recognize if mindful recognition is enough for it to disappear. Stronger conditions may require helpful mental conditions to emerge from it and prevent recurrence. [Complexities]

Facing a Hindrance.⁷ Contemplation of hindrances requires an element of *playfulness* combined with strong intention. First, we learn to take the hindrance less seriously. Its presence does not mean that you own it. Explore the “texture” of the mind from which hindrances are absent; savor this condition. Actual removal takes right effort, right view, and right intention (from the Eightfold Path). These require mindful monitoring to avoid either excess or deficiency.

1 - Sensual desire. Desire can be wholesome or not, such as desire for liberation. A *hindrance* is sensuality, such as the search for happiness through sex and sensual indulgence (hedonism). At times mindful recognition or investigation of the causes can suffice. In the *satipatthana* the next step would be emphasis to the *impermanent nature of pleasant feelings*. The traditional monastic antidote for sexual desire was contemplation of anatomical parts – skin, flesh, and bones – to inculcate non-attachment (a form of psychological “indulgent therapy”). Mindfulness can alert us at the sense-doors (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, flesh, and mind itself). “Restraint” means cognizing the actual sense data without allowing further proliferations to occur. Sense restraint is not the mere avoidance of sense contact. It requires training in mindfulness, supported by particular types of behavior by “seclusion” from the source. For example, in the *Brahmayu Sutra*, when eating the Buddha experienced the taste of food *without experiencing the desire* for the taste.

2 - Anger. As previously, mindful recognition alone or investigation of the trigger may suffice. We can direct our attention to the impermanent nature of painful feelings. A body scan of the elements as mindfulness of the body or insight into the “empty nature” of mind may undermine the source. The standard antidote to anger is “lovingkindness”, opening the heart to overcome our anger.

3 - Laziness and inactivity (sloth-and-torpor) and restlessness-and-worry. Both combine two mental conditions. The first two can have internal and external dimensions. The next two are divided into their individual parts: either laziness or inactivity and either restlessness or worry. If we are tired, we may just need to rest. In the hot season, the Buddha himself would rest during the day. However, sluggishness or boredom requires recognizing whether it is more body or mind. Where has the energy gone? Etc. At other times it could be a matter of avoidance or our attitude toward practice.

A standard remedy for laziness and inactivity is mental clarity. Recollection of an inspiring teaching or rejoicing in virtues and meritorious deeds may arouse inspiration and energy. The joy of being in the present moment may arouse inspiration. As for inactivity in particular, additional

⁷ There are 5 additional hindrances sometimes described: (1) craving for existence in form heavenly realms, (2) craving for existence in formless heavenly realms, (3) conceit (pride or arrogance), (4) restlessness (impatience), and (5) ignorance (delusion).

remedies may include massaging the body, sprinkling the eyes with water and looking at the sky, cultivating clarity of perception, or doing walking meditation.

4 - Restlessness-and-worry are the opposites. Anything that calms the mind may be helpful. Paying attention to the present moment or resting in whole-body awareness. Some effort is needed, but do not overdo it. Cultivate contentment. As with the sutra of tuning a “lute”, neither too tight nor too loose. If the mind remains agitated, direct mindfulness to the breath, relaxing and letting go with each out-breath. Worries may be set aside for later, when there is time to think it over.

5 - Doubt. Some doubts may be set aside for later, such as doubts about the teachings. These required wise reflection. Recall the Buddha saying that we must become an island to ourselves. Or you may need guidance from your teacher or a spiritual friend. Walking meditation may also be helpful. In any case, shift from a feeling of hopelessness to stirring a keen sense of interest and investigation. Trust yourself, with a clear distinction between what is wholesome or skillful and what is unwholesome or unskillful. Practice patience and reach out to others.

The Absence of the Hindrances. When no hindrance is present in the mind, arouse joy! Mental clarity comes with the absence of the hindrances. Rejoice in their absence. Reflect in the mirror of your mind on your mental condition.

The foundation is clarity of the mind, with the absence of the hindrances. We proceed with open awareness of changing experiences. Nothing can disturb us, because whatever happens is food for mindfulness. Mental clarity arises free from defilements. The absence of hindrances facilitates “dwelling independently” without clinging to anything.

Chapter 9 – Awakening: the last spoke in the wheel of *satipatthana* practice is contemplation of the seven “awakening factors”: (1) mindfulness, (2) investigation of dhammas, (3) energy, (4) joy, (5) tranquility, (6) concentration, and (7) equipoise. The first stage is recognition of the presence or absence of the factor. The second concerns exploring conditionality, awareness of the conditions that lead to the arising of a factor and those that will further strengthen it. *Mindfulness* provides the foundation (including previously the presence or absence of the five hindrances. This *investigation* has been carried out with sufficient *energy* to make sure the hindrances have indeed gone. The *joy* that has arisen leads to *tranquility*, *concentration*, and *equipoise*. The presence of these seven awakening factors testifies to our capacity to awaken.

Mindfulness (again). At this stage, mindfulness is the main condition for the arising of the awakening factors. At the time of the Buddha, ability to remember and give an accurate report to others required keen interest and open receptivity to avoid minor details and tangential associations with a balanced attitude of unbiased observation. During meditation practice, this required *openness and receptivity*, being *awake* to remember vividly and distinctly, and *presence* to remain fully present in the present moment.

Investigation. This includes examining, scrutinizing, and investigating the information with keen interest, inquisitiveness, and a wish to follow up and really understand them. During meditation our mind notes what is skillful or wholesome and what is unskillful or unwholesome, a form of *meta-awareness*.

Energy. This refers to persistence of inquisitiveness, monitoring the presence or not of an awakening factor, how it arises, and how it is perfected. Energy stands for persistence, active and continuous engagement.

Joy. This is a wholesome form of joy, noting its presence, how arisen, and how perfected. There is a subtle joy of being in the present moment, the joy of an unworldly type [perhaps “joy” is not the best word], such as rejoicing in the temporary absence of the hindrances. Discourses regularly refer to joy that leads to tranquility and concentration, with no need for “intention”.

Tranquility follows the same pattern as those above. Here the focus is on calmness of body and mind, leading to “ultimate happiness”. [Liberation, enlightenment...]

Concentration also follows the same pattern. Concentration (*samadhi*) is a bringing together, a sense of collectedness or composure of the mind with a condition of being unruffled and unified serenity. Concentration that arises at this point can fulfill the path factor of “right concentration”. Although the *jhanas* were known before the time of the Buddha, his contribution seems to have been that such experiences are merely the product of specific conditions, without metaphysical or ontological connotations. Any level of concentration as part of the Eightfold Path approached with analytical attitude is considered “right concentration”, whereby one becomes a “stream-enterer”.

Equipoise [balance, evenness] is the culmination point of the awakening factors, following again the same pattern. In other contexts “equanimity” [mental calmness, composure] is used instead of “equipoise”. The Pali description of building the awakening factors speaks of looking on well with equipoise at the concentrated mind. A Chinese parallel refers to being free from covetousness and sadness. The *Satipatthana Sutra* relates to dwelling free from desires and discontent, or more literally covetousness and sadness. The gradual building of the awakening factors through meditation aims at dwelling with “inner balance” (and returning to it as soon as it is lost).

Balancing the Awakening Factors. Mindfulness is always required. The remaining six are two sets of three each: (1) investigation of dharma, energy, and joy *energize* the practice, and (2) tranquility, concentration, and equipoise bring *calmness* to the practice. Mindfulness is always required.

Cultivating individual Awakening Factors. These factors may also be cultivated individually, requiring familiarity and clear understanding of each, and may include study and reflection in addition to meditation.

Inclining the mind towards awakening. The culmination is “letting go”, in dependence on *seclusion*, *dispassion*, and *cessation*. “**Seclusion**” is having distanced ourselves from what is unwholesome (especially the hindrances), “**dispassion**” is the fading away of attachments, and “**cessation**” is the ending of *dukkha*. We are secluded from the hindrances; dispassionate from craving and attachments, with cessation allowing the flow of change to wash them away, and we are *at peace* as we prepare for the supreme letting go, “deathlessness” – the realization of Nirvana. What is most needed is **letting go**.

Repeated practice should leave its marks on how we handle everyday situations. There should be small but noticeable changes for the better in our personal well-being and in how we relate to others.

PART 6 - The Jhanas/Dhyanas (Seven Summaries)

Mindfulness in Early Buddhism: Characteristics and Functions by Bhikkhu Analayo.

Summary of NOTES from PART 3 on Jhanas/Dhyanas

26 Ariyapariyesana Sutta – The Noble Search Ananda; Four Jhanas:

- First: accompanied by applied and sustained thought, rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.
- Second: Stilling of applied and sustained thought, self-confidence, singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration.
- Third: Fading away of rapture, abides in equanimity (mental calm), mindful and aware, still feeling pleasure in the body/pleasant abiding.
- Fourth: abandoning pleasure and pain, disappearance of joy and grief, purity of mindfulness due to equanimity [mental calm].

36 Mahasaccaka Sutta – Rose-Apple Tree & 4 Jhanas

- First: “I entered upon and abided in the *first jhana*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain.
- Second: With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, I entered upon and abided in the *second jhana*.
- Third: With the fading away as well of rapture...I entered upon and abided in the *third jhana*...
- Fourth: With the abandoning of pleasure and pain...I entered upon and abided in the *fourth jhana*...But such pleasant feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and remain. My concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and attained to imperturbability” [calm, tranquility].

39 Maha-Assapura Sutta – Gradual training to becoming a “recluse”

- Abandoning hindrances – abandon covetousness, ill will and hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt; abide with mindfulness, inwardly **peaceful**,
- Secluded from hindrances, sensual pleasures, and unwholesome states, [Four Jhanas]
 - Abide in the 1st jhana, accompanied by sustained thought, rapture, and pleasure born of seclusion,
 - Stilling applied and sustained thought, abide in the 2nd jhana, with self-confidence and signlessness of mind, without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration,
 - With fading away of rapture, abide in the 3rd jhana, in equanimity [mental calm], mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body,
 - Abandoning pleasure and pain, joy and grief, abide in the 4th jhana, with purity of mindfulness due to equanimity, pervading body and pure mind.
- Concentrated mind is purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and imperturbable, liberated from the origin, cessation, and the way, leading to the cessation of the taints and suffering

8 Sallekha Sutta – Benefits of virtue (4 Jhanas, 4 absorptions and long lists to eliminate)

- *First Jhana* – secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, but still with discursive thoughts, one abides with rapture and joy.
- *Second Jhana* – having abandoned discursive thoughts, but still with rapture and joy, one abides with inner tranquility, harmony, and concentration.
- *Third Jhana* – having abandoned rapture and joy, but still feeling pleasure in the body, one abides in mental calm (equanimity), mindful and fully aware.
- *Fourth Jhana* – having abandoned pain and pleasure, one abides in purity of mindfulness of mental calm (equanimity).

64 *Mahamalunkya Sutta* – the five lower fetters: *Four Jhanas*, *Four Absorptions*, *Deathlessness*

- *First Jhana* – directed toward the “**deathless element**” – **peaceful**, sublime, stilling of all formations, relinquishing of all attachments, destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, *Nirvana* ... destruction of the taints.
- *Second Jhana* – stilling applied and sustained thought.
- *Third Jhana* – fading away of rapture.
- *Fourth Jhana* – abandoning of pleasure and pain, with neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of **mindfulness** due to **equanimity** [mental calm].

31 *Culagosinga Sutta* – Life in the sangha – practices

- *Four Jhanas*: (1) secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, (2) stilling of applied and sustained thought, (3) fading away of rapture, (4) abandoning pleasure and pain.

65 *Bhaddali Sutta* – (includes *Four Jhanas*)

- *First Jhana* – (accompanied by applied and sustained thought?), with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.
- *Second Jhana* – with stilling of applied and sustained thought.
- *Third Jhana* – with the fading away of rapture.
- *Fourth Jhana* – with the abandoning of pleasure and pain.

When concentrated mind is purified and bright, attained to imperturbability (calm), one directs it to knowledge of the destruction of the taints (a hint of), one understands this is suffering...as it actually is, leading to the cessation of taints: **sensual desires**, “**being**”, **ignorance**; when liberated there comes the knowledge it is liberated: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being”.

Note that the last 3 examples above are the most simple and direct.

SUMMARY of the 7 Summaries above [number of occurrences from these texts are in brackets; top 50% in each *jhana* list of 4 or more references are in bold]:

- *First Jhana*:
 (1) **rapture** [5],
 (2) **pleasure of seclusion** [5],
 (3) accompanied by applied and sustained thought [3],
 (4) secluded of hindrances [1],
 (5) pleasant feeling that did not invade mind and remain [1],
 (6) applied and sustained thought [1],
 (7) joy [1],

- (8) secluded from unwholesome states [1],
- (9) deathless element – sublime, stilling of formations, relinquishing attachments, destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nirvana, destruction of taints [1].

- **Second Jhana:**

- (1) stilling applied and sustained thought [4],
- (2) without applied and sustained thought (absence of #6 above) [4],
- (3) with rapture and pleasure/joy/harmony born of concentration [4],
- (4) self-confidence [2],
- (5) signless mind [1]

- **Third Jhana:**

- (1) fading away or abandoning rapture and joy [7],
- (2) equanimity (mental calm)/tranquility [4],
- (3) mindful and aware [3],
- (4) still feeling pleasure/pleasant abiding [3]

- **Fourth Jhana:**

- (1) abandoning pleasure and pain [6],
- (2) equanimity (mental calm) [5],
- (3) dissolution of appearance and grief [2],
- (4) purity of mindfulness [2],
- (5) abandoning joy [2],
- (6) pleasant feeling [1],
- (7) mind was purified [1],
- (8) bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady [1]

From “Dhyana in Buddhism”, Wikipedia: The stock description of the *jhānas*, with traditional and alternative interpretations, is as follows (edited for simplicity):

1. **First Jhāna:** Separated from desire for sensual pleasures, other unwholesome states, and unwholesome actions, a practitioner enters upon and abides in the first *jhana*, which is [mental] rapture or joy and lasting bodily pleasure born of seclusion. *Alternative additions include: initial and sustained attention on a meditative object, initial inquiry and subsequent investigation of defilements and wholesome thoughts, stilling the mind when moving to the second jhana.*
2. **Second Jhāna:** With sustained attention, a practitioner enters upon and abides mentally and bodily in the second *jhana*, born from non-conceptual awareness. *Alternative additions include: bringing mental habits (defilements) into full view then letting them go, thus knowing with non-conceptual awareness and inner tranquility.*
3. **Third Jhāna:** With the fading away of joy, a practitioner abides in equanimity (mental calm), mindful with full knowing (awareness). Still experiencing happiness, pleasure, ease, joy or bliss with the body, one enters and abides in the third *jhana*, abiding in bodily pleasure, one is calm and mindful.
4. **Fourth Jhāna:** With the abandoning the desire for pleasure (good) and aversion to pain (bad), a practitioner enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhana*, which is neither-painful-nor-pleasurable, free from pleasure and pain and has complete purity of equanimity and

mindfulness). *Alternative additions include: attainment of “higher knowledge”, the extinction of all mental intoxicants, but also with “psychic powers”.* “When a monk has developed and pursued the five-factored noble ‘right concentration’ in this way, then whichever of the six higher knowledges he turns his mind to know and realize, he can witness them for himself whenever there is an opening.... If he wants, he wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds. He can witness this for himself whenever there is an opening ...” [God-like ... symbolic vs. literal]

Bhikkhu Analayo summarizes the Four Jhanas as follows:

- **First Jhana** – One completely drenches and pervades the body with *joy and happiness born of “seclusion”* [in the forest] so that there is no part within the body that is not pervaded by joy and happiness born of **seclusion**. [*Isolation, stillness*]
- **Second Jhana** – One completely drenches and pervades the body with *joy and happiness born of “concentration”* so that there is no part within the body that is not pervaded by joy and happiness born of **concentration**. [*Focused attention, mindfulness*]
- **Third Jhana** – One completely drenches and pervades the body with *happiness born of the “absence of joy”* so that there is no part within the body that is not pervaded by happiness born of the **absence of joy**. [*Overcome with mental calm*]
- **Fourth Jhana** – One mentally resolves to dwell having accomplished a *complete pervasion of the body with “mental purity”*, so that there is no part within the body that is not pervaded in **mental purity**. [*Peace, contentment*]

In summary: one experiences the joy and happiness of isolation or stillness, of mindfulness, then mental calm, and finally peace and contentment!

PART 7: The Four Infinite Absorptions

Section 1 - Abiding in Emptiness: A Guide for Meditative Practice – Bhikkhu Analayo

Before we begin this session, it may be helpful to review the “Four Reliances”:

1. Rely on the teaching, not the teacher.
2. Rely on the meaning of the teaching, not the words that express it.
3. Rely on the definitive meaning, not the provisional meaning.
4. Rely on transcendent wisdom of deep experience, not ordinary knowledge.

From *Innate Happiness*:

It is very important that you not get caught up in words, concepts, or ideas. You must go beyond them to see that meaning from the view of “ultimate truth” [the highest view; there is no “absolute truth” – *everything* is relative in some way or other]. And beyond that, it is best to use the meaning to achieve transcendent wisdom through direct experience. It is very easy to get caught up in the details of Buddhism. Step back and absorb the broader meaning. Then let go of even that and abide in *suchness*.

The term “absorptions” has also become applied to the four *Dhyanas* (Sanskrit) and *Jhanas* (Pali), which can cause some confusion regarding which of the two sets – *Dhyanas/Jhanas* or *Infinite Absorptions* are being referenced. Having examined the *Four Dhyanas/Jhanas* in Part 6, we move on to the *Four Absorptions*, which are also found in the *Vedas*, but *not* as a “set”, as the “*Four Jhanas*” are. The four absorptions are viewed as being “infinite”, although a better phrase might be “transcending” or even “transcending ordinary perceptual experiences”. The Buddha-to-be is said to have studied with two ascetic masters, one of whom taught him the “third absorption” and the other who taught him the “fourth absorption”. He is said to have mastered them quickly in each case and was even invited by each master to become a teacher along side. However, the Buddha-to-be asserted that they did not help him attain his goal of *liberation*, and so he left each of them to practice on his own (under the bodhi tree).

Over time, the absorption practices became incorporated into the Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan forms of Buddhism. It is not at all clear whether the Buddha actually taught or practiced these following his liberation, or whether they may be a later addition. It hardly makes sense that he would have taught them *if* he *rejected* the effectiveness from his own mastery of both of these from these two masters!

Nevertheless, there are elements of these practices that are similar to other advanced practices that evolved long after the time of the Buddha, particularly Dzogchen and Mahamudra. Therefore, we will explore each of these four absorptions for the benefits that they offer. We will examine these connections in more detail later in the course.

As I mentioned above, there is some value in the use of the *Four Formless Absorptions* related to meditation practices leading to liberation. These four are:

1. Infinite space – as an “element” (earth, water, fire, *space*) [Focused on “earth – solid matter”]
2. Infinite consciousness – mindfulness/awareness; what is and what is not the *ultimate*
3. Infinite nothingness – similar to but not experiential, the same as the philosophical term “emptiness”

4. (Infinite) neither perception nor non-perception (or *signlessness* in Tibetan and Chinese versions) – transcending perceptions by “leading the mind into a *calm abiding without relying on something to focus on*.” [Advanced mindfulness or shamata; similar to *rigpa*, pure perception, etc.]

Interestingly, these four terms (or similarities), are commonly found in Dzogchen teachings and commentaries, although not as a set (just as they were separate in the *Vedas*). Here we examine them as an extension of the *Four Dhyanas/Jhanas* on the path to liberation.

Numerous varieties of these practices have evolved in Buddhism even up to now. I have chosen to summarize them based primarily upon the writings of Bhikkhu Analayo, primarily from his book *Abiding in Emptiness: A Guide for Meditative Practice*.

Recall that the essence of the Four *Jhanas* may be simplified as:

1. *First Jhana* – joy and happiness pervades from *seclusion*.
2. *Second Jhana* – joy and happiness pervades the body from *concentration*.
3. *Third Jhana* – mental calm is born from the *absence of joy*. [Transcended, not rejected]
4. *Fourth Jhana* – complete pervasion of mental purity (peace, contentment).

Joy and happiness, as in 1-3 and nice as they may seem, can become a *hindrance* to true liberation. Through their absence, mental purity (peace and contentment) arises. It is from this state of peace that we enter the *Four Formless Absorptions*. [Note here that there are other approaches to liberation, as we will see, but the Four Absorptions have a striking similarity to what are considered to be the highest practices of Dzogchen in particular.]

(1) **Infinite Space** – as an “element” (earth, water, fire, *space*) – from Chapter 4

The Buddha: “Ananda, not attending to the perception of the forest and not attending to the perception of earth, a practitioner⁸ attends to oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite space [the element space]. Their mind enters upon, is pleased with, settles on, and is devoted to the perception of the sphere of infinite space.

They understand like this: “Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of the forest, these are not present here. Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of earth, these are not present here. There is just this remainder of disturbance, namely the oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite space” ...

Thus, they contemplate it as empty of what is indeed not there, and they understand that what remains there is still present. Ananda, like this, there also comes to be for them this genuine, undistorted, and purified entry into emptiness” [of everything else].

A few other points from Analayo:

“The present instruction does not indicate that one “abides in its attainment”, but just that one has the corresponding “perception”. The Chinese and Tibetan versions agree in speaking just of having the “perception” ... Nevertheless, cultivating the perception of infinite space does require considerable meditative training, especially if we have not yet developed familiarity with leading the mind into a *calm abiding* without relying on a specific circumscribed focus (like advanced

⁸ A “monastic” in the original text.

shamata) ... It needs time and dedication until the mind “enters upon, is pleased with, settle on, and is devoted to it ... that clearly point to the need for mental tranquility”. [Hence the benefit of mindfulness and the Four Jhana practices, for example. Analayo also suggests the Four Immeasurables practices.] Analayo also uses a brief text from the Buddha to his son, Rahula:

“Just like space, which is not established anywhere ... cultivate meditation that is like space ... [Thus] arisen agreeable and disagreeable contacts will not remain and overwhelm the mind. [Empties mind of other distractions]

“Such practice leads to establishing equanimity at any sense door, ... equanimity is peaceful [and] may become established as swiftly as someone may close or open their eyes, ... sounds comparable to snapping the fingers, ... odors like a raindrop rolling off a sloping lotus leaf, ... flavors like spitting.... The open receptivity of the space-like mind naturally forestalls the onset of reactivity toward what is being experienced... Mind that is like space is simply too vast to be overwhelmed by the pettiness of any contact through the six senses... Rather than trying to suppress thinking activity, it can be simply that one notices as occurring in the vast space of the mind. ... Arrival at stillness does not require total absence of thinking activity. Instead, it requires not taking thinking activity so very personally, not identifying with it.

“At the same time, the idea of leaving behind materiality needs to be taken for what it is, a meditative strategy and not a statement of an absolute truth... There is a need to be aware of the limitations of these perceptions, which are just tools... The subjective experience of matter is indeed to a substantial degree the creation of our own mind... Eventually, this type of insight will inform the meditative experience in a way that does not involve the intentional employment of conceptual thinking.

“In line with the overall trajectory of tranquility and insight, the emphasis can be on cultivating mindfulness of the notion of infinite space, in order to be able to shift easily between calm abiding and an understanding of the disturbances that have been left behind... A powerful way of establishing equanimity in regard to whatever may occur at any of the six senses is to keep the mind like space.”

Space has no boundaries. The perceptions of earth, fire, wind and space, indeed the whole body is viewed without boundaries, a sense of becoming one with the whole universe, infinite and unobstructed (avoiding issues of science at this point). Through the Four Immeasurables practices, we may also reflect on our body as mostly space and becoming one with the whole universe. Relax and let go. “The final aim is just abiding in the perception of infinite space without any further activity”.

As a sequence of practice, when you have time (you don't have to spend much time on each of these) begin with a few deep breaths, calming your body and mind. Then follow the sequence of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Jhanas, (perhaps the Four Infinite Abodes or Immeasurables), and finally Infinite Space. (Some also reverse the process back to the beginning.)

(2) Infinite Consciousness – advanced mindfulness/awareness; what is and what is not the *ultimate* – from Chapter 5

“Again, Ananda, not attending to the perception of earth (element) and not attending to the perception of the sphere of infinite space (above), a practitioner attends to oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness. Their mind enters upon,

is pleased with, settles on, and is devoted to the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness... Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite space are not present here. There is just this remainder of disturbance, namely the oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness... There is just this remainder, the oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness... [Single focus]

“They contemplate it as empty of what is indeed not there, and understand that what remains is still present... There also comes to be this genuine, undistorted, and purified entry into emptiness” [of everything else, what is not there]

A few other points from Analayo:

The early Buddhist conception of consciousness is one of several alternative terms employed in early Buddhist texts to refer to the *mind*. Two others are *citta* (heart-mind, the seat of emotions) and *manas* (intellect-mind). In meditation, “heart-mind” should be cultivated and “intellect-mind” should be restrained; consciousness should be comprehended with insight [experiential, not cognitive]. In addition, at times “consciousness” *does* represent the whole of the mind... Comparative study shows that consciousness is that which knows experiences arisen in dependence on one of the six senses and the respective objects. This concords with the way the early discourses usually depict consciousness.

“Reification⁹ of perception needs to be avoided in understanding that it is definitely impermanent, just a process of knowing, a consciousness-ing, so to say [treating consciousness as a real thing]... Consciousness can go a long way in being an inner reference point of stillness and stability, ...a grounding in calmness. Mental activities can influence, shape, and model the things that are experienced as being out there. ‘Phenomena are preceded by the mind, they are led by the mind, and they are made by the mind’.

Following in sequence, Infinite Consciousness shifts from the outer (Infinite Space) to the inner. We direct our attention to the knowing part of the mind (the brain). “Meditation does not require the absence of thought. What it does require is the presence of mindfulness to enable the recognition that here is thought activity. But there is no need to use force to stop that thought activity. Instead, a gentle and relaxed turning to that which knows can provide a haven in the storm, an anchoring in stillness. If one is unable to remain with the inner anchor in stillness, mindfulness has recognized that the time has come to back up, returning to a more structured approach. In a way there is *only* the mind. Consciousness has no boundaries or limits (unless these are imposed on it). Increasing familiarity can lead to experiencing anything that happens as taking place within our own mind. But we need to cognize it.

In a way, the whole world known to us is comprised within our own mind: hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching [just as is all thinking]. Practice done in this way can offer a remarkably transformative approach to life... like watching a movie. The drama of existence is to a considerable degree a fabrication of our own mind. The key is stepping out of the subject-object duality. Turning attention to infinite consciousness implies that any other object has been left behind [empty]. The key is a shift toward the mind only. Becoming aware of the mind puts the

⁹ The act of treating an abstract concept as if it were a concrete thing.

meditator in direct contact with the one thing that can indeed be changed and improved, one thing that is right at the heart of all the ups and downs in life.

“A danger is that “infinite consciousness” (and other steps) can be turned into an object of attachment. The instructions hint at the need not to latch onto any of these experiences. It can be quite helpful to place the meditative trajectory from the outset under the overarching aim of liberation *and* benefiting others... an altruistic motivation. Whatever is to be done next in daily life, a brief reminder toward consciousness can set the proper direction, while *remaining aware* can be experienced as happening in the mind [reminiscent of the movie *Matrix*].

“It is so simple but takes dedication and time. The best attitude can be a playful one! The very attitude toward the implementation of this practice can benefit considerably from *awareness of the knowing mind*. [Not the brain per say, but perhaps both the brain and mind as one]

(3) Infinite Nothingness – similar to, but not the same as the philosophical term “emptiness” – from Chapter 6

“Ananda, not attending to the perception of the sphere of infinite space and not attending to the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness, a practitioner attends to oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of nothingness, Their mind enters upon, is pleased with, settles on, and is devoted to the perception of the sphere of nothingness.

“They understand like this: Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite space ... and infinite consciousness are not present here. There is just this remainder of disturbance, namely the oneness in dependence on the perception of the sphere of nothingness.

“They contemplate it as empty of what is indeed not there, and they understand that what remains there is still present. Ananda, like this there also come to be this genuine, undistorted, and purified entry into emptiness” [of everything else].

A few other points from Analayo: Analayo refers to this as “empty of self”.

“Nothingness can at times refer to the final goal of Buddhist practice, the perception of nothingness employed to cultivate the corresponding immaterial sphere does not necessarily involve an insight into emptiness. Perception of nothingness can become a tool for insight into emptiness. Insight contemplations provide ways to cultivate tranquility for this purpose.”

NOTE: Emptiness is often used in relation to the lack of a permanent “self”, i.e., we are empty of a permanent self. More broadly, it is often stated as “everything is impermanent” (and relatedly, everything is interdependent).

“The contemplation of *nothingness* can be undertaken in terms of there being *not* a single *thing* in this world of experience that qualifies as a self or as belonging to a self, the latter being representative of a permanent entity. *Not self* (self as “soul”) is intrinsically related to *impermanence*. The absence of a self is of central relevance within the overall trajectory of contemplating emptiness. Being empty of a *self* goes right to the heart of Buddhist doctrine.

“What changes cannot yield lasting satisfaction; hence what is impermanent is ultimately unsatisfactory... The absence of anything permanent needs to be applied to consciousness above all else. The five aggregates are most easily prone to give rise to the mistaken idea of being some

sort of permanent entity. Thus, the progression from infinite consciousness to infinite nothingness makes eminent sense, ensuring that the profound experience of infinite consciousness does not result in mistaken conclusions. This experience thoroughly purifies any grasping, however subtle, at a self. [Not sure that is always the case, but it is the assumption!]

“Behavior based on self-referentiality needs to be overcome. The idea of something “belonging” to a “self” leads to conceit [attachment, pride, arrogance, etc.]... emotional attachment and clinging... Through the previous practice on infinite consciousness, we are already accustomed to being less carried away.

“There is a need to beware of taking things too literally and thereby missing the main point... The “absence of a self” does not deny the reality of subjective experience... The issue is the innate belief that there is a substantial and unchanging self or essence. [As in Dzogchen, rigpa] This is the root cause of defilements of conceit and clinging... Emptiness is not something to be done, but rather something to be understood and recognized.

“Another area of exploration is distractions during meditation... The existence of thoughts is not the problem, as long as there is a recognition of what is taking place (*mindfulness* or *awareness*). Successful meditation does not equate to having a thought-free mind [here]. Thoughts can be turned into food for insight.

“With the perception of infinite space we learn to be at ease with thoughts by surrounding them with space. With infinite consciousness, distraction can lead to turning toward the knowing part of the mind, from what and how to the knowing part of experience. Knowing becomes a tool [for insight]... This modality of “nothingness” does not affirm that there is nothing... To the contrary, [this practice] can become substantially more effective to the degree to which self-centeredness has been diminished... Be in the present moment without “owning” even that present moment... Leave “defilements” with no place to land! [Poof!]

(4) (Infinite) Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception (In Pali Versions Or *Signlessness* in Tibetan and Chinese versions) – transcending perceptions by “leading the mind into a *calm abiding without relying on something to focus on*.” – from Chapter 7

“Ananda, not attending to the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness and not attending to the perception of the sphere of nothingness, a practitioner attends to oneness in dependence on signless concentration of the mind. Their mind enters upon, is pleased with, settles on, and is devoted to the “signless concentration” of the mind.

“They understand like this: Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of the sphere of infinite consciousness, these are not present here. Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the perception of the sphere of nothingness, these are not present here. There is just this remainder of disturbance, namely the oneness in dependence on the signless concentration of the mind... There is just this non-emptiness, namely the oneness in dependence on the signless concentration of the mind.

“Thus, they contemplate it as empty of what is indeed not there, and they understand that what remains there is still present: “It is there”. Ananda, like this there also comes to be for them this genuine, undistorted, and purified entry into emptiness”.

A few other points from Analayo: Analayo refers to this as “empty of self”.

As noted above, Tibetan parallels do not mention “neither-perception-nor-non-perception” and use the term “signless element” ... Such signlessness is then also the disturbance or non-emptiness left at this point. “Sign” is the characteristic mark of something, which enables perception to recognize what that something is... Signlessness in turn is an intentional abstaining from taking up any sign, a deliberate ignoring of the signposts that experience offers, a refusal to construct meaning out of data provided by the senses. [Much like Dzogchen, rigpa]

“The standard description in early discourses stipulates two conditions for its attainment: not giving attention to any sign and giving attention to the signless element, thus complementing each other... Perception remains fully functional, but the practitioner maintains the conscious resolve not to pick up any sign. [Peace & calm] Concentration is devoid of an object to focus on. Cultivating these perceptions requires mindfulness more than a concentrative focus. Leading the mind into unconscious calm abiding, without relying on something to focus on. Concentration or mental composure or collectedness are not confined to focusing on an object. One Pali source refers to ‘having made letting go the basis, one will gain concentration and will gain unification of the mind’, particularly pertinent to letting go of all signs.

“The first and foundational stage here is *sense restraint*. Such a form of practice is particularly apt for daily-life situations. The main task is to establish sufficient mindfulness to realize when anything that happens at one sense door or the other leads to unwholesome reactivity in the mind ... usually like and dislikes. The instructions speak specifically of avoiding the tendency to *grasp* the sign, to cling to it, which then usually leads to further associations and elaborations in the realm of the mind. Sensual desire, anger, and delusion can operate as markers ... for grasping some feature. It becomes increasingly easy to notice when the mind enters into a defiled condition and an urgent need to let go of the sign arousing a defilement. Practicing in this way reveals the conditionality of the perceptual process.

“Building on training with signs, basic *bare awareness* requires a good foundation in mindfulness. Anything that comes up at any sense door should be received in its *bare condition* of sensory information [non-conceptual direct experience, after which the mind just remains still... What really counts is the process of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching [and thinking]. A particularly remarkable case of such practice involves the story of the non-Buddhist practitioner Bahiya, who became an arhat right on the spot after receiving the following instruction at what was his first encounter with Buddhist teachings; the Buddha to:

Bahiya, you should train yourself like this: in what is seen there will be just what is seen, in what is heard will be just what is heard, in what is sensed will be just what is sensed, in what is cognized will be just what is cognized. Bahiya, you should train yourself thus.

Bahiya, what is seen will be just what is seen ... heard ... sensed, what is cognized [in mind] will be just what is cognized. Then, Bahiya, ‘you’ will not be thereby, ‘you’ will not be therein. Then you will be neither here, nor beyond, nor between the two. Just this is the end of *dukkha*. [Very similar to Dzogchen]

“Instead of all attention being on things out there as objects of experience, there is a growing awareness of the process characteristic of *experience*. We no longer hold on to any aspect of experience and no longer become established on it in any way: ‘neither here, nor beyond, nor between the two’. The profound letting go can lead to a remarkable liberating potential.

Although, in the case of Bahiya, this was already enough, a further step to actualize this liberating *potential* can be taken by cultivating signlessness.

“Bare awareness is most appropriate during formal meditation (we need other sensory inputs to avoid harm or being harmed while living in the world). Signlessness can only be fully implemented in a sustained manner during formal sitting meditation. It is difficult even in walking meditation.

“Signlessness calls for dropping whatever ‘sign’ the mind is involved with at present and not taking up any other sign. [As the Buddha taught] all the teachings, however sublime, are merely a raft for the purpose of crossing over. There comes a time when even a raft needs to be left behind in order to complete the journey. [Much like Dzogchen] Even *wisdom* needs to be abandoned; and *signlessness* [and emptiness] in turn needs to be left behind.

“Practices of *natural stillness*, absence of any *distractions*, and *mental unification* without any reference point goes further than infinite space and consciousness, which already involve calm abiding, also requires foregoing *any* circumscribed focus. With signlessness, even such a theme or topic is no longer available, and the meditative experience becomes one of total and absolute absence. As soon as mind reaches out for a sign, let go to continue the absence of any signs [a “sign” in itself! 😊]. The Chinese parallel also indicates the need for the absence of any signs. The Pali tradition offers the following:

Concentration is reached *without exertion* by holding in check and retraining[?]. Through being freed, one is stable; through being stable, one is contented; and through being contented, one is not agitated.

“A particularly appealing interpretation takes this to refer to having no negativity toward signs, and also not to arouse clinging to their absence, the signless element. The best attitude for cultivation of signlessness is most easily achieved if *no emotional reactivity* is involved, just let go and let be, just a quiet and gentle shedding of what for the time being is of no further use.

“Similarly, abiding in signlessness can just be a quiet letting go, softly and gently without aversion. The mind is suspended without anything to do. [This resembles but is not a *trance state* – “a state of semi-consciousness in which a person is not self-aware and altogether unresponsive to external stimuli”.] Here one is *fully aware but unaffected* by external and internal stimuli. A key feature here is *contentment*. Just a profound sense of stillness and quietude remains, being still and quiet.

“Signlessness completes a meditative trajectory ... of recognizing what is absent and stepping out of the ingrained tendency to pay attention only to what is present. It is about letting go. Even the sword of wisdom is relinquished. This could be encapsulated in this way: mind at rest, let it be; mind moves, let go! Let go of the “object” of meditation, then the “subject”. In an outdoor practice, sit with nothing to do, fully relax, look up at the sky. [Like Togal sky gazing] Over time, this can pervade daily life; remain in the actual *experience* rather than associations, evaluations, and reactivity. Abide in signlessness ‘neither here, nor beyond, nor between’, the Buddha’s final instruction to Bahiya.

“A direct application of abiding in signlessness in daily life is not really feasible, because it requires non-attention to any signs. Instead, sense restraint and bare awareness would be practices in situations outside of formal meditation practice. Here, signs can be observed and

better understood ... diminishing conceptual proliferation. We no longer believe the various dramas and stories our mind can create leading on the path of complete freedom of full awakening, while also reducing the degree to which anything that happens reverberates in the mind.

From the next chapter on Nirvana, from the Buddha:

This signlessness concentration is produced by volition [intention], but whatever is constructed and produced by volition is *impermanent* and of a nature to cease. Knowing and seeing like this, *mind is liberated from becoming and ignorance*. On being liberated, there is *awareness of being liberated* and one understands, "Birth is extinct, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no further of this present state of being. ... Whatever disturbances there could be in dependence on the influx of *sensuality, becoming, and ignorance are not present here*. ... The perceptual range is *empty of sensuality, becoming, ignorance*; they are not present here, just the six sense spheres in dependence on this body and conditioned by life.

They contemplate it as empty of what is not there and what remains is still present. Ananda, *there comes to be this genuine, undistorted, purified, supreme, and unsurpassed entry into emptiness* [lack of the lists above, not a "void" per se]... Train like this: "We shall abide having attained purified, supreme, and unsurpassed emptiness."

The Final Meditation: In the Buddha's final meditation, he advised followers to **cultivate silence**, followed by the **four jhanas**, the **four infinite spheres**, with **cessation of feelings and perceptions**, after which he "entered his final Nirvana".

Section 2 – Compassion and Emptiness in Early Buddhist Meditation – Analayo

This book includes several descriptions on the early view of emptiness and has been inserted here as a transition from the early teachings to those in the Mahayana tradition. In the *Cula-sunnata-sutra* "emptiness" in the early discourses describes the entry into emptiness, directing attention to the "quality of being empty". This text asserts that the "real solution can be found only by once and for all getting rid of lustful craving ... by fully realizing the empty nature of sense experience". From the *Sumyukta-agama*:

"The eye is empty; it is empty of being permanent, of being perpetual, and of having an unchanging nature, and it is empty of what belongs to a self ... its intrinsic nature.... Forms ... eye-consciousness ... eye-contact ... feeling arisen in dependence on eye-contact that is painful, pleasant, or neutral, is also empty ... of being permanent ... perpetual ... an having an unchanging nature ... and what belongs to a self. That is its intrinsic nature. The ear, nose, tongue, body, mind are also like that. This is the implication of saying: 'The world is empty'.... The doctrinal equivalent to emptiness is the teaching of not-self.... All phenomena are not-self."

"*Physical seclusion* requires withdrawal, at least temporarily, from involvement in worldly affairs, ideally undertaken in a secluded location that affords protection against outside disturbances. *Mental seclusion* requires withdrawal from involvement in worldly affairs ... emptying the mind of plans, worries, and memories, by letting go of past and future, and simply *being aware* of the empty nature of the present moment ... letting the mind remain

anchored in the present moment and in full awareness of the lack of stability of whatever manifests itself.”

“Mindfulness has a central role to play when it comes to bringing formal emptiness meditation to bear on daily activities.... Dwelling in emptiness does not necessarily require maintaining a non-conceptual mental condition.... The point is not to avoid thought altogether, but to avoid certain types of thought, namely unwholesome thoughts. In this way emptiness can be practiced even when the mind is crowded with thinking activity.”

[Mindfulness of ... always and all ways!]

“It is not the powerfulness of the experience of emptiness that really matters, but its effect in completely removing the “chirping crickets” in one’s mind. [The “thought train”]

“The *Madhyama-agama* version of the progression of practice after “signless concentration” (empty of signs) has been attained, provides the finishing touch to the gradual entry into emptiness: ‘My experience of the signless concentration of the mind is rooted in formations, intentions.... I [the Buddha] do not delight in that, I do not seek that, I should not become established in that’. Knowing this way, seeing this way, [one’s mind is liberated from the influx of sensual desire, the influx of existence, and one’s mind is liberated from the influx of ignorance. One knows that one is liberated.... Yet there is this non-emptiness: just this body with its six sense-spheres and the life faculty.

“Whatever is not present, one sees as empty; whatever else is present, one sees as truly present. Ananda, this is called truly dwelling in emptiness, without distortion, namely the eradication of the influxes¹⁰, the influx-free and unconditioned liberation of the mind.... The main point is the realization that the experience of signlessness is still within the realm of what is conditioned ... something created by one’s own mind.... Fabricated by one’s own intentions (or natural tendencies). This experience is impermanent.... Becoming dispassionate with what is impermanent and conditioned then enables the breakthrough to full liberation.... This is what emptiness is really about, namely voiding the mind of all defilements.... The mind has become truly silent.”

The *Madhyama-Agama* – Shorter Discourse on Emptiness [most of the text is included here]

“At one time I heard the Blessed One speak like this: ‘Ananda, I often dwell in emptiness’. Did I understand well, receive well, and remember well that saying by the Blessed One?

“Then the Blessed One replied: ‘Ananda, you truly understood well, received well, and remembered well that saying by me. Why is that? From then until now, I often dwell in emptiness.

“Ananda, just as this mansion of Migara’s Mother is empty of elephants, horses, cattle, sheep, wealth, grain, and male and female slaves; yet there is the non-emptiness [what is not present]: just the community of monks. Whatever is not present, I therefore see as empty; and whatever else is present, I see as truly present. This is called truly dwelling in emptiness without distortion.

¹⁰ The *mental defilements* of sensual pleasures, craving for existence, and ignorance, which perpetuate samsara, the beginningless cycle of rebirth, dukkha, and dying again.

“Ananda, if a monk wishes to dwell much in emptiness, that monk should not give attention to the village and not give attention to the people, but should frequently give attention to the perception of forest. Whatever weariness because of the people there might be – that is also not present for me. There is only the weariness because of the unitary perception of forest. Whatever is not present is seen as empty; whatever else is present, he sees as truly present. Ananda, this is called truly dwelling in emptiness, without distortion.

Again, Ananda, if a monk wishes to dwell much in emptiness, he should not give attention to the perception of the people *or* the forest, but should frequently give attention to the earth, but should frequently give attention to the perception of the earth.... In this way he knows that this is empty of the perception of people and empty of the perception of forest. Yet there is this non-emptiness: the unitary perception of earth. Whatever is *not* present is seen as empty; whatever else is present, is seen as truly present. This is called truly dwelling in emptiness without distortion....

[The text continues with the sphere of infinite space, consciousness, nothingness, then...] Ananda, the monk frequently gives attention to the “unitary signless concentration of the mind [vs. perception and nonperception. He then moves on to concentration” of the mind on formations, intentions....] ‘I do not delight in that, I do not seek that, I should not become established in that.’ Knowing and seeing in this way, his mind is liberated from the influx of sensual desires, permanent existence, ignorance. Being liberated, he knows he is liberated, that birth has been extinguished, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, there will be no more experiencing of further existence. [Again, like Dzogchen]

“Ananda, in this way he knows that this is empty of sensual desire, existence, and ignorance. Yet there is this non-emptiness: this body of mind with its six sense-spheres and the life faculty.... Whatever is not present he sees as empty; whatever is present, he sees as truly present. Ananada, this is truly dwelling in emptiness, the eradication of the influxes, the influx-free and unconditioned liberation of the mind.

“Ananda, whatever Tathagatas, free from attachment and completely awakened, they truly dwelled in this emptiness, without distortion in eradication of the influxes, the influx-free and unconditioned liberation of the mind.... Whatever Tathagatas, free from attachment and completely awakened there will be in the future, they will all truly dwell in this emptiness without distortion, namely the eradication of the influxes, influx-free and unconditioned liberation of the mind...

“Ananda, you should train yourself like this: ‘I shall also truly dwell in this emptiness [of the influxes] without distortion, namely the eradication of the influxes, the influx-free and unconditioned liberation of the mind. Train yourself like this.”

From the Greater Discourse on Emptiness: “Then the Blessed One told Ananda: ‘A monk should not desire, delight, or associate with vociferous talk; desire, delight or associate with company; not desiring to be separated from company, not delighting in dwelling alone in remote places.... Then it is certainly possible to attain, easily and without difficulty, that happiness which is called noble happiness, the happiness of dispassion, separation, stillness, happiness that leads to full awakening, the non-worldly happiness (peace and contentment) that leads beyond birth and death.

PART 8: Selections from Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha – E.A. Burt, Ed.

We now transition into the **Path of Mahayana**, “the Great Vehicle” (from divisive competition with what became called “the Lesser Vehicle” – Hinayana or Theravada – the Path of Individual Liberation). Mahayana is also known as the Path of the Bodhisattva or the Path of Altruism (prioritizing helping others attain liberation over one’s own final liberation). The danger here is one of “ego”.

The principle concept is *bodhicitta*, literally *the mind of enlightenment*, which is further divided into (1) relative – focused on “compassion” (including altruistic intention and altruistic action) and (2) ultimate – focused on insight (more commonly used in the Pali) or wisdom (more common in Sanskrit).

There are three principle categories of teachings: (1) ethics, (2) meditation, and (3) wisdom. Ethics are further divided into “the Two Truths”: (1) relative – this life and (2) ultimate – transcendent or ultimate truth.

Ethics:

The relative ethics are essentially the same as previously, basic universal principles: no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct (celibacy for monastics, as before), lying, and no intoxication, but detailed into a list of 10 as before. Monastics, of course, have a much longer list known as the *vinaya* code.

There are some new considerations in Mahayana to facilitate transcending our conflicting emotions, articulated as being associated with mythical (or “real”) realms: (1) hatred – “hell beings”, (2) greed – “hungry ghosts”, (3) ignorance – “animals”, (4) sensual desires – “humans”, (5) jealousy – “demi or jealous gods”, and (6) pride or arrogance – “gods”. These are, of course, all *human* experiences. The metaphors make them easier to recall (and perhaps blame!). These also become part of an increasing reference in Mahayana to various gods and demons, as those found in most ancient religions.

Another principle development is the “Bodhisattva Vow”. This appears in a variety of forms, most often in a ritual format. Whereas the previous Path of Individual Liberation had some “rules”, primarily the monastic code, the Path of the Bodhisattva shows a trend to increasing use of rules and rituals. The Bodhisattva Vow is one of those, often done in a ritual format. The essence of it is “May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings”, with any number of elaborations. More of these may be found in *Innate Happiness* and other sources.

And finally, there is also a list of 18 Bodhisattva Downfalls:

- 1) Praising yourself and denigrating others
- 2) Not giving wealth and dharma when requested, if able or qualified
- 3) Not forgiving others who apologize
- 4) Abandoning the Path of Altruism
- 5) Taking offerings made to the **Three Jewels**¹¹
- 6) Abandoning the *dharma*
- 7) Disrobing or causing disrobing of monks and nuns

¹¹ The Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

- 8) Committing the five heinous crimes¹²
- 9) Holding wrong views (not believing in the dharma)
- 10) Destroying towns or other habitats
- 11) Teaching emptiness to the untrained
- 12) Discouraging others from their aspiration for full liberation
- 13) Causing someone to abandon their individual liberation vows
- 14) Denigrating the Path of Individual Liberation
- 15) Claiming realization of emptiness when not fully realized
- 16) Accepting something stolen from the Three Jewels
- 17) Showing favoritism
- 18) Giving up aspiration *bodhicitta*

These vows can be combined with other ethical lists to gain a deeper understanding of the Buddhist view of morality, although these are not comprehensive lists, but the core of the teachings as they evolved during and after the historical Buddha's lifetime.

This can be summarized in the verse, the *Four Immeasurables*:

May all sentient beings have happiness and its causes.
 May they be liberated from all sufferings and their causes.
 May they never be separated from the happiness that is free from sorrow.
 May they rest in peace, free from attachment and aversion.

Practices:

We will explore new (or different?) forms of meditation added to those described before. Times were changing on the Indian subcontinent, and with them the views of practice in Buddhism. As we have seen above, there was a move toward a more altruistic and compassionate view of other beings, including to some degree or more, other non-humans. These principles are also found in the Pali Canon, but they were not a point of emphasis in the Theravada tradition. That, however, is beginning to change with increasing emphasis.

The principle practices were based upon a practice called the Six Perfections, divided into *merit* – the first five, also referred to as “skillful means”, and the sixth – *wisdom*. The classic text on these is Shantideva's *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, described in more detail there, also in *Innate Happiness*, and numerous other texts. Here is a concise list, perfection of:

- 1) generosity or altruism
- 2) ethics
- 3) patience
- 4) effort
- 5) concentration
- 6) wisdom

We have seen the first two previously and above in this section of the text. We have also seen the need for 3, 4, and 5 in the earlier practice requiring patience, effort, and concentration. As noted above, these are to develop our skillful means for both daily life and other forms of meditation described earlier (and those which follow).

¹² Killing one's father, mother, or an *arhat*, wounding a Buddha, causing a division in the sangha

Another significant practice is “The Four Immeasurables”: (1) lovingkindness, (2) compassion, (3) joy, and (4) equanimity (mental calm or peace). These are said to be immeasurable, infinite if you will. A Bodhisattva is often described as being committed to these principles and practices even to the sacrifice of their life. In the *Four Immeasurables*, lovingkindness is referred to as “happiness”, specifically the wish that *all beings* have happiness. The happiness, however, is *not* ordinary happiness (although it is sometimes used in that way), but the subtle joy, peace, and contentment we examined in the *Four Dhyanas/Jhanas*. Furthermore, it is a key part of the core principle of the Bodhisattva path. This is commonly paired with compassion, the wish that all beings *not have* suffering. So we want all beings to have the good and not have the bad, the essence of the Bodhisattva ideal. Or better yet, we want all beings to achieve complete liberation or enlightenment!

As noted above, the “joy” part is not the pleasure or extreme gladness like the common use of the word. It is a far more subtle experience similar to peace and contentment. And most importantly, we wish these for others, not so much ourselves, even though we may have the same or similar experiences through our view and practices. Finally, we achieve the fourth immeasurable, equanimity or peace. Although each of the four have a unique quality, they are also an increasingly subtle experience very similar to that of the four *Dhyanas*. They could easily be integrated as a practice.

Wisdom:

The sixth perfection deals with “wisdom”, similar to “insight” in the Pali sources (although these are both used somewhat loosely). I’ll share my view of the difference below. This is reflected in three principles in the Path of Altruism: Buddhanature, transcendent wisdom, and the Middle Way (in the form of a particular philosophical view, with several variations. The essence can be described as “the way things *are*” vs. “the way things *appear*”). First, we simply do not experience things as they really are. At one level, we don’t experience individual atoms, or even compounds made of atoms, etc. What we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and yes think are not they way they appear. From another view, the Buddha shared his insight that all things are impermanent (change) and interdependent (causes and conditions) ... among the most basic ways to articulate these.

The Mahayana Ideal

The following representations of this view are based on Part IV of a collection of texts and his commentaries by E. A. Burtt, *The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha*. I have selected examples to give a general description beyond my summary above. He introduces this part of the book with, “Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the necessity of renouncing the world and aggressively pursuing the path of self-conquest... Its spiritual ideal is symbolized by the *arahat* – the individual who in self-sufficient homelessness has overcome the power of selfish craving, thrown aside the fetters which bind him to a cycle of birth and death, *and* has thus gained the unutterable peace of Nirvana”. Thus, rebirths have been brought to an end. “The influence Buddhism exerted everywhere lay in its practice of love and equality ... unity of all beings, and its ideal of supreme enlightenment (*Bodhi*) to be attained by all.”

“Theravada Buddhists primarily see the man who left behind entanglement in worldly interests, who resolutely purged himself of all attachments and obstructions, and who pioneered the way

of escape from the suffering involved in transitory forms of existence. The blissful peace of Nirvana was the natural effect of his achievement of **complete detachment** in this fashion.”

“Mahayana Buddhists primarily see the princely heir of pomp, luxury, and power¹³ who gave these up not merely for his own peace, but the pity for suffering mankind ... and the Buddha who upon gaining enlightenment refused to keep his great discovery to himself but devoted the rest of his life to sharing with others the way to enduring happiness (peace, mental calm, and contentment) that he had found, confident that this loving dedication and devoted sharing were involved in the very realization of enlightenment”.

“Mahayana doctrines ... could only be revealed later to those who had reached the point where they could understand and follow them. The main purpose of some of the Mahayana parables is to explain and justify this idea”.

Recall, however, this may not be the actual sequence of events. Current research questions the Pali to Sanskrit sequence with some saying that there is no evidence for the Pali was even written until around the 5th century CE and may even have been based upon earlier Sanskrit versions! This too is hypothetical at this point as so little hard evidence has survived, the oldest being a more recent discovery of texts written in Gandhari language in a region now in northern Pakistan, where texts have survived from 100 BCE – 200 CE, by far the oldest actual documents on Buddhist teachings, yet still long after the life of the Buddha. (Note that the pillar texts of King Ashoka ca. 250 BCE mention but do not include much actual Buddhist writings, but they do reference a couple of texts that have never been found.) It is most likely that we never know. Therefore, my approach is one of a meaningful understanding of what we do have, in spite of the variations.

The difference between wisdom and insight is that “wisdom” is a conceptual *philosophical* position about reality, whereas “insight” is an *experiential* view of reality ... somewhat similar, but clearly different at the same time. The historical Buddha tended to reject “philosophical” views, as if they are purely hypothetical. He referred to them as a “tangle of views”. At the same time, he didn’t completely reject them in that as an *experience* regarding *the way things are* vs. *the way things appear* is an important form of “awareness”.

Specific to the terminology, the first wisdom factor is **Buddhanature** commonly referred to an innate quality in *all* sentient beings (not just humans). Without getting into the details, it came about as a philosophical view to help explain *how* we can possibly attain Buddhahood when we have an infinite bag of karma keeping that from happening. Basically, our Buddhanature was articulated as a way out, among a variety of philosophical views at the time trying to explain some apparently conflicting teachings of the Buddha (or some of his followers). Simply put, this was a way out IF we attained realization of that, and master the practices and other views, etc.

¹³ More recent sources question the stories of Sidhartha as a prince and such. *All* of the stories of his life appear to be a collection of parts from other sources compiled around 300 years after his death when followers began to wonder more about him instead of just his teachings. Nearly all of these stories have been shown to be from other “non-Buddhist” sources. Since none of his teachings appear to have been written down (alphabets began to emerge in northern India a couple of centuries after his life), even “his teachings” show signs of evolving along variations over time. But little hard evidence has actually survived.

The second wisdom factor is that of **Transcendent Wisdom** – a Chinese philosophical view, literally the “Perfection of Wisdom”. It is a transcendent view, beyond any direct articulation, ineffable, beyond words. The classic example is the “Heart Sutra” (not an actual sutra – teaching of the Buddha or one of his closest disciples), based on the heart of one of these transcendent texts in the Chinese tradition. The principle is sometimes explained as a *via negativa* approach to explaining the phrase. (Indian culture was also known for using similar ways of articulating certain ideas, but it can be confusing in English.) The most famous line is “Form is emptiness, emptiness is form; emptiness is not other than form, form is not other than emptiness”. It goes on to include senses, perceptions, ignorance, “old age, sickness, and death”¹⁴ and so forth. It concludes with the mantra “go (or gone), go, go beyond, go totally beyond; ultimate enlightenment, *Soha!*” One transcends the various perceptions and so forth that tend to dominate our lives, causing our sufferings. So the view is considered to be “empty” of any perceptual existence.

The third philosophical category of “wisdom” is “**The Middle Way**”. This is not the same Middle Way used by the Buddha to describe his “path” of Buddhism. Here, we are talking about philosophy, or a small part thereof. The most influential articulation of this is a line from Nagarjuna (~150-250 CE) and considered to be the founder of Madhyamaka (Middle Way philosophy). He refers to this as the “ultimate” nature of phenomena and a non-conceptual approach to understanding ultimate reality in meditation. This “transcendent” view is also found elsewhere but had become the dominant label and understanding in Mahayana, as well as in Vajrayana that evolved from it. It can be articulated as similar to Transcendent Wisdom above, as well as a number of other practices related to this principle of transcendence or emptiness. Buddhism became increasingly philosophical, heavily influencing the views of Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism, which we will examine later in this course.

The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha:

The Mahayana teachings of the Buddha have only survived in Gandhari (very limited so far), Chinese (from Sanskrit or Gandhari sources), and Tibetan (from Sanskrit and some Chinese and even Pali sources). Only a small proportion of these is available in English, although several projects are underway to make them available. One from the 84000 project (84000.co/collections/kangyur) is translating the Tibetan Kangyur, including summaries of the Buddha’s discourses. However, there are related sources in the Pali Canon as well that are beginning to gain traction with the contemporary Theravada traditions. Numerous other works are available.

The book being used in this section of the course includes only six texts on the “ideal” and four on the “philosophy”.

According to the book, the most influential sources are the *Diamond Sutra*, *Lankavatara Sutra*, *Lotus of the Perfect Law*, *Surangama Sutra*, *Sukhavati-Vyuha Sutra*, and *Awakening the Faith*. The “Mahayana” means “great vehicle” and is often articulated as transcending the teachings from the Pali Canon. Many of the known texts are from later dates and are known not to have the historical Buddha as a source but represent the continuing change in the Tradition.

¹⁴ A phrase used by the Buddha in articulating causes of our sufferings.

In the **first of six texts**, the book lists the *Hymn to the Buddha of Infinite Compassion and Wisdom*. It also represents a transition to a “devotional attitude ... which pervades all Mahayana thought and experience”. Here are a few examples:

“All the faults can never in any way be in him; all the virtues are in every way in him established”.

“How can there be a likeness to your virtues, untouched by foe or obstacle, everlasting, unlimited, and which cannot be surpassed?”

“This form of yours, calm yet lovely, brilliant without dazzling, soft but mighty – whom would it not entrance?”

“To praise you takes all guilt away, to recollect you lifts up the heart, to seek you brings understanding, to comprehend your purity....”

“What steadfastness! What conduct! What form! What virtues! In a Buddha’s dharma there is nothing that is not wonderful”.

[The Buddha becomes more of a Celestial Being.]

The **second text** is an example is from *The Bodhisattva’s Vow of Universal Redemption* in which “the Bodhisattva has transcended the state in which he is concerned for his own salvation; he is committed to all living beings and will not rest until he has led them all to the goal ... he remains in the world, appearing like an ordinary person, but devoting his compassionate skill to the aid of others. He shares and bears the burden of their sufferings, in loving union with them, instead of merely giving others an example of a person who has overcome the causes of suffering for himself.

“The Lord: What do you think Shariputra, does it occur to any of the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas to think that after we have known full enlightenment, we should lead all beings to nirvana, into the realm of Nirvana which leaves nothing behind?

“Shariputra: No indeed, O Lord.

“The Lord: ... Just so, the Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas do not think that they should, after winning full enlightenment, lead all beings to Nirvana. But the sun, when it has risen, radiates its light over the whole of Earth. Just so a Bodhisattva, after he has accomplished the practices which lead to the full enlightenment of Buddhahood, leads countless beings to Nirvana.”

From another selection:

“He has gone beyond all that is worldly, yet he has not moved out of the world; in the world he pursues his course for the world’s wellbeing, unstained by worldly taints.

“As a lotus flower, though it grows in water, is not polluted by the water, so he, though born in the world, is not polluted by worldly dharmas.

“Like a fire, his mind constantly blazes up into good works for others; at the same time he always remains merged in the calm of the insights and formless attainments...

“Without turning towards anything, always unobstructed in his wisdom, he goes along, in the world of living beings, boundless as space, acting for the weal of beings.

“When a Bodhisattva has reached this position, he is like the Tathagatas, insofar as he is in the world for the sake of saving beings”.

And another:

“A Bodhisattva resolves: I take upon myself the burden of all suffering, I am resolved to do so, I will endure it. I do not turn or run away, do not tremble, am not terrified, nor afraid, do not turn back or respond. [Turn the other cheek]

“...In that I do not follow my own inclinations. I have made the vow to save all beings, all beings I must set free. The whole world of living beings I must rescue, from the terrors of birth, old age, sickness, death and rebirth¹⁵, of all kinds of moral offence, of all states of woe, of the whole cycle of birth-and-death, of the jungle of false views, of the loss of wholesome dharmas, of the concomitants of ignorance - from all these terrors I must rescue all beings.”

The **third text** example is taken from *The Path of Light and Love*:

This section shows how “the Bodhisattva ideal ... transformed the entire quest for enlightenment and liberation. He wants to overcome cravings and obscurations ..., not to achieve his own perfection but for the sake of a deeper oneness with others, and for the greater power to serve them – even those who are his enemies.... The passages are taken from the Bodi-charya-vatara of Shantideva who lived about 600 CE”.

“I would willingly become a soother of all the sorrows of all creatures. May I be a balm to the sick, their healer and servitor, until sickness come never again ... (followed by a long list of examples) ... Let them make me do whatever works bring them pleasure; but may never mishap befall any of them by reason of me...”

“The body is made happy by righteous works, the spirit by knowledge; what can vex the compassionate one who remains in embodied life only for the welfare of others?”

“I must first seek for stillness; it comes through the contentment that is, regardless of the world.

The **fourth text** example is from the famous Mahayana Parable of *The Burning House*:

This section shows how “the main purpose of some of the most popular and frequently quoted Mahayana parables was to meet the objection that, according to the ancient sutras, Buddha taught Theravada doctrine rather than the Mahayana ideal”. This purpose is present in this sutra. “The ‘burning house’ develops the thought that although the Buddha had a far more wonderful truth to give to those who could understand it, he was not deceiving the minds of the beginners by teaching them Theravada ideas. Such teaching was all they could receive, and it would lead them in the right direction”.

“Shariputra, suppose in a certain kingdom, city, or town, there is a great elder ... of boundless wealth... His house’s spacious and large, but it has only one door, and many people dwell in it.... Fire suddenly starts and is in conflagration. The boys say ten, twenty, or even thirty are in the dwelling. The elder, on seeing this conflagration spring up on every side, is greatly startled and reflects thus: ‘Though I am able to get safely out of the gate of this burning house,

¹⁵ “Rebirth” here may be a later development, as it is not found in most early sources.

my boys are pleasurably absorbed in amusements without apprehension or fear and have no impulse to escape.... He calls to his children: 'Come out quickly, all of you!

"Though their father lures and admonishes with kind words, the children, joyfully absorbed in their play, are unwilling to believe him nor any mind to escape. Then the elder reflects thus: 'This house is burning! If I and my children do not get out at once, we shall certainly be burned up by it! Knowing that to which each child is predisposed, and all the various attractive playthings and curiosities to which their natures will joyfully respond, the father tells them: 'Here are rare and precious things for your amusement. If you do not come and get them, you will be sorry for it afterwards.... All of you come quickly out of this burning house, and I will give you whatever you want.' Thereupon the children... eagerly pushing the other... comes rushing out of the burning house.

"The father sits down in the open, no longer embarrassed, but with a mind at ease and ecstatic with joy. Then each of the children says: 'Father, please now give us those playthings you promised us. Then the elder gives to his children equally a great cart, lofty and spacious, adorned with all the precious things...."

"Shariputra, what is your opinion? Has that elder been in any way guilty of falsehood?

"No," says Shariputra. "That elder only caused his children to escape the disaster of fire and preserved their lives – he committed no falsity... and in addition gave them the playthings; moreover, it was expedient that he saved them from that burning house!

"Good! Good!" replies the Buddha to Shariputra. "It is even as you say. The Tathagata is also like this, for he is the Father of all worlds, who has forever entirely ended all fear, despondency, distress, ignorance, and enveloping darkness, and has perfected boundless knowledge, strength, and fearlessness. He is possessed of great supernatural-power [a clear Mahayana feature] and wisdom-power, has completely attained the Six Paramitas [Perfections] of adaptability and wisdom, and is the greatly merciful and greatly compassionate, ever tireless, ever seeing the good, and benefiting all beings...."

"Shariputra, if I only use supernatural power and wisdom, the living creatures cannot be saved. As long as all these creatures have not escaped birth, age, disease, death, grief, and suffering, but are being burnt in the burning house of the triple world¹⁶, how can they understand the Buddha-wisdom? ... So it is with the Tathagata. Though he has power and fearlessness, he does not use them, but only by his wise tact does he remove and save all living creatures from the burning house of the triple world [desire, form, and formlessness], preaching the Three-Vehicles [Shravaka, Pratyekabuddha, and Mahayana]. Do not hanker after its crude forms, sounds, odors, flavors, and contacts. For if through hankering, you beget a love of it, then you will be burnt by it. Get out with haste from the triple world and take to the Three-Vehicles..." [Before development of Vajrayana]

Note: this story is also found in the Pali Canon. Next is an example of *The Eternal Buddha of Countless Worlds*. This abbreviated text is from the *Lotus Sutra*. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are brought together in a conclave from countless regions of the universe. The Blessed One proclaims that his is not identical with the historical Gotama of *this* particular world, but his Eternal Love reveals itself in all times and places for the blessing of all creatures. The purpose is a

¹⁶ The classical desire, form, and formless realms of samsara in Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism.

compassionate reason for the early teaching that at his death Buddha ended his existence and became “extinct”¹⁷.

In the **fifth text** example the book follows with *The Parable of the Physician*, here in a summary form:

“Suppose a good physician, who is wise and understanding, conversant with the medical care, and skillful in healing all sorts of diseases has many sons. He goes abroad and his sons drink poisonous medicines... At the moment their father comes back... Of the sons, some have drank the poison; some have lost their senses, others are still sensible. On seeing their father approaching, they are greatly delighted, and kneeling, greet him.

“How good it is that you are returned in safety! We, in our foolishness have mistakenly drank poison. We beg that you heal us and give us back our lives. The father, seeing his sons in such distress,... seeks the good herbs and gives them to his sons to take, saying: ‘This excellent medicine... will at once rid you of your distress so that you have no more suffering.’ Those who were sensible took the medicine immediately and are wholly delivered from their illness.

“The others who have lost their senses... though they are also delighted, salute him, and ask him to heal their illness, yet when offered the medicine, they are unwilling to take it. Why? Because the poison had entered deeply, they had lost their senses... and they said that it is not good.

“The father reflects ‘Alas, for these sons, afflicted by this poison, and their mind all unbalanced... Now I must arrange an expedient plan so that they will take this medicine’. He says to them, ‘Know that I am now worn out with old age and the time of my death has arrived. I will leave this excellent medicine here. You may take it and have no fear of not being better.’ He then departs again for another country and sends a messenger to inform them: ‘Your father is dead. Their minds are greatly distressed.

“Deeming themselves orphans with no one to rely on, grief brings them to their senses and they take the medicine and their poisoning is entirely relieved. Upon hearing that, their father returns, showing himself to them all. ‘Good sons! What is your opinion? Are there any who could say that this good physician has committed the sin of falsehood?

And in the **sixth text** example, the book discusses *What is Nirvana? (Mahayana View)*.

“With the adoption of the Bodhisattva ideal, there arose a serious problem about Nirvana, explained here from passages from the *Lankavatara Sutra*.... The philosophers who place unqualified trust in analytic reason cannot be expected to understand the truth of Nirvana, but how about the Theravada notion of the state which one enters..., when one has overcome the fetters which block the path to liberation? If this is the true concept of Nirvana, then the Bodhisattva never enjoys it because one never turns back and (cares) for those still caught in the stream of life and death, in a loving concern for their salvation. The answer is that if this concept is retained, then for the buddhas and Bodhisattvas there is no Nirvana. But as the Bodhisattva goes through the various stages leading toward liberation he comes to realize that the *essential meaning* of Nirvana is not this, but the true state of spiritual perfection.

¹⁷ An unusual term for one said to be “enlightened”. Most likely infers to a state beyond any heaven or hell, and beyond *any* conceptualization. Later in Mahayana, numerous “Buddha realms” are articulated.

“Rightly conceived it is one in which the particularities of ordinary experience and the illusory distinctions of the discriminating mind are left behind; and the religious aspect of this is that it is a state in which compassionate oneness with others has transcended all thoughts of oneself as a separately distinguishable entity. Thus, the perfected Bodhisattva becomes aware that just being a Bodhisattva, one is already in Nirvana as it is truly understood. Nirvana and Samsara are not two different realms. Nothing is outside Nirvana.

“Paradoxically put, the spiritual insight here is that to renounce Nirvana for oneself, in love for others, is to find oneself **in Nirvana**, in its *real meaning*.

The Buddha gives this explanation to Mahamati: “When the Bodhisattvas face and perceive the happiness of the samadhi of perfect tranquillization, they are moved with the feeling of love and sympathy ... saying, ‘So long as they do not attain Nirvana, I will not attain it myself.’ Thus, they keep themselves away from Nirvana. But the fact is that **they are already in Nirvana** because in them there is **no rising of discrimination** ... grasped and grasping no more takes place.... There is nothing in the world but what is seen of the Mind itself, they have done away with the thought of discrimination concerning all things. They have abandoned adhering to and discriminating about such notions ... However, they have not given up the things promoting the *cause* of Buddhism; because of their attainment of the *inner insight* which belongs to the stage of (Buddhahood); whatever they do all issues from their transcendental knowledge.... For the Bodhisattvas, Nirvana does not mean extinction... There is for them the attainment of the recognition that all things are unborn (no beginning, no end).

Mahayana philosophies:

The following “are limited to ones which reveal Buddhism in terms readily understood ... (with some) thinkers who have endeavored to defend their Buddhist faith by philosophical argument.... The (main) individual interpreter of Theravada Buddhism is Buddhaghosa, a converted Brahmin who lived in the first half of the fifth century CE. His (most influential) work, *Visud-dhi-magga* (Path to Purity) is a classic systemization and compendium of Theravada doctrine.

“The most famous of the individual Mahayana philosophers are Nagarjuna, Asangha, and Vasubandhu, who were active in North India during the later formative period of the Mahayana perspective.... Mahayana sutras employ ... reasoning in defense of the doctrines they teach, and some of these are more easily followed by a Western reader than the terse arguments of the renowned philosophers.

“**Nagarjuna** probably lived about the 2nd century CE. He maintained a position in comparison with Western philosophies would be called a form of “nihilism”; only emptiness (or the “Void”) is real. **Asangha** and **Vasubandhu** were half-brothers, who lived some time in the fourth century CE. They expounded a position which in the West would be described as a kind of subjective “idealism”, holding that mental representations constitute phenomenal reality.... But it can be misleading to refer to these in terms of Western speculative systems....

Why? “Just as typical Western philosophies must be understood in the framework of scientific-theoretical presuppositions that are characteristic of the Western mind, so these philosophies must be understood in the framework of the presuppositions characteristic of the Buddhist mind,

which explores the nature of goodness, reality, and truth in the search for spiritual liberation, as the East conceives this process.

“Most generally, Mahayana philosophies would either be mainly concerned with practical problems, seeking clarification of the moral values and spiritual techniques involved (similar to ethics in the West), or they would be largely concerned with questions about reality and truth.... The analogy, however, always needs to be interpreted in light of the radical difference of presuppositions that is inescapably present.

“Philosophies which believe it possible to use the reasoning mind to clarify and establish the nature of the ultimately real, and those that reject this conviction, holding that the reasoning mind must discover and accept its own drastic limitations, and the illusoriness of what it has taken for granted, so that a supreme realization that lies beyond discriminative thought and speech may become possible. The former group led to some kind of metaphysical idealism... The latter group led to a kind of nihilism, more accurately called a super-rational mysticism.

The ulterior purpose of both Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu is religious rather than metaphysical. They are aiming to clear away obstructions which ... stand in the way of realizing the spiritual integrity that transcends ordinary experience and ordinary ways of thinking. Nagarjuna’s technique is analytic reasoning to destroy even the basic Buddhist concept of Nirvana as a concept ... to destroy the basic Buddhist concept of Nirvana as a concept.... that Nirvana is ... not a different realm.

“Vasubandhu’s technique ... is to destroy belief in physical reality, by undermining the concepts of atom, an aggregate of atoms (an object), and perceptual qualities. He leaves subjective impressions, which can only exist in a mind. This prepares the way for an intuitive realization of the true and absolute nature of mind, which is the intellectual aspect of enlightenment.”
[...leading to the “Mind Only” school of thought]

“Nagarjuna’s Analysis of Causality and Nirvana: (1) There absolutely are no things, nowhere and none, that arise anew; neither out of themselves, nor out of non-self, nor out of both, nor at random.... (2) (He concludes with) bliss consists in the cessation of all thought.... No separate reality was preached at all, nowhere and none by Buddha!”

Vasubandhu’s Argument for Subjective Idealism: (1) That realm is neither one thing, nor is it many atoms; again, it is not an agglomeration, because the atom is not proved.... (2) (He concludes with) immediate awareness is the same as in dreams. At the time when immediate awareness has arisen, seeing and its object are already nonexistent; how can it be admitted that perception exists? ... (And) as has been said, the apparent object is a representation. It is from this that memory arises. Before we have awakened we cannot know that what is seen in the dream does not exist.”

Ultimate Reality Is Absolute Mind: What is absolute and why? [The Buddha speaks] This unity in the world is boundless in its reality, and being boundless is yet one. Though in small things, yet it is great; though in great things, yet it is small. Pervading all things, present in every minutest hair, and yet including the infinite worlds in its embrace; enthroned in the minutest particle of dust, and yet turning the great wheel of the law; opposed to all sensible phenomena; it is one with divine knowledge; it is manifested as the effulgent nature of divine intelligence of Tathagata”.

NOTE: “In Tibet and Mongolia, Buddhism took forms quite divergent from those typical of any other Buddhist countries; it has seemed best not to include any sample of these.” These will be addressed in part, beginning in Part 12 in this text.

PART 9: The Bodhisattva's Way of Life – Shantideva (10 chapters)

This is a core text of the Bodhisattva path with numerous translations and commentaries available. It contains 911 verses in 10 chapters. Awam offers a *full class* on this text (see our website: AwamInstitute.org, classes page). In this Introduction to Buddhism, we will look at a few selected verses from each chapter, enough to give a feel for it's content and meaning.

The principle source for this book is the Six Paramitas or Perfections: (1) generosity, (2) ethics, (3) patience, (4) persistence (or joyful effort), (5) concentration (meditation and mental consciousness), and (6) "wisdom" (insight). The first five are grouped into the "relative" and the last as the "ultimate" (relatively speaking 😊). In the text there are three chapters related to "generosity", two on ethics, one chapter for each of the other four, and a concluding dedication chapter for the total of 10.

Shantideva lived in the 8th century CE, and became a very renowned and esteemed figure in Mahayana Buddhism. He became a monk at Nalanda University, but according to his fellow monks all he did was "eat, sleep, and defecate". They sought to humiliate and expel him. He was required to recite a *sutra* before the monastic community, a task thought to far exceed his abilities. Under pressure, he agreed, asking whether to recite an existing text or an original composition. They selected the latter.

On the day of the recitation, the monks arranged a very high throne for him to sit on, just to make fun of him. He is said to have floated up to the seat, from which he began his recitation. As he recited, he is said to have floated up in the sky as he completed the recitation.

Being amazed, they sought to find him for a copy of his text. They learned of his location and went to request a copy. He told them where it could be found. Shantideva is then said to have retreated to a monastery in a forest filled with wildlife. He later renounced his monkhood and wandered about India serving others as a Bodhisattva.

The texts recited here are adaptations from *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, translated by the Padmakara Translation Group, supplemented with *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, translated by Vesna and Alan Wallace, including some Tibetan translations, *The Wisdom Chapter – Jamgon Mipham's Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of The Way of the Bodhisattva*, and *Practicing Wisdom* by The Dalai Lama. The verse numbers listed are those in the text itself. NOTE: texts sometimes include or omit a verse, causing the verse numbers to be inconsistent between texts.

Chapter 1 – The Benefit of the Spirit of Awakening [generosity – setting our intention]

1. To the Buddhas, the dharmakaya they possess, and all their Bodhisattvas, to all those worthy of respect, I reverently bow. According to the scriptures, I shall now in brief describe the practice of the Bodhisattvas.

4. The 8 freedoms¹⁸ and 10 endowments¹⁹, so difficult to obtain, have been acquired... If one fails to take this favorable opportunity, how could this occur again?
8. Those who wish to overcome the sufferings of samsara, to dispel the sufferings of living beings, who wish to experience myriad joys should never turn away from bodhicitta.
15. Bodhicitta, the awakened mind, is known to have two aspects: aspiring (bodhicitta intention) and active bodhicitta (practical engagement).
16. Like the difference between those who wish to travel and one who sets out, the wise should understand the difference between these two.
21. If with kindly generosity one merely has the wish to soothe the aching heads of others, such merit knows no bounds.
27. If the simple thought to be of help to others exceeds in worth the worship of the Buddhas, what need is there to speak of actual deeds that bring about the complete happiness of beings?
33. What need is there to speak of those who long bestow on countless multitudes the joy of blissful Buddhahood, the ultimate fulfillment of their hopes?
36. To them in whom this precious jewel of mind is born, I bow down. I go for refuge to those springs of happiness who bring their very enemies to perfect bliss!

Chapter 2 – Confessions [generosity – commitment]

1. To the Buddhas, the sacred Dharma, and the Buddha's offspring (sanghas), that I might gain this precious attitude, I make perfect offerings.
20. May a host of other offerings and clouds of sweet melody that comforts the suffering of living beings arise and constantly abide.
26. Thus, until enlightenment is reached, I go for refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma, and the Bodhisattvas.
31. Whatever evil I have committed, all harmful faults I have done, I confess them all.
35. All my enemies will cease to be, all my friends, myself, everything will cease to be.
36. All that I possess and use is like a fleeting vision of a dream, fading into memory to be seen no more.
38. I have not considered that I too am short-lived; and through hate, lust, and ignorance, I have harmed in many ways.

¹⁸ Free from being born into a hell realm, hungry ghost realm, animal realm, a barbarian, a long-lived god, born with wrong views, in a time without enlightened beings, and free from being born deaf or mute.

¹⁹ Five Endowments Found within Oneself: having been born a human being, in a central region, with all of one's faculties, having a proper lifestyle that does not conflict with spiritual practice, faith in the sacred teachings, AND The Five Endowments Found with External Circumstances: an Enlightened Being has appeared, the Enlightened Being has shared the teachings, the teachings still exist, are practiced, and there are those who are kind-hearted towards others and share the teachings.

47. Thus, from this day forward I take refuge in the Buddhas and Protectors, who protect the world and eliminate fear.
65. I pray to you to take me and my harmful actions as I am, and I promise I will never do again.

Chapter 3 – Taking Hold of Bodhicitta [generosity – the mind of awakening]

1. I rejoice in the virtue that relieves all beings from sufferings of hatred, greed, ignorance, desire, jealousy, and arrogance.
2. I revel in the stores of *virtue* from lovingkindness and compassion, the freedom won by living beings in the realms of suffering.
4. I beseech the Bodhisattva's ocean of great good that seek to place all beings in the state of bliss, and every action for the benefit of beings; such is my delight and joy.
7. Through my prostrations, offerings, confessions, rejoicing, requesting teachings, requesting the Buddha's long life, and dedication of merit, may the pain of every living being be wholly scattered and destroyed!
8. May I become the doctor, nurse, and medicine for the sick, until every sickness is healed.
9. Raining down a flood of food and drink may I dispel hunger and thirst. In times of famine, may I become the food and drink.
10. May I be an inexhaustible treasury for the destitute. With various forms of assistance may I remain available to help.
12. Surrendering everything is *nirvana*, and my mind seeks *nirvana*. If I must surrender all, it is better that I give it to other sentient beings.
18. May I be a protector for those who are without help, a guide for travelers, and a boat, bridge, and ship for those who wish to cross over.
19. May I be a lamp for those who seek light, a bed for those who seek rest, and may I be a servant for all who need help.
20. To all sentient beings may I be a wish-fulfilling gem, a vase of good fortune, a fruitful mantra, a great medication, a wish-fulfilling tree, land a wish-granting cow.
- 21-22. Just as the earth and the elements are useful in various ways to innumerable sentient beings, so may I be the ground of life for sentient beings present throughout space until all are liberated.
23. [Bodhisattva vow, part 1] Just as all the Buddhas of the past have brought forth the awakened mind, and just as they conformed to the practice of the Bodhisattvas...
24. [Bodhisattva vow, part 2] ...so I too shall generate the mind of awakening and engage in the practices for the sake of all sentient beings.
25. Upon adopting the spirit of awakening, an intelligent person will take hold of the awakened mind with bright and lucid joy, to increase what they have gained and lift their hearts with praises such as:
26. Today my life has given fruit. This human state has now been well obtained. Today I take my birth into the family of the Buddhas and have become a child of the Buddha.

31. It is the universal bridge that saves all wandering beings from the states of loss, the rising moon of the enlightened mind that soothes the mental afflictions of the world.
32. It is the great sun dispelling the darkness of ignorance.

Chapter 4: Attending to the Spirit of Awakening [part 1 – ethical discipline]

1. Thus, upon firmly adopting Bodhicitta, a Bodhisattva should always vigilantly strive not to neglect their ethics.
2. Although one has made a commitment, is it appropriate to reconsider whether or not to do that which has been rashly undertaken and which has not been well considered?
4. If, upon making such a promise, I do not put it into action, then having deceived those sentient beings, what destiny shall I have?
6. Then, if I were to deceive all beings after sincerely inviting them to unsurpassable happiness, how could I ever proceed to a favorable state of existence? [Tibetan trans.]
8. Giving up, for the Bodhisattva, is the gravest of all downfalls. For should it ever come to pass, the good of every being is thrown down.
12. Therefore, according to my Bodhisattva vows, I will act accordingly. If I fail to strive, I will fall to lower and lower states.
20. This is why the Lord Buddha has declared that like a blind turtle that perchance can place its head within a yoke adrift upon the mighty sea, this human birth is difficult to find.
22. Having experienced a favorable state of existence, one is still not liberated. Therefore, while experiencing it, one begets more subtle obscurations and habitual tendencies (karma).
23. Upon obtaining such leisure, if I do not practice virtue, then there is no duplicity greater than this, and there is not delusion greater than this. [“opportunity cost”]
34. How can I take delight in the cycle of existence when constant, long-lasting enemies (kleshas, habits), who are the sole cause of the perpetuation of a mass of adversities, fearlessly dwell in my heart?
41. While I have promised to liberate beings throughout space in the ten directions from their mental afflictions, I have not liberated even myself from mental afflictions.
47. Mental afflictions do not exist in sense objects, nor in the sense faculties, not in the space between, nor anywhere else. Then where do they exist and agitate the whole world? This is an illusion only. Liberate your fearful heart and cultivate perseverance for the stake of wisdom. Why would you torture yourself in hells for no reason? [hatred, greed...]
48. I shall make an effort to apply the teachings as they have been explained. How can someone who could be cured by medicine be restored to health if they stray from the physician’s advice?

Chapter 5: Guarding Alertness [part 2 – ethics, guarding introspection]

1. Those who wish to protect their practice should zealously guard the mind. The practice cannot be protected without guarding the unsteady mind.

3. But if the unsteady mind is completely restrained by the rope of mindfulness, then all perils vanish, and complete wellbeing is obtained.
6. The Buddha declared that all has arisen from the mind, so there is nothing to fear other than mind itself.
11. The perfection of ethical discipline is a mind deciding to refrain from *every* harmful act.
- 13-14. Where would there be enough leather to cover the entire world? The earth is covered over merely with the leather of my shoes. Likewise, I am unable to restrain external phenomena, but I shall restrain my own mind.
17. Those who do not understand this mystery of the mind, which is the great principle of Dharma, wander aimlessly, even though they wish to achieve happiness and overcome suffering.
18. Therefore, I will take control and guard my mind. What use are many practices if I can't guard and discipline my mind?
- 19 & 23. When with others, I will diligently guard my mind with mindfulness and introspection.
25. Without introspection, those who only hear the teachings, ponder them, or meditate will not recall them.
32. For one who has devotion, memory of Buddha rises frequently in the mind.
41. Those who strive to master concentration should never be distracted for even an instant. They should always examine their mind, inquiring, "Where is my mind engaged?"
42. Nevertheless, in the case of danger or festivities, then one may be at ease. It is said that in times of giving, rules of discipline may be relaxed.
47. Before moving or speaking, first examine one's mind then act with moderation.
- 48-53. When feelings of desire or anger, pride or arrogance, harsh speech, yearning for wealth, attention or fame, honors or recognition, impatience, laziness, cowardice, or careless speech arise, remain like a log.
- 70-73. Set your body in motion at your will, in order to benefit sentient beings. Be the master of yourself with a smiling face and a friend to the world. Take pleasure in humility, delight in silence. Such is the practice of a sage.
77. Take the pleasure of satisfaction in the good qualities of others. Let them be a heartfelt joy to you.
79. If you speak, do so sincerely, coherently, with clear meaning, pleasantly, without attachment or hatred, softly and in moderation.
80. When gazing at sentient beings, do so candidly and lovingly, thinking, "In reliance upon them, I shall attain Buddhahood".
84. One should always strive for the benefit of beings. Even the Buddha permits that which is forbidden in order to benefit beings.
97. The actions of a Bodhisattva are immeasurable. But until the goal is won, first engage in practices that purify your mind.

108. Again and again examine the state of your body and mind sustaining watchful introspection and alertness.

Chapter 6 – The Perfection of Patience

1. All good conduct, such as generosity and practice, are destroyed by a single flash of anger.
2. There is no evil like hatred, no austerity like patience. Cultivate patience earnestly and in many ways.
3. Those tormented by hatred will not find peace.
5. There is nothing that can make an angry person happy.
14. There is nothing that does not grow light through habit and familiarity. Putting up with little cares, I'll train myself to bear great adversities.
19. A wise person's mind should be serene and undisturbed, for the battle is with defiled emotions and mental afflictions.
22. Why be angry at sentient beings, who are also provoked to anger by circumstances?
23. Just as sharp pain arises although one does not desire it, so anger arises although one does not desire it.
29. A "permanent self" is not sentient (able to perceive or feel) but is inactive.
40. If faults are temporary and due to conditions beyond control, why be angry at them – like being angry at clouds in the sky?
50. If there is virtue in my intentions, I will avoid the pains of "hell". If I protect only myself, what will be the fate of others?
53. Disrespect and harsh words do not cause harm to my body. Why then does my "mind" become angry?
54. Will the unkindness of others devour me in this life? So why should I be so averse to it?
59. Although I have acquired many possessions and have enjoyed pleasures, I shall depart emptyhanded and naked as if I had been robbed.
69. Come what may, I'll hold fast to the virtuous path and strive for virtues in such a way that *all* will have loving thoughts toward each other.
71. When the mind burns with the fire of hatred due to attachment, cast it aside...
76. When others delight in giving praise to others good qualities, why mind do you not find joy and praise it as well?
103. If I fail to practice patience, hindered by my own shortcomings, I create obstacles to my own merit.
111. Since patience often arises in dependence upon the malicious intention of another, he is then the cause of my patience, and I should respect him like the sublime Dharma.
113. The state of Buddhahood depends on ordinary beings and Buddhas equally. Why do I honor the Buddhas but not beings?

115. Offerings made to those with loving minds reveal the greatness of living beings. Merit from faith in the Buddha shows the greatness of the Buddha.
120. Even if beings harm me, I will strive to bring them benefits to liberation. [Being a role model]
124. The harm I have done to others saddens the Buddhas in their great compassion. Therefore, I confess these today and pray that they will bear with me and my offences.
- 125-126. Today with my entire being I place myself in service of the world. Those whom I perceive as beings are Buddhas in themselves; how can I not treat them with respect?
127. Altruism is pleasing to the Buddhas and secures my liberation. This will remove sufferings of the world and therefore is my resolve.
134. Patience brings the vast contentment of a Buddha.

Chapter 7 – Perfection of Joyful Effort

1. Thus, with patience, I will strive with diligence because Awakening is found. There is no merit without diligence.
2. Diligence involves “joy” in virtuous ways.
3. Laziness is born from idle pleasures, sleep, and apathy about samsara.
7. Death will swoop on you swiftly. Gather merit until that time comes.
10. Memory of your vices bring terror, too late to change.
14. Upon finding the boat of human birth now, cross the river of suffering. There is no time to waste, because this boat is hard to find again.
16. Do not be downcast but marshal all your powers; make an effort; be the master of yourself! Practice the equality of self and other, and exchange of self and other [see Ch. 8].
19. Human by birth and able to distinguish good from bad and not leave aside the Bodhisattva ideals, why could I not attain Awakening?
- 23-24. All doctors may at times use unpleasant treatments; thus, to destroy a multitude of pains, a slight one may need to be endured. But the Buddha does not use such treatments. He cures our sufferings with very “gentle” means.
27. Mental obscurations and unwholesome deeds have been abandoned, transcending suffering.
40. The Sage has asserted that intention is the root of all virtue, constantly meditating on the fruits of our actions.
42. My wholesome acts, sincerely intended, will present wholesome benefits.
43. If I search for happiness through unwholesome actions, my karma will only cause suffering.
46. I will nurture and aspire for virtue, cultivating it with reverence.
72. With every unwholesome act, I will contemplate such that this will never happen again.
74. At all times and situations, I will make mindfulness my constant habit, citing: “I will aspire to meet with anyone and fulfill the proper actions”.

Chapter 8 – Meditative Concentration (*samadhi*) [Note: this chapter has been controversial due to statements of “impurity” of a woman’s body, intended for chastity of monks.]

1. Upon developing effort, one should stabilize the mind in meditative concentration.
2. In seclusion or solitude, mind and body are not distracted. With focused attention on insight of “the way things *really* are”, one should renounce worldly concerns²⁰ and discursive thoughts by abiding in mental calm and peace.
4. Recognize that mental afflictions are eradicated by insight imbued with mental calm and contentment, free of worldly attachment.
14. I shall be content alone with a non-afflicted mind.
15. I shall abide far away from the foolish. If I encounter them, I shall greet them pleasantly, without becoming close to them.
- 18-19. Infatuated with craving pleasures, suffering arises a thousand times. Thus, the wise do not become attached, for fear arises from attachment. These objects pass away by themselves, so be firm and know this.
24. The Buddhas have said that a fool is no one’s friend, because the affection of a fool does not arise without self-interest.
26. In the forest the deer, birds, and trees do not speak unpleasantly. When shall I dwell with those whose company brings delight? [This could infer humans that bring delight as well. Beware of “attachment”.]
28. When shall I dwell in unclaimed and naturally spacious regions, wandering as I please and without a residence? [This can be anywhere ... in your mind.]
36. Free of intimacy and free of conflict, one is in bodily solitude.
39. Free from all other concerns and having a single-pointed mind, I shall apply myself to meditative concentration and to the subjugation of the mind.
40. Sensuous desires create calamities in this world and the next.
69. The earth is crowded with insane people, diligent in deluding themselves.
83. With but a millionth part of one’s sensual desires, enlightenment itself could be attained. Yet those who crave are suffering far more than those engaged upon the path; yet those who crave have no Awakening.
85. Disillusioned with lust and sensual desires, rejoice in solitude, places empty of conflict and defilement – the peace and stillness of our mind!
88. To have such liberty unmarred by craving, one savors the joy of contentment.
89. After reflecting on the advantages of solitude, having discursive thoughts calmed, cultivate the Mind of Awakening.
90. [Tonglen] Meditate on the sameness in the joy and sorrow of yourself and others. We are all interrelated, interconnected, interdependent in not wanting suffering and wanting happiness.

²⁰ Particularly greed for wealth, pleasures, praise, and fame.

94. Seek to alleviate the sufferings of others, which are *like* my own. They are sentient beings just as I am.
100. Avoid that which is inappropriate, whether it belongs to you or another.
117. Just as you wish to protect yourself from pain, grief, and the like, so may you cultivate a spirit of protection and a spirit of compassion toward the world.
120. One who wishes to protect oneself and others should mentally exchange “self” and “other” to better understand their views and experiences.
125. Thinking of oneself, “If I give this, what will be left for me?” is a fiendish state. If one thinks, “If I enjoy it, what shall I give away?” shows concern for others and is the way to liberation.
129. **All the joy in the world comes from the desire for others’ happiness; all the suffering in the world comes from the desire for one’s own happiness.**
134. All the harm, fear, and suffering arise from clinging to myself; what am I to do with it?
137. Resolve that “I am bound to others” [interrelated, interconnected, interdependent]. From now on you must be concerned for the welfare of *all* sentient beings.
156. Apply altruistic intentions for the good of others. The Buddha said, “You will see the benefits that come from it”.
158. As though it was yourself, take other sentient beings as yourself. [Exchanging self and other; **empathy**]
170. Stop your whining and be of service! 😊
177. Free rein should not be given to growth of desires. It is truly good when one does not take something that one craves.
187. Thus, I shall always concentrate my mind on eliminating my mental obscurations.

On Chapter 9 – The Perfection of Wisdom

“This chapter is by far the most challenging as it makes numerous references to various philosophical views that emerged in differing schools of Buddhism. This is a field of study in itself. But the Buddha himself referred to these views in a variety of ways, but perhaps most simply as ‘a tangle of views’. Thus, I will likewise seek to avoid the various complexities and subtleties of this chapter and emphasize those more essential to later stages of Buddhism.”

From “A Short Presentation of Shantideva’s *Bodhicharyavatara*” by Francis Brassard

“It has been argued that the last chapter was not originally part of the *Bodhicharyavatara* because its main Indian commentator did not comment on it and the Tibetan historian Taranatha doubted its authenticity. However, the tenth chapter (“Dedication” or “Colophon”) was extant in the various manuscripts used to compile the basic editions and is found in the Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese translations...

“This chapter presents itself as an example of the perfection of giving... The first four chapters [of the book] focus on the arising of the bodhicitta as a necessary condition for all genuine progression toward Buddhahood and the last six as a means to cultivate that progression...

“One may wonder why the perfection of [generosity] comes after the perfection of wisdom... Perhaps the answer lies in verse 34 of the 9th chapter, where Shantideva attained **complete peace of mind**:

34. When both real and nonreal
Are absent from the mind,
Nothing else remains for the mind to do
But rest in perfect peace, free from concepts.

In Buddhism, *ideas* are subsidiary to the experience of *extinguishing* what is likely to perturb the mind, an experience known as *nirvana*. What remains ... is a compassionate Bodhisattva ‘acting’ for the welfare of all sentient beings, which is the very essence of bodhicitta.

“9. The Perfection of Wisdom...”

This chapter “may be viewed as an autonomous text on account of its philosophical and doctrinal content. However, ... if the overcoming of the fear of the truth is an essential part of our practice, this ought to be considered as fully integrated with the other parts... More precisely, *wisdom*, which here refers to the unconditional acceptance of the notion of emptiness²¹ and its implications, and supports cultivation of the other perfections by regulating the movements of the mind...

“Firstly, to train the mind is to use the notion of emptiness as a yardstick by which all wrong views are analyzed and eventually eradicated. The second purpose, which is in fact an outcome of the first, is to develop in us *an intimate knowledge of emptiness* to a point where even the notion itself, as an object of the mind, recedes to allow a perfect pacification of the mind to occur... The perfection of wisdom is achieved only when we have abandoned the very wisdom that carried us all the way to fulfilling our ultimate aspiration.

“The analogy is valid in so far as it applies to awakened beings who completely disconnected themselves from their fellows’ worldly realities... How it is possible for a Buddha or a Bodhisattva to be active in relieving the world from suffering, it would be preferable to say that ‘emptiness does not really fade away’, but that it has acquired a new status.

“It thus becomes subsidiary or tacit in our ways of experiencing reality with a fully pacified mind (Polanyi, Prosch, 1975). To put it simply, emptiness itself has become transparent in a way similar to *the words* (you are seeing just now) are, when you are attending to *the meaning* they convey. It is only when this pacified mind is disturbed that the awareness of the notion of emptiness, as an object of the mind, re-emerges or becomes visible like an unknown word. And simultaneously the notion ‘emptiness’ reappears as the *I* whose sole purpose is to pacify the *Me*. Or, ‘What does this word mean?’ followed by an action like looking for its meaning in a dictionary.

“A temporary connection between a suffering *Me* (any sentient being yet to be awakened) and a compassionate *I/Me* (a Bodhisattva ‘acting’ on the impetus of the bodhicitta) can be established. As such, the difference between effecting our own spiritual transformation and that of other people is just a question of range. If an awakened mind decided to remain isolated, it will not be

²¹ While “emptiness” is used most commonly, some authors (including myself) prefer “**suchness**”, since “emptiness” has many English meanings that are misleading for the ultimate in Buddhist philosophy. Even within Buddhism, there are different meanings of “emptiness” based on differing philosophical schools over time.

very active. Such a mind in the world of off-centered mind will remain active as long as these minds have not been pacified.”

“An abbreviated outline of the organization of the chapter text is as follows:

1. Showing why those who wish to attain liberation need to develop the wisdom that understands emptiness
2. The presentation of the two truths
 - a. The distinction between the two truths
 - b. The definition of the two truths
 - c. The distinction between the two individuals who determine the presentation
 - d. The distinctions in their varying degrees of mental capacity
 - e. Refutation of the arguments that it is not necessary to realize emptiness in order to attain liberation
3. Showing the reasons why those who seek only self-liberation need to develop the wisdom of understanding emptiness
4. An extensive explanation of the logical reasonings that establish emptiness
 - a. Selflessness of persons
 - b. Selflessness of phenomena
 - i. By means of the four close placements of mindfulness²²
 - ii. Refutations concerning the two truths
 - iii. Logical reasoning on selflessness
5. Encouraging the practitioner to strive for the development of wisdom
 - a. The meaning of sublime, precious emptiness
 - b. One should strive to realize emptiness
 - c. Disadvantages of cyclic existence and an explanation of great compassion
 - d. Explanation of great compassion

“Shantideva’s presentation has five main parts. First, third, and fifth are exhortations encouraging people to develop this wisdom. We have to be motivated to realize it ourselves. Our motivation determines the *karmic effect* of our wisdom, not the wisdom itself. Our practice needs to be motivated by *renunciation* [from “this life”] and *bodhicitta*.

“Second and fourth parts actually explain the teachings on emptiness... The second part on the two truths has two parts: the first introduces the two truths, and the second refutes arguments by those who say we do not actually need to realize emptiness. We never end our suffering until we realize emptiness, but if we realize this we will be extremely motivated to gain realization, the *only* solution to all of our problems.

“The fourth part is also divided into two parts: the **first** is an explanation of the emptiness or selflessness of persons; one looks at mindfulness, namely close placement of body, feelings, mind, and phenomena. The second is an explanation of the emptiness of phenomena. If we realize both, we realize the emptiness of everything. One looks at phenomena and their emptiness. Normally we think that if things are empty they cannot produce anything, but actually if anything is

²² The Four Close Placements is the Buddha's pith instruction in mindfulness practice. It speaks of where our attention should be placed; in our body, feelings, mind, and objects of the mind (phenomena), and how a deep meditative insight into each of these four can become a path out of suffering.

produced it reveals that it is empty.” [All is interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent in both science and Buddhism.]

Here are a few of the verses to illustrate the most important principles being addressed:

1. All these branches of the doctrine the Powerful Lord expounded for the sake of wisdom. Therefore, they must generate this wisdom for those who wish to have an end of suffering.
2. Relative and absolute, these are the two truths. The absolute is not within the reach of intellect, for intellect is grounded in the relative. [This relates to the difference between “the way things *appear* and the way things *are*” and based on differing philosophical views.]
3. Two kinds of people are to be distinguished: meditative thinkers (yogis) and ordinary people; the common views of ordinary people are superseded by the views of meditative thinkers.
5. When ordinary people perceive phenomena, they look on them as real, and not illusory. This, then, is the subject of debate where ordinary people and yogis differ. [Mipham cites an unspecified source as: “Suchness is unborn, ... and when the mind is tuned to this, it is as though it knows the ultimate reality”.]
6. Forms and so forth, which we sense directly, exist by general perception, but not by valid reasoning. They are false, deceiving, like unclean things regarded in the common view as clean.

This leads into philosophical arguments (all sides’ views presented by Shantideva). According to HH the Dalai Lama, “The Madhyamikas state that the reality of the conventional world is not destroyed by their logic of emptiness but is left completely intact [experientially]. In the aftermath of negating intrinsic existence, what is crucial is to be able to maintain the validity of the world of conventional truth. If we are able to do this, we will arrive at the true ‘Middle Way’, free from the extremes of absolutism and nihilism. For example:

16. If for you, these illusions have no being, what remains to be perceived? If objects have another mode of being, that very mode is but the mind itself. [Mind only view]
17. If the mirage is mind itself, what is perceived by what? The Buddha himself said that mind cannot be seen by mind. [Madhyamikas reply]

The criterion being advocated is “valid cognition”. Dalai Lama: “If any thing or event can be established by a valid cognition, it can be said to exist. So the reality of a phenomenon depends on the validity of the perception or cognition. Yet, the validity of the cognition depends in turn upon its relation to reality; so there is a mutual dependence between cognitions and their objects.” Mipham says: “How can you deny subjective experiences like happiness on the conventional level? They cannot be denied. It should be understood therefore that self-awareness is only untenable for those who believe that the mind is ‘truly existent’” [ultimate].

One more regarding the Mind-Only school:

26. “Illusions are not other than the mind,” you say, and yet you don’t consider them the same. How could they not be different if the mind is real? [‘Real’ means ultimate] ...And how can mind be real if you deny a difference?”

Illusions are by definition not real. So, if both illusions and mind are the same, both must be either real or not. Yet the Mind-Only school considers them to be both the same *and* different... or so that is what Shantideva is arguing.

The next example is based on the Prasangika view:

32. By training in this aptitude for emptiness, the habit to perceive things as real will be relinquished (or fade). By training in the view that all lacks entity, this view will also disappear.

Mipham: “People grow accustomed to the understanding that *all things* are empty of intrinsic being ... and their tendency to cling to phenomena as *really existent* is discarded”. Dalai Lama: “What is emphasized here is to be critically aware of the danger of reifying emptiness itself”. Even the Buddha said, “At some point, even emptiness must be discarded”. But by meditating on emptiness (or better yet, *suchness* or *rigpa*), we transcend attachment and/or desire. Or as the Dalai Lama says, “The need is to develop a complete realization of emptiness so that it frees us from grasping even ‘emptiness’ as truly existent”. [It is just a **concept**.]

34. When both real and nonreal are absent from the mind, nothing else remains for mind to do but rest in perfect peace free from concepts.

Mipham cites this verse from *The Great Middle Way*:

It is not known through other sources; it is *peace*; and not through mind’s construction can it be constructed; it is free of thought, undifferentiated: this describes the character of suchness.

The Dalai Lama says,

Without the *realization of emptiness*, meditating on emptiness will be merely remaining in a nonconceptual state. Simply shutting out thoughts can never lead to full liberation from cyclic existence. And absence of any independent nature or intrinsic reality is emptiness (p. 90).

In addition, he says,

When we examine an object such as a vase and analyze whether it exists inherently or not, what we find is its emptiness. When we then take that emptiness as the object of our analysis and examine whether it too exists inherently or not, what we find is the emptiness of emptiness. ... Typically emptiness is taken as ultimate truth. However, when we take emptiness itself as the object of an ultimate analysis, emptiness becomes a conventional truth.

Emptiness, suchness, and peace are often used as synonyms regarding the true nature of things or “the way things *are*”. These *can be* attained in a state of mental calm without going into a “trance state”. “Things” include sensory experiences of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and of course thinking. But all of these, including “thinking” require *awareness* at all times. Mipham states, “We do indeed consider that phenomena are one and the same in suchness ... If one applies the reasoning that ascertains the suchness of one thing, and if one meditates on it, one will come to an understanding of the emptiness of all things”.

In addition, the Dalai Lama says, “Typically, emptiness is taken as ultimate truth. However, when we take emptiness itself as the object of an ultimate analysis, emptiness becomes a conventional truth.”

But what about love and compassion for all beings? The Bodhisattva Path

Dalai Lama: “Karma itself is rooted in intention and motivation, so in effect it all comes down to the individual’s state of mind.”

52. To linger and abide within samsara, freed from ever craving and from every fear, in order to achieve the good of those who ignorantly suffer: such is the fruit that emptiness will bear”.

According to Mipham [on Bodhicitta and Bodhisattva],

On the ultimate level, there is no such thing as suffering. Yet beings suffer because their minds are overpowered by delusion. It is for their sake that those who realize the emptiness and illusion-like appearance of phenomena remain in the world, which they neither crave nor fear, being free from these two extremes. Although they abide within the world, they are untainted by its defects, like lotuses that grow in the mud. To be able to live in the world in such a way is indeed the result of realizing emptiness.

And,

What we call nirvana (literally, the state beyond sorrow) is just the name given to the exhaustion of the deluded mind's thoughts. ... Ultimately, neither samsara nor nirvana has true existence. ... In the end, when one is free from every kind of dualistic concept, even the subtlest cognitive veils (arising from the firm belief in samsara and nirvana) are drawn aside, and this is buddhahood. ... It is essential for us to overcome the discrepancy between the appearance and the true status of phenomena.

Verses 151-154 deal with the “eight worldly concerns”: gain/loss (or wealth/poverty), pleasure/pain, praise/blame, and fame/disgrace.

Chapter 10 – Dedication

The text concludes with a 58-verse dedication.

1. May all sentient beings be graced with the Bodhisattva way of life by the virtue I have obtained while reflecting on *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*....

PART 10: 37 Practices and the Bodhisattva Vow

Section 1: The Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices *by Gyalsé Ngol-chu Thokmé Rinpoche – 14th Century*

Teaching Notes

Background:

- This is considered to be a seminal Mahayana practice text, along with the 4 Immeasurables and the 6 Perfections (included here)
- It has been said that the 8 Verses for Training the Mind represent the short version, 37 Practices the medium version, The Bodhisattvas Way of Life the extensive version for training the mind in the Mahayana tradition.
- **Bodhicitta** – the heart (or heart-mind) of enlightenment may be divided into relative (intention, action) and ultimate.
 - **Action** – must actually help others!
 - **Start** – training your own mind: give up attachment (desire, grasping, clinging...), aversion (anger, hatred, ...), regard all with equanimity.
- **Shantideva** wrote:

All the joy the world contains
Has come through wishing happiness for others.
All the misery the world contains
Has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.
- **Bodhicitta** (the mind of enlightenment) is the root of all the teachings of Sutrayana, Mahayana, Vajrayana, Mahamudra, and Great Perfection.
- **Bodhisattva** – one who takes the Bodhisattva vow ... to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings with altruistic intent. Ordinary being vs the **ideal**, the Bodhisattva ideal is beyond most, if not all of us. Nevertheless, we can strive for it to the best of our ability!

Opening verses

(a) **Homage to Lokeshvara-ya!**

Loka – world or universe

Ishvara – the all-powerful master

I pay homage to the Lord of the Universe ... Avalokiteshvara (Chenrezig; HH the Dalai Lama) ... one who sees all; manifest to help beings as a buddha, a 10th level bodhisattva, a deity, a spiritual teacher, an ordinary person, or even an animal!

(b) **At all times I prostrate with respectful three doors** [body, speech, and mind] **to the supreme guru and the protector Chenrezig** [mental image, or “real”], **who through realizing that all phenomena neither come nor go** [transcend coming and going, eternalism and nihilism, existence and nonexistence, oneness and diversity...], **makes single-minded effort for the sake of migrators** [all beings, by showing the path of the Bodhisattva].

(c) [Gyalsé Tokmé’s intention] **The perfect Buddhas, source of benefit and happiness, arise from accomplishing the sublime Dharma. And as that accomplishment depends on knowing the Dharma practices, I will explain the bodhisattvas' practices.**

Through practice you will gradually see the truth of the Buddha's teachings and progress on the path. Altruistic mind is both a source of temporary happiness and ultimate liberation from the "suffering" [including discontent, dissatisfaction, etc.] of samsara. With the wish to help others, the general welfare of the world steadily increases. [Although not always!]

Preparation: verses 1-7

1. **At this time when the difficult-to-gain ship of leisure and fortune** [8 states with no freedom to practice – 5 desire realms (hell, hungry ghosts, animals, "barbarians", various gods), erroneous views, no buddha, impaired sense faculties; 10 advantages – (5 individual) born a human, dharma, faculties intact, lifestyle not conflicting with the dharma, "faith" (trust) in the teachings, (5 circumstances) a buddha appeared, taught the dharma, still exists, you have entered the dharma, accepted by a spiritual teacher] **has been obtained** [opportunity, do not waste it], **ceaselessly hearing, pondering and meditating day and night** [motivation, time and resources, effort; (1) study (listen, read), (2) contemplate (reflect, essential meaning; 4 Reliances: teaching, not teacher, meaning not words, definitive meaning not relative, direct experience not knowledge), (3) meditate, assimilate into your being] **in order to liberate oneself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence** [samsara, this life: unwholesome anger, greed, ignorance, desire, jealousy, pride (afflictive emotions)] **is the bodhisattvas' practice.**
2. **The mind of attachment to loved ones wavers like water.** [Emotions – love] **The mind of hatred of enemies burns like fire** [hot/cold hells]. **The mind of ignorance** [ordinary ignorance] **which forgets what to adopt** [wholesome] **and discard** [unwholesome] **is greatly obscured.** [Ethics, meaningless activities – TV, social media, entertainment...] **Abandoning one's fatherland** [worldly focus – 8 worldly concerns: gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and shame, pleasure and pain; let go, nothing to "cling" to (strong attachment)] **is the bodhisattvas' practice.**
3. **When harmful places are abandoned, disturbing emotions gradually diminish.** [A solitary place, physical or mental, undisturbed by friends and relatives, business, entertainments...even retreats!] **Without distraction, virtuous endeavors naturally increase.** [Fewer temptations, more self-control, contented, just enough "stuff" for life's needs] **Being clear-minded, definite understanding of the Dharma arises.** [Certainty, more peaceful, free of afflictive emotions; but we need regular practice; the main hinderance is distractions] **Resorting to "secluded" places is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Real or imagined]
4. **Long-associated companions will part from each other. Wealth and possessions obtained with effort will be left behind. Consciousness, the guest, will cast aside the guest-house of the body.** [Me] **Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice.**
 [Letting go, impermanence – seasons, day/night, am/pm, youth/old age/death ... don't know when or how; let go, let be; concentrate on the dharma; start day by wish for liberation, end with review, and commit to do better every day!]
5. **When evil companions are associated with, the three poisons increase** [various lists of attachment, aversion, ignorance; desire or craving or greed; anger, hatred, jealousy...], **the activities of listening, pondering and meditation decline** [distractions], **and love and compassion are extinguished.** [Erroneous teachings, teachers, friends, esp. when encouraging unwholesome actions, ordinary worldly activities] **Abandoning evil companions is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [This can be, but need not be (attachment and aversion).]

6. **When sublime spiritual friends** [teachers who act, speak, think in accord with the dharma; show you what to do, how to avoid obstacles, encourages practice and wholesome activities] **are relied upon, one's faults are exhausted and one's qualities increase like the waxing moon. Holding sublime spiritual friends even more dear than one's own body is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Seek out friends and teachers who encourage your dharma practices, remind you to be aware of impermanence, stop clinging to samsara... Have "faith" (not blind faith) in the teacher; will receive their blessing; visualize on the crown of your head, see as a real buddha (vs teacher, vs ordinary person)]
7. **What worldly god** [desire, form, and formless realms], **himself** [or herself] **also bound in the prison of cyclic existence, is able to protect others?** [We are seeking protection] **Therefore, when refuge is sought, taking refuge in the undeceiving triple gem** [three jewels - *Buddha* - free from ignorance and samsara, *Dharma* - teachings, and *Sangha* - followers, dharma friends, community of support; the teacher: mind = buddha, speech = dharma, body = sangha] **is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [These are the *outer* aspects. Additionally, it may include the *inner* - 3 Roots (Guru, Yidam, Dakini and/or Dharma Protector; and the *secret* - 3 kayas (*Nirmanakaya* - material body, *Sambhogakaya* - variously enjoyment body, bliss body, energy or light body, rainbow body, spirit or celestial body, or subtle body; and *Dharmakaya* - "truth body" or "ultimate reality" (not a physical body); but these are also considered as not 3 separate entities); and *most secret* - Buddhature (said to be the source or "ground of all being".)]

Three things to avoid: (1) having taken refuge in the Buddha - avoid seeking refuge in worldly gods or powerful people, (2) having taken refuge in the Dharma - avoid all forms of violence in thought, word, deed, (3) and having taken refuge in the Sangha - avoid unwholesome lifestyle and/or distrust of karma (cause and effect).

Three things to be done: (1) regarding the Buddha - respect any representation (paintings, statues), (2) regarding the Dharma - respect all scriptures, even parts, never step over, (3) and regarding the Sangha - respect all dharma practitioners (monastic and nonmonastic).

Main Teachings

Bodhisattva intent: 8-11

8. **The Subduer** [Buddha, subduer of suffering] **said that all the unbearable suffering of three lower realms is the fruition of wrongdoing. Therefore, never committing negative deeds, even at the peril to one's life, is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [10 unwholesome actions: killing, stealing, sexual abuse, lying, divisiveness, harsh words, idle talk, jealousy, harmful thoughts, and wrong views. 10 wholesome actions (antidotes): protect life, generosity, honor sexual vows and respect others, truth and loving speech, reconcile or harmonize, pleasant words, meaningful talk, rejoicing for others, benefit others, and wisdom of the true nature of things.]
9. **The pleasure of the triple world**, [desire, form, formless] **like a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass, is imperiled in a single moment.** [Lure of the Eight Worldly Concerns, the power of habitual tendencies; samsara is all that is unsatisfactory; maintain mindfulness, focus on the present, think of impermanence; let go of grasping and clinging.] **Striving for the supreme state of never-changing liberation is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Savor the joy of dharma practice over ordinary, temporary pleasures.]
10. [Many/most do not come to dharma centers to become enlightened, to become liberated, at least not in the beginning; maybe they are just interested in Buddhism, learn some meditation, hang out with cool people... Bodhicitta requires more of us.] **When our mothers who have**

been kind to us since beginningless time are suffering, what's the use of one's own happiness? [Due to “beginingless time”, we view all beings as if they had at one time or other been our loving mother; but now they, in samsara, are suffering too. How can we abandon any of them in their suffering?] **Therefore, generating the mind of enlightenment [Bodhicitta] in order to liberate limitless sentient beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Altruistic intention (doing things without any expectation of something in return) – making the wish to bring all beings to liberation should generate great compassion for all; but if you don't aim for liberation for yourself, how will you help others? If focus just on your own liberation, how benefit others? Buddha taught dharma for the benefit of all! We should follow in his footsteps as best we can and “join the team”, it's not us alone. Even donating food, clothes, etc. is a step. Dedicate the merit of your practice each day – reinforcement.]

11. [Action Bodhicitta] **All suffering without exception comes from the wish for one's own happiness.** [Self-centered, ego, even narcissism.] **The perfect buddhas arise from the altruistic mind.** [Intention to benefit all, followed by action.] **Therefore, completely exchanging one's own happiness for the suffering of others is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Three practices: (1) equalizing self and others, (2) exchanging self and others, (3) Tonglen – giving and taking; these can be combined. Practice:

[Think of someone kind and loving, focus on his/her actions, generosity, etc. Feel strong love and compassion.

[Then, imagine their sufferings in each of the six realms (hells, hungry ghosts, animals, human, jealous gods, gods OR burning anger, greed, causing others to suffer, strong sense pleasure desires, jealousy, and pride or arrogance). Feel intense compassion.

[Extend that compassion to all beings, even enemies or trouble makers. Think of the old and infirm, the desperate and impoverished, people suffering famine and starvation, the blind, the spiritually destitute. Think of all those who suffer as slaves to their own minds, maddened by desire and aggression, who harm others.

[Then, starting with the most “hated” enemy or someone who has caused you trouble or difficulty. As you breathe out, all your happiness, good fortune, merit, health, enjoyment goes out to that person with love and compassion. It meets their every need.

[As you breathe in, a dark cloud of sickness, obscurations and mental poisons, all their sufferings are absorbed into you and instantly transformed in your heart. You feel great joy and bliss mingled with the experience of luminous emptiness.

[There are countless other ways to do this practice. HH Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche said, “Only if you have developed the love and compassion of relative bodhicitta can absolute bodhicitta – the very essence of Great Perfection and Mahamudra – ever take birth in your being.

[Shantideva:

All the joy in the world Has come through wishing happiness for others.
All the misery in the world Has come through wanting pleasure for oneself.]

Unfavorable circumstances: 12-21 [Using unfavorable circumstances on the path – post meditation; the 8 Worldly Concerns: gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, praise and disparagement]

Four that are unwanted: 12-15

12. **Even if others, influenced by great desire, steal all of one's wealth or have it stolen, dedicating to them one's body, possessions and virtues accumulated in the three times [past, present, future] is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *loss* on the path. Although wealth may be desirable, our attachment can become a form of anxiety or other fetters. Loss of that wealth can be a form of freedom. "Freedom's just another work for nothin' left to lose..." – Janis Joplin. Generosity is the first of the Six Perfections. Buddha said wealth is ok depending on how you earned it and what you do with it. The Bodhisattva uses it to help benefit others... You wish for their happiness, to be of service to them. It purifies the obscurations in our mind and heart, helping them and freeing ourselves. The Dalai Lama says we all have a "good heart". We can make offerings, real or imagined based on our ability, helping to remove any karmic debts we may have. Practice the Four Immeasurables – boundless love (*metta*), compassion (Tonglen), happiness for others, and equanimity. Morning – commit to do whatever you can to help others; look for opportunities. Evening – dedicate the merit; wish anyone who has harmed others true happiness and not to engage in any further unwholesome actions.]
13. **Even if others cut off one's head when one is utterly blameless, taking upon oneself all their negative deeds by power of compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *suffering* (pain) on the path. Most suffering is considered to be due to your past actions (karma, good or bad). Do not get angry at others who harm you (physically, emotionally, mentally). It may be *your* past karma. And feel compassion for them, due to the negative karma they will accrue do to such actions. A bodhisattva tries to give help and benefit others. This also helps us overcome the belief in a "truly existent self" (permanent, independent, partless existence from the Vedas). This basic "ignorance" is the source of much of our suffering, dissatisfaction, discontent. We focus on self, me, mine ... various forms of selfish thoughts and actions. Focus on others is a higher level of moral development ... and bodhisattva level.]
14. **Even if someone broadcasts throughout the billion worlds all sorts of offensive remarks about one [disgrace], speaking in turn of that person's qualities with a loving mind is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *disgrace* on the path. If someone defames or disgraces you through offensive remarks, feel grateful to them for the opportunity to purify *your* misdeeds ... not reacting in unwholesome ways, but with love and compassion or other wholesome actions. Ultimately, your reputation is neither "good" nor "bad"; it has no ultimate reality. It is just a concept. Shakespeare's Hamlet said, "Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so"! We are in control. We can change our thinking, through practice and understanding (wisdom) applied in each of our thoughts, words, and actions.
15. **Even if, in the midst of a public gathering, someone exposes faults and speaks ill of one [disparagement], humbly paying homage to that person, perceiving him as a spiritual friend, is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *disparagement* on the path. Do not "return the favor"! Never retaliate. Tit for tat. Do not abuse them, do not get angry at them, do not expose their hidden faults, do not strike back. Here we are told to show respect. Practice

patience. Let go of your own pride or arrogance. Practice generosity and compassion, being happy to lose! Allow others to “win”. This may sound a bit extreme, and it is. But fighting back seldom makes things better, more often it just escalates the harm done to all. Act with integrity. Even learn from it. Atisha said that such uncomfortable experiences may do us a great service:

The best spiritual friend is one who attacks your hidden faults.

The best instructions are the ones that hit your hidden faults.

The best incentives are enemies, obstacles, and the sufferings of illness.

Atisha’s tea boy example.

From the view of absolute truth, there is no difference between gain and loss, pleasure and pain, fame and disgrace, praise and disparagement (the Eight Worldly Concerns).]

Two things that are difficult to bear: 16-17

16. **Even if someone for whom one has cared as lovingly as his own child regards one as an enemy, to cherish that person as dearly as a mother does an ailing child is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *humiliation* or being wronged in return for kindness on the path. Unfortunately, it happens a lot in relationships! Altruism means to do something good for others without expectation of anything in return. It is a mistake to expect a quid pro quo, to keep track of favors given, or even to hope people will admire you for being a bodhisattva (whatever level). Expect nothing and love them even more. As a spiritual friend, your job is to help with love and compassion more than anyone else, no matter how they behave. Practice patience and wish that they will be free of their emotions. Treasure the lessons and use them as an opportunity to eradicate your own defects and progress on the path.]
17. **Even if, influenced by pride, an equal or inferior person treats one with contempt, respectfully placing him like a guru at the crown of your head is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *humiliation*, contempt or disparagement on the path. Do not be angry or feel badly treated. Respect them as teachers. Wish to do them as much good as your can. As previously, practice patience; remain humble and never proud. Do Khyentse Rinpoche once said, “The great teacher Drom Tonpa Jungné would circumambulate even a (dead?) dog on the side of the road in recognition of the Buddhanature that, like all beings, it possessed”!]

Deprivation and prosperity: 18-19

18. **Though one may have an impoverished life, always disparaged by others, afflicted by dangerous illness and evil spirits, to be without discouragement and to take upon oneself all the misdeeds and suffering of beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *deprivation*, etc. on the path. Countless people live in extreme poverty, without sufficient basic food, clothing, shelter and affection ... even the most basic needs of all beings. They may be treated badly by others or have serious illnesses. When *you* suffer in similar ways or see others suffering in those ways, even on TV, do whatever you can, even Tonglen practice – taking on their suffering and giving back love, compassion, happiness and whatever else they may need. When difficult times and circumstances arise, the difference between genuine practice and a semblance of that is revealed. Do the *best* that you can, without causing yourself anxiety or other hardships! Start with small steps. It gets easier and easier. Compassion grows and grows.]

19. **Though one may become famous and revered by many people or gain wealth like that of Vaishnavana** (a dharma protector who confers spiritual and material wealth on dharma practitioners), **having realized that worldly fortune is without essence, to be unconceited is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *fame and prosperity* on the path. Wealth, beauty, influence, prosperity, family lineage, etc. are fleeting, like a flash of lightening. A bodhisattva is never conceited or proud, no matter his/her worldly achievements and privileges. They will eventually be taken away – by robbers, people in power, or death. Everything is impermanent. There is no certainty about what your heirs will do with their inheritance. Milarepa taught his disciples to be generous to those in need. Even a small act of generosity accumulates great merit. If you have power and wealth, use it for the sake of the dharma and to benefit beings. Make wishes that their needs be fulfilled. Provide food, clothing, shelter, etc. directly or through donations. Or give the gift of dharma (even if not in Buddhist terminology).]

Objects of hatred and desire: 20-21

20. **If outer foes are destroyed while not subduing the enemy of one's own hatred, enemies will only increase. Therefore, subduing one's own mind with the army of love and compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use objects of *hatred* on the path. It is said that if you conquer your own hatred, there will no longer be even a single enemy. Hatred itself is the true enemy. Anger or hatred are the afflictive emotions associated with the hell realms in Buddhist mythology. The hell realms are within. Our anger may be hot or cold, like the hot hells or the cold hells. Some go into a rage, others go into isolation – hot and cold hells. To overcome hatred, meditate on patience and love. These are the antidotes for hate (and many other afflictive emotions). Once love and compassion take root in your being, there can be no outer adversaries. Never get angry, even when someone has deliberately and maliciously harmed you. This is not easy! But instead, be grateful for their help in purifying (burning up) past negative actions (karma); increase your determination to be free from samsara; continue to develop love and compassion. Become conscious that attachment, aversion, and ignorance (the three poisons) are your true enemies. When you overcome *them*, no outer enemies remain. Anger itself is nothing but a thought/emotion, generated by mind. Overcome it with love and compassion for all beings.]
21. **However much sense pleasures, like salt water, are enjoyed, craving still increases. Immediately abandoning whatever things give rise to clinging and attachment is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *objects of desire* on the path. Ordinary people never feel satisfied (or only temporarily). They move on the hedonic treadmill ... more, more, more. We “crave” want, want, want. If only I had... (**Craving** = *strong* desires; not representative of the **Middle Way** – moderation in all things. Some dharma sources can be a bit extreme, perhaps due to the monastic ascetic ideal. But Buddha was not so extreme for lay practitioners (and perhaps not even with monastics, which may be a later development, e.g., the Theravada tradition in Sri Lanka.) But back to sense pleasures, trying to satisfy those wants are like drinking salt water; it only makes you desire more! The happiness of hedonia only leads to temporary satisfaction and drives us to seek more, there is never enough (“he who dies with the most toys wins”), and to **cling** onto them in fear of losing them. Grasping and clinging. These are born of our selfishness. In Buddhism the objects of our grasping and clinging are often referred to as “sense pleasures”.

On the other hand, eudaimonia is happiness based on our *inner* satisfaction, which is far more lasting. We become contented with what we have, even if we have relatively little. Seek the contentment and peace of inner happiness through regular dharma practice and everyday life experience (application). Constantly look for opportunities to apply your practice. (More on pp. 25-26 in *Innate Happiness*.)]

Absolute bodhicitta - Wisdom

“Bodhicitta” is the mind of enlightenment. Now we move from “relative bodhicitta” to “ultimate or absolute bodhicitta” – wisdom.

Nature of mind and appearances: 22-24

22. All appearances are one's own mind. From the beginning, mind's nature is free from extremes of elaboration. Knowing this, not to engage the mind in subject-object duality is the bodhisattvas' practice. [How to remain free of conceptual elaborations without “clinging” on the path. Many “perceptions” arise in our mind – friends, relatives, benefactors, protectors ... enemies. It starts with our senses, perceived as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch. We also sense feelings – pleasant, attractive, unpleasant... One form of suffering is not getting what we want. Another is getting what we don’t want. These things are not intrinsically pleasant or unpleasant. They arise as such only in our mind! Shakespeare again, “Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” Trump’s base sees him as good; progressives see him as bad; but he is just one person. Thinking makes it so. Our mind is a slave of its own biased perceptions. Buddha said that we must transcend that bias to understand the *true* nature of things. As Tilopa taught Naropa:

**It is not what you perceive that binds you,
It is your clinging to it that binds you.
Cut through your clinging, Naropa.**

We must master our mind so that it will remain concentrated, peaceful, and aware ... without being distracted and carried away by desire or aversion. Otherwise we continue to be influenced by habitual tendencies. We must learn to control our mind (the part that is accessible – “the 40% solution”). *Everything* is in your mind – *all* experiences. So, what is this mind? Buddhism uses different words, e.g., that which pays attention, that which is aware, that which is knowing the true nature of things (“lack of any inherent existence”, impermanent, dependent, having parts). Phenomena are *empty* of inherent existence ... *inherent* existence. Not that they don’t exist from a relative view. They do, just not the way we normally view them. (Also, see scientific view...) Think about time – past, present, future. What is the past? Only a memory. What is the future? Only a plan or expectation. There is only the present. What is it? Nothing more than the point (not even an “instant”) between past and future. It doesn’t actually exist, but we perceive that it does ... in our mind. We “suffer” due to our delusions. We grasp at things, cling to things, we avoid things, we reject things... all because of an illusion. There is a difference between relative view and ultimate view. Here talking about ultimate view – what is “really real”. But this is critical to how we also perceive the relative view; how we are “conditioned” by it; how it is the source of our discontent, dissatisfaction, our “suffering”. Knowing the “true nature” of things, attachment and desire will not arise; hatred and repulsion will not develop. Karma is no longer accumulated. Mind becomes peaceful and we recognize the empty nature of all. With this, we

are on the path to liberation! But we don't have time to examine this in depth today, perhaps another day.

- 23. When encountering pleasing sense objects, though they appear beautiful like a rainbow in summertime, not to regard them as real and to abandon clinging attachment is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Post-meditation, how to abandon belief in objects of desire as truly existing, things we want. Our ego ("self") is deluded through faulty perception. We become suckers for advertising and other marketing, as well as much of our entertainment and so forth. We crave ... which by its nature only brings trouble and dissatisfaction. (Maybe some temporary pleasure on the hedonic treadmill.) Let's be clear, this is about strong desire, or harmful forms. Desire for enlightenment or to help other (be a Bodhisattva) are good!
- 24. Diverse sufferings are like the death of a child in a dream. By apprehending illusory appearances as real, one becomes weary. Therefore, when encountering disagreeable circumstances, viewing them as illusory is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Here we have how to abandon belief in objects of aversion as truly existing in post-meditation. Similarly to #23 (above), we react to things or events that we perceive as unpleasant. We become a slave to our negative emotions (strong aversion, not helpful forms that may trigger actions to benefit others being harmed by those negative actions or other "things"). When viewing the sufferings of others, we may be able to take actions, or just wish that their suffering be exhausted (e.g., Tonglen, Metta, White Tara, Chenrezig...). It is said that people with relaxed minds never lose their happiness. Relax your mind and feel a flow of compassion toward all who suffer.

Six Perfections: 25-30: generosity, ethics, patience, diligent effort, meditative concentration, and wisdom. Each quality is truly transcendent (*paramita*), when (1) it destroys its negative counterpart (e.g. generosity destroys miserliness), (2) it is reinforced with wisdom (beyond "subject, object, action"), (3) it can result in fulfillment of all beings' aspirations (esp. liberation), and (4) it can bring others to the full maturity of their potential (ideally, enlightenment). Think of a 6-spoked wheel, all are interdependent, not like a ladder one step at a time.

- 25. If it is necessary to give away even one's body [one of the extremes found in the path of the bodhisattva] while aspiring to enlightenment, what need is there to mention external objects? Therefore, practicing generosity without hope of reciprocation or positive karmic results [altruism] is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *generosity* on the path. Generosity is the expression of altruism, free from attachment. If you have wealth, the first thought is to give it (all) away to the Three Jewels and to help those in need of food, clothing, and shelter. (This can be actual support or imagined if you lack resources, or somewhere in between as you are able.) Use it to carry out altruistic deeds to benefit others until you achieve liberation. Buddha said wealth is okay, depending on how it was earned (ethical, fair, helpful to others) and how it is used (e.g., to benefit others). There are 3 kinds of generosity: (1) material giving, given with pure intention, (2) to save life or protect from fear (e.g., catch and release insects or pacify feuds), and (3) to give dharma (teaching, sharing, even if not in dharma terms) ... not about proselytizing. The essence of generosity is nonattachment. Transcendent generosity is free of concepts even of any substantial reality of giving, a recipient, and the act of giving.

- 26. If, lacking ethical conduct, one fails to achieve one's own purpose, the wish to accomplish others' purpose is laughable. Therefore, guarding ethics devoid of aspiration for worldly existence is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *ethics* on the path. There are various sets of vows or commitments: Pratimoksha vows, Bodhisattva vows, Tantric vows. The Pratimoksha vows begin with refuge vows: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; 3 prohibitions, 3 prescriptions, 5 lay vows (or 10 non-virtuous actions to avoid and 20 virtuous actions [see **notes**]). There are also monastic vows. The Bodhisattva vows focus primarily on the 18 root and branch vows of bodhisattvas (won't cover here), especially "to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings". The tantric vows include 14 Root Downfalls, 25 Branch Samayas, Eight Mother Tantra Vows, individual samaya commitments for particular practices, and so forth. It requires discipline (ethics) to help others. We must give up "strong" attachment and desire, i.e., the Middle Way. "Ethics" were the first part of the Buddha's training, even before meditation and insight/wisdom. Perfect discipline is to keep the vows in a pure way with constant mindfulness without conceit or pride, i.e., keeping a peaceful, self-controlled, and altruistic mind always and all ways.]
- 27. To Bodhisattvas who desire the wealth [joys] of virtue, all those who do harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore, cultivating patience devoid of hostility is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to practice *patience* on the path. Three kinds: (1) bear without anger whatever harm people may do to you, (2) endure hardships you may experience for the sake of the dharma without sadness, and (3) face without fear the profound meaning of the dharma and the boundless qualities of the Three Jewels. In the **first**, "bear without anger": e.g., His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche – held in Chinese prison 20 years; karmic results(?), burning up those effects (overcoming harmful thoughts and actions for self *and* others); doing you a kindness (a lesson); do not seek revenge or bear even the slightest grudge; a person doing you harm may be due to their own karma so feel compassion for them; at ultimate level, there is no *inherent* person being harmed, harming, or harm being done, transcend those concepts. [Like Shakespeare's Hamlet: "There is no good or bad, but thinking makes it so" or Padmasambhava's "My mind is vast as space, but my actions are as fine as barley flour".] **Second**, enduring hardships: illness, heat/cold, hunger/thirst ... short term; help purify actions, help achieve Buddhahood, accept them with joy. **Third**, use deep inner courage to work out of love and compassion for the altruistic benefit of others. We *all* have Buddhanature. In the end, dedicate your merit to them all.]
- 28. Even hearers [shravakas – monastics, and laity] and solitary realizers [pratyekabuddhas – yogis and yoginis], who accomplish only their own welfare, strive as if putting out a fire on their heads. Seeing this, taking up diligent effort–the source of good qualities–for the sake of all beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *diligence, joyous effort* on the path. Three types: (1) "armorlike diligence" is joyous courage and fortitude; (2) "diligence in action" is practice of the six perfections (now) with great joy for study, contemplation and meditation; (3) "diligence that cannot be stopped" is insatiable and unremitting energy to work for the benefit of others. These are the opposites of laziness, faint-heartedness, and negligence. It takes a strong commitment! It takes time and effort. You need to consider what you are willing to give up in your life of comfort and ease ... for the benefit of others. It may help to reflect on impermanence and death; we don't know when or how that might happen. We cannot delay.]
- 29. Having understood that disturbing emotions are destroyed by insight possessed with tranquil abiding, to cultivate meditative concentration [*shamata* – peace, calm] which**

perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions is the bodhisattvas' practice. [How to apply the union of calm abiding (shamata) and profound insight (vipassana) on the path to liberation. The four jhanas are basic shamata or shamata with signs (object of meditation; four formless absorptions or higher jhanas or shamata without signs or no “object” of meditation (usually a focus on the mind itself or the nature of mind); “insight” refers to vipassana (basic insight into self and other phenomena, advanced insight into mind and the nature of mind or “emptiness”. This may be appearance-emptiness – lack of inherent existence, luminous-emptiness – Buddhanature, bliss-emptiness – transcendent bliss or clear light, or awareness-emptiness – pure awareness itself. But the key here is the union of calm abiding and profound insight (one taste). First, we calm the mind, then we contemplate on the “emptiness” of self, phenomena, mind and/or nature of mind.

- 30. If one lacks wisdom, it is impossible to attain perfect enlightenment through the [other] five perfections. Thus, cultivating skillful means [the first 5 perfections] with the wisdom [6th perfection, vipassana or insight meditation] that does not discriminate among the three spheres [here – subject, object, action] is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *transcendent wisdom* to the path. Paramita means transcendent or “gone to the other shore”. First, we learn by listening and reading until we know the words and their meaning. Then we contemplate what we have learned, the provisional or relative meaning and the definitive or ultimate meanings until we gain confidence in our understanding. Next we meditate until we experience the transcendent or experiential understanding of the teachings, especially those on emptiness. Finally, we integrate them into our being, everyday life, fully and completely, including boundless love and compassion for all beings and the rest of the Four Immeasurables (joy and equanimity for all).]

Four Sutra Instructions: 31-34

- 31. If, having [merely] the appearance of a practitioner, one does not investigate one's own mistakes; it is possible to act contrary to the Dharma. Therefore, constantly examining one's own errors and abandoning them is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *one's own defects* on the path. Keep everything you think, say, and do in accordance with the dharma. Keep looking into your mind. You must apply dharma principles all the time or there will be no liberation. Keep looking! Examine your own shortcomings, not those of others. With mindfulness, all the time, recognize your defects and reinforce positive thoughts. Avoid downfalls such as: (1) praising yourself and disparaging others, (2) not giving what you can to those who are destitute and suffering or dharma to those who are worthy, (3) abusing others verbally or physically, or harboring resentment against wrongdoers who have sought forgiveness and changed their ways, (4) criticizing and rejecting dharma teachings (not the same as “critical thinking”, which is ok or even necessary) or hypocritically assuming an outward appearance of dharma, and (5) generally refrain from everything harmful or meaningless for wealth, fame, status, or gratification. Transform your own mind and help others.]
- 32. If, influenced by disturbing emotions, one points out another bodhisattva's faults, oneself is diminished. Therefore, not speaking about the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle (Mahayana) is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *your critical thoughts* on the path. Consider other dharma practitioners as close relatives (dharma brothers and sisters) and all others as well (as if have been our own loving mothers). Don't look for others' mistakes. Respect the sangha. Consider all to be free of faults. Malicious criticisms of other

dharma lineages only cause the dharma, as a whole, to decline and become corrupted. Be aware that every action of enlightened beings, spiritual masters, and bodhisattvas has a deep meaning that reflects their intention to benefit beings. They might seem ordinary, or even take forms as animals or beggars or rough-looking people, but they have goodness within. Recognize that goodness, see everything as pure, see the teacher as a real buddha. It is said that if you see the teacher as another being, you will receive the benefit of another being. If you see the teacher as a guru, you will receive the benefit of a guru. If you see the teacher as a buddha, you will receive the benefit of a buddha. NOTE: This is not intended to ignore evidence of manipulation, abuse, or exploitation. A pattern of harmful actions must also be addressed, according to the Buddha.]

- 33. Because the influence of gain and respect causes quarreling and the decline of the activities of listening, pondering and meditation, to abandon attachment (a key word) to the households of friends, relations and benefactors is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to abandon *attachment* on the path to liberation. Wealth, power, fame and so forth can lead to resentment, jealousy, and competition with others. Abandon these attachments. Be contented with what you have (not “suffering” or “basic needs”). Discontent is suffering. Contentment leads to liberation. Some of the rich, powerful or famous use it to benefit others, many use it to exploit others, often for personal gain. As Gyalsé Thokmé said:

**To feel satisfied with whatever you have, that is the ultimate wealth;
Not to crave or be attached to anything at all, that is the ultimate happiness.**

The hedonic treadmill does not bring true, ultimate happiness, or liberation. Only the eudaimonia of innate, inner happiness can help do that.]

- 34. Because harsh words disturb others' minds and cause the bodhisattva's conduct to deteriorate, abandoning harsh speech that is unpleasant to others is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [Never say things that hurt others, things that can lead to anger. Say gentle words that will encourage them. The antidote to “harsh speech” (as one of the 10 non-virtuous or unwholesome actions is “pleasant words”. Nagarjuna described 3 types of words people use: (1) like honey, (2) like flowers, and (3) like excrement. These (1) help and please, (2) are honest and true, or (3) are violent, harmful, or falsehoods (“fake”). A Bodhisattva uses speech to bring people onto the path of liberation by first telling stories that make them happy and then gradually and skillfully introduce them to the meaning of the dharma. They seek to benefit others, as can we.]

Mindfulness: 35-36

- 35. When disturbing emotions are habituated, it is difficult to overcome them with antidotes. By arming oneself with the antidotal weapons of mindfulness, to destroy disturbing emotions such as desire the moment they first arise is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to use *mindfulness* to overcome *disturbing or afflictive emotions* on the path. Your practice, to be effective, must serve as an antidote to your negative emotions and/or belief in a permanent “inherent existence” (heaven). Emotions begin as a tiny thought or experience and grows stronger and stronger, sometimes gradually, sometimes very quickly, partly due to our habitual tendencies (stimulus → response). We must recognize them at the very moment they first arise, when it is easier to let them subside. If we are not mindful, they will expand and multiply, becoming increasingly difficult to hold back. Guru Rinpoche said that afflictive emotions are our worst enemy. Therefore, we must always stay alert, be mindful. Shamata,

calm abiding helps mind become stable, relaxed and focused. In that state, habitual tendencies tend to fade away, while altruism and compassion naturally develop and expand. Eventually, you will come to a state of ease in the unceasing flow of the absolute nature, undistracted by afflictive emotions and replacing them with new, beneficial habits. The root is our ignorance of the true nature of things. This leads to a mistaken belief in “I” or “me”, which in turn leads to selfishness from which attachment and aversion arise. As we begin to recognize the illusory nature of what we usually call reality, it loses its attraction and power over us. Through mindfulness, we begin to create a gap between the stimulus and our habitual response. We become free to make mindful choices about how to respond, another step on the path to liberation.]

- 36. In brief, whatever conduct one engages in, one should ask, "What is the state of my mind?" Accomplishing other's purpose through constantly maintaining mindfulness and awareness is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How can we use *mindfulness and awareness of mind* on the path to liberation. There are many expressions used in the dharma to represent this concept. It is the union of great compassion and emptiness, enlightenment, liberation and so forth. Mindfulness has many different levels. Basically, it means paying attention, close attention to what is going on ... our mind. In this context then, awareness means paying attention to whether or not we are paying attention. Deeper still, it means awareness of awareness, the nature of mind. In Dzogchen we call it “pure awareness,” the awareness before we become “aware of” something, anything. It is the ultimate pure nature of mind itself. Sometimes it is expressed as “suchness”, “isness” or “thatness”. It really just “is”. It is the potential for action, like potential energy vs. kinetic energy, or the sun and its rays, or the mirror and the reflection. There are many forms of meditation from a variety of lineages that can be used to develop this level of focused attention, knowing that *everything* we “experience” is going on in our mind! Whatever practice you do with body, speech, and mind, do them with the altruistic intention of benefiting all sentient beings! Love and compassion ... the Good Heart!

Dedication of Merit: 37

- 37. In order to clear away the suffering of limitless beings, through the wisdom [realizing] the purity of the three spheres [subject, object, action], to dedicate the virtue attained by making such effort for enlightenment is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to *dedicate the merit* of your practice for the benefit of all sentient beings. This is often done with a simple prayer at the end of your practice of upon going to bed for the night: “I dedicate the merit of this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings” 3X. There are countless other variations, some similarly short, some more elaborated. Find one or more that is suited to you or ask your lama. Citing such a dedication reinforces our intent. We are following in the footsteps of those who achieved realization before us. We emulate these great bodhisattvas.

This teaching is based upon *The Heart of Compassion: The Thirty-Seven Verses on the Practice of a Bodhisattva* by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, with annotations by Khenpo Drimed Dawa for the Tubac Buddhist Meditation Center on March 9, 2019.

Following the speech of the Sublime Ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras and their commentaries, I have written the Thirty-seven Practices of Bodhisattvas for those who wish to train on the bodhisattvas' path.

Due to my inferior intellect and poor learning, this is not poetry that will please scholars, yet as I have relied upon the sutras and the speech of the Sublime Ones, I think the bodhisattva practices are not mistaken.

However, because it is difficult for one of inferior intellect like myself to fathom the depth of the great deeds of bodhisattvas, I beseech the Sublime Ones to forbear my errors such as contradictions and incoherent [reasoning].

By the virtue arising from this may all migrators become, through excellent conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, like the protector Chenrezig who does not abide in the extremes of existence or peace.

This was written for the benefit of himself and others by the monk Thogme, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngülchu Rinchen.

Section 2: The Bodhisattva and the Bodhisattva Vow

Definition - (from Mahayana) “a person who is able to reach nirvana but delays doing so out of compassion in order to save suffering beings”

Literally - bodhi = awakened; sattva = being

Early schools - anyone who has made a resolution to become a Buddha and has also received a confirmation or prediction from a living Buddha that this will be so.

Mahayana - anyone who has generated bodhicitta [the mind of enlightenment], a spontaneous wish and compassionate mind to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings and, therefore, work to develop and exemplify the loving-kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. These four virtues are the four divine abodes, called Brahma-vihara (immeasurables).

Abhidharma commentary texts refer to Gautama Buddha in his previous lives and as a young man in his historic life, in the period during which he was working towards his own liberation, as a Bodhisattva. During his discourses, to recount his experiences as a young aspirant, he regularly used the phrase “When I was an unenlightened bodhisatta...” [Jataka Tales, much like “morality tales in Dark Ages of Europe”]. The term therefore connotes a being who is “bound for enlightenment”, to become fully enlightened. In the Pāli canon, the bodhisattva is also described as someone who is still subject to birth, illness, death, sorrow, defilement, and delusion.

According to the Theravada monk Bhikkhu Bodhi, the bodhisattva path is not taught in the earliest strata of Buddhist texts such as the Pali Nikayas (and their counterparts such as the Chinese Āgamas) which instead focus on the ideal of the Arahāt.

The oldest known story about how Gautama Buddha becomes a bodhisattva is the story of his encounter with the previous Buddha, Dīpan-kara. During this encounter, a previous incarnation of Gautama offers five blue lotuses and spreads out his hair or entire body for Dīpan-kara to walk on, resolving to one day become a Buddha. Dīpan-kara then confirms that he will attain Buddhahood. Early Buddhist authors saw this story as indicating that the making of a resolution in the presence of a living Buddha and his prediction/confirmation of one's future Buddhahood was necessary to become a bodhisattva. According to Drewes, “all known models of the path to Buddhahood developed from this basic understanding.”

The path is explained differently by the various Nikaya schools. In one of the Theravāda stories, after receiving the prediction, Gautama took four incalculable eons and a hundred thousand, shorter eons to reach Buddhahood. [So what's the rush?!]

One text presents four stages of the bodhisattva path without giving specific time frames (though it's said to take various eons):

1. **Natural**, one first plants the roots of merit in front of a Buddha to attain Buddhahood.
2. **Resolution**, one makes their first resolution to attain Buddhahood in the presence of a Buddha.
3. **Continuing**, one continues to practice until one meets a Buddha who confirms one's future Buddhahood.
4. **Irreversible**, at this stage, one cannot fall back.

Theravada and the Mahayana unanimously accept the Bodhisattva ideal as the highest... Although the Theravada holds that anybody can be a Bodhisattva, it does not stipulate or insist that all must be Bodhisattva, which is considered not practical. One of the earliest known Mahayana texts contains a simple and brief definition for the term *bodhisattva*, the earliest known Mahāyāna definition, as: "Because he has bodhi (enlightenment) as his aim, a bodhisattva-mahāsattva is so called."

Mahāyāna sūtras present stories of Buddhas and bodhisattvas' first arising of the thought of attaining Buddhahood, as taking place in the presence of a Buddha, suggesting that they shared with all known Nikāya traditions the understanding that this is a necessary condition for entering the path. In addition, though this key fact is often obscured in scholarship, they apparently never encourage anyone to become a bodhisattva or present any ritual or other means of doing so. Like Nikāya texts, they also regard the status of new or recent bodhisattvas as largely meaningless. One text states that as many bodhisattvas as there grains of sand in the Ganges turn back from the pursuit of Buddhahood, and that out of innumerable beings who give rise to bodhicitta and progress toward Buddhahood, only one or two will reach the point of becoming irreversible. [So why bother?!]

However, the term "Bodhisattva" was also used in a broader sense. It can refer to those who follow any of the three vehicles [Individual Liberation, Mahayana, or Vajrayana], since all are working towards bodhi (awakening). Therefore, the specific term for a Mahāyāna bodhisattva is a mahāsattva bodhisattva (great, awakened being). According to Atiśa, the central defining feature of a Mahāyāna bodhisattva is the universal aspiration to end suffering for all sentient beings, which is termed bodhicitta (the heart set on awakening). Later Sanskrit Mahayana Buddhists also developed specific rituals and devotional acts for the arising of this central quality of *bodhicitta*.

Contemporary Mahāyāna Buddhism encourages everyone to give rise to bodhicitta and ceremonially take bodhisattva vows. With these vows, one makes the promise to work for the complete enlightenment of all sentient beings primarily by practicing the 6 or 10 Perfections. Yet there are two theories.

One theory is the idea that a bodhisattva must postpone their awakening until full Buddhahood is attained (at which point one ceases to be reborn, which is the classical view of nirvāṇa). This view is promoted in some sutras.

The second theory is the idea that there are two kinds of nirvāṇa: (1) the nirvāṇa of an arhat and (2) a superior type of nirvāṇa that allows a Buddha to remain engaged in the world, which developed later in the Yogacara school and is not found in the early Mahāyāna literature.

Over time, a more varied understanding developed focused on one's motivation. This can be seen in the Tibetan Buddhist teaching on three types of motivation for generating bodhicitta. According to Patrul Rinpoche's Words of My Perfect Teacher, a bodhisattva might be **motivated** in one of three ways:

1. King-like bodhicitta – To aspire to become a Buddha first in order to then help sentient beings.
2. Boatman-like bodhicitta – To aspire to become a Buddha at the same time as other sentient beings.
3. Shepherd-like bodhicitta – To aspire to become a Buddha only after all other sentient beings have done so.

The 10 Bodhisattva grounds or levels (bhūmis)

Before a bodhisattva arrives at the first bodhisattva ground, he or she first must travel the first two of five paths:

1. the path of accumulation – desire to overcome suffering and renunciation of worldly life
2. the path of preparation or application – practice meditation and emptiness

The ten grounds of the bodhisattva can be grouped into the next three paths:

1. *bhūmi* 1 – the path of insight or seeing – concentration and nature of reality (extension of practice of meditation/concentration and emptiness/nature of reality)
2. *bhūmis* 2-7 – the path of meditation – purification (of *kleshas* or afflictive emotions and mental obscurations) and accumulation of wisdom
3. *bhūmis* 8-10 – the path of no more learning – completely purified

After the ten *bhūmis*, according to Mahāyāna Buddhism, one attains complete enlightenment and becomes a Buddha.

The *bhūmis* are also linked to the six or ten perfections. The first six perfections are: generosity, morality, patience, joyful effort, concentration, and wisdom. The last four are: skillful means, aspiration, spiritual power, and knowledge (*jnana*) – application of the principles found in the first 6 perfections.

The 10 *bhūmis* are: [note: sources of terms and content vary quite a bit!]

1. **Great Joy:** It is said that being close to enlightenment and seeing the benefit for all sentient beings, one achieves great joy, hence the name. In this *bhūmi* the bodhisattvas practice all perfections (*pāramitās*), but especially emphasizing generosity (*dāna*).
2. **Stainless:** In accomplishing the second *bhūmi*, the bodhisattva is free from the stains of immorality, therefore, this *bhūmi* is named "stainless". The emphasized perfection is moral discipline (*śīla*).
3. **Luminous:** The light of Dharma is said to radiate for others from the bodhisattva who accomplishes the third *bhūmi*. The emphasized perfection is patience (*kṣānti*).
4. **Radiant:** This *bhūmi* it is said to be like a radiating light that fully burns that which opposes enlightenment. The emphasized perfection is joyful effort.
5. **Very difficult to train:** Bodhisattvas who attain this ground strive to help sentient beings attain maturity, and do not become emotionally involved when such beings respond negatively, both of which are difficult to do. The emphasized perfection is meditative concentration (*dhyāna*).
6. **Obviously Transcendent:** By depending on the perfection of wisdom, [the bodhisattva] does not abide in either samsāra or nirvāṇa, so this state is "obviously transcendent". The emphasized perfection is wisdom (*prajñā*).
7. **Gone afar:** Particular emphasis is on the perfection of skillful means (*upāya*), to help others.

8. **Immovable:** The emphasized virtue is strong aspiration. This "immovable" *bhūmi* is where one becomes able to choose his or her place of rebirth.
9. **Spiritual Power:** The emphasized virtue is increasing the power of concentration, awareness and patience. [The name and content of this bhumi varies considerably among different sources.]
10. **Cloud of Dharma:** The emphasized virtue is the application of transcendent wisdom in the world.

Followers of Tibetan Buddhism consider the Dalai Lamas and the Karmapas to be an emanation of Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.

The Bodhisattva Vow

The **Bodhisattva vow** is a commitment made by some Buddhists to achieve buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. One who has taken the vow is nominally known as a bodhisattva (a being working towards buddhahood). This can be done by venerating all Buddhas and cultivating supreme moral and spiritual perfection, to benefit others on the path. Such bodhisattvas practice the six (or 10) perfections (described above) to fulfill their bodhicitta aim of attaining buddhahood for the sake of all beings. Whereas the prātimoksa (monastic & lay) vows cease at death, the bodhisattva vow extends into future lives.

In Tibetan Buddhism there are two lineages of the bodhisattva vow, which are linked to two sets of Bodhisattva precepts or moral rules. The first is associated with the Cittamatra movement (Mind Only) of Indian Buddhism, and is said to have originated with the bodhisattva Maitreya, and to have been propagated by the Indian master Asanga.

The second is associated with the Madhyamaka tradition (Middly Way) and is said to have originated with the bodhisattva Manjusri and to have been propagated by Nagarjuna, and later by Shantideva. The main difference between these two lineages of the bodhisattva vow is that in the Cittamatra lineage the vow cannot be received by one who has not previously received the monastic vows. Both traditions share a set of 18 major precepts (or "downfalls").

In Tibetan Buddhism preliminary practices and prayers, particularly the Seven Branch Practice or Prayer, may be recited:

1. Prostration to the three jewels, supplicating to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas
2. Making physical, verbal and/or mental offerings to the Buddhas
3. Confessing one's negative deeds, "one admits to doing the negative deed, feels true remorse, and then one resolves not to do it again." (Vajrasattva)
4. Rejoicing in the goodness and virtues of others
5. Requesting the Buddhas to turn the wheel of Dharma (to teach the dharma)
6. Praying to the Buddhas to not pass away into final extinction, but to keep coming back to teach and help others
7. Dedicating the merit of all good deeds for the benefit of all beings.

The Ceremony (many variations) – one example:

After an explanation (short or long) by the lama officiating at the ceremony, the key verses are recited by the lama, followed by the adepts:

The Four Immeasurables recitation (3X):

May all sentient beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.
 May they be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering.
 May they never be separated from the happiness which is free from sorrow.
 May they rest in equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

Shantideva's vows (verses 23 and 24 of *The Bodhisattva's Way of Life*) are:

Just as all the previous Buddhas
Generated the mind of enlightenment
And accomplished all the stages
Of the Bodhisattva training,

So will I too, for the sake of all beings,
Generate the mind of enlightenment
And accomplish all the stages
Of the Bodhisattva training. (3X)

Rejoicing:

Now my life has borne great fruit,
My human life has attained great meaning;
Today, I am born into the lineage of Buddha
And have become a Bodhisattva.

All my actions from now on
Shall accord with this noble lineage;
And upon this lineage, pure and faultless,
I shall never bring disgrace. (1X)

Bodhicitta Prayer:

Bodhicitta, the excellent and precious mid –
Where it is unborn, may it arise.
Where it is born, may it not decline
But ever increase, higher and higher. (1X)

Dedication of merit...

Alternately, the 14th Dalai Lama's approach is more elaborate, which begins by reading "through the second and third chapters of the *Bodhisattvas Way of Life* up to verse 23" (about 20 pages). The Dalai Lama then says:

In order to take this vow, we should imagine that in front of us are ... all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas ... surrounded by all the beings in the universe. With this visualization, we shall now read the Seven Branch Prayer ... (*as above*). We ... generate compassion for [all beings]. Think of the Buddha and feel great devotion to him. Then, pray, "May I attain Buddhahood!" and recite:

Teachers, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, listen!
Just as you, who in the past have gone to bliss,
Conceived the awakened attitude of mind,
Likewise, for the benefit of beings, I will generate this self-same attitude.

Then think that you have generated this bodhicitta in the depth of your hearts, in the very marrow of your bones, and that you will never go back on this promise. Traditionally we now recite the last nine verses of the chapter as a conclusion to taking the vow.

Another form of this vow is simply, "May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings." This is often included with the refuge vow repeated at the start of or early in a practice session, without any formal ritual ceremony.

A more poetic expression of the vow is in the form of The Four Great Vows:

However innumerable beings are, I vow to liberate them.
 However inexhaustible delusions are, I vow to extinguish them.
 However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them.
 However incomparable liberation is, I vow to attain it.

There are numerous versions of the Bodhisattva Vow, e.g., Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) lists 64 different versions of the vow.

One favorite verse often repeated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the following, which also comes from *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva:

As long as space endures,
 As long as sentient beings remain,
 May I too remain for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Having taken the vow, we need to practice and apply the altruistic intention in daily living, to the best of our ability. Shantideva's text is based upon the *Six Perfections (Paramitas)*. As described earlier, the path is a process of "perfecting" these principles: generosity, morality, patience, joyful effort, meditative concentration, and wisdom. Generosity, of course, means giving. We can give material things, when we have them, and when they are needed and will help. Or we can give our time, helping others as needed. We can also give through our devotion and practice so that we can help others on their path to liberation by teaching or being a "role model" for others. They don't even need to know you are a Buddhist. Among the verses that illustrate the strong commitment of a *Bodhisattva* are these, selected from Shantideva's chapter three:

May I be a guard for those who are protectorless,
 A guide for those who journey on the road;
 For those who wish to go across the water,
 May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.
 May I be an isle for those who yearn for landfall,
 And a lamp for those who long for light;
 For those who need a resting place, a bed;
 For all who need a servant, may I be a slave.
 May I be the wish-fulfilling jewel, the vase of plenty,
 A word of power, and the supreme remedy.
 May I be the trees of miracles,
 And for every being, the abundant cow.
 Like the great earth and the other elements,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
 For the boundless multitude of living beings,
 May I be the ground and vessel of their life.
 Thus, for every single thing that lives,
 In number like the boundless reaches of the sky,
 May I be their sustenance and nourishment
 Until they pass beyond the bounds of suffering.

Another set of verses related to the Bodhisattva Vow that are often referenced by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the subject of several of his teachings, is the *Eight Verses for Training the Mind*:

- 1) With a determination to accomplish
The highest welfare for all sentient beings,
Who surpass even a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I will learn to hold them supremely dear.
- 2) Whatever I associate with others, I will learn
To think of myself as the lowest among all,
And respectfully hold others to be supreme
From the very depths of my heart.
- 3) In all actions I will learn to search into my mind
And as soon as an afflictive emotion arises,
Endangering myself and others,
Will firmly face and avert it.
- 4) I will learn to cherish beings of bad nature
And those pressed by strong sins and sufferings,
As if I had found a precious
Treasure very difficult to find. [Often explained as a source of teaching, or a test, for us.]
- 5) When others out of jealousy treat me badly
With abuse, slander, and so on,
I will learn to take all loss
And offer the victory to them. [Turn the other cheek.]
- 6) When one whom I have benefited with great hope
Unreasonably hurts me very badly,
I will learn to view that person
As an excellent spiritual guide. [Teacher of compassion.]
- 7) In short, I will learn to offer to everyone without exception
All help and happiness directly and indirectly,
And respectfully take upon myself
All harm and suffering of my mothers. [Tonglen]
- 8) I will learn to keep all these practices
Undefined by the stains of the eight worldly concerns²³,
And by understanding all phenomena as like illusions
Be released from the bondage of attachment.

On the Path of the Bodhisattva, both our intention and our actions focus on the benefit of others. But this, too, has two levels – relative and ultimate. **First**, on the relative level it refers to ordinary acts of generosity and kindness to help others. **Second**, once we are able and qualified, at the ultimate level our intention and actions focus on helping others attain liberation itself.

There are two primary actions we can take. **One** is simply our own behavior as a **role model**. We can find countless examples of this in the literature, including those mentioned above. We act as best we can as if we are already a buddha. Here it is important to know that we cannot know the causes and conditions (karma) behind another's actions. Some Buddhists say that because of this we should not engage in actions that might “interfere” with the karma of another. Perhaps. But the logical extension of this approach is that we do nothing! Ever! What about “do good”? Clearly the verses above state otherwise. Alternately, we can do what we believe in our heart is the best

²³ Like and dislike, gaining and losing, praise and blame, fame and disgrace.

action to benefit others, as the most fundamental element in “doing good” is our *intention*. Never forget that!

The other action is to teach. This, of course, necessitates that we engage in years of extensive study and practice to become qualified to do that in a formal way. However, you can still share what you do know with others from the very beginning.

The 18 Bodhisattva Downfalls

There is a list of 18 Bodhisattva Downfalls specifically for the Path of the Bodhisattva. These too are considered part of the vows we are taking. These are additional unwholesome actions to be avoided on the Bodhisattva Path:

1. Praising yourself and denigrating others
2. Not giving wealth and dharma when requested [to the best of your ability]
3. Not forgiving others who apologize
4. Abandoning the Path of the Bodhisattva
5. Taking offerings made to the **Three Jewels** [Buddha, Dharma, & Sangha]
6. Abandoning the *dharma*
7. Disrobing or causing disrobing of monks and nuns
8. Committing the five heinous crimes [killing one's father, mother, or an *arhat*, wounding a Buddha, causing a division in the sangha]
9. Holding wrong views [not believing in the dharma]
10. Destroying towns or other habitat
11. Teaching “emptiness” to the untrained
12. Discouraging others from their aspiration for *full* liberation
13. Causing someone to abandon their individual liberation vows
14. Denigrating the Path of Individual Liberation
15. Claiming realization of emptiness when not fully realized
16. Accepting something stolen from the Three Jewels
17. Showing favoritism [attachment to others]
18. Giving up aspiration *bodhicitta*

The underlying principle is that these have been found to facilitate our progress on the path to liberation. For the most part we could say that they are simple common-sense guidelines. So, to summarize *do good or at least do no harm for the benefit of all beings... always and all ways! BE a Bodhisattva*. The bodhisattva principle is absolutely essential moving forward into Vajrayana and Dzogchen to avoid the fatal flaw of focus on oneself. Since these higher paths focus more on personal practice and understanding, it can become a slippery slope, sliding us back into the lower realms (anger, greed, and delusion) in selfishness. Ultimately, **Full Awakening** requires that we achieve **Great Compassion**, in thought, word, and deed, as well as the **Wisdom** of insight into the ultimate-nature of all things.

PART 11 – Practices of Lovingkindness & Compassion, **4 Immeasurables and 6 Perfections**

Section 1: Lovingkindness & Compassion

A. Lovingkindness

Lovingkindness:

- (3rd) Luminous bhumi – the practitioner seeks the perfection of patience and equanimity. They often practice the Four Immeasurables: lovingkindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.
- Lovingkindness – self, others
- Compassion – self, others

We now turn to the first of the Four Immeasurables. Having established confidence that all beings want happiness and not suffering, we now focus on lovingkindness or *metta* meditation. In Buddhism, the lovingkindness is the wish that all beings have (ultimate) happiness and its causes. Ultimate happiness is the ideal, but of course we also wish that they have relative happiness as well, to the extent that it is not harmful to them or others in some way. This practice focuses on growing our feeling of lovingkindness for all beings, whether human, animal, bird, reptile, fish, insect or other form.

The Buddha said that this practice is the most important!

The Lovingkindness in early Buddhism from the Buddha

Iti-vuttaka Sutra: The most fruitful way to achieve merit is lovingkindness, one of the four “divine abodes” which are to be extended boundlessly to all sentient beings. Monks, whatever grounds there are for making merit productive of a future birth, all these do not equal a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. The liberation of mind by lovingkindness surpasses them and shines forth, bright and brilliant.

Just as the radiance of all the stars does not equal a sixteenth part of the moon’s radiance, but the moon’s radiance surpasses them and shines forth, bright and brilliant, even so, whatever grounds there are for making merit productive of the future birth, all these do not equal a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. The liberation of mind by lovingkindness surpasses them and shines forth bright and brilliant.

Just as the last month of the rainy season, in the autumn, when the sky is clear and free of clouds, the sun, on ascending, dispels the darkness of space and shines forth, bright and brilliant, even so, whatever grounds there are for making merit productive of a future birth, all these do not equal a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. The liberation of mind by lovingkindness surpasses them and shines forth, bright and brilliant.

And just as in the night, at the moment of dawn, the morning star shines forth, bright and brilliant, even so, whatever grounds there are for making merit productive of a future birth, all these do not equal a sixteenth part of the liberation of mind by lovingkindness. The liberation of mind by lovingkindness surpasses them and shines forth, bright and brilliant.

In the two *Metta Suttas* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha states that those who practice radiating the four immeasurables in this life and die “without losing it” are destined for rebirth in a heavenly realm in their next life. In addition, if such a person is a Buddhist disciple and thus

realizes the three marks of existence [impermanence (*aniccā*), selflessness (*anattā*) and unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*)], this disciple will reach *nibbāna*.

In the *Majjhima Nikaya* on the Four Divine Abodes, the Buddha states:

Here a monk dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with lovingkindness, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with lovingkindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility, and without ill will. When the liberation of mind by lovingkindness is developed in this way, no limiting action remains here, nor persists there. Just as a vigorous trumpeter could make himself heard without difficulty in the four quarters, so too, when the liberation of mind by lovingkindness is developed in this way, no limiting action remains there, none persists there. This is the path to the company of Brahma (ultimate god realm).

Again, a monk dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion ... with a mind imbued with altruistic joy ... with a mind imbued with equanimity, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth; so above, below, around, and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with equanimity, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility, and without ill will...

B. Compassion

(*Innate Happiness* – p 4) Happiness or liberation became articulated as the union of wisdom and compassion. This results in a deep **inner peace** that is undisturbed by the events that happen in our lives. “**Wisdom**” is the most difficult element to define or describe. It refers to a direct experiential knowing of the true *nature* of self, mind, and all things, often referred to as “**emptiness**.”²⁴ It is said that emptiness is **ineffable**, beyond words. Yet much has been written about it. Compassion and its partner, lovingkindness, have very specific definitions in Buddhism. **Lovingkindness** is the wish that all beings have happiness and its causes. **Compassion** is the wish that all beings *not* have suffering and its causes. Together they express the desire for all beings to achieve liberation. The liberation of **Buddhahood**, then, is a state of deep inner peace attained through direct experiential knowing of the true nature of things – emptiness – and simultaneously acting out of Great Compassion for all other beings. Pretty simple.

(*Innate Happiness* - pp 28-29) With the cessation of discontent, our *innate happiness* blossoms. There is a deep inner peace with no attachment or aversion and with great lovingkindness and compassion for all. This, above all, is what made the message of the Buddha unique. This was the realization he finally had under the Bodhi tree. We find that much of human motivation, whether or not it is considered to be ethical, is driven by our pursuit of happiness. The founding fathers and mothers of the United States considered it to be a fundamental human right as expressed in the Declaration of Independence. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has also pointed out that it is the common denominator in most human endeavors and at the heart of our religious traditions, whether we are seeking happiness in this life or in some form of afterlife.

²⁴ Empty of sufferings, etc. and their causes; they are specific qualities or characteristics, not a “void”.

But “happiness” should not be confused with “pleasure”. When we pursue pleasure, we are seeking a temporary state of happiness. Happiness is certainly not about money. Studies show that except in cases of extreme poverty, there is no correlation between one’s wealth and one’s happiness beyond a temporary effect from a sufficient increase. The effect of a raise, a promotion, a fancy car, a beautiful home, even an intense orgasm, does not last. Then we are off on the chase after yet another level of achievement to fulfill our endless pursuit of pleasure (and continuously promoted by marketing).

True happiness comes from inner peace, contentment, and satisfaction with our lives. Inner peace best comes from training our mind – learning, experiencing, and abiding in our sense of wellbeing. When you can remain continuously in this state, you experience blissful surrender and true inner peace. This is the goal described as nirvana, the pure lands, or heaven in various traditions. In some it is in the next life; in others it is here and now, “heaven is within” so to speak.

Yet even inner peace by itself is not the ultimate. Happiness for yourself fails to meet the ethical consideration of transcending self for the benefit of others. Thus, ultimate happiness engages an **altruistic intention** to benefit *all* others in also realizing inner peace. We have already established that we are all interdependent. Therefore, we can only achieve ultimate happiness through our intention and actions to benefit everyone ... even, as Jesus said, our enemies. That’s a tough standard ... to put it mildly. But we are all one in a sense – interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent. Only when we consider the common good of all can we achieve our own state of ultimate happiness. As Shantideva said:

All the suffering in the world comes from the desire for our own happiness.

All the happiness in the world comes from the desire for the happiness of others.

How can this be possible? There are over eight billion human beings on this planet, a number that is rapidly increasing. People are starving and dying all over the globe. What can one lone person do? And that does not even begin to consider the gazillion ants and other sentient beings on this planet alone. Fortunately, **interdependence** works in both directions. Not only are we dependent upon others, but also they are dependent upon us. *Anything* that we do to benefit others, even one other, tends to have a beneficial effect that extends in subtle ways to others. In some cases this comes from the chain of cause and effect. We help one, who then helps another, who then ... and so forth. As Gandhi said, “We must be the change we seek.”

(Innate Happiness, p 31) Right Conduct or Actions – built upon universal love and compassion for all. The Buddha taught “for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world.” This also includes no killing, no stealing, not sexual misconduct, no lying, no greed.

(Innate Happiness, p 34) After the death of the Buddha, and perhaps during his life, Buddhists began to emphasize one or the other of two views of the Buddha, both found in the *Pali Canon*.²⁵

²⁵ The Pali Canon, written in a *Sinhala* language is said to have been written down around 100 BCE. Mostly written on palm leaves, which have not survived, there are few remaining prior to about 1800, leaving only historically known literary devices to attempt to age the texts that have survived. The earliest Sanskrit sutras are dated by scholars to about the same time. The earliest existent written texts have been dated to about the beginning of the first millennium, found in the area of Gandhara in current Pakistan/Afghanistan. There were 13 scrolls written on birch bark that were stored in clay jars, now in the British Library, that appear to be part of a Gandharan Canon. Over 200 scrolls and other documents have now been recovered and are in a variety of collections.

He is depicted as both a wise and compassionate human teacher and a cosmic world teacher. These texts were primarily passed on in an oral tradition of memorization and recitation. The Buddha said that he gave his teaching, "for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world."

(Inmate Happiness, p 106) The great master Shabkar said: One with compassion is kind even when angry, one without compassion kills even as he smiles. For one with compassion, even enemies turn into friends, without compassion, even friends turn into enemies. Therefore, all of you, renunciants and householders, cultivate compassion and you will achieve Buddhahood.

Therefore, compassion is the root of liberation because liberation cannot be achieved without compassion.

Section 2: The Four Immeasurables

The Relative:

- Relative: in relation or proportionate to something else; relationship; or compared to
- Lovingkindness and compassion or "skillful means" ... helping others
 - Lovingkindness: The wish that (**action** to help) all beings have "happiness" and its causes (the good – relatively; liberation – ultimately; or "ordinary and supreme")
 - Compassion: The wish (**action** to help) all beings not have "suffering" and its causes (the bad – relatively; also liberation – ultimately; again, "ordinary or supreme")
 - All beings? – "sentient beings"
- East: "sentient" means those that desire "happiness" and do not want "suffering" (how know – mosquito?); basically all visible beings
- West: "sentient" means has senses – seeing, hearing, smelling...
- **The four immeasurables** are:
 1. **Loving-kindness** towards all: the hope that a person will be well; "the wish that all sentient beings, without any exception, be happy."
 2. **Compassion**: the hope that a person's sufferings will diminish; "the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering."
 3. **Joy**: joy in the accomplishments of a person – oneself or another; sympathetic joy; "the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings."
 4. **Equanimity**: learning to accept loss and gain, praise and blame, and success and failure, all with detachment, equally, for oneself and for others. Equanimity is "not to distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal. It is a clear-minded tranquil state of mind - not being overpowered by delusions, mental dullness or agitation."

Introduction – background & context

Apra-mana: immeasurable attitudes

Brahma-vihara: *Brahma* – sublime or divine; *vihara* – abidings (states) or abodes ... sublime attitudes of the gods

- Can be cultivated without end – immeasurable

- Immeasurable like the countless number of sentient beings in multiple universes beyond time and space
- 4 divine abodes, 4 divine emotions, 4 immeasurables, 4 sublime attitudes...
- *Brahmavihara Sutta* – these attitudes make the mind immeasurable like the loving brahma gods
- 4 virtues and meditation practices to cultivate those virtues
 - Lovingkindness – Pali: *metta*, Sanskrit: *maitre* ... the hope that a person will be well
 - Compassion – Pali and Sanskrit: *karuna* ... the hope that a person's sufferings will diminish
 - Joy – Pali and Sanskrit: *mudita* ... joy in the accomplishments of oneself or another (sympathetic joy, rejoicing)
 - Equanimity – Pali: *upekkha*, Sanskrit: *upeksha* ... learning to accept loss and gain, praise and blame, and success and failure, all with detachment, equally for oneself and for others
- Lovingkindness and compassion are hopes for the future
- Joy and equanimity are attitudes about what has already happened ... grounded in right thoughts and right intention
- **May focus on the four Brahma abodes** ... four levels of mental stability (Skt: *dhyana*, Pali: *jhana*) ... the sublime states of mind “like Brahma gods” ... all free of anger and immeasurable because they include all sentient beings *and* have no limit to its intensity:
 - **Love** – the wish for others to be happy
 - Its direct enemy is anger.
 - Its indirect (subtle) enemy is clinging ... too much love for others
 - **Compassion** – the wish for the removal of the suffering of others
 - Its direct enemy is a cruel or harmful attitude.
 - Its indirect enemy is grief ... being overwhelmed by the suffering of others
 - **Sympathetic joy or rejoicing** – being happy at others' prosperity [narrower than other sources]
 - Its direct enemy is jealousy.
 - Its indirect enemy is exultation ... being so excited about their prosperity that one's mind is disturbed.
 - **Equanimity** – being even-minded, even-tempered.
 - Its direct enemy is attachment.
 - Its indirect enemy is indifference ... thinking that each individual is responsible for their karma.
- **Asanga (3rd Century)**
 - **Immeasurable love** is absorbed concentration (*samadhi*) or discriminating awareness (*prajna*, wisdom) that relies on one of the 4 levels of mental stability applied to the thought, “May sentient beings be with happiness”.
 - **Immeasurable compassion** applies to the thought, “May sentient beings be parted from suffering”.
 - **Immeasurable joy** applies to the thought, “May sentient beings never be parted from happiness”.
 - **Immeasurable equanimity** applies to the thought, “May sentient beings be benefited”.
- **Vasubandhu**
 - Sentient beings (desire realm)
 - Lovingkindness – physical happiness

- Compassion – no physical suffering (pain)
- Joy – rejoicing at others' happiness and wish for mental happiness
- Equanimity – sentient beings are equal

Brahmavihara

From **Wikipedia**, the free encyclopedia The **sublime attitudes** are a series of four virtues and Buddhist meditation practices designed to cultivate those virtues. They are also known as the **four "immeasurables"**.

According to the *Metta Sutta*, Shākyamuni Buddha held that cultivation of the four immeasurables has the power to cause the practitioner to be re-born into a Brahma realm. The meditator is instructed to radiate out to all beings in all directions the mental states of: 1) loving-kindness or benevolence, 2) compassion, 3) sympathetic joy, and, 4) equanimity. The four immeasurables are also found in Patañjali's Yoga Sutras a text composed long after the beginning of Buddhism and substantially influenced by Buddhism. These virtues are also highly regarded by Buddhists as powerful antidotes to negative mental states (non-virtues) such as avarice, anger and pride.

Etymology

Brahmavihāra is a term in Pāli and Sanskrit meaning “Brahma abidings”, or “sublime attitudes.” It may be parsed as “Brahma” and “vihāra”; which is often rendered into English as “sublime” or “divine abodes”. They are also called the “four immeasurables” or “the four sublime attitudes (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity)”, and are virtues that people can cultivate endlessly, that is without limits, as good qualities for any Buddhist to possess in good measure. They form a sequence of Buddhist virtues recommended in the *Brahmavihāra Sutta*.

When developed to a high degree in meditation, these attitudes are said to make the mind “immeasurable” and like the mind of the loving *brahmā* (gods).

Exegesis

The four immeasurables are:

1. **Loving-kindness** towards all: the hope that a person will be well; “the wish that all sentient beings, without any exception, be happy.”
2. **Compassion**: the hope that a person's sufferings will diminish; “the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering.”
3. **Joy**: joy in the accomplishments of a person — oneself or another; sympathetic joy; “the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings.”
4. **Equanimity**: learning to accept loss and gain, praise and blame, and success and failure, all with detachment, equally, for oneself and for others. Equanimity is “not to distinguish between friend, enemy or stranger, but regard every sentient being as equal. It is a clear-minded tranquil state of mind - not being overpowered by delusions, mental dullness or agitation.”

Loving-kindness and compassion are both hopes for the future (leading, where possible, to action aimed at realizing those hopes). Joy and equanimity are attitudes to what has already happened, but also with regard to consequences for future action. While these four might be delineated as attitudes to the future or past, they contain the seed of the “present” within their core (as a living embodied practice). This is the essence of the spiritual laws of karma, self-

responsibility, and right thoughts (literally 'right commitments'). A dedicated intention that all beings are in the "here and now", tranquil, happy, in touch with their gifts and accomplishments, and feeling interconnected by that synergy to eschew suffering by abdication.

Brahmavihāra practice in the Visuddhimagga

The four immeasurables are explained in *The Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), written in the fifth century CE by the scholar and commentator Buddhaghosa. They are often practiced by taking each of the immeasurables in turn and applying it to oneself, wishing oneself well (omitted while training oneself in joy), and then to others nearby, and so on to everybody in the world, and to everybody in all universes.

Legacy

Although this form of these ideas has a Buddhist origin, the ideas themselves are in no way sectarian. The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement uses them in public meditation events in Sri Lanka bringing together Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Rudyard Kipling's inspirational poem *If* refers to the idea of *equanimity* in calling triumph and disaster impostors.

The four immeasurables in early Buddhism

In the two *Metta Suttas* of the *Ariguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha states that those who practice radiating the four immeasurables in this life and die "without losing it" are destined for rebirth in a heavenly realm in their next life. In addition, if such a person is a Buddhist disciple and thus realizes the three characteristics of the five aggregates, then after his heavenly life, this disciple will reach nirvana. Even if one is not a disciple, one will still attain the heavenly life, after which, however, one may again be reborn in a hell realm, or as an animal or hungry ghost.

From "The Path of the Bodhisattva"

- ***Bodhicitta - The Mind of Enlightenment***
 - Relative and Ultimate Bodhicitta
 - Relative: (a) altruistic intention ... to become enlightened to benefit all sentient beings; (b) action bodhicitta ... activities to bring about enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings
 - Ultimate Bodhicitta – the fruition: the ultimate state of enlightenment, direct experience of “emptiness”, transcendent wisdom
 - Embodied in the Six *Paramitas* (Perfections): Generosity, ethics, patience, persistence, concentration, & wisdom
- ***The Lotus Sutra*** – similar to Theravada
 - E.g., joy – rejoicing when sentient beings have happiness.
 - But *equanimity* – a state of complete tranquility without immeasurable love, compassion and joy – quiet joy of mental peace.
- ***The Sutra Taught by the Arya Aksha-yamati*** focuses on results in future lives:
 - Love → reborn free of harm
 - Compassion → born with stable roots
 - Joy → born with physical happiness and belief in what is true, as well as supreme mental joy
 - Equanimity → born without being agitated by happiness or unhappiness.
- **Maitreya**

- Although may attain the four attitudes with mind in plane of sensory desires, they will not be “immeasurable”.
- Mind must be in mental stability of one of the four states of mental stability (the Brahma gods).
- **Tsongkapa (early 14th Century)**
 - Bodhisattvas need to practice 4 Immeasurables with the Six *Paramitas* (Six Perfections), not just mental stability, especially wisdom of discriminating awareness (perfection of wisdom – *Prajnaparamita*); otherwise be reborn in god realm
 - Immeasurable attitudes need to have four features to be stable:
 - They must get rid of disharmonious factors – ill-will, cruel or harmful attitude, lack of joy, and both ill-will/longing desire.
 - They must bring on nonconceptual deep awareness.
 - They must bring on focus on beings who do not have happiness, those who have suffering, those who already have happiness, and those who have attraction and aversion to others.
 - They must bring about omniscient awareness to provide the conditions for the Buddhanature of others to ripen and attain enlightenment.
- **Gelug master Detri (late 18th Century) re *Brahma-vihara* – The Four Immeasurables**
 - *Brahma* – Brahma gods or nirvana (enlightened state of a Buddha)
 - *Vihara* – abode or cause
 - Therefore, *Brahma-vihara* could mean the cause of enlightenment
- **Conditions for developing the Four Immeasurable Attitudes**
 - Positive influence of a spiritual teacher
 - Correct understanding of the nature of phenomena and sentient beings (emptiness)
 - Bodhicitta intention
 - Advanced concentration
- **Main variations of Joy and Equanimity**
 - **Joy**
 - Rejoices in others’ happiness
 - Wish for others to have mental happiness
 - Wish for others never to be parted from happiness they already have
 - **Equanimity**
 - Beings that have attraction and revulsion (attachment and aversion) to others
 - Mind that has disturbing emotions (afflictive emotions and mental obscurations) ... own or others’
 - May sentient beings be free of attachment and aversion (in mind of meditator)
 - May sentient beings themselves be free of attachment and aversion.
- **Placement relative to Bodhicitta**
 - As a preliminary to developing Bodhicitta
 - As a reinforcement after having developed Bodhicitta

In the Path of Tantra

- **Longchenpa (14th Century) – Nyingma**
 - Preliminary practice for developing Bodhicitta
 - For beginners, better to begin with equanimity, otherwise the other 3 attitudes will be partial and not extend to others equally.
 - Two forms of each: (a) ordinary mind and (b) ultimate Mind

- **Equanimity** – mind that is equal toward others *and* wish that all others have such an attitude
- **Love** – wish for all beings have better rebirth *and* ultimate happiness of enlightenment
 - More than physical happiness, or mental happiness
- **Compassion** – wish for them to be free from suffering *and* fundamental ignorance
- **Joy** – wish that they never be parted from happiness *and* happiness of enlightenment
- **Practices:**
 - “Aimed” forms similar to others, focus on ordinary mind; friend, enemy, stranger
 - “Unaimed” equanimity – rest in open space of pure awareness (*rigpa*) free of disturbing emotions and concepts
 - “Unaimed” love – rest in equality of open space of pure awareness, extending love equally everywhere
 - “Unaimed” compassion – rest in total absorption of open space of pure awareness, extending into realization inseparable with openness and compassion.
 - “Unaimed” joy – rest in the bliss of open space of pure awareness.
- **Further meditations**
 - To lessen any clinging that might develop (similar to “indirect enemies”)
 - Dissolving the five disturbing emotions into the five wisdoms
 - Hatred/anger → mirror-like wisdom
 - Desire/attachment → discriminating wisdom
 - Jealousy/envy → all-accomplishing wisdom
 - Pride/arrogance → wisdom of equanimity
 - Naivety → Dharmadhatu wisdom
- **Patrul Rinpoche (19th Century)**
 - **Equanimity** – recognize all sentient beings have equally been one’s mother in some previous life
 - **Love** – regard all beings as parents regard their children (with warm-hearted love) ... all want to be happy
 - **Compassion** – see suffering as one would one’s own suffering mother ... others having been one’s mother
 - **Joy** – rejoice in others’ happiness and wish them more ... especially the bliss of enlightenment
- **The Gelugpa order**
 - Equanimity first, but practice Four Immeasurables *after* developing Bodhicitta to reinforce one’s intention.
- **First Panchen Lama**
 - Includes “oneself” in each (not just others)

Section 2: The Second Vow

The heart of ethics in the Path of Altruism is the Bodhisattva Vow. In Part 2, I briefly described the three vows. Previously we looked at the vows of The Path of Individual Liberation, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama summarized as “do good, or at least do no harm.” Our discussion of ethics on The Path of Altruism focuses on the second vow, the Bodhisattva Vow. One form of this vow is, “May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.” This is often included with the refuge vow repeated at the start of or early in a practice session as described in the beginning of Part 4.

A more detailed and poetic expression of the vow is in the form of The Four Great Vows:

However innumerable beings are, I vow to liberate them.
 However inexhaustible delusions are, I vow to extinguish them.
 However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them.
 However incomparable liberation is, I vow to attain it.

There are numerous versions of the Bodhisattva Vow. Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) lists 64 different versions of the vow. Perhaps the most popular version is taken from Shantideva's (circa 700 CE) *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, which is often used for the Bodhisattva Vow ceremony:

Just as all the previous Sugatas, the Buddhas,
 Generated the mind of liberation
 And accomplished all the stages
 Of the *Bodhisattva* training,
 So will I, too, for the sake of all beings,
 Generate the mind of liberation
 And accomplish all the stages
 Of the *Bodhisattva* training.

One favorite verse often repeated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the following, which also comes from *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva:

As long as space endures,
 As long as sentient beings remain,
 May I too remain for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Shantideva's text is based upon the Six Perfections (*Paramitas*): (1) generosity, (2) ethics, (3) patience, (4) persistence, (5) meditative concentration, and (6) wisdom. Both generosity and ethics have to do with ethics on The Path of Altruism. Generosity, of course, means giving. We can give material things, when we have them and they are needed and will help. Or we can give our time, helping others as needed. We can also give through our devotion and practice so that we can help others on their path to liberation. Among the verses that illustrate the ethical commitment of a *Bodhisattva* are these, selected from Shantideva's chapter three:

May I be a guard for those who are protectorless,
 A guide for those who journey on the road;
 For those who wish to go across the water,
 May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.

May I be an isle for those who yearn for landfall,
 And a lamp for those who long for light;
 For those who need a resting place, a bed;
 For all who need a servant, may I be a slave.

May I be the wish-fulfilling jewel, the vase of plenty,
 A word of power, and the supreme remedy.
 May I be the trees of miracles,
 And for every being, the abundant cow.

Like the great earth and the other elements,
 Enduring as the sky itself endures,

For the boundless multitude of living beings,
May I be the ground and vessel of their life.

Thus, for every single thing that lives,
In number like the boundless reaches of the sky,
May I be their sustenance and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bounds of suffering.

Section 3: The Practices of the Four Immeasurables

I introduced the Four Immeasurables in Chapter 8: (1) lovingkindness, (2) compassion, (3) joy and (4) equanimity. They are immeasurable because there are no limits to their expression. In the *sutras*, the Buddha teaches that these practices will bring liberation. So, these are among the most important of all of the practices in Buddhism. There are numerous variations in the practices for each of these four. I have selected examples that are as direct and straight forward among those I have been taught.

From *Innate Happiness* (pp. 123-129): Lovingkindness and Compassion

I introduced the Four Immeasurables in Chapter 8: (1) lovingkindness, (2) compassion, (3) joy and (4) equanimity. They are immeasurable because there are no limits to their expression. In the *sutras*, the Buddha teaches that these practices will bring liberation. So, these are among the most important of all of the practices in Buddhism. There are numerous variations in the practices for each of these four. I have selected examples that are as direct and straight forward among those I have been taught.

Lovingkindness (Metta)

We now turn to the first of the Four Immeasurables. Having established confidence that all beings want happiness and not suffering, we now focus on lovingkindness or *metta* meditation. In Buddhism, the lovingkindness is the wish that all beings have (ultimate) happiness and its causes. Ultimate happiness is the ideal, but of course we also wish that they have relative happiness as well, to the extent that it is not harmful to them or others in some way. This practice focuses on growing our feeling of lovingkindness for all beings, whether human, animal, bird, reptile, fish, insect or other form.

The Buddha said that this practice is the most important!

The Practice of Lovingkindness

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Lovingkindness:

Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Think of someone you love. Bring that *feeling* into your heart. Focus on it and let it grow stronger and stronger. As it grows, it expands throughout your body, filling it entirely. Soon you can no longer contain it and it radiates out to others nearby, then those in the immediate surroundings, then those in the neighborhood, the city, the state, the country, the region of the globe, all sentient beings in and around the globe ... all animate beings. This too becomes so strong that it then radiates out through the

solar system, the galaxy, the universe, and all universes across time and space. Continue meditating in this state until you feel confidence in this lovingkindness for all.

Then *rest* naturally in this confidence without thoughts. *Let go and let be*. Sit in this mental calm as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities to reflect on your wish for liberation for every being, no matter who or what they are. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

Compassion (Tonglen)

The next of the Four Immeasurables is compassion. It is based on our mutual *interdependence*. In Buddhism compassion is the wish that all sentient beings *not have* suffering and its causes. It complements lovingkindness so that together we do not want beings to suffer, and we do want them to have happiness. No “bad,” all “good.” We apply these principles in all of our actions, habituating our behavior in this way until it becomes natural. We wouldn’t even think of doing it any other way. It changes our worldview. According to the Dalai Lama,

The first beneficiary of compassion is always oneself. When compassion, or warm heartedness, arises in us and our focus shifts away from our own narrow self-interest, it is as if we open an inner door. It reduces fear, boosts confidence and brings us inner strength. By reducing distrust, it opens us to others and brings us a sense of connection to others, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

This next practice combines lovingkindness and compassion. It is called *Tonglen* – giving and taking. It can be done whenever you see discontent or suffering.

The Practice of Compassion

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Compassion:

Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Think of someone you know who is suffering, whether due to pain, mental anguish or some other form. Put yourself in their place. Feel their suffering. At the same time *know* that they do not want this suffering. They just want it to go away! Imagine their suffering as a thick, black cloud clogging their mind. Breathe it in and down to your heart where it is instantly transformed into pure, warm, white light. Breathe that out sending it back to them as lovingkindness and compassion to relieve their suffering. Repeat it over and over with each breath until you *feel* that they are no longer suffering.²⁶ If you have time, continue with another being and so forth.

²⁶ As with prayer, many do not believe that such actions are really beneficial. H.H. the Dalai Lama says that he does not know whether it benefits the other person, but it clearly benefits the person doing the practice. There is some research that supports a small benefit to others, but that is not yet conclusive. The key is to keep in mind that this practice is for training *your* mind.

At the end of the session *relax, let go and let be*. Sit in mental and physical stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities to practice compassion for others. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

The next of the Four Immeasurables is joy. Some translate this as *sympathetic joy*. There are two forms – relative and ultimate. In the first case we are indeed sympathetic to the joy of someone else, whether they graduated from school, got a new job or promotion, won the big game or whatever success they may have had. We are not jealous or envious of their joy, only sympathetic. The second form relates to liberation itself. It is the wish that all beings achieve liberation. It is often helpful to start with the first form and then move to the second.

Joy

The next of the Four Immeasurables is joy. Some translate this as *sympathetic joy*. There are two forms – relative and ultimate. In the first case we are indeed sympathetic to the joy of someone else, whether they graduated from school, got a new job or promotion, won the big game or whatever success they may have had. We are not jealous or envious of their joy, only sympathetic. The second form relates to liberation itself. It is the wish that all beings achieve liberation. It is often helpful to start with the first form and then move to the second.

The Practice of Joy

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Joy: Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Think of someone you know who has recently experienced some form of success that also made you feel good for them. Reflect on their happiness at having done so. Feel your own sympathy for their experience. Let the feeling grow until it is strong. Then think of another and another. Then move to someone for whom you did not feel quite so good at their success. Finish with someone towards whom you may have felt a bit of jealousy or envy at their success. Continue working with those visualizations until you feel a strong sense of sympathetic joy for their success.

Then switch to the wish for each of these beings to attain liberation. Imagine them in a state of inner peace and happiness in which they are also helping others achieve that same peace and happiness. Continue with this contemplation for each of those for whom you did the first form of the practice and you gain confidence in your feeling of joy for them and all sentient beings who will benefit from their success!

Conclude by resting naturally in this confidence now without thoughts. *Let go and let be*. Sit in stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities for sympathetic joy or your wish for the joy of liberation for every being, no matter who or what they are. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

Equanimity

Equanimity can mean “mental calm”, but it also means that we treat every sentient being equally, the focus here. We don’t have favorites or those we reject or ignore. As a *Bodhisattva* we wish every being to achieve liberation. One of the ways that Buddhism stresses this point is by stating that with countless reincarnations, we have undoubtedly had every other sentient being as our mother in some previous life. If by chance you have doubts about literal reincarnation, consider it as a metaphor, which can be just as effective. In either case when we think that every being has been our mother (assuming that you had a loving relationship with your mother, otherwise you might substitute another being with whom you have had a loving relationship), it changes the way you think about and treat other sentient beings. This includes not only humans, but all forms of beings such as animals, birds, fish, insects and so forth.

Alternately, consider that every sentient being is a buddha, even though they may not realize that due to their own obscurations and habitual tendencies. How does this make you feel when you try to swat that mosquito? Do you really want to *kill* a buddha? Or what about the insects splattered across your windshield during a road trip in your car? Hopefully that was not intended, but do you feel some regret for having done that nevertheless? Or have you been indifferent?²⁷ As I said, this practice changes the way you see the world.

So what is the actual practice for equanimity? Besides contemplating the *idea* of equanimity, there are two practices frequently used for this purpose: (1) equalizing self and other and (2) exchanging self and other. Below they are incorporated into one practice session. But they may be done separately if you prefer.

The Practice of Equanimity

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Equanimity:

Equalizing Self and Other –

Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Out of that stillness think how you and all other sentient beings want happiness and peace. Through beginningless lifetimes we have all been stuck in *samsara* because of our fundamental ignorance and the resulting focus on ourselves. I want peace and happiness. They want peace and happiness. We are all equal in this regard. Think specifically of one particular individual, someone you are close to. *Feel* what that is like for them. Then think of another and another. Each wants peace and happiness.

²⁷ I exaggerate slightly here. The Vinaya gives rules for killing different levels of beings, with insects low on the list. Furthermore, intention is critical. And finally, consider that the “rules” apply to beings that can experience happiness and suffering. Scientists are not sure whether insects (specifically mosquitoes, according to H.H. the Dalai Lama) are capable of experiencing happiness as the brain structures for that experience are not present. Still, there may be other ways for that experience that are not currently known to us. Be kind.

When you have exhausted your list of individuals, think of groups of others you do not know, e.g., neighbors, community members, state residents, country residents, global residents.

Then think of any “enemies” you may have or persons that you dislike or disagree with for any reason at all. They too want happiness and peace. Think of those enemies you know personally, those you know of but not personally, those who are members of groups with which you disagree or dislike and so forth. Continue until you are confident in knowing that all want happiness and peace and do not want suffering.

Exchanging Self and Other –

Now repeat this pattern of thought, but actually put yourself in the place of the other person or imagine yourself as a member of that group. Walk in their shoes as they walk in yours. *Feel* what they must feel in their shoes. Still they want happiness and peace. So do you. May they too have this precious opportunity for peace and happiness. Again, continue until you are confident in knowing that all want happiness and peace and do not want suffering.

Relax naturally into mental calm, peace, and contentment in confidence without thoughts. *Let go and let be.* Sit in this stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings.
(3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities to reflect on your wish for liberation for every being, no matter who or what they are. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

The practices of the Four Immeasurables can also be combined into a single session. It is usually best to begin with a focus on just one. But once you become familiar with the practice for each of the four, they may easily be combined into a single session taking each in turn if you have sufficient time to do so. These are *wonderful* and *important* practices. Please *enjoy* doing them!

A Concise Variation

Meditation – Shamata (single-pointed calm abiding) and Vipassana (analytical or contemplative)

- **Lovingkindness** – happiness for spouse, partner or close friend ... happiness for family (one at a time) ... happiness for friends (one at a time) ... happiness for strangers ... happiness for enemies ... happiness for all Americans ... happiness for all people on earth ... happiness for all non-human sentient beings ... happiness for all sentient beings in the universe(s) across time and space ... rest in natural state (shamata)
- **Compassion** – no suffering for spouse, partner or close friend ... no suffering for family (one at a time) ... no suffering for friends (one at a time) ... no suffering for strangers ... no suffering for enemies ... no suffering for all Americans ... no suffering for all people on earth ... no suffering for all non-human sentient beings ... no suffering for all no suffering in the universe(s) across time and space ... rest in natural state (shamata)
- **Joy** – rejoice for spouse, partner or close friend ... rejoice for family (one at a time) ... rejoice for friends (one at a time) ... rejoice for strangers ... rejoice for enemies ... rejoice for all Americans ... rejoice for all people on earth ... rejoice for all non-human sentient

beings ... rejoice for all sentient beings in the universe(s) across time and space ... rest in natural state (shamata)

- **Equanimity** – equality for spouse, partner or close friend ... equality for family (one at a time) ... equality for friends (one at a time) ... equality for strangers ... equality for enemies ... equality for all Americans ... equality for all people on earth ... equality for all non-human sentient beings ... equality for all sentient beings in the universe(s) across time and space ... rest in natural state (shamata)

Section 3: The Six Perfections

Six Perfections: Shantideva's Bodhisattva's Way of Life (verses 25-30)

Generosity, ethics, patience, diligent effort, meditative concentration, and wisdom. Each quality is truly transcendent (*paramita*), when (1) it destroys its negative counterpart (e.g. generosity destroys miserliness), (2) it is reinforced with wisdom (beyond “subject, object, action”), (3) it can result in fulfillment of all beings’ aspirations (esp. liberation), and (4) it can bring others to the full maturity of their potential (ideally, enlightenment). Think of a 6-spoked wheel, all are interdependent, not like a ladder one step at a time.

- 25. If it is necessary to give away even one's body [one of the extremes found in the path of the bodhisattva] while aspiring to enlightenment, what need is there to mention external objects? Therefore, practicing generosity without hope of reciprocation or positive karmic results [altruism] is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *generosity* on the path.

Generosity is the expression of altruism, free from attachment. If you have wealth, the first thought is to give it (all) away to the Three Jewels and to help those in need of food, clothing, and shelter. Use it to carry out altruistic deeds to benefit others until you achieve liberation. Buddha said wealth is okay, depending on how it was earned (ethical, fair, helpful to others) and how it is used (e.g., to benefit others). There are 3 kinds of generosity: (1) material giving, given with pure intention, (2) to save life or protect from fear (e.g., catch and release insects or pacify feuds), and (3) to give dharma (teaching, sharing, even if not in dharma terms) ... not about proselytizing. The essence of generosity is nonattachment. Transcendent generosity is free of concepts of any substantial reality of giving, a recipient, and the act of giving.

- 26. If, lacking ethical conduct, one fails to achieve one's own purpose, the wish to accomplish others' purpose is laughable. Therefore, guarding ethics devoid of aspiration for worldly existence is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *ethics* on the path. There are various sets of vows or commitments: Pratimoksha vows, Bodhisattva vows, Tantric vows. The Pratimoksha vows begin with refuge vows: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; 3 prohibitions, 3 prescriptions, 5 lay vows (or 10 non-virtuous actions to avoid and 20 virtuous actions [see **notes**]). There are also monastic vows. The Bodhisattva vows focus primarily on the 18 root and branch vows of bodhisattvas (won't cover here), especially “to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings”. The tantric vows include 14 Root Downfalls, 25 Branch Samayas, 8 Mother Tantra Vows, individual samaya commitments for particular practices, and so forth. It requires discipline (ethics) to help others. We must give up “strong” attachment and desire, i.e., the Middle Way. Ethics were the first part of the Buddha’s training, even before meditation. Perfect discipline is to keep the vows in a pure way with constant mindfulness without conceit or pride, i.e., keeping a peaceful, self-controlled, and altruistic mind always and all ways.

27. **To Bodhisattvas who desire the wealth [joys] of virtue, all those who do harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore, cultivating patience devoid of hostility is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to practice *patience* on the path. Three kinds: (1) bear without anger whatever harm people may do to you, (2) endure hardships you may experience for the sake of the dharma without sadness, and (3) face without fear the profound meaning of the dharma and the boundless qualities of the Three Jewels. In the **first**, bear without anger: e.g., Garchen Rinpoche – Chinese prison 20 years; karmic results(?), burning up those effects; doing you a kindness (a lesson); do not seek revenge or bear even the slightest grudge; person doing you harm may be due to their own karma so feel compassion for them; at ultimate level, there is no *inherent* person being harmed, harming, or harm being done, transcend those concepts. **Second**, enduring hardships: illness, heat/cold, hunger/thirst ... short term; help purify actions, help achieve Buddhahood, accept them with joy. **Third**, deep inner courage to work out of love and compassion for the altruistic benefit of others. We *all* have Buddhature. In the end, dedicate your merit to them all.
28. **Even hearers [shravakas – monastics, leity] and solitary realizers [pratyekabuddhas – yogis and yoginis], who accomplish only their own welfare, strive as if putting out a fire on their heads. Seeing this, taking up diligent effort—the source of good qualities—for the sake of all beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *diligence, joyous effort* on the path. Three types: (1) “armorlike diligence” is joyous courage and fortitude; (2) “diligence in action” is practice of the six perfections (now) with great joy for study, contemplation and meditation; (3) “diligence that cannot be stopped” is insatiable and unremitting energy to work for the benefit of others. These are the opposites of laziness, faint-heartedness, and negligence. It takes a strong commitment! It takes time and effort. You need to consider what you are willing to give up in your life of comfort and ease ... for the benefit of others. It may help to reflect on impermanence and death; we don't know when or how that might happen. We cannot delay.
29. **Having understood that disturbing emotions are destroyed by insight possessed with tranquil abiding, to cultivate meditative concentration [shamata] which perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply the union of calm abiding (shamata) and profound insight (vipassana) on the path to liberation. The four jhanas are basic shamata or shamata with signs (object of meditation; four formless absorptions or higher jhanas or shamata without signs or no “object” of meditation (usually a focus on the mind itself or the nature of mind); “insight” refers to vipassana (basic insight into self and other phenomena, advanced insight into mind and the nature of mind or “emptiness”. This may be appearance-emptiness – lack of inherent existence, luminous-emptiness – Buddhature, bliss-emptiness – transcendent bliss or clear light, or awareness-emptiness – pure awareness itself. But the key here is the union of calm abiding and profound insight (one taste). First, we calm the mind, then we contemplate “emptiness” (self, phenomena, mind ... nature of mind).
30. **If one lacks wisdom, it is impossible to attain perfect enlightenment through the [other] five perfections. Thus, cultivating skillful means [the first 5 perfections] with the wisdom [6th perfection, vipassana or insight meditation] that does not discriminate among the three spheres [here – subject, object, action] is the bodhisattvas' practice.** [How to apply *transcendent wisdom* to the path. Paramita means transcendent or “gone to the other shore”. First, we learn by listening and reading until we know the words and their meaning. Then we contemplate what we have learned, the provisional or relative meaning and the definitive or

ultimate meanings until we gain confidence in our understanding. Next we meditate until we experience the transcendent or experiential understanding of the teachings, especially those on emptiness. Finally, we integrate them into our being, everyday life, fully and completely, including boundless love and compassion for all beings and the rest of the Four Immeasurables (joy and equanimity).]

From Innate Happiness

The practices of the *Six Perfections* help us overcome the “suffering” of these “realms”. In the process of practicing meditation and Pure View, you transform these poisons into wisdoms. We find these matched in the Five Buddha Families, which will be discussed later.

The Second Vow

The heart of ethics in the Path of Altruism is the Bodhisattva Vow. In Part 2, I briefly described the three vows. Previously we looked at the vows of The Path of Individual Liberation, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama summarized as “do good, or at least do no harm.” Our discussion of ethics on The Path of Altruism focuses on the second vow, the Bodhisattva Vow. One form of this vow is, “May I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.” This is often included with the refuge vow repeated at the start of or early in a practice session as described in the beginning of Part 4. A more detailed and poetic expression of the vow is in the form of The Four Great Vows:

However innumerable beings are, I vow to liberate them.
 However inexhaustible delusions are, I vow to extinguish them.
 However immeasurable the dharmas are, I vow to master them.
 However incomparable liberation is, I vow to attain it.

There are numerous versions of the Bodhisattva Vow. Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) lists 64 different versions of the vow. Perhaps the most popular version is taken from Shantideva’s (circa 700 CE) *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, which is often used for the Bodhisattva Vow ceremony:

Just as all the previous Sugatas, the Buddhas,
 Generated the mind of liberation
 And accomplished all the stages
 Of the *Bodhisattva* training,
 So will I, too, for the sake of all beings,
 Generate the mind of liberation
 And accomplish all the stages
 Of the *Bodhisattva* training.

One favorite verse often repeated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the following, which also comes from *Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life* by Shantideva:

As long as space endures,
 As long as sentient beings remain,
 May I too remain for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Shantideva’s text is based upon the Six Perfections (*Paramitas*): (1) generosity, (2) ethics, (3) patience, (4) persistence, (5) meditative concentration, and (6) wisdom. Both generosity and ethics have to do with ethics on The Path of Altruism. Generosity, of course, means giving. We can give material things, when we have them and they are needed and will help. Or we can give our time, helping

others as needed. We can also give through our devotion and practice so that we can help others on their path to liberation. Among the verses that illustrate the ethical commitment of a *Bodhisattva* are these, selected from Shantideva's chapter three:

May I be a guard for those who are protectorless,
A guide for those who journey on the road;
For those who wish to go across the water,
May I be a boat, a raft, a bridge.

May I be an isle for those who yearn for landfall,
And a lamp for those who long for light;
For those who need a resting place, a bed;
For all who need a servant, may I be a slave.

May I be the wish-fulfilling jewel, the vase of plenty,
A word of power, and the supreme remedy.
May I be the trees of miracles,
And for every being, the abundant cow.

Like the great earth and the other elements,
Enduring as the sky itself endures,
For the boundless multitude of living beings,
May I be the ground and vessel of their life.

Thus, for every single thing that lives,
In number like the boundless reaches of the sky,
May I be their sustenance and nourishment
Until they pass beyond the bounds of suffering.

Ask Khenchen Drimed Dawa or your other lama to request taking the Bodhisattva Vow.

The Practices of the Six Perfections

The main practices on The Path of Altruism are called the Six Perfections (Six *Paramitas*): generosity, ethics, patience, persistence, concentration (*shamata*), and wisdom (*vipassana*). The classic text on these practices is Shantideva's (8th c.) *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. According to legend, Shantideva was a bit of a slacker when it came to his practice and his fellow monks looked for a way to get rid of him (not very Buddhist, but sometimes it is best not to question some of the details in these stories). They set up a challenge for him to give a teaching or leave. Then they built a very high throne for him to sit upon. Unable to climb up he touched the throne and it shrank down to a size easy for him to get up on. Once seated, he asked the monks if he should give a teaching on something that had been taught before or something new. They requested the latter and he gave the beloved teaching of this famous text. Afterwards he left the stunned sangha and set out on his own.

Another fundamental concept from the Path of Altruism is that of the *two accumulations*. The two are *merit* and *wisdom*. In terms of the Six Perfections, **merit** refers to the first five (often called "skillful means"), while wisdom refers to the sixth. Contrary to what the term implies, you do not "accumulate" a specific amount or number of these practices. Rather, the accumulation is done in terms of accomplishments. These are seen through your progression in the ten *bhumis*, which will

be described in the wisdom chapter. For now, it is sufficient to be aware that the concept of accumulation is inherent in these practices ... for the benefit of all beings.

In many ways the Six Perfections are another way of framing other teachings given by the Buddha. So while they are “new” from one view, they are based on very traditional teachings as well. Let’s examine each of the components.

1 - The Perfection of Generosity

There are many potential forms of **generosity**. The essence of this as the first of these perfections has to do with giving away or letting go. When we get caught up in our attachments, we tend to hold onto things, strengthening our ego or self and enhancing our discontent or suffering. So generosity helps us to let go of these attachments, and thus our ego-clinging as well.

Generosity may be viewed from several perspectives. One is that to pursue a spiritual practice based on altruistic consideration of others, you must also practice generosity. There is a sense of selflessness. You can, of course, give money or other resources. In the East, Buddhism was dependent upon the generosity of the population, particularly the wealthy. In the West, although there are certainly examples of great material giving, many practitioners are just getting by financially and may not be in a position to give a great deal. Consequently, many Buddhist organizations struggle to get by, often supported exclusively by volunteers. Even supporting an unpaid lama can be difficult. According to the understanding of karma, those who have much have been blessed by their previous generosity. They will continue to receive such blessings through their continuing generosity. But it is the *intention* that that is the most important part of karma, not the amount.

A second form of giving is that done by the lamas, giving dharma. They give us the teachings, recite prayers, and blessings. These are given freely. Most do not charge for these teachings. And even though dharma centers need to request donations in order to cover the costs of their operations, nearly all explain that “no one will be turned away for lack of funds.”

Finally, there is what is called “giving protection from fear.” *The Words of My Perfect Teacher* explains that this means helping others in difficulty. While it could refer to material giving as described above, the intention here is other forms of protection such as safety or companionship. Within the tradition of not killing, a Buddhist will also sometimes buy live animals, fish, birds or other creatures to release them instead of allowing them to be killed for food or sacrifice as an act of generosity.

As a practice we can engage in any of these forms of giving. Below I have included a practice of mentally dedicating your body, life and wealth to benefit others.

2 - The Perfection of Ethics

Ethics is avoiding negative actions and engaging in positive actions for the benefit of others. Following the Three Trainings model for this text, I have already discussed the Path of Altruism’s view of ethics – do good, or at least not harm, for the benefit of all beings. This is none other than *generosity*. Thus, for this meditation we use the ethics of the Bodhisattva Vow in the form of a contemplative meditation on generosity. Keep in mind that the focus is on the act of generosity, although the benefit is also relevant.

The Practice of Generosity & Ethics (Combined)

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Giving:

Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Reflect on your body, life and wealth to get a clear understanding of all that might be included here. Imagine each thing in some detail. Then pray that someday you will be free to give them away, with no attachment whatsoever, with the pure intention that they will be of benefit for the liberation of other sentient beings. Continue until you feel confident that you will someday be able to give in this way.

Conclude by resting naturally in this confidence without thoughts. *Let go and let be.* Sit in stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities for giving what you can or imagining that someday you could for the benefit of every being. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

3 - The Perfection of Patience

There is little doubt that we could all benefit from more patience in our lives. Whether we experience a flash of anger at being wronged, the desire for the latest, greatest “toy,” or some other immediate gratification, we tend to be a very *impatient* society. Instead, we should always be humble, treat *everyone* with dignity and respect, lovingkindness and compassion.

One of the forms of impatience that I see often in my students is to make progress in their practice. “Khenpo, [such and such] happened! Is that a sign?” Sadly, the answer is often, “No, just keep practicing.” Patience and the next perfection – persistence – are the most common instructions that I give, especially to beginners. It took the Buddha over six years to achieve liberation. It took the great *Mahasiddhas* twelve or more years, often after many years of training, to achieve liberation. It takes many repetitions to rewire your brain. *Practice patience.* Here is a simple meditation on patience to help in your daily life, as well as your practice.

The Practice of Patience

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Patience: Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Reflect on a time when you have been impatient with yourself or others. Re-imagine that experience and your impatience at that time. Once you have a clear experience, imagine yourself in the same situation responding with great patience and control. Continue until you feel confident that you will be able to respond with patience the next time you face this situation. If you have time, continue with another experience of impatience in your life.

Conclude by resting naturally in this confidence without thoughts. *Let go and let be.* Sit in stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, look for opportunities to show patience. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

4 - The Perfection of Persistence (Joyful Effort)

As noted above, patience and persistence often go together, especially when it comes to progress in your practice. But this is often true in other life situations as well. To better grasp the meaning of this perfection, consider another way of understanding it – *joyful effort*. It is more than just working away at it. We tend to give up on things that we don't like. Or at least we rarely do our best at them. So part of the task here is to reframe our perspective. This meditation is designed to help reframe your view of the effort involved. But be assured, it does involve effort! It took the greatest yogis of all time many years. So, too, should we expect it to take us an extended period of time. Patrul Rinpoche describes it as "diligence that cannot be stopped." Nevertheless, it is important to enjoy that experience and to *want* to make the effort. It is possible to achieve liberation in *this* lifetime.

Persistence is also about dealing with obstacles that get in the way of our practice. His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche explained it this way:

Obstacles can arise from good as well as bad circumstances, but they should never deter or overpower you. Be like the earth, which supports all living creatures indiscriminately, without distinguishing good from bad. The earth is simply there. Your practice should be strengthened by the difficult situations you encounter, just as the bonfire in a strong wind is not blown out, but blazes even brighter.

Or you may recall the saying, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." Or another of my favorites, "Go on anyway; it all depends on those who go on anyway." Whatever inspires you to go on anyway, remember that *joyful effort cannot be stopped*.

The Practice of Persistence (Joyful Effort)

Intention: I do this practice for the benefit of all sentient beings (*or other personal intention*).

Recite: I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha most excellent, in order to enable all sentient beings to attain liberation. (3X)

Persistence: Settle into stillness of body, speech and mind. Reflect on your commitment to your practice. Do you ensure that there is time to practice *every* day? What things do you let get in the way? How much *joy* do you experience in your practice? How strong is that as a motivator for you? Are you so *compelled* to practice that it is often difficult to stop? If not, how would that feel? Imagine making a joyful effort every day and finding time to do even more until your whole life is your practice. Continue until you feel confident in your desire to make that happen with joy and devotion.

Conclude by resting naturally in this confidence without thoughts. *Let go and let be*. Sit in stillness as long as you can.

Dedication: By the merit of this practice may I attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. (3X)

Post-meditation: Throughout the day, make a joyful effort to reinforce your commitment to practice. And continue to remain mindful of all that you think, say, and do.

PART 12: A Concise Look at the Philosophical Views

Section 1

The Buddha, Mind Only, Buddhanature, Mahayana, Vajrayana (various views)

First, we need to understand “emptiness” and how the term has evolved and used in Buddhist traditions. My general view is that it is an unfortunate choice for the meaning that is generally applied in Buddhism. The word in English means “containing nothing”. That appears to me to have caused and continues to cause confusion among students, particularly in the West, regarding its meaning.

The Buddha rarely used the term, and his most common usage when he did related primarily to a *context*, not a philosophical principle. Bhikkhu Analayo explains it as follows: “present experience is empty of what has been left behind and not empty of what is still there”. If your mind is focused on object A, it will be “empty” of object B. Similarly, if your mind is focused on object B, it will be empty of object A. The Buddha does *not* describe emptiness from a philosophical view as evolved after the life of the Buddha, commonly referred to as “the way things *are*” vs. our common experiences of “the way things *appear*”. This philosophical view is most commonly applied to impermanence or change (except for the principle itself), no innate “self” (particularly not a “soul”), or a philosophical view of “the way things are”. The Buddha’s use of emptiness in practice is that you focus your mind on one thing at a time and it is “empty” of everything else, especially when you are truly “focused” on that one thing.

Another example that I like to use is near his death, when he gives the instruction to (Shariputra?) that eventually you have to even give up on “emptiness”. It is just another concept with multiple meanings and is not helpful the way that it is most often described. But it has become a dominant topic in Buddhism, particularly in philosophical views, which brings up another instruction from the Buddha. He gave instructions strongly opposed to “philosophical views”, referring to them as a “tangle of views” and problematic complexifications (my word, not his) to those seeking true liberation.

A: Path of Individual Liberation:

Introduction to the Stages of Development

Notes from Innate Happiness 3rd Edition (2024)

Having previously touched on the teachings of the historical Buddha, we now move into the main schools of thought regarding Buddhism that developed following the death and final nirvana (*paranirvana*) of Shakyamuni Buddha. I have mentioned some of these previously as they tie directly back to the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Buddha himself appears to have been very much a pragmatist. As previously described, he even refused to answer the big philosophical questions by maintaining a “Noble Silence.” But with the passing of the Buddha, differences of opinion gradually emerged. These differences showed up in several Indian philosophical schools. Of these, the most notable were the *Shravakans*, *Cittamatrans*, and the *Madhyamikas*. Don’t be overwhelmed by the names. You will get used to them.

The key focus of these schools was on the understanding of *emptiness*. There are different descriptions of this concept, which is associated with *transcendent wisdom* and is therefore beyond

any accurate definition or description in words. Nevertheless, countless volumes have been composed over the centuries to do exactly that, or in some cases to say why it cannot be done.

The wisdom view of the Path of Individual Liberation may be characterized as “**appearance-emptiness**.” The focus is on the emptiness of all appearances, commonly divided into “self” and “other.” The Buddha defined emptiness as “the lack of inherent existence.” But what does this mean? How are we to understand this in terms of Buddhism?

Some background in the views of the main schools and the evolution of thought regarding *emptiness* can be very beneficial when doing the actual practices. So here is my humble attempt to give an overview of their positions based primarily on the excellent text, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness* by Khenpo Tsultrim.

The text presents a progression of increasing subtle understanding of *emptiness* in five stages:

1. Shravaka stage (monastics)
2. Cittamatra stage (Mind Only)
3. Rangtong Svatantrika Madhyamaka stage
4. Rangtong Prasangika Madhyamaka stage
5. Shentong Yogacarya Madhyamaka stage

The original teachings of the Buddha focused on the Middle Way of the path between the extremes of indulgence and asceticism. But later, the Buddha taught that *emptiness* meant “empty of any intrinsically existing nature.” That is, things are not *self-existent*. Phenomena do not exist independent of other causes and conditions. This is based on the principles of **impermanence** (things change) and “**dependent arising**” (interdependence). *Emptiness* and dependent arising are held to have the same meaning. Things are empty of inherent existence because they are interdependent.

The teachings of the *Madhyamaka* (Middle Way school) teach the Middle Way of *emptiness* free of the two extremes of nihilism (nothingness or no life after death) and eternalism (permanence or an eternal soul after death). The *emptiness* of the *Madhyamaka* is expressed by Nagarjuna in terms of four extremes: *emptiness* is not a thing, it is not no-thing (nothing), it is not both, and it is not neither. Yet another expression of *emptiness* is that the *emptiness* of mind is vast and open like space. These will be explained in the Path of Altruism and the Path of Great Perfection respectively.

The Indian schools differentiated between two kinds of truth – ultimate and relative. **Ultimate truth** was *transcendent* (non-conceptual) *wisdom*; and **relative truth** was everything else, i.e., all concepts, labels and so forth regarding the dharma. The ultimate truth was considered absolute, whereas relative truth was provisional, that is, its “truth” depended upon the people, circumstances or context. So relative truth may or may not apply in other contexts. Since everything that can be explained in words is in some way *relative*, it can also be argued that *all* texts and teachings are forms of relative truth and only *direct experience* can be ultimate truth itself.

Applied to the Two Truths, *emptiness* refers to ultimate truth and *dependent arising* refers to relative truth. Echoing Nagarjuna, founder of the Middle Way school of thought, Tsongkapa, founder of the Gelugpa school of the Dalai Lamas in Tibet, warns that complete certainty about *emptiness* and *dependent arising* is very rare. Conventional thoughts can be mistaken as an ultimate level, even though they may not necessarily be “wrong” at a conventional level. At the same time,

we cannot ignore that we still need to make moral choices in this conventional world. Therefore, relative truth is still important. In fact, we cannot even discuss ultimate truth without using conventional concepts and labels. In other words, our understanding of ultimate truth is dependent upon our use of *relative truth* to attempt to describe it, limited as that effort may be.

B. Path of Altruism: The Bodhisattva Path

It is helpful here to differentiate between “wisdom” and “insight”, as the terms are frequently used interchangeably, with wisdom being the more common in Mahayana and Tantra forms of Buddhism. However, the words in English do have differences: (1) *wisdom* means a *cognitive* understanding, the approach used primarily by the various Buddhist philosophical schools that evolved over time, whereas (2) *insight* refers to an *intuitive* understanding, based on our experience, more commonly used by yogis, and the Buddha. At the same time, philosophical views also evolved towards a “transcendent” view, generally articulated as being *nonconceptual*, while mostly explaining it conceptually!

Wisdom on the Path of Altruism is firmly grounded in the teachings of the Buddha or some of his closest disciples (*sutras*). Nevertheless, there is some evolution in the conceptual explanations and texts used to explain this wisdom. There are three forms of this literature that have been collected into the Path of Altruism. The first is Buddhature, the second is Transcendent Wisdom, and the third is the Middle Way. We will examine each of these in a summary fashion, as the literature is quite extensive. For a householder, that level of depth is not only unnecessary, but can be an obstacle to your understanding and practice. Nevertheless, an in-depth investigation into the ideas embedded in these teachings can facilitate greater insight for those willing and able to take the time and make the effort. But that is not our level of focus in this text.

1 – Buddhature: Uttarantra

In the “First Turning of the Wheel”, the Buddha taught the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. In the “Second Turning of the Wheel” he taught emptiness – empty of inherent existence and dependent arising or interdependence of all things. In the “Third Turning of the Wheel”, he taught Buddhature – *luminous-emptiness*. The text referenced here is dated to the time of Asanga (ca. 50-200 CE). However, it is based on statements in earlier sources going back to the Pali Canon of the Path of Individual Liberation.

All sentient beings are endowed with this luminous emptiness. Based on this and the Transcendent Wisdom literature, presented below, two interpretations emerged. The first is that all beings have the *seed* for becoming a buddha. The second is that all beings are already a buddha but have not realized that they are. In both cases they exist in *samsara* due to their afflictive emotions and mental obscurations (known as the two obscurations).

So what is **luminous-emptiness**? In the Path of Individual Liberation we saw that the Buddha defined emptiness as the lack of inherent self-existence. Nothing exists except in dependence upon other causes and conditions. There is nothing that exists permanently on its own. Furthermore, we did meditations to develop direct insight into this as the true nature of things.

In the *Uttarantra* the Buddha, in the form of *Maitreya* – the Buddha of the Future, expands upon this view by adding the adjective “luminous.” This is often described as “clarity.” In other words, is this clear? Thus, it is clarity of understanding. The difference then can be understood as a *direct understanding* as opposed to an intellectual understanding – the **emptiness of emptiness**. This is not to say that those on the Path of Individual Liberation only understood emptiness

conceptually. But it does appear to have been a serious enough issue to warrant additional clarification (no pun intended).

While the innate nature of luminous emptiness is the most critical contribution of the *Uttaratantra*, it also elaborates on views of the Buddha, the dharma, the *sangha*, liberation, the qualities of Buddhahood, and buddha activities.

2 - Transcendent Wisdom: *Prajnaparamita*

The Transcendent Wisdom (literally the “Perfection of Wisdom”) literature may be the second major contribution to the understanding of wisdom in the Path of Altruism, although dating covers a range of several centuries, so it is hard to know the order with certainty. This is a body of literature dating from as early as 100 BCE. The best known is the *Heart Sutra* (see below), which is only 14 or 25 lines (two versions – we will use the short version here) in Sanskrit and is often included in daily recitations in monasteries. There is also a set of eight other main texts, the best known being the *Diamond Sutra*.

The *Heart Sutra* contains the famous lines “form is emptiness, emptiness is form; emptiness is not other than form, form is not other than emptiness.” It continues through an extensive list of characteristics of what emptiness is *not*, including many of the core principles of Buddhist teaching²⁸. Using this *via negativa* approach, it attempts to give a concise sense of emptiness without saying what it is. The basic idea is that the wisdom of emptiness transcends anything that can be said about it. Our wisdom comes from a direct understanding. I have inserted a few brief notes to facilitate a basic understanding.

Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion, realizing perfect wisdom, clearly saw that the five aggregates²⁹ are emptiness, thus transcending all suffering.

O Shariputra [Shariputra is one of the Buddha’s principle disciples.], form is emptiness, emptiness is form; form is not other than emptiness, emptiness is not other than form. The same is true with feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness. [This illustrates our lack of inherent or innate self-existence independent of each other.]

O Shariputra, all phenomena are emptiness; they are not produced nor destroyed, not defiled nor pure, not deficient nor complete. [Thus they transcend traditional views of existence.]

Therefore, in emptiness there is no form, no feelings, no perceptions, no mental formations, and no consciousness. [Our six senses.]

There is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind. There is no seeing, no hearing, no smelling, no tasting, no touching, no thinking. [Our perceptions.]

There is no realm of sight and so on up to no realm of consciousness. [Thus, we are deluded regarding our perceptions.]

There is no ignorance and no extinction of ignorance. [Ignorance is as taught as the root cause of all sufferings and delusions.]

²⁸ Indian languages are known for their “indirect languages”, saying what something is not rather than what it is not.

²⁹ The five mental and physical elements that constitute the existence of an individual: form (body), feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness.

There is no old age and death, and no extinction of old age and death. [*The Buddha is said to have referred to old age, sickness, and death; and being liberated into “deathlessness” – an indescribable (transcendent) state of paranirvana, complete cessation of samsara.*]

Likewise, there is no suffering, no origination of suffering, no extinction of suffering, no path; there is no wisdom, no attainment. [*The Four Noble Truths.*]

Since there is nothing to be attained, the *Bodhisattvas* rely on this Perfection of Wisdom and abide in it without fear. Liberating themselves from illusion, they awaken ultimate liberation. [*Abiding in transcendent wisdom is one of complete mental calm, deep-peace, and complete contentment in this life. Being Bodhisattvas, we also engage in altruistic unconditional lovingkindness and great compassion for all beings.*]

All Buddhas in the past, present, and future attained ultimate liberation by relying on this perfect transcendent wisdom. [*They did it, and so can we.*]

Therefore, one should know that perfect transcendent wisdom is the greatest mantra, the highest mantra, the incomparable mantra, the mantra that clears all suffering, the deepest truth. The mantra for perfect transcendent wisdom is proclaimed: [*The mantra says it all!*]

Gaté, gaté, paragaté, parasamgaté, bodhi soha! [*Go (or “gone”), go, go beyond, go totally beyond; ultimate enlightenment, soha!*]

From this text, we can see how the Path of Altruism took a philosophical position that transcended even the core philosophical tenants of the Path of Individual Liberation taught by the Buddha – no aggregates, no ignorance, no suffering, not even nirvana! How can you even call yourself a Buddhist? Well, that answer came from the Middle Way, grounded directly in the teachings of the Buddha himself.

3 - The Middle Way: Madhyamaka

One of the results of this was a third major contribution to the wisdom literature, and arguably the most significant – The Middle Way. Nagarjuna (~150-250 CE) is considered to be the founder of the Madhyamaka approach. Some say he was the founder of the Path of Altruism. He is sometimes referred to as a second Buddha.

He states that *emptiness* and *dependent arising* have the same importance; that they are really two ways of talking about the same view of the “nature of reality”. The central tenant of this approach is that emptiness is not a thing, not no-thing, not both, not neither (the “**tetralemma**” – four-part dilemma). Thus, emptiness is beyond *any* concept or logical explanation. He summed up his reasoning in *Mulamadhyamakakarikas*. His disciple Buddhapalita wrote a famous commentary on this.

The Madhyamaka approach is divided into two groups: **Rangtong** and **Shentong**. *Rangtong* is further divided into two groups: **Svatantrika** and **Prasangika**. Bhavaviveka criticized the method of Buddhapalita and became the founder of the *Svatantrika Madhyamaka*. Chandrakirti defended Buddhapalita and became the founder of the *Prasangika Madhyamaka*.

The purpose of the **Svatantrika** approach is to establish the *emptiness of any self-nature of all phenomena*, all is interdependent, thus has no “self-nature”. These *Madhyamikas* do not consider the mind stream of the *Cittamatrans* (see the Path of Individual Liberation) to be ultimate emptiness at all. Nevertheless, they do agree that mind is a stream of “moments of

consciousness". While the *Cittamatras* found no self-nature in objects of consciousness, the *Svatantrikas* find *no self-nature in either the objects of consciousness or the consciousnesses themselves*.³⁰ *Madhyamikas* all agree that appearances are only *relative truth* and have no ultimate reality. All *Madhyamaka* systems clarify awareness by "exhausting" the reasoning mind.

The *Svatantrika* approach uses reason to establish that consciousnesses and their objects cannot be ultimately real because each arises only in dependence on the other and neither has a self-nature of its own. The *Svatantrika* approach is to use arguments to refute the self-nature of phenomena and then to establish that their true nature is emptiness – a *lack of complete independence*. Relative truth is *the way things appear* to the non-critical ordinary consciousness, and the **absolute truth** is the **ultimate nature** of a thing that is established through accurate and minute analysis by means of the rational mind – *the way things are*.

In the dream example, appearances happen but have no "real" self-nature, yet they do appear even though their **absolute reality** is emptiness. Thus, all phenomena are emptiness. They do not accept the *Cittamatra* view that there is some truly existing substance called mind. Mind is relative, not absolute. The ultimate nature of all phenomena is emptiness because they are merely concepts. Even concepts such as emptiness itself can be established as being empty – the emptiness of emptiness. Thus, Tsongkapa argues that everything that exists, exists only conventionally. Even the Two Truths (ultimate and relative) are conventional. Emptiness itself lacks any intrinsic nature. In *Madhyamaka* emptiness is the absence of any other level or type of existence. It is only *called* ultimate truth because it is realized by a mind that analyzes how things ultimately exist. The danger is reifying emptiness as something that is truly existent (the *concept* of emptiness rather than emptiness itself).

Ultimately the true nature of things cannot be conceptualized as existent, non-existent, both or neither. The method is to examine all elements of existence in turn until you reach the conviction that all, without exception, are empty. One approach to the analysis is to break a phenomenon into parts. Is it existent as a single entity or one made up of parts? This is known as the "one or many" system of analysis. If it can be divided into parts, each of those is further examined as one or many, and so forth. If it cannot be established as either a single self-entity nor can it be any one of its many parts, then it can be said to have no self-nature. It is simply a concept. The same argument can be applied to mental phenomena.

The second approach used is that of "dependent arising" or interdependence. If an object has self-nature, it is said to exist independently of any other phenomena, causes or conditions. Anything that arises in dependence upon any other cause or condition has no self-nature. Each object is analyzed for one or more causes and conditions until you exhaust your mind of all possible analyses and you become convinced of the certainty that all phenomena have no self-nature. This is done for each of the six senses: seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling, and thoughts or feelings.

C. The Path of Tantra: Rangtong Prasangika Madhyamaka

Unlike the *Svatantrikas* (Chapter 10), the *Prasangikas* refute "self-nature" (an independent existence) without trying to establish the true nature by reasoning at all. That is, the *Prasangikas*

³⁰ Buddhism posits that there is a consciousness for each of the five senses, as well as for thoughts and feelings, for a total of six. For example, there is eye consciousness, ear consciousness, and so forth. There are also higher levels of consciousness that vary from one school to another and are one to three in number.

simply argue that self-nature cannot be established, period. The “relative” is simply accepted as a “perceptual reality” (what we call “empirical reality”) having no true basis. They argue that the attempt to establish emptiness through reasoning is a subtle attempt to grasp the ultimate nature with the conceptual mind. Therefore, they refuse to use any reasoning to establish the true nature of phenomena. They say that the ultimate nature is beyond even the most subtle of concepts and posit that nothing is either positive or negative.

Whereas the *Shravakans* and *Cittamatrans* (Chapter 7) believed that one moment gave rise to the next, Chandrakirti argued that no connection exists between one moment and the next. Otherwise darkness could be the cause of light or light the cause of darkness. But things do arise. For the *Prasangikas*, the arising of things is mere relative appearance, dependent upon consciousness. There is “no arising” (unchanging, permanent) in the absolute, which is all that matters.

The *Prasangikas* (who do follow this approach) hold views concerning the nature of relative phenomena. They use reasoning to establish that relative phenomena exist conventionally, just not on their own. Other *Prasangikas* doubt whether this can be considered to be *Prasangika* at all. The original *Prasangika* view refutes *all* views without asserting any counter-argument to establish a view of their own. It is completely non-conceptual. You simply rest in emptiness, the absolute freedom from all concepts. [Yet there are vast numbers of books and other texts asserting these (non)concepts.]

The *Prasangika* view of the dream example is that there is no concept of “real” or “unreal” in a dream. There is no concept of “self-nature” or “absence of self-nature” either. Thus, mind rests in total peace.

In practice, this direct approach can be challenging. Thus, it is recommended to use the *Svatantrika* approach to establish emptiness first. Then use the *Prasangika* to cut through the conceptual mind completely. Relative and ultimate truths are mere concepts. Ignorance cannot exist in an awareness without concepts. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche recommended using analysis only briefly, then resting the mind free of concepts. Je Tsongkapa says that one must return to analysis over and over to establish a strong, long-lasting, clear and steady view of emptiness. You then alternate between analysis and serenity until this gives rise to the union of the two (one taste).

Early texts differentiated between “the way things appear” (relative) and “the way things are” (ultimate). Mipham Rinpoche adds to that with the term “reflexive awareness” – a middle ground, like my “relative-ultimate” providing a way to talk about the ineffable. We will examine this in more detail below.

D. Path of Great Perfection: Shentong Yogacarya Madhyamaka

In the previous paths we looked at wisdom from the view of the *Shravaka*, *Cittamatra*, *Svatantrika*, and *Prasangika* schools of Buddhism.³¹ The latter two are both branches of the Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*). Each provided a slightly different interpretation of the teachings of the Buddha regarding ultimate truth. In the Path of Great Perfection, we now look at the *Shentong* school, sometimes referred to as *Yogacarya*, but is actually a merger of *Yogacarya* and *Madhyamaka*. Thus, this is the third branch of the Middle Way philosophy.

³¹ These are not actual “schools” per se, but are commonly referred to in this way.

It is important here to note that many sources do not distinguish between the *Cittamatrans* (Mind Only school) and the *Yogacaryans* due to similarities between their approaches. It is fairly common to see the names used interchangeably. Yet there are important differences. The *Shentong* does not accept the *Cittamatra* view that consciousness is truly existent. They hold the *Madhyamaka* view that it is non-arising and without self-nature. *Yogacaryans* argue that their system involves not only recognizing freedom from all concepts, but also the realization of the Wisdom Mind (*jnana*) that is free from all concepts. Non-conceptual Wisdom Mind is the only thing that has absolute and true existence. This, however, does not mean that it can be conceptualized. It can be realized only through means other than the conceptual process. You must experience it directly, nonconceptually.

There has been some dispute among the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism regarding the *Prasangika* and *Shentong* approaches. In part this stems from the fact that the *Shentong* view is said to have been developed by Shantarakshita at Nalanda University and brought to Tibet in first dissemination of Buddhism into Tibet in the late 8th century CE, when he was invited by King Trisong Detsen to build the *Samye* monastery.³² In this approach, he included the views of the *Yogacarya* tradition founded in India by Asanga and his half-brother Vasubandhu (4th century CE), as well as views from Dharmakirti and others. However, although the *Prasangika* texts were written by Chandrakirti in the mid 6th century, they did not come to Tibet until much later, during the second dissemination (10th to 12th centuries CE). This gave the appearance that the *Prasangika* texts were more recent and superseded the *Shentong* texts, when in reality it was the other way around.

But there is more to the argument than just the dates. The *Shentong* masters criticized the *Prasangikas* for their claim that they did not hold *any* views, i.e., since everything is impermanent and empty of inherent existence, there is no “relative” or “ultimate” truth. The *Shentong* argue that if the mere absence of concepts were absolute reality, it would be mere nothingness, empty space, or the extreme of nihilism. How can nothingness account for appearances? There has to be *something* that is in some sense luminous – illuminating and knowing.

Furthermore, the *Shentong* argued that what the *Cittamatrans* called “absolute” was wrongly interpreted by them to be a consciousness (*vijnana*). According to the *Shentong*, this clear luminous aware quality of mind is not a consciousness, but a non-conceptual absolute reality (*jnana*) with no seeing and seen aspect, no realizing and realized aspect. This is called Transcendent Wisdom (*Prajnaparamita*) and is none other than the non-conceptual Wisdom Mind itself, also referred to as *clear light*, nature of mind, *dharmata*, clarity and emptiness, bliss and emptiness, *tathagatagarbha*, and so forth. The *Shentong* posit that the experience of complete freedom from concepts must also be the *experience* of the *clear light* nature of mind. Thus, *Prasangikas*, who deny this, must still have some subtle concept, which is obscuring or negating this reality.

The *Shentong* argued that if there really were no concepts in the mind, the *clear light* nature would shine forth so clearly and unmistakably that it would not be possible to deny it. The practices purify obscurations so that this Buddhature emerges. If the true nature of beings were not the *tathagatagarbha*, they could never become buddhas in the same way that a rock that did not contain gold could never yield gold, however much it was refined.

³² Some scholars now dispute this claim and posit that it was developed by the Jonang branch of Tibetan Buddhism.

The *Shentong* criticize the other *Madhyamikas* who say that the buddha qualities arise as a result of the good deeds, vows and connections made by *Bodhisattvas* on the path to liberation. For the *Shentong*, the buddha qualities are primordially existent as Buddhature. Nevertheless, good deeds, vows and connections are necessary for removing veils that obscure those qualities.

The *Shentong* also do not accept that the Wisdom Mind “knows” in a dualistic way, so there is no subtle object of the Wisdom Mind. It is not a stream of moments of awareness. It is completely unbounded and free from all concepts, including time and space (the “fourth time” or “beginningless time”).

When the non-conceptual Wisdom Mind is not realized, it is the basis for the impure, mistaken, or illusory appearances to manifest. Once it is realized, it is the basis for pure manifestations of the three kayas, buddhafiels, mandalas of the yidams, and so forth. Wisdom Mind is both emptiness *and* luminosity. Emptiness expresses its non-conceptual nature; luminosity expresses its ability to manifest (all pure and impure) appearances.

In the dream example, dreams arise from the luminous quality of mind. If Wisdom Mind is not recognized, the dependent nature arises. Once the awakened consciousness returns, you quickly see dreams are mere manifestations of the “play of mind.”

The key in the meditation (or non-meditation) is personal instruction from a realized master with faith and devotion that through his/her skillful means, realization can arise and mature. Gradually, understanding deepens and the conceptualizing tendency loses its hold on the mind, and it becomes more relaxed and open, calm and clear. Jamgon Kongtrul describes the two approaches this way:

Madhyamaka philosophies have no differences in realizing as “*Shunyata*” (emptiness) all phenomena that we experience on a relative level. They have no differences also in reaching the meditative state where all extremes (ideas) completely dissolve. Their difference lies in the words they use to describe the *dharmata*. *Shentong* describes the *dharmata*, the mind of Buddha, as “ultimately real”; while [*Prasangika*] philosophers fear that if it is described that way, people might understand it as the concept of “soul” or “*Atman*.” The *Shentong* philosopher believes that there is a more serious possibility of misunderstanding in describing the enlightened state as “unreal” and “void.” Kongtrul finds the [*Prasangika*] way of presentation the best to dissolve concepts and the *Shentong* way the best to describe the experience.

Jamgon Kongtrul says that the *Prasangika* is the view when you are establishing certainty through listening, studying and reflecting (nonconceptual, dissolving concepts); *Shentong* is the view for meditation practice (experientially “real” as luminous clarity). The important part of this approach is the direct experience. In practice, *Shentong Madhyamaka* is very much like the advanced *shamata* of *trekcho*.

Section 2: Supplemental Notes

[Wikipedia, slightly edited by Khenchen Drimed Dawa]

Basic Teachings of Buddha – Early Schools and Texts

Apart from the middle way, early Buddhist texts taught *some* of these key teachings:

- The Four Noble Truths, especially the cause of suffering (*duḥkha*)
- The Noble Eightfold Path, which illustrate the path to spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*)

- Mindfulness and the four *dhyānas* (meditations)
- The three marks of existence: suffering (*duḥkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), and non-self (*anattā*)
- The five aggregates of clinging (*skandhā*), which provide an analysis of personal identity and physical existence [form, feeling, perception, mental formations (thoughts), and consciousness]
- Dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), how living beings come to be and how they are conditioned by various psycho-physical processes [almost certainly a later combination of 2 or 3 other sources] – the 12 Links of Dependent Origination.
- *Karma* and rebirth, actions which lead to another life in an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*saṃsāra* – sufferings)
- *Nirvāṇa*, the ultimate goal which leads to the cessation of all suffering (no rebirth, purelands, god realms, heavens, etc.)

Gandhāran Buddhist texts (which are the earliest manuscripts containing discourses attributed to Gautama Buddha), has confirmed that their teachings are "consistent with non-Mahayana Buddhism, which survives today in the Theravada school of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, but which in ancient times was represented by eighteen separate schools.

However, critical analysis reveals discrepancies. They present alternative possibilities for what was taught in earliest Buddhism and question the authenticity of certain teachings and doctrines. For example, some scholars think that the doctrine of *karma* was not central to the teachings of the historical Buddha, while others disagree with this position. Likewise, there is scholarly disagreement on whether insight into the true nature of reality (*prajñā*) was seen as liberating in earliest Buddhism or whether it was a later addition. *Dhyāna* constituted the original "liberating practice", and the Four Noble Truths may not have been formulated in earliest Buddhism but slightly later.

According to some scholars, the philosophical outlook of earliest Buddhism was primarily negative, what doctrines to *reject* and let go of. Only knowledge that is useful in attaining liberation is valued. The cycle of philosophical upheavals that drove the diversification of Buddhism into its many schools and sects only began once Buddhists began attempting to make explicit the implicit philosophy of the Buddha and the early texts. [Buddha rejected philosophical views as "a tangle of views" and we "must let go of even *emptiness*".]

The Four Noble Truths and dependent causation

The Four Noble Truths are a central feature to the teachings of the historical. The **first truth** of *duḥkha*, often translated as "suffering", is the "inherent and eternal" unsatisfactoriness of life, not just physical pain and psychological distress, but also unease caused by the inevitable facts of our mortality and ultimately by the impermanence of all beings and phenomena.

Suffering also arises because of contact with unpleasant events, and due to not getting what one desires. The **second truth** is that this unease arises out of conditions, mainly craving and ignorance. The **third truth** is whenever sentient beings let go of craving and remove ignorance through insight and knowledge, suffering ceases. The **fourth truth** consists of practices that end suffering. The highest good and ultimate goal taught by the historical Buddha is the attainment of *nirvāṇa*, literally "the complete extinguishing of greed, hatred, and delusion (i.e. ignorance), which power *saṃsāra*".

Nirvāṇa also means that after an enlightened being's death, there is no further rebirth. In earliest Buddhism, the concept of dependent origination was most likely limited to mental conditioning. Gautama Buddha understood the world in procedural terms, not in terms of things or substances.^[33] His theory posits a flux of events arising under certain conditions which are interconnected and interdependent, at no time are static or independent. Craving is always dependent on, and caused by sensations gained by the sense organs. Sensations are always dependent on contact with our surroundings. Buddha's causal theory is simply: "This existing, that exists; this arising, that arises; this not existing, that does not exist; this ceasing, that ceases." It shows *how* the processes that give rise to suffering work, and also *how* they can be reversed.

The removal of suffering is from ignorance, and requires a deep understanding of the nature of reality (*prajñā*). Philosophical analysis is not enough to remove our unskillful mental habits and deeply ingrained prejudices, which require meditation, paired with understanding. In Gandhāran texts, we train the mind in meditation to truly comprehend the "nature of reality", three marks of existence: suffering, impermanence, and non-self (*anātman*). Understanding and meditation work together to clearly see (*vipassanā*) the nature of human experience, and this leads to liberation.

Gautama Buddha argued that compounded entities and sentient beings lacked essence, the self is without essence (*anātman*). There is no part of a person which is unchanging and essential for continuity in opposition to the Upanishadic concept of an unchanging ultimate self (*ātman*) and any eternal soul. Appearance of a permanent self in this world of change is the cause of suffering (*duḥkha*), the main obstacle to liberation (*mokṣa*).

The idea of an unchanging ego is based on the observation of the five aggregates (*skandhā*) that constitute a sentient being, and are always changing. There is no more to the person than the five aggregates. [So what makes up a person? Biology, psychology, social factors? Personality? Five aggregates vs. nature and nurture, biological factors, psychological factors, traits...

The implied premise is that the five aggregates are an exhaustive account of what makes up a person ... [obviously not!] or the "self" could exist outside of these aggregates, [indeed it does!]. [What makes up a "personality"? Genetics, the environment, experiences, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, brain chemistry, genetics and natural selection, developmental stages, social interactions, all subject to change to some degree or other.]

This argument is expounded in the *Anatmalaksana Sutra*. "Fixed self" is merely the temporary aggregates of existence. "Person" is only a convenient nominal designation and "individual" is a conceptual construction overlaid upon a stream of experiences. The foundation of this argument is purely empiricist, based on the fact that all we observe [or things not observed] is subject to change, especially everything observed when looking inwardly in meditation.

The doctrine of non-self is based on our lack of control. Yet, we often seek to change certain parts of ourselves, that the "executive function" of the mind attempts to alter. This denies that there is one permanent "controller". Instead, it views the person as a set of constantly changing processes which include volitional events seeking change and an awareness of that desire for change.

The Buddha outlines six wrong views about *self*: An unwise, untrained person may think of the *body*, 'This is mine, this is me, this is my self'; he may think that of *feelings*; of *perceptions*; of *volitions*; or of *what has been seen, heard, thought, cognized, reached, sought or considered by the mind*. The sixth is to identify the world and self, to believe: 'At death, I shall become permanent, eternal, unchanging, and so remain forever the same; and that is mine, that is me, that is myself.' A wise and

well-trained person sees that *all these positions are wrong*, and so he is not worried about something that does not exist. The historical Buddha also held that understanding and seeing the truth of *non-self* led to un-attachment, and hence to the cessation of suffering, while ignorance about the true nature of a person led to further suffering and attachment.

Epistemology - the study of the nature, origin, and limits of human knowledge

The historical Buddha denied the authority of the Vedas, though, he affirmed the importance of holding the right view; a proper understanding of reality as the arising and cessation of suffering in human experience. Gautama Buddha's empiricism was based on the experience of the world through the senses. The Buddha taught that empirical observation through the six sense fields was the proper way of verifying *any* knowledge claims. Some Buddhist texts go further, stating that *everything* that exists *are* these six sense spheres. For the Buddha, things in themselves are beyond our reach [like *Mind Only* view].

In the *Kālāma Sutta* the Buddha tells a group of confused villagers that the only proper reason for one's beliefs is verification in one's own personal experience (and the experience of the wise) and denies metaphysical theories. The Buddha rejects the personal authority of Brahmins because none of them can prove they have had personal experience of Brahman, nor could any of them prove its existence. The Buddha also stressed that experience is the only criterion for verification of the truth in this passage from the *Majjhima Nikāya* (MN.I.265):

"Monks, do you only speak that which is known by yourselves seen by yourselves, found by yourselves?"

"Yes, we do, sir."

"Good, monks, that is how you have been instructed by me in this timeless doctrine which can be realized and verified, that leads to the goal and can be understood by those who are intelligent."

The Buddha's standard for personal verification was pragmatic, a belief counts as truth only if it leads to successful Buddhist practice (and the destruction of craving). A belief should only be accepted if it leads to wholesome consequences. This tendency of the Buddha to see what is true as what was useful or "what works", a form of pragmatism. Intellectual disputation is fruitless, and distracts one from the ultimate goals of awakening (*bodhi*) and liberation (*mokṣa*). Only liberation from suffering is seen as important. The historical Buddha stated that thinking about these imponderable issues led to "a thicket of views, a wilderness of views, a contortion of views, a writhing of views, a fetter of views".

The practical methods of realizing awakeness during one's lifetime and the danger of substituting the experience of liberation by a conceptual understanding or religious faith contribute nothing. According to the Buddha, the *Dharma* is not an ultimate end in itself or an explanation of all metaphysical reality, but a pragmatic set of teachings. The Buddha used two parables to clarify this point, the 'Parable of the raft' and the Parable of the Poisoned Arrow.^[60] The *Dharma* is like a raft in the sense that it is only a pragmatic tool for attaining nirvana ("for the purpose of crossing over, not for the purpose of holding onto", MN 22); once one has done this, one can discard the raft. It is also like medicine, in that the particulars of how one was injured by a poisoned arrow (i.e. metaphysics, etc.) do not matter in the act of removing and curing the arrow wound itself (removing suffering). His goal was to cure the human condition of suffering first and foremost, not to speculate about metaphysics.

Transcendence

Another possible reason why the Buddha refused to engage in metaphysics is that he saw ultimate reality and nirvana as devoid of sensory mediation and conception and therefore language itself is inadequate to explain it. Dependent arising provides a framework for analysis of reality not based on metaphysical assumptions regarding existence or non-existence, but direct cognition of phenomena as they are presented to the **mind in meditation**. The Buddha describes Dharma as "beyond reasoning" or "transcending logic", a conceptual framework rather than *things as they really are*.

Meta-ethics

The Buddha's ethics are based on the need to eliminate "suffering" and the premise of the law of "karma", termed eudaimonic (with their goal of well-being). The Buddha outlined five precepts (no killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or drinking alcohol) which were to be followed by his disciples, lay and monastic. There are various reasons the Buddha gave as to why someone should be ethical.

First, if someone *intentionally* commits a misdeed, a bad karmic fruit will be the result. It is best to abstain from these negative actions which bring forth negative results. The important word here is *intentionally*: for the Buddha, karma is nothing but intention, and hence unintentionally harming someone does not create bad karmic results.

The **second** is intentionally performing negative actions reinforces and propagates mental defilements which keep persons bound to the cycle of rebirth and interfere with the process of liberation, and hence intentionally performing good karmic actions is participating in mental purification which leads to nirvana, *the highest happiness*. This perspective sees immoral acts as unskillful in our quest for happiness, and hence it is *pragmatic* to do good.

The **third** takes the view of not-self and our natural desire to end our suffering to its logical conclusion. Since there is no self, there is no reason to prefer our own welfare over that of others because there is no ultimate grounding for the differentiation of "my" suffering and someone else's. Instead, an enlightened person would just work to end suffering, without even thinking of the conventional concept of persons.

Buddhist schools and Abhidharma

The main Indian Buddhist philosophical schools practiced a form of analysis termed *Abhidharma* which sought to systematize the teachings of the early Buddhist discourses (*sutras*). Abhidharma analysis broke down human experience into momentary phenomenal events or occurrences called "*dharma*s", impermanent and dependent on other causal factors, part of a web of other interconnected dharmas, and are never found alone. The teachings of the Buddha were merely conventional, while Abhidharma was "ultimate truth", *the way things really are* when seen by an enlightened being. [It is questionable to even assert any "ultimate truth", e.g., Mt. Everest as the "highest mountain", which depends on how it is measured vs. two other "highest mountains" on the planet. Various figures considered to be "enlightened beings" have different views!] In the Abhidharmic analysis, the only thing which is ultimately real is the interplay of dharmas in a causal stream; everything else is conceptual and nominal.

The Abhidharma schools

After being brought to Sri Lanka in the first century BCE, the Pali language Theravada Abhidhamma tradition was heavily influenced by the works of Buddhaghosa (4-5th century CE).

The Sarvāstivāda-Vaibhāṣika (sometimes just "Vaibhāṣika") was one of the major Buddhist philosophical schools in India, so named because of their belief that dharmas exist in all three times: past, present and future. Though the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma system began as a mere categorization of mental events, their philosophers refined this system into a robust realism, based on the nature of dharmas called *svabhava* ("self-nature" or "intrinsic existence") a sort of essence, though not a completely independent essence, since all dharmas were said to be causally dependent. The Sarvāstivāda system extended this realism across time, positing a type of eternalism.

Other Buddhist schools such as the Prajñaptivāda ("the nominalists") refused to accept the concept of *svabhava*. Thus, not all Abhidharma sources defend *svabhava*. All Abhidharma schools also developed complex theories of causation and conditionality to explain how dharmas interacted with each other. Another major philosophical project of the Abhidharma schools was the explanation of perception. Some explained perception as a type of realism, while others held that we only perceive objects indirectly.

Indian Mahāyāna philosophy

From about the 1st century BCE, a new textual tradition began to arise called Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle), which would slowly come to dominate Indian Buddhist philosophy. During the medieval period of Indian history, Buddhist philosophy thrived in large monastery complexes such as Nalanda, Vikramasila, and Vallabhi, major centers of philosophical learning in North India (where both Buddhist and also non-Buddhist thought was studied and debated). Mahāyāna held to the pragmatic concept of truth, that doctrines are regarded as conditionally "true" in the sense of being spiritually beneficial as 'skillful means' (*upaya*).

The Mahayana also promoted the bodhisattva ideal, an attitude of compassion for all sentient beings. Major Mahayana philosophical schools and traditions include the *Prajñāpāramitā*, Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, and Tathagatagarbha (Buddhanature).

Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka

The earliest *Prajñāpāramitā*-sutras ("perfection of insight" sutras) (circa 1st century BCE) emphasize the shunyata (emptiness) of *all* phenomena. All of reality as a dreamlike appearance without any fundamental essence. *Prajñāpāramitā* is said to be a transcendent spiritual knowledge of the nature of ultimate reality, like a mirage.

The *Heart Sutra* famously affirms the emptiness (shunyata) of all phenomena:

Oh, Sariputra, form does not differ from emptiness,
and emptiness does not differ from form.
Form is emptiness and emptiness is form;
the same is true for feelings, perceptions, volitions and consciousness.

This applies to every single phenomenon, even Buddhahood. The goal is to awaken to the perfection of wisdom ("*prajñāpāramitā*"), a non-conceptual transcendent wisdom that knows the

“emptiness” of all things while not being attached to anything (including the very idea of emptiness itself or perfect wisdom).

Nāgārjuna (c. 150 – c. 250 CE) was one of the most influential Indian Mahayana thinkers. He gave the classical arguments for the empty nature of all dharmas and attacked the essentialism in various Abhidharma schools (and Hindu philosophy). Nagarjuna relies on *reductio ad absurdum* arguments (*where a proposition is disproven by showing that its consequences lead to an absurd or contradictory result*) to refute various theories which assume *svabhava* (an inherent essence or "own being"), *drav-ya* (substances) or any theory of existence.

Nāgārjuna asserted a direct connection between dependent origination, non-self, and emptiness. Implicit in dependent origination is the lack of substantial being, so that they have no independent existence, a state identified as *śūnyatā* (i.e., emptiness of a nature or essence).

Later philosophers built upon and defended Madhyamaka. These included Āryadeva (3rd century CE), Chandrakīrti (600–c. 650), and Shantideva (8th century), the key Mahayana ethicist.

The commentator Buddhapālita (c. 470–550), the originator of '*prāsaṅgika*' Bhāvaviveka (c. 500 – c. 578) argued for the use of positive statements for emptiness (instead of just refuting the theories of others). These two approaches were later termed the *prāsaṅgika* and the *svātantrika*.

Yogācāra

The Yogācāra school arose in between the 2nd century CE and the 4th century CE and is associated with the philosopher brothers Asanga and Vasubandhu. The central feature of Yogācāra is “*cittamatra*” (**mind-only**). We only ever have access to our own mental impressions, and hence our *inference* of the existence of external objects is based on faulty logic. “This [world] is nothing but impressions, since it manifests itself *as* an unreal object....” This also weakens the 'internal' sense of “self” as an observer, which is supposed to be separate from the external world, and to dissolve the sense of “self and other”. Yogachara sources also developed a new theory of mind, the Eight Consciousnesses, which includes the subliminal storehouse consciousness. This became very influential in later philosophical development.

The Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition

Dignāga (c. 480–540) and Dharmakīrti (c. 6-7th century) developed a system of debates with the Brahminical philosophers to defend Buddhist doctrine. This is called "those who follow reasoning". They were associated with the Yogacara and Sautrantika schools, and defended theories held by both of these schools.

Dignāga's influence was profound and led to a turn among all Buddhists and all Sanskrit language philosophers in India after his death. Sanskrit philosophers became much more focused on defending all of their propositions with fully developed theories of knowledge.

The "School of Dignāga" developed the view that there are only two 'valid cognitions': "perception" and "inference". Perception is a non-conceptual awareness bound by causality, while inference is reasonable, linguistic, and conceptual. They also developed Yogācāra "awareness only" view.

A later development was the rise of *tathāgatagarbha* (the "buddha-within") found in various *tathāgatagarbha* sutras. This hybrid school eventually went on to equate the *tathāgatagarbha* with the pure aspect of the storehouse consciousness. Another later development was the synthesis of

Yogācāra with Madhyamaka. Śāntarakṣita (725–788) brought together Yogacara, Madhyamaka and the Dignaga school into the *Yogācāra-Svatantrika-Mādhyamika*.

Perhaps the most important debate was the question of whether mental appearances, images or “aspects” are true or false, images in consciousness have a real existence, since they arise from a real consciousness or that mental appearances do not really exist, and are false or illusory. For these thinkers, the only thing which is *real* is a *pure self-aware consciousness* which is contentless.

Buddha-nature thought

The *tathāgathagarbha* sutras, in a departure from mainstream Buddhist language, insist that there is a real potential for awakening is inherent to every sentient being. The womb or embryo of a Buddha is what allows someone to become a Buddha. A similar term used for this idea is buddha-nature.

Prior to these, Mahāyāna metaphysics had been dominated by teachings on emptiness. Buddha-nature literature can be seen as using *positive language* instead of a false impression of nihilism. “Not-self” is the “true self”, described as the perfection of the wisdom of “not-self” now adapted to describe the positive realities of Buddhahood.

Most influential brought together all the major themes into a single treatise as being inherent in all beings, “the intrinsically stainless nature of the mind”. This originally pure nature (i.e. the fully purified buddha-nature) is further described through numerous terms such as: unconditioned, unborn, unarisen, eternal, changeless, and permanent.

Some scholars say it is a positive language expression of emptiness, and the potentiality to realize Buddhahood is soteriological (salvation) rather than metaphysical (nature of reality, existence, and universe).

Vajrayāna Buddhism – Additional Notes

Vajrayāna is a Mahayana Buddhist tradition associated with a group of texts known as the Buddhist Tantras which had developed into a major force in India by the eighth century. Indian Tantric scholars were developing philosophical defenses and explanations of Buddhist tantric systems through commentaries on key tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja* and *Guhyagarbha*.

While the view was based on earlier Madhyamaka, Yogacara and Buddha-nature theories, but it saw itself as being a *faster vehicle* to liberation containing many skillful methods of tantric ritual and the unusual nature of the rituals associated with them, which included the use of secret mantras, alcohol, sexual yoga, complex visualizations of mandalas filled with wrathful deities and other practices which were discordant with or at least novel in comparison to traditional Buddhist practice.

The *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, for example, states: “you should kill living beings, speak lying words, take things that are not given and have sex with many women”. Other features of tantra included a focus on the physical body as the means to liberation, and a reaffirmation of feminine elements, feminine deities, and a positive view of sexuality.

These tantric practices are based on the theory of *transformation*, which states that negative mental factors and physical actions can be cultivated and transformed in a ritual setting. The *Hevajra tantra* states: “By passion the world is bound, by passion too it is released, but by heretical Buddhists, this practice of reversals is not known”.

A commentary on the *Kalacakra Tantra* is one of interpreting taboo or unethical statements in the Tantras as metaphorical statements about tantric practice and physiology. For example, in the commentary to the *Guhyasamaja Tantra*, killing living beings is glossed as "making them void" by means of a "special samadhi" associated with completion stage practice.

Vajrayāna philosophical outlook is one of embodiment, which sees the physical and cosmological body as already containing wisdom and divinity. Every existing entity is in some sense divine and that all things express some form of unity.

Tibetan Buddhist philosophy

Tibetan Buddhist philosophy is mainly a continuation and refinement of the Indian Mahayana philosophical traditions. The initial efforts of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla brought their eclectic scholarly tradition to Tibet.

The initial work was the translation of classical Indian philosophical treatises and writing commentaries. The 12th and 13th centuries saw Tibetan debate between prasāngika and svatantrika views which continues to this day. The main disagreement is the use of reasoned argument. For Śāntarakṣita's school, reason leads one to a correct understanding of emptiness. Then, through meditation, one can reach non-conceptual understanding that does not rely on reason. Chandrakīrti rejected this idea, because meditation on emptiness cannot possibly involve any object. [Depends on how one defines "object".]

There are various Tibetan Buddhist schools or monastic orders. The Sakya school holds a mostly anti-realist philosophical position (which sees conventional truth as an illusion), while the Gelug school tends to defend a form of realism (which accepts that conventional truth is in some sense real and true, yet "dependently" originated). The Kagyū and Nyingma schools also tend to follow Sakya anti-realism (with some differences).

Nyingma

The Nyingma school is strongly influenced by the view of Dzogchen (Great Perfection). Longchenpa (1308–1364) was a major philosopher of the Nyingma school and wrote an extensive number of works on Dzogchen and Buddhist Tantra. These include the *Seven Treasures*, the *Trilogy of Natural Ease*, and his *Trilogy of Dispelling Darkness*. Longchenpa's works provide a philosophical understanding, a defense of Dzogchen of the sutras, as well as practical instructions. For Longchenpa, the ground of reality is "luminous emptiness", *rigpa* ("pure awareness"), or buddha nature, and this ground is also the bridge between sutra and tantra. Longchenpa's philosophy sought to establish the positive aspects of Buddha nature thought against the totally negative theology of Madhyamika, without straying into the absolutism of Dolpopa. For Longchenpa, the basis for Dzogchen and Tantric practice in Vajrayana is the "Ground" or "Basis", the immanent Buddha nature, "the primordially luminous reality that is unconditioned and spontaneously present" and "free from all elaborated extremes".

Sakya

Sakya Pandita (1182–1251) one of the most important Buddhist philosophers in the Tibetan tradition, set forth the classic Sakya "anti-realist" position, arguing that concepts such as universals are not known through valid cognition and hence are not real objects of knowledge. Sakya Pandita was also critical of theories of sudden awakening, which were held by some teachers of Dzogchen in Tibet.

Later Gorampa (1429–1489) and Sakya Chokden (1428–1507) would defend Sakya anti-realism, major interpreters and critics of Sakya Pandita's philosophy. Sakya Chokden also critiqued Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Madhyamaka and Dolpopa's Shentong. Sakya Chokden attempted to reconcile the views of the Yogacara and Madhyamaka, both as valid and complementary on ultimate truth. Madhyamaka is seen as removing the fault of taking the “unreal” as being “real”, and Yogacara removes the fault of the denial of Reality. Likewise, the Shentong and Rangtong views are seen as complementary; Rangtong is effective in cutting through clinging to wrong views, while Shentong is more amenable for describing and enhancing meditative experience and realization. Ultimate reality can be accessed and described in two different but compatible ways.

Shentong and Buddha nature

The 14th century saw increasing interest in the Buddha nature texts and doctrines such as the ultimate nature or *suchness* as Buddha nature, which is the basis for nirvana and samsara, radiant in nature and empty in essence, surpassing all thoughts.

Scholar-yogi Dölpopa (c. 1292–1361), a figure of the Jonang school, developed a view called Shentong ('other emptiness'), based on earlier Yogacara and Buddha-nature ideas present in Indian sources and buddha-nature literature. The Shentong view holds that Buddhahood is already immanent in all living beings as an eternal and all-pervasive “non-dual wisdom” or knowing the “ground of all”, that all *relative* phenomena are empty of inherent existence, but *ultimate* reality is *not empty* of its own inherent existence.

According to Dölpopa, all beings have Buddha nature, non-dual wisdom which is real, unchanging, permanent, non-conditioned, eternal, blissful and compassionate. This ultimate buddha wisdom is “uncreated and indestructible, unconditioned and beyond the chain of dependent origination” and is the basis for both samsara and nirvana. Shentong also taught that ultimate reality was truly a “Supreme Self”.

The Shentong view had an influence on philosophers of other schools, such as Nyingma and Kagyu thinkers, but was also criticized in some circles as being similar to the Hindu notions of *atman* or soul. In the late 17th century, the Jonang order came under attack by the 5th Dalai Lama, who converted the majority of their monasteries to the Gelug order, although several survived in secret.

Kagyu

There are various Kagyu presentations of the right philosophical view depending on the specific lineage.

Some Kagyu lineages follow the *Shentong* (empty of other) presentations which was influenced by the work of Dolpopa. This view was defended by the influential Rime philosopher Jamgön Kongtrül (1813–1899). Shentong views the two truths doctrine as distinguishing between relative and absolute reality, agreeing that relative reality is empty of self-nature, but stating that absolute reality is “empty” only of “other” relative phenomena, but is itself not empty. In Shentong, this absolute reality (i.e. Buddha nature) is the “ground or substratum” which is “uncreated and indestructible, noncomposite and beyond the chain of dependent origination.” According to Jamgon Kontrul, this ultimate reality which is “nondual, self-aware primordial wisdom” can be said to “always exists in its own nature and never changes, so it is never empty of its own nature and it is there all the time.” However, this wisdom is also free of conceptual elaborations and also

"free of the two extremes of nihilism and eternalism." This Shentong view has been upheld by various modern Kagyu masters.

However, several important Kagyu figures have disagreed with the view of "Shentong Madhyamaka", who see "Shentong" as another name for Yogacara and as a separate system to Madhyamaka and as being against the sutras of ultimate meaning which state that all phenomena are emptiness as well as being against the treatises of the Indian masters. He argued that the "rangtong shentong" distinction is inaccurate and not in line with the teachings of the Indian masters. He also argues that "teachings on Buddha nature being a self, permanent, substantial, really existent, indestructible, and so on are of expedient meaning."

Gelug – adapted from Atisha’s earlier Kadampa school

Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) founded the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, which came to dominate the country through the office of the Dalai Lama and is the major defender of the Prasaṅgika Madhyamaka view. Gelug philosophy is based upon the study of Madhyamaka texts and Tsongkhapa's works as well as formal debate.

Tsongkhapa defended Prasangika Madhyamaka as the highest view and critiqued the svatantrika position. They fail to completely understand the emptiness of phenomena. Tsongkhapa was also critical of the Shentong view as dangerously absolutist and hence outside the middle way. Tsongkhapa identified two major flaws in interpretations of Madhyamaka, under-negation (own essence), which could lead to Absolutism, and over-negation, which could lead to Nihilism. Tsongkhapa's solution was the use of inferential reasoning only within the conventional realm of the two truths framework, ethics, monastic rules and conventional cognitive realism, while holding the view of ultimate truth, all things (including Buddha nature and Nirvana) are empty of inherent existence, and that true liberation is this realization of emptiness.

Sakya scholars disagreed with Tsongkhapa, and argued that the prasangika svatantrika distinction was merely pedagogical. Gorampa also critiqued Tsongkhapa's realism, arguing that the structures which allow an "empty" object to be presented as "conventionally real" eventually dissolve under analysis.

Rimé movement

The 19th century saw the rise of the Rimé movement (non-sectarian, unbiased) which sought to push back against the politically dominant Gelug school's criticisms of the Sakya, Kagyu, Nyingma and Bon philosophical views, and develop a more eclectic or universal system of textual study. The Rimé movement came to prominence at a point in Tibetan history when the religious climate had become partisan. The aim was "a push towards a middle ground where various views and styles were appreciated.

Jamgön Kongtrül defended Shentong as being compatible with Madhyamaka while Ju Mipham Rinpoche (1846–1912) criticized Tsongkhapa from a Nyingma perspective. Mipham argued that the view of the middle way is unity, from the ultimate perspective the duality of sentient beings and Buddhas is also dissolved. Mipham also affirmed the view of *rangtong* (self emptiness).

The later Nyingma scholar Botrul (1894–1959) classified the major Tibetan Madhyamaka positions as *shentong* (other emptiness), Nyingma *rangtong* (self emptiness) and Gelug *bdentong* (emptiness of true existence). *Shentong* states that inauthentic experience is empty, *rangtong* negates any conceptual reference, and *bdentong* negates any true existence.

The 14th Dalai Lama was also influenced by this non-sectarian approach. Having studied under teachers from all major Tibetan Buddhist schools, his philosophical position tends to be that the different perspectives on emptiness are complementary:

There is a tradition of making a distinction between two different perspectives on the nature of emptiness: one is when emptiness is presented within a *philosophical analysis* of the ultimate reality of things, in which case it ought to be understood in terms of a non-affirming negative phenomena. On the other hand, when it is discussed from the point of view of *experience*, it should be understood more in terms of an affirming negation – 14th Dalai Lama

Modern philosophy

In Sri Lanka, Buddhist modernists such as Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) and the American convert Henry Steel Olcott sought to show that Buddhism was rational and compatible with modern Scientific ideas such as the theory of evolution. Dharmapala also argued that Buddhism included a strong social element, interpreting it as liberal, altruistic and democratic.

A later Sri Lankan philosopher, K. N. Jayatilleke (1920–1970), wrote the classic modern account of Buddhist epistemology (*Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963). His student David Kalupahana wrote on the history of Buddhist thought and psychology. Other important Sri Lankan Buddhist thinkers include Ven Ñāṇananda (*Concept and Reality*), Walpola Rahula, Hammalawa Saddhatissa (*Buddhist Ethics*, 1987), Gunapala Dharmasiri (*A Buddhist critique of the Christian concept of God*, 1988), P. D. Premasiri and R. G. de S. Wettimuny.

In 20th-century China, the modernist Taixu (1890–1947) advocated a reform and revival of Buddhism. He promoted an idea of a Buddhist Pure Land, not as a metaphysical place in Buddhist cosmology but as something possible to create here and now in this very world, which could be achieved through a "Buddhism for Human Life" which was free of supernatural beliefs. Taixu also wrote on the connections between modern science and Buddhism, ultimately holding that "scientific methods can only corroborate the Buddhist doctrine, they can never advance beyond it". Like Taixu, Yin Shun (1906–2005) advocated a form of Humanistic Buddhism grounded in concern for humanitarian issues, and his students and followers have been influential in promoting Humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan. This period also saw a revival of the study of Weishi (Yogachara), by Yang Rensan (1837–1911), Ouyang Jinwu (1871–1943) and Liang Shuming (1893–1988).

One of Tibetan Buddhism's most influential modernist thinkers is Gendün Chöphel (1903–1951), who, according to Donald S. Lopez Jr., "was arguably the most important Tibetan intellectual of the twentieth century." Gendün Chöphel travelled throughout India with the Indian Buddhist Rahul Sankrityayan and wrote a wide variety of material, including works promoting the importance of modern science to his Tibetan countrymen and also Buddhist philosophical texts such as *Adornment for Nagarjuna's Thought*. Another very influential Tibetan Buddhist modernist was Chögyam Trungpa, whose Shambhala Training was meant to be more suitable to modern Western sensitivities by offering a vision of "secular enlightenment".

In Southeast Asia, thinkers such as Buddhadasa, Thích Nhất Hạnh, Sulak Sivaraksa and Aung San Suu Kyi have promoted a philosophy of socially Engaged Buddhism and have written on the socio-political application of Buddhism. Likewise, Buddhist approaches to economic ethics (Buddhist economics) have been explored in the works of E. F. Schumacher, Prayudh Payutto, Neville Karunatilake and Padmasiri de Silva. The study of the Pali Abhidhamma tradition

continued to be influential in Myanmar, where it was developed by monks such as Ledi Sayadaw and Mahasi Sayadaw.

Japanese philosophy was heavily influenced by the work of the Kyoto School which included Kitaro Nishida, Keiji Nishitani, Hajime Tanabe and Masao Abe. These thinkers brought Buddhist ideas in dialogue with Western philosophy, especially European phenomenologists and existentialists. The most important trend in Japanese Buddhist thought after the formation of the Kyoto school is Critical Buddhism, which argues against several Mahayana concepts such as Buddha nature and original enlightenment.

The Japanese Zen Buddhist D.T. Suzuki (1870–1966) was instrumental in bringing Zen Buddhism to the West and his Buddhist modernist works were very influential in the United States. Suzuki's worldview was a Zen Buddhism influenced by Romanticism and Transcendentalism, which promoted spiritual freedom as "a spontaneous, emancipatory consciousness that transcends rational intellect and social convention." This idea of Buddhism influenced the Beat writers, and a contemporary representative of Western Buddhist Romanticism is Gary Snyder. The American Theravada Buddhist monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu has critiqued 'Buddhist Romanticism' in his writings.

Western Buddhist monastics and priests such as Nanavira Thera, Bhikkhu Bodhi, Nyanaponika Thera, Robert Aitken, Taigen Dan Leighton, and Matthieu Ricard have written texts on Buddhist philosophy. A feature of Buddhist thought in the West has been a desire for dialogue and integration with modern science and psychology, and various modern Buddhists such as B. Alan Wallace, James H. Austin, Mark Epstein and the 14th Dalai Lama have worked and written on this issue.

Another area of convergence has been Buddhism and environmentalism, which is explored in the work of Joanna Macy.^{[183][184]} Another Western Buddhist philosophical trend has been the project to secularize Buddhism, as seen in the works of Stephen Batchelor.

In the West, Comparative philosophy between Buddhist and Western thought began with the work of Charles A. Moore, who founded the journal *Philosophy East and West*. Contemporary Western Academics such as Mark Siderits, Jan Westerhoff, Jonardon Ganeri, Miri Albahari, Owen Flanagan, Damien Keown, Tom Tillemans, David Loy, Evan Thompson and Jay Garfield have written various works which interpret Buddhist ideas through Western philosophy.

Part 13 – Tibetan Buddhism: Historical Development, Path of Tantra, & Ritual

These texts are selections from *Innate Happiness – A Buddhist Guidance Manual for Householder Yogis and Yoginis*, 3rd Edition, by Yogi Khenchen Drimed Dawa (2024)

Section 1 - Historical Development

An Introduction

Buddhism, like most religions, is heavily embedded with “myth and magic”, especially Tibetan Buddhism. We need to consider the meaning of these terms as we venture into the deep dive of these in Tibetan Buddhism. It is not that the previous views did not include these principles, but that Tibetan Buddhism takes them to the extreme among the various branches of Buddhism.

“**Myth and magic**” refer to a cultural mode of understanding the world through symbolic stories (myths) and supernatural practices (magic) that explain origins, purpose, and existence, often through shared themes like ritual, enchantment, and transformation, serving to give meaning and structure to life beyond purely scientific explanation. *Myths* are foundational narratives about people and the world, while *magic* involves rituals or beliefs to influence supernatural forces, with both providing deep cultural understanding.

Joseph Campbell is particularly noted for his examination of a variety of these in various cultures and described them as including **mythology, theology, philosophy, science, and magic** – yes, *all of these*, even science! He also described the understandings we encounter when our sense of existence is fully experienced. When this occurs, we are awakened into our own “reality – beyond meaning” (commonly referred to as “transcendent”), and we experience an affect that is neither thought nor feeling, but an interior impact. This view is embedded in various degrees of Tibetan Buddhism, but particularly what is considered to be the “ultimate” practice of Dzogchen. I hope that this brief explanation will enrich your understanding and experience of Buddhism in general, and Tibetan Buddhism specifically.

Historical Development

After the death of the Buddha, and perhaps during his life, Buddhists began to emphasize one or the other of two views of the Buddha, both found in the *Pali Canon*. He is depicted as both a wise and compassionate human teacher and a cosmic world teacher. These texts were primarily passed on in an oral tradition of memorization and recitation. The Buddha said that he gave his teaching, “for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world.” He is praised as the one person with an altruistic vision for the welfare and happiness of all devas and humans. He also described his liberation as including realization of all his previous lives as a **Bodhisattva**, one who seeks to attain liberation for the benefit of all sentient beings. Despite differences, these principles were adopted by those who followed both the Paths of Individual Liberation and Altruism, and later the Path of Tantra.

This set in motion elements that combined with other forces within the culture of India, particularly eastern India and along the Himalayas where the Vedas were less influential – tantra. Tantra refers to a loom or warp, a weaving together as in a system of principles, but also an expansion or stretching and liberation. No one knows for sure when or where it actually began, although there are several theories. But we do know that it was originally a separate movement apart from either Hinduism or Buddhism with which it is associated today.

In general, it appears to have been a counter-culture movement. The early tantric texts, which begin to appear in the mid fifth century, take a very contrarian view to that of the Vedic Indian culture at the time. That is, whatever was generally prohibited by the culture was accepted and practiced by Tantrikas. First, it was dominated by women in a patriarchal society, although men increasingly became part of the movement. They would go into the forest in small groups without regard to class, take off their clothes and engage in practices that included eating meat, drinking alcohol, taking drugs, and having sex outside of marriage, among others, that were prohibited by society.

This movement corresponded to another movement in Indian culture in which the female goddess rose to prominence, even becoming central figures in various rituals and practices. This transcended specific religions, so we see evidence for the movement in Buddhism, Hinduism, Shaivism, etc. at the same time. These religions often borrowed from each other, sometimes even retaining the names and descriptions, but other times modifying them to fit their particular view. There is also some evidence of influence from Chinese Taoism regarding sexual practices in which the male avoids orgasm. But, still, we don't really know, and may never know.

Nevertheless, the result of the rise of tantra and the goddess movements led to the absorption of tantra into both Buddhism and Hinduism, with rather different approaches. In Buddhism, the movement was largely "monasticized", i.e., adapted to fit the dominant monastic tradition and Buddhist principles. Since monks (and nuns) took vows of celibacy, they were generally prohibited from participating in a literal way. So the texts were adapted to a process that involved visualization rather than actual intercourse. Other ritual elements such as eating the "five meats" and drinking the "five nectars" were also modified into symbolic representations of those. On the other hand, not all Buddhists were monastics, so celibacy did not necessarily apply. So a more literal version of these practices survived among the yogis and yoginis and was also transmitted into Tibet as we will see.

Tantra

The principle impact of tantra on Buddhism was the use of "**yidams**" (or deities) in the meditation practices, although this began earlier during the period dominated by the Path of Altruism. In general, yidams are considered to be buddhas, not gods as used in other religious traditions. It is also important to recognize a distinction between the yidams of Buddhism and deities of other religions, especially Hinduism with which a number of them are shared. In Buddhism, all yidams are considered to be a manifestation of your mind. They do not "truly" exist in the same way that other religions often view deities or gods. Although some teachers object to this characterization, I have found that students in the West find the characterization of yidams as "tools," "symbols", or "archetypes" (idealized beings) for meditation practice to be helpful in understanding both the role of yidams in practice and their very nature in terms of training the mind. "Yidam yogas" support our process of transformation into a buddha, hence this path is sometimes referred to as the path of transformation.

Tantra practices or **yidam yoga** generally follow a standard plan, albeit with many variations. The basic plan is: (1) opening prayers, (2) generation of the yidam (visualization), (3) mantra recitation, (4) dissolution/meditation, and (5) closing prayers. The idea is to transform our *impure* body, speech, and mind into the *pure* body, speech, and mind of a buddha. You might say we practice and then "role play" being a buddha when we get off the cushion. These will be described in detail later.

The Three Buddha Bodies

As a buddha, you manifest in multiple mental forms. The primary division is into the three bodies (kayas) of a buddha. *Dharmakaya* (truth body or heart essence) represents the ultimate nature of mind. It is not a “body” per se, but none other than pure awareness (actual *clear light*, ultimate *bodhicitta*). The *Sambhogakaya* (mental body) is a spirit or energy form. It is said to be transparent like a rainbow and invisible to all but highly realized beings. It may be thought of as something like a daydream or a reflection in a window through which you can see the things on the other side as well. This is the form of the yidams visualized in the yidam yoga practices of the Path of Tantra. The third form or body is the *Nirmanakaya* (the physical form body of a buddha). This is the form taken by Shakyamuni Buddha.

The Second Buddha

Buddhism spread to other parts of the Middle East, China and Mongolia, SE Asia and Japan, where it developed in somewhat different ways, though all founded on the same basic principles. The surviving texts show remarkable consistency on the teachings attributed to the historical Buddha, but there have been other developments as Buddhism spread to other cultures, including Tibet.

We are not sure how Buddhism first came to Tibet. There are differing stories. We do know that the Indian king, Ashoka, sent Buddhist emissaries throughout much of the known world in the 3rd century BCE. By the 7th century CE, Tibet had encountered Buddhism as an invading force into China and other regions. The first “definitive establishment of Buddhism in Tibet occurred during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo (ca. 618-650).”³³ According to legend, he took two Buddhist wives to establish political alliances, one from Nepal and the other from China. Each brought Buddhist statues with them for which temples were built. In the latter case, the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha became known as Jowo Rinpoche and remains as one of the most sacred images in Tibet. The legends also tell us that King Songtsen Gampo sent a scholar to India to develop a script for the Tibetan language, which became the first written script and grammatical standards for the Tibetan language.

A century later Tibetan King Trisong Detsen (ca. 740-798) decided to construct the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. He invited the Indian scholar Shantarakshita as the abbot of Nalanda University to oversee the construction. However, after encountering a series of “natural disasters” – some say evil spirits who, each night, would destroy what was built that day – and resistance from government ministers from the indigenous Bon religion, he was forced to leave Tibet. In leaving, he recommended to the king that he invite the powerful tantric adept Padmasambhava³⁴ to come from India to overpower the spirits.

According to legend, the king invited Padmasambhava, who is said to have subdued many spirits along the way, as well as those obstructing the construction of Tibet’s first monastery, *Samye*. In addition, during his stay in Tibet, he is said to have traveled extensively and subdued more evil spirits, turning them into “dharma **protectors**” who promised to protect the dharma against other

³³ *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (revised edition) by John Powers, p. 144.

³⁴ There is almost no documentary historical evidence of Padmasambhava, yet a vast array of hagiographies were written to authenticate the “historical” evidence for what became the “Old School” or *Nyingma* lineage.

evil spirits and obstructions.³⁵ King Trisong Detsen was able to invite Shantarakshita to return and the monastery was consecrated around 767 CE, and the first seven Tibetans received monastic ordination.

The Indian *pandita* Vimalamitra was also invited to Tibet, and together these three figures are largely credited with the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. Padmasambhava, who also initiated the householder yogi and yogini tradition in Tibet, became regarded as the Second Buddha by Tibetans. Buddhism then spread, particularly among the educated classes for the next 50 years. Retroactively, during the second dissemination (see below), Padmasambhava became known as the “founder” of the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism.

The Second Dissemination into Tibet

In spite of his efforts to subdue and transform the evil spirits of Tibet into dharma protectors, not everyone was happy about the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. In particular the Bon ministers continued to resist. Sixty-five years later, after King Relbachen (reigned 815-836) spent lavishly on temples and monasteries, supported visiting teachers from India and sent Tibetan scholars to India, all while neglecting matters of state, the opposition intensified, and he was assassinated.

He was followed by King Lang Dharma (reigned 836-841), who was a devout Bon follower. According to legend, which according to recent scholars appears to be overstated. He is said to have persecuted Buddhism³⁶, closed the monasteries and temples in central Tibet, destroyed texts and statues, and forced the monks and nuns to return to lay life. Buddhism in that part of Tibet went underground. The harsh policies created a backlash that led to Lang Dharma's assassination. This was followed by a period of chaos until China gained control over parts of Tibet. After the collapse of the Yang dynasty in 905 CE, the emergent Mongol empire began to annex Tibet.

Buddhism remained relatively strong in Western Tibet. However, it was around 1000 CE that Indian scholars again began to visit Tibet and new monasteries began to be built. Buddhism in India was in decline under the influence of growing Hinduism, as well as several invasions of India by the growing Muslim forces.

One of the most famous to travel to Tibet at this time was Atisha (982-1054). Although records from the time show him as a minor player with little influence, he became known as a major figure in what became known as the second dissemination of Buddhism into Tibet. His disciples established the Kadampa order, which later became the Gelugpa order under Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419), the order of the Dalai Lamas. The second dissemination continued over the next 100 or so years. Some of these great figures and others may have been fleeing the series of Muslim invasions and the growing influence of Islam and Hinduism in India.

Out of this dissemination into Tibet came two other major orders of Tibetan Buddhism – the Sakyas and the Kagyus. The Sakyas rose to political dominance through collaboration with the Mongols.

³⁵ This is reminiscent of Catholic missionaries turning Celtic gods and goddesses into saints in Ireland to gain acceptance of the indigenous people.

³⁶ Scholarly evidence is that the main issue was the previous depletion of Tibet's wealth to expand Buddhism as well as a disregard for administration of the country.

After the Sakya empire fell apart, the Gelugpas, which had little interest in politics under Tsongkapa, ascended to power, particularly under the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). They retained dominance until Tibet was overthrown by the Chinese in 1950-51. His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama fled from Tibet to India in 1959.

As noted in the descriptions above, four main orders of Buddhism evolved in Tibet. Those four orders of Buddhism are the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug, each with their own subdivisions. Two other orders with long histories, more recently ascending to formal recognition are the Bon³⁷ and the Jonang.

Nyingma

The first order was the Nyingma lineage. The lineage is said to have originated from *Samantabhadra*, the **Primordial Buddha**, who passed it on to other Buddha forms, who passed it on to the first human recipient, Garab Dorje, and eventually to Padmasambhava and others. As noted above, we don't know how long Padmasambhava remained in Tibet. Stories vary considerably from a few months to many years. Nor do we know the degree of his actual influence. Scholars say it was minimal, but legend gives it great significance. There is evidence that numerous teachings, stories, etc. may have been attributed to him at a later time. Nevertheless, keep in mind that at this point in history, it was more about the story than what really happened.

One of the most important figures, in addition to Padmasambhava and King Trisong Detsen, was a "queen" of the King, Yeshe Tsogyal³⁸, who was given to Padmasambhava by the King (it was a different time and age). She became his most important disciple in Tibet, recording his teachings and hiding them away to be found later, at a time more appropriate for their understanding and use by the people. These became known as *termas*, hidden treasure texts, to be found by designated *tertons*, treasure revealers. Most of the important teachings of Padmasambhava are these types. Some of the best-known treasure revealers are Karma Lingpa, Ratna Lingpa, and Jigmed Lingpa. The best-known treasure text in the West is *The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Todal)*. A companion text is *The Six Bardo Teachings of Padmasambhava*, translated as *Natural Liberation*, the source of many of the practices in this book.

It is likely that many texts were hidden away during the destruction of temples during the persecution under Lang Dharma. These may be some of the texts that were found later, though that may also have led others to create their own to hide and later be "revealed." Although we don't know for sure, there is evidence that some, if not many, of the texts were written well after the time of Padmasambhava. The hidden treasure tradition later expanded from actual texts and other sacred objects to "mind transmissions" based on meditation, visions, or dreams. While accepted by many as legitimate forms of transmission of the Buddha dharma, others do not accept these as legitimate sources. Nevertheless, these treasures have become a way of keeping the tradition relevant over time (primarily Nyingma). All traditions need a way to do that if they are to survive.

³⁷ This is the same Bon noted earlier as the indigenous religion of Tibet. Subsequently, Bon divided into two branches, the indigenous animistic, shamanistic "black Bon" and the Buddhist "white Bon."

³⁸ There is no historical evidence for Yeshe Tsogyal, although the clan she is said to belong to has been documented. Nevertheless, she has become a significant figure in the Nyingma lineage.

Other significant figures in the Nyingma tradition are Longchen Rabjam (Longchenpa), Jigmed Lingpa, Patrul Rinpoche, Mipham Rinpoche, Dudjom Rinpoche, and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. The main text of the Nyingma tradition is the *Guhyaagarbha Tantra*. The main practices are called *Dzogchen*, the Great Perfection or Great Completion. These are considered to be the highest of all Buddhist teachings, the basics of which are included here in *Innate Happiness*. These consist of three main components described later in the Path of Great Perfection: the preliminary practices (*Khorde Rushen*), Cutting Through (*trekcho*), and Leaping Over (*togal*). The latter includes the “Four Visions” of Sky Gazing used to attain the “rainbow body,” discussed later.

Kagyu

The Kagyu order is also known as “the teaching (or practice) lineage,” and included some of the great yogis of India. Like the Nyingma, they are said to have originated from the Primordial Buddha, in this case manifested in the form of *Vajradhara*. This tradition traces its human origins to the great yogi and mahasiddha Tilopa (988-1096). His follower was Naropa (1016-1100) – the abbot of Nalanda University and teacher of the Six Yogas of Naropa, who faced numerous challenges from Tilopa just to receive his teachings. Marpa the Translator (1012-1097) became the first Tibetan in the lineage. He was a householder who taught that monastic life was only for those of limited capacities. His main student was the great Tibetan yogi Milarepa (1040-1123), best known for his *100,000 Songs of Milarepa*. His student Gampopa (1079-1153) became the founder of the monastic tradition for the order. The Kagyu order also helped the Nyingma order re-establish itself as a monastic order after nearly three centuries as a primarily householder tradition after Lang Dharma’s “persecution” of the order in the mid 800s.

The main Kagyu tantra is *Chakrasamvara* with *Vajrayogini* as a consort, who later became accepted as a female buddha in her own right. Advanced practices include the Six Yogas of Naropa and *Mahamudra*, as well as *chod* – the practice of Cutting Through Ego.

Sakya

The Sakya order originated as a split-off of the Nyingma by the Khon family of Tibet. It has remained a family lineage until just recently when it was announced that the next successor to the head of the order will be selected from the “most qualified.”

It was founded by Gonchok Gyelpo (1034-1102), who after the split sent his brother to India to study newer texts. The primary text selected was the mahasiddha Virupa’s *Lamdre*, path and result (are the same). Virupa was an accomplished scholar-monk in India, who followed tantra at night. His primary tantra practice was *Hevajra*. The order grew in political power until it controlled much of Tibet. In the early 12th century the Mongols grew in power under Ghingis Khan, who ordered the Sakya Pandita to surrender Tibet to him. Instead, the Pandita converted Khan to Buddhism, and Khan offered to protect Tibet, making the Sakya clan the spiritual preceptors of the Mongol Khans, who left administration of Tibet to the Tibetans. This arrangement continued with Kublai Khan and over several generations, until they lost interest in the 1300s and Tibet broke into factions.

Gelug

Gelug refers to a “system of virtue.” As we learned above, Atisha’s students formed the Kadampa order. Much later Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) led a significant change in the order. He was known as a great scholar, meditator, and philosopher, who spent long periods in meditative

retreat, wrote extensively to integrate sutra and tantra, emphasized the use of analytical reasoning, and followed strict rules for the monastic community. He believed that the Kadampa order had become too lax in its discipline and formed a revised version as the Gelug order. Tsongkapa is also known for preserving the *Kalachakra Tantra*, popular with the current Dalai Lama, and for re-establishing the celebration for Losar, the Tibetan New Year.

The Gelugpas had avoided political involvement but expanded rapidly in both Tibet and Mongolia. In 1578 Alta Khan invited Sonom Gyatso (1543-1588), the second reincarnation of Tsongkapa's main disciple, to Mongolia. He was given the title of *Talé* (ocean), implying "Ocean of Wisdom" or *Dalai Lama*. Thus, he became the 1st Dalai Lama. However, two earlier leaders in the Gelug order were posthumously also given the title, making Sonom Gyatso officially the 3rd Dalai Lama.

Later, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) became the first Dalai Lama to rule Tibet. He was considered to be a dynamic leader, scholar, teacher, tantric yogi, a prodigious writer, and able statesman. But this was not without some controversy. For political reasons he forced the order of Jonang lamas to convert to the Gelug order and punished several of the Kagyu monasteries. On the other hand, he was supportive of the Nyingmapas, with which his family had connections. With the rise of Chinese power over the Mongols, the Fifth Dalai Lama was recognized by the Chinese emperor in 1652.

He was followed by the infamous 6th Dalai Lama, who was more interested in women and poetry than religion or politics. There was then a long period of turmoil until the 13th Dalai Lama, who sought to modernize Tibet. A period of increasing conflict with China followed until they took over Tibet by military force and the current 14th Dalai Lama later fled to India in 1959.

The Gelugpas are known for their extensive program of study (especially philosophy), including post-graduate study and retreat, before tantric training. After completing 15-25 years of study and an examination by debate, the student may earn the *Geshe* degree (equivalent to a PhD in Buddhist studies). There is also an even more *advanced Geshe* degree for the most elite students to continue their study. Their practices include the *Lamrim*, Stages of the Path. The main tantras are *Yamantaka*, *Chakrasamvara*, and *Guhyasamaja*. In addition, the current Dalai Lama has done many public empowerments on the "*Kalachakra for World Peace*."

Bon

As previously mentioned, the indigenous Bon religion evolved into two branches, the original ("black Bon" – an animistic and shamanistic earlier tradition, with shamans with powers connected to the "other world" such as animating plants and rocks, healing, communicating with spirits and souls of the dead) and another order within Tibetan Buddhism ("white Bon"). The texts and concepts of the latter are essentially the same as other forms of Tibetan Buddhism, being most similar to the Nyingma order, including the practice of Great Perfection. One distinction is that they use different names for various yidams and date their sources to earlier times, even prior to Shakyamuni Buddha. Scholars believe the texts actually post-date other similar Buddhist sources. In addition, the Bon tradition has had cultural influences on Buddhism in Tibet through such things as prayer flags, prayer wheels, fire or smoke offerings, masks, dances, and so forth.

Jonang

While the Great Fifth Dalai Lama sought to extinguish the Jonang order for political reasons, and was thought to have done so, there have been fairly recent discoveries of very isolated

monasteries that are still active. The Jonang have been guardians of the *Kalachakra Tantra* and may have developed what some consider to be the highest philosophical position in all of Buddhism, called *Shentong*. The Dalai Lama has now recognized this order as a legitimate Buddhist order in the Tibetan tradition.

Section 2 - The Path of Tantra

The Path of Tantra is sometimes referred to as the “path of transformation”. It uses transformative methods to facilitate the process of becoming a buddha. But it also uses such processes to address specific afflictive emotions and mental obscurations that block or interfere with our progress on the path to liberation, compared to the use of renunciation on the Path of Individual Liberation and antidotes on the Path of Altruism.

According to the Path of Tantra, the other paths are not sufficiently complete, leaving some very subtle obscurations to total liberation; and the other paths take too long, potentially many eons or at least several lifetimes. Tantra is said to purify all remaining subtle obscurations and enable you to achieve liberation in this lifetime or at the time of death.

The Path of Tantra introduces the yogas of “yidam” practices to fast track the process of achieving liberation. There are three major divisions of these practices: the preliminary practices, the generation stage, and the completion stage. There are multiple elements within each. These practices are considerably more detailed than those of the previous paths, so I have divided the material in *Innate Happiness* into six chapters instead of three. Most of the practices described by Padmasambhava in his *Natural Liberation* text are in this and the Path of Great Perfection part of the book.

Many sources include the Path of Great Perfection within the Path of Tantra. However, it is sufficiently unique with no yidams, no generation stage, and no completion stage that I have separated it as its own path.

The root *tan* means to extend, such as to extend knowledge (as in transcendent knowledge). *Tantra* is also explained as a weaving together, such as the weaving together of ultimate and relative, personified as male and female in sexual union, sometimes literally, but more often symbolically.

No one knows for sure when or where tantra actually began, although there are several theories. Some sources trace the origin back to the fertility rituals of pre-history. Others trace it to the indigenous Indian tradition and their Vedic religion (2nd millennium BCE to 6th century BCE). However, the evidence is that tantra and the Vedic religion coexisted independently for some time. In addition, tantra appears most strongly in regions *not* dominated by the Vedas, i.e., Northwest, Bengal and South India, in the 4th century CE, as well as after the *Bhagavad Gita* (ca. 3rd century CE), along with the rapid growth of Hinduism.

The emergence of tantra coincides with another movement in India, the rise of the divine feminine. Minor female spirits were elevated to goddesses during the early centuries of the Common Era (CE). In *Buddhist Goddesses of India*, Miranda Shaw states,

“[Tantra] emerges from a period of strong female participation in Buddhism from the 1st century BCE through the 1st century CE. Nuns wielded substantial political, economic, and social power through their patronage practices and imperial influence, while their literary efforts and participation in public festivals and dramatic performances signal their cultural and civic prominence.”

By the 6th century, there is evidence of emphasis on the divine feminine with many yidams being elevated to goddess status. The first *surviving* written tantric texts emerged in the early fifth century (ca. 425 CE), by which time the practices had been integrated into monastic Buddhism, as well as Hinduism. A Chinese Buddhist, Hiuen Tsiang, who visited India around 630 CE, found that tantra was being extensively practiced by that time.

Tantra appears to have particularly protested against the rigid structure of the Vedic tradition. The Buddha had already objected to the caste system and other characteristics of the Vedic tradition prior to any evidence of the tantra movement. We do know that it was originally a separate movement apart from either Hinduism or Buddhism. In general, it was a “counter-culture movement”.

The early texts take a very contrarian view to that of the Indian Vedic culture at the time. That is, whatever was generally prohibited by the culture was accepted and practiced by tantricas. First, it was dominated by women³⁹ in a patriarchal society, although men increasingly became part of the movement. They would go into the forest to practice in secret. Reginald Ray in *Touching Liberation* writes about the call of the forest, “Within Indian culture, the forest was considered the ideal place for spiritual practice because, in the forest, there are no rules and there are no presiding authorities.” This was an ideal place to practice tantra.

So it appears that the practice of tantra was largely dominated by females rebelling against the male-dominated culture of India and its rigid social and religious norms. Resembling the American counter-culture movement of the 1960s, when the culture told them what to wear, they went naked. When they were told not to eat meat or drink alcohol, they ate meat and drank alcohol. When they were restricted in what they could do sexually, they had sex openly and freely. The early theme seemed to be one of intentionally violating all the rules. In the beginning, it appears that males participated only to consummate the ritual sex. They were not permitted to have an orgasm, perhaps in order to have intercourse with all of the women present, although there are other ritualistic reasons that may have been factors as well.

The result of the rise of tantra and the goddess movements led to their absorption into both Buddhism and Hinduism, with rather different approaches. In Buddhism, the movement was largely “monasticized,” i.e., adapted to fit the dominant monastic tradition and Buddhist principles. Since monks (and nuns) took vows of celibacy, they were generally prohibited from participating in a literal way. It became a highly symbolic practice said to significantly speed up the process of attaining liberation. We see the result in the generation and completion stage practices of the Path of Tantra. So the texts were adapted to a process that involved visualization rather than actual sexual union. Other ritual elements such as eating the “five meats” and drinking the “five nectars” were also modified later into symbolic representations of those. Nevertheless, some leaders such as Atisha and Tsongkapa rejected or even prohibited followers from doing these practices at all.

Nevertheless, while the tantric practices in the monastic tradition became highly ritualized, the yogis and yoginis continued to do the practices in a more literal way (as did some monks and nuns, who were often criticized for having done so). The practice with an actual consort (*karmamudra*) became known as the “lower” path or the “left hand” path. While it is rarely taught by lamas, since they are largely restricted from learning or doing these practices with an actual

consort, practice with a consort may be appropriate for householders, who rarely take the vows of celibacy that are taken by monks and nuns. (See Appendix G in *Innate Happiness*, 3rd edition.)

However, in Buddhism the core of the practice is not about sex at all. In fact, using sexual desire as the path is designed to transform the experience of sexual bliss into *transcendent bliss*, and in the process eliminate sexual desire, which is considered to be the major obscuration of the human realm on the path to liberation. Most teachers consider practice with an actual consort to be unnecessary and a potentially dangerous diversion. Thus, the predominant approach is through reciting and understanding the symbolic ritual to achieve transcendent bliss.

The principle impact of tantra on Buddhism, however, was the use of “yidams” in the meditation practices, although this began earlier during the period dominated by the Path of Altruism. However, it is important to recognize a distinction between the yidams of Buddhism and those of other religions, especially Hinduism with which a number of them are shared. In Buddhism, all yidams are considered to be a manifestation of your mind. They do not exist in the same way that other religions view deities or gods. Although some teachers object to this characterization, I have found that students in the West find the characterization as “tools” for meditation practice can be helpful in understanding both the role of yidams in practice and their very nature in terms of training the mind.

There are vast numbers of these figures in the pantheon of Tibetan Buddhism. In general, they may be divided into “peaceful” and “wrathful” categories. Both help us to overcome our “afflictive emotions” and “mental obscurations.” One key difference is in the methods they employ, i.e., peaceful or wrathful as indicated by their categories. However, the differences are not limited to that. Peaceful yidams are usually also associated with the “outer” tantras, that is, they are visualized as being outside of our bodies. Whereas wrathful yidams are usually a part of the “inner” tantras in which they become embodied in us and we become them. Visualizing yourself as a buddha may be the most effective part of these practices for realizing liberation, a “role play” found in psychology to be highly effective in other developmental processes.

Furthermore, peaceful yidams are usually visualized as single figures, whereas wrathful yidams usually have a consort and are visualized in sexual union (an esoteric or “radical” approach). Symbolically, the female represents transcendent wisdom and the male represents skillful means, such as lovingkindness and compassion.

Tantric practices are often further divided into two “stages”: generation and completion.⁴⁰ The **generation stage** is generation of a visualization of the yidam and their associated environment, the mantra recitation, and meditation (and may include other prayers or rituals). The generation stage is further divided into generation and completion “*phases*”. The **generation phase** is just the initial generation of the yidam. The **completion phase** is the next part of the **generation stage**, the dissolution of that visualization into emptiness, at which point you rest in meditative equipoise, followed by concluding prayers.

The **completion stage** refers to the inner practices such as the Six Yogas of Naropa or the Six Yogas of Niguma. These include practices such as inner heat (*tummo*), illusory body, dream yoga, *clear light*, transference (*phowa*), and the *bardos*.

⁴⁰ NOTE, these terms are not always used in a consistent manner, leading to confusion, so follow the terms here for clarification.

The basic approach of tantra is to understand yourself as a buddha (yidam). You practice being a buddha in body (visualization), speech (mantra), and mind (dissolution and meditation); then you arise for practice on the cushion and act as if you *are* a buddha. As the bumper sticker says, “What would Buddha do?” You then do your very best to do that as you continue to study and do formal “practice.”

While these practices are said to enable you to achieve liberation in this lifetime, most branches of the tradition also include advanced “nondual” practices of *Mahamudra* or *Dzogchen*. These practices focus on transcendent wisdom itself. The visualizations previously employed in the practices are no longer considered necessary (although some of the actual practices still use visualizations). *Mahamudra* and *Dzogchen* are directed at finalizing your attainment of liberation in this lifetime. The essence of the state of liberation is the mind of a buddha – often articulated as “emptiness” (more on that later) or “pure awareness” (later as well).

The Third Vow

Previously, I summarized the first two vows as do good, or at least no harm, for the benefit of all beings. In the third vow in Tibetan Buddhism we practice Pure View or sacred outlook – all beings are viewed as Buddhas, all sounds as mantra, all thoughts as the wisdom of Buddha, and all phenomena as a buddhfield (a pureland or abode of a Buddha). All are sacred. In the beginning you “imagine” this to be the case. With practice and understanding you begin to realize that this is “actually true” in our mind. There is no longer any need to “imagine” it to be true. In the ground of purity and equality, everything is none other than a natural mandala. Here it is sufficient to note that what we do off of the cushion is as important as, or even more important than, what we do on the cushion. Ethics form the foundation for what we do during our meditation, but also what we do afterwards during the rest of our day.

In addition, there are numerous other specific vows in the tantric tradition. In attempting to apply these, keep in mind the Four Reliances (rely on: 1 –the teaching not the teacher, 2 – the meaning not the words, 3 – the ultimate not the relative, and 4 – transcendent insight not knowledge). The core principles are the Fourteen Root Downfalls (also taken by ordained lay practitioners – Ngakpas and Ngakmas) Because there are different versions of these, I have listed what seem to be the most common, with some of the most common alternatives listed in brackets.

You are also expected to avoid the *Eighteen Bodhisattva Downfalls* from the Path of Altruism and the *Ten Unwholesome Actions* from the Path of Individual Liberation. While these are fairly self-explanatory, there are detailed teachings and/or texts available for those wanting further explanation, although you may need to seek explanations from a lama. A word of caution here, we are beginning to get into some very deep levels of Buddhism that include terminology that may not be familiar or understood by beginners. At this point, it is not important that you grasp each point in detail, but that you get a general idea of the kinds of ethics that are part of this level of vows.

The 14 Root Downfalls

- 1) Criticizing your vajra master.
- 2) Transgressing teachings of the Buddha.
- 3) Out of anger, being hostile toward your vajra brothers and sisters.
- 4) Forsaking love for all sentient beings.
- 5) Abandoning bodhicitta for the benefit of all sentient beings. [Or illicit sexual activity.]

- 6) Disparaging our own or others' beliefs.
- 7) Revealing secrets of the tantra to those not ready to understand.
- 8) Abusing your own embodied being as impure.
- 9) Indulging doubts about naturally pure dharma.
- 10) When qualified, refraining from stopping others from doing harm.
- 11) Claiming to be realized when not. [Or not living/practicing the view of emptiness, e.g., nihilism or permanence.]
- 12) Deriding the practices of others [including other religions].
- 13) Failing to understand or keep other samayas. [Or not taking what is offered as impure.]
- 14) Abusing or deriding a woman, the nature of wisdom.

There are other vows sometimes included in advanced tantra practice. Two of these are the Twenty-Five Branch Samayas (a highly symbolic representation that is beyond this text) and the Mother Tantra Vows.

The Preliminary Practices - Ngondro

As noted earlier, these practices are taught as preliminary to other practices. They are the very foundation for all that follows. For some, these practices are so powerful that they alone lead to liberation. Yet many in the West treat them lightly in order to move on to the sexier advanced practices. There is a lot of resistance to the commitment traditionally required, or perhaps silence about whether it has actually even been done.

Ngondro is divided into major parts. The first is known as the Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind or Common Ngondro: (1) the sufferings of samsara, (2) precious human life, (3) impermanence and death, and (4) karma and reincarnation. These are four of the basic principles of Tibetan Buddhism.

The second part is the Uncommon Ngondro, a more advanced practice, which includes: (1) refuge prayer with prostrations, (2) bodhicitta practices, (3) Vajrasattva purification practice, (4) mandala offerings, and (5) guru yoga.

Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind – The Common Preliminaries

The Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind are contemplations on (1) the suffering of samsara, (2) precious human life, (3) impermanence and death, and (4) karma and reincarnation. The primary purpose for contemplating these four “thoughts” is as a motivation for us to do the practices for training the mind. They are, to some degree, “fear-based” and you can argue numerous more positive reasons for doing these practices. Nevertheless, there is some value in contemplating these thoughts. And at a very minimum, they are such fundamental concepts within the tradition of which you need at least a basic understanding and experience to understand and appreciate the more advanced preliminary practices.

These may be assigned by the lama for a period of 1-3 months. One begins with a period of focus on the “Four Thoughts”, such as in *Words of My Perfect Teacher*.

The Uncommon Preliminaries

The traditional tantric path includes preliminary practices that are designed to establish your commitment and discipline in the practice. The uncommon preliminary practices are (1) refuge, (2) bodhicitta, (3) Vajrasattva purification, (4) mandala offerings, and (5) guru yoga. Each of these

preliminary practices is traditionally repeated 100,000 times as a preliminary to entering the tantric training. Many Western students react to this rather negatively. “Are you serious?” Keep in mind that this serves a dual purpose. One is actual preparation for the advanced practices. The other is evidence that you are serious! In reality, the exact number, sequence and combinations vary by school and teacher. Some of my teachers required the full 100,000 repetitions of each of their students. Another teacher required daily practice for a period of one year. Still another teacher required it only as a daily preliminary practice to other meditation practices.

These practices are normally done by ordained monks and nuns as the first part of a 3-year retreat and are completed in 6 to 9 months. But this is a daunting challenge for most lay practitioners in the West. At only 10 per day, it would take nearly 30 years to complete! With a stronger commitment of 100 per day, it is cut to a more realistic three years. Even that can be a time challenge depending on the exact text and the ritual elements required by the teacher. At the same time, three years can seem like an eternity to someone anxious to proceed to more advanced practices.

In addition to the approach mentioned above, based on number of repetitions, there are two other commitment alternatives: (1) based on a period of time, and (2) based on “signs of accomplishment”. And not all teachers require this.

As with the common preliminary practices, Padmasambhava seems to have recommended a period of at least three days for each (3 days X 5 practices = 15 days total), a nice 2-week retreat. Research shows that the brain learns better by number of sessions than number of hours. Alternately, one three-week format for each of the five quality daily practices in short sessions should have the same or better effect on training the mind than the “three-day” format suggested by Padmasambhava. More sessions can actually be even better!

Following this pattern, I also recommend that following the one or three-weeks model for each, lay practitioners should continue with a short preliminary practice prior to any other daily practice for the rest of this life. Of course, if you can and will, completing 100,000 of each is even better! Some teachers will not accept practitioners into the higher teachings without having completed these practices. However, in the Western tradition, this is less often followed. In any case, follow the instructions of your own lama, if you have one.

Here is another time-based alternative:

- 1) Refuge prayer with prostrations (360 hours)
- 2) Bodhicitta practices (360 hours)
- 3) Vajrasattva practice – mantras (360 hours)
- 4) Mandala offerings (360 hours)
- 5) Guru yoga – mantras (360 hours)

It is important to ask your lama.

In the third alternative, some lamas look for “signs of accomplishment”, which improve with the degree of commitment of the practitioner. These are dependent upon the lama, so contact them directly for this approach. There are some examples of signs at the end of this part of the text.

In addition, some lamas require that the practices be done daily as “preliminary” to other daily meditations for the rest of your life. Following an initial period, e.g., 6 months (one for the “Four Thoughts that Turn the Mind” and one each for the five “Uncommon Preliminary Practices”). There are abbreviated “daily preliminary practices” for this purpose.

There is one other recommendation to enhance training the mind. Keeping a daily journal of your practice and experiences will strengthen the effect of those practices. Just a few notes is all that it takes. Then each week and month, go back and review what you have done and the experiences you have had. This will help give you a sense of commitment and progress.

Do not expect miracles. This is a slow process, just like learning to play the piano. It takes patience and persistence above all. But the rewards are nothing short of amazing! Diligence (or joyful effort) does pay off. And it can take less time than some texts would have you believe. On the other hand, if you feel that you have not done well in the suggested timeframe, I recommend that you stick with that practice a bit longer until you really feel you have been successful.

Just one word of caution – I have also seen students who have so much doubt about their progress that they also allow themselves to get “stuck” at one level, when they should be pushing on toward higher realizations. So, there is a need for balance that only you will know. Of course, having a master available for consultation is also extremely beneficial and highly preferable, if you can.

Section 2: Meditation

The “Outer” Yidam Yogas

The unique power of tantra is to transform you into a buddha. One of the key psychological techniques employed here is acting as if you are already a buddha. You might call it “role play.” We are basically rehearsing in order to actually be a buddha. Yes, we will make mistakes, but just imagine that you are already a buddha and do your best to do what you think that a buddha would do as you go about your day. This also requires that you continue to study to better understand what a buddha would do in a wide variety of circumstances that occur daily.

Tantra practices fall into two main categories, outer and inner yogas. (1) In general, the outer tantras involve visualization of the yidam outside of us. They tend to be individual peaceful yidams dressed in royal garb and seated on a “moon disc.” (2) The inner tantras involve visualization of ourselves as the yidam. These tend to involve a wrathful yidam in sexual union with a consort, naked or wearing bone ornaments and/or animal skins, and usually standing or on a “sun and moon disc.” In some cases these are single wrathful females, often holding a staff (*khatvanga*) that symbolizes her consort.

The outer yidam yogas are sometimes described as having three categories, although these have largely been merged or focused on the latter: performance (*kria*), action (*upa*), and yoga tantras. (1) Performance tantra focuses on purification of *karma* (in body, speech and mind); *absolute* and *relative truths*, but separate; and *yidam* visualization (*yidam* as lord, yourself as servant). (2) Action tantra is essentially the same, but the *yidam* is understood as friend or helper. (3) Yoga tantra focuses on *absolute truth* as nonconceptual, empty, and luminous; *relative truth* as *mandala* of *yidams*; visualization of self as *yidam*; and actualization of divine (pure) body, speech, mind and actions.

Common examples of outer yidam yogas include Shakyamuni Buddha, *Vajrasattva*, Green and White Tara, *Avalokiteshvara* (*Chenrezig*), Medicine Buddha, *Amitabha*, Manjushri and so forth. Some yidam practices do not easily fit into various “categories” because the categories were developed after the yidam practices. For example, some semi-wrathful yidam practices have elements of both inner and outer categories. In the practices included in this chapter, for example, we will visualize ourselves as the actual yidam, either in the end or throughout the practice. This

is a step on the way to becoming a buddha, one of the reasons the Path of Tantra is considered to be more effective than the more abstract practices in the Paths of Individual Liberation and Altruism in that we can achieve liberation in this lifetime.

Padmasambhava only touches on the practices of yidam yoga as such. The previous *Vajrasattva* practice was one example of yidam yoga, but the focus was on purification, not the practice of yidam yoga as described here. Padmasambhava then goes on to include one additional reference with little explanation. You are given the option of choosing *one* practice. (I have adapted three additional short practices from which you may choose one, or continue with one after the other over a longer period of time.)

Keep in mind that these are a form of *shamata* – single-pointed calm abiding – with a more complex level of visualization that is intended to expedite the process of liberation. It also incorporates visualizing yourself as the yidam, a very powerful psychological practice used by world-class athletes, dancers, and many others to enhance performance. As noted above, you “act as if” you are a buddha, even off of the cushion.

First, following Padmasambhava, you follow a stepwise development of your *shamata* practice, leading into yidam practice. Yidams are imagined figures (buddhas) that help you develop your single-pointed calm abiding (generation stage practice) and wisdom (completion stage practice) by seeing yourself as the yidam. (But please don’t go around claiming *I am* this or that yidam. Anyone who would do that is not.) First, you will practice with a focus on an imaginary object. Then you will move to visualizing yourself as a hollow body with an imaginary object at your heart. Then you will advance to the actual yidam visualization.

Highest Yoga Tantra - Generation Stage

NOTE: Highest Yoga Tantra (HYT) requires at least one HYT empowerment. If you have not yet had such an empowerment (in person is preferred), there are very limited sources available online. (Conventionally one must have a personal connection with the lama.) HH the Dalai Lama has said that we need to become 21st century Buddhists and take advantage of the technology now available. He has given some online empowerments, but they have been only posted for a short time. One of my root gurus, HE Garchen Rinpoche has given online empowerments regularly, which are then saved on YouTube. There are direct links to a few of these on our website: AwamInstitute.org Resources-Links. Please take advantage of these if needed.

The “inner” tantras focus on more complex visualizations involving “wrathful” yidams to better eliminate the more challenging subtle obscurations blocking our path to liberation. They are usually in union with consorts and naked or wearing bone ornaments and perhaps animal skins. The visualization often includes an elaborate mandala loaded with symbolic meaning as well. This is the generation stage of Highest Yoga Tantra.

The generation stage is still a form of *shamata* – single-pointed calm abiding. The level of complexity has increased, taking our skill to a new level. These practices also help prepare us for the completion-stage practices on the path to liberation, as well as for the bardos and rebirth, in the event that we do not attain liberation in this lifetime or fail to transfer our consciousness to a Buddha pureland at the time of death. The bardos are what the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche humorously refers to as “Plan B.” Here we focus on “Plan A,” attaining liberation in this lifetime.

The basic outline of the generation-stage practices is the visualization, mantra recitation, dissolution, and meditation. As we will soon see, this is an oversimplification. There tend to be

three lengths of *sadhana* practice texts for these practices. There is a long text, often including an elaborate *ganachakra* or *tsok* feast that is primarily used on special occasions or during retreat. These may take several hours to complete. There may also be a middle length *sadhana* that is more convenient for shorter sessions during retreat or weekend practice. These often take about an hour to complete and are ideal for group practice. And often there is a short daily-practice *sadhana* for everyday use. These are particularly helpful for householders with limited time for formal practice, especially during the week.

The main purpose of Highest Yoga Tantra is to actually become a buddha. First you visualize or “pretend” to be the yidam/buddha, then you become one. We move from an “impure” to a “pure” state of being. Here we are generating ourselves as the yidam in an impure form. In the completion stage, we will engage in practices to then transform our impure body, speech and mind into the pure body, speech and mind of a buddha.

As a buddha, you manifest in multiple forms. The primary division is into the three bodies (*kayas*) of a buddha. The **Truth Body** (*Dharmakaya*) represents the ultimate nature of mind. It is not a “body” per se, but none other than pure awareness (actual *clear light*, ultimate *bodhicitta*). The “celestial” **Enjoyment Body** (*Sambhogakaya*) is a spirit or energy form. It is said to be transparent like a rainbow and invisible to all but highly realized beings. It may be thought of as something like a daydream or a reflection in a window through which you can see the things on the other side as well. This is the form of the yidams visualized in the yidam yoga practices of the Path of Tantra. Third is the **Form Body** (*Nirmanakaya*) – the physical form body of a buddha.⁴¹ This is the form taken by Shakyamuni Buddha.

Many sources articulate these “bodies” as separate entities. However, other sources say that a buddha has all three bodies at the same time (called *Svabhavikakaya*) and there cannot be one without the others. What appears to be a contradiction can be “explained” rather simply. In Buddhist terminology you would say it is not one nor is it many (three in this case); it just is.

Trying to explain the ultimate is like a two-edged sword. It is helpful and even necessary to provide some explanation to help individuals understand and progress in their practice. However, anything that is said has the potential to be taken as “real,” creating yet another obscuration to your true understanding. As with most attempts to describe or explain the ultimate, it is best left unsaid as any such effort only makes it something that it is not. This becomes much easier to understand and accept with years of experience (vs. eons of lifetimes).

When you visualize the yidam, it is very important that you not view them as an independent, existent being as is done in other religions. They are not “gods.” They are a manifestation of your mind, like a dream or reflection in a mirror. More specifically, they are the wisdom that manifests in the form of the yidam, mantra, and mandala.

Secret Mantra

Tantric practices are sometimes referred to as “secret mantra.” Traditionally, these practices were passed down one-on-one from master to disciple, and they were not spoken of outside of that relationship. More recently, as many of these works have been published, they have been described as being “self-secret,” meaning that only those who have had empowerments and teachings are able to actually read them and have sufficient interest to understand them. (Some

⁴¹ There is also another “Form Body” described in the texts. This is called *rupakaya*, which is a combination of the *Sambhogakaya* and *Nirmanakaya*.

texts are now being released as “restricted” texts, usually based on honest of the buyer’s qualification to make the purchase.)

The seventh of the Fourteen Root Downfalls is “revealing secrets of the tantra to those not ready to understand.” Some sources list four secrets: (1) the profound view of tantra, (2) the deep conduct, (3) the name and form of the yidam, and (4) the signs of accomplishment. Please respect and honor the teachings. This is a sign of your own accomplishment.

The Generation Stage

There are numerous tantric practices. The new (*sarma*) schools classify them into three categories: father, mother and non-dual. There is no uniform agreement on the meaning of these classifications, nor the attribution of tantras to the classifications themselves. As outlined in chapter 3, in the Nyingma lineages, tantras are divided into Mahayoga (generation stage), Anuyoga (completion stage), and non-dual (Dzogchen or Ati Yoga stage).

The content of tantras varies considerably, but there are significant similarities. For the most part they follow a somewhat similar pattern. What follows is a moderately detailed outline of the key characteristics you are likely to find in these texts. For a more detailed explanation, I recommend the section in *Innate Happiness*, 3rd edition (starting at the bottom of p. 201) or for even more details in *The Generation Stage in Buddhist Tantra* by Gyatrul Rinpoche.

Highest Yoga Tantra - Completion Stage

The Highest Yoga Tantra completion stage practices are often embedded into the **Six Yogas** (or Dharmas) of Naropa or the Six Yogas of Niguma. The six actual practices vary somewhat with different sources packaging them in different combinations. In general these include vase breathing, vajra recitation, channels, winds, and drops (*tsalung*) and/or inner heat (*tummo*), illusory body, dream yoga, *clear light*, transference of consciousness (*phowa*), and the intermediate state (the *bardos*). The exact content of these also varies, adding to the rich array of practices available in the Path of Tantra.

Phases of Completion-Stage Practices

First you master the previous generation stage of yidam yoga practice to the point of having a stable experience of meditation and post-meditation with Pure View – seeing all beings as buddhas, all sounds as mantra, all thoughts as wisdom of the buddhas, and all phenomena as a pure buddhfield. Although still “visualized” as such, this should be relatively continuous with few gaps.

Then you continue the practices of the completion stage. One classification system organizes phases of completion stage practices into six categories. Here I have also included the main practices used by Padmasambhava. This is one outline showing the links of the practices to the accomplishments on the path:

1. *Physical isolation* – through **vase breathing**, vital energies (winds) enter and abide in the central channel; and you are isolated from viewing the world as ordinary.
2. *Verbal isolation* – through **vajra recitation**, vital energies dissolve into the central channel at the heart chakra, but not into the heart chakra; you are isolated from ordinariness.

3. *Mental isolation* – through *tummo* and *tsalung* with four blisses and four empties, as well as dissolution into *clear light*, the “empties” manifest due to the dissolution of the winds into the indestructible drop at the heart; you are isolated from concepts.
4. *Illusory body* – subtle winds manifest as the yidam; practice with a tantric consort causes the winds to dissolve into the indestructible drop; the **impure illusory body** approaches the **pure illusory body** of a buddha.
5. *Clear light*⁴² – from the most fundamental level of consciousness (*rigpa*) – pure awareness, you experience emptiness directly; the winds are completely dissolved, and **semblant clear light** approaches the **actual clear light**.
6. *Learner’s union* – the winds begin to move again through union with the consort; actual *clear light* and pure illusory body arise as one taste and you achieve **Buddhahood**.

I have organized the completion-stage practices following the above pattern. As with so many other cases, there are differences in the approaches based on the school, lineage, and in some cases, the lama. We begin with the practices of purification, vase breathing, vajra recitation, channels, winds, and drops (*tsa, lung, tige* or just *tsalung*), and actual inner heat (*tummo*). Then we move to the four joys or blisses and the dream yogas, the pure illusory body with the four empties, and finally *clear light*.

⁴² Terms vary in different sources on the term “clear light”

PART 14 –Padmasambhava – History, Role, Teachings, Guru Yoga

Based on Awam, Google, and other sources

Padmasambhava ('Born from a Lotus'), also known as **Guru Rinpoche** ('Precious Guru'), was a Legendary tantric master from Oddiyana, who fully revealed the Vajrayana in Tibet, circa 8th – 9th centuries.

Padmasambhava later came to be viewed as a central figure in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. Starting from around the 12th century, hagiographies concerning Padmasambhava were written. These works expanded the profile and activities of Padmasambhava, now seen as taming all the Tibetan spirits and gods, and concealing various secret texts (*terma*) for future tertöns. Nyima Özer (1124–1192) was the author of the *Jeweled Rosary*, the earliest biography of Padmasambhava. He has been called "one of the main architects of the Padmasambhava mythos – who first linked Padmasambhava to the Great Perfection in a high-profile manner."

According to traditional hagiographies, his students include the great female masters Yeshe Tsogyal and Mandarava. The contemporary Nyingma school considers Padmasambhava to be a founding figure. The Nyingma school also traditionally holds that its Dzogchen lineage has its origins in Garab Dorje through a lineage of transmission to Padmasambhava.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the teachings of Padmasambhava are said to include an oral lineage (*kama*), and a lineage of the hidden treasure texts (*termas*). Tibetan Buddhism holds that Padmasambhava's *termas* are discovered by fortunate beings and tertöns (treasure revealers) when conditions are ripe for their reception. Padmasambhava is said to appear to tertöns in visionary encounters, and his form is visualized during guru yoga practice, particularly in the Nyingma school. Padmasambhava is widely venerated by Buddhists in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, the Himalayan states of India, and in countries around the world.

History

Early sources

One of the earliest chronicle sources for Padmasambhava as a historical figure is the *Testament of Ba* (c. 9th–12th centuries), which records the founding of Samye Monastery under the reign of King Trisong Detsen (r. 755–797/804). Other early manuscripts from Dunhuang also mention a tantric master associated with kilaya rituals named Padmasambhava who tames demons, though they do not associate this figure with Trisong Detsen.

According to the *Testament of Ba*, Trisong Detsen had invited the Buddhist abbot and Indian philosopher Śāntarakṣita (725–788) to Tibet to propagate Buddhism and help found the first Buddhist monastery at Samye. However, certain events like the flooding of a Buddhist temple and lightning striking the royal palace had caused some at the Tibetan court to believe that the local gods were angry. [Other variations as well]

Śāntarakṣita was sent to Nepal, but was then asked to return after the anti-Buddhist sentiments had subsided. On his return, Śāntarakṣita brought Padmasambhava who was an Indian tantric adept from Oddiyana. Padmasambhava's task was to tame the local spirits. The Tibetan sources then explain how Padmasambhava identified the local gods and spirits, called them out and threatened them with his powers. After they had been tamed, the construction of Samye went ahead. Padmasambhava was also said to have taught various forms of tantric Buddhist yoga.

According to one source, the royal court began to suspect that Padmasambhava wanted to seize power, he was asked to leave by the king. The "Testament of Ba" also mentions other miracles by Padmasambhava, mostly associated with the taming of demons and spirits as well as longevity rituals and water magic.

Lewis Doney notes that while numerous texts are associated with Padmasambhava, the most likely of these attributions are *The Garland of Views*, a commentary on the 13th chapter of the *Guhyagarbha tantra* and *A Noble Noose of Methods*, *The Lotus Garland*, an exposition of *Mahayoga*. The former work is mentioned in the work of *Nubchen Sangye Yeshe* (c. 9–10th centuries and one of HH Khenchen Lama's earlier incarnations) and attributed to Padmasambhava.

Development of the mythos

While in the eleventh and twelfth centuries there were several parallel narratives of important founding figures like Padmasambhava, *Vimalamitra*, *Songtsän Gampo*, and *Vairotsana*, by the end of the 12th century, the Padmasambhava narrative grew to dominate the others, becoming the most influential legend of the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet.

The first full biography of Padmasambhava is a *terma* (treasure text) said to have been revealed by Nyangrel Nyima Özer, abbot of Mawochok Monastery. This biography, *The Copper Palace*, was very influential on the Padmasambhava hagiographical tradition. The narrative was also incorporated into Nyima Özer's history of Buddhism, the *Flower Nectar: The Essence of Honey*.

The tertön Guru Chöwang (1212–1270) was the next major contributor to the Padmasambhava tradition, and may have been the first full life-story biographer of *Yeshe Tsogyal*.

The basic narrative of *The Copper Palace* continued to be expanded and edited by Tibetans. In the 14th century, the Padmasambhava hagiography was further expanded and re-envisioned through the efforts of the *Orgyen Lingpa* (1323 – c. 1360). It is in the works of Orgyen Lingpa, particularly his *Lotus Testament* (1352), that the "11 deeds" of Padmasambhava first appear in full. The *Lotus Testament* is a very extensive biography of Padmasambhava, which begins with his ordination under *Ananda* and contains numerous references to Padmasambhava as a "second Buddha."

Hagiography

Birth and early life

Hagiographies of Padmasambhava such as *The Copper Palace*, depict Padmasambhava being born as an eight-year-old child appearing in a lotus blossom floating in *Lake Dhanakosha* surrounded by a host of *dakinis*, in the kingdom of *Oddiyana*.

However, there are other birth stories as well, another common one states that he was born from the womb of Queen Jalendra, the wife of king Sakra of Oddiyana and received the name Dorje Duddul (Vajra Demon Subjugator) because of the auspicious marks on his body were identified as those of a demon tamer.

Nepal

Padmasambhava and *Mandarava* are also said to have travelled together to the *Maratika Cave* in eastern Nepal to practice long life rituals of *Amitāyus*. It was the place where, after the penance, they achieved the blessing of immortality from lord *Amitāyus*, the Buddha of long life. In the village of *Pharping*, located on the southern edge of *Kathmandu* district, the Guru is said to have

done long penance combining the practices of Yangdak Heruka and Vajrakilaya, and attained the ultimate Mahamudra.

Tibet

Padmasambhava hagiographies also discuss the activities of Padmasambhāva in Tibet (see above). The subjection of subduing deities and demons is a recurrent theme in Buddhist literature. Because of his role in the founding of Samye monastery, the first monastery in Tibet, Padmasambhava is regarded as the founder of the Nyingma school ("Ancients") of Tibetan Buddhism. Padmasambhava's activities in the Tibet include the practice of tantric rituals to increase the life of the king as well as initiating king Trisong Detsen into tantric rites.

The various biographies also discuss stories of Padmasambhava's main Tibetan consort, princess Yeshe Tsogyal ("Knowledge Lake Empress"), who became his student while living in the court of Trisong Detsen. She was among Padmasambhava's three special students (along with the King, and Namkhai Nyingpo) and is widely revered in Tibet as the "Mother of Buddhism". Yeshe Tsogyal became a great master with many disciples and is widely considered to be a female Buddha.

Padmasambhava is said to have hidden numerous *termas* in Tibet for later discovery with her aid, while she compiled and elicited Padmasambhava's teachings through the posing of questions, and then reached Buddhahood in her lifetime. Many thangkas and paintings depict Padmasambhava with consorts at each side, Mandarava on his right and Yeshe Tsogyal on his left.

The Nyingma school traces its lineage of Dzogchen teachings to Garab Dorje through Padmasambhava's *termas*.

Bhutan

Bhutan has many important pilgrimage places associated with Padmasambhava. He visited Bhutan three times. Guru Rinpoche first came to Bhutan in 810 A.D. from Nepal via Nabji Korphu in the Trongsa District. The second and third visits were from Tibet. The most famous site of Guru Rinpoche is the "Tiger's Nest" monastery which is built on a sheer cliff wall about 900m above the floor of Paro valley. It was built around the *Taksang Senge Samdup cave*, where Padmasambhava is said to have meditated.

The Eight Manifestations of Padmasambhava

The eight manifestations are also seen as Padmasambhava's biography that spans 1500 years. As Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche states,

When Guru Padmasambhava appeared on earth, he came as a human being. In order to dissolve our attachment to dualistic conceptions and destroy complex neurotic fixations, he also exhibited some extraordinary manifestations.

In accord, Rigpa Shedra also states the eight principal forms were assumed by Guru Rinpoche at different points in his life. Padmasambhava's eight manifestations, or forms, represent different aspects of his being as needed, such as wrathful or peaceful for example.

The eight manifestations of Padmasambhava belong to the tradition of Terma, the Revealed Treasures (Tib.: *terma*) with descriptions omitted:

1. **Guru Pema Gyalpo** of Oddiyana, meaning "Lotus King", manifests as a child four years after the Maha-pari-nirvana of Buddha Shakyamuni, as predicted by the Buddha. He is shown with a reddish pink complexion and semi-wrathful, seated on a lotus and wearing yellow-orange robes, a small damaru in his right hand and a mirror and hook in his left hand, with a top-knot wrapped in white and streaming with red silk.
2. **Guru Nyima Ozer**, meaning "Ray of Sun", the Sunray Yogi, semi-wrathful, manifests in India simultaneously with Guru Pema Gyalpo, often portrayed as a crazy wisdom wandering yogi, numerous simultaneous emanations, illuminates the darkness of the mind through the insight of Dzogchen.
3. **Guru Loden Chokse**, meaning roughly "Super Knowledge Holder", peaceful, manifests after Guru Pema Gyalpo departs Oddiyana for the great charnel grounds of India.
4. **Guru Padmasambhava**, meaning "Lotus Essence", a symbol of spiritual perfection, peaceful, manifests and teaches Mandarava, transforming negative energies into compassionate and peaceful forms.
5. **Guru Shakyas Senge** of Bodh Gaya, meaning "Lion of the Sakyas", peaceful, manifests as Ananda's student and brings King Ashoka to the Dharma, Lion of the Sakyas, embodies patience and detachment, learns all Buddhist canons and Tantric practices of the eight Vidyadharas.
6. **Guru Senge Dradrog**, meaning "The Lion's Roar", wrathful, subdues and pacifies negative influences, manifests in India and at Nalanda University, the Lion of Debate, promulgator of the Dharma throughout the six realms of sentient beings.
7. **Guru Pema Jungne**, meaning "Born from a Lotus", manifests before his arrival in Tibet, the Vajrayana Buddha that teaches the Dharma to the people, embodies all manifestations and actions of pacifying, increasing, magnetizing and subjugating.
8. **Guru Dorje Drolu**, meaning "Crazy Wisdom", very wrathful, manifests five years before Guru Pema Jungne departs Tibet, 13 emanations for 13 Tiger's Nests caves, the fierce manifestation of Vajrakilaya (wrathful Vajrasattva) known as "Diamond Guts", the comforter of all, imprinting the elements with Wisdom-Treasure, subduer for degenerate times.

Iconography

Padmasambhava has one face and two hands. He is wrathful and smiling. He blazes magnificently with the splendor of the major and minor marks. His two eyes are wide open in a piercing gaze. He has the youthful appearance of an eight-year-old child. His complexion is white with a tinge of red. He is seated with his two feet in the royal posture.

On his head he wears a five-petalled lotus hat, which has three points symbolizing the three kayas, five colors symbolizing the five kayas, the sun and moon symbolizing skillful means and wisdom, a vajra top to symbolize unshakable samadhi, and a vulture's feather to represent the realization of the highest view.

In his right hand, he holds a five-pronged vajra at his heart. His left hand rests in the gesture of equanimity. In his left hand he holds a skull-cup brimming with nectar, containing the vase of longevity that is also filled with the nectar of deathless wisdom and ornamented on top by a wish-fulfilling tree.

Cradled in his left arm he holds the three-pointed khatvanga (trident) symbolizing the Princess consort Mandarava, one of his two main consorts. who arouses the wisdom of bliss and emptiness, concealed as the three-pointed khatvanga. Other sources say that the khatvanga represents the Lady Yeshe Tsogyal, his primary consort and main disciple.

Attributes

Pureland paradise

His pureland paradise is the Copper-Colored Mountain.

Samantabhadra and Samantabhadri

Padmasambhava said:

My father is wisdom and my mother is voidness.

My country is the country of Dharma.

I am of no caste and no creed.

I am sustained by perplexity; and I am here to destroy lust, anger and sloth.

— *Guru Padmasambhava*

Associated practices

From the earliest sources to today, Padmasambhava has remained closely associated with the Kila (phurba) dagger and also with the deity Vajrakilaya (a meditation deity based on the kila).

Vajra Guru mantra

The *Vajra Guru mantra* is: **Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Pema Siddhi Hung**. This mantra does require transmission and it is usually requested that no one shares the mantra, but it can only be read.

In the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, particularly in Nyingma, the Vajra Guru mantra is held to be a powerful mantra engendering communion with the Three Vajras of Padmasambhava's mindstream and by his grace, all enlightened beings. The 14th century tertön Karma Lingpa wrote a famous commentary on the mantra.

According to the great tertön Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, the basic meaning of the mantra is:

It begins with **Om Ah Hung**, which are the seed syllables of the three vajras (of body, speech and mind). **Vajra** signifies the dharmakāya since it cannot be 'cut' or destroyed by the elaborations of conceptual thought. **Guru** signifies the sambhogakāya, which is 'heavily' laden with the qualities of the aspects of union. **Padma** signifies the nirmāṇakāya, the radiant awareness of the wisdom of discernment arising as the lotus family of enlightened speech. Remembering the qualities of the great Guru of Oḍḍiyāna, who is inseparable from these three kāyas, pray with the continuous devotion that is the intrinsic display of the nature of mind, free from the elaboration of conceptual thought. All the supreme and ordinary accomplishments — **Siddhi** — are obtained through the power of this prayer, and by thinking, "Hung"! May they be bestowed upon my mindstream, this very instant!"

Seven Line Prayer

Padmasambhava on Enlightenment for Female Seekers

These contents may be used for **educational purposes only** and not for bastardization.

— Khenchen Drimed Dawa

"The basis for realizing enlightenment is a human body. Male or female, there is no great difference. But if she develops the mind bent on enlightenment, the woman's body is better."

The **Seven Line Prayer** to Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche) is a well-known prayer that is recited by many Tibetans daily and is said to contain the most sacred and important teachings of Dzogchen:

Hung! In the north-west of the land of Oḍḍiyāna
 In the heart of a lotus flower,
 Endowed with the most marvelous attainments,
 You are renowned as the 'Lotus-born',
 Surrounded by many hosts of ḍākinīs
 Following in your footsteps,
 I pray to you: Come, inspire me with your blessing!
Guru Padma Siddhi Hung.

Mipham Rinpoche composed a famous commentary to the Seven Line Prayer called *White Lotus*. It explains the meaning of the prayer in five levels of meaning intended to catalyze a process of realization.

Guru Yoga

Numerous variations of Guru Yoga practices have been developed. Guru Yoga is a tantric devotional practice in Vajrayana Buddhism, where practitioners visualize themselves as a deity, their guru, and then unite their mind with the guru's wisdom. It involves cultivating devotion, faith, and respect for the guru, leading to blessings and a deeper understanding of reality.

In Vajrayana, guru yoga unites their mindstream with the mindstream of the body, speech, and mind of their guru. Guru yoga is akin to deity yoga since the guru (who can be a Buddha, a historical figure like Padmasambhava, or a living person) is visualized in the same manner as with a meditational deity. The process of guru yoga may entail visualization of a refuge tree as an invocation of the lineage, with the 'root guru' channeling the blessings of the entire lineage to the practitioner. The guru may be visualized as above the meditator, in front of them, or in their heart. Guru yoga may also include a liturgy, prayer, or mantra, such as the "Seven Line Prayer" of Padmasambhava.

As in other Buddhist traditions, an attitude of reverence for the teacher, or guru, is highly prized. A guru or lama is seen as an essential guide during tantric practice. Without the guru's example, blessings, and guidance, genuine progress in tantra is held to be impossible for all but the most keen and gifted. One particular feature of the Tantric view of teacher student relationship is that in Tibetan Buddhist tantra, one is instructed to regard one's guru as an awakened Buddha.

At the beginning of a public teaching, a lama will do prostrations to the throne on which he will teach due to its symbolism, or to an image of the Buddha behind that throne, then students will do prostrations to the lama after he is seated. Merit accrues when one's interactions with the teacher are imbued with such reverence in the form of guru devotion, a code of practices governing them that derives from Indian sources. By such things as avoiding disturbance to the peace of mind of one's teacher, and wholeheartedly following his prescriptions, much merit accrues and this can significantly help improve one's practice.

Key Aspects of Guru Yoga

1. *Devotion and Faith:* Guru Yoga emphasizes cultivating deep devotion and faith in one's guru, recognizing their enlightened qualities.
2. *Visualization:* The practice involves visualizing the guru as a deity or in their own form, often with the practitioner also visualizing themselves as a deity.
3. *Uniting Minds:* A key aspect is the union of the practitioner's mind with the guru's wisdom mind, which is thought to bring blessings and spiritual progress.
4. *Inner and Outer Guru:* Guru Yoga can involve both an outer teacher and an inner, more profound guru, often identified with the Buddha's nature or one's own true nature.
5. *Importance of Oral Transmission:* The practice is often taught through direct oral transmissions from the guru, emphasizing the role of a teacher in spiritual development.
6. *Four Empowerments:* Some Guru Yoga practices involve requesting and receiving four empowerments from the guru, symbolizing enlightened body, speech, mind, and wisdom.

Benefits of Guru Yoga:

1. *Reduced Ego and Pride:* Cultivating devotion can help diminish ego and pride, allowing for clearer spiritual perception.
2. *Increased Compassion:* The practice can lead to a greater sense of compassion and connection with all beings.
3. *Reduced Suffering:* By working with the guru's blessings, practitioners can overcome mental and emotional obstacles.
4. *Clearer Understanding:* Guru Yoga can foster a deeper understanding of the nature of reality and one's own true nature.
5. *Blessings:* The practice is seen as a way to receive blessings from the guru, which can help to overcome obstacles and facilitate spiritual growth.

Different Approaches to Guru Yoga

Dzogchen Level: Some Guru Yoga practices focus on experiencing the ultimate guru, which is one's own true nature. In essence, Guru Yoga is a powerful practice that connects practitioners to the wisdom and guidance of their teacher, ultimately leading to spiritual growth and enlightenment. Here is one example used at the Awam Tibetan Buddhist Institut

Rigpa Guru Yoga:

Ah, Rigpa Guru Padma Gyalpo,
I take refuge in the self-recognizing nature of my mind.
Because of their ignorance sentient beings are wandering in samsara,
May all sentient beings reach the great liberation.

By recognizing their nature as the primordial awareness of Samantabhadra,
All demons and malicious forces, even their concepts and names fall apart.
The nature of all phenomena is dharmadhatu and
The unchanging self-arising wisdom is your only protection.

Jnana Rakcha Hung

Phenomena perceived through the six kinds of consciousness (the five senses and
the mind consciousness) without attachment are recognized as the rays of rigpa,
All surroundings appear as Buddha fields and sentient beings as Buddhas,

Everything is the blessing of wisdom,

Jnana Ahwe Shaya Pem

Primordial self-arising ultimate Padmasambhava
Appears as my rigpa space – there is no face, no limbs, no image,
Primordial rays of rigpa fully encompass the three kayas
Without the impurity coming from discursive meditation.

Primordial nature of my rigpa is my guru,
There is no coming and going – In every moment I welcome his presence.
Everything firmly abides in dharmadhatu.
I prostrate to the understanding of the real nature that eliminates ignorance.

I offer recognition of the Buddha nature in objects of the six kinds of consciousness.
I praise the nature of the Vajra Three Kayas of the body, speech and mind.
In the great unchanging dharmadhatu
All moral ethics are encompassed in the pure guru mind.

I recognize the deepest empty nature of all sounds and speech,
In all my activity, I recognize its dharmadhatu nature and recite the mantra:

Recite the mantra of Guru Rinpoche as many times as you can:

Om Ah Hung Benza Guru Peme Siddhi Hung

Dedication:

With all the good virtue I have accumulated in samsara and nirvana,
I pray that discursive thought of all sentient beings would be eliminated,
That they would achieve the ultimate liberation and
Obtain the rainbow body just like Rigpa Guru Padmasambhava's.

PART 15: Patrul Rinpoche

*Advice from Me to Myself
and A Lullaby to Awaken the Heart: Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra & Commentary*

Background (from Wikipedia)

Patrul Rinpoche was born in 1808. He studied Longchen Rabjam's *Trilogy of Finding Comfort and Ease*, *The Way of the Bodhisattva* (Bodhicaryavatara), Guhyagarbha Tantra and many other works. He received the reading transmission for the Translated Word of the Buddha (Kangyur) and commentaries (Tengyur) in their entirety, together with the writings of many masters of the old and new translation schools.

He received instruction on the *Longchen Nyintik Ngondro* some twenty-five times. In addition, he received instruction on *tsa-lung* practice and Dzogchen. Do Khyentse Rinpoche introduced him to the pure awareness of *rigpa*. He received many teachings from Dzogchen Rinpoche Mingyur Namkhé Dorje and other masters.

It is said, attained a realization that was as vast as space.

From the age of thirty, he travelled to Serthar, Yarlung Pemako and other places, teaching extensively on the *Secret Essence Tantra*. To assemblies in Serthar and in the upper and lower regions of the Do valley he taught on *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, Mani Kambum, *Aspiration Prayer of Sukhavati* and so on. He made efforts to put an end to robbery and banditry and abolished the custom of serving meat at special gatherings.^[5] He also went to Dzamthang and studied the Six Yogas with Tsangpa Ngawang Chöjor, and he went to Minyak, where he had extensive discussions with Dra Geshe Tsultrim Namgyal on the prajnaparamita and other topics.

He turned the wheel of dharma teaching many topics. In particular, he taught on *The Way of the Bodhisattva* for several years in succession, giving extensive explanations. He established a teaching center in the vicinity of Dzagyal Monastery and taught many masters of the Nyingma school, including Jikme, Tertön Sogyal Lerab Lingpa, Jamgon Ju Mipham Rinpoche, and others. In addition, his disciples included many masters of the Sakya, Gelugpa and Kagyü schools. Patrul Rinpoche died in 1887.

Many of Patrul Rinpoche's writings were never carved into printing blocks. Those which were printed can be found *The Way of the Bodhisattva*, *Treasury of Precious Qualities*, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, and *The Drama in the Lotus Garden*. Selections from *Advice from Me to Myself* and *A Lullaby to Awaken the Heart: The Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra* are included below.

Advice from Me to Myself

Vajrasattva, sole deity, Master, you sit on a
full-moon lotus-cushion of white light
In the hundred-petalled full bloom of youth.

Think of me, Vajrasattva, you who remain
unmoved within the manifest display that is
Mahamudra, pure bliss-emptiness.

Listen up, old bad-karma Patrul, you dweller-
in-distraction.

For ages now you've been beguiled,
entranced, and fooled by appearances. Are
you aware of that? Are you?

Right this very instant, when you're under
the spell of mistaken perception you've got to
watch out. Don't let yourself get carried away
by this fake and empty life.

Your mind is spinning around about carrying out a lot of useless projects: It's a waste! Give it up!

Thinking about the hundred plans you want to accomplish, with never enough time to finish them, just weighs down your mind. You're completely distracted by all these projects, which never come to an end, but keep spreading out more, like ripples in water. Don't be a fool: for once, just sit tight.

Listening to the teachings—you've already heard hundreds of teachings, but when you haven't grasped the meaning of even one teaching, what's the point of more listening?

Reflecting on the teachings—even though you've listened, if the teachings aren't coming to mind when needed, what's the point of more reflection? None.

Meditating according to the teachings—if your meditation practice still isn't curing the obscuring states of mind—*forget about it!*

You've added up just how many mantras you've done—but you aren't accomplishing the *kyerim* visualization. You may get the forms of deities nice and clear—but you're not putting an end to subject and object.

You may tame what appear to be evil spirits and ghosts, but you're not training the stream of your own mind.

Your four fine sessions of sadhana practice, So meticulously arranged—*forget about them.*

When you're in a good mood, your practice seems to have lots of clarity—but you just can't relax into it. When you're depressed, your practice is stable enough, but there's no brilliance to it. As for awareness, you try to force yourself into a rigpa-like state, as if stabbing a stake into a target!

When those yogic positions and gazes keep your mind stable, only by keeping mind tethered—forget about them!

Giving high-sounding lectures doesn't do your mind-stream any good. The path of analytical reasoning is precise and acute—but it's just more delusion, good for nothing goat-shit. The oral instructions are very profound but not if you don't put them into practice.

Reading over and over those dharma texts that just occupy your mind and make your eyes sore—*forget about it!*

You beat your little *damaru* drum—ting, ting—and your audience thinks it's charming to hear. You're reciting words about offering up your body, but you still haven't stopped holding it dear. You're making your little cymbals go cling, cling—without keeping the ultimate purpose in mind. All this dharma-practice equipment that seems so attractive—*forget about it!*

Right now, those students are all studying so very hard, but in the end, they can't keep it up. Today, they seem to get the idea, but later on, there's not a trace left. Even if one of them manages to learn a little, he rarely applies his "learning" to his own conduct. Those elegant dharma disciples—*forget about them!*

This year, he really cares about you, next year, it's not like that. At first, he seems modest, then he grows exalted and pompous. The more you nurture and cherish him, the more distant he grows. These dear friends who show such smiling faces to begin with—*forget about them!*

Her smile seems so full of joy—but who knows if that's really the case? One time, its pure pleasure, then it's nine months of mental pain. It might be fine for a month, but sooner or later, there's trouble. People teasing; your mind embroiled—your lady-friend—*forget about her!*

These endless rounds of conversation are just attachment and aversion—it's just more goat-shit, good for nothing at all. At the time it seems marvelously entertaining, but really, you're just spreading around stories about

other people's mistakes. Your audience seems to be listening politely, but then they grow embarrassed for you. Useless talk that just makes you thirsty — *forget about it!*

Giving teachings on meditation texts without yourself having gained actual experience through practice, is like reciting a dance-manual out loud and thinking that's the same as actually dancing.

People may be listening to you with devotion, but it just isn't the real thing. Sooner or later, when your own actions contradict the teachings, you'll feel ashamed. Just mouthing the words, giving dharma explanations that sound so eloquent — *forget about it!*

When you don't have a text, you long for it; then when you've finally gotten it, you hardly look at it. The number of pages seems few enough, but it's a bit hard to find time to copy them all. Even if you copied down all the dharma texts on earth, you wouldn't be satisfied. Copying down texts is a waste of time (unless you get paid) — *so forget about it!*

Today, they're happy as clams — tomorrow, they're furious. With all their black moods and white moods, people are never satisfied. Or even if they're nice enough, they may not come through when you really need them,

disappointing you even more. All this politeness, keeping up a courteous demeanor — *forget about it!*

Worldly and religious work is the province of gentlemen. Patrul, old boy — that's not for you.

Haven't you noticed what always happens? An old bull, once you've gone to the trouble of borrowing him for his services, seems to have absolutely no desire left in him at all — (except to go back to sleep).

Be like that — desireless. Just sleep, eat, piss, shit. There's nothing else in life that has to be done. Don't get involved with other things: They're not the point. Keep a low profile, sleep.

In the triple universe when you're lower than your company, you should take the low seat. Should you happen to be the superior one, don't get arrogant. There's no absolute need to have close friends; you're better off just keeping to yourself.

When you're without any worldly or religious obligations, don't keep on longing to acquire some! If you let go of everything, everything, everything — that's the real point!

This advice was written by the practitioner Trime Lodro (Patrul Rinpoche) for his intimate friend Ahu Shri (Patrul Rinpoche), in order to give advice that is tailored exactly to his capacities.

This advice should be put into practice.

Even though you don't know how to practice, just let go of everything — that's what I really want to say. Even though you aren't able to succeed in your dharma practice, don't get angry.

A Lullaby to Awaken the Heart: Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra

HOMAGE to the ever-youthful exalted Manjushri!

1 – With purity of body, speech, and mind, I bow to all the heroic Buddhas of the past, present, and future without exception in every world in all the ten directions.

2 – By the power of this Aspiration of Samantabhadra, I bow with as many bodies as there are atoms in the Pure Lands to all those

- victorious Buddhas manifest in my mind, and I pay homage to all of them.
- 3 – I conceive the entire realm of truth to be completely filled with Enlightened Ones. On each atom I imagine there to be as many Buddhas as atoms in the Pure Lands, each Buddha surrounded by many Bodhisattvas.
 - 4 – I honor all these blissful lords, praising their perfections with all the sounds of an ocean of varied melodies, an ocean of endless praise.
 - 5 – I offer to those heroic Buddhas the finest flowers, garlands, music, and ointments, excellent canopies, choice lamps, and the best incense.
 - 6 – I offer as well to those Victorious Ones the finest array of all excellent things, the finest robes and fragrances, and heaps of sweet smelling powders as high as Mount Meru.
 - 7 – By the power of my faith in the deeds of Samantabhadra, I prostrate and present vast and unequalled offerings to each of the victorious Buddhas.
 - 8 – I confess every type of wrong that I have done in thought, word, or deed, under the influence of desire, anger, or ignorance.
 - 9 – I rejoice in the meritorious deeds of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, the Bodhisattvas, Pratyeka Buddhas, Arhats, practitioners, and all sentient beings.
 - 10 – I request the enlightened protectors who have attained the detachment of Buddhahood and illumine the worlds of the ten directions to turn the peerless Wheel of Dharma.
 - 11 – With folded hands, I beseech those who intend to manifest the final Nirvana to remain for as many eons as there are atoms in all the Pure Lands, for the benefit and happiness of all living beings.
 - 12 – May whatever small amount of virtue I may have gained from prostrating, offering, confessing, rejoicing, requesting, and beseeching be dedicated to attaining perfect enlightenment.
 - 13 – May I worship the Buddhas of the past and those now present in the worlds of the ten directions; may those to come quickly fulfill their aspiration and reach Buddhahood by traversing the stages of enlightenment.
 - 14 – May all the worlds of the ten directions become pure and filled with Bodhisattvas and victorious Buddhas who proceed to the royal tree of enlightenment.
 - 15 – May all living beings in the ten directions always be happy and free of sickness. May the contents of Dharma be in harmony with the needs of all living beings and fulfill their hopes.
 - 16 – May I perform all the deeds of enlightenment and remember my lives in all states of existence. And in all my lives, after death, migration, and rebirth, may I always embrace religious life.
 - 17 – May I follow all the victorious Buddhas and perfect all the deeds of Samantabhadra. Pure in the immaculate deeds of morality, may my conduct always be flawless and without fault.
 - 18 – May I teach the Dharma in every tongue, in whatever sounds are understood by living beings, in the language of the gods, nagas, demons, spirits, and human beings.
 - 19 – May I always diligently and patiently perform the perfection. May I never disregard my intention to attain enlightenment and completely remove whatever faults may obscure it.
 - 20 – Freed from karma, defilements, and actions of demons, as a lotus is unsoiled by the mire, so in every rebirth in the world may I proceed unhindered, like the sun and moon in a clear sky.
 - 21 – Throughout all the lands in all directions, may the sufferings of the lower realms be completely relieved. Establishing beings in happiness, may I work for the benefit of all living beings.
 - 22 – Fully accomplishing the activities of enlightenment, may I work in harmony with the activities of all beings. May I practice and demonstrate the deeds of Samantabhadra, through all future eons.
 - 23 – May I always associate with those whose activities are similar to mine. We act alike in thought, word, and deed, and may our aspirations be as one.

- 24 - May those friends who wish to help me and also demonstrate the deeds of Samantabhadra, always meet me again; and may I never cause them pain.
- 25 - May I always personally behold the victorious Buddhas, those Guardians surrounded by Bodhisattvas. And without tiring, in all future eons may I always present them magnificent offerings.
- 26 - May I always uphold the Buddhas' holy Dharma and illuminate the deeds of enlightenment. May I train in the practice of Samantabhadra in all future eons.
- 27 - Through rebirth in all the states of existence, may I gather endless stores of merit and wisdom. May I become an inexhaustible treasure of all virtues of method, wisdom, concentration, and liberation.
- 28 - May I always behold as many Pure Lands as there are atoms present in each Pure Land, with inconceivable Buddhas sitting in the midst of their Bodhisattvas and performing the activities of Enlightenment.
- 29 - In this way may I be able to see everywhere – even on every mote of dust – countless Buddhas of the past, present, and future; limitless Pure Lands; and endless eons.
- 30 - May I always heed the pure speech of the victorious Buddhas, which holds within each word the totality of the perfect Dharma, and an ocean of words and languages precisely suited to the needs of all beings.
- 31 - May I possess perfect intelligence so as to heed the endless melody of speech when the victorious Buddhas of the past, present, and future turn the Wheels of Dharma.
- 32 - May I accomplish the Bodhisattva practice of entering the past, present, and future in a fraction of a second. May I enter all the future eons in a single instant.
- 33 - May I behold all the heroic Buddhas of the past, present, and future in a single instant. May I always perform their activities through the power of liberation from illusion.
- 34 - May I perceive upon a single atom the perfect design of the pure realms of the past, present, and future. Thus, may I enter into the realms of the victorious Buddhas in all directions.
- 35 - May the illuminators of the worlds of the future realize the stages of Buddhahood, of turning the Wheel, and of the profound peace of Nirvana; and may I always be in their presence.
- 36 - May I acquire the perfectly accomplished powers of enlightenment: the power of miraculous swiftness, the power of perfection of every spiritual path, the power of all virtuous qualities,
- 37 - the power of all-pervasive love, the power of the merit of every virtue, the power of all-transcendent wisdom, and the powers of perfect knowledge, method, and meditation.
- 38 - May the power of action be utterly purified, the power of passions utterly subdued, the power of demons utterly destroyed, and the power of the deeds of Samantabhadra perfected.
- 39 - May the ocean of lands be purified, the ocean of beings liberated, the ocean of Dharma realized, and the ocean of wisdom fully attained.
- 40 - May the ocean of practice be purified and the ocean of aspirations accomplished. May oceans of Buddhas be ceaselessly worshipped and the deeds of enlightenment tirelessly performed.
- 41 - May I completely fulfill all perfect aspirations to enlightened activities in order to attain the stage of the victorious Buddhas of the past, present, and future according to the deeds of Samantabhadra.
- 42 - The eldest son of the victorious Buddhas is called Samantabhadra. I dedicate all these virtuous actions that my deeds may be like his.
- 43 - May my body, speech, mind, activities, and environment always be pure, and may I become equal to this excellent Aspiration of Samantabhadra.
- 44 - May I tirelessly accomplish the virtuous deeds of Samantabhadra and the aspirations of the Bodhisattva Manjushri, throughout all future eons.
- 45 - May there be no limit to my activities. May there be no limit to my virtues. Through limitless perseverance may I accomplish all miraculous deeds.

- 46 - The limit of living beings is like the limit of open space. May the limit of my aspirations be equal to the limit of their activities and passions.
- 47 - Whoever offers to victorious Buddhas all perfect joys of gods and men, and the infinite realms of the ten directions adorned with jewels, for as many eons as there are atoms in those realms, shall gain merit.
- 48 - But whoever hears this greatest dedication prayer and is inspired by faith to intensely desire supreme enlightenment shall gain even higher and holier merit.
- 49 - Whoever recites this Aspiration of Samantabhadra will never again endure hellish rebirth, will abandon all evil friends, and will soon behold the Buddha of Boundless Light.
- 50 - They will gain all benefits, live in happiness, attain precious human rebirth, and soon become like Samantabhadra himself.
- 51 - Even those who in ignorance committed the five unredeemable sins, will soon be completely purified by reciting this aspiration of Samantabhadra.
- 52 - They will achieve perfect wisdom, a radiant countenance, ethereal form, auspicious physical marks, and a noble birth. Profane and devilish beings will not trouble them, and they will be honored in the three realms.
- 53 - They will quickly reach the royal tree of enlightenment, residing there to benefit all beings. As enlightened Buddhas, they will turn the wheel of the Dharma, taming the demonic hosts.
- 54 - Whoever knows, teaches, or recites this Aspiration of Samantabhadra, shall ultimately attain perfect Buddhahood. May none despair of complete enlightenment.
- 55 - In whatever way valiant Manjushri and Samantabhadra know how to transfer merit, so do I dedicate all of my own virtues that I might train to be like them.
- 56 - Through this dedication, praised as supreme by the victorious Buddhas of the past, present, and future, I dedicate all of these roots of virtue to accomplishing the deeds of Samantabhadra.
- 57 - At the moment of my death, may all obscurations be removed that I may behold the Buddha of Boundless Light and go to the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss.
- 58 - In that blissful land, may I completely fulfill all of these aspirations, and benefit all beings as long as the universe remains.
- 59 - Joyful there, in that blessed assembly of the Buddhas, may I be reborn like the Holy Ones from an exquisite lotus, and may the Buddha Amitabha himself foretell my own enlightenment.
- 60 - May I thereafter accomplish countless benefits for living beings in all the ten directions, by the power of perfect wisdom in its myriad incarnations.
- 61 - Through whatever small virtue I have gathered by reciting this aspiration of Samantabhadra, may all the virtuous aspirations of living beings be accomplished in a single instant.
- 62 - Through the boundless merit gained by so dedicating this Aspiration of Samantabhadra, may the countless beings drowning in the torrent of suffering reach the stage of Amitabha.
- 63 - May this greatest of dedication prayers benefit countless living beings. May reciting this ornament of Samantabhadra release all beings from the suffering of the lower realms!

PART 16: The Seven-Point Mind-Training of Atisha

by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101–1175)

Adapted from multiple sources by Khenchen Drimed Dawa for teaching

A. The Preliminaries

1. First, train in the preliminaries – samsara (sufferings, discontent), impermanence (change and death), karma (intentional actions, cause and effect), and this precious human life.

B. The Main Practices

Absolute Bodhicitta and Intention

2. Regard all experiences like dreams. Perceptions and mental phenomena do not “truly” exist; they are like dreams, not the way things *really are*, which is an attainable “experiential” process (vs. “cognitive”). (See #6)
3. Examine the nature of “unborn awareness” (the *essence* of awareness itself). This is not an intellectual or philosophical process, but a state of steady calm or flow experience or sensation or feeling.
4. Free even the “antidote” into its ground/source. Perceptions are viewed as like a dream, “empty” of “real existence”. Even “emptiness” is not real; it is an intellectual concept.
5. Rest in the alaya consciousness as the essence or foundation of all *experience*. Buddhism evolved beyond the five sense consciousnesses and mind consciousness, all of which are considered to be deluded by viewing all as being “real”, and *alaya* as an always present “knowing”, which is sometimes divided into (a) one part that is *not aware* of the deluded aspect of mind but the foundation of the other six consciousnesses, and (b) the part that is *continuously aware* of the deluded aspect of mind. We must learn to rest in the nature of *this part* of alaya, which is said to also *point to* our buddhanature (*tathagatagarbha*), without conceptualization (which is *conceptualized* as “the union of emptiness and luminosity”). Our focus is on this “nature of mind”, often articulated as “the way things are”.
6. Between meditation sessions, regard all experiences as illusory. (See #2) During formal mind training, we train in analytical meditation (*vipassana*) or resting meditation (*shamata*). Post meditation is to avoid “reacting” to our life experiences as good or bad, but to perceive them as dream-like illusions.

Relative Bodhicitta – Lovingkindness and Compassion for All

7. Train in taking and giving, imagine breathing *in* the “bad” and *out* the “good” (*tonglen*) for those in need as perceived in our imagination. We are also told to begin with ourselves (see #10), then move on to others. This benefits our clinging to “self-cherishing” and increases our lovingkindness and compassion for others.
8. Three objects, three poisons, and three roots of virtue: The *three objects* affect our views – “the world according to us” – viewed as desirable, undesirable, and neutral. These give rise to *three poisons* attachment, hatred, and delusion. These are our own creations. These are said to dissolve into the *three roots of virtue* in our mind, and through mind training we are freed from our ignorance, increasing our relative bodhicitta in this life.
9. In all that you do, train with these “slogans”, for example: (a) for those better off, happier, or do good, wish that they have happiness, success, and that their positive activities increase; (b) for those suffering, discontented, or unhappy, wish they progress and achieve bodhicitta

and happiness; and (c) for those harming or creating suffering for others, wish that they stop and attain happiness.

10. Begin the process of taking and giving with a focus on yourself (see #7).

C. Transforming Adversities onto the Path

11. When the world is filled with negativity, transform adverse conditions into the path of awakening. We wish that all beings have happiness and its causes, as well as that they don't have sufferings and their causes. The practice can be done by relying on relative or ultimate "bodhicitta" – diminishing self-cherishing and valuing others.
12. Drive "all blames" into one: ego. Our "self-cherishing" or ego is considered to be the main cause of our unhappiness, causing anger, attachment, desires, pride, arrogance, jealousy, etc. ... It's all about *me*! Ego-clinging is rampant. Yet our "real" innate "ego" is transcendent or "empty". The demon must be tamed.
13. Meditate with great lovingkindness and compassion for all. Cultivate patience, tolerance, and compassion. Be grateful to everyone and everything. If others "harm" us, use this as an opportunity for practice. Shantideva said, "All the unhappiness in the world comes from desire for our own happiness (*greed*); all the happiness in the world comes from the desire for other's happiness (*generosity*)".
14. Meditate on delusory perceptions as the "four kayas" (Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya, and Svabhabikakaya), as "emptiness", the "ultimate" protection. Regard everything as "illusory" in that no sensory experience is the way that it *appears*. The true nature is "the way things *are*", which is transcendent or emptiness, beyond ordinary perceptions. [Note: in Nyingma, particularly Dzogchen, which emerged later in the tradition, the ultimate is viewed as *rigpa* or "pure awareness", also known as "awareness of awareness", known as "metacognition" in science.]
15. The four best methods are: (a) accumulating merit (perfection of generosity, ethics, patience, persistence [or joyful effort], and concentration) – including wholesome intentions and actions; (b) confession of negative actions – (i) *regret* negative actions, (ii) *determine not to repeat them*, (iii) *use antidotes* such as bodhicitta, mantras, or Vajrasattva, and (iv) *reliance on refuge* in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha; and (c) making offerings (numerous variations are available).
16. Whatever you encounter, engage it with meditation: Bring both pleasure and pain onto the path, whatever we encounter; promote lovingkindness and compassion; and remind ourselves of self-cherishing when we experience an unpleasant moment.

D. Applying Practice Throughout Daily Life

17. The essence of practice the "five heart instructions" (also known as the Five Powers): (a) faith or confidence, (b) effort, (c) mindfulness, (d) concentration, and (e) insight or wisdom (similar to the Six Perfections – see first five above in #15, plus wisdom or insight). Another list has Five Powers: (a) determination – the greatest benefit is lovingkindness and compassion now, (b) familiarization – reducing self-cherishing and increasing lovingkindness and compassion, (c) virtuous actions – when know we are going to die, give up all possessions, (d) remorse – there is no "ultimate self", my suffering comes from my delusion, and (e) aspiration – give up self-cherishing for lovingkindness and compassion for others, [see #18].

18. At the time of death, the Mahayana advice for transference of consciousness (*phowa*) includes reflecting on these same Five Powers, [in reverse sequence from #17]. (Compare with *phowa* practice instructions elsewhere, such as *Innate Happiness*.)

E. Assessment of Mind Training

19. Clinging to “self”: All the Buddha’s teachings converge in a single point – lessening or eliminating ego and self-absorption. The Buddha identified self or selfishness as one of the most obstructive forces in our lives. “Self” is just a concept, thus often referred to as “empty” (although there is nothing to *be* empty). Taken literally, our deluded desires and concerns tend to obscure reality, leading to numerous afflictive emotions and mental obscurations and thus “sufferings”. There are numerous lists of potential causes: arrogance, attachments, aversions, fires, fetters, greed, hatred, hedonism, hindrances, jealousy, *kleshas*, nihilism, permanence, poisons, selfishness, taints, and more. Thus, we give up “self-cherishing” through numerous variations of practice of relative (and ultimate) bodhicitta, several of which have been noted earlier, including the “middle way” between extremes, the three-fold version for training the mind: ethics-meditation-insight, and the Four Noble Truths versions with numerous alternative practices (which can become overwhelming).
20. Of two witnesses, focus on the principal one – you know *yourself* better than anyone else does (so long as we are not deluded!). Examine your behavior with others, your mental processes, your motivation and intention. Because we just might be biased (a well-documented psychological consideration), it is always helpful to have an honest discussion of your views and concerns with your teacher.
21. Always maintain a “joyful” mind – mental calm, peace, and contentment. Monitor or check-in regularly with your mind. Ultimately, we learn to sustain a continuous awareness of our body, speech, and mind (the principle focus of Dzogchen practices).
22. If you can practice even when distracted, you are well trained. Beyond our view of ourself, we spontaneously and continuously think of others, the Bodhisattva ideal. To reach complete liberation our focus turns to the *ideal* intention of helping each and every living being with our prayers, generosity (both gifts and actions), ethics, and understanding of our interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent nature to the best of our ability.

F. Commitments for Mind Training (some are redundant or similar to above)

23. Always train in three basic principles: (a) do your best to diminish selfishness and promote lovingkindness, compassion, and bodhicitta, (b) avoid pretentious actions, and (c) avoid partiality or bias, and thus do no harm to other beings, and practice patience, equanimity, and compassion for all.
24. Change your attitude but remain natural – reduce ego, but be “yourself”: (a) be unselfish and caring and (b) regard all others as even “more important” than ourselves (the Bodhisattva view).
25. Don’t talk about or take pleasure in others’ shortcomings: Don’t talk of other’s weaknesses unless it can be genuinely nice and pleasant. Be cautious to avoid our personal biases. Be pleasant and have a good heart for all. Do not gossip or say harmful things about others directly or indirectly. Speak in a gentle and loving manner, pleasing to all.
26. Don’t dwell on or take pleasure in other’s problems or weaknesses. Focus on your own faults, not those of others. As above, teach others when helpful, with respect and trust, gently, and with a good heart of love and compassion.

27. Work on your strongest defilements, your greatest obstacles first. We all have some. Focus on those we have the most trouble with first.
28. Abandon future expectations or results; stay in the present moment. (This conflicts with some of the other principles.) The key here is to *stay focused* on now instead of the future. The wish to attain liberation may be a wish for your future, but focus on your actions now to attain that result.
29. Give up “poisoned food”. This is a metaphor for our ego. Instead, we do what is good and meaningful on the path. The root problems are often articulated as our selfishness and clinging to desires. Pay special attention to these core problems.
30. Don’t be so predictable. Habits may be challenging to overcome. We are often kind to those who are good to us and resentful to those who harm us. This asserts reversing these, having a “good heart” for all beings consistently.
31. Don’t malign others or be riled by their critical remarks. As earlier, avoid talking of others’ weak points or concern ourselves with their affairs, or get upset and say something negative in return. Keep to your “good heart”, practice patience, and recite prayers for them *and* you.
32. Don’t lie in ambush or attack other’s weaknesses. If someone has hurt you, don’t respond in kind, just let go and let be!
33. Don’t humiliate others. Again, practice patience and lovingkindness. If someone commits a more harmful action, we *are* expected to respond, such as explaining the negative results of their actions. If a person fails to refrain, even the Buddha said that they were no longer welcome in the sangha.
34. Don’t transfer “the ox’s burden to the cow” – take responsibility for yourself. Everyone should carry the burden appropriate to him or her. Don’t expect someone else to take care of it. Also, don’t pass the blame for something you did onto someone else.
35. Don’t be competitive. We have a tendency to desire being the *best* or to *win*. Be happy when others are successful. We don’t have to be better than they are.
36. Don’t perform rites or good deeds to benefit yourself. Don’t undertake hardships motivated by a hidden agenda. This is a reference to *altruism* – we do good without any expectation of anything in return.
37. Don’t turn “gods into demons”. This refers to our *pride* for our accomplishments or *envy* of another for theirs. Don’t use your or other’s accomplishments to increase *self-absorption*.

G. Additional Guidelines for Mind Training (some are redundant or similar to above)

38. Don’t seek other’s suffering as the source of your happiness. Wish well for all beings, and without any hidden agenda. Don’t rejoice in others’ misfortune.
39. All activities should be done with one intention: bodhicitta. Never part from that, even while eating, walking, sitting, lying down, talking to others, and so on. Never part from wanting to benefit others in all that we do.
40. Correct all wrongs with one intention. This is our Bodhisattva intention that all beings not have sufferings, as well as our actions in support of that intention.
41. There are two things to do – one at the beginning and one at the end. Start your day with the *intention* to use your practice for both ultimate and relative bodhicitta. Then at the end of the day, *review* your actions and notice what was beneficial and what can be improved.
42. Good or bad, be patient. Some actions are simple or easy. Some take more time and effort. Don’t become attached to the easy actions and/or adverse to the challenging actions. Sustain your good intentions and don’t “worry” about any problems but patiently seek to continue your path to improve.

43. Maintain these two, even at risk of your life: Most of us hold our life to be precious. But even more precious is to adopt virtuous actions and avoid unvirtuous ones. Always maintain your vows: Pratimoksha vows, Bodhisattva vows, and Tantra vows (as well as any others such as empowerment vows, Dzogchen vows, etc.).
44. Train to meet three difficulties or points: (a) recognize disturbing emotions when they arise, (b) employ a remedy (practice), and (c) perform actions to cut them off completely. This requires great diligence and mindfulness.
45. Take up the three main cause: (a) rely on an authentic teacher, who's actions follow the teachings, (b) have enthusiasm for mind training and delight in practicing and applying the instructions, and (c) never turn away from mind training itself (what is to be adopted and what is to be avoided).
46. Pay attention that these three do not diminish: (a) trust the lama, "the root of all virtues", (b) sustain joy and delight in practicing the teachings, and (c) sustain your vows.
47. Keep body, speech, and mind inseparable: (a) abandon nonvirtuous actions and practice virtuous actions with our *body*, (b) sustain enthusiasm for *practice*, and (c) never turn away from *mind training*.
48. Train pervasively, and wholeheartedly without bias: practice with lovingkindness and compassion for *all* sentient beings.
49. Always meditate on whomever provokes anger or resentment: train in having good feelings for all, even those who are harmful or ungrateful.
50. Don't depend on external circumstances: practice whether feeling good or bad, healthy or not, rich or poor, people who are kind to us or not, or whether we have all the proper conditions for practicing or not.
51. Practice what is important now – others before self, dharma principles, lovingkindness, compassion, and altruistic generosity, among others.
52. Don't make mistakes: practice patience, devotion, lovingkindness, and compassion for all beings.
53. Don't neglect these slogans: don't fluctuate in your practice, be single-minded and simply practice, always and all ways.
54. Train wholeheartedly: be positive and not distracted with single-minded focus; act courageously, be brave, with your whole heart.
55. Liberate yourself by examining and analyzing: free yourself from disturbing emotions by continuing to examine your mind, being conscious of what is going on in your mind and your actions with mindfulness or pure awareness.
56. Don't wallow in self-pity: (a) avoid thinking "I was so kind" or "I practice so well" or "I am so good", and (b) avoid expecting appreciation for our good work (altruism).
57. Don't be irritated: do not react with anger or jealousy, but with lovingkindness and compassion.
58. Don't overreact: good or bad, be even-tempered, whatever happens stay on an even keel.
59. Don't seek or expect acknowledgement or thanks: don't expect thanks, congratulations, or fame for helping others; have a "good heart" with good intention, and noble resolve; don't be pretentious, irritable, fluctuate, and so on; and improve as needed.

PART 17: Dzogchen

Section 1: *The Cuckoo's Song – Six Vajra Verses*
and Garab Dorje's *Three Statements* with commentaries

Comparisons of the Six Vajra Verses of Dzogchen

The Cuckoo's Song of Total Presence

(From Tun Huang cave, earliest known Dzogchen document)

In Tibet's ancient shamanistic tradition the cuckoo was a magical bird, the king of birds. As the cuckoo's first call is the harbinger of spring, so the six verses of the *Cuckoo's Song of Total Presence* introduce the total presence of the nature of mind.

The six lines of the Cuckoo's Song are also known as the *Six Vajra Verses*. They are considered to be the root text of the Dzogchen Mind Series tradition out of which the entire view, meditation and action of Dzogchen may be extrapolated. If the meaning of the verses in Tibetan is simple, the expression of that meaning in English is no simple matter.

The nature of multiplicity is nondual
and things in themselves are pure and simple;

being here and now is thought-free
and it shines out in all forms, always all-good;

it is already perfect, so the striving sickness is avoided
and spontaneity is constantly present.

Turned into prose, based on the *Dochu* commentary, it says:

All experience, the entire phantasmagoria of the six senses, the diverse multiplicity of existence, in reality is without duality.

Even if we examine the parts of the bodhi-matrix in the laboratory of the mind, such specifics are seen to be illusive and indeterminate. There is nothing to grasp and there is no way to express it.

The suchness of things, their actuality, left just as it is, is beyond (*analytical*) thought and inconceivable, and that is the here and now.

Yet diversity is manifestly apparent, and that is the indiscriminating, all-inclusive sphere of the all-good buddha, Samantabhadra.

Total perfection has always been a fact, and there has never been anything to do to actuate this immaculate completion. All endeavor is redundant.

What remains is spontaneity and that is always present as our natural condition.

Chogyel Namkhai Norbu and Adriano Clemente rendered the *Six Vajra Verses* in *The Supreme Source* like this:

The nature of the variety of phenomena is non-dual,
Yet each phenomenon is beyond the limits of the mind.

The authentic condition, as it is, does not become a concept,
Yet it manifests totally in form, always good.

All being already perfect, overcome the sickness of effort
And remain naturally in self-perfection: this is contemplation.

Chogyel Namkhai Norbu's commentary divides the six verses into three verses of two lines. The first couplet describes the ground of being and the view, relating to the Mind Series of instruction and to Garab Dorje's first Incisive Precept which is introduction to the nature of mind. The second couplet describes the path, the nature of meditation, relating to the Space Series of instruction and Garab Dorje's second incisive precept which is conviction of the reflexive function of liberation. The third couplet describes the product, which does not differ from the ground and relates to the Secret Precept Series and to Garab Dorje's third incisive precept which is confidence in the process.

Based on Chogyel Namkhai Norbu's commentary, John Reynolds (Vajranath), Nyingma scholar and yogi, made this discursive translation:

Even though the nature of the diversity (of all phenomena) is without any duality,
In the terms of the individuality of the things themselves, they are free of any conceptual elaborations.

Even though there exists no thought or conception of what is called the state of being just as it is,
These various appearances, which are created, are but manifestations of Samantabhadra.

Since everything is complete in itself, one comes to abandon the illness of efforts,
And thus one continues spontaneously in the calm state of contemplation.

Professor Samten Karmay found a version of the text amongst the cache of material that Sir Aurel Stein found in Tun Huang and which was concealed in the tenth century, thus validating its age and form His rendering is this:

All the varieties of phenomenal existence as a whole do not in reality differ one from another.

Individually, also, they are beyond conceptualization.

Although as "suchness" there is no mental discursiveness (with regard to them),

Kuntuzangpo shines forth in all forms.

Abandon all the malady of striving, for one has already acquired it all.

One leaves it as it is with spontaneity.

Translation of the basic text (IOL 647, Part I) – Six Vajra Verses

Svasti. Homage to the great bliss of the indestructible body, speech and mind of the most holy, Kuntuzangpo, the one who is most glorious!

(1) All the varieties of phenomenal existence as a whole do not in reality differ from one another.

(2) Individually also they are beyond conceptualization.

- (3) Although as “suchness” [*essence of mind*] there is no mental discursiveness (with regard to them).
- (4) Kuntuzangpo shines forth in all forms [*the play of mind*].
- (5) Abandon all the malady of striving, for one has already acquired it all [already done from the beginning ... the work for all beings, the mandala, offerings, practices, the theory, the meditation, observed the vows].
- (6) One leaves it as it is spontaneously [*effortlessly, naturally; later as lhungrub – treckcho*].

They are translated below so that they can easily be compared to the version of the Tun-huang document:

- (1) “Phenomenal existence involves diversity, but it does not differentiate in absolute terms [*dharmata – nature of mind*].
- (2) The essence [*bodhi – enlightenment*] has no beginning or end.
- (3) Hence it cannot be illustrated as it is beyond any expression.
- (4) In the absolute which is unalterable.
- (5) As “suchness” [*the essence of mind*], there is no imagination.
- (6) But it appears in diverse forms.
- (7) Since there is no acceptance or rejection, it is the one Kuntuzangpo.
- (8) This has always been beyond striving.
One rests with spontaneity.”

The Three Statements of Garab Dorje

From Innate Happiness, 3rd Edition

“The Three Statements of Garab Dorje,” the first known Great Perfection human master, summarizes the teachings in three points:

- 1) Direct introduction of the view.
- 2) Developing confidence in the view.
- 3) Abiding in the view until fully awakened.

These represent the direct approach to *Dzogchen*.

The first step comes from receiving the “pointing-out instructions”. These cannot be done through the written word, as they depend on actions of the lama and the direct experience of the student based on those actions. Descriptions are insufficient by themselves. This direct introduction, usually accompanied by simple or elaborate explanations, is the first step.

Second, once you *have* a direct experience of the view, you develop confidence in it through many short, quality meditations. These are similar to *shamata* and are explained below. This is a process of habituation, for which the generation and completion-stage practices have prepared you.

The third step indicates mastery of training the mind in the view. You remain undisturbed by other thoughts or actions. We abide in *Dharmakaya* at all times. This does not mean that you don’t ever have thoughts (like the goal of *shamata*), but that you are able to have thoughts at the

same time as abiding in *Dharmakaya* – both/and! Similarly, you can engage in conversation and other actions, while maintaining the view – Buddhahood in this lifetime.

But first, we need to receive the “**pointing-out instructions**” from the lama to be directly experienced by the practitioner. This is the primary Great Perfection initiation. It must be done directly as a description does not have the same effect. It cannot give you the same direct experience. The instructions may be given in a variety of ways, even in a sequence of increasingly ultimate perspectives. The most common expression is a representation of “the gap” between thoughts. We have all had this momentary experience of emptiness, whether we were aware of it or not. To point it out directly, the master may have the participant sit quietly in meditation and then shout “**phat**” (sounds like “pay” to the Western ear) creating a startle-reflex for the participant and creating a gap in any residual thought processes that exist. That gap between thoughts is then used to “point out” the true nature of mind – mind without thoughts, or *rigpa* – pure awareness.

Another approach that I like, because it is less abrupt – not creating the startle-reflex – is the bell meditation, which I learned from Lama Surya Das. In this case, the lama rings a bell and you simply follow the sound into emptiness, then continuing to abide as long as you can. More gentle than the startle reflex approach, this is also effective at creating a state of naturally aware emptiness. It can be done by yourself and tends to last longer.

If you have not already received these instructions from the lama, now is the time to ask. If you do not have direct access to a lama, you may try it yourself (a self-initiation), but you will probably not get a startle response from “phat” by doing this. You might be able to receive the initiation online on zoom or other connection, but not all lamas will do this. In a “worst case” scenario, you may self-initiate yourself with the bell (it does need to be a quality bell with a sustained ring tone. Do it several times, perhaps at different times during the day, until you really get the feel of it.

Here are concise instructions on the Three Statements of Garab Dorje from HH Khenchen Lama Rinpoche (by Mipham Rinpoche):

1. Introducing directly the face of rigpa in itself

First, relax and release your mind,
Neither scattered, nor concentrated, without thoughts.
While resting in this even state, at ease,
Suddenly let out a mind-shattering ‘*phat!*’,
Fierce, forceful and abrupt. Amazing!
There is nothing there: transfixed in wonder,
Struck by wonder, and yet all is transparent and clear.
Fresh, pure and sudden, so beyond description:
Recognize this as the pure awareness of *dharmakaya*.
The first vital point is: introducing directly the face of rigpa in itself.

2. Decide upon one thing, and one thing only

Then, whether in a state of movement or stillness,
Of anger or attachment, happiness or sorrow,
All the time, in any situation,
Recognize that *dharmakaya* you recognized before,
And mother and child clear light, already acquainted, will reunite.

Rest in the aspect of *awareness*, beyond all description.
 Stillness, bliss and clarity: disrupt them, again and again,
 Suddenly striking with the syllable of skillful means and wisdom.
 With no difference between meditation and post-meditation,
 No division between sessions and breaks,
 Always remain in this indivisible state.
 But, until stability is attained,
 It is vital to meditate, away from all distractions and busyness,
 Practicing in proper meditation sessions.
 All the time, in any situation,
 Abide by the flow of what is only *dharmakaya*.
 Decide with absolute conviction that there is nothing other than this –
 The second vital point is: decide upon the one thing, and one thing only.

3. Confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts

At that point, whether attachment or aversion, happiness or sorrow –
 All momentary thoughts, each and every one,
 Upon recognition, leave not a trace behind.
 For recognize the *dharmakaya* in which they are freed,
 And just as writing vanishes on water,
 Arising and liberation become natural and continuous.
 And whatever arises is food for the bare *rigpa* emptiness,
 Whatever stirs in the mind is the inner power of the *dharmakaya* king,
 Leaving no trace, and innately pure. What joy!
 The way things arise may be the same as before,
 But the difference lies in the way they are liberated: that's the key.
 Without this, meditation is but the path of delusion,
 When you have it, there's non-meditation, the state of *dharmakaya* –
 The third vital point is: confidence directly in the liberation of rising thoughts.

4. Colophon

For the View which has the three vital points,
 Meditation, the union of wisdom and love,
 Is accompanied by the Action common to all the bodhisattvas.
 Were all the buddhas of past, present and future to confer,
 No instruction would they find greater than this,
 Brought out as a treasure from the depth of transcendental insight,
 By the tertön of *dharmakāya*, the inner power of *rigpa*,
 Nothing like ordinary treasures of earth and stone,
 For it is the final testament of Garab Dorje,
 The essence of the wisdom mind of the three transmissions.
 It is entrusted to my heart disciples, sealed to be secret.
 It is profound in meaning, my heart's words.
 It is the words of my heart, the crucial key point.
 This crucial point: never hold it cheap.
 Never let this instruction slip away from you.
 This is the special teaching of the wise and glorious king.

Having received the initial instructions (first statement), continue to focus on those, as long as it takes to actualize that experience in your daily life. You should have a clear *experiential* sense of *pure awareness*, the ability to be aware. Your focus is not on the “dynamic radiant display”, our perceptions of the world, but our *mind itself*. I sometimes compare it to the imagined experience of living your life in a 3-D movie. The dynamic radiant display is what is going on in your mind. And it is completely different than what we call “ordinary mind”.

Once that is done, proceed to the second statement. Again, it can take a significant amount of time. Here you are seeking to attain *stability* in your meditative experience. Here you are seeking stability, always and all ways. You are seeking to be continuously aware of your mind. The only real difference is that you move from moments of that experience to continuity, no matter what you are doing or when you are doing it. You get there through continuous reminders, habituating to this experience at all times. Stability is the key in this stage. It has to become a strong habit so that it rarely, if ever, slips from your experience of the world, but especially your mind.

Finally, the third statement deals with “embodiment”. Here you are able to stabilize this even more! No matter what happens in your life, in your mind, you never lose your view or experience of the world as *rigpa* – pure awareness of your mind.

Let me give you another metaphor from an experience based on one described by the Buddha that may help you. After the initial experience, it is like “watching a slow-moving river”. Once you are comfortable with that, then it becomes like watching your mind, which is watching the slow-moving river. Later, it becomes like watching the “slow-moving river-of-your-mind” watching the slow-moving river. In this state, you *become* the slow-moving river-of-your-mind, and abide continuously in that mental calm, deep-peace, and complete contentment of the true nature of your mind. Everything is now perceived as being in your mind, when there is anything being perceived by your five senses or thought-train at all. This is true abiding in *rigpa*.

It may help to look back in your life for moments where you may have experienced this, without knowing what was even going on, nor did you care! For example, recall sitting on a mountainside by yourself looking across the valley at a large mountain, the stillness of the mountain and the stillness of your mind. Similarly, recall sitting on the edge of a canyon, just experiencing the canyon, the river below, the insects flying around in the sunlight, without thinking about it at all. Or perhaps you recall driving by yourself to the coast on a hot summer day and found a quiet place away from others, then just watching and hearing the waves crashing into the rocks as the sun moved across the sky and down toward the water before going back home. No thoughts, just observations ... and feeling that deep-peace, so often articulated by the Buddha. Yep, back in that 3-D “bubble” without thinking about it at all, just experiencing your mind.

Another way that I describe the experience of trekcho with my students is more conceptual, but sometimes that is what they need. I describe my left hand as *rigpa*, the ability to be aware, and my right hand as objects that we perceive in the world (though they need not be material in nature). Now, if I have *rigpa*, the ability to be aware, but there are no objects to be aware of, there will only be completely nothing. On the other hand, if there are objects to be aware of, but I have no ability to be aware, there will only be completely nothing. Only when both hands (the ability to be aware and objects that can be perceived) join with each other does the ability to be aware become interdependent with the objects of our awareness, and we then become mentally

aware. (The Buddha referred to it as “contact” in the 12-Links of Dependent Origination.) Both are dependent upon the other and do not function otherwise ... no mind. The *experience* of mental calm, deep-peace, and complete contentment.

Section 2: Ethics and Meditation in Dzogchen

From *Innate Happiness*, Chapter 17

Ethics in the Great Perfection

To complete the discussion on ethics, we need to briefly note that the highest principles of wholesome behavior transcend even those I have described before. In *transcendent wisdom* (as in the *Heart Sutra*), there is no right or wrong, good or bad, no attachment or aversion. Here you transcend even the concept of good or bad. I am reminded of the statement by William Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” In his treatise on the Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*) Nagarjuna explains this in terms of the *tetralemma* based on the teachings of the Buddha: (1) transcendent wisdom is not a thing, (2) it is not nothing, (3) it is not both, and (4) it is not neither. Think about it! He has eliminated every conceivable possibility save one – it is beyond logic, beyond thought. It simply is. Thus, we often use the word *suchness* (*tathata*) to reference this “___” that is truly ineffable – beyond description.

This does not mean that you are free to simply do as you choose independent of the effects on others, however. We must always keep in mind the Four Reliances (see Chapter 3). We are all interrelated, interconnected and interdependent. The principles described earlier still apply, even though specific precepts may be transcended for purposes of spiritual development. Thus, Padmasambhava said, “My view is as vast as the sky; my behavior is as fine as barley flour.” This asserts the difference between the ultimate and relative truths. Being without attachment and aversion is the view of *Dharmakaya*, while behaving in the manner of the other vows for the benefit of sentient beings is the *rupakaya*. These are not either/or, but both/and ... one taste.

The ethical view of the Path of Great Perfection can be a very slippery slope. In Tibet “crazy wisdom” on the part of realized yogis may have been culturally accepted. So, on one hand, there are no rules! No good or bad. Any practice that can be done from Pure View is an authentic practice, including freely enjoying sense pleasures, being free from accepting and rejecting, engaging in sexual union, and so forth. This principle is very controversial, even in Tibet.

There is a set of instructions from Longchenpa (1308-1364) called the *Cloud Banks of Nectar* that illustrate the transcendent view quite well, though they may require some explanation for beginners or others not familiar with the transcendent view.

Emaho!

The intention of Great Mother *Dharmakaya* (Samantabhadri),

The heart of the ten perfections (an elaboration of the Six Perfections),

Is enjoyment of profound wisdom.

By genuinely ending up here

There’s no one to see appearances.

All arising is *Dharmakaya*’s play (manifestations or “the dynamic radiant display”).

Illusions are the Lama’s compassion.

So go ahead and stir things up!

Emaho!

The intention of Lama Kunzang (*Samantabhadra*),
 The heart of the yidam-yoga's result,
 Is non-fabrication in whatever arises (transcendent).
 By genuinely ending up here
 There's no one to be afraid of thought.
 Whatever happens is mental projection.
 Thoughts are the Lama's compassion.
 So go ahead and stir things up!

Emaho!

The intention of Lama Pema (*Padmasambhava*),
 The heart of all-embracing Ati,
 Is enjoyment of your stainless mind (pure, not deluded).
 By genuinely ending up here
 There is no one to perceive impurity.
 Stains are all *dharmata's* play (manifestation or play of suchness or emptiness, nature of reality, or nature of mind).
 All ways of seeing are the Lama's compassion.
 So go ahead and stir things up!

Emaho!

The practice of the woman Tsogyal (*Yeshe Tsogyal*),
 The heart of secret mantra,
 Is the single taste of joy and sorrow (nondual).
 Since genuinely ending up here,
 There is no one to parse (divide) what's good and what's bad.
 They both just enhance experience (without judging – the source of all ignorance).
 Whatever appears is the Lama's compassion (not just a total void).
 So go ahead and stir things up!

Emaho!

This short text points out how these practices result in transcending a sense of “self,” as well as the concepts normally brought on as a result, which of course lead to our discontent. On the other hand, with transcendent wisdom, we are no longer bound by those concepts, so we are free to “stir things up” as they will no longer result in “suffering.” Of course, as pointed out below, we must beware of the slippery slope of assuming that we can rationalize any behavior we choose, even though it may be harmful to others. That is not the intention. Nevertheless, the ideas expressed here can be very liberating for those who truly understand.

In addition, Padmasambhava gave instructions to his consort Yeshe Tsogyal that are helpful in a more complete understanding of this view.⁴³

Your realization of the view's nature may be like an ocean (vast),
 But still guard the relative cause and effect down to the finest detail.
 You may have understood the vast ocean of *dharmata's* nature,

⁴³ From *Treasures from Juniper Ridge: The Profound Treasure Instructions of Padmasambhava to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal*

But still keep an undistracted training like a pillar of gold.

You may have realized the natural state of open mind (no boundaries),
 But still protect your samayas and precepts, stable and undamaged.
 You may have gained a realization of the oceanlike *dharmata*'s nature (nature of mind),
 But still respect sublime masters as you would the crown of your head.

Your loving heart may be free of partiality,
 But still fulfill the wishes of your companions and all your *dharma* friends.
 You may have seen the equal nature of the buddhas and all beings,
 But still avoid like poison the ten unwholesome deeds and their results.

You may have realized the fact that the buddha is your mind,
 But still regard the sublime yidam as dear as your own heart.
 You may have understood that suffering itself is greatest bliss,
 But still avoid creating all its causes, actions, and involvements.

You may have transformed emotions into pristine wakefulness,
 But still avoid scorching your mind with flames of the three- and fivefold poisons.
 You may have experienced nonaction as the state of greatest ease,
 But still exert yourself in goodness with the utmost diligence (action).

So there are still consequences for our actions. And this is not Tibet. Even if you are able to sustain Pure View and see all actions as pure – as they are – others may not, since they are still bound by *samsara*. This may lead to a wide variety of problems in your life and those of others. If, for example, you take the position that there are no barriers in having sex with another, and do that, a spouse or significant other may want a divorce or break up the relationship. Even if you are able to maintain a state of no attachment or aversion under these circumstances (the ideal here), your actions have resulted in a great deal of harm to others, and you have accrued negative karma. So while no rules may sound good, it's never that simple. Pick your poison carefully. In addition, to the extent that you do engage in these activities, it is important to be discrete; show respect for others, as well as the dharma.

Motivation, Intention and Rationalization

Doing the right thing is largely a matter of motivation and intention. You cannot always be sure that what we intend will actually yield the best result. So you must trust your intentions and follow the guidelines. Following these is no guarantee, but they have been shown to be beneficial to the practice of millions over thousands of years.

There is a risk, however, that you may use these guidelines in a way that simply rationalizes doing what you want to do, based on your ordinary attachments or aversions and your habitual tendencies. This necessitates that you are constantly aware of your choices and question your motivation and intentions before acting. As noted above, Padmasambhava said, "My view is as vast as the sky; my behavior is as fine as barley flour." Sometimes using the ultimate view as the basis for your actions in *samsara* is simply a rationalization. If I use "Pure View" as a reason to drink alcohol or have sex, then I am rationalizing. If, however, I genuinely see alcohol as nectar and illusory, then it does not matter if I drink it or water. I have no attachment or

aversion ... no preference one way or the other. Similarly with sex. If I maintain Pure View during sex or follow the guidance of the lama for the practice of sexual yoga without any attachment or aversion, then it will not affect my karma. But if I am just using “no attachment or aversion” to rationalize my desire to have sex, then it can have consequences for me and/or others, which of course comes back to me.

Yes, there may be cases where circumstances and the view of yourself and others are such that you can engage in “crazy wisdom” and cross the line. But rationalization is a very slippery slope. Beware! It is important to maintain your behavior “as fine as barley flour” when dealing with others, no matter how pure *your* view is.

Skillful Means

Because Buddhism treats ethical principles as guidelines rather than hard and fast rules, there is another overriding principle necessary. This is *skillful means*. Previously I mentioned the first five of the Six Perfections are sometimes referred to as skillful means. In this case the term is applied in the context of ethical conduct. To avoid the slippery slope of rationalization, you can apply the principle of skillful means to help determine how and when to apply or make exceptions to the basic guidelines. Motivation and intention become important considerations. You also need to ensure that you are not falling into the abyss of rationalization. But lying in order to save another’s life is an example of skillful means. You won’t always know.

For this reason, there are lamas who will argue that we are simply too ignorant to decide what is skillful or not until we attain liberation. On the surface this may sound, and may even be, legitimate in guiding our behavior. Nevertheless, it can also lead you down the path of *not* doing good for the benefit of others. Another form of rationalization! Perhaps this is why His Holiness the Dalai Lama makes a strong case for the importance of your altruistic intention, your ethical intention, in deciding upon your actions of thought, word and deed each and every day. You do the best you can with what you do know, grounded in your altruistic intention to benefit others. This is skillful means.

[NOTE: If you error, do Vajrasattva purification practice as soon as you can, but no later than one day. This may be done with the 100-syllable mantra or the short mantra.]

Training Through Meditation

The Path of Great Perfection is the highest of the Tantric yogas. It is a direct path and no other preliminary practices are necessary, as the practice itself becomes the preliminary practices for Great Perfection. The practitioner abides in “the vastness of each moment...the natural simplicity of being.” In the Great Perfection you have transcended all attachments, including sexual yoga, which may or may not continue as part of the practice. In all of these paths, but particularly the Path of Great Perfection, “A certain degree of wildness or craziness is required.”⁴⁴

The Path of Great Perfection is most commonly found in Tibetan Buddhism’s Nyingma school, though is often practiced by those in other schools as well. It is also found in the Tibetan native religion of Bon. The current evidence appears to begin in the 10th century out of the Mahayana, but may have influence from the Chinese *Chuan* (Japanese Zen).

⁴⁴ *Rebel Buddha: On the Road to Freedom* by the Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche.

Until fairly recently, The Path of Great Perfection was considered to be a secret practice, passed only from master to disciple directly. It was little known, even in Tibet. However, several masters have now said that the time has come for sharing these teachings. New books are being published regularly. Old texts are being translated into English and other languages. More of the qualified masters are becoming open to public teachings. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has published two books on the subject.

The published texts do caution the practitioner to seek the guidance of a qualified master. Otherwise it is very possible to misunderstand the words, which could lead to a misguided understanding and spiritual disaster. It is important to note at this point, that within the overall scope of the Path of Great Perfection, different masters teach the tradition in slightly different ways that do not always agree – as you might expect in a highly oral, secret tradition. Similarly, differences will be found among the published texts regarding these practices. Thus, following the teachings of a particular master helps you achieve certainty in the practice, a fundamental principle of the Path of Great Perfection.

In addition to the Word empowerment discussed previously in the Path of Tantra, the initiation into the Path of Great Perfection consists of the “pointing out instructions” from the master. What is pointed out is the nature of our mind – primordial purity. This is first described conceptually, to the extent that words can describe the ineffable. Then one or more methods are used to point it out experientially. You then practice to gain confidence in that gnostic (experiential) wisdom.

There are two primary branches of the practice, each said to be complete in itself, but usually practiced in sequence. The most common sequence is *trekcho* followed by *togal*. In this case, *trekcho* is considered as a foundation practice without which *togal* would not be of any benefit. *Trekcho* provides the context for *togal*. However, a few teach it in reverse order. *Trekcho* can be seen as a form of *shamata*, and *togal* as a form of *vipassana*.

Trekcho is divided into three parts: view, meditation, and action:

View is freedom from analytical mentality;
Meditation is experiential knowledge from primal purity;
Action is characterized by imperturbable relaxation;
And the goal is natural expression of the Buddha’s three modes.⁴⁵

View

The *view* takes the cognitive understanding of the transcendent wisdom and, through “**pointing-out instructions**” from the master, is experienced directly by the practitioner. This is the Great Perfection initiation. It must be done directly as a description does not have the same effect. It cannot give you the same direct experience. The instructions may be given in a variety of ways, even in a sequence of increasingly ultimate perspectives. The most common expression is a representation of “the gap” between thoughts. We have all had this momentary experience of emptiness, whether we were aware of it or not. To point it out directly, the master may have the participant sit quietly in meditation and then shout “phat” (sounds like “payt” to the Western ear) creating a startle-reflex for the participant and creating a gap in any residual

⁴⁵ *Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya...collectively Svabhavikakaya.n*

thought processes that exist. That gap between thoughts is then used to “point out” the true nature of mind – mind without thoughts, or *rigpa* – pure awareness.

Another approach that I like, because it is less abrupt – not creating the startle-reflex – is the bell meditation, which I learned from Lama Surya Das. In this case, the lama rings a bell and you simply follow the sound into emptiness. More gentle than the startle reflex approach, this is also effective at creating a state of naturally aware emptiness. It can be done by yourself and tends to last longer.

Another common description, though less experiential in nature, is the mirror. Although the mirror reflects images, it contains none. It itself is empty of reflections, just as the nature of mind is emptiness. At the same time, the mirror has the potential for reflection and the mind has the potential for thoughts. But the *nature* of mind is empty of any quality or characteristic.

This nature is described in several ways. It is *ineffable*. It is beyond words, descriptions, and concepts. Yet, to be able to convey the experience from one person to another, several other phrases have been used that give a sense of what this is like, while the participant is repeatedly cautioned to realize that these too are concepts and not the direct experience itself.

One of these phrases is *openness*. The direct experience has a feeling of openness, of vastness, of emptiness, like the cloudless sky or empty space. It has an incredible lightness about it.

Another phrase is *dynamic* or *spontaneous radiant display*. This quality references the energy or spirit quality that manifests as thoughts in our mind or things in other phenomena. These are not ordinary appearances, but experiences of the innate energy of phenomena manifesting as lights and forms, the dance of pattern and randomness together.

These aspects are combined in a fourth phrase, *oneness*. Experientially there is no difference between the vast openness and the dynamic radiant display. They are not mutually exclusive. These apparent dualisms are in fact two qualities of the one – transcendent wisdom. Newborn babies do not differentiate themselves from their surroundings. They *learn* to do that. Duality and nonduality are but conceptual distinctions. Here, you view all phenomena with equanimity. There is no difference, particularly regarding “good” or “bad.” It is what it is.

A perpetual *awareness* in this view is the union of sacred outlook (lovingkindness and compassion in the dynamic radiant display) and the transcendent wisdom, relative and ultimate truth. You have already learned that in the Tantric writings, this is often referred to as *Pure View* – viewing each sentient being as a buddha, each sound as the voice of buddha, each thought as the innate nature of buddha. Everything is perfect as it is, the Great Perfection. There is nothing to do but to remain in the natural state, *let go and let be*.

Meditation

Meditation in the Path of Great Perfection is the state of *relaxed awareness*, remaining in the natural state. The primary danger at this point is to relax *without* awareness. You begin by gathering yourself in preparation for the meditation, abiding calmly, relaxing. Discriminating awareness meditation heightens your discriminating awareness of the transcendent wisdom nature of things. You then relax into *shamata* without signs (no object of focus), abiding softly into the vast openness of space ... a state of relaxed awareness without thought. There is nothing to do but to *relax and surrender* in the state of naked perception of the nature of reality as it is. You abide in pure awareness beyond concepts until the *view* dissolves as a concept and becomes direct, gnostic knowledge.

To extend our awareness, you may practice a form of *dream yoga*. As you lie in bed, visualize the syllable **Ah**, white like the moon, floating a few feet above. Then let it dissolve and abide in awareness into the dream state. With practice you remain aware during the dream state, and eventually even in deep dreamless sleep (before unconsciousness).

With practice, the nondual state becomes experiential. Emptiness *is* form; form *is* emptiness. Nakedness *and* delight. You experience a vibrant dance of the nature of reality ... the primordial purity and radiant display of the transcendent wisdom. You abide in the *view* experientially.

The Great Perfection yogin abides in a state of complete equanimity (mental calm) without attachment or judgment of thoughts or things. There is no self or ego through which to be attached. At the same time, the nature of *bodhicitta* includes lovingkindness and compassion. Thus, you are detached *and* caring for the benefit of others.

A state of bliss – an incredible lightness of being – naturally arises. But bliss is not the goal. Becoming attached to the feeling will distract you from the path to liberation. You abide naturally in the relaxed state, letting go and letting be.

This requires that you have a good sense of humor, as well as inspiration and determination. The masters are noted for their light-hearted, self-deprecating humor. They laugh frequently ... at almost anything. There is an almost mischievous sparkle in their eyes. They also possess a remarkable presence.

Action

As you increase the frequency and time of meditation and maintain the meditative equipoise into daily living, you begin to transcend meditation. Ultimately, you maintain the view throughout the day and night. Awareness of your Buddhanature has permeated every fiber of your being. In the *action* phase of Great Perfection, everything is meditation. You live and sleep in the *view*. Everything you think, say or do is in the *view*. Liberation sparkles through from the ground of being in spontaneous self-perfection. Everything is one taste. You have transcended “practice” and simply continue in nondual pure awareness of every moment, like watching a movie, but not engaging in the story. Or it’s like *living* in a 3-D movie.

In nonconceptual awareness, ethics also transcend concepts. There is no right or wrong, no good or bad [prior cautions still apply in actions]. Abiding in complete mental calm transcends pleasure and pain. You have gone beyond the conceptual dualism of everyday mind. You embody the ethical principles and they are no longer something you *do*.

You directly experience the *energy* of emptiness, and the manifestation of energy as form (see *togal*). Any thoughts or feelings that occur are seen as the energy of the transcendent wisdom – ornaments or manifestations of the natural state.

Pleasure and emotion *are* the path. In this sense, the stronger the better! Yet you remain unattached to these thoughts or feelings. You neither cultivate nor reject them; they are perfect as they are. Letting them go and letting them be, they arise and dissolve on their own. When done with complete integration, you remain *undisturbed* by them. You become like a child and there are no limitations. Everything is of one taste. The integration of passions into the practice is known as “**crazy wisdom**” and *must* be done within the state of pure awareness or it may be seriously detrimental to your development and practice.

Decisiveness is key. It gives you confidence in your actions. You realize “the four achievements”:

- 1) Be able to do the opposite of what you consider to be “right” – you are never deluded in the natural state (or never right or wrong).
- 2) Act with mental calm – transcendent, beyond concepts of “good” and “bad” – they are just concepts, not a rejection of the actions.
- 3) Do not be “involved” in actions or thoughts – remain unattached, unaffected by them.
- 4) Remain undeluded, unaffected by what others think, say, or do.

Furthermore, you abide in “the three capacities of understanding”:

- 1) No one can dissuade you from your nature.
- 2) No one can make you afraid.
- 3) You do not follow good or bad as concepts.

Finally, you experience “the decision without action”:

- 1) Activity cannot bring Buddhahood – just decide.
- 2) There are not obscurations or negativity in the natural state.
- 3) Everything is a reflection of wisdom and is self-liberated.
- 4) All existences are reflections of the natural state (in your mind).
- 5) The natural state is beyond whether you understand it or not.

“Let go and let be” permeates your daily actions. There are no limits to your openness. You transcend the *view* as a concept and live it experientially, delighting in the dance, and laughing at ... well, whatever! Your retreat is wherever you are. You sit anywhere. You are aware of whatever. There are no distractions. You have fully integrated your practice into everyday life.

Ultimate and relative *bodhicitta* are one. Lovingkindness, compassion and joy naturally manifest spontaneously in the incredible lightness of being and sacred outlook for the benefit of others. You realize the pure happiness of indestructible inner peace and joy.

In *From the Depths of the Heart*, Padmasambhava gives this advice to Yeshe Tsogyal (slightly abbreviated):

Because mind-as-such is fully awake from the very beginning, it is neither associated nor disassociated [from Buddhahood]. Recognizing this without any conceptual elaboration is the *view*.

Remaining in a natural state is the *meditation*.

Whatever *dharma* practices one performs in that state ... is the *activity*.

Self-emergent, spontaneous, and unborn direct insight is the *result*.

PART 18: Longchenpa

*Background, The Seven Treasuries, Nyingtik Yabshi, The Trilogy of Rest,
three other popular texts, and Thirty Pieces of Heart Advice*

Longchen Rabjam Drimé Özer, or simply **Longchenpa** (1308–1364, "The Great One Who Is the Vast Cosmic Expanse") was a Tibetan scholar-yogi of the Nyingma school, the 'Old School' of Tibetan Buddhism. Longchenpa's work led to the dominance of the *Longchen Nyingthig* lineage of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection (or Great Completion), over other Dzogchen traditions - consolidated with focused attention. He is also responsible for the scholastic systematization of Dzogchen thought within the context of the wider Tibetan Vajrayana tradition.

Dzogchen thought was highly developed among both the Nyingma and some new Sarma schools (especially Kagyu). Longchenpa's work is "generally taken to be the definitive expression of the Great Perfection with its precise terminological distinctions, systematic scope, and integration with the normative Buddhist scholasticism that became dominant in Tibet during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries."

Longchenpa is known for his voluminous writings, including the highly influential *Seven Treasuries* and his compilation of the Dzogchen text and commentary, the *Nyingtik Yabshi, The Inner Essence in Four Parts*. Longchenpa was also a Tertön or treasure revealer, and some of his works, like the *Khadro Yangtig*, are considered terma and revealed treasure texts. Longchenpa's composition of over 270 texts encapsulates the core of Nyingma thought and practice and is a critical link between the school's general Sutra and exotic Tantra teachings.

Longchenpa's work also unified various Dzogchen traditions of his time into a single system. Longchenpa is known for his skill as a poet and his works are written in a unique literary voice which was widely admired and imitated by later Nyingma figures.

Longchenpa was the Khenpo of Samye Monastery, Tibet's first monastery, and the first Buddhist monastery established in the Himalayas. He spent most of his life travelling or in spiritual retreat (and writing a lot!).

The Seven Treasuries

The Seven Treasuries are a collection of seven works, some with auto-commentaries, by Longchenpa. They constitute his most influential scholarly output and together provide a systematic overview of exoteric and esoteric topics from the point of view of the Nyingma school's Dzogchen tradition. The seven texts are:

- *The Wish Fulfilling Treasury* has a long prose commentary, the White Lotus. This text mainly deals with classic Buddhist topics common to all schools of Tibetan Buddhism and could be classified as a Lamrim type work.
- *The Treasury of Pith Instructions*, a short text which consists of advice for meditative contemplation and which only deals in passing with Dzogchen topics.
- *The Treasury of Philosophical Systems*, a work of the "tenets" genre which gives a systematic and doxographic account of the various Buddhist philosophical views. Longchenpa uses the nine yanas schema in this work to discuss the various Buddhist philosophies, and naturally places Dzogchen at the pinnacle.
- *The Treasury of Word and Meaning*, a shorter overview of Dzogchen thought and practice which follows the outline of the "eleven vajra topics".

- *The Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle*, a large commentary on all topics of the Dzogchen tradition found in the Seventeen Tantras which provide a wide ranging and systematic account of Dzogchen that goes into much more detail.
- *The Treasury of the Basic Space of Phenomena (Dharmadhātu)*, a poem with a prose commentary called the Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmissions. This is a free ranging poetic work which discusses Dzogchen topics in much less comprehensive manner. This can be seen as "a hymn to the mind of enlightenment (which is synonymous with the Great Perfection)."
- *The Treasury of the Way of Abiding (or Natural State)*, a poem with its prose commentary. This work mainly discusses the four samayas or commitments of Dzogchen (ineffability, openness, spontaneous presence, and oneness).

The last two in this collection are considered by a number of great masters as the most important of these seven. Both are included in our Advanced Dzogchen classes.

Nyingtik Yabshi – the Four-fold Heart Essence

The *Nyingtik Yabshi Collection*, one of the most famous sets of Dzogchen scriptures, was compiled by Longchenpa to condense the two primary lineages of Dzogchen practice in Tibet, those of Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra. Together, this collection of texts is considered the core teaching on the practice of Dzogchen, and in particular the Heart Essence teachings of the Instruction Class.

The teachings of Padmasambhava on the *Innermost Unexcelled Cycle* are contained in two volumes and are referred to as the ***Khandro Nyingtik***. A sadhana practice based on this is the core of our final class in the Advanced Dzogchen Series. Longchenpa's commentaries on this cycle of teachings comprise three further volumes, which are known as the ***Khandro Yangtik***.

The teachings of the Vimalamitra's lineage, which unite the two aspects of *Innermost Unexcelled Cycle*, the explanatory lineage with scriptures and the hearing lineage without scriptures, are contained in four volumes, known as the ***Vima Nyingtik***. Longchenpa's 51 commentaries on this cycle of teachings comprise two volumes, which are referred to as the ***Lama Yangtik***.

Longchenpa also wrote two volumes of commentary that relate to both lineages entitled ***Zabmo Yangtik***.

The Trilogy of Rest

The Padmakara Translation Group has provided us with a clear and fluid new translation of the Trilogy of Rest along with its auto-commentary, *The Chariot of Excellence*, both intended to elucidate the appropriate view, meditation, and action of practice.

Longchenpa's classic Buddhist manual for attaining liberation teaches us how to familiarize ourselves with our most basic nature – the clear, pristine, and aware mind. Written in the fourteenth century, this text is the first volume of Longchenpa's ***Trilogy of Rest***, a work of the Tibetan Dzogchen tradition:

- ***Finding Rest in the Nature of Mind, Volume I*** is the profound and comprehensive presentation of the Buddhist view and path, combining the scholastic expository method with direct pith instructions designed for yogi practitioners.
- ***Finding Rest in Meditation, Volume 2*** establishes the view of the Buddhist path generally, and specifically that of the teachings of the Great Perfection. It outlines the

main points of meditation, namely, where one should meditate, what qualities a practitioner should possess and develop, and what should be practiced.

- *Finding Rest in Illusion, Volume 3* describes in detail the conduct of those who have stabilized their recognition of the nature of the mind and how to apply the Buddhist view when relating to ordinary appearances. Drawing extensively from classic Buddhist works, Longchenpa uses well-known examples of illusion found throughout Mahāyāna literature to illustrate the illusory nature of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, thus revealing their ultimate nondual nature. This is an invaluable manual for any genuine student of Buddhism who wishes to truly find rest through the path of the Great Perfection.

Three other important compositions include:

- *The Guhyagarbha Tantra – Secret Essence Definitive Nature Just as It Is*, the Root Tantra of the Nyingma lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, and is the most advanced and extensively studied tantra within the lineage. In this version, Longchenpa provides a translation of the tantra and his extensive commentary. This has been used in our Awam Institute advanced class on the Guhyagarbha Tantra.

(*Splendid Presence of the Great Guhyagarbha* is a more contemporary text by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and his brother Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal Rinpoche.)

- *The Trilogy of Dispelling Darkness*, includes three commentaries on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which draw on the Dzogchen texts as well.
- *The Trilogy of Natural Freedom*, mainly focuses on Mind Series (*semde*) forms of contemplation.

Thirty Pieces of Heart Advice

by Longchen Rabjam

From his great clouds of prayers arising through wisdom, which permeates the dimension of reality completely, and through the sunrays of compassion, amṛita falls down unceasingly onto the field of students, ripening the offshoots of the three kāyas. I bow down at the feet of the lama, who protects as the embodiment of the Three Jewels.

Though I entered the sacred lineage of accomplishment through the power of my prayers, due to my lack of effort my life has turned out meaningless and is now vanishing. I had wanted to act in an honest manner, but now I am in despair and have seen many like me. Out of renunciation I composed these thirty pieces of heart advice.

1. *Kyeho!* Drawing a large following by employing a variety of methods
Although we accumulate the right facilities to establish a monastery,
This will become a field of dispute causing attachment.
'To remain alone' is my heart advice.
2. Performing village rites, like taming demons of dead children and the living,
Peddling our qualities as merchandise amidst the people
Out of attachment to food and wealth, we get carried away by the demons of the mind.
'To tame one's own mind' is my heart advice.
3. By gathering donations from the poor as if imposing taxes,
We can erect large statues and distribute offerings on a vast scale.

But even though this is to support virtuous goals, we instigate others to commit negative actions.

'To keep one's mind virtuous' is my heart advice.

4. Teaching others Dharma out of a desire for greatness and
Maintaining a retinue of important and humble people through skilled methods –
A mind involved with this is the source of pride.
'To have few aspirations' is my heart advice.
5. Were we to offer a hundred valuable things accumulated through wrong livelihood,
Based on conducting business, taking interest, deception and so on.
We might attempt to be virtuous, but instead give rise to the eight worldly dharmas.
'To meditate on renunciation' is my heart advice.
6. Through taking on responsibility, bearing witness, enforcing the law and so on,
We reconcile people in their disputes, thinking this benefits them,
But still, aversion and attachment arise.
'To be without hope and fear' is my heart advice.
7. To have subordinates, wealth, a retinue, good fortune and
Fame spreading through the whole world –
At the time of death all this is of no benefit.
'To be diligent in one's practice' is my heart advice.
8. Even though caretakers, attendants, people in charge and cooks
Constitute the lifeblood of a monastery,
Entertaining dualistic perception is the cause for strife.
'To give up such chores' is my heart advice.
9. To carry whatever we think necessary to the cave,
Statues, offerings, texts, cooking utensils and the like,
All hastily gathered together, leads to suffering and dispute.
'To be frugal' is my heart advice.
10. Pointing out faults to a short-tempered retinue
In these degenerate times, even with the wish to benefit,
Gives rise to negative states of mind.
'To speak peacefully' is my heart advice.
11. Giving advice with a wish to benefit and without self-interest,
Or lovingly pointing out someone's hidden faults,
We might be honest, but still it creates heartache.
'To speak pleasantly' is my heart advice.
12. When we support our own side and refute the other,
We might think this is the way to propagate the teachings during debate,
But instead it will give rise to negative states of mind.
'To stop talking' is my heart advice.
13. Through being partial towards our lama, lineage and practice,
We believe we are upholding them.
But to praise our own side whilst disparaging others is the source of attachment and

aversion.

'To give all this up' is my heart advice.

14. After differentiating and examining the teachings we have studied,
We find faults in the teachings of others and might believe this to be wisdom.
But through this we accrue negative deeds.
'To train in pure view' is my heart advice.
15. Speaking about blank emptiness and disregarding cause and effect,
Thinking that non-action is the ultimate,
We give up the two kinds of accumulation, leading to the deterioration of our practice.
'To practice unifying both' is my heart advice.
16. We let the innermost essence descend for the sake (of practicing) the third (empowerment),
Thinking we enhance our practice by relying on a consort.
Yet many have been deceived by such contaminated ways.
'To practice the path of liberation' is my heart advice.
17. To bestow empowerments upon unqualified people,⁴⁶
And to distribute sacred substances among the ordinary
Is the basis for slander and the deterioration of samaya.
'To start in the proper way' is my heart advice.
18. To be naked and so on in the middle of ordinary people —
We might think of such eccentric behavior as part of higher asceticism,
But it is a reason for worldly beings to lose faith in what is pure.
'To act with mindfulness' is my heart advice.
19. Aspiring to be someone superior where we reside,
Even if we act purely and are learned,
Is the cause to fall from the highest point to the lowest.
'To be neither too tight nor too loose' is my heart advice.
20. In villages, monasteries, caves and such places —
Wherever we might stay — let us not look for close friendship,
But with whomever we become acquainted, be neither too intimate nor too hostile.
'To remain self-reliant' is my heart advice.
21. In order to receive provisions from the faithful,
We might pay respect in a hypocritical way
To attract attention, but that will only fetter us.
'To act regarding everything as equal' is my heart advice.
22. There are many texts on craft, astrology and medicine,
All sources for understanding the methods of interdependence,
Yet to know too many things ruins one's meditation.
'To limit the objects of knowledge' is my heart advice.
23. To replicate the arrangements of the home,
When venturing into solitude

⁴⁶ This is very common today as it is very rare that a lama assesses qualifications taught to a group.

Is to waste one's life in a meaningless manner.
'To give up too many activities' is my heart advice.

24. There might be excellent qualities in striving
 For learnedness and purity,
 But whatever we are attached to will only bind the mind stream.
'To be without bias' is my advice from the heart.
25. Summoning hail and thunderbolts and the like, producing black magic spells and protecting oneself,
 We might believe these are activities to subdue those who are hardest to tame,
 But this will only inflame their minds and lead us to the lower realms.
'To take a humble place' is my heart advice.
26. To amass a multitude of profound texts
 Such as scriptures, commentaries and oral instructions,
 Without practicing them, will be of no benefit at the time of death.
'To watch your mind' is my heart advice.
27. When we accomplish remaining one-pointedly, we can gain insights and understanding,
 But to write spiritual texts and songs of realization about them,
 Even though they are signs of experience, will give rise to conceptualization.
'To maintain a non-conceptual frame of mind' is my heart advice.
28. When conceptual thoughts arise, the direct view is crucial;
 Having examined the mind, to settle it is crucial;
 Even as there is nothing to meditate on [i.e., transcendent], to meditate is crucial.
'To remain undistracted' is my heart advice.
29. Dwelling in the state of emptiness, acting according to (the law of) cause and effect;
 Realizing non-action, keeping the three vows [Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana];
 Without focus, exert yourself in benefitting beings through compassion.
'To engage in the two accumulations [relative and ultimate] indivisibly' is my heart advice.
30. If we have listened to many learned masters and received deep instructions,
 Have studied a few sūtras and tantras,
 Without ever applying them – *'Oh how pitiful!' – we are just fooling ourselves.*

For myself and others like me, I have explained these thirty pieces of heart advice. Through composing this, with a mind of renunciation, may all beings be freed from cyclic existence and reach the pure realms. May I emulate the conduct of the victors of the three times, their heirs and the great rishis, so that I may become their foremost heir. [Motivated by a slight sense of renunciation, I, Tsultrim Lodrö, composed these thirty pieces of heart advice. May all be auspicious! Translated by Daniela Hartmann and edited by Judith Amtzis, Jacqueline Bourbon and Monsieur "Fifi" Greywhiskers, 2014.]

PART 19: Milarepa and Shabkar

Section 1: *The Life of Milarepa and the Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* – from a new translation by Tsangnyon Heruka

Jetsun Milarepa (1052–1135) was a Tibetan *siddha*, who was famously known as a murderer when he was a young man, before turning to Buddhism and becoming a highly accomplished Buddhist disciple. He is generally considered one of Tibet's most famous yogis and spiritual poets, whose teachings are known among several schools of Tibetan Buddhism. He was a student of Marpa Lotsawa, and a major figure in the history of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Milarepa's life-story is famous in Tibetan culture, and has been retold many times. The best-known biography, *The Life of Milarepa*, written by Tsangnyön Heruka (1452–1507) in the fifteenth century and drawing from older biographies, is still very popular. Most of the present-day stories on Milarepa come from this single source, with oral lineage predominating as well as relics including his bearskin coat. While "very little [is known] about him as a historical person at all", Milarepa is venerated by all Tibetan schools "as an exemplar of religious dedication and mastery." His life story established the lineage of the Kagyu sect and its key figures.

Early life

According to *The Life of Milarepa*, Milarepa was born in western Tibet to a prosperous family. When his father died, his family was deprived of their wealth by his aunt and uncle. At his mother's request, Milarepa left home and studied sorcery to take revenge, killing many people.

Training and realization

Later he felt sorrow about his deeds, and became a student of Marpa the Translator. Before Marpa would teach Milarepa, he had him undergo abuse and trials, such as letting him build and then demolish three towers in turn. Milarepa was asked to build one final multi-story tower by Marpa, which still stands. Eventually, Marpa accepted him, explaining that the trials were a means to purify Milarepa's negative karma. Marpa transmitted Tantric initiations and instructions to Milarepa, including *tummo* ("inner heat"), the "oral transmissions", and *mahamudra*. Marpa told Milarepa to practice solitary meditation in caves and mountain retreats.

In some other sources, it is said that Milarepa and Marpa both went to India to seek one most important thing for ultimate realization from Marpa's guru, Naropa, but even he didn't know about it. The Kagyu tradition with the Indian *siddha* tradition, portray Marpa as a student of Naropa, though Naropa had already died when Marpa went to India. According to the biography, after many years of practice, Milarepa came to "a deep experiential realization about the true nature of reality." Thereafter, he lived as a fully realized yogi, and eventually forgave his aunt, who caused his family's misfortune.

Tibetan Buddha

The life story of Milarepa portrays "the rapid method of the Tantric path," in which liberation is gained in one lifetime. It describes how Milarepa practiced the generation stage and completion

stage, to achieve *mahamudra*, "spontaneous realization of the most profound nature of mind." Yet, in his instructions to his Tibetan audiences, Milarepa refers to the basic Buddhist teachings of "impermanence, the sufferings of *samsāra*, the certainty of death and the uncertainty of its arrival, the frightful rebirth that is the direct result of our harmful deeds." But, his own life also is an example that even a murderer can transform into a Buddha. *The Life of Milarepa* portrays two parallel worlds, a profane world and a sacred world, which are ultimately one, showing that the world itself is sacred.

The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa

The acclaimed spiritual poetry of Milarepa is known of as *The Hundred Thousand Songs*. Previous biographies of Milarepa were enlarged with religious poetry and song cycles, which doubled the volume of biographical information. Collected for publication in English in 1962, in 1999 these songs were re-published in a separate volume entitled *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, then in 2017 a new translation by the Nitartha Translation Network, both published by Shambhala. These summarize the various song cycles in chapter eleven of *The Life of Milarepa*.

Brief texts from Milarepa's 100,000 Songs:

"I need nothing. I seek nothing. I desire nothing."

"My religion is to live - and die - without regret."

"However beautiful a song may be,
it is just a tune to those
who do not understand its meaning."

"He who avoids misunderstandings,
Amused at the play of his own mind,
Is ever joyful."

"If you realize the emptiness of all things, compassion will raise within your heart;
If you lose all differentiation between yourself and others, fit to serve others you will be;
And when in serving others you shall win success, then come and meet with me;
And finding me, you shall attain to Buddhahood."

"The world knows a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, but they don't care that it may also become a moth. One is active in day another at night. A human once awakened can change from Angulimala⁴⁷ to a Buddha."

"When you look at me, I am an idle, idle man; when I look at myself, I am a busy, busy man. Since upon the plain of uncreated infinity I am building - building the tower of ecstasy, I have no time for building houses. Since upon the steppe of the void of truth I am breaking - breaking the savage fetter of suffering, I have no time for ploughing family land. Since the birth of unity ineffable I am subduing - subduing the demon-foe of self, I have no time for subduing angry men. Since in the palace of mind which transcends duality I am waiting -

⁴⁷ The name of a notorious serial killer in Buddhist tradition, who wore a necklace of severed fingers from his victims before being converted by the Buddha and becoming a revered monk.

waiting for spiritual experience as my bride, I have no time for setting up house. Since in the circle of the Buddhas of my body I am fostering - fostering the child of wisdom, I have no time for fostering sniveling children. Since in the frame of the body, the seat of all delight, I am saving - saving precious instruction and reflection, I have no time for saving worldly wealth."

"At first, money is like the wish-fulfilling gem.
Later, it becomes indispensable.
In the end, you feel like a penniless beggar.
These are my thoughts and feelings on money.
So, I renounced both wealth and goods."

"When one comes to the essence of being,
The shining wisdom of reality
Illumines all like the cloudless sky."

"What appears as a demon, what is called a demon, what is recognized as a demon, exists within a human being himself and disappears with him."

"How senseless to disregard one's life by fighting foes who are but frail flowers. How foolish to spend your lifetime without meaning when a precious human body is so rare a gift."

Section 2: The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogin
translated by Matthieu Ricard with info from Wikipedia.

Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781–1851) was a Tibetan Buddhist yogi and poet from Amdo. Shabkar's yogic and poetic skill is considered second only to Milarepa. Shabkar began his spiritual practice early, completing a one-year retreat at the age of 16, later becoming a Gelug monk at 20. Shabkar studied with masters of all major Tibetan Buddhist schools including Gelug and Nyingma, and received Dzogchen teachings from his main root guru Chögyal Wangpo. He spent years in solitary retreats in various caves, woods and mountains of Tibet.

From 1818 to 1819, he went on a pilgrimage that brought him to Nepal where he made offerings of whitewash and saffron to both the Swa-yam-bu-nath Stupa and the Bou-dha-nath Stupa. He also sponsored two ganachakra feasts, and ransomed the lives a buffalo at each feast instead of killing and eating them.

Shabkar's works express non-sectarian ideals similar to those of the 19th century Rimé movement, even though he predates the movement by about three decades and never met with any of the Rime masters from Kham. Shabkar also held that even non-Buddhist religions are manifestations of the Buddhas:

Thus, one should know all the tenets of the religions of Buddhism and non-Buddhism – for example, other religions, Bönpos, the Chan Buddhists, the Nyingma, the Kagyus, the Sakya, the Geluks, and so forth – to be the emanations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Shabkar was a prolific writer with his collected works running into several volumes. One of his key works is a series of poems on trekchö and tögal, *Flight of the Garuda*, which has become an important text in the Nyingma Nyingthig tradition.

Brief texts from Shabkar's Autobiography:

"If someone has compassion, he is a Buddha; without compassion, he is a Lord of Death".

"With compassion, even enemies turn into friends. Without compassion, even friends turn into enemies".

"Compassion is the very essence of all Dharma".

"The root of all that exists, samsara and nirvana, is one's own mind".

"All appearances are vast openness, blissful and utterly free. With a free, happy mind, I sing this song of joy".

"Luminosity is the nature of one's mind that eons of confusion cannot darken".

"In the beginning I took the teacher as the teacher. In the middle I took the scriptures as the teacher. In the end I took my own mind as the teacher".

"You who have a precious human life for the moment and have received instructions from a spiritual master... think with joy and enthusiasm of traveling the great path of the supreme Dharma".

"To cry when parting from one's guru, and when one's father or mother dies, is a noble thing in this world. It is something you should wish for, not something despicable".

"My native land is all lands, in no particular direction. My monastery is the solitary mountains, in no particular place. My family is all the beings of the six realms."

"In the beginning I took the teacher as the teacher; in the middle I took the scriptures as the teacher; and in the end I took my own mind as the teacher."

"If someone has compassion, he is a Buddha;
Without compassion, he is a Lord of Death.
With compassion, the root of Dharma is planted,
Without compassion, the root of Dharma is rotten.
One with compassion is kind even when angry,
One without compassion will kill even as he smiles.
For one with compassion, even his enemies will turn into friends,
Without compassion, even his friends turn into enemies.
With compassion, one has all Dharmas,
Without compassion, one has no Dharma at all.
With compassion, one is a Buddhist,
Without compassion, one is worse than a heretic.
Even if meditating on voidness, one needs compassion as its essence.
A Dharma practitioner must have a compassionate nature.
Compassion is the distinctive characteristic of Buddhism.
Compassion is the very essence of all Dharma.
Great compassion is like a wish-fulfilling gem.
Great compassion will fulfill the hopes of self and others.
Therefore, all of you, practitioners and laypeople,
Cultivate compassion and you will achieve Buddhahood.
May all men and women who hear this song,
With great compassion, benefit all beings!"

“All appearances are vast openness,
Blissful and utterly free.
With a free, happy mind
I sing this song of joy.

When one looks toward one's own mind -
The root of all phenomena -
There is nothing but vivid emptiness,
Nothing concrete there to be taken as real.

It is present and transparent, utter
openness,
Without outside, without inside -
An all pervasiveness
Without boundary and without direction.

The wide-open expanse of the view,
The true condition of the mind,
Is like the sky, like space:
Without center, without edge, without
goal.

By leaving whatever I experience
Relaxed in ease, just as it is,
I have arrived at the vast plain
That is the absolute expanse.

Dissolving into the expanse of emptiness
That has no limits and no boundary,

Everything I see, everything I hear,
My own mind, and the sky all merge.

Not once has the notion arisen
Of these being separate and distinct.

In the absolute expanse of awareness
All things are blended into that single
taste -

But, relatively, each and every
phenomenon is distinctly, clearly seen.
Wondrous!”

“The root of all that exists,
Samsara and nirvana, is one's own mind.
Primordially, mind is emptiness.

Merge into the sky-like absolute expanse,
Empty, luminous, beyond clinging.

Outside, inside; eyes open or closed,
Day, night; asleep or awake:
No difference.

During practice, after practice,
Mind, appearances: Blend [unify] them.

Continuously, without wavering,
Merge completely with this vibrant, sky-
like state.”

PART 20: Mipham Rinpoche

His life (*Wikipedia*), *His Life and Teachings* (Duckworth),
The Just King (Jose Ignacio Cabeson trans.)

Jamgön Ju Mipham Gyatso (1846–1912) (also known as "Mipham the Great") was a very influential philosopher with a wide range of knowledge of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He wrote over 32 volumes on topics such as painting, poetics, sculpture, alchemy, medicine, logic, philosophy and tantra. Mipham's works are still central to the scholastic curriculum in Nyingma monasteries today. Mipham is also considered to be one of the leading figures in the Rimé (non-sectarian) movement in Tibet.

Early life

Mipham was born to an aristocratic family in 1846 in Kham, Eastern Tibet. He was recognized as an exceptional child from a young age, memorizing texts as early as age six. By the age of ten he had already composed many texts. At twelve, he entered the monastery as an ordinary monk of the Mindrolling lineage [one of the six Nyingma lineage forms].

At fifteen or sixteen, he is said to have completely mastered the practice of Manjushri. In an 18-month retreat he accomplished the form of Manjushri. It was said that he could accomplish any sutra or tantra without any effort. He went to many lamas to obtain the necessary lungs (oral transmissions), but he needed no study or teachings for any texts.

Teachers

Mipham was "a luminary of the nineteenth century Nyingma renaissance and Rime ecumenical movement, which started in the Kham region of eastern Tibet". He received teachings from masters of all lineages. His root gurus were Patrul Rinpoche, from whom he received instruction on Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's* Way of Life and Dzogchen, and the renowned master Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, from whom he received the oral transmission of Kama, Buddha's teachings - sutras and revealed or Terma lineages, and many other teachings.

Philosophy

A key theme in Mipham's work is the unity of seemingly disparate ideas such as duality and nonduality, conceptual and nonconceptual wisdom, rational analysis and uncontrived meditation, presence and absence, immanence and transcendence, emptiness and Buddha nature. Mipham attempted to reconcile tantra, especially Dzogchen, with Madhyamaka in departure with the Nyingma school.

For Mipham, the unity is resolved in the "nonduality" of conventional and ultimate realities, samsara and nirvana, unlike Tsongkapa who held that emptiness was the "definitive reality" and view. In his many texts Mipham explored the tension and dialectic that arises between philosophical reasoning of the ordinary mind, the Madhyamaka philosophy, and "luminous nonconceptual wisdom" – the focus of Dzogchen. He attempts to synthesize them to show that they are not incompatible perspectives and that the teachings of Dzogchen are in line with reason.

Two models of the two truths

Mipham developed a twofold model of the Buddhist two truths doctrine. The first model is the Madhyamaka perspective which presents the two truths of emptiness and appearance, with emptiness representing the level of ultimate truth and appearance representing relative truth. In this model the two truths are really the same reality and are only conceptually distinct.

In his second model of the two truths, Mipham presents an authentic truth and an inauthentic truth. "Authentic experience" is any perception that is in accord with "reality" and "perceptions", those which do not are said to be inauthentic. In the first model only emptiness is ultimate, while in the second model the ultimate truth is the meditative experience of unitary wisdom. Instead of just being a negation, it includes the *subjective content* of the cognition of wisdom, as well as the *objective nature* of reality. Ultimate truth is also experienced "nonconceptually", without duality and reification, which in Dzogchen is termed *rigpa*, while the relative truth is the conceptual mind. The first relates to the analysis of *experience after meditation*, and the second corresponds to the *experience* in meditation.

For Mipham, both of these teachings are definitive and a middle way between both of them is the best way to avoid the extremes of nihilism and essentialism.

View of Buddhanature

For Mipham, when the buddha qualities appear, it is not that they are newly produced; rather they are merely made manifest. Mipham inherited a distinction from Longchenpa between two types of effects: (1) *produced effects*, such as when a sprout is produced by a seed; and (2) *freed effects*, such as when the sun appears after the clouds have vanished. For Mipham, the *buddha qualities* are freed effects in that they are simply made manifest when the conditions that obscure them have been removed. They are not produced anew. Buddhanature is said to be inherent in all beings.

Work and legacy

Scholar Robert Mayer remarks, Mipham "completely revolutionized Nyingma scholasticism in the late 19th century, raising its status after many centuries as a comparative intellectual backwater, to arguably the most dynamic and expansive of philosophical traditions in all of Tibetan Buddhism, with an influence and impact far beyond the Nyingma themselves."

Commentaries on Buddhist Shastra (philosophy)

Mipham produced a whole array of brilliant philosophical commentaries on scriptures of the great Indian philosophical systems and texts that clearly articulated a Nyingma orientation or view.

The texts include *Fundamental Stanzas on Wisdom* by Nagarjuna; *Introduction to the Middle Way* by Chandrakirti; *Quintessence of all Courses of Ultimate Wisdom* by Aryadeva; commentaries on the major works of Dharmakirti and Dignaga; and the ninth chapter of Shantideva's *Bodhicaryavatara*, among others, were often considered highly controversial by scholars in the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

Commentaries on Tantras

Mipham's commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra is based on Longchenpa's commentary, *Dispelling Darkness in the Ten Directions* which explains the Guhyagarbha from the Dzogchen point of view. Mipham also showed particular interest in the Kalachakra.

Additional Texts:

Lion of Speech: The Life of Mipham Rinpoche by Dilgo Khyentse

Jamgon Mipam: His Life and Teachings (Douglas Duckworth translator)

White Lotus: An Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer to Guru Padmasambhava (Padmakara Translation Group)

Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection (John Pettit and Penor Rinpoche)

Titles with Selected Quotations (some editing)

The Just King: The Tibetan Buddhist Classic on Leading an Ethical Life (Jose Ignacio Cabezón translator) – practical advice from the Buddha applicable to lay practitioners.

The true path of happiness and well-being depends on the activities of the holy. [p. 3]

The root of all good qualities is wisdom. There is nothing that the wise cannot accomplish. Buddhahood requires wisdom. [p. 12]

A wise one who understands the sciences is an ornament of the world, just like the sun. [p.15]

All beings rejoice when they see that the retinue is good and their behavior is proper. Therefore, only include in your entourage those who are morally upright. [p. 24]

Desire is the cause of all self-destruction. Even if you do not completely overcome attachment to pleasure, at least do not go overboard in your desires. [p. 26]

If you overly cultivate sense pleasures, it comes back to consume you like fire does grass. It ruins your glory and reputation. Hence, being satisfied is true happiness. [p. 27]

Being praised brings joy to the world. It brings happiness both to self and others. So do not belittle the good qualities of others but rather praise them. [p. 33]

Anyone can tell whether an action or an individual is good or evil when this is self-evident, but only a wise person can determine this beforehand. [p. 45]

If the lama asks too much of the king, that will make life difficult for him. [p. 51]

Compassionate rulers love their subjects as they would an only child. They care for their followers even at the cost of their own wealth and life. [p. 123] [A rather extreme statement of the Bodhisattva ideal]

I will not let my personal pleasures impede other's happiness. [p. 127]

Selections from the chapter on "How to Cultivate the Ten Virtues":

When a king who is himself law abiding enforces the laws among the subjects, this is pleasing. When he himself transgresses the law, how can it be appropriate for him to sit in judgment of others?

Killing: Bring an end to violence against any being, down to bird and wild animals... For the sake of the welfare of the many, he banishes hardened criminals... But the king should never forsake compassion.

Stealing: You should not unjustly confiscate the wealth of others... You should maintain the attitude that wealth is injurious. You should not allow yourself to become greedy... for the kingdom's welfare.

Adultery: Delighting in your own wife (or husband), you should not engage in adultery (with others).

Lying: Always speaking the truth is the highest quality of the righteous.

Divisive Speech: Abandoning divisive speech that creates rifts between others, you should instead promote reconciliation.

Harsh Words: The ruler should always strive to speak sweetly and pleasantly.

Idle Talk: Giving up meaningless idle talk, let whatever you say have a real purpose.

Covetousness: Whether someone else is wealthy or not, do not covet what they own, but instead remain joyful for what you have. Covetousness leads to the smashing of your expectations and causes you to become greedy and unsatisfied.

Harmful Thoughts: Abandon thoughts of harming others and have a loving attitude toward everyone. Harmful thoughts create tremendous pain and cause you to be needlessly harmed by others.

Wrong View: Completely do away with wrong views, like the belief that there is no karma and its effects. If you do not get rid of wrong views now, you will become a liar with wrong views, even in your next life.

The king and royalty are in control of their society; they should do everything in their power to get people to enter the path of the ten virtues. They should protect life, engage in charity, stop adultery, and do away with lying, and so forth. They should rejoice in others' wealth and meditate on love and the right view. [pp. 177-182]

The Way of the Realized Old Dogs, Advice that Points Out the Essence of Mind, Called "The Lamp that Dispels Darkness" (Tony Duff translator)

The oblivion of no thought process at all itself is ignorance, the cause of confusion... (p. 3)
[Avoid complete nonconceptuality!]

The Wisdom Chapter: Jamgon Mipham's Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of the Way of the Bodhisattva (Padmakara Translation Group)

The entire purpose of the teachings on emptiness is to free beings from *clinging* to phenomena, the cause of suffering. Beings perceive phenomena; they do not perceive the *true existence* of phenomena. They are attached to *things* themselves, not to their "true

existence". *Things*, not some true existence of things, which must be negated. That phenomena are *not empty of themselves but only of their "true existence" is an important mistake*, and Mipham energetically refutes it on many occasions. (p. 39, translator)

It is possible, and necessary, to differentiate two kinds of ultimate... the *idea* of the ultimate (elsewhere labeled as *reflexive awareness*) vs. the *ultimate truth in itself*, which is *not an object or ordinary knowledge*, and cannot be described but only *experienced*. (p. 49)

Appearances are the relative truth, the mere *appearance* of things; ultimate truth is the true status of the way they *actually are* (impermanent and interdependent). (p. 81, translator)

Whatever appears is *empty* of an *innate* existence. Phenomena exist relatively, but not ultimately. [To "exist" infers a relative, sensory quality.] (p. 83, KDD)

The "ultimate nature of things", being free from existence, nonexistence, both, and neither, is not the object of mind's experience [sensory experiences, including mental]. Objects in ordinary mind and language belong to the *relative*... The ultimate nature is *not* an object of knowledge; *dharmata* is ultimate nature of phenomena stripped of all concepts and subjective perceptions ... totally devoid of any characteristics.

[Mipham] *And finally, to say that the self-knowing mind should not be asserted on the conventional level... is nonsense. To be sure, there is no need for the self-knowing mind and the alaya when one is establishing the ultimate level... They are established by valid reasoning that investigates the conventional level; there are no arguments that can refute them, asserting that they have no reality conventionally* (pp. 102-103, Mipham).

An ineffable experience beyond thought and word is what the ultimate nature is like, and if the Bodhisattvas understand and proclaim that "the aggregates are empty", they are still caught up in characteristics (p. 110, Mipham):

**It is not known through other sources; it is peace;
And not through mind's construction can it be constructed;
It is free of thought, undifferentiated:
This describes the character of suchness.** (p. 111)

Clinging to the notion that emptiness is a single, true reality – that if "emptiness" is realized, all things are simultaneously realized as empty, and that if it is not realized, nothing is realized as empty. If that were so, all the Buddhist scriptures and the commentaries on their meaning would be reduced to a marvelous jumble. (p. 121)

The ultimate nature of phenomena is but a single suchness. Therefore, since all paths flow toward, and lead into, the omniscient wisdom that realizes **suchness**, there is, ultimately, but one vehicle. (pp. 122-123)

The "body", "soul", indeed *all words and things* are "mere labels"!

A Lamp to Dispel Darkness

*An Instruction That Points Directly to the Very Essence of Mind
in the Tradition of 'the Old Realized Ones' by Mipham Jampal Dorje
(Condensed Version Available by Khenchen Drimed Dawa)*

The Homage

Homage to the guru, inseparable from Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of primordial wisdom!

*Without having to study, contemplate, or train to any great degree,
Simply by maintaining recognition of the nature of mind according to the approach of pith instructions,
Any ordinary village yogi can, without too much difficulty,
Reach the level of a vidyādhara: such is the power of this profound path.*

(1) *The Instruction for Cracking Open the Eggshell of Ignorance*

When you leave your mind in a state of natural rest, without thinking any particular thought, and at the same time maintaining a flow of mindfulness, you can experience a state of vacant, neutral, apathetic indifference, referred to as indeterminate, in which consciousness is dull and blank. In this, there is none of the clear insight of *vipaśyanā*, which discerns things precisely, and so the masters call it ignorance. Since you cannot define it and say “This is what it’s like” or “This is it!”, such a state is called indeterminate. And since you cannot say what kind of state you are resting in, or what your mind is thinking, it is also called common equanimity. In fact, you are stuck in an ordinary state within the ground-of-all (*ālaya*).

Such a means of resting the mind is necessary, as a steppingstone, in the process of bringing about non-conceptual primordial wisdom. However, as this primordial wisdom has not yet dawned, it cannot count as the main practice of Dzogchen meditation. As *The Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra* says:

They are entirely mindless and confused.
This itself is unawareness, delusion’s cause.

Therefore, when mind experiences such a dull state that lacks any thought or mental activity, allow your attention to turn naturally and gently toward the one who is aware of this state—the one who is not thinking. By doing so, you will discover the pure awareness of rigpa, free from any movement of thought, beyond any notion of outside or inside, unimpeded and open, like the clear sky. Although there is no dualistic separation here between an experience and an experiencer, still the mind is certain about its own true nature, and there is a sense that, “There is nothing whatsoever beyond this.” When this occurs, because you cannot conceptualize it or express it in words, it is acceptable to apply such terms as *free from all extremes, beyond description, the fundamental state of clear light and the pure awareness of rigpa*.

As the wisdom of recognizing your own true nature dawns, it clears away the blinding darkness of confusion, and, just as you can see clearly the inside of your home once the sun has risen, you gain confident certainty in the true nature of your mind.

This is the instruction for cracking open the eggshell of ignorance.

(2) *The Instruction for Cutting Through the Web of Conditioned Existence*

When you gain this kind of realization, you understand that the nature of reality has always been so, timelessly. It is not created by any causes or conditions, and it never undergoes any kind of transition or change in the past, present or future. At the same time, you cannot find even the tiniest fraction of something called “mind” that is separate from this nature. You could say that the state of mental blankness referred to earlier is also indescribable, but it lacks decisiveness, since you are completely *unable* to describe it in any way. Rigpa, on the other hand, is *essentially* indescribable. Yet at the same time it has a decisive quality, which cuts through any doubt about what is indescribable. There is thus a huge difference between these two kinds of indescribability, as great as the difference between blindness and perfect vision. This is also a crucial point in distinguishing between the ground-of-all and the dharmakaya. Therefore, terms such as *ordinary awareness*, *mental inactivity*, *inexpressible* and so on are used in two different ways, only one of which is authentic. And when you come to know the crucial point of how the same words can have a higher level of meaning, you can gain some experience of the true meaning of the profound Dharma.

Some feel that what is to be maintained when resting naturally in the essence of mind is a simple clarity, a simple awareness, and so they settle in a state of ordinary mental consciousness, thinking, “This is clarity.” Others focus their attention on an absorbing sense of emptiness, as though their minds had *become* empty. But, in both cases, there is some clinging to the dualistic experience of an aspect of ordinary mental consciousness. Whenever you find yourself in either state, look into the very nature of that subtly fixated attention – the clarity and the one perceiving the clarity, and the emptiness and the one perceiving the emptiness. By doing so, you will take away the support for the ordinary consciousness that perceives things dualistically. Then, if you can decisively recognize the natural state of your own mind in all its nakedness – clear and open, without any limit or center – and a state of lucid clarity arises, that is what is called the very essence of rigpa. With this, as rigpa sheds the covering layer of experiences that involve clinging, its pure and pristine wisdom is laid bare.

This is the instruction for cutting through the web of conditioned existence.

(3) *The Instruction for Remaining in Space-Like Equality*

This is how you should recognize the pure awareness of rigpa once it is freed from the various layers of ordinary thinking and experience, like a grain of rice freed from its husk – by settling naturally and making use of rigpa’s own self-knowing (or self-illuminating) quality. It is not enough, however, simply to understand the nature of rigpa; you must be able to remain in that state with some stability through developing familiarity. For this, it is very important that, without becoming distracted, you sustain constant mindfulness, so as to continue resting in an utterly natural state of awareness.

When you are sustaining awareness like this, at times you might experience a vague, dull state with no thoughts, while at other times you might experience an unobstructed state with no thoughts that has the clarity of insight. At times, you might experience feelings of bliss on which you fixate, while at other times you might experience blissful feelings free of such fixation. At times, you might have various experiences of clarity involving grasping, while at other times you might experience a vivid clarity that is unsullied and free of grasping. At times, you might undergo unpleasant and unsettling experiences, while at other times you might feel pleasant and soothing sensations. And at times, you might be beset by an extreme turbulence of

thought, carrying your mind away and causing you to lose your meditation. At other times, you might experience unclear states of mind because of a failure to distinguish between mental dullness and vivid clarity.

These and other experiences come about unpredictably and to an extent you cannot measure, like various waves produced by the winds of karma and habitual thoughts, cultivated throughout beginningless time. It is as though you are on a long journey, during which you visit all sorts of different places – some pleasant, some fraught with danger – but whatever happens, you must not be deterred but continue on your way.

When you are not yet familiar with this practice, and you have the experience of movement, as all manner of thoughts stir in your mind like a blazing fire, do not be discouraged. Maintain the flow of your practice without letting it slip away; and find the right balance so that you are neither too tense nor too relaxed. In this way, the more advanced meditative experiences, such as attainment, the five stages of shamata⁴⁸ will occur one after another.

At this point, investigate the distinction between the recognition and nonrecognition of rigpa, between the ground-of-all and dharmakāya, and between ordinary consciousness and wisdom. Through the master's pith instructions, and on the basis of your own personal experience, have confidence in the direct introduction you receive. While you are sustaining the essence of mind, just as water clears by itself if you do not stir it, ordinary consciousness will settle in its own nature. Focus mainly on the instructions describing how the true nature of this awareness develops into naturally arising wisdom. Do not analyze with a view to adopting one state and abandoning another, thinking, "What is this that I am cultivating in meditation? Is it ordinary consciousness or wisdom?" Nor should you entertain speculations based on an understanding derived from books, because doing so will only serve to obstruct both śamatha and vipaśyanā to some degree.

At some point, the aspect of familiarity with śamatha (which here means a stable continuity of mindful awareness as you settle naturally) and vipaśyanā (which here means that awareness knows its own nature by itself) will merge together automatically. When your familiarity with this becomes stable, the calm and insight that have always been inseparable, as the primordial stillness of the natural state and the clear light of your own nature, will dawn as the naturally arising wisdom that is the wisdom mind of the Great Perfection.

That is the instruction for remaining in space-like equality.

Glorious Saraha said:

Utterly abandon thoughts and thinking,
And remain without thought, like a young child.

This is the way to *be*. He also said:

Focus on the guru's words and apply great effort –
Then, if you have received the master's instructions introducing you to your rigpa:
There is no doubt that the co-emergent nature will arise.

⁴⁸ This is a reference to five successive experiences that occur during the development of meditation in general and shamata in particular. They are termed (1) movement (like a waterfall), (2) attainment (like a rushing stream), (3) familiarization (like a meandering river), (4) stability (like a slow moving river), and (5) consummation (like a still mirror-like lake or mountain unmoved by the wind).

As this says, the naturally arising wisdom that is mind's inherent nature, and which has always accompanied your ordinary mind from time immemorial, will dawn. This is no different from the inherent nature of everything, and so it is also called the actual clear light of the genuine nature.

Therefore, this approach of resting in a completely natural state and maintaining the recognition of your own self-knowing rigpa, the very essence of mind, or the dharmata nature of phenomena, is the pith instruction that brings together a hundred crucial points into one. This is also what you are to maintain continuously.

The true measure of familiarity is the ability to maintain the state of clear light even during sleep. The signs that you are on the right track can be known through your own experience; faith, compassion, and wisdom will increase automatically, so that realization will come easily, and you will experience few difficulties. You can be certain as to the profundity and swiftness of this approach if you compare the realization it brings with that gained only through great effort in other approaches.

As a result of cultivating your mind's own natural clear light, the obscurations of ordinary thinking and the habits it creates will be naturally cleared away, and the twin aspects of omniscient wisdom will effortlessly unfold.⁴⁹ With this, as you seize the stronghold of your own primordial nature, the three kāyas will be accomplished spontaneously.

Profound! Guhya! Samaya! This profound instruction was written by Mipham Jampal Dorje on the twelfth day of the second month in the Fire Horse year (1906), for the benefit of village yogis and others, who, while not able to exert themselves too much in study and contemplation, still wish to take the very essence of mind into experience through practice. It has been set out in language that is easy to understand, as raw, experiential guidance for ordinary old realized ones. Virtue! Maṅgala! | Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2005. Revised 2022.

A Lamp to Dispel Darkness – Very Concise

Summary by Khenchen Drimed Dawa

From an *Instruction That Points Directly to the Very Essence of Mind in the Tradition of “the Old Realized Ones”* [yogis and yoginis] by Mipham Jampal Dorje. The text below is a *very* concise summary of Mipham's “Concise Version”, by Yogi Khenchen Drimed Dawa.

Introduction

Without study, contemplation, or training to any great degree, simply maintain recognition of the nature of mind according to these pith instructions. Any ordinary local practitioner can, without much difficulty, reach the level of a vidyādhara; such is the power of these profound instructions.

1. Cracking Open the Eggshell of Ignorance

Rest your mind in a *natural and gentle flow* without thinking about it. You will discover the *pure awareness of rigpa* and will gain *confident certainty* in the true “nature of your mind”.

2. Cutting Through the Web of Conditioned Existence

⁴⁹ Here Mipham plays on the literal meaning of the Tibetan term for Buddha or enlightenment (*sangs rgyas*), which consists of two syllables meaning “cleared away or purified” (*sangs*) and “unfolded or expanded” (*rgyas*), i.e., purified and fully opened.

Observe the distinction between “objects” (physical) or “ideas” (mental) **vs. *perceiving*** those “objects or ideas” (awareness). Remove that “dualistic view” by focusing on the “natural state of your mind” (awareness itself) with *lucid clarity*,⁵⁰ the very essence of *rigpa* (*pure awareness*). Having shed all “clinging”, its pure and pristine essence is laid bare.

Validate this by investigating the distinction between (1) the recognition and nonrecognition of *rigpa*, (2) the ground-of-all and dharmakāya, and (3) ordinary consciousness and insight. Have *confidence* in the direct introduction you have received, while sustaining the *essence of mind*. Focus on *how* the true nature of this awareness [*rigpa*] develops into naturally arising experience. *Do not analyze*.

3. Sustaining the Natural Flow of Rigpa Experience

It is not enough simply to “understand” the *nature of rigpa*; you must be able to *sustain that natural flow* by developing familiarity and comfort. Without being distracted, sustain constant mindfulness of your rigpa experience and continue resting in an utterly natural flow of awareness. Sustain that *flow* in your practice, neither too tense nor too relaxed, without letting it slip away.

With inseparable *calm and insight*, continuously maintain recognition of your own *self-knowing rigpa*. The obscurations of “ordinary thinking” and the habits they create will be naturally cleared away. *Insight* will effortlessly unfold. As you seize the stronghold of your own primordial nature, *liberation* into the three kayas will be spontaneously accomplished.

Profound! Guhya! Samaya! Translated by Adam Pearcey, 2005. Revised 2022. Adapted by Khenchen Drimed Dawa from the original, 2025.

The Heart Essence of Lamp to Dispel Darkness

“The Incredible Lightness of Being – The Profound Peace of Suchness” from Khenchen Drimed Dawa

1. **Sensory perceptions** – like “watching” a slow-moving river with all 6 senses (including consciousness)
2. **Awareness of your perceptions** – like watching the “6 senses” in your mind as it is watching the slow-moving river in your mind
3. **Awareness of awareness (metacognition)** – “experiencing” the nature of mind itself that is watching the “slow-moving river-of-your-mind”
4. **Awareness of the profound peace of suchness**, underlying the experience of the nature of your mind itself

⁵⁰ Like “crystal clear”

PART 21: Where to Go from Here – A Synthesis and Potential

By Khenchen Drimed Dawa

We began this adventure with a brief look into the history of Buddhism, its purpose, key principles and core practices. From that we looked into some of the earliest texts and teachings attributed to the Buddha. From those we moved into core teachings in the Pali tradition, most likely to be close to the Buddha's own practices and teachings, and some that are at least attributed to him nevertheless.

From that we ventured into some of the key teachings and practices closely related to the very essence of the Buddha's views on the importance of lovingkindness and compassion towards all beings with whom we are interrelated, interconnected, and interdependent. We all live on planet Earth! And we ventured into the somewhat controversial philosophical views that began to dominate the landscape among the various Buddhist paths in the close centuries past the life of the Buddha, but also continued on into the evolution of "tantra" and other approaches to liberation from our "sufferings", the core of the Buddha's teachings.

This was followed by more familiar ground found in "Tibetan Buddhism" or Vajrayana and the tantra approach, followed by what is often considered to be the most advanced of all, Dzogchen or the Great Perfection (or Great Completion). This included looking into some of the more contemporary masters who had great influence on Buddhism as we know it now.

So now we reach the conclusion, but not without consideration of one of the strongest influencers of modern Buddhism, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the effect of science upon the views and paths of the dharma.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Science

The 14th Dalai Lama was recognized and began receiving the teachings at a very young age, only to be challenged by the Chinese takeover of Tibet and his escape to India in 1959, where he was embraced by the Indian government in a diaspora that has circled the globe, along with other lineages from the Pali tradition to Zen Buddhism of Japan.

Yet even as a youth, the Dalai Lama was fascinated by "things" – watches, equipment, cars and so forth, in spite of the isolation of Tibet, a "medieval" country isolated from most of the world. At the same time he was "recognized" as "His Holiness" and the head of *all* of Buddhism (at least in the view of his dominant Gelugpa order). Although so very young, he took on the idealized role of Chenrezig (Avalokiteshvara), the Buddha of Compassion, as a "reincarnation" of this Buddha form. Regardless of our view, he has been widely regarded and followed, including in the West.

It has been his interest in science that has made a significant impact on the West, particularly in areas of the mind and brain as it relates to Buddhist views of consciousness, love and compassion. Among his approach to science are:

- Compatibility of religion and science and the potential for interrelated views and understandings.
- Collaboration with scientists through annual or even semi-annual meetings exploring the similarities and differences in the workings of the mind and consciousness.
- His focus on meditation and consciousness has spurred deeper research into the practices of meditation on the brain and mind.

- He has advocated integration of modern science into the curriculum of monastic studies for monks and nuns to become teachers and scientists.
- Nevertheless, he acknowledges some limitations in addressing these issues, such as inner peace, compassion, and consciousness (lack of major focus due to ambiguities involved, but getting better), as well as Buddhist principles of karma and reincarnation (no evidence).
- He has accepted the commitment of science to critical thinking, focused observation, and a willingness to let go of outdated ideas in pursuit of reality.
- The profound benefits of neuroscience may help deepen our understanding of the brain and consciousness in ways that may lead to improved wellbeing for many beings, as well as the use of Buddhist practices of meditation leading to peace, calm, and contentment in the world.

The Buddha-to-be sought answers to the challenges of life in ancient India. The prevailing focus of those seeking answers was how to achieve “liberation (*moksha*) from the discontent (*dukkha*) of this life”. First, *liberation* is a generic word that includes similar ideas such as awakening, realization, and (centuries later) *enlightenment*.⁵¹ Not only did this term not exist anywhere in the world at the time of the Buddha, the terms included in its descriptions do not even match very well with those articulated in Buddhism. Nevertheless, the phrase took hold in European discussions about Buddhism and became a word used to replace the more accurate term of “liberation”.

Furthermore, the “sufferings” grew into a very broad list of related experiences⁵², such as:

- Five hindrances
- Three poisons (or four or five or six)
- Three fires
- Three marks of existence
- Ten fetters
- Kleshas
- Taints
- Attachments
- Aversions
- Sufferings
- Afflictive emotions and mental obscurations
- Eight worldly concerns

Does it ever end? According to the Buddha, yes! But one of the key obscurations is “attachment” to our various desires, cravings, greed, etc., or “aversion” to our dislikes, even hatred. And even before that, in the center of the list of The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination prior to our mental consciousness is the core idea of “contact”. Without this mental

⁵¹ This word comes from Europe during a period called “the Age of Enlightenment” or “Age of Reason” in the 18th – 19th centuries that emphasized reason, empirical evidence, and scientific methods. It promoted individual liberty, religious tolerance, progress, and natural rights. Thinkers advocated constitutional government, separation of church and state, and rational principles for social and political reform. [Adapted from Wikipedia]

⁵² See *Profound Peace* by Yogi Khenpo (now Khenchen) Drimed Dawa, pp. 13-14 for an extensive list.

contact, there can be no mental attachments or aversions. So many of the problems we face (or create) is our “lack of awareness” in the process of perception itself. Thus, as Shakespeare has Hamlet say in the play by that name, “there is no good or bad, but thinking makes it so”. Once we begin “thinking” about the perception, it leads to “like” or “dislike” (or neutral, although this is rarely considered in the discussions on this), leading to stronger experiences of attachments or aversions, and hence our “discontent” with the world – not having what we want and having what we do not want.

Furthermore, the Buddha pointed out the obvious. Everything is changing. Nothing is permanent (even if it appears to be). This is articulated in the key term of “impermanence”. Deeper still, nothing is the way that it appears. Early in the Buddha’s teachings he pointed out how our attachment to things leads to our unhappiness because we are troubled by that change. Similarly, our aversion leads to unhappiness because change leads to things or circumstances that we do not desire.

This principle is applied in two particular cases by the Buddha. Because everything changes (1) there is no permanent “self”; we continuously change (more or less, but always); and “we” here is our “ego” and (2) there is no permanent “soul” (a very common idea in nearly all religions intended to help direct moral actions by its followers); rather, we are responsible for our actions, which lead to ethical or moral outcomes, good or bad.

Why? Because not only is there nothing that is “permanent”, but there is also nothing that is “independent”. We are responsible for our actions, good or bad. This led the Buddha to articulate a list of wholesome and unwholesome actions such as: protect life, generosity, respect sexual vows, honesty and loving speech, reconcile and harmonize with others, use pleasant words and meaningful talk, rejoice for other’s wellbeing, follow helpful intentions, and engage with insight into the “true nature” of things, as well as avoiding their opposites. We must all get along whether family, friends, colleagues, neighbors, people we don’t know, those who are different or hold other views. In summary, do good or at least do no harm. Make a daily commitment to these standards.

Practices

My Concise Summary of Suggestions

The following collection provides a concise summary of the practices of the Buddha, as well as some key forms that evolved following the Buddha’s end of life [see “Part 1” lists]. Details are included in the major sections of the texts in earlier chapters and will not be repeated here.

The earliest teachings of the Buddha were based upon his realization and liberation from all forms of *discontent*. It begins with **moral actions** as listed above, but not necessarily limited to just those. The core then includes a vast number of particular **practices**. Although each can provide some form of progress along the path, there is a relatively small list that provide the core of these teachings and to our wellbeing along with actions to benefit others.

The first is to **calm your mind**. The first part of the practice is simple – relax your brain, take a deep breath, and slowly let it go while focused on the breath itself. Then repeat for as long as the time you have. That’s all. It leads to a sense of peace, calm, and contentment. If thoughts arise, take another breath, let them go, and continue. It gets better with practice. It can be done in only a minute or two, or between TV programs by silencing the sound during ads (one I find particularly calming!), or waiting in a line at an office, a traffic light, or any other necessary

pause. Just practice and value these opportunities. When you have more time, engage it in a more focused attention on your breath, but *without thoughts*.

By this point, you may want to commit to the Buddhist tradition through taking the “**refuge vows**”, a simple ritual of your commitment. Generally, this does not have vast specific requirements as some advanced practices such as Tantra practices (there are numerous variations), which were discussed earlier but not included in this concise path to liberation. Ask your lama or contact us at EmailAwamTBI@gmail.com. In our tradition and with support of HH the Dalai Lama for us to become Twenty-First Century Buddhists, Khenchen Drimed Dawa can provide the brief ritual for this commitment.

With practice, you may continue this as opportunities arise. But set aside time for a more formal session using the **Four Foundations of Mindfulness** (you may skip the charnal ground parts), usually one part or even pieces within each of the four parts, depending on the amount of time you have. Even tiny moments each day can further enrich your experience.

The Buddha himself is said in one of the Pali Sutras to have spent time each day with the Four Foundations followed by the **Four Jhanas**. These begin with the first Jhana, then the first followed by the second Jhana, etc. There are some cases in commentaries of going up and down the four in a series of changes. But I am one to advocate on *simplicity*, not complexification. Over time one no longer needs the earlier stages as mastery has allowed one to attain the fourth level right from the beginning of each practice in a state of even *deeper peace* that can then be sustained in our activities in the world.

The next step adds to the Jhanas. The **Six Perfections** – altruistic generosity, ethics, patience, diligence, meditative concentration (Four Jhanas), and insight or wisdom. This embraces a few additional elements into our practice and our lives, including our interactions with others.

Having attained comfort in these, we add the **Four Immeasurables**, which the Buddha also emphasized, particularly the first two – lovingkindness and compassion – for all! As previously described, “lovingkindness” (*metta*) practice and “taking and giving” (*tonglen*) are the key practices with a variety of specific details.

This begins to push our limits from the altruistic generosity, ethics, etc. from the Six Perfections, to the “Bodhisattva Ideal”. There is also a **Bodhisattva Vow** ritual that may be taken to reinforce your commitment to this principle to the best of your ability. It is not enough to focus on ourselves if we seek complete liberation. We must commit to doing what we can to help “all”, or at least those which we can.

Having now attained the illuminated mind, the “mind of enlightenment” (although not necessarily complete liberation), there are further trainings available to those feeling a need. But they are not necessary in the context of this concise path to liberation. These include Atisha’s Seven-Point Mind Training and Tantra, described earlier. These are considered powerful additions to one’s practice and development, but are not strictly needed here.

The next stage is attainment of “Buddhahood” through the practice of *Dzogchen* in this concise path, with focused attention on **Trekcho** (or Mahamudra not detailed in these descriptions). This is heart essence of Dzogchen when developed through this concise, summary sequence of practices. Although, it is not a complete sequence of the Nine Yanas of the Nyingma Lineage, it is also not Dzogchen alone, as sometimes articulated.

In our Nyingma tradition, Dzogchen is the peak of the mountain but requires the mountain (the previous practices) to be present as well. This takes the previous practice experiences even deeper to a continuous “flow state” of “**pure awareness**” (*rigpa*) or “**suchness**”. As previously described, ultimately this “state” is embodied 24/7 (at least when conscious, although some assert to inclusion of being “unconscious”, which cannot be validated because, well, you are not conscious!). In daily practice, pure awareness or suchness evolves out of the *peace* previously derived in the “Jhanas” and beautifully articulated in Mipham Rinpoche’s *A Lamp to Dispel Darkness*, with its emphasis on “a single suchness”.

It is advisable to practice it as a flow of the sequence described above, when time is available. Here, in addition to your daily practice, use a “retreat” sequence for a morning, day, week, or month to embrace the flow of the full set whenever possible. And don’t forget to include frequent reminders throughout the day whenever an opportunity arises, even if for only a few minutes or even seconds until it becomes a full continuous flow of experience!

Liberation

As previously noted, liberation is the result of the cessation of negative karma (actions). Most religions, including those in India, believe in some form of life-after-death. Buddhism asserts a fairly common (but not absolute) belief in India that the soul (as a conscious form that continues after death of our body) will be reborn into conditions and circumstances based on previous *intentional actions*. Details vary.

Some assert that there may also be some intermediate realms beyond Earth for those who have advanced but not fully attained the ultimate nature of the ideals of that religion. In Buddhism, those are considered to be “Buddhafiels” (or similar phrase), headed by a fully realized Buddha. Once one has established and fully embraced the principles of the religion, that body is transformed into some transcendent form indefinitely.

However, the Buddha did not articulate the nature of such a being, using the phrase “deathlessness”. After his own passing, his followers sought to articulate the meaning and intention of this phrase and generally arrived at “deathlessness” as an *ineffable* term beyond description or articulation. Keep in mind that the Buddha himself *was* a Buddha, but also living on this Earth, which later also led to speculation about other realms in which he lived prior to his final liberation.

Fundamentally, given the lack of any articulation, we can use the principle of “deathlessness” as transcendent or suchness or “Mu” (from the Japanese Zen tradition), all of which represent this ineffable quality, while accepting that it does or at least may exist at all. Not all Buddhists accept this, as science has found no evidence (so far) to support this view of a heaven, which is clearly linked to very early assertions in nearly all religions in very ancient times without any method of validation.

My view is to remain neutral or agnostic if you like, and do all that I can to attain the ultimate state in this lifetime, regardless of the ultimate outcome. The result will be what it will be in any case, having done what I can to the best of my ability in either view. I would do the same in either case, so having a “belief” in such matters is irrelevant. But the choice is up to you. In addition, you may consider taking other classes, embracing other practices, participate in a sangha of other followers of Buddhism, or connect with a lama to touch base with at least

occasionally or to ask questions that may arise. Finally, I have added a brief text that I recently wrote...

The Heart Essence (Khenchen Drimed Dawa, 3/8/2025)

“There is no good or bad, but thinking makes it so” *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare

Myth and magic – everything is in some way myth and magic. Our sensory experiences are a good example – nothing is the way that it *appears*. Electronic microscopes and the CERN particle accelerator, among others, go deeper into the “small”, while the James Webb telescope and others identify no longer existent cosmos from the time near the very beginning of the universe. Both are beyond our ordinary perception. All that we perceive in our senses (including our mind) are *not* “real”.

In addition, paleontologists have identified the **evolution** of six different forms of human beings over several hundred-thousand years, only one of which has survived ... us. There is no evidence of the “myth and magic” that have been associated with many religious views.

In Dzogchen this is illustrated in “*Samantabhadra’s Prayer*” that (among other things) shows exactly what Shakespeare articulated – ultimately there is no good or bad. In Dzogchen, this view illustrates the ultimate truth of “the way things *are*” over our relative experience of “the way things *appear*” (terms found at all levels of Buddhism). Ultimately, *nothing* is as it seems.

Nevertheless, here we are in this *relative world* of appearances of our six senses (including “mind” or “consciousness”). The path is first to *recognize* this, then *experience* it, and finally *abide* in that *experiential awareness*.

At the same time, we live in this world of “delusion”, the way things *appear*. We cannot just ignore this as some advocate. Thus, the Buddha also taught both how to realize this ultimate truth *and* gave guidance for our life of “appearances”. Here, we are to engage with others with ethics, lovingkindness, compassion, and altruism *within* the “pure view” of the way things *are*. That is **the heart essence**. To know these truths while abiding in this world *is* liberation!

A Concise Middle Way in 21st Century: Four Noble Truths

Khenchen Drimed Dawa - March 7, 2025

1. Suffering, discontent, & unhappiness

Survival: food, clothing, shelter, health, (reproduction)

Fulfillment: safety, security, love, belonging, confidence, wellbeing, liberation

2. Hindrances – what we can vs. cannot control, fix, or influence; requires awareness, especially upon contact

Greed

Hate

Delusion
(ignorance)

Craving

Discontent

Desires/Cravings: wealth vs. poverty, pleasure vs. pain, praise vs. blame, fame vs. disgrace

Happiness: 50% comes from our genetics, events and things over which we have no control (our set-point), 10% comes from circumstances in our life over which we have little or no control, leaving 40% over which we can have control.

But it requires our intention and actions the Path.

3. The way out – the Path

Remove the hindrances that are within your control, replacing with new habits

Train your mind – from first “sense contact”; practice ethics, mindfulness, & concentration in *all* you think, say, and do.

Live with altruistic lovingkindness, compassion, and generosity for all, always and all ways!

4. Liberation

Insights: all things change; we are all interdependent; there is no “innate self” beyond mind

Results: mental and physical calm, peace, & contentment, with love and compassionate actions for all

Buddhism cannot fix all of our problems. But it can do a very good job dealing with those which can be fixed or at least improved with patience and persistence.