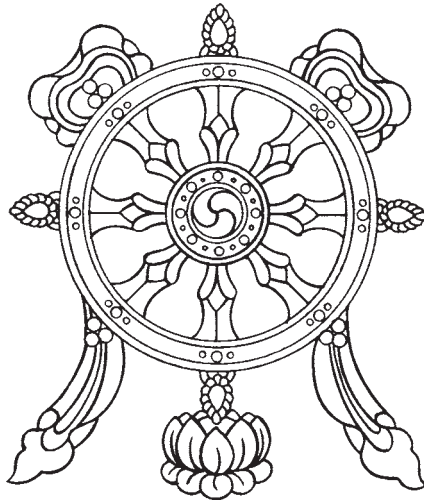


Discovering BUDDHISM *at Home*

*Awakening the limitless potential of your mind,
achieving all peace and happiness*



SUBJECT AREA 11

Transforming Problems

Readings

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Further required reading includes the following texts:

The Wish-Fulfilling Golden Sun, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche (pp. 106–10, 114–42)

Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, 1997 gold edition (pp. 589–625) or 2006 blue edition (pp. 537-72)

Transforming Problems into Happiness, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Transforming the Mind, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Practice text:

The Everflowing Nectar of Bodhicitta, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation

by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama

The text The Eight Verses of Thought Transformation, by Langri Tangpa, explains the Paramitayana practice of method and wisdom: the first seven verses deal with method—loving kindness, bodhicitta—and the eighth deals with wisdom.

1. Determined to accomplish all success, I shall always practise holding dear all sentient beings, who are more precious than wish-fulfilling gems.

We ourselves and all other beings want to be happy and completely free from suffering. In this we are all exactly equal. However, each of us is only one while other beings are infinite in number. Now, there are two attitudes to consider: that of selfishly cherishing ourselves and that of cherishing others. The self-cherishing attitude makes us very uptight; we think we are extremely important, and our basic desire is for ourselves to be happy and for things to go well for us. Yet we don't know how to bring this about. In fact, acting out of self-cherishing can never make us happy.

Those who have the attitude of cherishing others regard all other beings as much more important than themselves and value helping others above all else. And, acting in this way, incidentally they themselves become very happy. Even politicians, for example, who are genuinely concerned with helping or serving other people are recorded in history with respect, while those who are constantly exploiting and doing bad things to others go down in history as examples of bad people.

Leaving aside, for the moment, religion, the next life and nirvana, even within this life selfish people bring negative repercussions down upon themselves by their self-centered actions. On the other hand, people like Mother Teresa, who sincerely devote their whole lives and all their energy to selflessly serving the poor, the needy and the helpless, are always remembered for their noble work with respect; others never have anything negative to say about them. This, then, is the result of cherishing others: whether you want it or not, even those who are not your relatives always like you, feel happy with you, have a warm feeling towards you. If you are the sort of person who always speaks nicely in front of others but behind their backs says nasty things about them, of course nobody will like you. Thus even in this life, if we try to help others as much as we can and have as few selfish thoughts as possible we shall experience much happiness. Our life is not very long: 100 years at the most. If throughout its duration we try to be kind, warm-hearted and concerned for the welfare of others, and less selfish and angry, that will be wonderful, excellent; that is really the cause of happiness. If you are selfish, if you always put yourself first and others second, the actual result will be that you yourself will finish up last. If mentally you put yourself last and others first, you will come out ahead.

So don't worry about the next life or nirvana: these things will come gradually. If within this life you

remain a good, warm-hearted, unselfish person you will be a good citizen of the world. Whether you are a Buddhist, a Christian, or a communist is irrelevant; the important thing is that as long as you are a human being you should be a good human being. That is the teaching of Buddhism; that is the message carried by all the world's religions. However, the teachings of Buddhism contain every technique for eradicating selfishness and actualizing the attitude of cherishing others. Shantideva's marvelous text, the *Bodhicaryavatara*, for example, is very helpful for this; I myself practice according to that book; it is extremely useful. Our mind is very cunning, very difficult to control, but if we make constant efforts, work tirelessly with logical reasoning and careful analysis, we shall be able to control it and change it for the better.

Some Western psychologists say that we should not repress our anger but express it—that we should practice anger! However, we must make an important distinction here between mental problems that should be expressed and those that should not. Sometimes you may be truly wronged and it is right for you to express your grievance instead of letting it fester inside you. But you should not express it with anger. If you foster disturbing negative minds such as anger they will become a part of your personality; each time you express anger it becomes easier to express it again. You do it more and more until you are simply a furious person completely out of control. Thus in terms of our mental problems there are certainly some that are properly expressed but others that are not. At first when you try to control disturbing negative minds it is difficult. The first day, the first week, the first month you cannot control them well. But if you make constant efforts, gradually your negativities will decrease. Progress in mental development does not come about through taking medicines or other chemical substances; it depends on controlling the mind.

Thus we can see that if we want to fulfill our wishes, be they temporal or ultimate, we should rely on other sentient beings much more than on wish-granting gems, and always cherish them above all else.

Q: Is the whole purpose of this practice to improve our minds or actually to do something to help others? What is more important?

A: Both are important. First, you see, if we do not have pure motivation, whatever we do may not be satisfactory. Thus the first thing we should do is cultivate pure motivation. But we do not have to wait until that motivation is fully developed before actually doing something to help others. Of course, to help others in the most effective way possible we have to be fully enlightened buddhas. Even to help others in vast and extensive ways we need to have attained one of the levels of a bodhisattva, that is to have had the experience of a direct, non-conceptual perception of the reality of voidness and to have achieved the powers of extra-sensory perception. Nonetheless, there are many levels of help we can offer others. Even before we have achieved these qualities we can try to act like bodhisattvas, but naturally our actions will be less effective than theirs. Therefore, without waiting until we are fully qualified, we can generate a good motivation and with that try to help others as best we can. This, I think, is a more balanced approach, and better than simply staying somewhere in isolation doing some meditation and recitations. Of course, this depends very much on the individual. If someone is confident that by staying in a remote place he can gain definite realizations within a certain period, that is different. Perhaps it is best to spend half our time in active work and the other half in the practice of meditation.

Q: Tibet was a Buddhist country. If these values you are describing are Buddhist ones, why was there

so much imbalance in Tibetan society.

A: Human weakness. Although Tibet was certainly a Buddhist country it had its share of bad, corrupt people. Even some of the religious institutions, the monasteries, became corrupt and turned into centers of exploitation. But all the same, compared with other feudal societies, Tibet was much more peaceful and harmonious and had less problems than they.

2. Wherever I go and whomever I accompany I shall practice seeing myself as the lowest of all and sincerely hold others dear and supreme.

No matter who we are with, we often think things like, “I am stronger than him,” “I am more beautiful than her,” “I am more intelligent,” “I am wealthier,” “I am much better qualified” and so forth—we generate much pride. This is not good. Instead we should always remain humble. Even when we are helping others and are engaged in charity work we should not regard ourselves in a very haughty way as great protectors benefiting the weak. This too is pride. Rather we should engage in such activities very humbly and think that we are offering our services up to the people.

When we compare ourselves with animals, for instance, we might think, “I have a human body” or “I’m an ordained person” and feel much higher than them. From one point of view we can say that we have human bodies and are practicing the Buddha’s teachings and are thus much better than insects. But from another, we can say that insects are very innocent and free from guile, whereas we often lie and misrepresent ourselves in devious ways in order to achieve our ends or better ourselves. From this point of view we have to say that we are much worse than insects, which just go about their business without pretending to be anything. This is one method of training in humility.

3. In all actions I shall examine my mind, and the moment an unsubdued thought arises, endangering myself and others, I shall face and avert it.

If we investigate our minds at times when we are very selfish and preoccupied with ourselves to the exclusion of others we shall find that the disturbing negative minds are the root of this behavior. Since they greatly disturb our minds, the moment we notice that we are coming under their influence, we should apply some antidote to them. The general opponent to all the disturbing negative minds is meditation on emptiness, but there are also antidotes to specific ones that we, as beginners, can apply. Thus for attachment we meditate on ugliness; for anger, on love; for closed-minded ignorance, on dependent arising; for many disturbing thoughts, on the breath and energy winds.

Q: Which dependent arising?

A: The twelve links of dependent arising, or interdependent origination. They start from ignorance and go through to aging and death. On a more subtle level you can use dependent arising as a cause for establishing that things are void of true existence.

Q: Why should we meditate on ugliness to overcome attachment?

A: We develop attachment to things because we see them as very attractive. Trying to view them as unattractive, or ugly, counteracts that. For example, we might develop attachment to another person’s

body, seeing his or her figure as something very attractive. When you start to analyze this attachment you find that it is based on viewing merely the skin. However, the nature of this body that appears to us as beautiful is that of the flesh, blood, bones, skin and so forth, of which it is composed. Now let's analyze human skin: take your own, for example. If a piece of it comes off and you put it on your shelf for a few days it becomes really ugly. This is the nature of skin. All parts of the body are the same. There is no beauty in a piece of human flesh; when you see blood you might feel afraid, not attached. Even a beautiful face: if it gets scratched there is nothing nice about it; wash off the paint—there is nothing left! Ugliness is the nature of the physical body. Human bones, the skeleton, are also repulsive. A skull-and-crossed-bones have a very negative connotation.

So that is the way to analyze something towards which you feel attachment, or love, using this word in the negative sense of desirous attachment: think more of the object's ugly side; analyze its nature—the person or thing—from that point of view. Even if this does not control your attachment completely, at least it will help subdue it a little. This is the purpose of meditating on or building up the habit of looking at the ugly aspect of things.

The other kind of love, or kindness, is not based on the reasoning that “such and such a person is beautiful therefore I shall show respect and kindness.” The basis for pure love is, “This is a living being. It wants happiness; it does not want suffering; it has the right to be happy. Therefore I should feel love and compassion towards it.” This kind of love is entirely different from the first, which is based on ignorance and therefore totally unsound. The reasons for this loving kindness are sound. With the love that is simply attachment, the slightest change in the object, such as a tiny change of attitude, immediately causes you to change. This is because your emotion is based on something very superficial. Take, for example, a new marriage. Often after a few weeks, months or years the couple become enemies and finish up getting divorced. They married deeply in love—nobody marries with hatred—but after a short time everything changed. Why? Because of the superficial basis for the relationship; a small change in one person caused a complete change of attitude in the other.

We should think, “The other person is a human being like me. Certainly I want happiness, therefore he must want happiness too. As a sentient being I have the right to happiness; for the same reason he, too, has the right to happiness.” This kind of sound reasoning gives rise to pure love and compassion. Then no matter how our view of that person changes—from good to bad to ugly—he is basically the same sentient being. Thus since the main reason for showing loving kindness is always there, our feelings towards the other are perfectly stable.

The antidote to anger is meditation on love because anger is a very rough, coarse mind that needs to be softened with love.

When we enjoy the objects to which we are attached, we do experience a certain pleasure but, as Nagarjuna has said, it is like having an itch and scratching it; it gives us some pleasure but we would be far better off if we did not have the itch in the first place. Similarly, when we get the things with which we are obsessed we feel happy, but we'd be far better off if we were free from the attachment that causes us to become obsessed with things.

4. Whenever I see a being of wicked nature, who is overwhelmed by heavy non-virtue and suffering, I shall hold him dear, as if I had discovered a precious treasure, difficult to find.

If we run into someone who is by nature very cruel, rough, nasty and unpleasant our usual reaction is to avoid the person, and in such situations our loving concern for others is liable to decrease. Instead of allowing our love for others to weaken by thinking what an evil person this is, we should see him or her as a special object of love and compassion and cherish that person as though we had come across a precious treasure, difficult to find.

5. When out of jealousy others treat me badly with abuse, insult and the like, I shall practice accepting defeat and offering the victory to others.

If someone insults, abuses and criticizes us, saying that we are incompetent and don't know how to do anything and so forth, we are likely to get very angry and contradict what the person has said. We should not react in this way; instead, with humility and tolerance, we should accept what has been said.

Where it says that we should accept defeat and offer the victory to others, we have to differentiate two kinds of situation. If, on the one hand, we are obsessed with our own welfare and very selfishly motivated, we should accept defeat and offer victory to the other, even if our life is at stake. But if, on the other hand, the situation is such that the welfare of others is at stake, we have to work very hard and fight for the rights of others, and not accept the loss at all.

One of the forty-six secondary vows of a bodhisattva refers to a situation in which someone is doing something very harmful and you have to use forceful methods or whatever else is necessary to stop that person's actions immediately: if you don't you have transgressed that commitment. It might appear that this precept and the fifth stanza, which says that one must accept defeat and give the victory to the other, are contradictory but they are not. The bodhisattva precept deals with a situation in which one's prime concern is the welfare of others: if someone is doing something extremely harmful and dangerous it is wrong not to take strong measures to stop it if necessary. Nowadays, in very competitive societies, strong defensive or similar actions are often required. The motivation for these should not be selfish concern but extensive feelings of kindness and compassion towards others. If we act out of such feelings to save others from creating negative karma this is entirely correct.

Q: It may sometimes be necessary to take strong action when we see something wrong, but whose judgment do we trust for such decisions? Can we rely on our own perception of the world?

A: That's complicated. When you consider taking the loss upon yourself you have to see whether giving the victory to the others is going to benefit them ultimately or only temporarily. You also have to consider the effect that taking the loss upon yourself will have on your power or ability to help others in the future. It is also possible that by doing something that is harmful to others now you create a great deal of merit that will enable you to do things vastly beneficial for others in the long run; this is another factor you have to take into account.

As it says in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, you have to examine, both superficially and deeply, whether the benefits of doing a prohibited action outweigh the shortcomings. At times when it is difficult to tell you should check your motivation. In the *Sikshasamuccaya*, Shantideva says that the benefits of an action done with bodhichitta motivation outweigh the negativities of doing it with such motivation. Because it is sometimes very difficult yet very important to see the dividing line between what to do and what not to do, you should study the texts that explain about such things. In lower texts it will say

that certain actions are prohibited, while in higher ones it will say that those same actions are allowed. The more you know about all of this the easier it will be to decide what to do in any situation.

6. When someone I have benefited and in whom I have great hopes gives me terrible harm, I shall practice regarding him or her as my holy guru.

Usually we expect a person whom we have helped a great deal to be very grateful, and if he reacts to us with ingratitude we are likely to get angry. In such situations we should not get angry but, instead, practice patience. Moreover, we should see this person as a teacher testing our patience and therefore treat him with respect. This verse contains all the *Bodhicharyavatara* teachings on patience.

7. In short, both directly and indirectly, I offer every benefit and happiness to all my mothers. Secretly, I shall practice taking all their harmful actions and suffering upon myself.

This refers to the practice of taking upon ourselves all the sufferings of others and giving away to them all our happiness, motivated by strong compassion and love. We all want happiness and do not want suffering and can see that all other beings feel the same. We can see, too, that other beings are overwhelmed by suffering but do not know how to get rid of it. Thus we should generate the intention of taking on all their suffering and negative karma and pray for it to ripen upon ourselves immediately. Likewise it is obvious that other beings are devoid of the happiness they seek and do not know how to find it. Thus, without a trace of miserliness, we should offer to others all our happiness—our body, wealth, and merits—and pray for it to ripen on them immediately.

Of course, it is most unlikely that we shall actually be able to take on the sufferings of others and give them our happiness. When such transference between beings does occur it is the result of some very strong unbroken karmic connection from the past. However, this meditation is a very powerful means of building up courage in our minds and is therefore a highly beneficial practice.

In the Seven-Point Thought Transformation it says that we should alternate the practices of taking and giving and mount them on the breath. And here, Langri Tangpa says these should be done secretly. As it is explained in the *Bodhicharyavatara*, this practice does not suit the minds of beginner bodhisattvas—it is something for the select few practitioners. Therefore it is called secret.

Q: In the eighth chapter of *Bodhicharyavatara*, Shantideva says:
...if for the sake of others I cause harm to myself
I shall acquire all that is magnificent.

On the other hand, Nagarjuna says that one should not mortify the body. So in what way does Shantideva mean one should harm oneself?

A: This does not mean that you have to hit yourself on the head or something like that. Shantideva is saying that at times when strong, self-cherishing thoughts arise you have to argue very strongly with yourself and use forceful means to subdue them; in other words, you have to harm your self-cherishing mind. You have to distinguish clearly between the I that is completely obsessed with its own welfare and the I that is going to become enlightened: there is a big difference. And you have to see this verse of the *Bodhicharyavatara* in the context of the verses that precede and follow. There are many different

ways the I is discussed: the grasping at a true identity for the I, the self-cherishing I, the I that we join with in looking at things from the viewpoint of others and so forth. You have to see the discussion of the self in these different contexts.

If it really benefits others, if it benefits even one sentient being, it is appropriate for us to take upon ourselves the suffering of the three realms of existence or to go to one of the hells, and we should have the courage to do this. In order to reach enlightenment for the sake of sentient beings we should be happy and willing to spend countless eons in the lowest hell, Avici. This is what taking the harms that afflict others upon ourselves refers to.

Q: What would we have to do to get to the lowest hell?

A: The point is to develop the courage to be willing to go to one of the hells; it doesn't mean you actually have to go there. When the Kadampa Geshe Chekawa was dying, he suddenly called in his disciples and asked them to make special offerings, ceremonies and prayers for him because his practice had been unsuccessful. The disciples were very upset because they thought something terrible was about to happen. However, the geshe explained that although all his life he had been praying to be born in the hells for the benefit of others, he was now receiving a pure vision of what was to follow—he was going to be reborn in a pure land instead of the hells. In the same way, if we develop a strong, sincere wish to be reborn in the lower realms for the benefit of others, we accumulate a vast amount of merit that brings about the opposite result.

That's why I always say, if we are going to be selfish we should be wisely selfish. Real, or narrow, selfishness causes us to go down; wise selfishness brings us buddhahood. That's really wise! Unfortunately, what we usually do first is get attached to buddhahood. From the scriptures we understand that to attain buddhahood we need bodhichitta and that without it we can't become enlightened; thus we think, "I want buddhahood, therefore I have to practice bodhichitta." We are not so much concerned about bodhichitta as about buddhahood. This is absolutely wrong. We should do the opposite; forget the selfish motivation and think how really to help others. If we go to hell we can help neither others nor ourselves. How can we help? Not just by giving them something or performing miracles, but by teaching Dharma. However, first we must be qualified to teach. At present we cannot explain the whole path: all the practices and experiences that one person has to go through from the first stage up to the last, enlightenment. Perhaps we can explain some of the early stages through our own experience, but not much more than that. To be able to help others in the most extensive way by leading them along the entire path to enlightenment we must first enlighten ourselves. For this reason we should practice bodhichitta. This is entirely different from our usual way of thinking, where we are compelled to think of others and dedicate our heart to them because of selfish concern for our own enlightenment. This way of going about things is completely false, a sort of lie.

Q: I read in a book that just by practicing Dharma we prevent nine generations of our relatives from rebirth in hell. Is this true?

A: This is a little bit of advertising! In fact it is possible that something like this could happen, but in general it's not so simple. Take, for example, our reciting the mantra *Om mani padme hum* and dedicating the merit of that to our rapidly attaining enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. We can't say that just by reciting mantras we shall quickly attain enlightenment, but we can say that such

practices act as contributory causes for enlightenment. Likewise, while our practicing Dharma will not itself protect our relatives from lower rebirths, it may act as a contributory cause for this. If this were not the case, if our practice could act as the principal cause of a result experienced by others, it would contradict the law of karma, the relationship between cause and effect. Then we could simply sit back and relax and let all the buddhas and bodhisattvas do everything for us; we would not have to take any responsibility for our own welfare. However, the fully enlightened one said that all he can do is teach us the Dharma, the path to liberation from suffering; it is up to us to put it into practice—he washed his hands of that responsibility! As Buddhism teaches that there is no creator and that we create everything for ourselves, we are therefore our own masters—within the limits of the law of cause and effect. And this law of karma teaches that if we do good we shall experience good results; if we do bad things we shall experience unhappiness.

Q: How do we cultivate patience?

A: There are many methods. Knowledge of and faith in the law of karma itself engenders patience. You realize, “This suffering I’m experiencing is entirely my own fault, the result of actions I myself created in the past. Since I can’t escape it I have to put up with it. However, if I want to avoid suffering in the future I can do so by cultivating virtues such as patience. Getting irritated or angry with this suffering will only create negative karma, the cause for future misfortune.” This is one way of practicing patience.

Another thing you can do is meditate on the suffering nature of the body. “This body and mind are the basis for all kinds of suffering; it is natural and by no means unexpected that suffering should arise from them.” This sort of realization is very helpful for the development of patience. You can also recall what it says in the *Bodhicaryavatara*:

Why be unhappy about something
If it can be remedied?
And what is the use of being unhappy about something
If it cannot be remedied?

If there is a method or an opportunity of overcoming your suffering you have no need to worry. If there is absolutely nothing you can do about it worrying cannot help you at all. This is both very simple and very clear.

Something else you can do is contemplate the disadvantages of getting angry and the advantages of practicing patience. We are human beings—one of our better qualities is our ability to think and judge. If we lose patience and get angry we lose our ability to make proper judgments and thereby lose one of the most powerful instruments we have for tackling problems: our human wisdom. This is something that animals do not have. If we lose patience and get irritated we are damaging this precious instrument. We should remember this; it is far better to have courage and determination and face suffering with patience.

Q: How can we be humble yet at the same time realistic about the good qualities that we possess?

A: You have to differentiate between confidence in your abilities and pride. You should have confidence in whatever good qualities and skills you have and use them courageously, but you shouldn’t feel

arrogantly proud of them. Being humble doesn't mean feeling totally incompetent and helpless. Humility is cultivated as the opponent of pride, but we should use whatever good qualities we have to the full.

Ideally one should have a great deal of courage and strength but not boast about or make a big show of it. Then, in times of need he should rise to the occasion and fight bravely for what is right. This is perfect. Someone who has none of these good qualities but goes around boasting how great he is and in times of need completely shrinks back is just the opposite. The first person is very courageous but has no pride; the other is very proud but has no courage.

8. With all these (practices) undefiled by the stains of the superstitions of the eight (worldly) dharmas, by perceiving all dharmas as illusory I shall practice, without grasping, to release (all sentient beings) from bondage.

This verse deals with wisdom. All the preceding practices should not be defiled by the stains of the superstitions of the eight worldly dharmas. These eight can be referred to as white, black or mixed. I think it should be all right if I explain this verse from the point of view of the practices being done without their being stained by the wrong conception of clinging to true existence—the superstition of the eight dharmas. How does one avoid staining one's practice in this way? By recognizing all existence as illusory and not clinging to true existence. Thus one is liberated from the bondage of this type of clinging.

To explain the meaning of “illusory” here: true existence appears in the aspect of various objects, wherever they are manifest, but in fact there is no true existence there. True existence appears, but there is none—it is an illusion. Even though everything that exists appears as truly existent, it is devoid of true existence. To see that objects are empty of true existence that even though true existence appears there is none, it is illusory—one should have definite understanding of the meaning of emptiness: the emptiness of the manifest appearance. First one should be certain that all phenomena are empty of true existence. Then later, when that which has absolute nature appears to be truly existent, one refutes the true existence by recalling one's previous ascertainment of the total absence of true existence. When one puts together these two—the appearance of true existence and its emptiness as previously experienced—one discovers the illusoriness of phenomena.

Now there is no need for an explanation of the way things appear as illusory separate from that just given. This text explains up to the meditation on mere emptiness. In tantric teachings such as the Guhyasamaja tantra, what is called illusory is completely separate; in this verse what is called illusory does not have to be shown separately. Thus the true existence of that which has absolute nature is the object of refutation and should be refuted. When it has been, the illusory mode of appearance of things arises indirectly: they seem to be truly existent but they are not.

Q: How can something that is unfindable and that exists merely by imputation function?

A: That's very difficult. If you can realize that subject and action exist by reason of their being dependent arisings, emptiness will appear in dependent arising. This is the most difficult thing to understand.

If you have realized non-inherent existence well, the experience of existent objects speaks for itself.

That they exist by nature is refuted by logic, and you can be convinced by logic that things do not—there is no way that they can—inherently exist. Yet they definitely do exist because we experience them. So how do they exist? Merely by the power of name. This is not saying that they don't exist; it is never said that things do not exist. What is said is that they exist by the power of name. This is a difficult point; something that you can understand slowly, slowly through experience.

First you have to analyze whether things exist truly or not, actually findably or not: you can't find them. But if we say that they don't exist at all, this is a mistake, because we do experience them. We can't prove through logic that things exist findably, but we do know through our experience that they exist. Thus we can make a definite conclusion that things do exist. Now, if things exist there are only two ways in which they can do so; either from their own base or by being under the control of other factors, that is either completely independently or dependently. Since logic disproves that things exist independently, the only way they can exist is dependently.

Upon what do things depend for their existence? They depend upon the base that is labeled and the thought that labels. If they could be found when searched for, they should exist by their own nature, and thus the Madhyamaka scriptures, which say that things do not exist by their own nature, would be wrong. However, you can't find things when you search for them. What you do find is something that exists under the control of other factors, that is therefore said to exist merely in name. The word “merely” here indicates that something is being cut off: but that is not that which is not the name but has a meaning and is the object of a valid mind. This is not saying that there is no meaning to things other than their names, or that the meaning that is not the name is not the object of a valid mind. What it cuts off is that it exists by something other than the power of name. Things exist merely by the power of name, but they have meaning, and that meaning is the object of a valid mind. But the nature of things is that they exist simply by the power of name.

There is no other alternative, only the force of name. That does not mean that besides the name there is nothing. There is the thing, there is a meaning, there is a name. What is the meaning? The meaning also exists merely in name.

Q: Is the mind something that really exists or is it too an illusion?

A: It's the same thing. According to the Prasangika-Madhyamaka, the highest, most precise view, it is the same thing whether it is an external object or the internal consciousness that apprehends it: both exist by the power of name; neither is truly existent. Thought itself exists merely in name; so do voidness, buddha, good, bad, and indifferent. Everything exists solely by the power of name.

When we say “name only” there is no way to understand what it means other than that it cuts off meanings that are not name only. If you take a real person and a phantom person, for example, both are the same in that they exist merely by name, but there is a difference between them. Whatever exists or does not exist is merely labeled, but in name, some things exist and others do not.

According to the Mind Only school, external phenomena appear to inherently exist but are, in fact, empty of external, inherent existence, whereas the mind is truly existent. I think this is enough about Buddhist tenets for now.

Q: Are “mind” and “consciousness” equivalent terms?

A: There are distinctions made in Tibetan, but it’s difficult to say whether the English words carry the same connotations. Where “mind” refers to primary consciousness it would probably be the same as “consciousness.” In Tibetan, “awareness” is the most general term and is divided into primary consciousness and (secondary) mental factors, both of which have many further subdivisions. Also, when we speak of awareness there are mental and sensory awareness, and the former has many subdivisions into various degrees of roughness and subtlety. Whether or not the English words correspond to the Tibetan in terms of precision and so forth is difficult to say.

Colophon:

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Mahayana Thought Transformation

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The Mahayana thought transformation condensed in eight verses, written by the great hidden meditator, Langri Tangpa Dorje Senghe, is a method to transform all undesirable conditions into useful ones. The things that cause unhappiness, depression and aggression in those who have not met Buddhadharmā, and which make unhappy even those who have met and are trying to practice Buddhadharmā, are transformed into useful conditions. All these undesirable conditions become beneficial. For Dharma practitioners and also those who do not meditate or practice Buddhadharmā, all the failures and undesirable experiences such as disease, criticism and bad reputation can be transformed into necessary and desirable conditions. Any harm can be transformed into benefit.

For the practitioner of Mahayana thought transformation who has put the meaning of *The Eight Verses* into action in his everyday life, nothing distracts him from his Dharma practice. This meditator always prays that others receive whatever good things—possessions, happiness, merit—he has; he always dedicates and gives up every good thing to others. And he always prays to receive all the sufferings and undesirable conditions of other sentient beings. “May I experience all these sufferings upon myself” is the prayer he often says to the merit field in his everyday life. This is the wish he always generates.

Whenever something bad happens to him—some criticism, failure, disaster—as he constantly prays to exchange himself for others, to renounce himself and cherish others, the practitioner recognizes the situation and is not shocked by it. As he wishes to give up everything good to others and experience upon himself all their undesirable sufferings, when an obstacle such as other people badly treating him or some distraction to his Dharma practice occurs, he is not shocked. Because the practitioner has trained his mind in transforming sufferings into happiness, he prays instead like this: “May I receive all the sufferings of other sentient beings and experience them by myself. May all my merit and happiness be received and experienced by others.” It is not that he makes this prayer and is then shocked when he actually experiences a problem, it would be contradictory to act the opposite to his daily prayers.

It is not that we scream prayers such as those in *Lama Chöpa* in front of the merit field, making sure that everybody hears: “I want to take all the sufferings of others and dedicate all my happiness to others,” then are shocked when an obstacle suddenly happens. If you pray like this, but are shocked when a problem suddenly occurs—you have a stroke, an epileptic fit, a headache, or somebody criticises you—what your mouth is saying is not the same as what you feel in your heart. If you are shocked when some undesirable obstacle actually happens in your life, the wish in your heart and the prayer you say contradict each other.

You may not feel comfortable even to recite the words: “I will give up everything, all my happiness and merit, to others. May I receive and experience all their sufferings and unhappiness by myself.” Even

saying the words, you may feel a little fear arise in your heart. This fear comes because you are taking the side of the self-cherishing thought more than the thought of cherishing others. The more you take the side of cherishing others, the less fear arises. The more you are able to dedicate and give up your own merit, happiness, possessions and body for others, the more happiness and peace of mind arise, rather than fear. As you dedicate yourself more to others, there is more joy.

The more you are able to take upon yourself the problems and sufferings of others, the more peace of mind and happiness there is in your life, and the fewer the obstacles. This is true even for someone who does not regard himself as a religious person, who hasn't met Buddhadharma and doesn't have faith in reincarnation, in past and future lives. If such a person has a very sincere mind and a very generous heart, with little self-cherishing thought, the more he is able to dedicate himself to others, bearing hardships for the sake of others in his everyday life, the greater his peace of mind and the fewer obstacles to the fulfilment of his wishes.

Instead of becoming depressed or aggressive when he meets obstacles in his daily life, the practitioner of Mahayana thought transformation, who has trained his mind in putting *The Eight Verses* into practice, becomes happy. He thinks: "Now I have succeeded. When I do *Lama Chöpa* and other prayers, I have been praying many times a day to receive all the sufferings of others and experience them by myself—now I have accomplished my prayer. I have received and am able to experience the problems and sufferings of others." In this way he becomes happier.

Such practitioners even give tormas as gifts to the spirits and worldly protectors, asking them to help eliminate their self-cherishing thought and to be able to receive and experience the sufferings of others. In other words, instead of asking for the distractions to be stopped, they give gifts to the spirits and ask to be disturbed. However, even when he makes prayers such as this, the main aim of the practitioner of thought transformation is to benefit other sentient beings. He prays constantly to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and even to the spirits and worldly protectors, who can help or disturb him: "If it is more beneficial to other sentient beings for me to be sick, let me be sick. If being healthy is more beneficial, let me be healthy. If it is more beneficial that I die, let my death happen. If it is more beneficial that I live, then let me live. Let happen whatever is best for other sentient beings."

This practitioner keeps in his heart the kind mother sentient beings, from whom he receives all the temporal and ultimate happiness and perfections of the three times. All the good things we have, including a good reputation, praise, education, and even small pleasures, are received through the kindness of other sentient beings. All these come entirely from others.

Keeping all sentient beings in the depth of his heart, the practitioner of Mahayana thought transformation lives his life doing whatever is most beneficial for other sentient beings. This is his practice. All the time he prays to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha: "Let whatever is best for other sentient beings happen. If it is more beneficial for me to die, let that happen immediately. If my living is more beneficial for others, then let that happen." He gives up himself and completely dedicates his life to the kind sentient beings. He prays to the guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha like this because he himself doesn't know what is best, whether to live or die is more beneficial for others. Because he himself doesn't have this knowledge, he relies upon those with the three qualities of omniscient mind, perfect power to guide and compassion for all sentient beings, and prays that what happens is the most beneficial for other sentient beings.

In Tibet, sick people usually give their names and small money offerings to monasteries, lamas or meditators and ask them to pray for their recovery. Or if someone dies, the family makes a small money offering and dedicates the merits of offering the money for the person who has died to have a good rebirth, to receive a perfect human body and be born in a place where there is the opportunity to practice holy Dharma. However, one lama in Kham used to give money offerings to other lamas and write petitions requesting them to pray for him to die soon and be reborn in the hells. People normally request: “Please pray that I be able to live a long and healthy life and that when I die, I not be reborn in the hells.” This lama’s request was the complete opposite. He requested other lamas to pray that he die soon and be born in the hells.

A person with bodhichitta is unbelievably happy to be born in the heaviest suffering realm of the hells, where there is unbearable suffering and the length of life is one aeon. This makes him very happy, like a swan entering a pond or a sunburnt person at the beach entering the ocean. Practitioners of Mahayana thought transformation who are well trained in great compassion and have generated bodhichitta are very happy even to be born in the unbearable suffering state of the hells for the sake of other sentient beings, like a swan entering a pool.

A practitioner of Mahayana thought transformation is happier when he receives obstacles. When disaster happens, his mind is extremely happy. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says he finds it very beneficial for his own mind that the work for the Tibetans is becoming harder, with more problems. For himself, His Holiness wishes the work for the Tibetan people could be harder because in this way he would be able to bear more hardships for others. With so many problems related to Tibet, His Holiness says: “I would have gone crazy, except that I have the holy Dharma.” This shows that His Holiness’s holy mind is well-trained in Mahayana thought transformation. No matter how many people bring problems to His Holiness, it cannot disturb his holy mind. His holy mind overwhelms the problems; they cannot disturb him or make him depressed.

Relate what His Holiness says to your own everyday life. Even though you don’t have the incredible responsibility of looking after many millions of people, even though no one has actually offered you such a powerful position, bring what His Holiness says into your own life. His Holiness is looking after not only six million Tibetans, but all sentient beings. You have only to take care of yourself, and you can’t even do that well; you can’t skillfully guide even this one sentient being—yourself.

The Dharma you are practicing, especially if you have taken bodhisattva vows, involves dedicating your life every day to others. You have taken vows to live day and night for others, not for yourself. You have especially taken vows to eat, dress, sleep, wear clothing and so forth for other sentient beings. And at the beginning of each retreat session, you generate refuge and bodhichitta: “I am going to do this practice for the sake of all sentient beings, in order to lead them to the sublime happiness of enlightenment.”

Relate what His Holiness says to your everyday life, particularly to the bodhisattva’s brave action of doing very difficult works for other sentient beings, and with an incredibly happy mind. No matter how hard it is to work for other sentient beings or how many aeons it takes, the bodhisattva is extremely happy to have the opportunity to bear these hardships. Relate this to your everyday life—to your retreat or other Dharma practice. When you get up in the morning, generate the motivation to practice Dharma for the sake of other sentient beings, no matter how hard it is. And at the beginning of your

Dharma practice try to generate the motivation of bodhichitta, so that the practice is done for the sake of others.

Sometimes, no matter how much you meditate, nothing happens in your mind. For example, no matter how much you try to understand emptiness by reading teachings and meditating, nothing happens in your mind. After years of meditation, nothing has happened in your mind. You should not be discouraged or depressed. When you are studying Dharma, you may find it very hard to understand. Remember that you are studying Dharma for the sake of other sentient beings, so you should not feel discouraged if you find it hard. Remembering the bodhisattva's brave attitude of voluntarily doing the most difficult work with an incredibly happy mind, you should not feel discouraged. You should feel happy. No matter how hard it is to study and understand Dharma, you should continue to try.

It is the same with retreat. Before you start retreat, there are no distractions; but when you start, the distractions begin. Everything becomes very difficult and nothing happens exactly as you wish. You have thousands of obstacles during the retreat: sickness, fleas biting and so on. On top of that, people bother you. During both break times and meditation sessions, people bother you. And if there are no people bothering you, the dogs are barking. At such times, instead of generating the thought of killing the dogs, you should generate patience!

I've just remembered a story from Solu Khumbu. I was at Lawudo one summer, building the first school for young monks on the mountain. One American student asked me if he could put his tent on top of the Lawudo Lama's cave. I said it was okay, although I think my mother and some others didn't like his putting the tent there. His tent was actually much more comfortable than any of the upstairs rooms of the main monastery or even the cave where I slept. His tent had electricity (no one else on the mountain had electricity) and a long table. He had solar batteries that he charged by putting them outside in the daytime. He said the batteries were the same as those used in rockets. This American was very good with machinery—I think he fixed the television belonging to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's mother when he was in Dharamsala. He was young, very tall and very intelligent.

Anyway, his pillow was made of some kind of nylon, similar to a sleeping bag, and this cloth made a lot of noise when it was rubbed. At night, when he was sleeping on top of my cave, each time he moved his head on the pillow, he made a noise. There was a big dog just below the cave, so each time the American moved his head, the dog barked. The next day he told me that he had gotten so angry that he wanted to kill the dog.

The next day he moved the dog a little further down the mountain. My sister wanted to move the dog's kennel back up because it was a long way down a steep slope, and this made it very difficult for her to carry the dog's food down from the kitchen. Thinking that she might move the kennel back up, the American rubbed dog faeces on the wooden planks of the kennel so that she wouldn't touch it. I can understand it—he was having an incredibly good sleep, and the dog's barking was very distracting.

One day this same American experimented with datura, a lot of which grows on the mountains. The goats eat a lot of it and seem to find it very delicious, but I don't think the local people eat it. One day he cooked this datura in a pot, ate it and got sick. I didn't realize that he had eaten datura and nobody knew that he was sick. Only after he had recovered did he come to the cave and tell me how terribly sick he had been for one or two days—particularly one day. For one whole day he saw everything as

worms: the entire ground was full of moving worms. And he heard the sound of people speaking.

Anyway, to return to the point: It is natural, due to our karma, to have many distractions when we are trying to do something good. It is natural to have many obstacles the one time in this life, this year, this month, these few days that you are trying to practice holy Dharma by doing retreat, by following the graduated path to enlightenment. As His Holiness explained from his own experience, it is extremely important to have a brave mind. Remember the brave bodhisattvas and be brave in your practice. In this way, especially with Mahayana thought transformation, problems and distractions cannot arise. And even if there are distractions from the side of your mind or body, or from the side of the place, people or animals around you, they cannot disturb your mind. Your mind overwhelms and controls any problems.

As long as you put it into practice, it is impossible for Mahayana thought transformation not to work. It is only a question of putting it into practice. As long as you put it into practice, it is impossible for it not to benefit your mind by cutting off problems. You have to put Mahayana thought transformation into action; simply knowing, speaking or writing about these teachings will not stop problems.

Colophon:

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When Problems Come

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Generally, what we want is happiness, and what we do not want is suffering. But the times of happiness are very short, and the times of problems are so much longer. What we want happens very rarely; what we don't want happens so much.

We care so much about suffering: if there is one louse or one flea jumping in a hotel room, you scream and you move to another hotel. I don't know the exact term for this, but the Tibetan term is *se-re*, which means that a person cares incredibly about small discomforts. You argue and make a big show in front of all the people in the hotel, or you insult others and get very angry—even if you have a nice face, it becomes completely terrible. If you give something to someone and they do not say 'thank you' (maybe you give them a cup of tea or chocolate or something), it becomes so unbearable for your mind—such a big suffering. Maybe you even criticize that person for weeks or months just because of that. You hold them as your enemy because they did not thank you, just because they did not say the words 'thank you'—two words.

If you care so much about discomfort and suffering, then small things become huge, unbearable. Everything that you hear, see and feel appears to you as the enemy. Even if you stay at home there is no happiness because everything appears as the enemy, everything. Even if you go outside and are not even with other people, the wind becomes an adversary, even the birds become an enemy.

In the same way, if you are not that concerned about small discomforts and sufferings, you can also develop the mind that way. If you stop being so concerned then gradually the mind also develops. Even one huge problem happens in life it becomes so little, like cotton, so light, so easy. Even the huge ones become small. You are happy. It is not so important.

That is why thought training—transforming the sufferings into happiness—is so important, Dharma practice is extremely important. So far one has been under the control of the mind, and the mind has been under the control of the disturbing thoughts. That is why we are experiencing the sufferings of samsara. Now, if we want happiness, if we want to cease the suffering of samsara, we should gain control over the mind, then instead of the mind being under the control of the disturbing thoughts, the disturbing thoughts will be under the control of the mind.

The way to have control over the mind so that the mind has control over the delusions is through Dharma practice. There is no other way. And one reason for doing so now is that this time we have achieved a perfect human rebirth and met the virtuous friend who gives teachings on the path. Therefore one should practice Dharma while one has the opportunity.

The perfect human rebirth is difficult to find again, so one should practice now. Death will definitely happen, though the time of death is indefinite. After death the consciousness does not cease, it takes another rebirth in the suffering realms through the force of karma, either in the lower realm or in the realm of the happy transmigratory beings. Therefore we must practice Dharma right now.

When death comes, at that most critical time, the only thing that can benefit is Dharma, only the holy Dharma. Nothing benefits except the holy Dharma. Now, while we have suffering we cannot practice Dharma. When we have problems we cannot practice Dharma. When we are happy, because we cling to that happiness and comfort, again we cannot practice Dharma. We never have the time to practice Dharma. We should not let this happen—unable to practice Dharma when we are suffering and unable to practice Dharma when there is happiness.

“Foolish people seek happiness from outside, learned people seek happiness from the mind.” Uninformed people, the unskillful and foolish ones seek happiness from outside. “Whatever happens in life, we should be happy; the mind should be happy. One should not let happiness or suffering disturb our practice of Dharma.”

The bodhisattva Togme Zangpo, who wrote *The Thirty-seven Practices of the Bodhisattvas*, who was himself a great practitioner of transforming suffering into happiness, gave this advice.

If the illusory body, the aggregates, of oneself or others are sick, then it is best for them to be sick, be happy that they are sick. Why is it good to be sick? Why be happy to be sick? Because negative karma that one has accumulated in the past gets finished off. Since you have collected this karma you have to experience it some time, it is impossible for others to experience it, so now you are finishing it off. Instead of being sick in the lower realms and suffering in the lower realms for many aeons, you finish off all that negative karma just by having some sickness in this body.

You see, the first Dharma practices, the *ngöndro*, includes various Dharma practices to purify the two obscurations: making mandala offerings and prostrations, doing guru-yoga practice, reciting Vajrasattva mantra, meditating on shunyata, and meditating on bodhichitta. These are all intended to exhaust the negative karma, to purify the karma. These practices purify the two obscurations, but the experiencing the disease also finishes off that negative karma, so one should feel happy even if one feels sick and experiences the suffering of sickness. The Dharma practices and the sickness both purify negative karma so it comes to the same thing.

If you are not sick, then it is best not to be sick. Be happy not being sick, because if your body and mind are comfortable and happy, you are able to practice Dharma. If your body and mind are comfortable then your virtue increases and you have the opportunity to practice Dharma. The way to make the human body meaningful, beneficial, is to transform the actions of body, speech and mind into virtue. Therefore, if your body and mind are comfortable your virtue increases because they are what you need to make your life meaningful.

If you don't have possessions and wealth, it is best not to have any, be happy not having any. Because if you do not have any possessions you do not have to worry about them or to protect them from thieves. There is no rush, no need to continuously keep your life busy because of this wealth. If you have much wealth it makes your life very busy, you have to take care of it, to increase it, to make sure

you don't lose it. Also, there is so much fighting, there are so many quarrels that come from possessions. Disharmony comes from having possessions.

You can see many examples of disharmony and fighting in this country, even within families. You can see different groups of people fighting because of their clinging to possessions. I think it also happens many times in Italy that rich people have much danger in their lives. They get telephone calls: "If you don't leave such and such an amount of money at this place at this time—a big amount of money—then I will kill you!" They get many phone calls, so they are scared to go outside.

If you have possessions, be happy to have possessions. If you have many dollars then be happy about it. Whatever happens in life, whether happy or suffering, whether you have wealth or you don't have wealth, be happy—that is what is emphasized here. If you have wealth and possessions, you can increase your merit. For example, many Tibetan people in Switzerland and other countries work day and night, keeping very busy, to make money. When I was talking with His Holiness Song Rinpoche, they did not even have the time to be at the house when Rinpoche was there, they had to go out both nighttime and daytime, both times they had to go to work. They work so hard, they make money and then often they go to India and then they offer it to the monasteries or do whatever they can think of as best to accumulate merit for the happiness of future lives. They offer their money to some holy object or do whatever they think is best to accumulate merit.

So, having wealth can be worthwhile, it can be used to accumulate merit, either to accumulate merit for yourself, for your happiness, or for other sentient beings. You can make it worthwhile to have possessions. Togme Zangpo said that it was definite that this would result in temporal benefit and happiness, and future benefit and happiness. The result of all these good things is merit. So if you have wealth you can use it to accumulate merit, you do not have to feel depressed, full of worry, things like that. You can make it beneficial and use it to accumulate merit.

If death comes quickly, you should be happy to die because, as the bodhisattva Togme Zangpo said, death is not disturbed by bad conditions and will definitely lead to the infallible path. Good impressions are left on the consciousness by practicing virtue—saying prayers, practicing lam rim, generating bodhichitta, doing the particular tantric methods practicing the transference of consciousness, the practice of purification, self-initiation, the tsog offering practice, meditating on deities and making prayers in daily life—in the past. These things all leave an impression on the mind, and with these as support, one is able to enter the infallible path.

Also, the guru yoga practice—following the guru's advice, stopping heresy, and things like that—leaves good impressions. These all act as causes for one to be able to meditate at the time of death, to transform the mind into virtue. It enables the person to do *Po-ma* (transference of consciousness) or thought training or whatever, so one is able to turn the mind to virtue at the time of death. The person is able to recognize clear light and transfer the consciousness to the pure realms or to find a better human rebirth. Also, another good Dharma person can help at the time of death.

If you are sick, if you are overcome by great pain, by a strong disease or very strong delusions, then at the time of death, even though you know that death is happening it is difficult to practice these things, to do these meditations. If your body is in a bad condition and there are bad conditions around you, it is difficult to make the mind virtuous at the time of death.

Whether you have success at the time of death depends completely on whether you have created the right causes during your life by making preparations as I just explained: lam-rim practice, thought-training practice, and guru practice (actually guru practice is the main one). Even if you know many other meditation techniques, profound secret methods, whether you are able to use them or not depends on those other practices.

You see, when your mind is full of anger or you have sickness and somebody tries to give you advice, it does not benefit you, it just becomes the cause for more anger. Guru yoga is not just a meditation, not just saying a prayer; not just visualizing a deity and reciting mantra, although as Lama Tsongkhapa explained in the *Commentary on Lam-rim*, the emphasis is on that.

One Dharma king of Tibet, Song-tsen Gampo, had two disciples who both had the karma to become enlightened in that lifetime. Some heresy arose towards the guru and they did not confess it. Afterwards, they were killed by a thief with stones and robbed.

Also, heresy arose in the mind of one of the Kadampa geshe's disciples. The Kadampa geshe felt sad that the disciple did not confess before he died. The Kadampa geshe said, "Oh, he could have confessed." Because it makes a difference to the karma after death. It makes it lighter.

If the mind at the time of death becomes nonvirtuous, then you cannot recognize the clear light when the absorptions happen, so you enter the wrong path. If one has done something wrong then one can confess it, as the Kadampa geshe used to do.

When Lama Atisha was on his way to Tibet, whenever in general view he had broken or degenerated one of those subtle tantric vows, the subtle branches, he immediately stopped on the road and prostrated to the stupa that contained his guru's hair or relics. He confessed these broken vows by doing prostrations.

If you live long, you should be happy to live long. If you stay alive for a long time there is no need for you to worry about it, there is no need for you to be depressed. You do not have to worry, thinking, "Oh, I am not going to die soon so my problems will not finish. If I died the problems would stop. I have this relationship problem and that problem, this and that, many things. My body is incapable of doing many things. The best thing would be to die soon, but I am unable to die!" Then, you have to take scissors or a knife to kill yourself with. I think the mother of one of my students kept scissors for cutting hair or something, but she could not stand living, so she used the scissors to try and kill herself. I don't remember whether she died or not.

Why be happy to live for a long time? Because in order to grow the crops of experience of the path, one should practice a long time before the warm fresh advice disappears; then the realizations come. Did you get it clear? In order to generate the realizations of the path, we should practice the teachings and the advice given by the guru, by Buddha, for a long time. We need an opportunity to practice so that in this life, before death comes, the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment can be actualized. So one should be happy to have a long life.

What the bodhisattva Togme Zangpo is saying is that whatever happens, be happy, meditate on happiness, think about these things. "If I am suffering, it is good because of this, this, and this; if I am happy,

or comfortable, it is good because of this, this, and this.” This is the short advice that he is giving, as I have just explained. Whether you are alone or you are living with people, whatever happens you should be happy.

One most important thing is the practice of patience. Think: even the creatures living in the ocean and in the bushes, those birds who are flying and keeping so busy, what they are all trying to get is happiness. All human beings, from the time of childhood when they learn the alphabet, the abc, onwards, spend so much money, have so much worry and fear, work so hard to get wealth, material power, and position. They do all this, keeping their lives so busy, to try and find happiness.

Therefore, happiness is incredibly important, unbelievably important. It is the main thing that we are seeking. But without practicing patience, without trying to control anger, there is no way to have happiness. No matter how high your position, or how much power we have; even if we become king or president—the highest person on earth—with the greatest wealth, education, and ability to speak thousands of languages; even if you accomplish all of this, power and everything, as long as you have not changed your mind and controlled your anger, you will have no happiness at all. There will be no happiness in your everyday life.

Now you can see how incredibly important patience is, more important than any of the worldly things that keep you busy day and night trying to find happiness. Patience is so incredibly important. When you practice patience, anger goes away. There is relaxation; there is peace.

Now, this happiness—where does it come from? From the enemy. Who gives this happiness? Who gives you the opportunity to have this happiness and peace in the mind, not having anger? This comes from the enemy. It is given by the enemy. The person who treats you badly gives you the opportunity to practice patience and then gradually the anger becomes less and less and less. The more one practices patience, the less and less the anger, weaker and weaker. Then, after some time there is no more anger. No matter how badly you are treated, even if someone kills you, no matter what happens, there is no anger at all. Anger doesn't arise for even one second, in place of that only the unbearable thought of kindness arises.

So you can see how incredibly kind the enemy is. Where do your happiness and peace come from? They are given by the enemy. No matter how much money you spend on comfort, or how much time and effort you put into gaining that, you don't get the same mental peace that you get from the enemy. So, so precious. The benefit that you get from the enemy by practicing thought training, by practicing patience, the mind peace that you get, the merit that you accumulate is so much. The delusions and the self-cherishing thought become less, anger becomes less and you are more able to train the mind in the graduated path to enlightenment—all this with the help of the enemy.

Even if you gave the enemy a billion dollars, even if you gave him a mountain of gold, it would be nothing. It would not be enough to repay his kindness for the mind peace that you have received. Anger becomes less and less, the paramita of patience gets completed. The enemy helps you to complete the paramita of patience. Anger becomes less and less, the paramita of patience is completed and through that you achieve the omniscient mind. So the enemy is the one who really puts enlightenment in your hand.

Even having received so many teachings on thought training again and again, or on Lam-rim again and again, if we do not put these teachings into practice, not today, not next week, not this month, not next month, not this year, not next year, then sooner or later death comes and then you have never done any practice of patience.

If there is no enemy, there is no opportunity to practice patience, so if you don't practice patience while there is the enemy, while somebody is treating you badly, then at other times there is no opportunity to practice patience. Also, one person does not stay enemy all the time, sometimes he becomes a friend and then you have no opportunity to practice patience. so you should practice while he is the enemy, while he is disturbing you.

Whatever problem comes, if you practice *tong-len*, thought training, and patience, then, as the bodhisattva Togme Zangpo says, your mind get trained. So always the mind is soft, always there are realizations and there is happiness. No matter who you accompany, no matter who you are staying with, there is happiness. Whether you are with other people or alone, always there is happiness. The mind is always very brave. Your practice of Dharma has no obstacles. All the bad conditions appear as good, as auspicious—they help you to continue the Dharma practice. So there is always happiness and satisfaction in the mind.

Then, no matter how degenerate the time, no matter how things degenerate—more and more problems, more and more bad conditions—it only becomes a cause to achieve enlightenment more quickly because there is more purification and more accumulation of merit.

So, since the course is finished now, I hope there is something that you can practice for mind peace.

I think that's all.

Colophon:

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