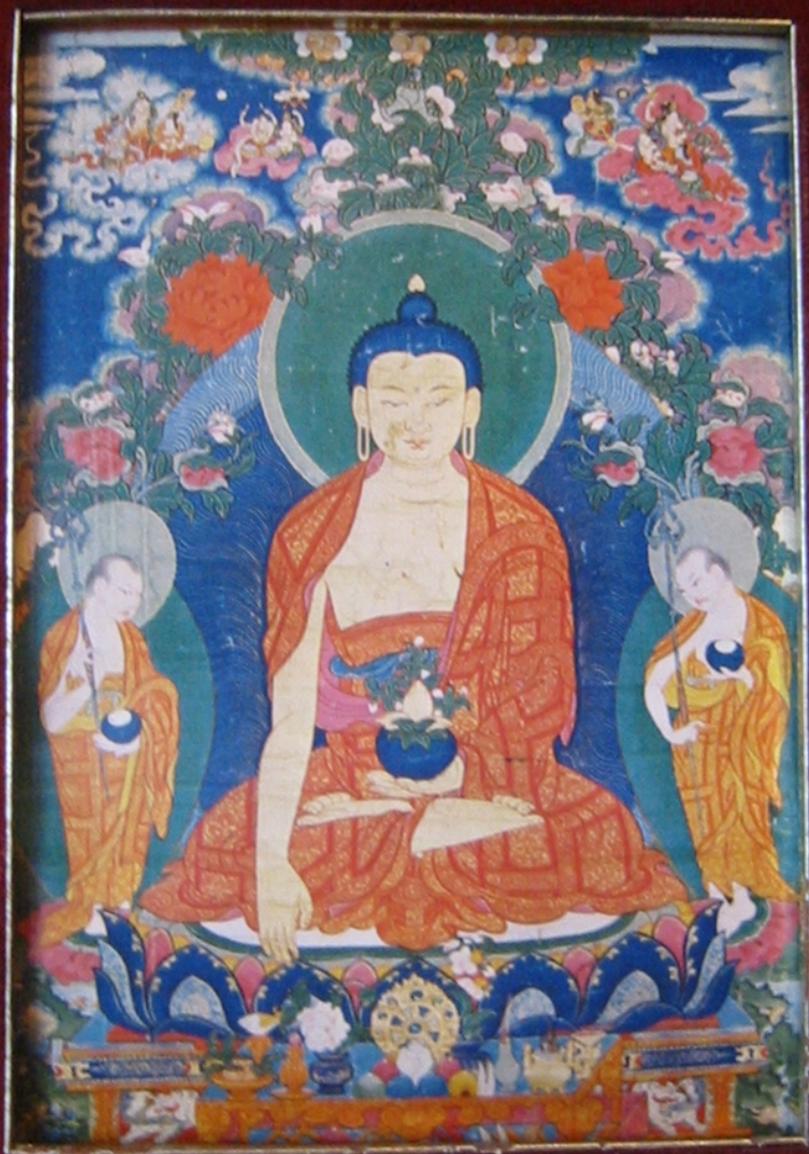


COMMITMENTS, VOWS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE, PRATIMOKSHA VOWS, AND BODHISATTVA VOWS

**TEACHINGS & PRACTICES BY
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Compiled by Ven. Robina Courtin



THIS IS LAMA YESHES ALTA
CARRIED ALWAYS WITH HIM

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PHOTO Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, "This is Lama Yeshe's Altar Carried Always With Him," written on the frame by Lama Zopa Rinpoche; on the altar in the Hayagriva Room at Tushita Retreat Center, Dharamsala, India.

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THE LIST OF COMMITMENTS, VOWS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE, LAY VOWS, AND BODHISATTVA VOWS

REFUGE COMMITMENTS

- 1. To know and keep** the three sets of actions to adopt and avoid. **SEE CHAPTERS 1 & 2; also 3**
- 2. INCLUDING** to take refuge three times in the morning and three times at night **SEE CHAPTER 12**
- 3. INCLUDING** to offer your food to the Three Jewels **SEE CHAPTER 11**
- 4. INCLUDING** to make offerings daily to the Three Jewels **SEE CHAPTER 21**

PRATIMOKSHA VOWS

- 5. To know and keep** the *pratimoksha*, or individual liberation, vows, lay or ordained. **SEE CHAPTER 1; also 3**

WISHING BODHICHTTA

- 6. To know and keep** the commitments relating to this. **SEE CHAPTER 4**

ENGAGING BODHICHTTA: THE BODHISATTVA VOWS

- 7. To know and keep** the 18 Root Bodhisattva Vows and the 46 Secondary Bodhisattva Vows. **SEE CHAPTERS 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10**
- 8. To recite three times in the morning and three times at night** “The Prayer for Purifying and Renewing Bodhisattva Vows” to purify broken vows and strengthen kept ones. **SEE CHAPTER 12**

9. To purify broken vows and commitments every evening and determine to keep them by doing the Vajrasattva practice in the context of the Four Opponent Powers. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, “We are insane not to do it every day.”

SEE CHAPTER 22

RECOMMENDED READING

10. Read and think about *The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*.

SEE CHAPTER 23

PART ONE
REFUGE COMMITMENTS AND
PRATIMOKSHA VOWS

1. REFUGE IN BUDDHA, DHARMA AND SANGHA AND THE FIVE LAY VOWS

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

MOTIVATION FOR THE LIFE

The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from every suffering and to lead them to happiness, especially the sublime peerless happiness of full enlightenment.

Since the enjoyments in my every-day life – all the past, present and future happiness, including enlightenment – are dependent on other sentient beings, the numberless sentient beings' happiness also depends on me.

Because if I generate loving kindness towards sentient beings, then all sentient beings receive no harm from me and they have peace, success. Therefore, I am responsible for all sentient beings' happiness and peace.

I am a servant here to serve every sentient being without discrimination between those who harm and those who help, whatever they do.

For the success of this I must achieve full enlightenment. Therefore I am going to put all the actions of my body, speech and mind in virtue: may all these actions not cause the slightest harm and only be of the greatest benefit to all sentient beings so that they will achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

GENERAL ADVICE

In general, there are four points to the practice of Dharma.

1. One should rely upon holy beings, listen to the holy Dharma and after correctly comprehending, follow the Dharma and practice it.

2. One should not let one's senses become excited [that is, control the senses when in danger of creating negative karma], and take as many vows as one is capable of keeping.

3. Have a compassionate attitude towards sentient beings.

4. Whenever you eat or drink, make effort to offer to the Rare Sublime Ones [The Triple Gem], and train well in the refuge precepts, including exerting oneself to make offerings to the Triple Gem.

REFUGE ADVICE

REFUGE AND BODHICITTA PRAYER

This prayer should be recited three times in the morning and three times at night.

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

By the merits I create by listening to the Dharma

May I reach Buddhahood so as to benefit all sentient beings!

WHAT IS TO BE AVOIDED

1. Having taken refuge in the ***Buddha***, one should not take refuge from the depths of one's heart in worldly gods such as Brahma and so on, and one should not prostrate to such objects. One should not entrust oneself from the depths of one's heart to non-virtuous friends or teachers of non-Buddhist teachings that have no supporting levels.

2. Having taken refuge in the ***Dharma***, one should avoid harming any being, either directly by oneself, or indirectly by making others do it for you.

3. Having taken refuge in the ***Sangha***, one should avoid entrusting oneself to and keeping company with negative friends and followers of hedonism.

WHAT IS TO BE PRACTICED

1. Having taken refuge in the **Buddha**, with a mind of respect towards Those Gone to Bliss [the Buddhas], one should regard even statues as being actual Buddhas, prostrate and pay respect to them.

One should avoid showing disrespect to them by, for example, placing them on the bare ground, judging them according to their material value, or discriminating between them, saying that some are good and others bad.

2. Having taken refuge in the **Dharma**, one should pay homage and respect by generating the recognition of all scriptural texts or even just one syllable of the teachings as being the actual Rare Sublime Dharma.

And one should avoid placing them on the bare ground, regarding them as material objects, using them as security for a loan, or carrying them together with one's shoes.

3. Having taken refuge in the **Sangha**, one should regard even one member of the Sangha as being the actual Sangha.

One should avoid discriminating within the Sangha community and have equal respect for all.

One should train well in all the advice concerning what is to be practiced, such as not even stepping over pieces of robe or throwing them in dirty places but instead placing them in clean places.

THE LAY VOWS

The five branch vows to be kept by a full *upasika* [*ge-nyen*, “nearing virtue”] are to avoid

1. killing;
2. taking what has not been given;
3. sexual misconduct;
4. telling lies;
5. drinking alcohol.

Of these vows, killing, taking what has not been given and drinking alcohol are very easy to understand.

LOSING THE VOWS FROM THE ROOT

One would lose the vow from the root, and so should take it again, if one transgresses these vows by

1. killing a human being;
2. stealing an object that is valuable to another person;
3. engaging in sexual misconduct, that is, engaging in sexual activities with another's husband or wife or partner.
4. telling a supreme lie, that is, pretending one has attained realizations of the Grounds and Paths even though one hasn't.

RECEIVING A DOWNFALL

Otherwise, one would not lose the vow from the root but would receive a downfall, which must be confessed, if one transgresses the vows by

1. killing a non-human being such as an animal;
2. stealing an object of no value;
3. engaging in sexual conduct at a holy place, at a special time [for example, the day before full moon, the eighth day of the lunar calendar, Buddha's special holy days. etc], or engaging in sexual activity whilst living in the one-day eight precepts [*nyen-ne*, "near abiding"];- 4. telling ordinary lies;
- 5. drinking alcohol [or taking mind-altering drugs]

So, one should confess and abstain precisely, which is the method of purification.

One should protect well and tightly with the mind the six remaining non-virtuous actions, which are similar in part to the previous negative karmas [that is, close to those heavy negative karmas]: avoiding slander, harsh words, gossip, covetousness, harmful intention and wrong views.

BENEFITS OF PROTECTING THE VOWS

The benefits of protecting the vows like this are: you will not fall to the evil-gone realms [hells, animal and hungry ghost]; temporarily

you will continuously achieve the body of a deva or human, and ultimately you will easily achieve the state of liberation. Furthermore, the virtue of protecting these five vows increases constantly, even while one is asleep or unconscious, intoxicated and so forth.

Also, in addition to these, the Founder [Guru Shakyamuni Buddha] always thinks of you; the gods [protectors beyond sorrow, worldly protectors, devas] praise and protect you; non-humans cannot harm you; your qualities increase limitlessly; and at the time of death you will die without regret. Again, by avoiding killing, you will have a long life in all future lifetimes.

By avoiding taking what has not been given, you will have great wealth [in future lives].

By avoiding sexual misconduct, you will meet with a perfect wife or husband and friends [harmonious exactly according to your wishes] [in future lives].

By avoiding telling lies, you will have a good memory and be conscientious [in future lives].

It is said in the Sutra *The Lamp of the Moon*:

If, with a mind of devotion, one makes offerings of umbrellas, fan-flags, rows of lights, food and drink to as many billions of Buddhas as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges and for that many tens of millions of aeons, the merit of this can in no way compare with that of a person who keeps one precept even for one day at the time when the holy Dharma, the teaching of the Gone to Bliss One, perishes.

DEDICATION PRAYERS

It is best, if possible, to always dedicate the merit of any virtuous action right after doing it. If not, at least dedicate the merit of each day before going to bed. Dedicate one's own past, present and future merit and also that of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May bodhichitta – from which the happiness of all sentient beings
comes –
Be generated in the minds of self and other sentient beings
without delay, even for one second.
And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May emptiness be generated in the minds of self and others
sentient beings, without delay, even for one second.
And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May I, who am empty from my own side,
Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is
empty from its own side.
And lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side,
To that enlightenment, which is empty from its own side,
As quickly as possible, by myself, alone.

Whatever dedication the Victorious Ones Gone to Bliss
Of the three times have admired as best,
I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same way all these roots of
virtue
So that I may perform good works.

Because of the past, present, and future merit created by me and
by the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and sentient beings,
May I, my family, students, and all sentient beings
Be able to actualize completely in this very lifetime
Lama Tsong Khapa's path of unified sutra and tantra,
Which is pure like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsong Khapa
Spread in all directions and flourish forever.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord [Buddha], make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, let me sow pardon.
Where there is discord, let me sow unity.
Where there is doubt, let me sow faith.
Where there is error, let me sow truth,
Where there is despair, let me sow hope.
Where there is sadness, let me sow joy.
Where there is darkness, let me sow light.
O Divine Master,
Grant that I may not so much seek [happiness for the ego];
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For: It is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying [having practised] that we are born to eternal life
[from happiness to happiness up to full enlightenment].

Translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

2. ACTIONS TO ADOPT AND AVOID AFTER HAVING TAKEN REFUGE

ALEXANDER BERZIN

Taking refuge means formally putting the safe and positive direction in our life indicated by the Triple Gem – the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha – and pledging to maintain this steady direction unwaveringly, until it brings us enlightenment.

When we formally orient our life with the safe and positive direction of refuge, we commit ourselves to three sets of actions helpful for maintaining this direction.

EIGHT ACTIONS TO ADOPT

The first set consists of eight actions that relate to general behavior.

The eight are:

Parallel to taking refuge in the Buddhas:

1. COMMITTING OURSELVES WHOLEHEARTEDLY TO A SPIRITUAL TEACHER

If we have not yet found a personal teacher to direct our practice, this commitment is to find one.

Taking formal refuge with a teacher in a separate ceremony that is not part of a tantric initiation does not imply necessarily committing ourselves to following this teacher as our personal spiritual guide. It is important, of course, always to maintain respect and gratitude toward this person as the one who opened the door to our safe direction in life.

Our refuge, however, is in the Triple Gem – represented by a Buddha statue or painting during the ceremony – and not in the specific person who conducts the ritual.

Furthermore, regardless of context, our refuge is in the Triple Gem in general, not a specific lineage or tradition of Buddhism. If the teacher conducting a refuge ceremony is of a particular lineage, receiving safe direction or empowerment from him or her does not necessarily render us a follower of the same lineage.

To maintain a Dharma direction in life:

2. STUDYING THE BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

and

3. APPLYING THEM TO OVERCOME OUR DISTURBING EMOTIONS AND ATTITUDES.

ACADEMIC STUDY IS NOT ENOUGH.

To take direction from the Sangha community of highly realized practitioners:

4. FOLLOWING THEIR EXAMPLE.

To do so does not mean necessarily becoming a monastic, but rather making sincere efforts to realize straightforwardly and nonconceptually the four noble truths. These are that life is difficult; our difficulties come from a cause, namely confusion about reality; we can end our problems; and to do so we need the understanding of voidness as a pathway mind.

5. WORKING ON OURSELVES AS THE PRIMARY TASK IN OUR LIFE.

This means rather than constantly complaining or criticizing others, devoting our time and energies to overcoming our shortcomings and realizing our talents and potentials.

6. ADOPTING THE ETHICAL STANDARDS THE BUDDHAS HAVE SET

This ethic is based on clearly discriminating between what is helpful and what is harmful to a positive direction in life. Therefore, following the Buddhist ethic means to refrain from certain modes of conduct because they are destructive and hamper our ability to benefit ourselves or others, and to embrace other modes because they are constructive and help us to grow.

7. TRYING TO BE AS SYMPATHETIC AND COMPASSIONATE TO OTHERS AS POSSIBLE.

Even if our spiritual goal is limited to gaining liberation from our personal problems, this is never at the expense of others.

Finally, to maintain our connection with the Triple Gem:

8. MAKING SPECIAL OFFERINGS OF FRUIT, FLOWERS AND SO FORTH ON BUDDHIST HOLY DAYS, SUCH AS THE ANNIVERSARY OF BUDDHA'S ENLIGHTENMENT

Observing religious holidays with traditional ritual helps us feel part of a larger community.

SIX ACTIONS TO AVOID AND WAYS TO SHOW RESPECT

The second set of refuge commitments is to avoid certain actions and to maintain others, in connection with each of the Three Precious Gems.

The actions avoided lead to a contrary direction in life, while those adopted foster mindfulness of the goal.

In spite of taking refuge in the Buddhas:

1. TAKING PARAMOUNT REFUGE IN OTHERS

The most important thing in life is no longer accumulating as many material objects and entertaining experiences as possible, but as many good qualities as we can – such as love, patience, concentration

and wisdom – in order to be of more benefit to others. This is not a vow of poverty and abstinence, but rather an affirmation of having a deeper direction in life.

More specifically, this commitment means not taking ultimate refuge in gods or spirits. Buddhism, particularly in its Tibetan form, often contains ritual ceremonies, or *pujas*, directed toward various Buddha-figures or fierce protectors in order to help dispel obstacles and accomplish constructive purposes. Performing these ceremonies provides conducive circumstances for negative potentials to ripen in trivial rather than major obstacles, and positive potentials to ripen sooner rather than later. If we have built up overwhelmingly negative potentials, however, these ceremonies are ineffective in averting difficulties. Therefore, propitiating gods, spirits, protectors or even Buddhas is never a substitute for attending to our karma – avoiding destructive conduct and acting in a constructive manner. Buddhism is not a spiritual path of protector-worship, or even Buddha-worship. The safe direction of the Buddhist path is working to become a Buddha ourselves.

In spite of taking refuge in the Dharma:

2. CAUSING HARM OR MISCHIEF TO HUMANS OR ANIMALS.

One of the main guidelines Buddha taught is to help others as much as possible, and if we cannot be of help, at least not to cause any harm.

And, in spite of taking refuge in the Sangha:

3. ASSOCIATING CLOSELY WITH NEGATIVE PEOPLE

Shunning such contact helps us avoid being easily swayed from our positive goals when we are still weak in our direction in life. It does not mean having to live in a Buddhist community, but rather exercising care about the company we keep and taking whatever measures are appropriate and necessary to avoid detrimental influences.

The three actions to adopt as a sign of respect are honoring:

4. HONORING ALL STATUES, PAINTINGS AND OTHER ARTISTIC DEPICTIONS OF BUDDHAS

5. HONORING ALL BOOKS, ESPECIALLY CONCERNING THE DHARMA

6. HONORING ALL PERSONS WITH BUDDHIST MONASTIC VOWS, AND EVEN THEIR ROBES.

Traditionally, signs of disrespect are stepping on or over such objects, sitting or standing on them, and placing them directly on the floor or ground without at least providing a piece of cloth beneath them. Although these objects are not the actual sources of refuge, they represent and help keep us mindful of enlightened beings, their supreme attainments and the highly realized practitioners well-advanced toward that goal.

SIX GENERAL REFUGE COMMITMENTS

The third set of commitments from refuge is to engage in six trainings that relate to the Three Precious Gems as a whole.

The six are:

1. REAFFIRMING OUR REFUGE BY CONTINUALLY REMINDING OURSELVES OF THE QUALITIES OF THE THREE JEWELS OF REFUGE, AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM AND OTHER POSSIBLE DIRECTIONS IN LIFE.

2. IN GRATITUDE FOR THEIR KINDNESS AND SPIRITUAL SUSTENANCE, OFFERING THE FIRST PORTION OF OUR HOT DRINKS AND MEALS EACH DAY TO THE TRIPLE

GEM.

This is usually done in the imagination, although we may also place a small portion of our first hot drink of the day before a Buddha statue or painting, and then later drink it ourselves. It is not necessary, when making offerings of food or drink, to recite a verse in a foreign tongue we do not know, unless we find its mystery inspiring. Simply thinking, “Please, Buddhas, enjoy this,” is sufficient.

If the people with whom we are eating are not Buddhists, it is best to make this offering in a discreet manner so that no one knows what we are doing. Making a show of our practice only invites others’ discomfort or ridicule.

3. MINDFUL OF THE COMPASSION OF THE TRIPLE GEM, INDIRECTLY ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO GO IN THEIR DIRECTION.

The intent of this commitment is not that we become missionaries and try to convert anyone. However, people receptive to us who are lost in life, with either no direction or a negative one, often find it helpful if we explain to them the importance and benefit we ourselves derive from having a safe and positive direction. Whether or not others become Buddhists is not the point. Our own example may encourage them to do something constructive with their lives by working on themselves to grow and improve.

4. REMEMBERING THE BENEFITS OF HAVING TAKEN REFUGE, FORMALLY REAFFIRMING IT THREE TIMES EACH DAY AND THREE TIMES EACH NIGHT

This affirmation is normally made by repeating, “I take refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha,” usually in the morning shortly after waking up and in the evening just before going to sleep.

5. WHATEVER HAPPENS, RELYING ON OUR REFUGE

In times of crisis, the Three Jewels are the best refuge because it deals with adversity by seeking to eliminate its cause. Friends may

give us sympathy, but unless they are enlightened beings, they inevitably let us down. They have problems of their own and are limited in what they can do. Always working to overcome shortcomings and difficulties in a sober and realistic manner, however, never fails in our hour of need. This leads to the final commitment,

6. NEVER GIVING UP THIS REFUGE IN LIFE, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS

TAKING REFUGE AND FOLLOWING OTHER RELIGIONS OR SPIRITUAL PATHS

Some people ask if taking refuge vows means converting to Buddhism and leaving forever their native religion. This is not the case, unless we wish to do so. There is no term in Tibetan literally equivalent to a “Buddhist.” The word used for a practitioner means “someone who lives within,” namely within the boundaries of taking a safe and positive direction in life. To live that type of life does not require wearing a red protection string around our neck and never setting foot inside a church, synagogue, Hindu temple or Confucian shrine. Rather, it means working on ourselves to overcome our shortcomings and realize our potentials – in other words, to actualize the Dharma – as the Buddhas have done and highly realized practitioners, the Sangha, are doing. We put our primary efforts in this direction. As many Buddhist masters have said, including my own late teacher, Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche, if we look at the teachings of charity and love in other religions such as Christianity, we must conclude that following them is not counter to the direction taught in Buddhism. The humanitarian message in all religions is the same.

From berzinarchives.com

3. THE TEN NON-VIRTUOUS ACTIONS AND THEIR RESULTS

1. HOW WE CREATE A COMPLETE NON-VIRTUOUS ACTION

Each of the ten non-virtuous actions – three of the body, four of the speech, three of the mind – has four components or factors. For the action to be complete, that is, to bring the full karmic result of lower realm rebirth, all four components must be present.

THE BASIS OR OBJECT OF THE ACTION

THE INTENTION

- a. recognition
- b. intention
- c. motivation

THE ACTION

THE COMPLETION OF THE ACTION

KILLING

BASIS A living being other than yourself.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You recognize unmistakably the person or being you intend to kill.

b. intention: You intend to kill.

c. motivation: You are motivated to kill out of anger, attachment, or ignorance.

For example, out of anger, killing an enemy or a being that annoys you; out of attachment, killing an animal for its meat or skin; out of ignorance, killing animals with the belief that they were placed on this earth to be used by humans for food, etc., or killing an animal as a sacrifice to a worldly god, believing this to be virtuous.

ACTION You carry out the killing by some means, e.g., a weapon, poison, black magic, etc., either directly by yourself or indirectly by ordering someone else to kill.

COMPLETION The other person or being dies before you do. (Suicide is a negative action that will bring suffering in the future but is not a complete act because factors 1 and 4 are missing.)

STEALING (TAKING THE UNGIVEN)

BASIS Something of value belonging to another.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You recognize unmistakably the object to be stolen.

b. intention: You intend to steal.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, stealing something from someone you wish to hurt; out of attachment, stealing something you wish to possess; out of ignorance, stealing or cheating, thinking that it's not wrong.

ACTION Whatever means you use to steal, e.g., taking the object secretly, not paying taxes or fees you owe, misusing donations, etc.; or getting someone to steal for you.

COMPLETION You think that the object now belongs to you.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

BASIS For lay people, improper time, improper place, or improper partner; for ordained people, any kind of sexual activity is sexual misconduct. (Some lam-rim books say that the basis is the person with whom you engage in sexual misconduct.)

INTENTION

a. recognition: You must be in no doubt that the act is sexual misconduct. (Other lam-rim books: You must have unmistakable recognition of the object of your misconduct.)

b. intention: You intend to engage in an improper sexual act.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger one might rape the wife of an enemy; out of attachment, engaging in sexual misconduct with someone other than one's spouse or with someone who's already married; out of ignorance, committing adultery thinking that it's cool, or engaging in sexual misconduct thinking that it leads to enlightenment.

ACTION The two organs come into contact.

COMPLETION [The two organs come into contact.]

LYING

There are many objects of lying, but most are included in the following eight: denying something you have seen, heard, experienced with your other senses, or known; or falsely claiming to have seen, heard, experienced with your other senses, or known something which you have not.

BASIS Another person who can understand you, and who can speak.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You must know that what you are saying is untrue.

b. intention: You intend to lie and deceive someone.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger, lying to hurt someone or destroy their reputation; out of attachment, lying to get something you want; out of ignorance, not thinking there's anything wrong with lying.

ACTION Conveying the lie by some means, e.g., speaking, writing, making a gesture with your hand or eyes, facial expression, remaining silent, etc.

COMPLETION The other person understands and believes your lie.

DIVISIVE SPEECH

BASIS Two or more people, who have a good or bad relationship.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You must have unmistakable recognition of the parties involved and their relationship/feelings for each other.

b. intention: You intend to cause division or disunity.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger, creating disharmony among people you dislike; out of attachment, speaking in a harsh or rude way to be accepted by a gang, or insulting the husband out of desire for the wife; out of ignorance, causing disharmony, believing that it's healthy, or causing disunity among followers of a religion you disagree with, believing this to be positive.

ACTION You undertake either to cause disunity among friends, or to prevent reconciliation among enemies, by saying something which is either true or false.

COMPLETION The other people understand and believe what you say, and, as a consequence, become hostile towards each other.

ABUSIVE SPEECH

BASIS Another person whose feelings could be hurt. (We can express insulting words to a non-human being or to an inanimate object, but the action is complete only when there's a being who understands and is hurt by our words).

INTENTION

a. recognition: You must correctly identify the person you intend to insult.

b. intention: You intend to speak insulting words.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger, insulting someone you dislike; out of attachment, speaking in a harsh or rude way to be accepted by a gang, or insulting the husband out of desire for his wife; out of ignorance, using abusive or rude language thinking that it's cool to do so, or not realizing the hurtful effect of your words, or thinking there's nothing wrong with

hurting others' feelings.

ACTION With a negative intention, you speak words pointing out faults, etc. in the other person, whether true or not, in a hurtful manner; or you get someone else to speak such words on your behalf.

COMPLETION The other person understands and is hurt.

IDLE GOSSIP

BASIS Something meaningless or insignificant, which you treat as important. (It's not necessary that another being hears our words.)

INTENTION

a. recognition: You believe that what you wish to say is important or meaningful, although it is not.

b. intention: You intend to express such words.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger, chattering idly in order to disturb someone you dislike who is trying to meditate or do something virtuous; out of attachment, indulging in gossip or frivolous talk about things you are attached to, or to spend time with someone you're attached to; out of ignorance, thinking there's nothing wrong with spending time idly gossiping.

ACTION Speaking without purpose, or getting someone else to do it for you.

COMPLETION Actually expressing the words.

COVETOUSNESS

BASIS Another person's property, possessions (includes merchandise in a shop), qualities, children, etc.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You identify correctly the object you covet.

b. intention: You wish to make the object your own.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons. For example, out of anger, wanting to buy something before someone you dislike has a chance to buy it, or wanting to deprive your enemy of his cherished possessions; out of attachment, wanting to possess many things,

thinking that they will bring happiness; out of ignorance, wanting to buy many things thinking that it's good for oneself or for the economy, or as a habit or obsession.

ACTION The wish to possess the object becomes stronger.

COMPLETION Deciding to find a way to make the object your own. The motive, deed, and final step are all part of one train of thought.

MALICE, ILL WILL

BASIS Another being who would be hurt if you acted out your harmful thoughts.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You correctly identify the being you wish to harm.

b. intention: You wish to give harm to this being.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, wishing to harm someone who has harmed you or who you dislike; out of attachment, wanting to kill your father to get your inheritance, or to harm someone to get his possessions; out of ignorance, wishing to harm others because of thinking that violence is good, or that you can do whatever you like.

ACTION Putting more effort into the wish to give harm, so that it grows stronger.

COMPLETION You decide to act out your wish and do something harmful.

WRONG VIEWS

BASIS Something that exists or is true, e.g., the law of cause and effect, the four noble truths, etc.

INTENTION

a. recognition: You believe that your denial of the object is correct (that is, you do not recognize that what you are denying is in fact true).

b. intention: You wish to deny something that exists.

c. motivation: One of the three poisons.

For example, out of anger, because of hating someone who holds a correct view, you deny what they say and assert the opposite; out of attachment, asserting some wrong view in order to get something you desire, or to impress or gain favour from someone in a powerful position; out of ignorance, not understanding what is true and correct.

ACTION Thinking about carrying out the repudiation of the object by, for example, telling others what you think.

COMPLETION Definitely deciding to deny the object.

2. RESULTS OF A COMPLETE NON–VIRTUOUS ACTION

There are four different results of a complete karma (that is, an action that has been committed with all four components/factors present):

FULLY RIPENED RESULT

The future rebirth state you will experience as a result of having created a complete karma

EXPERIENCES SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

Once your karma to be born in the lower realms has been exhausted and you take rebirth in an upper realm, you will have experiences similar to your original actions.

ACTIONS SIMILAR TO THE CAUSE

Once your karma to be born in the lower realms has been exhausted and you take rebirth in an upper realm, you will have the instinctive tendency to commit the original action again and again.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

When born in the human realm, you will experience results of your actions in the form of environmental conditions.

KILLING

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Later, in a human rebirth, you will have a short life or get killed, have ill–health, many troubles, no success in your activities.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have the habitual desire to kill and harm others.

Environmental Result Food, drink, medicine, and crops are scarce, always inferior and low in nutrition or potency; they are hard to digest and cause disease; most beings around you die before reaching the full life span.

STEALING (TAKING THE UNGIVEN)

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Lack of wealth, possessions and resources; you can never make ends meet; your things will be stolen or lost. What you do have is all just common property with others.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have an instinctive tendency to steal.

Environmental Results You will take birth in a barren place, where crops do not grow or are destroyed or have no power to remove hunger, and there are shortages of food, and bitter frosts, hail, dry spells stay on too long; it rains too much; crops dry up or die off; and business ventures fail.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause The people who work around you are unreliable; you find yourself having a lot of competition for your partner. Your relationships, all kinds, don't last.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to be unfaithful.

Environmental Result You live in a place where there is urine and feces all round, and mud, dirt, filth; everything stinks, and everywhere seems unpleasant and distasteful.

LYING

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause Others do not believe you, even when you tell the truth. People are always deceiving you.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have the tendency to lie and deceive others.

Environmental Results Your work in cooperation with others fails to prosper and people don't work well together, everyone generally is cheating one another and is afraid, and there are many things to be afraid of.

DIVISIVE SPEECH

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause You will be lonely; you will easily lose friends; people around you are always fighting one another; people around you have an undesirable character.

Actions Similar To The Cause You will have the tendency to cause disunity.

Environmental Results The ground where you live is covered with obstacles like fallen tree trunks, thorns, stones, sharp broken glass; it is rough, dreary, and there are no streams or lakes or water springs; the earth is parched and poisoned, burning hot, useless, threatening; a place where there are many things to fear.

ABUSIVE SPEECH

Fully Ripened Result You will be born in a lower realm

Experiences Similar To The Cause You will always hear distressing words. Others will abuse you, and even when you speak pleasantly, they will interpret it negatively.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to be

critical and hurtful.

Environmental Results You will live in a place where there are many tree stumps, brambles, nettles, sharp rocks, and thorns.

[According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche]: You will be live in a desert environment.

IDLE GOSSIP

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm

Experiences Similar To The Cause Others will not take your speech seriously or listen to what you have to say.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to talk continuously and fill any quiet moment with the sound of your voice.

Environmental Results Fruits don't grow, or grow at the wrong times, seem ripe when they are not, have frail roots; no leisure places like parks, glades, pools of cool water; and many things to make you afraid.

COVETOUSNESS

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause You will be unable to achieve your aims and get what you want; you will never be satisfied with what you have.

Actions Similar To The Cause Your personality will be dominated by desire, and your attachment increases.

Environmental Results You will live in a place where the crops are poor and material resources are easily destroyed or lost. Every good thing you manage to find starts to get worse, decreases as seasons, months, days pass.

MALICE, ILL WILL

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm.

Experiences Similar To The Cause You will be a person who easily becomes frightened and panicky. You always find yourself

without help, or never find the help you need; or always being hurt by others.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to hurt others. Your personality is dominated by anger, and your anger and hatred increase.

Environmental Results You live in a world of chaos, diseases spread, evil is everywhere; there is plague, conflict, and you have fear of your country's or others' external military; there are dangerous animals, and you are surrounded by harmful spirits, thieves or muggers, and the like.

WRONG VIEWS

Fully Ripened Result Rebirth in a lower realm

Experiences Similar To The Cause Being ignorant of correct views, and finding it difficult to develop realizations and correct understanding.

Actions Similar To The Cause Having the tendency to draw wrong conclusions again and again. Your personality will be dominated by stupidity, and your ignorance will increase

Environmental Results Having to live in a place where there are shortages of water and other resources such as food, and there are no precious things such as treasures, works of art, scriptures, or spiritual guides.

You live in a world where the single highest source of happiness is steadily disappearing from the earth, where people think that unclean and suffering things are actually nice and happy; where there is no place to go, no one to help, nothing to protect you.

The Ten Non-Virtuous Actions and Their Results is based on a version by Ven. Sangye Khadro, with many additions from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings.

The original version was compiled from various lam-rim books, including Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand, by Pabongka Rinpoche, Wisdom Publications; An Anthology of Well-Spoken

Advice, by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives; and The Path to Enlightenment in Tibetan Buddhism, by Geshe Loden, printed in Australia.

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PART TWO
WISHING BODHICHITTA
LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

4. WISHING BODHICHITTA

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

The commitments of having taken the vows to develop wishing bodhichitta are divided into two sections:

How to guard the vows from degenerating in this life; and
How to maintain and enhance your practice in future lives

HOW TO GUARD THE VOWS FROM DEGENERATING IN THIS LIFE

To develop inspiration, contemplate the advantages of bodhichitta.

1. It is the only door to the Mahayana path
2. You will be called an child¹ of the buddhas
3. You will surpass in brilliance even the Hinayana arhats
4. You will become an object of highest respect and offering
5. You will easily complete the extensive collections of merit
6. The obstructions of your negative karmic impressions will quickly be purified
7. You will be successful in whatever you attempt and you will be without need
8. You will not be overcome by either harm or interference
9. You will be an inexhaustible source of comfort and happiness for sentient beings
10. You will quickly attain all the realizations of the path to enlightenment

To strengthen one's bodhichitta, contemplate it and recite the prayer three times a day and three times at night.

It is very heavy negative karma to give up bodhichitta because you promised to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment; it is heavy negative karma to break your promise and to abandon bodhichitta.

You should never be disheartened even if it seems that it will take such a long time to receive enlightenment. Instead of becoming dismayed, complete the benefits and advantages and revive your vows by saying the prayer of wishing bodhichitta:

O buddhas, bodhisattvas, and gurus, please listen to what I now
have to say from the depths of my heart:
Just as all the buddhas of the past have developed the thought of
enlightenment, true bodhichitta,
Then practiced its stages of graded development by following the
trainings for all buddhas' children¹,
so may I too, for the sake of all beings, develop bodhichitta and
follow the trainings exactly as all bodhisattvas have done.

Do not give up bodhichitta because of the mischievous deeds of sentient beings

This happens when you think that you will not work for the welfare of a particular sentient being who has harmed you.

Work to accumulate the two collections of merit and wisdom.

In the beginning, you can acquire extensive merit by making offerings to the poor and to the three jewels; and wisdom by contemplating emptiness. This will help to strengthen your bodhichitta.

HOW TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE YOUR PRACTICE IN FUTURE LIVES

Abandon the four negative dharmas:

1. Knowingly confusing one's abbot, guru, or other holy beings with lies, such as changing the subject when your guru asks you to do something, or not telling your guru of your negative actions because you are afraid of his scolding you.
2. Discouraging others from practicing virtuous actions, or causing them to regret virtue that they have created, such as saying, "It is good but it will be difficult for you to maintain that practice," when someone is practicing renunciation. You cause them to doubt their virtuous practice. Even if they do not regret their virtuous action, your encouragement to do so is a negative dharma.
3. Abusing a bodhisattva out of anger. Even if a bodhisattva is at fault, if your abusive words are heard by others, you create this negative dharma.
4. Putting on an air of having selfless thought, but having ulterior motives other than the pure wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, such as pretending to be a scholar or concealing your shortcomings.

Practice the four positive dharmas that oppose the four negative ones:

1. Abandon deliberately lying to any sentient being, whether for the sake of humor or even at the cost of your life.
2. Do not discriminate amongst sentient beings. (This opposes the fourth negative dharma.)
3. Abandon criticizing bodhisattvas. Since you do not know who is a bodhisattva and who is not, it is best to treat all sentient beings as bodhisattvas and buddhas.
4. Take upon yourself the responsibility to establish all sentient beings in the Mahayana path by:

- a. encouraging their enthusiasm for the Mahayana path. Even if you are not successful, you must always try to do this.
- b. rejoicing in the virtues of others instead of being jealous of their wish to attain enlightenment.
- c. cultivating love and compassion in all your actions. This opposes the second negative dharma.

The result of practicing these wholesome dharmas and avoiding the negative dharmas is never to be separated from bodhichitta.

PART THREE
ENGAGING BODHICHTTA:
THE BODHISATTVA VOWS
ALEXANDER BERZIN

5. THE EIGHTEEN ROOT BODHISATTVA VOWS

BACKGROUND

A vow (*sdom-pa*) is a subtle invisible form on a mental continuum, which shapes behavior. Specifically, it is a restraint from an "uncommendable action" (*kha-na ma-tho-ba*), either one that is naturally destructive (*rang-bzhin-gyi kha-na ma-thoba*) or one that Buddha prohibited (*bcas-pa'i kha-na ma-tho-ba*) for specific individuals who are training to reach specific goals. An example of the former is taking the life of another; an example of the later is eating after noon, which monastics need to avoid for their minds to be clearer for meditating at night and the next morning. Of the two stages of developing bodhichitta, aspiring (*smon-pa'i sems-bskyed*) and engaged (*'jug-pa'i sems-bskyed*), only with the latter do we take the bodhisattva vows.

Taking bodhisattva vows (*byang-sems sdom-pa*) entails promising to restrain from two sets of negative acts that Buddha prohibited for those training as bodhisattvas to reach enlightenment and to be of as much benefit to others as is possible:

- eighteen actions that, if committed, constitute a root downfall (*byang-sems-kyi tsa-ltung*),
- forty-six types of faulty behavior (*nyes-byas*).

A root downfall means a loss of the entire set of bodhisattva vows. It is a "downfall" in the sense that it leads to a decline in spiritual development and hinders the growth of positive qualities. The word root signifies it is a root to be eliminated. For ease of expression, these two sets are usually called root and secondary bodhisattva vows. They offer excellent guidelines for the types of behavior to

avoid if we wish to benefit others in as pure and full a way as is possible.

The late tenth-century Indian master Atisha received this particular version of the bodhisattva vows from his Sumatran teacher Dharmakirti (Dharmapala) of Suvarnadvipa, which he later transmitted to Tibet. This version derives from the Sutra of Akashagarbha (*Nam-mkha'i snying-po mdo, Skt. Akashagarbhasutra*), as cited in Compendium of Trainings (*bSlabs-btus, Skt. Shikshasamuccaya*), compiled in India by Shantideva in the eighth century. All Tibetan traditions currently follow it, while the Buddhist traditions deriving from China observe variant versions of the bodhisattva vows.

The promise to keep bodhisattva vows applies not only to this life, but also to each subsequent lifetime until enlightenment. Thus, as subtle forms, these vows continue on our mental continuums into future lives. If we have taken the vows in a previous lifetime, we do not lose them by unknowingly committing a full transgression now, unless we have taken them freshly during our current life.

Retaking the vows for the first time in this life strengthens the momentum of our efforts toward enlightenment that has been growing ever since our first taking of them. Therefore, Mahayana masters emphasize the importance of dying with the bodhisattva vows intact and strong. Their abiding presence on our mental continuums continues building up positive force (merit) in future lives, even before we revitalize them by taking them again.

Following the Gelug founder, Tsongkhapa's fifteenth-century commentary on the bodhisattva vows, *An Explanation of Bodhisattvas' Ethical Discipline: The Main Path to Enlightenment* (*Byang-chub sems-dpa'i tshul-khrims-kyi rnam-bshad byangchub gzhung-lam*), let us examine the eighteen negative actions that constitute a root downfall. Each has several stipulations we need to know.

The following root vows are included for recitation in verse B6 in Six-session Guru Yoga

1. PRAISING OURSELVES AND/OR BELITTLING OTHERS

This downfall refers to speaking such words to someone in an inferior position. The motivation must contain either desire for profit, praise, love, respect, and so on from the person addressed, or jealousy of the person belittled. It makes no difference whether what we say is true or false. Professionals who advertise that they are Buddhists need to take care about committing this downfall.

2. NOT SHARING DHARMA TEACHINGS OR WEALTH

Here, the motivation must be specifically attachment and miserliness. This negative action includes not only being possessive of our notes or tape recorder, but also being stingy with our time and refusing to help if needed.

3. NOT LISTENING TO OTHERS' APOLOGIES OR STRIKING OTHERS

The motivation for either of these must be anger. The first refers to an actual occasion when yelling at or beating someone and either that person pleads for forgiveness, or someone else begs us to stop and we refuse. The latter is simply hitting someone. Sometimes, it may be necessary to give rambunctious children or pets a smack to stop them from running into the road if they will not listen, but it is never appropriate or helpful to discipline out of anger.

4. DISCARDING THE MAHAYANA TEACHINGS AND PROPOUNDING MADE-UP ONES

This means to reject the correct teachings about some topic concerning bodhisattvas, such as their ethical behavior, and to make up in their stead a plausible yet misleading instruction on the same subject, claim it to be authentic, and then teach it to others in order to gain their following. An example of this downfall is when teachers who are eager not to scare away prospective students condone liberal moral behavior and explain that any type of action is acceptable so

long as it does not harm others. We need not be a teacher to commit this downfall. We can commit it even in casual conversation with others.

5. TAKING OFFERINGS INTENDED FOR THE TRIPLE GEM

This downfall is to steal or embezzle, either personally or through deputing someone else, anything offered or belonging to the Buddhas, Dharma, or Sangha, and then to consider it as ours. The Sangha, in this context, refers to any group of four or more monastics. Examples include embezzling funds donated for building a Buddhist monument, for printing Dharma books, or for feeding a group of monks or nuns.

6. FORSAKING THE HOLY DHARMA

Here the downfall is to repudiate or, by voicing our opinions, cause others to repudiate that the scriptural teachings of the shravaka (nyan-thos), pratyekabuddha (rang-rgyal), or bodhisattva vehicles are the Buddha's words. Shravakas are those who listen to a Buddha's teachings while they are still extant, while pratyekabuddhas are self-evolving practitioners who live primarily during dark ages when the Dharma is no longer directly available.

To make spiritual progress, they rely on intuitive understanding gained from study and practice conducted during previous lives. The teachings for both of them collectively constitute the Hinayana, or "modest vehicle" for gaining personal liberation from samsara.

The Mahayana vehicle emphasizes methods for attaining full enlightenment. Denying that all or just certain scriptures of either vehicle derive from the Buddha is a root downfall.

Maintaining this vow does not mean forsaking a historical perspective. Buddha's teachings were transmitted orally for centuries before being committed to writing, and thus corruptions and forgeries undoubtedly occurred. The great masters who compiled the Tibetan Buddhist canon certainly rejected texts they considered inauthentic. However, instead of basing their decisions on prejudice,

they used the seventh-century Indian master Dharmakirti's criterion for assessing the validity of any material - the ability of its practice to bring about the Buddhist goals of better rebirth, liberation, or enlightenment. Stylistic differences among Buddhist scriptures, and even within a specific text, often indicate differences in time when various portions of the teachings were written down or translated into different languages. Therefore, studying the scriptures through methods of modern textual analysis can often be fruitful and does not conflict with this vow.

7. DISROBING MONASTICS OR COMMITTING SUCH ACTS AS STEALING THEIR ROBES

This downfall refers specifically to doing something damaging to one, two, or three Buddhist monks or nuns, regardless of their moral status or level of study or practice. Such actions need to be motivated by ill will or malice, and include beating or verbally abusing them, confiscating their goods, or expelling them from their monasteries. Expelling monastics, however, is not a downfall if they have broken one of their four major vows: not to kill, especially another human being; not to steal, particularly something belonging to the monastic community; not to lie, specifically about spiritual attainments; and to maintain complete celibacy.

8. COMMITTING ANY OF THE FIVE HEINOUS CRIMES

The five heinous crimes (mtshams-med lnga) are

- (a) killing our fathers,
- (b) mothers, or
- (c) an arhat (a liberated being),
- (d) with bad intentions drawing blood from a Buddha, or
- (e) causing a split in the monastic community.

The latter heinous crime refers to repudiating the Buddha's teachings and monastic institution, drawing monastics away from them, and enlisting them in one's own newly founded religion and monastic tradition. It does not refer to leaving a Dharma center or

organization - especially because of corruption in the organization or its spiritual teachers - and founding another center that still follows Buddha's teachings.

Moreover, the term sangha in this heinous crime refers specifically to the monastic community. It does not refer to "sangha" in the nontraditional usage of the term coined by Western Buddhists as an equivalent of the congregation of a Dharma center or organization.

9. HOLDING A DISTORTED, ANTAGONISTIC OUTLOOK

This means to deny what is true and of value - such as the laws of behavioral cause and effect, refuge, rebirth, and liberation from suffering - and to be antagonistic toward such ideas and those who hold them. (

10. DESTROYING PLACES SUCH AS TOWNS

This downfall includes intentionally demolishing, bombing, or degrading the environment of a town, city, district, or countryside area, and rendering it unfit, harmful, or difficult for humans or animals to live in.

11. TEACHING VOIDNESS TO THOSE WHOSE MINDS ARE UNTRAINED

The primary objects of this downfall are persons with the bodhichitta motivation who are not yet ready to understand voidness. Such persons would become confused or frightened by this teaching and consequently abandon the bodhisattva path for the path of personal liberation.

This can happen as a result of thinking that if all phenomena are devoid of inherent, findable existence, then no one exists, so why bother working to benefit anyone else?

This action also includes teaching voidness to anyone who would misunderstand it and therefore forsake the Dharma completely, for

example by thinking that Buddhism teaches that nothing exists and is therefore sheer nonsense.

Without extrasensory perception, it is difficult to know whether others' minds are sufficiently trained so that they will not misconstrue the teachings on the voidness of all phenomena. Therefore, it is important to lead others to these teachings through explanations of graduated levels of complexity, and periodically to check their understanding.

12. TURNING OTHERS AWAY FROM FULL ENLIGHTENMENT

The objects for this action are people who have already developed a bodhichitta motivation and are striving toward enlightenment. The downfall is to tell them they are incapable of acting all the time with generosity, patience, and so on - to say that they cannot possibly become a Buddha and so it would be far better for them to strive merely for their own liberation. Unless they actually turn their aim away from enlightenment, however, this root downfall is incomplete.

13. TURNING OTHERS AWAY FROM THEIR PRATIMOKSHA VOWS

Pratimoksha, or individual liberation vows (so-thar sdom-pa), include those for laymen, laywomen, probationary nuns, novice monks, novice nuns, full monks, and full nuns. The objects here are persons who are keeping one of these sets of pratimoksha vows.

The downfall is to tell them as a bodhisattva there is no use in keeping pratimoksha, because for bodhisattvas all actions are pure. For this downfall to be complete, they must actually give up their vows.

14. BELITTLING THE SHRAVAKA VEHICLE

The sixth root downfall is to repudiate that the texts of the shravaka or pratyekabuddha vehicles are the authentic words of the Buddha. Here, we accept that they are, but deny the effectiveness of their

teachings and maintain that it is impossible to become rid of disturbing emotions and attitudes by means of their instructions, for example those concerning vipassana (insight meditation).

15. PROCLAIMING A FALSE REALIZATION OF VOIDNESS

We commit this downfall if we have not fully realized voidness, yet teach or write about it pretending that we have, because of jealousy of the great masters. It makes no difference whether any students or readers are fooled by our pretense.

Nonetheless, they must understand what we explain. If they do not comprehend our discussion, the downfall is incomplete.

Although this vow refers to proclaiming false realizations specifically of voidness, it is clear that we need to avoid the same also when teaching bodhichitta or other points of Dharma. There is no fault in teaching voidness before fully realizing it, however, so long as we openly acknowledge this fact and that we are explaining merely from our present levels of provisional understanding.

16. ACCEPTING WHAT HAS BEEN STOLEN FROM THE TRIPLE GEM

This downfall is to accept as a gift, offering, salary, reward, fine, or bribe anything someone else has stolen or embezzled, either personally or through deputing someone else, from the Buddhas, Dharma, or Sangha, including if it belonged only to one, two, or three monks or nuns.

17. ESTABLISHING UNFAIR POLICIES

This means to be biased against serious practitioners, because of anger or hostility toward them, and to favor those with lesser attainments, or none at all, because of attachment to them.

An example of this downfall is to give most of our time as teachers to casual private students who can pay high fees and to neglect serious students who can pay us nothing.

18. GIVING UP BODHICHITTA

This is abandoning the wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all. Of the two levels of bodhichitta, aspiring and involved, this refers specifically to discarding the former. In doing so, we give up the latter as well. Occasionally, a nineteenth root downfall is specified:

19. BELITTLING OTHERS WITH SARCASTIC VERSES OR WORDS

This may be included, however, in the first bodhisattva root downfall.

From berzinarchives.com

6. THE FORTY-SIX SECONDARY BODHISATTVA VOWS

The secondary bodhisattva vows are to restrain from forty-six faulty actions (*nyes-byas*). These faulty actions are divided into seven groups detrimental, one each, to our training in the six perfections or far-reaching attitudes (*pha-rol-tu phyin-pa*, *Skt. paramita*) and to our benefiting others.

The six perfections are

- generosity
- ethical self-discipline
- patient tolerance (patience)
- joyful perseverance (positive enthusiasm)
- mental stability (concentration)
- discriminating awareness (wisdom).

Although the faulty actions are contrary to and hamper our progress toward enlightenment, committing them, even with the four binding factors (*kun-dkris bzhi*) complete, does not constitute a loss of our bodhisattva vows.

The less complete these factors are, however, the less damage we do to our spiritual development along the bodhisattva path. If we happen to commit any of these faulty actions, we acknowledge our mistake and apply the opponent powers, as in the case of the root bodhisattva vows.

There are many details to learn about these forty-six, with many exceptions when there is no fault in committing them. In general, however, the damage to our development of the perfections and to the benefit we can give others depends on the motivation behind our faulty acts.

If that motivation is a disturbed state of mind, such as attachment, anger, spite, or pride, the damage is much greater than if it is an undisturbed, though detrimental one, such as indifference, laziness, or forgetfulness.

With indifference, we lack adequate faith or respect in the training to be bothered engaging in it.

With laziness, we ignore our practice because we find it more pleasant and easier to do nothing.

When we lack mindfulness, we completely forget about our commitments to help others.

For many of the forty-six, we are not at fault if we have the intention eventually to eliminate them from our behavior, but our disturbing emotions and attitudes are still too strong to exercise sufficient self-control.

The presentation here follows that given by the fifteenth-century Gelug master Tsongkhapa in *An Explanation of Bodhisattvas' Ethical Discipline: The Main Path to Enlightenment (Byang-chub sems-dpa'i tshul-khrims-kyi rnam-bshad byang-chub gzhung-lam)*.

SEVEN FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN GENEROSITY

Generosity is defined as the attitude of being willing to give. It includes willingness to give material objects, protection from fearful situations, and teachings.

Of the seven faulty actions that negatively affect our development of generosity, two harm our willingness to give others material objects, two our willingness to give others protection from fearful situations, two involve not providing the circumstances for others to cultivate and practice generosity, and one harms our development of the generosity of giving teachings.

TWO FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO DEVELOPING THE WILLINGNESS TO GIVE OTHERS MATERIAL OBJECTS

1. Not making offerings to the Triple Gem through the three gateways of our bodies, speech, and minds

Because of being in a bad mood, like being annoyed about something, or because of laziness, indifference, or we simply forget, failing to offer to the Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, three times each day and three times each night, at least prostration with our bodies, words of praise with our speech, and remembrance of their good qualities with our minds and hearts.

If we cannot at least be generous enough to offer these happily each day and night to the Three Jewels of Refuge, how shall we ever perfect our willingness to give everything to everyone?

2. Following out our desirous minds

Because of great desire, attachment, or lack of contentment, indulging in any of the five types of desirable sensory objects - sights, sounds, fragrances, tastes, or tactile sensations.

For example, because of attachment to delicious tastes, we nibble at the cake in the refrigerator even when we are not hungry. This is detrimental to our fight against miserliness. We soon find ourselves hoarding the cake, and even hiding it on the back of the shelf, so that we do not have to share it with anyone else. If we fully intend to overcome this bad habit but cannot yet control it because our attachment to food is so strong, we are not at fault in taking a piece of cake. Nevertheless, we try to increase our self-control by taking smaller pieces and not so often.

TWO FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO DEVELOPING THE WILLINGNESS TO GIVE OTHERS PROTECTION FROM FEARFUL SITUATIONS

3. Not showing respect to our elders

The objects of this action include our parents, teachers, those with excellent qualities and, in general, any persons with seniority or simply older than ourselves. When we fail to give them our seats on the bus, meet them at the airport, help carry their bags, and so on, because of pride, anger, spite, laziness, indifference, or forgetfulness, we leave them in a fearful and worrisome situation difficult to cope with. (

4. Not answering those who ask us questions

Because of pride, anger, spite, laziness, indifference, or forgetfulness, not happily answering others' sincere questions. In ignoring them, we leave them in a quandary with no one to turn to - also a fearful and insecure position.

As illustration of the type of detail found in Tsongkhapa's commentary to these vows, let us look at the exceptions when there is no fault in remaining silent or postponing our response. In terms of ourselves as the basis for this action, we need not answer if we are too sick or the person asking the question has purposely woken us in the middle of the night.

Unless there is an emergency, there is no fault in telling the person to wait until we are feeling better or until the morning. There are exceptions according to the occasion, for example when someone interrupts us with a question while we are teaching others, delivering a lecture, conducting a ceremony, speaking words of comfort to someone else, receiving a lesson, or listening to a discourse. We tell them politely to hold their questions until later.

Certain situations, by necessity, require silence or postponing the answer. For example, if we were to respond in depth to a question about hells during a public lecture in the West on Buddhism, we

might turn many people off, causing a hindrance to their involvement with the Dharma. Silence is preferable if in answering someone's question, for example a bigot's inquiry about our ethnic backgrounds, we would cause that person to dislike us and therefore be unreceptive to our help.

Silence is also better if it would cause others to stop acting destructively and lead them to a more constructive mode of behavior - for example, when people psychologically dependent on us ask us to answer every question in their lives and we wish to teach them to make decisions and figure things out for themselves.

Furthermore, if we are at a meditation retreat with a rule of silence and someone asks us a question, there is no need to talk.

Finally, it is best to conclude a question and answer session at the end of a lecture if, by continuing when the audience is tired and it is very late, we will cause resentment and anger toward us.

TWO FAULTY ACTIONS OF NOT PROVIDING THE CIRCUMSTANCES FOR OTHERS TO CULTIVATE AND PRACTICE GENEROSITY

5. Not accepting when invited as a guest

If we refuse to go for a visit or a meal because of pride, anger, spite, laziness, or indifference, we deprive the other person of an opportunity for building up merit from offering hospitality. Unless there are good reasons to decline, we accept no matter how humble the home might be.

6. Not accepting material gifts

For the same reasons as in the previous case.

ONE FAULTY ACTION DETRIMENTAL TO DEVELOPING THE GENEROSITY OF GIVING TEACHINGS

7. Not giving the Dharma to those who wish to learn

Here the motivation for refusing to teach about Buddhism, loan others our Dharma books, share our notes, and so on, is anger, spite, jealousy that the other person will eventually outstrip us, laziness, or indifference. In the case of the second root bodhisattva vow, we decline because of attachment and miserliness.

NINE FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN ETHICAL SELF-DISCIPLINE

Ethical self-discipline (tshul-khrims, Skt. shila) is the attitude to restrain from negative actions. It also includes the discipline to engage in positive actions and to help others. Of the nine faulty actions that hamper our development of ethical self-discipline, four concern situations in which our main consideration is others, three concern our own situation, and two concern both ourselves and others.

FOUR FAULTY ACTIONS THAT CONCERN SITUATIONS IN WHICH OUR MAIN CONSIDERATION IS OTHERS

8. Ignoring those with shattered ethics

If, because of anger, spite, laziness, indifference, or forgetfulness, we ignore, neglect, or put down those who have broken their vows or even committed heinous crimes, we weaken our ethical self-discipline to engage in positive acts and to help others. Such persons are in special need of our concern and attention since they have built up the causes for present and future suffering and unhappiness. Without self-righteousness or moral indignation, we try to help them, for instance by teaching meditation to interested prisoners in jail.

9. Not upholding moral training for the sake of others' faith

Buddha has prohibited many actions that, although not naturally destructive, are detrimental to our spiritual progress - for example, laypersons and monastics drinking alcohol, or monastics sharing a room with a member of the opposite sex.

Refraining from such behavior is training shared in common by Hinayana practitioners and bodhisattvas alike. If, as budding bodhisattvas, we ignore these proscriptions because of lack of respect or belief in Buddha's ethical teachings, or because of laziness to exercise self-control, we cause others seeing our behavior to lose faith and admiration for Buddhists and Buddhism. Therefore, with concern for the impression our conduct makes on others, we refrain, for example, from taking recreational drugs.

10. Being petty when it concerns the welfare of others

Buddha gave many minor rules for monastics to train their behavior, for instance always to have our three sets of robes where we sleep. Sometimes, however, the needs of others overrides the necessity to follow this minor training, for example if someone falls sick and we need to stay overnight to take care of the person.

If, because of anger or spite toward the person, or simply laziness to stay up all night, we decline on the grounds that we do not have our three sets of robes with us, we commit this faulty action. Being a rigid fanatic with rules hampers our balanced development of ethical self-discipline.

11. Not committing a destructive action when love and compassion call for it

Occasionally, certain extreme situations arise in which the welfare of others is seriously jeopardized and there is no alternative left to prevent a tragedy other than committing one of the seven destructive physical or verbal actions.

These seven are taking a life, taking what has not been given to us, indulging in inappropriate sexual behavior, lying, speaking divisively, using harsh and cruel language, or chattering meaninglessly.

If we commit such an action without any disturbing emotion at the time, such as anger, desire, or naivety about cause and effect, but are motivated only by the wish to prevent others' suffering - being totally willing to accept on ourselves whatever negative consequences

may come, even hellish pain - we do not damage our far-reaching ethical self-discipline. In fact, we build up a tremendous amount of merit that speeds us on our spiritual paths.

Refusing to commit these destructive actions when necessity demands is at fault, however, only if we have taken and keep purely bodhisattva vows. Our reticence to exchange our happiness for the welfare of others hampers our perfection of the ethical self-discipline to help others always.

There is no fault if we have only superficial compassion and do not keep bodhisattva vows or train in the conduct outlined by them. We realize that since our compassion is weak and unstable, the resulting suffering we would experience from our destructive actions might easily cause us to begrudge bodhisattva conduct. We might even give up the path of working to help others.

Like the injunction that bodhisattvas on lower stages of development only damage themselves and their abilities to help others if they attempt practices of bodhisattvas on higher stages - such as feeding their flesh to a hungry tigress - it is better for us to remain cautious and hold back.

Since there may be confusion about what circumstances call for such bodhisattva action, let us look at examples taken from the commentary literature. Please keep in mind that these are last resort actions when all other means fail to alleviate or prevent others' suffering.

As a budding bodhisattva:

- We are willing to take the life of someone about to commit a mass murder.

- We have no hesitation in confiscating medicines intended for relief efforts in a war-torn country that someone has taken to sell on the black market, or taking away a charity's funds from an administrator who is squandering or mismanaging them.

- We are willing, if male, to have sex with another's wife - or with an unmarried woman whose parents forbid it, or with any other inappropriate partner - when the woman has the strong wish to

develop bodhichitta but is overwhelmed with desire for sex with us and who, if she were to die not having had sex with us, would carry the grudge as an instinct into future lives. As a result, she would be extremely hostile toward bodhisattvas and the bodhisattva path.

Bodhisattvas' willingness to engage in inappropriate sexual acts when all else fails to help prevent someone from developing an extremely negative attitude toward the spiritual path of altruism raises an important point for married couples on the bodhisattva path to consider. Sometimes a couple becomes involved in Dharma and one of them, for instance the woman, wishing to be celibate, stops sexual relations with her husband when he is not of the same mind. He still has attachment to sex and takes her decision as a personal rejection. Sometimes the wife's fanaticism and lack of sensitivity drives her husband to blame his frustration and unhappiness on the Dharma. He leaves the marriage and turns his back on Buddhism with bitter resentment. If there is no other way to avoid his hostile reaction toward the spiritual path and the woman is keeping bodhisattva vows, she would do well to evaluate her compassion to determine if it is strong enough to allow her to have occasional sex with her husband without serious harm to her ability to help others. This is very relevant in terms of the tantric vows concerning chaste behavior.

- As budding bodhisattvas, we are willing to lie when it saves others' lives or prevents others from being tortured and maimed.
- We have no hesitation to speak divisively to separate our children from a wrong crowd of friends - or disciples from misleading teachers - who are exerting negative influences on them and encouraging harmful attitudes and behavior.
- We do not refrain from using harsh language to rouse our children from negative ways, like not doing their homework, when they will not listen to reason. And when others, interested in Buddhism, are totally addicted to chattering, drinking, partying, singing, dancing, or telling off-color jokes or stories of violence, we are willing to join in if refusal would make these persons feel that

bodhisattvas, and Buddhists in general, never have fun and that the spiritual path is not for them.

THREE FAULTY ACTIONS CONCERNING OUR OWN SITUATION

12. Earning our living through a wrong livelihood

Such livelihoods are through dishonest or devious means, primarily of five major types:

- (a) pretense or hypocrisy,
- (b) flattery or using smooth words to fool others,
- (c) blackmail, extortion, or playing on people's guilt,
- (d) demanding bribes or exacting fines for imaginary offenses,
and
- (e) giving bribes to gain something larger in return. We resort to such means because of total lack of a sense of moral self-dignity or reserve.

13. Becoming excited and flying off to some frivolous activity

Because of being discontent, restless, bored, or hyperactive, and desirous for some excitement, running off to some frivolous distraction - like wandering in a shopping mall, flipping through the stations on the television, playing computer games and so on. We become completely engrossed and out of control.

If we engage in such activities with others in order to calm down their anger or lift their depression, to help them if they are addicted to such things, to gain their trust if we suspect they are hostile toward us, or to strengthen old friendships, we do not harm our ethical training to discipline ourselves to act positively and to help others.

However, if we run off to these activities feeling we have nothing better to do, we are deceiving ourselves. There is always something better to do. Sometimes, however, we need a break to help renew our

enthusiasm and energy when we become tired or depressed. There is no fault in that, so long as we set reasonable limits.

14. Intending only to wander in samsara

Many sutras explain that bodhisattvas prefer to stay in samsara rather than achieve liberation themselves. It is a fault to take this literally to mean we do not work to overcome our disturbing emotions and attitudes and achieve liberation, but just keep our delusions and work with them to help others.

This is different from the eighteenth root bodhisattva vow of giving up bodhichitta, with which we fully decide to stop working for liberation and enlightenment. Here, we just consider it unimportant and unnecessary to free ourselves from disturbing emotions, which seriously weakens our ethical self-discipline.

Although on the bodhisattva path, especially when it entails anuttarayoga tantra, we transform and use the energies of desire to enhance our spiritual progress, this does not mean we give free reign to our desires and do not work to rid ourselves of them.

TWO FAULTY ACTIONS CONCERNING BOTH OURSELVES AND OTHERS

15. Not ridding ourselves of behavior that causes us to fall to ill-repute

Suppose we like eating meat. If we are among vegetarian Buddhists and we insist on eating a steak, we invite their criticism and disrespect. They will not take our words about Dharma seriously and will spread stories about us, making others unreceptive to our help as well. As budding bodhisattvas, if we do not rid ourselves of such behavior, it is a great fault.

16. Not redressing those who act with disturbing emotions and attitudes

If we are in a position of authority in an office, school, monastery, or household and, because of attachment to certain members or the wish to be liked, we fail to scold or punish those with disturbing emotions and attitudes who are acting disruptively, we damage the discipline and morale of the entire group.

FOUR FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN PATIENT TOLERANCE

Patient tolerance (bzod-pa, Skt. kshanti) is the willingness to deal, without anger, with those doing harm, with the hardships involved in practicing Dharma, and with our own sufferings.

17. Discarding the four positive trainings

These trainings are not to retaliate when

- (a) verbally abused or criticized
- (b) made the target of others' anger
- (c) beaten, or
- (d) humiliated.

Since training ourselves not to retaliate in these four trying situations acts as a cause for our patience to grow, if we put this aside we damage our development of this positive trait.

18. Ignoring those who are angry with us

If others are annoyed with us and holding a grudge, if we do nothing about it and do not try to assuage their anger, because of pride, spite, jealousy, laziness, indifference, or not caring, we hamper our perfection of patience because we allow the opposite of patience, namely anger, to continue unabated.

To avoid this fault, we apologize whether or not we have offended or done anything wrong.

19. Refusing others' apologies

The third root bodhisattva downfall is not listening to others' apologies when they plead for forgiveness at the moment when we are angry with them. Here, we do not accept their apologies after the occasion, when we are holding a grudge.

20. Dwelling on anger

Once we become angry in any situation, we act contrary to our development of patient tolerance if we dwell on it, holding a grudge, without applying opponent forces to counter it.

If we apply these forces, such as meditating on love for the objects of our annoyance, but are unsuccessful, we are not at fault. Because we are at least trying, we do not weaken our cultivation of patience.

THREE FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN JOYFUL PERSEVERANCE

Joyful perseverance (brtson-grus, Skt. virya, positive enthusiasm) is taking joy in doing what is constructive.

21. Gathering a circle of followers because of desiring veneration and respect

When we gather a circle of friends, admirers or pupils, or decide to marry or live with someone, if our motive is the wish for others to show us respect, give us love and affection, shower us with gifts, serve us, massage our backs, and do our everyday tasks, we lose enthusiasm for doing anything positive ourselves, such as helping others. We are attracted to an inferior mode of operation, namely telling others what to do for us.

22. Not doing anything, out of laziness, and so on

If we give in to laziness, indifference, apathy, moods of not feeling like doing anything, or not being interested in anything at all, or addiction to sleeping long hours, lying in bed all day, taking naps, or

lounging around doing nothing, we become addicted to this and lose all enthusiasm for helping others.

Of course, we take rest if we are sick or exhausted, but it is a great fault to spoil ourselves by being too soft.

23. Resorting to passing time with stories, out of attachment

The third obstacle hindering the growth of enthusiasm for helping others is wasting time in a meaningless fashion. This refers to telling, listening to, reading, watching on television or in the movies, or surfing the Internet for stories about sex, violence, celebrities, political intrigues, and so on.

THREE FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN MENTAL STABILITY

Mental stability (bsam-gtan, Skt. dhyana, concentration) is the state of mind that does not lose its equilibrium or focus because of disturbing emotions, flightiness of mind, or mental dullness.

24. Not seeking the means for gaining absorbed concentration

If, because of pride, spite, laziness, or indifference, we do not attend teachings on how to settle our minds in absorbed concentration (ting-nge-'dzin, Skt. samadhi) when a lama is giving them, how can we ever cultivate or enhance our stability of mind?

If we are sick, suspect that the instructions are incorrect, or have already achieved perfect concentration, we need not go.

25. Not ridding ourselves of the obstacles preventing mental stability

When practicing meditation to achieve absorbed concentration, we encounter five major obstacles. If we give in and do not try to eliminate them, we damage our development of mental stability. If

we are trying to remove them, but are not yet successful, we are not at fault.

The five obstacles are

(a) intentions to pursue any of the five types of desirable sensory objects,

(b) thoughts of spite,

(c) foggy-mindedness and drowsiness,

(d) flightiness of mind and regrets, and

(e) indecisive wavering or doubts.

26. Regarding the taste of bliss from gaining mental stability as its main advantage

Normally, we tie up a great deal of our energies in nervousness, worry, indecision, thoughts of longing or resentment, and so on, or weigh them down with dullness and sleepiness. As we concentrate and absorb our minds ever deeper, we release ever greater amounts of this energy. We experience this as a feeling of physical and mental bliss. The stronger that bliss, the further it draws us into absorption.

For this reason, in anuttarayoga tantra, we generate and use even more intense blissful states of mind than those gained merely from perfect concentration, in order to reach subtlest clear light mental activity and absorb it in the understanding of voidness. If we become attached to the taste of bliss we gain at any stage of developing mental stability, whether or not in conjunction with tantra practice, and we regard enjoying the pleasure we gain from that bliss as the main goal of our practice, we seriously hinder our development of far-reaching stability of mind.

EIGHT FAULTY ACTIONS DETRIMENTAL TO TRAINING IN DISCRIMINATING AWARENESS, OR WISDOM

Discriminating awareness (shes-rab, Skt. prajna, wisdom) is the mental factor that decisively discriminates between what is correct and incorrect, appropriate and inappropriate, helpful and harmful, and so on.

27. Forsaking the shravaka (listener) vehicle

The sixth root bodhisattva downfall is to claim that the textual teachings of the shravaka vehicle are not Buddha's words, while the fourteenth is to say that the instructions in them are ineffective for eliminating attachment and so forth.

The thirteenth is to tell bodhisattvas holding lay or monastic pratimoksha (individual liberation) vows - part of the teachings of the shravaka vehicle - that there is no need for them, as bodhisattvas, to safeguard these vows.

For this root downfall to be complete, the bodhisattvas hearing our words must actually give up their pratimoksha vows. Here, the faulty action is simply to think or tell others that bodhisattvas have no need to listen to teachings from the shravaka vehicle - specifically concerning the rules of discipline of the pratimoksha vows - or to uphold or train themselves with them. No one need actually give up his or her vows.

In studying and keeping vowed rules of discipline, we increase our ability to discriminate between which types of behavior are to be adopted or abandoned. By denying the need to train ourselves with pratimoksha vows, we weaken our development of discriminating awareness. We also incorrectly discriminate the shravaka teachings as being essential for only shravakas, and worthless for bodhisattvas.

28. Exerting effort in them while having our own methods

If we exert all our efforts on studying and upholding merely our pratimoksha vows, to the neglect of studying and training in the vast bodhisattva teachings concerning compassion and wisdom, we also weaken our discriminating awareness. When we exert effort in the teachings of the shravaka vehicle, we simultaneously work on the bodhisattva ones as well.

29. Exerting effort in studying non-Buddhist texts when it is not to be done

According to the commentaries, non-Buddhist texts refer to works on logic and grammar. We can undoubtedly also include books for learning foreign languages or any topic from the modern educational curriculum, such as mathematics, science, psychology, or philosophy.

The fault here is putting all our efforts into studying these subjects and neglecting our Mahayana studies and practice so that eventually we forget all about them. If we are extremely intelligent, able to learn things quickly, have a sound and stable understanding of the Mahayana teachings based on logic and reason, and are able to retain those teachings in our memories for a long time, there is no fault in studying non-Buddhist texts if each day we also maintain our Mahayana studies and practice.

Non-Tibetan students of Buddhism who wish to study the Tibetan language would do well to keep this guideline in mind. If they are able to learn languages quickly and easily, already have a strong foundation in Buddhism, and enough time to study both language and Dharma, they gain much benefit from learning Tibetan. They can use it as a tool for deeper studies. However, if they find the language difficult, have only limited time and energy available, and do not yet have a good understanding of Buddhism or a stable daily meditation practice, they damage and hamper their spiritual development by studying Tibetan. It is important to discriminate our priorities.

30. Even if able to exert effort on them, becoming infatuated

If we have the ability to study non-Buddhist material, such as Tibetan language, with all the stipulations as above, if we become infatuated with the subject matter, we may give up our spiritual practice and concentrate totally on this less vital topic. Mastering Tibetan or mathematics does not bring us liberation from our disturbing emotions and attitudes, nor the problems and suffering they engender. It does not give us the ability to help others as fully as

is possible. Only perfecting bodhichitta and the perfections, especially discriminating awareness of voidness, can lead us to this goal.

Therefore, to guard against infatuation with non-Buddhist topics - which may certainly be helpful to learn, but are not the main things upon which to focus - we study them soberly, keeping a proper perspective. In this way, we discriminate correctly what is essential and safeguard ourselves from becoming carried away with less vital matters.

31. Forsaking the Mahayana vehicle

The sixth root bodhisattva downfall is claiming that the Mahayana texts are not Buddha's words. Here, we accept that, in general, they are authentic, but we criticize certain aspects of them, specifically texts concerning bodhisattvas' unimaginably extensive deeds and the inconceivably profound teachings of voidness. The former include accounts of Buddhas multiplying themselves into countless forms simultaneously helping numberless beings in myriad worlds, while the latter include collections of terse and pithy verses extremely difficult to fathom. We degenerate our discriminating awareness by repudiating them in any of four ways, that

- (a) their content is inferior - they speak sheer nonsense,
- (b) their manner of expression is inferior - they are bad writing that makes no sense,
- (c) their author is inferior - they are not the words of an enlightened Buddha, or
- (d) their use is inferior - they are of no benefit to anyone. By discriminating falsely like this, in a closed-minded and hotheaded manner, we damage our ability to discriminate anything correctly.

When faced with teachings or texts we do not understand, we remain openminded. We think that even though we cannot appreciate or fathom them now, the Buddhas and highly realized bodhisattvas understand their words and, through realization of their

meaning, benefit others in infinite ways. In this way, we develop firm resolve (mos-pa) to try to grasp them in the future.

There is no fault if we lack this firm resolve, so long as we do not belittle and denigrate the teachings. We at least maintain equanimity, acknowledging that we do not understand them.

32. Praising ourselves and/or belittling others

The first root bodhisattva downfall is doing this motivated by desire for gain or jealousy. Here the motivation is pride, conceit, haughtiness, or anger. Such motivations arise when we falsely discriminate ourselves as better than others are.

33. Not going for the sake of Dharma

The second root bodhisattva downfall is not giving the Dharma because of attachment and miserliness. Here, the fault is not going to teach, perform Buddhist rituals, attend Buddhist ceremonies, or listen to discourses because of pride, anger, spite, laziness, or indifference.

With such motivation, we do not discriminate correctly what is worthwhile. There is no fault, however, if we do not go because of feeling we are not a teacher or being too sick, or because we suspect the teachings we would hear or impart would be incorrect, or we know that the audience has heard them repeatedly and knows them already, or we have received them in full and comprehended and mastered them completely so that we have no need to listen further, or we are already focused and absorbed on the teachings so need no reminder about them, or they are over our heads and we would only become confused by listening.

Further, if our teachers would be displeased if we went - such as if he or she told us to do something else - we certainly do not go.

34. Relying on language to deride a teacher

We weaken our abilities to discriminate correctly when we judge spiritual teachers by their language. We ridicule and reject those who

speaking with a heavy accent, making many grammatical mistakes, even though what they explain is correct, and run after those who speak elegantly, but total nonsense.

TWELVE FAULTY ACTIONS THAT CONTRADICT WORKING TO BENEFIT OTHERS

35. Not going to help those in need

Because of anger, spite, laziness, or indifference, not going to the assistance of any of eight types of persons needing help:

- (a) in making a decision about something positive, for example at a meeting,
- (b) in traveling,
- (c) in learning a foreign language we know,
- (d) in carrying out some task that has no moral fault,
- (e) in keeping watch over a house, temple, or their possessions,
- (f) in stopping a fight or argument,
- (g) in celebrating an occasion, like a wedding, or
- (h) in doing charity work.

Declining to go, however, does not damage our efforts to help others if we are sick, have already promised our assistance elsewhere, send someone else who is capable of the job, are engaged in some positive task that is more urgent, or are incompetent to help.

There is also no fault if the task is harmful to others, contradictory to the Dharma or unreasonable, or if the persons requesting our assistance are capable of finding help elsewhere or have someone reliable to find it for them.

36. Neglecting to serve the sick

Because of anger, spite, laziness, or indifference.

37. Not alleviating suffering

Also because of the same reasons. Seven types of persons afflicted with difficulties require special care:

- (a) the blind,
- (b) the deaf,
- (c) amputees and cripples,
- (d) tired travelers,
- (e) those suffering from any of the five obstacles preventing mental stability,
- (f) those with ill will and strong prejudices, and
- (g) those who have fallen from positions of high status.

38. Not teaching the reckless in accordance with their character

Reckless (bag-med) persons refer to those who do not care about the laws of behavioral cause and effect and, consequently, whose behavior will bring them unhappiness and problems in this and future lives. We cannot help such people if we are self-righteously indignant and disapproving. To reach them, we need to be skillful and modify our approach to suit their specific situations.

For example, if our neighbor is an avid hunter, we do not preach to him with outrage that he will burn in hell. The person will probably never have anything to do with us again. Rather, we befriend our neighbor by telling him what a kind service he provides for making game meat available for his family and friends.

Once he is receptive to our advice, we slowly suggest better ways to relax and make others happy without taking lives.

39. Not paying back help received

Not wanting to help others in return for the help they have given us, or not remembering or even thinking to pay anything back. There is no fault, however, if while trying to be of help in return, such as when they are repairing their cars, we lack the knowledge and ability, or are too weak.

Moreover, if those who have helped us wish nothing in return, we do not force them to accept our offer.

40. Not alleviating the mental grief of others

Because of spite, laziness, or indifference, if we fail to try comforting those who have lost a loved one, money, or prized possessions, we are at fault. Those who are upset or depressed require our sincere affection, sympathy, and understanding, but certainly not pity.

41. Not giving to those in need of charity

Because of anger, spite, laziness, or indifference. If because of miserliness, it is a root downfall.

42. Not taking care of the needs of our circle

It is a great fault to neglect, out of spite, laziness, or indifference, our circle of relatives, friends, co-workers, employees, disciples, and so on, especially when engaged in social work helping others. We need to provide for their physical needs and look after their spiritual welfare. How can we pretend to be helping all sentient beings if we ignore the needs of those closest to us?

43. Not going along with the preferences of others

So long as what others wish us to do or what they like is not harmful to them or to others, it is a fault not to agree. Everyone does things differently or has individual tastes. If we do not honor this, because of spite, laziness, or indifference, we start petty arguments about things like where to eat, or we are insensitive to their preferences and arouse their discomfort or resentment when ordering the menu.

44. Not speaking in praise of others' talents or good qualities

If we fail to commend others when they have done something well or concur with someone else's acclaim of them, because of anger, spite, indifference, or laziness, we weaken our interest and enthusiasm for them to continue to grow. If others are embarrassed to be lauded, either privately or in public, or would become proud or vain if praised to their faces, we hold back our words.

45. Not enforcing punishment in accordance with circumstances

To help others, it is important to discipline them if they act in an unruly manner. If we fail to do so, because of emotional problems with it, or laziness, indifference, or not caring, we damage our ability to be effective guides.

46. Not using such things as extraphysical powers or the ability to cast spells

Certain situations call for special methods to help others, such as using extraphysical powers (rdzu-'phrul). If we possess these means, but do not use them when they would be appropriate and effective, we damage our ability to be of help. We try to use whatever talents, abilities, and attainments we have to benefit others.

From berzinarchives.com

7. THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN TRANSGRESSING BODHISATTVA VOWS

MAINTAINING VOWS

When people learn of vows such as these, they sometimes feel they are difficult to keep and are afraid to take them. We avoid this kind of intimidation, however, by knowing clearly what vows are.

There are two ways to explain them.

The first is that vows are an attitude we adopt toward life to restrain ourselves from certain modes of negative conduct.

The other is that they are a subtle shape or form we give to our lives.

In either case, maintaining vows involves mindfulness (*dran-pa*), alertness (*shes-bzhin*), and self-control. With mindfulness, we keep our vows in mind throughout each day. With alertness, we maintain watch on our behavior to check if it accords with the vows. If we discover we are transgressing, or about to transgress them, we exercise self-control.

In this way, we define and maintain an ethical shape to our lives. Keeping vows and maintaining mindfulness of them are not so alien or difficult to do.

If we drive a car, we agree to follow certain rules in order to minimize accidents and maximize safety. These rules shape our driving - we avoid speeding and keep to our sides of the road - and outline the most practical and realistic way to reach a destination.

After some experience, following the rules becomes so natural that being mindful of them is effortless and never a burden. The same thing happens when maintaining bodhisattva or any other ethical vows.

THE FOUR BINDING FACTORS FOR LOSING VOWS

We lose our vows when we totally drop their shape from our lives, or stop trying to maintain it. This is called a root downfall. When it occurs, the only way to regain this ethical shape is to reform our attitudes, undertake a purification procedure such as meditation on love and compassion, and retake the vows.

From among the eighteen root bodhisattva downfalls, as soon as we develop the state of mind of the **ninth** or **eighteenth** - holding a distorted, antagonistic attitude or giving up bodhichitta - we lose, by the very fact of our change of mind, the ethical shape to our lives fashioned by bodhisattva vows, and thus we stop all efforts to maintain it. Consequently, we immediately lose all our bodhisattva vows, not just the one we have specifically discarded.

Transgressing the other **sixteen bodhisattva vows** does not constitute a root downfall unless the attitude accompanying the act contains four binding factors (kun-dkris bzhi).

These factors must be held and maintained from the moment immediately after developing the motivation to break the vow, up until the moment right after completing the act of transgression.

1. Not regarding the negative action as detrimental, seeing only advantages to it, and undertaking the action with no regrets.
2. Having been in the habit of committing the transgression before, having no wish or intention to refrain now or in the future from repeating it. (
3. Delighting in the negative action and undertaking it with joy.
4. Having no moral self-dignity (*ngo-tsha med-pa*, no sense of honor) and no care for how our actions reflect on others (*khrel-med*, no sense of face), such as our teachers and parents, and thus having no intention of repairing the damage we are doing to ourselves.

If all four attitudes do not accompany a transgression of any of the sixteen vows, the bodhisattva shape to our lives is still there, as is the effort to maintain it, but they have both become weak. With the

sixteen vows, there is a great difference between merely breaking and losing them.

For example, suppose we do not lend somebody one of our books because of attachment to it and miserliness. We see nothing wrong with this - after all, this person might spill coffee on it or not give it back. We have never lent it before and have no intention to change this policy now or in the future.

Moreover, when we refuse, we are happy in our decision. Lacking moral self-dignity, we are shameless about saying no. We do not care how our refusal reflects on ourselves, despite the fact that as someone supposedly wishing to bring everyone to enlightenment, how could we not be willing to share any source of knowledge we have?

Unabashed, we do not care how our refusal reflects on our spiritual teachers or on Buddhism in general.

And we have no intention of doing anything to counterbalance our selfish act.

If we have all these attitudes when refusing to lend our book, we have definitely lost the bodhisattva shape to our lives. We have totally fallen down in our Mahayana training and lost all our bodhisattva vows.

On the other hand, if we lack some of these attitudes and do not loan our book, we have merely slackened our efforts to maintain a bodhisattva shape to our lives. We still have the vows, but in a weakened form.

WEAKENING VOWS

Transgressing one of the sixteen vows with none of the four binding factors present does not actually weaken our bodhisattva vows. For example, we do not lend our book to someone who asks, but we know it is basically wrong. We do not intend to do this as a policy, we are unhappy about saying no, and we are concerned about how our refusal reflects on ourselves and on our teachers.

We have a valid reason to refuse lending it, such as a pressing need for the book ourselves or we have already promised it to someone else. Our motivation is not attachment to the book or miserliness. We apologize for not being able to lend it now and explain why, assuring the person we shall lend it as soon as possible. To make up the loss, we offer to share our notes. In this way, we fully maintain the bodhisattva form of our lives.

We progressively begin to weaken that form and loosen our hold on our vows as we come increasingly under the influence of attachment and miserliness.

Please note that maintaining the vow to refrain from not sharing Dharma teachings or any other sources of knowledge does not rid us of attachment or miserliness with our books. It merely keeps us from acting under their influence. We may lend our book or, because of an urgent need, not lend it now, but still be attached to it and basically a miser.

Vows, however, help in the struggle to exterminate these disturbing emotions and gain liberation from the problems and the suffering they bring. The stronger these troublemakers are, however, the more difficult it is to exercise self-control not to let them dictate our behavior.

We are progressively more dominated by attachment and miserliness - and our vows are progressively weaker - when, in not lending our book, we know it is wrong to do so, but we hold any one, two, or all three of the other binding factors. These constitute the minor, intermediate, and major levels of minor corruption (zag-pa chung-ba) of our vows.

For example, we know it is wrong not to lend our book, but that is our policy and we make no exceptions. If we feel badly about that and are ashamed about how our refusal reflects on us and our teachers, the bodhisattva shape we are trying to put in our lives is still not too weak.

But if, in addition, we feel happy about our policy and then, in addition, we no longer care what others think about us or our

teachers, we are falling more and more prey to our attachment and miserliness.

An even weaker level of maintaining this shape in our lives begins when we do not acknowledge anything wrong in refusing to lend the book. This is the minor level of intermediate corruption (*zag-pa 'bring*). As we add one or two of the other binding factors, we weaken this shape even further, with major intermediate corruption and major corruption (*zag-pa chen-po*) respectively.

When all four binding factors are present, we commit a root downfall and completely lose our bodhisattva vows. We are now fully under the sway of attachment and miserliness, which means we are not engaged any more in overcoming them or realizing our potentials so that we can benefit others. In forsaking the involved stage of bodhichitta, we lose our bodhisattva vows, which structure that level.

STRENGTHENING WEAKENED VOWS

The first step to repairing our bodhisattva vows, if we have weakened or lost them, is to admit that our transgression was a mistake. We may do this with an expiation ritual (*phyir-'chos, phyir-bcos*). Such a ritual does not entail confessing our mistakes to some other person or seeking forgiveness from the Buddhas. We need to be honest with ourselves and with our commitment. If we already felt it was wrong when we actually broke a specific vow, we re-acknowledge our mistake. We then generate four factors that act as opponent forces (*gnyen-po bzhi*).

1. Feeling regret about our action.

Regret (*'gyod-pa*), whether at the time of transgressing a vow or afterwards, is not the same as guilt. Regret is the wish that we did not have to commit the act we are doing or one we have done. It is the opposite of taking pleasure or later rejoicing in our action.

Guilt, on the other hand, is a strong feeling that our action is or was really bad and that we are therefore a truly bad person. Regarding these identities as inherent and eternal, we dwell morbidly on them and do not let go. Guilt, however, is never an appropriate or

helpful response to our errors. For instance, if we eat some food that makes us sick, we regret our action - it was a mistake.

The fact that we ate that food, however, does not make us inherently bad. We are responsible for our actions and their consequences, but not guilty for them in a condemning sense that deprives us of any feeling of self-worth or dignity.

2. Promising to try our best not to repeat the mistake.

Even if we had such an intention when transgressing the vow, we consciously reaffirm our resolve.

3. Going back to our basis.

This means to reaffirm the safe and positive direction in our lives and rededicate our hearts to achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all - in other words, revitalizing and fortifying our refuge and aspiring level of bodhichitta.

4. Undertaking remedial measures to counterbalance our transgression.

Such measures include meditating on love and generosity, apologizing for our unkind behavior, and engaging in other positive deeds.

Since acting constructively requires a sense of moral self-dignity and care for how our actions reflect on those we respect, it counters the lack of these that might have accompanied our negative act. Even if we felt ashamed and embarrassed at the time of the transgression, these positive steps strengthen our self-respect and regard for how others might think of our teachers.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We can see, then, that the bodhisattva vows are in fact quite difficult to lose completely. So long as we sincerely respect and try to keep them as guidelines, we never actually lose them. This is because the four binding factors are never complete even if our disturbing emotions cause us to break a vow.

And even in the case of holding a distorted, antagonistic attitude or giving up bodhichitta, if we admit our mistake, muster the

opponent forces of regret and so on, and retake the vows, we can recover and resume our path.

Therefore, when trying to decide whether or not to take the vows, it is more reasonable to base the decision on an assessment of our abilities to sustain continuing effort in trying to keep them as guidelines, rather than our abilities to keep them perfectly. It is best, however, never to weaken or lose our vows. Although we are able to walk again after breaking a leg, we may be left with a limp.

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PART FOUR
ENGAGING BODHICHITTA:
BODHISATTVA VOWS
KIRTI TSENSHAB RINPOCHE AND
OTHER LAMAS

8. THE EIGHTEEN ROOT BODHISATTVA VOWS

KIRTI TSENSHAB RINPOCHE, WITH COMMENTS FROM LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE AND OTHER LAMAS

A commentary on the bodhisattva precepts given privately by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche to two Western sangha members in Dharamsala, India December 24, 1988 until January 2, 1989, supplemented with comments from other lamas.

Edited and partly retranslated by Gelong Thubten Lodroe (Hermes Brandt)

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

In the following comments by other teachers are added when they seem to be saying different things than Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche (KTR).

TT Tara Tulku (source: notes taken by Hermes Brandt during a private teaching, Bodh Gaya, 1990)

LZR Lama Zopa Rinpoche (source: old Kopan stencil)

GND Geshe Ngawang Dargye (source: old Dharamsala stencil)

YG Yonten Gyatso, paraphrasing LTK's Lamrim Chenmo in *Le Grand Livre de la Progression vers l'Eveil* (Jujurieux: Editions du Dharma, 1990))

LTK Lama Tsong Khapa, as quoted in the above text.

MT Mark Tatz in his translation with commentary of Candragomin's Twenty Stanzas on the Bodhisattva Vow, which has appeared in: *Difficult Beginnings, Three Works on the Bodhisattva Path*, by Chandragomin; translated and commented by Mark Tatz (Boston & London: Shambhala Publications, 1985)

EDITOR'S PREFACE

These teachings by Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche on the three sets of vows, which were orally translated by different translators, were taped and transcribed by the two sangha members who requested and attended the teachings. The transcript was subsequently edited by Gelong Thubten Lodroe, who also checked the translation to some extent.

As Rinpoche's voice was not well recorded, this was difficult. Whenever the transcribed translation seemed to be inaccurate, while the recording was unclear, he asked Geshe Tashi Pelbar to listen to the recording. Geshe Tashi was most often able to understand the recording. Although the biggest inaccuracies have been removed from the translation, some minor ones may remain and others may have been introduced by the editor, who sometimes made minor changes while understanding most but not all of the recording; such changes, however, were always consistent with teachings given by other lamas. All major changes were checked with Geshe Tashi.

The titles of the bodhisattva downfalls were added by the editor. They do not always correspond exactly to Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche's teaching. The editor followed mainly the oldest available source, Chandragomin's *Twenty Verses*, and for the downfalls not mentioned by that text, Lama Tzong Khapa's commentary, as rendered by Geshe Yonten Gyatso (see below). The commentary by other lamas was added whenever they seemed to shed more or a different light on the subject.

SCRIPTURAL SOURCES

The eighteen root downfalls and forty-six secondary downfalls are not mentioned together in one single Indian text. You will not find any ancient Indian text that explains all these downfalls together. When you look through the Indian texts, you will find some of them in one text and some of them in other texts. Some of the bodhisattva precepts and the actions which are to be abandoned by bodhisattvas were mentioned by Shantideva in his *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*. But he

did not mention all of the precepts or practices of a bodhisattva because some had already been explained in texts by other Indian masters such as Asanga. Asanga, in his text *Bodhisattvabhumi*, has mentioned a few of the Bodhisattva precepts or downfalls, but not all of them. So the precepts that were mentioned in the *Bodhisattvabhumi* were not mentioned in Shantideva's text. Only those that were not mentioned there are mentioned in Shantideva's text. And similarly, Shantideva explained some of the bodhisattva precepts in another text which is called *Shikshasamuccaya* or *Compendium of Training*. In that text he mentions many of the bodhisattva precepts which were not mentioned in the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* or in texts composed by other Indian masters.

The Indian scholar Chandragomin composed a text called *Twenty Stanzas on the Bodhisattva Vow*, in which he mentions the 46 secondary downfalls, but not all of the root downfalls because these were already mentioned in other texts by earlier masters. So there was no need for him to mention those and he mentioned only four root downfalls.

In the same way, in the sutras taught by the Buddha himself, he did not mention all the bodhisattva downfalls together in one single teaching. He taught some of the bodhisattva precepts at one place and another set of precepts at another place during another teaching. So you cannot find the precepts of the bodhisattvas all together in one single sutra. You have to gather them by looking through all the sutras. This is why you cannot find all the 18 root downfalls and all the 46 secondary downfalls mentioned together in one single text, only some of them.

So you should not have the wrong conception that the 18 root downfalls and the 46 secondary downfalls are only elaborations made by Tibetan masters. What the Tibetan masters did was to collect together all the bodhisattva precepts which they could find in the different Indian texts. They put them all together in one single text so

that future readers and practitioners would have no difficulty practicing them.

[There are different ways of enumerating the bodhisattva root downfalls. The present commentary follows the way they are listed (as 18) in the text of the *Six-Session Guru Yoga* (SSGY#1-18).

SSGY#1-4 have as source Asanga's Bodhisattvabhumi (B#1-4). (MT:) "Each of [the first four downfalls] has two elements, which has led some...commentators to list them as eight."

SSGY#5-17 have as source Shantideva's Shikshasamuccaya, in which the author lists 14 root downfalls (S#1-14), one of which (S#11) has the same title as B#1, viz. "Praising one self and belittling others." Some commentators consider B#1 and S#11 as identical and, consequently, do not count them separately. According to Shantideva himself, S#11 has the same meaning as B#1.

Other commentators consider B#1 and S#11 as slightly different and list them separately. Among them Lama Tzong Khapa, who lists 19 root downfalls. According to Sakya Dragpa Gyaltsen in his commentary on Chandragomin's Twenty Stanzas, downfall B#1 is dominated by attachment, while S#11 is dominated by anger.

Geshe Ngawang Dargye, who counts 18 root downfalls, appears to list S#11 as separate from B#1, as #15 in his *The Bodhicitta Vows and Lamrim Puja* (Dharamsala: LTWA, 1974), in the following way: "Practicing, supporting or teaching the Dharma for financial profit and fame while saying that your motives are pure and that only others are pursuing Dharma for such base aims."

However, in the text of the *Six-Session Guru Yoga*, B#1 and S#11 are combined into SSGY#1.

SSGY#18 has as source the Sutra of Skilful Means (Upayakaushalyasutra) (U#1) and is mentioned by LTK as a 19th root downfall.

The 46 secondary downfalls all have as source Chandragomin's *Twenty Verses on the Bodhisattva Vow*. Ed.]

THREE KINDS OF MORALITY, OR ETHICS

1. Abstaining from negative actions
2. Collecting virtuous actions
3. Benefiting sentient beings

THREE SETS OF VOWS

1. Pratimoksha
2. Bodhisattva
3. Tantra

Generally speaking, the texts that deal with morality such as the Vinaya texts of the Pratimoksha vehicle explain mostly the opposites of morality. They explain explicitly the actions which are to be abandoned, such as the root downfalls. The principal reason why it is explained in such a way is that if we are to do good, for example if we are to practice non-killing, then we first have to know what is the nature of the action of killing, what are the different aspects, what are the undesirable consequences. Only then will we be able to understand the practice of non-killing and its benefits.

For this reason, the precepts are often explained through their opposites, the negative actions; from these, the positive side can be easily inferred. For this reason the bodhisattva vow is explained through the enumeration of the eighteen root downfalls and the forty-six secondary downfalls.

The Pratimoksha Vow is included in first kind of morality: Abstaining from Negative Actions

Within the first vow, the Pratimoksha Vow, there are eight different kinds of precepts, eight subdivisions, and they are all included in the first of these three kinds of morality, abstaining from negative actions.

They are the eight types of vow held by, respectively, the

1. one-day vow holder (*nyen-ne, upavasini* – “one who fasts as a religious duty”)
2. layman (*genyenpa, upasaka* – “male devotee”)
3. laywoman (*genyenma, upasika* – “female devotee”)
4. novice monk (*getsulpa, shramanera*)
5. novice nun (*getsulma / dge tshul ma! shramanerika*)
6. fully ordained monk (*gelongpa, bhikshu*)
7. fully ordained nun (*gelongma, bhikshuni*)
8. probationary nun (*gelobma, sikshamana*); this vow can only be taken by women. It is not the bhikshuni vow; it is a separate vow.

The first three sets of vows, the one-day vows and those of the male and female upasikas, are taken by lay people; to take these vows you don't need to become a monk or nun. It is said in a text composed by Je Rinpoche that the first three sets of precepts can be taken by persons who are lay and the other, the next five sets of precepts are to be taken by ordained persons, that means by monks or nuns. Becoming ordained, taking one of the five other vows, means to change your clothing to the monk's robes, the red robes.

Within the novice vows there are said to be in total thirty-six precepts. There are also some other precepts which are not included in these thirty-six, but these are secondary. When presented concisely, the thirty-six precepts can be condensed into ten, four main precepts or roots and six branches or branch precepts.

For example, the first of the eight sets of pratimoksha precepts is the one-day vow. If you take the one-day vow and stick by the precepts for that one day, it will prevent you from doing non-virtuous actions for that one day. In this way, it helps you to avoid wrong actions.

Taking the other seven pratimoksha vows help you in the same way to abstain from engaging in non-virtuous actions.

The Ten Non-virtuous Actions are not included in the Pratimoksha Vows

There are negative actions that are not included in the eight sets of pratimoksha precepts, such as the ten non-virtuous actions. These ten non-virtuous actions should be avoided by all persons who have taken refuge in the Triple Gem. So, taking refuge in the Triple Gem helps us to abstain from such non-virtuous actions as the ten non-virtuous actions. *See chapter 3.*

The Ten Virtuous Actions are included in the second kind of morality: Collecting Virtuous Actions

The ten virtuous actions, which are the opposites of the ten non-virtuous actions, are included in the second type of morality. In order to practice this, you first have to know the various non-virtuous actions and their consequences.

The Bodhisattva Vows are included in the first kind of morality: Abstaining From Negative Actions

The first type of morality also includes abstaining from the eighteen root and forty-six secondary downfalls. So a bodhisattva has to abstain from the root downfalls, which are the main transgressions of the bodhisattva vow, and then from the secondary downfalls, which are lighter than the root downfalls, but still are transgressions of the bodhisattva vow.

THE EIGHTEEN ROOT DOWNFALLS

So first mentioned are the eighteen root downfalls of a bodhisattva, called *tsa-tung* in Tibetan. “Tsa” means root and “tung” means downfall, something that has to be abandoned. In the text, all precepts are expressed in the negative, from the opposite side. They express what is to be avoided. What is to be practiced is the opposite of what is mentioned. For example, it says, “not giving material help.” You should understand that this is what you must abandon once you

have taken the bodhisattva vow. What you should practice instead is giving.

1. PRAISING ONESELF AND BELITTLING OTHERS.

The first one is the abandonment of praising oneself and belittling others; praising oneself, like saying “I am knowledgeable, I am greatly learned, I am a scholar” and then belittling and abusing others for not being learned.

The ultimate aspiration or the ultimate aim of the precepts of the bodhisattva is to help other sentient beings and not to work only for oneself. The most important thing in abiding by the bodhisattva vow is the motivation, what kind of motivation you have generated before doing an action. When it is explained in the text that you have to practice the abandonment of belittling others and praising oneself, it does not mean that in the case, for example, that some people are indulging in bad actions, you are not allowed to insult or abuse them. In such cases, if you belittle somebody for engaging in non-virtuous actions, your words might help him from indulging in such actions later on; it might also stop others doing such things. So in such a case, belittling others or saying bad words to others is not against your precepts; rather, it is consistent with your practice. You have to apply the same principle to praising yourself.

For example, in some cases, if you praise yourself for a specific reason, it might encourage other people. In such cases you are allowed to praise yourself. But you are not allowed to praise yourself or insult others for your own immediate and temporal gain.

The main purpose of these precepts of abandoning praising yourself and belittling others is stopping you from praising yourself with the thought that it will benefit you and from belittling or abusing another person with the thought it will help you and harm the other. If you praise yourself and belittle others with such a kind of motivation, it is a bad thing, a negative action.

The purpose of the precept is to stop those kinds of actions. You can apply this same principle to the remaining 17 precepts.

[With this and with all the other downfalls, KTR mentioned, “for someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow”. As I think it is clear that these downfalls can only be incurred by someone who has taken the bodhisattva vow, I have left out this qualification most of the time. Ed.]

LZR “(a) Praising yourself and (b) belittling others, out of desire for offerings, praise, respect, etc.”

2. NOT GIVING MATERIAL OR SPIRITUAL AID.

The second root downfall is not giving spiritual teachings or material objects such as food to those who request you for such things. Not giving the Dharma means, if you are a very learned scholar of Buddhadharma and somebody comes to you and asks the meaning of a specific line in a text, not helping him by explaining that meaning. You have to practice the opposite, the giving of Dharma; that means you have to explain and teach it.

LZR “(a) Not giving material aid or (b) not teaching Dharma to those who have great suffering and are without a protector if you have the ability, because of miserliness or wanting to amass knowledge just for yourself.”

3. REFUSING ANOTHER’S APOLOGY AND STRIKING HIM OUT OF ANGER.

If a person has harmed you and wants to apologize to you for that, you have to accept the apology. For example, if you have taught someone and if, with a good motivation, you sincerely try to give advice to a bad person, and that man gets angry and instead of being grateful to you, he fights with you, insults you in a very bad way, but later on he calms down and regrets what he did or said and wants to apologize to you, then you have to accept the apology without bearing any grudge. If you do not, you incur a root downfall.

CG “Heedless of another’s confession, striking him out of anger.”

LZR “(a) Not forgiving, (b) harboring a grudge and retaliating when others apologize.”

YG “(a) Under the influence of anger, hitting someone with your hand or with an object; (b) out of dislike, not accepting a sincere apology from someone who has harmed us and not forgiving him.”

4. ABANDONING THE MAHAYANA; GIVING INCORRECT DHARMA TEACHINGS.

The fourth root downfall of a bodhisattva is abandoning the Mahayana teachings. That is, after a practitioner without the right capacity has come into contact with the bodhisattva teachings, the Mahayana teachings and has taken the bodhisattva vow, he might think that the bodhisattva teachings and paths are unsuitable, not realistic. The bodhisattva practices being very vast, he might think that their practice is not realistic, that the six perfections cannot really be practiced and that, therefore, they cannot have been taught by the Buddha.

If you think like that and tell it to another person, you commit a root downfall. The downfall is complete if the other person gives up that particular teaching because of your words.

The text specifically mentions the Mahayana teachings, but implied is also that it is incorrect to say that the Hinayana teachings were not taught by the Buddha.

Asanga in *Bodhisattvabhumi*: “Abandoning the Mahayana in general – the vast and the profound – and taking delight in giving wrong Dharma teachings.”

YG “Condemning Mahayana scriptures dealing with method or wisdom.”

LZR “(a) Saying that [any Mahayana scripture] is not Buddha’s teaching. (b) Preaching your own fabricated or perverted doctrine to others.”

5. STEALING PROPERTY OF THE TRIPLE GEM.

The fifth transgression of the bodhisattva vow is taking by stealing objects, food, wealth or anything belonging to a monastery or that have been offered to a temple or a monastery or to the sangha. If you

take and enjoy such things, then you commit the fifth of the eighteen transgressions.

LZR “Taking back, robbing, embezzling material offered to any of the Three Jewels; using material dedicated to the Sangha for self-purposes.”

YG “‘Buddha’ means the Enlightened One himself or an image representing him; ‘Dharma’ refers to scriptures or realizations; ‘Sangha,’ in the case of ordinary people, minimally four monks, or, in the case of Arya beings, any person. The various factors constituting this downfall are the same as mentioned during the explanation of theft in the context of the teachings [on cause and effect]: motivation, preparation, method and completion.”

6. ABANDONING DHARMA.

If you say to another person that any teaching that was in fact taught by the Buddha was not taught by him, you commit the sixth root downfall. The downfall is complete if the other person gives up that particular practice.

The difference with the fourth root downfall is that the sixth refers to any Hinayana or Mahayana teaching, whereas the fourth specifically refers to Mahayana teachings.

LZR “Criticizing scriptures or practices of any of the three vehicles.”

YG “‘Abandoning’ means saying that [any Hinayana or Mahayana teaching] is not the words of the Enlightened One and criticizing a path one does not feel inclined towards.”

7. DISROBING ORDAINED PERSONS.

If an ordained person, such as a novice monk, by some accident or misfortune transgresses any of the four root precepts of a monk, then his ordination ceases and he is no longer allowed to wear the monk’s robes. But if he continues to wear the robes, if a person who has the bodhisattva vow forces him to change his clothes and wear layman’s clothes then that is wrong – is the seventh root downfall. Instead, the

bodhisattva has to advise him skillfully and has to make him change his clothing in a peaceful manner.

GND “Beating or robbing ordained people or causing them to take off their robes or break their vows, irrespective of their keeping pure or impure morality.”

YG “With a bad motivation, cause a monk to give up his ordination, steal his robes, wound, imprison or kill him, whether or not his conduct is in harmony with his ordination or his teacher’s words.”

8. COMMITTING ONE OF THE FIVE ACTS WITH IMMEDIATE RETRIBUTION.

The eighth Bodhisattva root downfall is to commit one of the five acts with immediate retribution, which are considered as very heavy non-virtues, heavy sins. They are:

- killing your own mother;
- killing your own father;
- killing an arhat;
- causing disunity within the Sangha;
- with harmful intent, causing blood to flow from a Buddha.

9. HOLDING WRONG VIEWS.

The ninth root downfall is holding wrong views. Generally speaking, there are many different kinds of wrong view, but the specific ones meant here are, for example, thinking that there is no past or future life; thinking there is no law of cause and effect, no Triple Gem. If a person who has the bodhisattva vow has such views, he commits the ninth downfall

10. DESTROYING TOWNS AND SO FORTH.

The tenth downfall is the destruction of towns and so forth, by setting them on fire. The words “and so forth” include the intentional setting on fire of a forest or a meadow, because such actions harm a lot of sentient beings; they kill many insects and animals that live there.

GND “Completely destroying cities or towns by bombs, fire or black magic.”

YG “Because of being controlled by delusions, destroying villages, cities, regions or provinces with weapons, fire, black magic or any other means.”

11. TEACHING EMPTINESS TO UNQUALIFIED PERSONS.

The eleventh downfall is teaching emptiness to those who are likely to misunderstand those teachings. Instead of getting the correct understanding of emptiness they might develop misconceptions. They might think that, if everything is empty by nature, there is no point in practicing Dharma or doing anything virtuous. Therefore, teaching emptiness to such students, such disciples, can be very disastrous and therefore very sinful. So that’s why this is a downfall.

A teacher must always try and be careful when teaching on emptiness. He should teach it only to those disciples who have the right mental capacity. Before teaching on emptiness, he has to check the intelligence and the mental powers of the students. He has to test them by asking questions. He has to make sure the student is really interested in learning about emptiness and that he has the right intelligence. After some time, one can understand roughly whether the student is the right person to be taught emptiness or not.

12. CAUSING OTHERS TO ABANDON THE MAHAYANA.

If you practice the Mahayana and try to develop bodhicitta, the mind which wants to attain complete enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, but seeing the great amount of hardship you will have to undergo in order to attain enlightenment, you get discouraged, think that you might never be able to attain it, and give it up because it is too difficult, then you commit a root downfall.

Q: Here it says something different: “Turning someone away from working from full enlightenment.”

A: There are two ways of obstructing bodhicitta. One is by feeling that you are not able to attain enlightenment because it is too

difficult for you. The other is discouraging someone else from striving for highest enlightenment – acting as an unqualified teacher by giving wrong advice like, “It is impossible for you to attain enlightenment because you would have to accumulate merits for three aeons and you cannot do that.” In this way you discourage another person who is committed to attaining enlightenment and follows the path of the Mahayana. Both if you generate this disinterest by yourself and if you cause someone else to give up the Mahayana, you incur the 12th root downfall.”

LZR, YG, GND “Diverting someone from working to attain the highest enlightenment and encouraging him to work for his own Nirvana alone.”

13. CAUSING OTHERS TO ABANDON THEIR PRATIMOKSHA VOWS.

The thirteenth root downfall is causing another person who has taken any of the eight types of Pratimoksha vow to stop abiding by their vow. If you say to someone who has taken a Pratimoksha vow and abides by it, “You cannot attain total freedom from delusions by following the Pratimoksha Sutras. You should follow the Mahayana path, which does lead to that freedom,” and that person gives up their Pratimoksha vow, you incur the 13th downfall.

LZR “Causing others to give up their Pratimoksha vow.”

GND “Discouraging others from keeping their precepts of individual liberation l by saying that it is not necessary to keep these perfectly when [practicing Mahayana].”

14. BELITTLING THE HINAYANA.

The 14th root downfall is belittling the Hinayana tradition, either the path of the listeners (shravaka) or the path of the individual buddhas (pratyekabuddha). If you tell another person that the Hinayana tradition is inferior and should therefore not be practiced, and that the Mahayana path is superior and should therefore be practiced, you incur the 14th downfall.

LZR “Causing others to have incorrect views you might hold about Hinayana, e.g. saying that by practicing Hinayana one can never give up attachment, or be released from suffering and delusions. If the other person believes it, it is a transgression.”

TT “Making someone else believe that the shravaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles don’t get rid of attachment and so forth. If the other person doesn’t believe it, the downfall does not occur. Saying one cannot achieve liberation by relying on the Hinayana tenets (as opposed to the Hinayana methods) does not constitute a downfall.”

15. FALSELY PROCLAIMING REALIZATIONS OF EMPTINESS.

The fifteenth root downfall is called “lying about the profound.” In general, there are many kinds of lies but the lie that is meant here concerns your realization of emptiness. For example, if you have not correctly understood the meaning of emptiness but give teachings on emptiness to others and pretend to have realized emptiness directly, you incur the 15th root downfall.

LZR “The downfall occurs when the other person believes you have understood emptiness.”

GND “The downfall occurs when the other person hears your words.”

16. SEIZING PROPERTY OF THE TRIPLE GEM.

The sixteenth root downfall is taking wealth and objects that belong to monasteries and temples. This downfall can happen to the person who has the bodhisattva vow and who has some control over a monastery or a temple. As it is not considered proper in the eyes of the people to take something directly, he won’t go and take the object straight from the monastery. As he has some power, he will take these objects indirectly, through a second person, and then give them again to a third person. The person who gave the orders and who made the plans will be the one to incur this downfall.

Also if you have a position of authority, for example if you are a government minister and, backed by the authority of your king or president, you force monks living in a monastery or temple to give you their precious objects such as golden statues or other religious articles and you take these away and use them for your own purpose, you incur the 16th downfall.

We have already talked about taking objects which belong to a monastery or a community. The difference between these two downfalls is that downfall 5 concerns taking objects from a monastery or from the sangha by stealing, by taking them secretly without getting permission.

Downfall 16 concerns openly taking wealth or objects from a monastery or from the sangha by using some kind of force, in the face of the monks who own the articles. Here the person who takes the monastic wealth should be somebody who has some kind of power to do that, who has some control over the monastery. He does not grab anything directly, but says something like, "A monastery should not keep precious objects such as golden vases. They should be given to the government. The monks are not allowed to keep them." So he explains such things to a subordinate, lets him take the object from the monastery and either keeps it or gives it to somebody else.

LZR "Accepting material that you know has been robbed or embezzled from the Triple Gem or a bikkshu."

TT "Accepting something that someone else has stolen from the Triple Gem. If you don't know that, the fault is less. If a king takes a possession from a monk and offers it to a bodhisattva, the latter incurs this downfall."

GND "Accepting materials which have been confiscated by the government from the Sangha, a monastery or a bhikshu. Demarcation of the transgression: the thought 'Now I have received it.'"

YG "This downfall is incurred both by the person who confiscates the object from the monastic community and by the person who receives it."

17. MAKING BAD RULES

The seventeenth root downfall of a bodhisattva is making harmful rules in a monastic community or in a society. There are many different kinds of disciplinary codes and rules. Some of them are beneficial for human beings, not only in this life but also in future lives. But others, instead of benefiting, are harmful. The Vinaya rules laid down by the Buddha in the sutras are the kind of rules which not only help in this life, but also ensure happiness in the future lives.

But if someone who is in charge of discipline makes a rule like “all monks must go and watch a movie once a week” then that rule is not helpful, but harmful for the monks. So if you have taken the bodhisattva vow and make such harmful disciplinary rules, then you commit the 17th downfall.

LZR “Taking materials from one who is meditating on shamatha and giving it to someone who is merely reciting texts.”

GND “Due to a personal disliking, taking food from those who practice development of single-pointed concentration and giving it to those who recite and study texts. Demarcation of the transgression: when it has harmed the practitioner.”

YG “Taking possessions away from pure practitioners with a hostile intent, taking possessions away from monks or nuns who are engaged in an attempt to abandon suffering and giving them to persons who recite and study texts. In the case of this downfall, the monks and nuns are not more than three in number and are not Aryas, for if they are, the [fifth] root downfall (i.e. stealing objects offered to the Triple Gem) is incurred.”

18. GIVING UP BODHICITTA

The eighteenth root downfall concerns the degeneration of bodhicitta which you have already developed in your continuum through the blessing of your teacher. When you take the bodhisattva vow, you promise to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings equaling space, not singling anybody out. But you might sometimes feel an aversion for someone and think that you want to attain

enlightenment for all sentient beings except for that one. In such a case, you cannot generate bodhicitta. If you have already generated bodhicitta, it will degenerate and you commit the 18th downfall.

GND “...out of discouragement or aversion.”

Geshe Konchog Lhundrub “Giving up aspiring bodhicitta.”

9. THE FORTY-SIX SECONDARY BODHISATTVA VOWS

KIRTI TSENSHAB RINPOCHE

Next we are going to talk about the forty-six types of misbehavior that are also transgressions of the bodhisattva vow but less heavy than the eighteen root downfalls. In the text of *the Six-Session Guru Yoga*, the forty-six secondary downfalls are not enumerated.

In order to explain them one by one, I will use a commentary composed by Gungthang Tenpai Dronme which was published by the Tibetan Printing Press in Dharamsala.

These forty-six secondary downfalls can be divided into seven groups. Six of these are related to the delusions that are eliminated by the practice of the Six Perfections. The seventh group corresponds to the third kind of morality: Benefiting Sentient Beings.

The first thirty-four downfalls, the first six groups, are opposites of the second kind of morality: Collecting Virtuous Actions, so you can divide these thirty-four into the practices of the Six Perfections.

The last twelve of the forty-six secondary downfalls, the seventh group, are opposed to the third kind of morality: Benefiting Sentient Beings.

DOWNFALLS 1–7: THE PERFECTION OF GIVING

The first seven downfalls are the opposite of the practice of giving and are counteracted by the practice of giving.

In order to practice the perfection of giving, we have to understand what obstructs it, namely attachment and miserliness. We are attached to food, clothing, belongings, money and such kinds of worldly things. These attachments are obstacles for the practice of giving. Practicing giving will lessen attachment to one's belongings – the main benefit. If someone has much attachment, practicing giving

will make it less. If someone has very little attachment, the practice of giving will help to eliminate it completely. By itself, the perfection of giving cannot eliminate attachment completely; for that, we need to meditate on emptiness. Only the realization of emptiness can uproot attachment completely.

1. NOT MAKING DAILY OFFERINGS WITH BODY, SPEECH AND MIND TO THE TRIPLE GEM

The first secondary downfall is not making offerings to the Triple Gem. Generally speaking, we can distinguish two kinds of giving: making offerings to the Triple Gem and our teachers, and giving alms to the poor. In our daily life in our societies, we can see some wealthy people who have all the facilities to practice giving, but are so miserly and so attached to their wealth they are not able to make offerings to the Triple Gem, nor are they able to give alms to the poor. As we have taken the bodhisattva vow, we have to make sure that we make offerings to the Triple Gem every day with body, speech and mind. LZR, TT: “Not daily making physical (offerings, prostrations), verbal (praises) and mental (reflecting on the good qualities of the Triple Gem) offerings to the Triple Gem.”

2. FOLLOWING THOUGHTS OF DESIRE

Being attached to your belongings and considering them as very precious. Actually, attachment to your belongings makes you miserly.

LZR “Wanting to accumulate things out of greed.”

TT “Following and acting out thoughts of desire; e.g. immediately, without further thinking, following an impulse to go to the best restaurant.”

3. DISRESPECTING ELDERS

Being disrespectful to your elders. “Elder” can mean many different things. Some people are your elders through knowledge. Others are elder by age, again others through their position. You might fear losing your position or dignity if you respect and are obedient to your

elders. If you think in this way and do not behave respectfully towards them, then you commit the third downfall.

TT, TY “Elders = those who have taken the bodhisattva vow before you.”

GND “Elders = those who have received the bodhisattva or a pratimoksha ordination before you.”

4. NOT ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Not being honest and sincere in giving answers to another person who asks you questions on spiritual or educational matters or any kind of question, because you are afraid to lose your reputation. Such things happen in our societies. If you teach something to someone else, then that person will know it and later on there might less demand for your teachings. If out of such concerns you do not answer a question sincerely and honestly, you commit this fourth downfall.

TT, LZR “Not answering a question or not answering it correctly out of hatred or laziness.”

GND “Not answering a sincerely asked question about Dharma or not answering it properly.”

5. NOT ACCEPTING INVITATIONS

If you receive the visit of your lama or some rich or important person, you should be hospitable and make offerings to them without miserliness. Not doing so out of miserliness constitutes the fifth downfall.

TT, LZR “Not accepting invitations out of hatred, pride or jealousy.”

YG “Valid reasons for not accepting are: you have something more important to do; you are ill; the journey would be dangerous; the host has a bad attitude towards you; your presence would cause discord.”

6. REFUSING GIFTS

[Recording unclear. Translation #6 largely unchecked.]

If someone gives you gold, silver or other precious substances and, with a motivation to use the gold and the silver for the sake of other people, you take great care of the gold, clean it regularly, and inspect it from time to time, then that is not incorrect. But if you want to use it for your own purpose, are greatly attached to it and regularly clean, polish, inspect and fondle it, you commit this downfall. The difference lies in the motivation.

TT, LZR “Not accepting gifts of money, gold and so forth out of hatred, pride or jealousy.”

YG “Valid reasons for not accepting are: the gift increases your desires and attachment; the giver needs the object and gives it with regret; the giver is very poor; it seems the object belongs to the Sangha; the object is offered by mistake or has been stolen; the giver would be subject to legal difficulties or dangers.”

7. NOT GIVING DHARMA TEACHINGS TO THOSE WHO REQUEST IT

Not giving Dharma teachings although you know the subject, fearing that others gain the same knowledge as you.

TT “Not teaching the Dharma to those who desire teachings.”

LZR “Not giving teachings to those who are interested and sincerely approach you for Dharma, out of hatred, laziness, jealousy, miserliness, a grudge or negligence.”

YG “The difference between this downfall and the second root downfall lies in the mental attitude: the present downfall involves jealousy and pride, the second downfall involves miserliness.”

DOWNFALLS 8–16: THE PERFECTION OF MORALITY

The next nine are related to the Perfection of Morality or ethics. You have learned that killing is bad, a non-virtuous action that will have unpleasant results. You might sometimes not remember the consequences and kill another being but then regret it and not be happy about your action. But if you meet a bad teacher who tells you that killing is not bad at all, that on the contrary it is good and that

there are no bad consequences, giving you false reasons and you believe him, your ethics start to degenerate. This is the opposite of morality. The main function of the practice of morality is to abstain from non-virtuous actions such as the next nine downfalls.

8. ABANDONING VOW BREAKERS

The eighth downfall is rejecting a person who lacks in ethics. For example, if a monk commits a root downfall and you do not want to have anything to do with him because of that, saying, “You have no ethics, you have lost your ordination,” if you refuse to accept him as your friend, then you commit this downfall. So if such a person comes to you, instead of rejecting him, you have to advise him to confess his defeat. You have to be kind to him; you have to accept and help him.

LZR “Excluding from your compassion, belittling, not forgiving, not helping those who cultivate the ten immoralities, break a pratimoksha vow, commit the five crimes of immediate retribution or commit root bodhisattva downfalls. Instead of being hateful or disdainful, generate compassion.”

9. NOT ACTING SO AS TO INSPIRE FAITH IN OTHERS

Once you have taken the bodhisattva vow and meet people, you first have to see and understand their nature, their mental disposition. And then, with an understanding of their nature, you should talk to them in the most suitable way. The most important thing here is to know whether the other person has faith in the Dharma, in their lama or in the Triple Gem. You have to talk in such a way as to strengthen their faith in the Triple Gem and take care so you do not weaken their faith.

LZR “If someone desires a Hinayana teaching, it should be given so they develop faith in that path. If you abstain from giving a desired teaching to them because it is not your own personal practice or interest, this downfall occurs.”

TT “... e.g. by dressing improperly or by slamming doors.”

YG “Not applying yourself to follow the Pratimoksha instructions on ethics with a view to protect other beings; e.g. for a monk, to consume alcohol or to eat after noon. If a Bodhisattva who has taken the monk’s vow does not follow these rules, the lay people will not develop faith in him

10. DOING LITTLE TO BENEFIT OTHERS

The tenth downfall is having very little regard for other people’s needs and purposes and considering your own purposes and needs as more important.

A bodhisattva should always consider others as more important than himself and their purposes as more important than his own. Even if you think that the other person’s work is much less important than yours, since you have the bodhisattva vow, you have to consider the other person’s purpose as more important than your own.

LTK “Applying yourself to following the rules of the Small Vehicle without giving priority to following the rules of the Great Vehicle.”

TT “This downfall involves proscribed non-virtues: not transgressing minor vows if such would benefit others. E.g. a monk should not refuse to save a drowning woman on the grounds that he is not allowed to touch women. Or a monk should not turn down an invitation for an evening meal, saying he is not allowed to eat in the evening. He should allow the other person to collect merits.”

YG “If a bodhisattva monk is led to engaging in a sexual relationship, he first has to give back his monk’s vow.”

11. NOT COMMITTING NON-VIRTUE OUT OF COMPASSION

If you only generate compassion for your relatives and friends when they have problems and not for rich and important people when they have problems, saying to yourself they can’t have problems because they are so well off, you commit this downfall. Also the rich and powerful can suffer greatly from delusions. They are also objects of your compassion and you should try to help those people too.

TT “This downfall involves natural non-virtues: not committing any of the seven non-virtues of body and speech with compassion and love. The Buddha has allowed us to kill a person if that can prevent him from killing many others. It would save him from accumulating much negative karma and prevent much suffering by the many others. We are also allowed to steal and engage in sexual misconduct if the happiness of other beings is served by it.”

LZR “One must be very careful, however because, without having actualized bodhicitta, it is difficult to transform the seven non-virtues of body and speech into virtue.”

12. ACQUIRING THINGS BY WRONG LIVELIHOOD

The twelfth downfall is living on an improper livelihood. There are many types of improper livelihood. The examples mentioned here are: living by selling alcohol; living by working as a prostitute; by selling for profit statues of Buddhas and deities, sacred relics and these kinds of things; by keeping pigs or other animals, killing them and selling their meat. All these ways of making a living are regarded as improper.

TT “Acquiring things by wrong livelihood. E.g. pretending to be a better practitioner than you are when sponsors are around.”

Nagarjuna describes five wrong livelihoods in *The Precious Garland*: “Hypocrisy is to control the senses for the sake of goods and respect; flattery is to speak pleasant phrases for the sake of goods and respect; indirect acquisition is to praise the wealth of others so as to win it; artful acquisition is to deride others in order to acquire their goods; desiring to add profit to profit is to praise previous acquisitions. If somebody gives you something he has acquired through a wrong livelihood, you do not incur this downfall.”

LZR describes the five wrong livelihoods as follows: “(1) Flattering or praising others to gain something for yourself; (2) hinting: e.g. saying, ‘What you gave me before was so nice,’ thereby implying you want more; (3) bribery: giving a smaller thing to get a larger one; (4) force or abuse of authority: pressuring someone so

that he has no choice; (5) hypocrisy: changing one's usual actions to make a good impression so the other will give you something."

13. INDULGING IN FRIVOLITY

Talking badly about yourself, saying things like, "Oh, I am so useless," or complaining a lot about your perceived physical imperfections. Especially if you are a tantric practitioner, committed to maintain divine pride, it becomes putting down the deity.

Of course, it does not mean you should be very proud and boastful.

TT "Making others (and yourself) agitated by frivolous activities. Distracting them with gossip, music, etc."

YG "If you cause distraction in others, you commit a secondary downfall."

GND "Being mainly interested in frivolous activities such as entertainment, sports, drinking, being silly and so forth, causing your mind to wander and you to waste your time limitlessly which you could be using more constructively for the practice of Dharma."

14. THINKING TO REMAIN IN SAMBARA

The fourteenth downfall is wanting to attain liberation for one's own sake alone and not for all sentient beings. Such a mind is generated by both types of Hinayanists, the pratyekabuddhas and the hearers and allows them to liberate themselves from cyclic existence. In itself, this mind is virtuous, but it compares very poorly with the Mahayana mind, bodhicitta, in how it benefits all sentient beings. Therefore a bodhisattva is not allowed to generate such a mind. If he does, it is the 14th downfall.

LZR "Bodhisattvas remain in samsara to benefit sentient beings. Mistaking this and thinking they do not try to abandon delusions and achieve nirvana; thinking they are not afraid of delusions as they stay three countless aeons in samsara. By holding this wrong-conception, one may not cultivate opponents to delusions or tell others to do the same."

MT “...the danger of misinterpreting the stance of the bodhisattva vis-a-vis nirvana and samsara. The bodhisattva does indeed forego the entry into nirvana and instead remains in samsara to assist other beings. But this is not to say that he does not strive to eliminate the defilements that stand between him and nirvana, or that he somehow ‘enjoys’ the state of samsara.”

TT, GND “Having the motivation of wishing to escape from samsara by yourself alone.”

15. NOT AVOIDING A BAD REPUTATION

This downfall has to do with one’s reputation, which can be good or bad. For example, if you are a great discoverer, a scientist or a knowledgeable scholar or you are a very good practitioner and have attained high paths, if you are famous for such things, then you have a good reputation. But if you are widely known to have killed many people or to be very short-tempered, then you have a bad reputation. A bodhisattva has to try not to have a bad reputation and if he has got one, he has to try to get rid of it. If he is known for his short temper, then he should eliminate his short temper.

TT “A good reputation helps to be more effective while working for sentient beings.”

LZR “One does this in order to benefit others; otherwise, caring for one’s reputation is part of the eight worldly dharmas.”

16. NOT HELPING OTHERS TO AVOID NEGATIVITY

This downfall occurs when a bodhisattva sees others around him make many mistakes and does not bother about it, but just keeps quiet, shuts his eyes and lives by himself alone. It is his duty to always use skillful means to help them to eliminate their shortcomings. If he does not do that, he commits the 16th downfall.

TT “If another person behaves badly, it is good to point out his mistakes to him. However, if he is unreceptive, you don’t need to say anything.”

YG “Not using violence or methods that are unpleasant to someone else although you know it would be beneficial for them, for fear it might offend them.”

LZR “Not eliminating delusions of others, when one is capable of doing so; not telling someone of a bad trait of body or speech; not punishing a non-virtuous person in order to eliminate the non-virtue when wrathfulness would be beneficial because you think it would hurt his feelings or from fear of his anger.”

DOWNFALLS 17–20: THE PERFECTION OF PATIENCE

These are the opposites of the practice of patience, which has as its main purpose to lessen and eliminate anger.

17. ANGRILY RETALIATING

One bodhisattva precept is not to retaliate. If, for example, your teacher scolds you for some reason, you have to endure it; you are not allowed to talk back or retaliate for the scolding he gave you. In the same way, if a friend criticizes you for some reason, you have to endure it and you are not allowed to retaliate. Similarly, if somebody hits you, you are not allowed to retaliate and hit back. And if somebody is angry with you, you are not allowed to get angry in return. If you do these things, if you hit back, if you reply back and so forth, you commit this 17th downfall.

LZR “Angrily retaliating if someone (a) insults or blames you, (b) is angry with you, (c) beats you or (d) reveals your shortcomings to others.”

18. IGNORING THOSE WHO ARE ANGRY

If another person thinks that you have wronged him while you have not and he is very angry and quarrels with you, you have to see whether it is possible to clarify the situation to him either at that very moment or later. If you think that you can give some clarification to the other person right away, then you have to explain to him that you have done nothing wrong to him. If the other person is reasonable, he

will see the reason and will cool down. But if you think the other person will not cool down and instead become more angry if you try to clarify, then you should leave it for the time being and just keep quiet for some time. And then, later on, when he has cooled down, you should go to him and try to explain you were not at fault. Then he will stop being angry with you and will once again become your friend.

If a person who has the bodhisattva vow does not do this and does not give any explanations to someone who quarrels with him for no reason, he commits the eighteenth downfall.

TT “Not appeasing someone who is angry with you, even if you are not to blame.”

LZR “Ignoring angry people by not trying to relieve the effect of your actions that caused their anger, explaining why you did it, appeasing them or apologizing to them, because of harmful intent, anger or laziness.”

YG “...because of pride, harmful intent or jealousy.”

19. REJECTING ANOTHER’S EXCUSES

If you get angry with another person because of some wrong action the other has done or you do not actually get angry but pretend to be angry and later on the person approaches you and apologizes, you have to accept the apology and once again become friendly with the person. You should say something like, “It is good that you have come to repent your mistake,” and advise him not to repeat the same mistake in the future.

If you do not do that, but remain angry and refuse the apology, then you commit the nineteenth downfall.

The difference between this secondary downfall and the third root downfall is that, if you do not accept an apology from someone and that refusal is combined with the four aggravating factors, then the action becomes a root downfall. If the action is combined with less than four of these factors or none at all, it becomes a secondary downfall.

YG “Out of ill will and an extremely strong desire to harm, not accepting an apology following a dispute. The action is said to be undefiled if the refusal is motivated by sheer indifference. There is one case in which it is not incorrect to refuse an apology: if it is a means to discipline someone’s mind. The difference between this secondary downfall and the third root downfall is the presence (in the third) and the absence (here) of resentment.”

TT “Refusing to accept someone’s confession. The difference between this downfall and the third root downfall is as follows: The third root downfall involves not accepting an apology from someone who has harmed you. This secondary downfall involves not accepting the apology of someone who has harmed another person but regrets it and confesses it to you. E.g. someone has killed many people, then comes to you in order to confess it because you are a monk or a bodhisattva. If you do not accept the confession, you commit this downfall.”

LZR “Not accepting a sincere apology out of anger or laziness. This is different from the root downfall in that, here, the four aggravating factors are not needed.”

20. FOLLOWING THOUGHTS OF ANGER

If you get angry with somebody, what you should do is try to stop the anger, try to stop it becoming stronger. If instead, you just let it increase and become very strong, then you might want to hit the other person, you might like to kill him or do all kinds of bad things to him. This is all due to the anger that you have generated in your mind.

If a bodhisattva follows his angry thoughts, he commits the 20th downfall.

MT “Harboring resentment.”

YG “Not eliminating but nurturing thoughts of anger. Harboring anger without seeing it as wrong and without applying antidotes constitutes a fault. However, if in spite of

our efforts we do not succeed in eliminating or lessening the anger, we cannot speak of a fault.”

TT “Thinking over and over about some harm you received from another person increases your anger and will cause you to act out of anger.”

21. ATTRACTING FOLLOWERS OUT OF DESIRE FOR HONOR

If you try to attract followers and students with the motivation of getting offerings, fame, popularity and respect, you commit the twenty-first downfall. You are allowed to gather disciples if you have the pure wish to help other beings without being contaminated by a desire for offerings, popularity and fame.

LZR “Giving teachings, attracting disciples, building monasteries, or gathering people in order to obtain offerings or a good reputation.”

TT “Gathering an entourage out of desire for respect and offerings. E.g. a lama having a large staff of servants in order to get more respect.”

22. NOT DISPELLING LAZINESS

Not making an effort to overcome laziness. There are many different kinds of laziness. For example, during daytime, wasting your time with meaningless chatter, going here and there for no specific important reason. Also, it is described in the text that a practitioner is allowed to sleep during the first and second parts of the night. During the third part of the night, i.e. around dawn, he has to be awake and engage in practices – he is not allowed to sleep at that time.

If he does sleep during that time and if he does not try to overcome or counteract the laziness which naturally comes in our mind and just follows his laziness, then he commits the twenty-second downfall. A bodhisattva should overcome laziness.

LZR “Not eliminating laziness, procrastination, delusions of incapability and sleep, which are detrimental to your practice;

wasting time and energy on trivial matters of samsara. You should avoid sleeping late or irregularly.”

23. GOSSIPING OUT OF ATTACHMENT

Wasting your time by gossiping, engaging in meaningless conversations. Some people like to hear war stories; others like to hear love stories; different people have different likings for different stories, depending on their different mental dispositions.

If you spend your time with such meaningless talk, then you commit the twenty-third downfall. Actually a bodhisattva should plan his time well and make a regular timetable for his practices during the day. He has to follow his timetable strictly and should not spend the day not knowing what to do next.

LZR “Frivolously talking about objects of attachment.”

TT “Out of attachment, gossiping about trivial matters.”

MT “...the indolence of gossiping and social intercourse.”

DOWNFALLS 24–26: THE PERFECTION OF MEDITATIVE CONCENTRATION

The main purpose of developing concentration is to counteract distraction. By eliminating these three downfalls, the bodhisattva subdues distractedness and develops meditative concentration.

24. NOT TRAINING IN CONCENTRATION

Not training in concentration, not counteracting the distractions that hinder your concentration; not making an effort to develop your concentration gradually from poor to perfect. If you do not do this, you commit this downfall.

TT “Taking it easy by not seeking teachings on developing concentration and not trying to develop it.”

LZR “Not making an effort to study the means of attaining samadhi by requesting the guru for teachings. If you desire to meditate on this, you must approach your guru for instruction. Transgression is not doing this out of laziness, evil intent or

arrogance or meditating on samadhi without having received teachings on it.”

25. NOT ELIMINATING OBSTACLES TO CONCENTRATION

In general, there are five different kinds of obstacles to the development of meditative concentration and you should know them; you should know their different aspects and their disadvantages, their consequences. Meditating on their faults, you should eliminate these five obstacles so that when you actually try to develop meditative concentration, these five obstacles cannot cause a big problem.

If you do not try to understand these five obstacles or, if you understand them, if you do not try to eliminate them, you commit the twenty-fifth downfall.

In Nagarjuna’s Letter to a Friend, the five obstacles to the development of meditative concentration are compared to robbers who rob you of the wealth you intend to use for giving alms to beggars. The five obstacles rob you of your meditative concentration.

[From here onwards up to downfall 35, the recording is unintelligible. The translation could not be checked. Ed.]

The Five Obstacles to Concentration

1. The first of the five obstacles is attachment to the objects of the senses, desiring the objects of the five senses – forms, sounds, odors, tastes and touchables. Being attached and being distracted by the objects of the five senses leads to the generation of hatred, attachment and ignorance. So first of all, you have to understand and meditate on the many faults of the sense desires.

2. The second obstacle is the wish to harm a rival or an opponent. For example, thinking, “What can I say to hurt him?” The mind which wants to harm an opponent in any way, by any means, is hatred. It leads to many distractions and also to other root delusions.

3. The third obstacle is sleep and drowsiness. It is related to ignorance. Being asleep stops you from doing virtuous actions, it wastes your time. You need to take a short nap during the night, but during the rest of the time you are not allowed to sleep, except for the sake of health, because sleep itself is an affliction, a habit that stops you from doing virtuous actions. When you fall asleep, all your senses also go to sleep, they stop working and your mind becomes very unclear, so you don't stay in meditation. When you meditate concentratedly and then all of a sudden sleep comes, it really harms you because it causes drowsiness. Drowsiness is an aspect of ignorance; it comes and hinders the meditation because, for meditation, you have to have a very clear mind which focuses on the object. So when drowsiness comes in your mind, your mind becomes unclear, it affects your meditation.

4. The fourth obstacle is excitement. Excitement is an aspect of attachment or, rather, desire. It disturbs you and makes it difficult for you to grasp the object of meditation firmly. Like a child that is naughty and always runs around and never stays quiet for long; when it comes, it disturbs the meditation and distracts from the object. For example, when our mind is focused on an object and something happens outside, our mind leaps up from the object of our concentration and goes to put its energy in the other object. Feeling self-important disturbs one's meditation whereas regret and lacking in self-confidence also hinder meditation. One has to keep a balance between these by understanding the faults, keeping continuously on guard. If one does not, then, like thieves, they will rob one of one's concentration.

[5. Doubt was not mentioned in the transcript. Ed.]

LTK and **MT** define the five obstacles as: "(1) excitedness and regret, (2) ill will, (3) drowsiness and languor, (4) sense-desire, (5) doubt."

LZR "Attachment to the five sense objects; harmful intent; sleep and foggy-mindedness; regret and agitation; doubt."

TT “(1) Trying to meditate, then being distracted by thoughts of good food and losing the object of meditation; regretting that one meditates on concentration and wanting to go study texts instead; (2) Being distracted by thoughts of anger towards others; (3) Falling asleep during meditation; meditating with very heavy body and heavy mind; (4) Being distracted by thoughts of the five sense objects; (5) If doubts come up during meditation, immediately consult a text or ask advice, for doubts harm one’s concentration.”

26. SEEKING THE BLISS OF MEDITATIVE ABSORPTION

Having gained firm meditative concentration due to guarding the mind well, one might get attached to the resulting good feelings, stop trying to develop further and not do the far more important work of developing the wisdom of emptiness and developing bodhicitta. Meditative absorption is not an end in itself but a means for further development.

DOWNFALLS 27–34: THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM

Wisdom is a mind that understands a perfect meaning, which helps a person to do good things; e.g. understanding emptiness, impermanence, etc. Negative knowledge is improper wisdom. Wisdom is a secondary mental factor and has as purpose to defeat improper wisdom. There are eight antidotes.

27. ABANDONING THE HINAYANA

A bodhisattva has to understand all the teachings, including Hinayana, in order to be able to lead the followers of Hinayana as well. By saying a bodhisattva does not need to study Hinayana, one commits this downfall.

TT “Saying a bodhisattva does not need the Hinayana teachings. A bodhisattva needs to study the shravaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles too.”

YG “Thinking it is not necessary for yourself to study and practice the teachings of the Small Vehicle and spreading this opinion to others.”

28. FAVORING HINAYANA STUDY AND PRACTICE OVER MAHAYANA

Considering Hinayana scriptures as more important than Mahayana scriptures.

TT “If you are first engaged in Mahayana practices, switching to Hinayana texts. This is different from root downfall #18 where you give up the mind of enlightenment by saying, ‘There are too many sentient beings. I cannot help them all. I will work for my own liberation.’”

YG “A bodhisattva has to actualize the Hinayana teachings, but should do it by integrating them into the Mahayana practices.”

MT “Studying the auditor’s vehicle to the exclusion of the bodhisattva collection of sutras.”

29. BEING DILIGENT ONLY IN NON-BUDDHIST TREATISES

A bodhisattva has to lead followers of other religions as well, but if he takes other paths as more important, he incurs this downfall.

LZR “Making unnecessary study of non-Buddhist scriptures, thus neglecting studying Buddha’s teachings. Although it is permitted and advantageous for understanding and helping others, you should not use excessive time and energy in studying non-Buddhist tenets.”

MT “Studying non-Buddhist arts and sciences to the exclusion of Buddhist.

30. TAKING DELIGHT IN THAT DILIGENCE

If you study other religions often and with great enthusiasm in place of your own Mahayana path, you commit this downfall.

LZR “Favoring, becoming attached to or cultivating interest in non-Buddhist teachings when you have to study them. You are

allowed to study non-Buddhist scriptures so that you can refute the wrong views, but instead of doing this, you become fond of these scriptures.”

MT “Overly enjoying what diligence in them is appropriate.”

31. ABANDONING THE MAHAYANA

When studying Mahayana scriptures on emptiness, if you get the misconception that everything is non-existent and you get discouraged and give up the Mahayana practices, you commit this downfall. This is the same as the root vow, but it differs in that it is not combined with all the aggravating factors.

LZR “Casting aspersion on Mahayana teachings, the guru, or the subject, e.g. saying a scripture is poor in subject matter, composition, power to help sentient beings or that the subject is boring.”

TT “When studying Mahayana scriptures, rejecting them, saying they are not well-composed, etc. The difference with root downfall #4 is that in #4, one says, ‘such and such Mahayana teaching was not taught by the Buddha.’ With the present downfall, one is not saying that.”

YG “The difference with root downfall #6 (abandoning Dharma) is that, here, one abandons the profound, whereas in the [fourth] root downfall (abandoning the Mahayana), one abandons the whole Mahayana.”

32. PRAISING ONESELF AND BELITTLING OTHERS

The action is the same as in the first root downfall, but without the aggravating factors.

LZR “Praising oneself and belittling others, out of anger or arrogance.”

TT “In the first root downfall, one does it out of desire for gifts and respect, whereas here out of hatred or arrogance.”

33. AVOIDING DHARMA ACTIVITIES

If there are many people going to a particular lama's teachings, but, due to arrogance, one does not attend, one commits this downfall.

Q: Is not going to teachings out of laziness included in this downfall?

A: It is not mentioned in this text. We have to be careful with these many precepts. Another text by Lama Tsong Khapa, *The Main Path to Enlightenment (Jang chub Zhu nam ?)*, also gives explanations. All the different texts relate to the original explanation by Candragomin in his *Twenty Stanzas*. There it is explained that the forty-six downfalls arise out of arrogance, pride, and so forth. If one does not attend a teaching due to sickness, it is not a transgression, as the Buddha in his lifetime gave many exemptions to people who were ill.

But Lama Tsong Khapa says that if a healthy student does not attend teachings, knowing that the teacher is qualified, he commits a downfall.”

LZR “Not going to Dharma discourses, debates, discussions, pujas or ceremonies, due to arrogance, laziness, anger.”

GND, TT “Out of pride or laziness, not bothering to go to teachings, pujas, ceremonies, etc.”

34. DEPRECATING YOUR TEACHER AND RELYING ON HIS WORDS ONLY

Out of arrogance not going to a particular lama's teaching and then adding insult by saying that his teachings are not profound.

TT “Not relying on the meaning of your teacher's words but only on his words. This, e.g. in the case the lama does not express himself well.”

LZR “Not respecting but abusing the guru who gives teachings and shows the Path, seeking only his words without contemplating their meaning.”

YG “Despising your teacher; not considering him as a master: refusing to think that he is the Enlightened One; not showing respect

to him by making prostrations; having an arrogant attitude towards him; speaking to him impolitely; attaching much importance to the way he expresses himself and preferring the beauty of his language to the meaning of his words. In short, refusing to take heed of poorly expressed words with correct meaning and rather paying attention to nicely phrased but incorrect words.”

Downfalls 35–46 are the opposites of the third type of morality, Benefiting Sentient Being. Generally speaking, bodhisattvas have to benefit all sentient beings in every way possible. Bodhisattvas help other beings in ways that cannot easily be understood.

35. NOT HELPING THOSE IN NEED

A bodhisattva has to give help to any person, low or high, that needs help. If he does not give it when the other person needs it, then he commits the thirty-five downfall.

Asanga in *Bodhisattvabhumi* “Establishing what beings require, being a traveling companion, providing employment, guarding property, reconciling differences and meritorious deeds.

LZR “Although being able to, not helping sentient beings in need of help. Eight examples are given: (1) not helping someone doing purposeful work, who asks for help and you make excuses or you are lazy; (2) not helping someone making a journey, who needs help carrying things or for protection, due to laziness; (3) not teaching language and Dharma, if asked; (4) not doing work which may not be Dharma, but which concerns Dharma, when asked; (5) not helping protect another’s possessions if you have the time and ability, when asked; (6) not unifying a couple, if asked; (7) not going to a meal, if you have the time and ability, if you are asked; (8) not going, if invited, to create merits, such as to a puja, if you have the time and ability.”

TT “E.g. helping to travel, helping to give protection from thieves, helping a stranger in your country who does not speak your language; advising someone who in his work has to kill many animals

(fishermen, farmers) to do other work, e.g. in a factory, where he would not need to kill many beings.”

YG “There is no wrongdoing in the following cases: if one is sick or incapacitated; if one has promised to give help but has ordered someone else to do it; if one is engaged in more important virtuous actions; if one is not aware of the necessity to help or one is unable because of not knowing the Doctrine well enough. From the point of view of the action: when it would have a negative effect or be in conflict with the Dharma. From the point of view of the intention: if one wishes to discipline someone by refusing help; if a significant number of persons would take offence; if sangha rules prohibit the action.”

Q: Do we have to give to all beggars?

TT “No, but if they are blind or missing limbs, it is good to give them something. But if you were to give all your money today, tomorrow they would be clamoring for more – they have much greed. If you don’t give because of miserliness, many faults arise. If you don’t give because giving would only increase their craving, there is no downfall.”

36. REFUSING TO SERVE THE SICK

If a bodhisattva does not help or rather does not serve a sick person in need of help, he commits the thirty-sixth downfall.

For example, the sick person might be needing financial help, food or clothing. In such cases, the bodhisattva has to offer help to the other person. Or the sick person might need other kinds of help, might need a nurse. Then too, the bodhisattva has to offer assistance. If out of anger, arrogance, pride of his knowledge or out of miserliness, he does not offer the help that is needed, the bodhisattva incurs this downfall. However, there are exceptions.

If the bodhisattva is sick himself and is therefore unable to help, if he does not have enough money, if it would disturb his practice, in such cases the bodhisattva gets exempted and does not commit a

downfall. You should apply these exceptions to all twelve downfalls related to the morality of helping others.

37. NOT ACTING TO REMOVE SUFFERING

If a person has great difficulties and a bodhisattva sees this and he is in a position to help this person, but does not do it, then he incurs the thirty-seventh downfall. It is explained in the text that if the bodhisattva does not have the ability to alleviate the other person's problem he does not incur the downfall by not helping.

LZR “Not working to alleviate the suffering of others out of anger, laziness or negligence. One sees their suffering but avoids finding ways to eliminate it. E.g. the blind, deaf, paralyzed or with limbs missing, respiratory problems, travelers on a difficult journey, people having the five obstacles (cf. #25), the mentally distressed, paranoid, people who have lost their authority or position, who have been abused by others.”

38. NOT SHOWING THE RIGHT PATH TO THE CARELESS

The beings in cyclic existence have different mental dispositions. Many of these people – in fact all of us – live without concern for ourselves or for the future and we waste our time. We are always careless, so we commit a lot of negative actions whose result we have to suffer in the future. Seeing these problems, these faults of the sentient beings, a bodhisattva should use skillful means to put them on the right path, to stop them from engaging in wrong paths and doing non-virtuous actions.

But in doing that, the bodhisattva has to see what kind of method will suit the other person most. If the bodhisattva uses a method that is wrong for the other person, he also commits the 38th downfall. For example, if he uses wrathful ways in order to put a person on the right path, while wrathful methods are not suitable for that person, instead of helping him, it harms the other person, so that is the 38th downfall. The bodhisattva should only use wrathful ways if these are suitable for the other person. And if peaceful means are more

suitable for the other person, you have to use peaceful means. You should always be very skillful.

LZR “Through anger or laziness, not exhorting, correcting or activating a lazy person or a person who does not know virtuous from non-virtuous actions. If you see a person engaging in frivolous activities, you should give timely advice in appropriate situations and under proper circumstances so that they eliminate those actions and engage in virtue.”

MT “Not correcting those upon a wrong course, for this is the cause of suffering.”

TT “This downfall is similar to 16. The difference is that downfall 16 concerns the beings’ inner world, their delusions, while 38 concerns their outer behavior.”

39. NOT REPAYING KINDNESS

In the world in general, people feel that if somebody helps them, they have to repay that kindness. This is same in the context of religion. A religious person should repay all those who have helped them out of kindness. For example, your spiritual teacher has shown you the greatest kindness of all by teaching you the Dharma. So you should try to repay his kindness.

A bodhisattva considers that all sentient beings equaling space have been his mother at one time or another, in this life or in a previous life. Therefore it is definite that all sentient beings have shown him great kindness and this kindness should be repaid.

With these reasons in mind, a bodhisattva should always make efforts to help other sentient beings in order to repay the kindness they have shown to him in the past. If he does not do that, he commits the 39th misconduct.

LZR “Through anger or laziness, not repaying the kindness of someone who has helped you materially or morally.”

TT “You don’t have to repay a person’s kindness immediately, although that is best. If you don’t repay a person’s kindness because you never meet the person again, there is no downfall.”

GND “Not repaying the kindness which others have shown to you because of harmful intent, laziness or non-conscientiousness.”

40. NOT CONSOLING DISTRESSED PERSONS

In our society, it is customary to console a friend when he has lost someone dear to him or if something bad has happened to him and he is greatly depressed. From a religious point of view, too, we should do that. Bodhisattvas, in particular, should console, encourage and inspire all beings, whether they are relatives or not, whether they are friends or not. They should console anybody who is depressed or unhappy and give inspiration to them. They should advise such persons by saying things like, “These problems will happen to all people in this world. Difficulties will come, but will also go away. And in the future, you will gradually get happy again; there is no point in worrying.”

If a bodhisattva does not console distressed persons, he commits the 40th downfall.

LZR “Through harmful intent or laziness, not consoling those who are grieving from separation from their dear ones or possessions.”

41. NOT GIVING TO THOSE WHO SEEK CHARITY

If a poor man approaches you asking for food, clothes, money or anything else, once you have taken the bodhisattva vow, it is your duty to satisfy him and give him what he is asking from you. There are exceptions, e.g. if you do not have the thing the person is asking for or if the other person has bad intentions. For example, he might ask for poison in order to commit suicide.

In such a case you should not give him what he asks for because instead of helping him it would harm him. In the same way, somebody might come and ask you for a knife or a gun in order to kill someone else. If you suspect something like that, you should check up before giving the requested object. Only if you are satisfied the requested object will be put to good use, you can give it to him.

LZR “Through harmful intent or sluggishness, not giving food, clothes and other necessities to the poor and needy if you are asked and you have spare.” **TT** “Root downfall 2 concerns destitute people who really need your help. This secondary downfall concerns those who are not necessarily poor. E.g. someone asks you for food. If he does not have any food and you do not give, you commit a root downfall. If the other has food, but just does not know how to prepare it and therefore asks you for food and you do not give, it is a secondary downfall.”

42. NOT WORKING FOR THE WELFARE OF FOLLOWERS

If you have many followers, disciples, who depend on you not only spiritually but also materially – for food, clothing and shelter – then it is your responsibility as a bodhisattva to help them, to look after them and give them food, clothing and religious teachings, whatever they want to get from you. If you do not do that, you commit the 42nd downfall. But, as we have explained before, if you do not have the resources to help them, you do not incur the downfall.

LZR “Through hatred or laziness, not working for the welfare of your disciples and attendants by not giving them spiritual teachings or material help.”

43. NOT BEHAVING SOCIABLY

A bodhisattva should always try to behave in such a way that he does not make enemies and he does not make anybody unhappy or angry. He should always try to act in such a way as to please his friends and the people surrounding him. If he behaves badly and makes enemies or makes other people unhappy or angry, then he commits the 43rd downfall.

LZR “Being self-assertive, not considering and acting according to others’ wishes and feelings. Within your capabilities, not acting according to their mental disposition. Capabilities depend on one’s level of mind and differ for each individual. If one has actualized

bodhicitta, it is difficult not to transform negative actions of body and speech into virtue.

But one cannot do such actions if one's own mind isn't capable, even though others may wish one to. But we can do small actions according to others' minds, e.g. minding our manners. We please them as a way to encourage them in the Dharma. Examples of transgressions are: if one is with Dharma practitioners and one lies down and has a comfortable life without being concerned with others; or if one is with worldly people, using manners that may cause them to be angry or lose devotion."

TT "You should be agreeable, in harmony, with those who live with you."

44. NOT PRAISING THE GOOD QUALITIES OF OTHERS

You should praise others for their good qualities, such as knowledge, great scholarship, architectural skills, skill in making Buddha statues and so forth. If the other person really has those qualities, then you should praise him in front of other people. This will please him and encourage him to accumulate merits. If you do not do that, you incur the 44th downfall.

TT "If there is a danger of the other person's pride being inflated, it is okay not to say anything. If a virtuous person is slandered or unfairly abused in your presence and you do not say anything, you also commit this downfall."

45. NOT TAKING WRATHFUL ACTION WHEN APPROPRIATE

Up to this point, the precepts are setting out various peaceful ways in which the bodhisattva strives to help other sentient beings. The last two precepts or downfalls concern violent or wrathful ways in which bodhisattvas may help other sentient beings.

There are sometimes problems in a society that cannot be solved by peaceful means. If such problems exist in the society where a bodhisattva is living and he has a position of power, for example he is

the president of that country, then it is his responsibility to help the sentient beings by appropriate means.

If peaceful means would be useless, he has to take strong action against the person who causes the problem for the people of his country. This could mean denouncing him in public, imprisoning him for life or executing him. In short, he should take suitably rough actions so that the society is protected from those who would cause serious troubles.

If he does not use his power at the right time and does not take action against such persons, he commits the forty-fifth downfall.

LZR: “Not preventing those doing harmful actions from continuing their actions by whatever means are necessary according to the circumstances. The boastful may need to be looked down upon; the violent punished physically; those harmful to a society banished; abbots and disciplinarians should punish, expel, or reprimand a monk who is misbehaving. If you do not take such actions while you have the authority to do so, out of laziness, attachment to the harm-doer or because you do not care about him or the ones he is banning, you commit the forty-fifth downfall.”

46. IN WRATHFUL ACTIONS, NOT USING PSYCHIC POWERS

If a bodhisattva has attained high tantric powers, supernatural powers and is able, for example, to transfer a person directly to a pure land after having killed him, if he does not use his supernatural powers when they would be required to help other sentient beings, he incurs the 46th downfall. Rather, he should use his supernatural powers in wrathful ways, to help others.

LZR “If you possess psychic powers, not using them in a time of need, such as to frighten someone who is about to do non-virtue, so that he will stop, to enhance others’ faith or to subdue them.”

YG “Not using supernatural powers – if you possess them – to discipline beings who threaten the Doctrine and to instill a wholesome aspiration in them.”

So with this, we have finished with the eighteen root downfalls and the forty-six secondary downfalls of a bodhisattva.

Some texts also mention four white and four black actions or “dharma.” However, as they are not extensively explained in all the texts, I will not explain them here and we will end here our discussion of the bodhisattva precepts.

TT “Pratimoksha vows cease at death, but if you keep the bodhisattva vow well, it carries into the next life. To remember the bodhisattva vow in your next life, you should avoid the four black dharmas and practice the four white dharmas.”

THE FOUR BLACK DHARMAS

1. TT “Lying to your guru and to your benefactors.”

LZR “Knowingly confusing your abbot, guru, or other holy beings with lies. E.g. your guru tells you to do something and you change the subject or you do not tell him about a negative action you did, so that he does not feel badly about you.”

2. TT “Making others regret their virtuous actions, e.g. if they practice the lower vehicle, saying, ‘You have wasted your time, you should practice Mahayana.’ Or if someone spends much time reciting Mani, saying they waste their time, causing them to regret their actions.”

LZR “Discouraging others from practicing virtuous actions or causing them to regret ones they did, e.g. someone is renouncing this life and you say, ‘That is good, but it is difficult to keep doing that practice.’ You cause him to have doubts about doing virtuous actions. Even if he does not regret his virtue, [what] you are encouraging him to [do] is a black dharma.”

3. TT “Becoming angry or speaking harshly to a bodhisattva.”

LZR “Abusing bodhisattvas out of anger. Whether he possesses that trait or not, if your words are heard by others it is a transgression.”

4. TT “Dissimulation (hiding your shortcomings) and deceit (pretending to have qualities you don’t have).”

LZR “Putting on an air of having a selfless thought, but having ulterior motives other than the pure wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, e.g. you pretend to be a scholar or conceal your own shortcomings.”

THE FOUR WHITE DHARMAS

1. TT “Not telling lies to anyone, not even in jest.”

LZR “Abandon consciously lying to all sentient beings, even at the cost of your life or for laughter’s sake.”

2. TT: “Not deceiving any sentient being.”

LZR “Have an unbiased attitude to all sentient beings.”

3. TT “Recognizing all beings as bodhisattvas and buddhas.”

LZR “Abandon criticizing bodhisattvas. Since we do not know who is a bodhisattva, it is best to treat all sentient beings as bodhisattvas and buddhas.”

4. TT “Encouraging other beings to follow only Mahayana. If you have influence over someone, advise them to follow Mahayana, develop bodhicitta.”

LZR “Take the responsibility yourself to establish all sentient beings in the Mahayana path by: a. enthusing them in Mahayana. Even if we are not successful, we must try to do this. b. never being jealous of someone trying to attain enlightenment, rather, rejoicing in their virtue. c. cultivating love and compassion in all actions.”

TT “White dharma 1 is the opponent of black dharma 1.
White dharma 2 is the opponent of black dharma 4.
White dharma 3 is the opponent of black dharma 3.
White dharma 4 is the opponent of black dharma 2.”

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q: How about if strong regret arises not immediately following the action, but one day after having done it’?

A: That is too late because for the action to become the root downfall, all the four aggravating factors have already been assembled on the first day, when you killed the flea. So the action is already complete, it has already become one of the root downfalls. But regretting your action the day after having done it will make it a little bit lighter.

Q: Rinpoche explained that a bodhisattva is someone who has bodhicitta and bodhicitta is when you have the uninterrupted intense wish to gain enlightenment for the sake of others. But here it talks about a bodhisattva acting out of anger. That sounds contradictory.

A: That is a very good question. When somebody is a bodhisattva it is not necessary that he should have bodhicitta manifesting in him 24 hours a day. For example, when he is eating food, when he is sleeping or when he is engaged in meditative absorption on emptiness, he might not have bodhicitta manifested within him.

This is also explained in the practical texts like the Lam Rim. Before going into a retreat or into a meditation on, for example, emptiness or calm abiding, you first have to develop the bodhicitta motivation. During the actual meditation on emptiness, you will not manifest bodhicitta. The mind which perceives emptiness during the meditation, although it does not arise simultaneously with bodhicitta, is sealed by the mind of bodhicitta because you have already meditated on bodhicitta beforehand. So this is an example where you have not maintained bodhicitta manifest, and what is manifest is the object of the meditation, emptiness. So a bodhisattva

need not manifest bodhicitta 24 hours a day. Bodhicitta does develop in time but during the early stages it will manifest very seldom.

Q: So what defines him as a bodhisattva, what is the bottom line definition of a bodhisattva?

A: A bodhisattva is defined as a person who has generated the non-artificial bodhicitta in his mind, i.e. a genuine and strong wish to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others. At the earlier stages of generating bodhicitta, it is not spontaneous. But if you make an effort to get acquainted with this mind again and again, then after some time this mind becomes spontaneous. Bodhicitta is non-artificial when it arises spontaneously, without effort. When the person has generated this, he has become a bodhisattva; he has entered the Mahayana path; he has become a son of the Victors – all these terms are used for such a person.

But he will not always manifest this mind. Sometimes this mind will recede to the level of mental imprints or go to sleep. But the important thing is, the mind should not be allowed to degenerate. If, by certain bad circumstances, a bodhisattva completely degenerates his bodhicitta, then he becomes, once again, like ordinary people, without genuine love, without the desire to attain enlightenment for the benefit of others and he is no longer a bodhisattva. But if he develops the genuine wish to gain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings, then he is a bodhisattva, even during the times when he does not manifest this mind.

Another example is the mind that takes refuge in the Triple Gem. When we actually concentrate on refuge, this mind is manifested in our continuum. But when we think of something else, this mind will give way to the other mind. At that time, the mind which takes refuge in the Triple Gem has not been kicked out or eliminated; it is in a state of imprint and can reappear when you want to think of it, when you once again take refuge. It is similar with anger. We are sometimes angry but the anger will not stay in our mind all the time – sometimes it will subside while other minds appear, some virtuous,

others non-virtuous. We always have anger, but sometimes anger is in the form of imprints in our continuum, sometimes it is in the manifest form. So in the same way, bodhicitta sometimes comes in a manifest form, sometimes it stays in the form of an imprint.

10. THE FACTORS INVOLVED IN BREAKING THE VOWS

KIRTI TSENSHAB RINPOCHE

THE FOUR AGGRAVATING FACTORS

The eighteen root downfalls are strongly related to the frame of mind which you have before and during these actions. If you have a certain frame of mind while doing the action then you commit a downfall.

But in some cases, even if you have done the action, but you have not generated the right kind of motivation, you do not incur the downfall. In order to clarify this, we will discuss the four aggravating factors (kun dkris bzhi; “the four complete entanglements”). The term “kun dkris bzhi” means the four things that bind completely, that entangle completely.

[You can also translate it more literally as the “four binding factors”. Ed.]

We know that the first of the eighteen root downfalls is praising oneself and belittling others. For this to become a downfall, you need to have all four aggravating factors accompanying the action. If the four aggravating factors do not all accompany the action, it does not become a root downfall.

1. The first of these four aggravating factors is **not being aware of the disadvantages of the action** which you are about to do or which you are doing.

LZR “Knowing one is breaking a vow but not caring, because one lacks faith in karma and thinks doing a negative action does not matter. Also, due to ignorance, one may not think the action is negative and so acts contrary to the vow. Recognizing the action is negative makes the transgression incomplete.”

2. The second aggravating factor is **not wanting to refrain from it**.

LZR “Wishing to act like this in the future. Even after doing a non-virtuous action, one desires to do it again. Thinking, ‘I should not do this again,’ makes the transgression incomplete.”

3. The third aggravating factor is **to rejoice in the action**. In the case of praising yourself, if you are not aware of the faults of praising yourself, you might get attached to it, you might enjoy it and want to do it again in the future. In this case, all first three aggravating factors are present: not seeing the action as faulty, not wanting to abandon the action in the future and rejoicing in it.

When you are aware of it being a fault but still rejoice in it and want to praise yourself again, then the second and third factors are present, but not the first one.

LZR “Being pleased or satisfied, or having admiration for having done that action. For example, one commits the first downfall and then thinks, ‘How good it was that I could show off my good qualities.’ Feeling upset or regretting that action makes the transgression incomplete.”

4. The fourth aggravating factor is **having neither shame nor embarrassment**. These two are quite similar. The difference is that shame is felt in regard to oneself, while embarrassment is felt in relation to others. For example, if you praise yourself and you don’t have any self-consciousness, then you have no shame; if you don’t care what others might think of you, then you have no consideration or embarrassment.

[Jeffrey Hopkins in *Meditation on Emptiness*: “Non-shame (ahrikyā; ngo tsha med pa) is a non-avoidance of faults from the viewpoint of one’s own disapproval or of religious prohibition. It can involve desire, hatred, and ignorance and has the function of assisting all root afflictions and secondary afflictions. For example, if a monk, when encountering an intoxicant, did not avoid drinking it,

thinking, ‘This is something I should not do,’ he would have the mental factor of non-shame. Non-embarrassment (anapatrapya; khrel med pa) is non-avoidance of faults from the viewpoint of another’s disapproval. It can involve desire, hatred and ignorance and has the function of assisting all root afflictions and secondary afflictions. If one does not avoid faults thinking that the Teacher Buddha and clairvoyant gods would be disturbed and others would criticize oneself, one would have non-embarrassment. It and non-shame assist all afflictions and act as causes of all faults, for without a wish to avoid faults, one cannot keep from them. Thus, these two mental factors are said to accompany all non-virtuous minds.”]

SIXTEEN OF THE EIGHTEEN NEED ALL FOUR FACTORS PRESENT

For sixteen of the eighteen root downfalls to occur, it is necessary to have all four aggravating factors present.

TWO DON’T REQUIRE THESE FACTORS IN ORDER TO BREAK THEM

However, for two of the downfalls it is not necessary: 9. having wrong views, and 18, giving up your bodhicitta. These two actions are so heavy in themselves that for them to become a root downfall, the presence of the four aggravating factors is not necessary.

If the four factors are present with these two downfalls, then the action becomes without doubt very heavy, but even without all four factors, these two actions are heavy in themselves, unlike the other 16 root downfalls.

If you praise yourself and don’t consider it as a wrong action, then that is the first aggravating factor. If you want to praise yourself again in the future, that is the second factor. If you rejoice in praising yourself, then you have the third aggravating factor; and if you are not ashamed of the action and don’t care what others might think of you because of it, then that is the fourth factor. If you have all four,

then you have committed the first of the 18 root downfalls. But if one of the four factors is missing, then you have not committed the first root downfall.

The four aggravating factors help to make the downfall into a very heavy non-virtuous action. If one of these factors is missing, the downfall becomes a little less non-virtuous. It will still be a non-virtuous action close to root downfall, but not an actual root downfall because it is not combined with all four aggravating factors. If two are missing, it becomes still less non-virtuous. If there is only one aggravating factor, it becomes quite light. And if there is none of the four aggravating factors, then the action is not heavy at all.

If we explain it through yet another example, if a flea bites us and we are so provoked that we just kill it without thinking, without knowing the fault of killing the flea, then we have created the first of the four aggravating factors. And if we still want to kill other fleas that will bite us in the future, if we are prepared to do that, then we commit the second one. If we are happy to have killed the flea that disturbed us, then the third is also complete and if you have no shame and don't care what others might think of you for having killed the flea, then the fourth condition is also fulfilled. In that case the action of killing a flea becomes very heavy and very negative.

If you are aware of the fault of killing the flea, but since you are so angry and so much provoked that you forget everything and you just kill the flea, as soon as you have killed it, you become self-conscious and you regret your action and you think, "I am not going to do it again in the future, I will be more tolerant and more patient," then the negative action is much lighter.

If the action is combined with three or less of these factors or none at all, it becomes a secondary downfall. This applies to all 16 root downfalls that need the four aggravating factors – as soon as one of the factors is missing, they become secondary downfalls. It can be compared with rules of discipline in a school. Breaking the more important rules would cause one to be expelled from the school,

whereas infraction of the lesser rules- would be sanctioned by a small punishment. It is similar with the disciplinary rules of a bodhisattva.

This all shows the great skill of the Buddha in leading and helping sentient beings. Had he just made very difficult sets of disciplinary rules, saying “You must not transgress any of these,” it would have been very difficult for all of the students to follow the rules. So he made many different levels of discipline, where some are easier to adhere to and some are more difficult to follow. If you go step by step, practicing what is easier first and what is more difficult later, then you will gradually get acquainted and, as you go on, even the more difficult disciplines become easier.

PART FIVE
VARIOUS DAILY PRAYERS & PRACTICES

11. START THE DAY WITH WATER BOWL OFFERINGS

Set up an altar – a surface not lower than the waist, consisting of representations of the body, speech and mind of the Buddha: a statue or picture; a Dharma book; a stupa (or a picture of one). It should not be where one points one feet.

As a daily practice, it is excellent to start the day by making offerings to the Buddha, imagining that he is oneness with the mind of your lama. Thinking this way brings them into your presence, so have confidence that they are there. You want to make offerings to them as your special invited guests.

First make three prostrations while reciting the mantra OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE, NAMO SUSHRIAY, NAMO UTTAMA SHRIYE SOHA.

Choose containers – bowls or glasses, for example – that are beautiful and of best quality, something you'd offer the guru if he came to visit.

If the bowls are full from yesterday, empty them nicely and get rid of the water in a clean place (not down the drain), making sure not to spill it or put it where people will walk – it's blessed. Have a pitcher and cloths especially for this purpose.

Wipe each bowl very clean and put them upside down on the altar – it's inauspicious to have an empty bowl there, it's like offering nothing.

Start from the Buddha's right, our left. Pour some water into the first bowl, then pour nearly all of it into the next bowl until you've got them all lined up nicely with a little bit of water in each. Lay them out neatly in a row, not more than the width of a rice grain of space between each.

Once the bowls are arranged nicely, pick up the pitcher and fill each bowl.

As you pour the first one, all the way to the top – be generous – you would say

OM ARGHAM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM,

until it's full. (This one is nectar for drinking)

Continue reciting the mantra and visualizing each offering as you say, imagining the offering multiplying infinitely.

Then the rest:

OM PADYAM AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (water for washing)

OM PUPAY AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (flowers)

OM DUPAY AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (incense)

OM ALOKAY AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (light)

OM GENDAY AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (perfume)

OM NIUDAY AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (food)

OM SHAPTA AH HUM, OM AH HUM, OM AH HUM (music)

Imagine each offering as huge and magnificent. And imagine that the Guru Budhda – your lama as the Buddha himself – happily receives them.

Remember to dedicate your virtue to the welfare of all beings with the wish that they be free of suffering and attain enlightenment.

Then multiply the offerings by reciting three times:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE BENDZAY SARWAPARMA DANA TATHAGATAYA
ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA TAYATA OM BENDZAY BENDZAY MAHA
BENDZAY MAHA TAYDZA BENDZAY MAHA BIDYA BENDZAY MAHA
BODHICITTA BENDZAY MAHA BODHI MENDO PASAM KRAMANA BENDZAY
SARWA KARMA AWARANA BISHO DANA BENDZAY SOHA

And, finally, recite the *Prayer of the Power of the Truth*:

By the power of the truth of the Three Rare Sublime Ones,
The blessings of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas,
The great wealth of completed two collections,
And the sphere of phenomena being inconceivable and pure
May these piles of clouds of offerings,
Arising through transforming through Arya Samantabhadra,
Manjushri and so forth – unimaginable, inexhaustible,
equaling the sky – arise,
And in the eyes of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten
directions be received.

Source: Robina Courtin; from instructions of Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

12. DAILY PRAYER FOR REFUGE AND FOR PURIFYING AND RENEWING BODHISATTVA VOWS

1. DAILY COMMITMENT, MORNING AND NIGHT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

By the merits I create by listening to the Dharma

May I reach Buddhahood so as to benefit all sentient beings!

2. DAILY COMMITMENT, MORNING AND NIGHT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE TAKEN THE BODHISATTVA VOWS (WHICH ALSO INCLUDES REFUGE)

PRAYER FOR PURIFYING AND STRENGTHENING BODHISATTVA VOWS

I go for refuge to the Triple Gem.

I confess individually all my negativities.

I rejoice in the merit of all living beings.

I take hold with the mind the perfect state of Buddha.

I go for refuge until my enlightenment to the Buddha, Dharma and Supreme Sangha Assembly and I do so to attain the enlightened mind.

In order to fulfill the aims of myself and others

I shall develop a supreme enlightened motive,

And towards all dear beings, my invited guests, I shall act in supreme enlightened conduct.

May I become Buddha to benefit all.

13. BLESS YOUR SPEECH

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Blessing the Speech has these four benefits:

- a) Your speech becomes perfect,*
- b) Whatever you recite is multiplied ten million times,*
- c) All your speech will become the recitation of mantra, even gossiping,*
- d) The power of your speech will not be taken away by eating wrong foods. According to the lower tantras eating garlic takes away the power of the speech for seven days, onion five days, radish nine days, nettle half a year, animal tongue (tser-pa) the whole life. These foods harm the power of mantra as well as eating the flesh of foolish animals such as sheep.*

REFUGE

KÖN-CHOG SUM-LA KYAB-SU-CHI

I take refuge in the Three Jewels

DRO-LA PÄN-CHIR SANG-GYÄ SHOG (3X)

May I become a buddha to benefit all. (3x)

First, purify the truly existent I into emptiness, as it is empty in reality. Then the wisdom seeing emptiness experiences infinite bliss. You can also think the wisdom experiencing bliss is nondual with emptiness.

Then arise as the deity [if you have received an empowerment to do so].

On your tongue, the syllable AH transforms into a moon disc.

On top of that appears a white OM syllable surrounded by white ALI (vowels) circling clockwise, red KALI (consonants) circling counterclockwise, and the blue Dependent-Related Heart Mantra

circling clockwise.

Light beams radiate out from the syllables and the garland of mantras and hook the blessings and power of both mundane and supramundane speech in the form of the three mantras, the sublime seven precious royal symbols, and the eight auspicious signs.

This includes the power of speech (from beyond samsara) of the buddhas, arya bodhisattvas, those living in the three pure bhumis, and arhats, as well as the power of speech (from not beyond samsara) of those who are engaged in the path, and also those sages who have achieved the power of words, who have actualized the words of truth, and who have great power in their speech. Due to the power of abiding in silence, of living in the morality of abstaining from the negative karma of speech, the words of those sages have so much power. Whatever they pray, it brings success. All the blessing powers of the holy speech – from those who are beyond samsara and those who are not beyond – are hooked in the aspect of the three mantras, the seven precious objects of the kings' reign, and the eight auspicious signs, and are then absorbed. Think that the whole sky is filled with these together with the mantras and they are absorbed into the mantras on your tongue.

ALI (VOWELS)

As you recite the vowels, white nectar flows down from the mantra and fills your entire body, completely purifying all the negative karma collected with the body.

OM A AA I II U UU RI RII LI LII E AI O AU AM AH SVAHA (3x)

KALI (CONSONANTS)

As you recite the consonants, red nectar beams flow down from the mantra and fill your whole body, purifying all the negative karma collected with the speech from beginningless rebirths.

OM KA KHA GA GHA NGA / CHA CHHA JA JHA NYA / TA THA DA DHA NA /
TA THA DA DHA NA / PA PHA BA BHA MA / YA RA LA VA / SHA SHA SA HA
KSHA SVAHA (3X)

DEPENDENT-RELATED HEART MANTRA

As you recite the mantra, blue nectar beams flow down from the mantra and fill your whole body, completely purifying all the negative karma collected with your mind.

OM YE DHARMA HETU PRABHAVA HETUN TESHAN TATHAGATO
HYAVADAT TESHAN CHA YO [TINY PAUSE] NIRODHA EVAM VADI MAHA
SHRAMANA YE SVAHA (3X)

Then the dependent-related heart mantra, the consonants, the vowels, the OM, and the moon disk dissolve into each other, one by one. The moon disk transforms into an AH syllable, which transforms into pink-colored nectar and dissolves into your tongue. It becomes of vajra nature.

The tongue becomes of indestructible vajra nature. Nothing can harm, take away, or destroy the power of mantra, such as black foods. Then, generate very strong faith that all the power and blessings of the speech of all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, sages, yogis, and so on, have entered your speech and that your speech is perfected. Think: “I have perfected my speech.” The minute that sentient beings hear your speech, it pacifies their emotional and disturbing thoughts and whatever you say gets actualized; they do what you say.

BENEFITS OF BLESSING THE SPEECH

By thinking in this way, the power of your speech becomes marvelous and whatever you recite is multiplied by ten million times. Your speech will not become like gossip. By the power of the mantras, the power of your speech will not be snatched by eating. (2)

DEDICATION PRAYER

May my tongue have all the courage of the ones gone to bliss.
By the power manifesting from these glorified words,
May all sentient beings be subdued,
Whatever words I say, may all these actions be accomplished
instantly.

6. MANTRA FOR BLESSING THE MALA

OM RUCHIRA MANI PRAVARTAYA HUM (7X)

Recite seven times, then blow on the mala. This increases the power of the mantras you recite over one sextillion times (ten million times one billion). This is from *The Sutra Unfathomable Celestial Mansion, Great Increasing Jewel*.

Blessing the Speech: extracted from The Collection of Cherished Recitations Such as Lamäi Näljor and Sadhanas of Different Deities, Etc., Tibetan Cultural Printing Press, 1987. Translated from the Tibetan by Geshe Thubten Sherab. It has been rearranged with additions as per advice from Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Additions to the original text are italicized and in brackets. Compiled and edited by Kendall Magnussen and Venerable Sarah Thresher, January 2003. Updated by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Services, December 2005. Lightly edited by Merry Colony and Tom Truty, 2013.

14. RECITE MANTRAS FOR CREATING MERIT

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

MANTRA TO INCREASE VIRTUE

Reciting this mantra increases the merit of any virtuous action done with body, speech or mind of the day 100,000 times. This is according to The Sutra of the Wheel of Complete Dedication.

OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA BIMANA SARA MAHA JAVA HUM /OM SMARA
SMARA BIMANA SKARA MAHA JAVA HUM (7X)

ZUNG OF THE EXALTED COMPLETELY PURE STAINLESS LIGHT

Anyone who talks to a person who has recited this mantra, their five uninterrupted negative karmas are purified. Just hearing the voice of a person who has recited this mantra, being touched by their shadow, or touching that person's body purifies negative karmas collected in past lives. If you recite this mantra, you won't be harmed by spirit possession, poisons, or by the elements [fire, water, air, and earth]. All the buddhas will protect you and guide you and all the devas and those who are living in samaya will support you. You won't be harmed by black magic mantras and rituals. If this mantra is put inside a stupa then any being, including evil transmigratory beings who sees the stupa, hears of the stupa, touches the stupa, or who is touched by dust or wind that comes from this stupa, will be free from all negative karmas. They will be born in the realms of happy transmigratory beings and they won't be reborn in the lower realms. For more on this mantra, please see fpmt.org/education/teachings/texts/mantras.

NAMA NAWA NAWA TEENEN TATHAAGATA GANGA NAM DIVA LUKAA NEN
/ KOTINI YUTA SHATA SAHA SRAA NEN / OM VOVORI / TSARI NI* TSARI /
MORI GOLI TSALA WAARI SVAHA (A FEW TIMES) *indicates a high tone.

MANTRA TAUGHT BY BUDDHA DRODEN GYÄLWA CHÖ

It is said by the Victorious One, the Buddha, Drogen Gyälwa Chhö: “By having recited this mantra, if you make one stupa or tsa-tsa, you receive the merit of having made ten million stupas or tsa-tsas. By having recited this mantra, if you touch any of the four elements [earth, fire, water, air] those elements are blessed two times the power of a stupa, and anyone who sees you or touches you is purified of the five uninterrupted negative karmas, and they will be born in a higher caste. By having recited this mantra you will have long life, be purified of the five uninterrupted negative karmas, have wealth, and will remember past lives. You will be protected from all harm and become enlightened.” For more on this mantra, please see fpmt.org/education/teachings/texts/mantras

OM HRI YA DHE SARVA TATHAAGATA HRIDAYA GARBE / ZOLA DHARMA
DHATU GARBE / SANG HARANA AYU SANGSHODHAYA / PAPAM SARVA
TATHAAGATA SAMENDRA AUSHNI KHA VIMALE BISHUDHE SVAHA (a few
times)

THEN RECITE THE FOLLOWING NAME MANTRAS

MANTRA THAT FULFILLS WISHES

Anyone who recites the names of this tathagata and who memorizes the words of this mantra will have all their wishes fulfilled.

CHOM DÄN DE / DE ZHIN SHEG PA / DRA CHOM PA / YANG DAG PAR /
DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ / SA DZIN GYÄL PO LA / CHHAG TSHÄL LO (7x)

TADYATHA / OM DHARE DHARE / DHARANI BANDHE SVAHA (7x)

15. MORNING MEDITATION PRACTICE

BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

This contains the 84,000 teachings taught by the Buddha, which includes the Hinayana teachings and the Mahayana teachings of Paramitayana and Tantra. All those teachings are combined into the Lam-rim, the graduated path to enlightenment, which is divided into the graduated paths of the lower, middle and higher capable beings. These three contain the whole lam-rim and that is contained in the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment.

1. A DIRECT MEDITATION ON THE GRADUATED PATH, CONTAINING ALL THE IMPORTANT MEANINGS

GURU DEVOTION: VISUALIZE YOUR GURU AS BUDDHA OR TARA OR ANY OTHER DEITY

Essence encompassing all the Buddhas,
Originator of all the holy Dharma of scriptures and realizations,
Principal of all those *aryas* intending virtue,
To the glorified holy Guru, I go for refuge.

Please [Guru], bless my mind to go in Dharma,
Dharma to go in the path,
And to not have obstacles to the path. (1)

Please bless me until enlightenment is achieved,
Like the youthful Norsang and the Bodhisattva Always Crying One,
To devote to the virtuous friend with pure thought and action,
Whatever is done, see it as pure,
And to be able to accomplish whatever is said and advised.

PERFECT HUMAN REBIRTH

Please bless me by seeing this body of freedom and richness,
Which has great meaning, is difficult to find again and is easy to
perish;

THE GRADUATED PATH OF THE LOWER CAPABLE BEING

And action and result so profound,
So difficult to bear the suffering of the evil migrators;
To sincerely from the heart go for refuge to the Three Rare Sublime
Ones,
Abandon negative karma, and accomplish the practice of virtue
according to the Dharma.

THE GRADUATED PATH OF THE MIDDLE CAPABLE BEING

By depending on that,
Even though one has achieved
The mere higher rebirth of a deva or human,
Because of being under the control of not having abandoned
The disturbing thought obscurations [delusions],
One needs to experience suffering endlessly in this samsara.

Please bless me by thinking well
About the way of cycling in samsara,
To be able to follow day and night continuously
The principal method liberating from that:
The three precious paths of training.

THE GRADUATED PATH OF THE GREAT CAPABLE BEING

By depending on that,
Even I achieve the mere liberation,
Because there is no sentient being of the six types
Who has not been my father and mother;

Please bless me to fulfill their purpose.

Please bless me by thinking like this,
To change the mind from the lower happiness [nirvana]
And generate the precious thought of enlightenment [bodhichitta]
Through equalizing and exchanging myself and others,
To be able to follow the conduct
Of the victorious sons [bodhisattvas], the six paramitas, and so forth.

**THE GRADUATED PATH OF THE SECRET MANTRA
VAJRAYANA VEHICLE OF THE GREATEST CAPABLE
BEING**

By having trained the mind in the common path like this,
I will have no upsetness in experiencing the sufferings of samsara for
a long time.
By seeing unbearable, especially with compassion towards the
sentient beings,
Entering the quick path, the teachings of the Vajrayana,
And protecting my *samaya* and vows more than this life;
Please bless me to be able to accomplish quickly the unified
Vajradhara state
In one brief lifetime only of this degenerate time.

THEN RECITE

May I not arise heresy even for a second
In the actions of the glorious Guru.
May I regard whatever actions are done as pure.
[With this devotion] may I receive the blessings of the Guru in my
heart.

**THEN RECITE THE FOLLOWING VERSE AND MEDITATE
ON THE GURU ENTERING YOUR HEART**

Magnificent and precious root Guru,
Please abide on the lotus seat at my heart.

Guide me with your great kindness,
And grant me the realizations of your holy body, speech, and mind.

***After this morning motivation, recite the following verses
on how to live your life for sentient beings***

**2. FROM GESHE LANGRI TANGPA'S EIGHT VERSES OF
THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION**

Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit
From all sentient beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I shall hold them most dear at all times.

3. FROM NAGARJUNA

May I become a wish-granting jewel
Fulfilling all the wishes,
And a wish-granting tree
Fulfilling all the hopes of sentient beings.

**4. FROM SHANTIDEVA'S GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S
WAY OF LIFE**

For the sake of completing the welfare of all sentient beings,
Without any sense of loss
I give up my body, enjoyments, and wealth,
As well as all virtues of the three times.

By renouncing all, go beyond suffering,
My mind achieves the non-abiding sorrowless state [enlightenment].
Once I gave up altogether,
It's best to give away all for sentient beings.

I give up this body comfortably as they want,
To all the sentient beings [however is comfortable for them to use].

Always killing, criticizing, beating, and so forth;
They may do whatever they like.

Sentient beings play with my body,
Ridicule and make fun of me.
As I have already given it to them,
Why do I go against this?

Let the sentient beings be allowed to do any action
That doesn't do harm to them.
Whoever encounters me,
May it never be meaningless for them.

Just by looking at me,
Anyone who gets angry or has a devotional thought arise,
May that mind alone become the cause
To accomplish all the welfare of those living beings.

Any being who criticizes me [puts down],
Or anyone who gives harm,
[Like that] even making fun of me [behind my back] –
May all become fortunate to achieve [great] enlightenment.

May I become a savior for those who are guideless,
A guide for those who enter the road,
A boat, a ship, a bridge,
For those who wish to cross over [a great river to the dry land].

May I be an island for those seeking an island,
A light for those desiring light,
Bedding for those desiring a place to rest;
Sentient beings who desire a slave – may I become a slave of all.

May I become a wish-granting jewel, a wish-fulfilling vase,
Powerful mantra and great medicine,
A wish-fulfilling tree,
A wish-granting cow for those sentient beings.

May I become the great elements,
The earth, and like the forever [boundless] sky,
May I become the cause of living
Of the innumerable sentient beings.

Like that, towards the realms of sentient beings
Who equal the limit of the sky,
May I become a cause of living always
Until the non-abiding sorrowless state is achieved.

As long as space exists,
As long as sentient beings exist,
May I too abide and eliminate the sufferings of sentient beings.

A Direct Meditation on the Graduated Path, Containing all the Important Meanings composed by Dorje Chang Losang Jinpa Pal Zangpo, the glorified holy being. Translated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, Jan 12-16, 2013. Scribed by Merry Colony.

Geshe Langri Thangpa's Eight Verses of Thought Transformation: Verse 1. Nagarjuna Verse: Source unidentified.

Bodhicharyavatara: Chapter Three, verses 11-21 and final verse from Chapter Ten, verse 55 by Bodhisattva Shantideva. Translation by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Kopan Monastery, Nepal, January 14-16, 2013. Scribed by Merry Colony. Lama Zopa Rinpoche composed this translation by comparing different versions of Bodhicharyavatara.

16. FIRST ALTERNATIVE MORNING PRACTICE

REFUGE

LA-MA SANG-GYE LAM-MA-CHÖ
DE-ZHIN LA-MA GE-DÜN-TE
KÜN-GYI JE-PO LAM-MA-YIN
LA-MA NAM-LA KYAB-SU-CHI (x3)

The guru is Buddha; the guru is Dharma;
The guru is Sangha also.
The guru is the creator of all (happiness);
To all gurus I go for refuge. (x3)

GENERATING BODHICITTA

DAG-DANG ZHEN-DÖN DRUB-LE-DU
DAG-GYI JANG-CHUB SEM-KYE-DO (x3)

To accomplish my own and others aims,
I generate bodhicitta. (x3)

PURIFYING THE PLACE

TAM-CHÄ DU-NI SA-ZHI-DAG
SEG-MA LA-SOG ME-PA-DANG
LAG-TIL TAR-NYAM BÄI-DUR-YÄI
RANG-ZHIN JAM-POR NÄ-GYUR-CHIG

Everywhere may the ground be pure,
Free of the roughness of pebbles and so forth.
May it be in the nature of lapis lazuli
And as smooth as the palm of one's hand.

INVITE THE BUDDHAS TO COME

MA-LÜ SEM-CHÄN KÜN-GYI GÖN-GYUR-CHING
DÜ-DE PUNG-CHÄ MI-ZÄ JOM-DZÄ-LHA
NGÖ-NAM MA-LÜ YANG-DAG KYEN-GYUR-PÄI
CHOM-DÄN KOR-CHÄ NÄ-DIR SHEG-SU-SÖL

Protector of all beings without exception;
Perfect knower of all things:
Divine destroyer of the intractable legions of Mara;
Bhagavan and retinue, please come here.

OFFERING PRAYER

LHA-DANG MI-YI CHÖ-PÄI-DZÄ
NGÖ-SU SHAM-DANG YI-KYI-TRÜL
KÜN-ZANG CHÖ-TRIN LA-NA-ME
NAM-KHÄI KHAM-KÜN KHYAB-GYUR-CHIG

May human and divine offerings,
Actually arranged and mentally created,
Clouds of finest Samantabhadra offerings,
Fill the entire space.

OFFERING CLOUD MANTRA

Multiply the offerings with:

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE VAJRA SARA PRAMARDANE / TATHAGATAYA /
ARHATE SAMYAKSAM BUDDHAYA / TADYATHA / OM VAJRE VAJRE / MAHA
VAJRE / MAHA TEJA VAJRE / MAHA VIDYA VAJRE / MAHA BODHICHITTA
VAJRE / MAHA BODHI MÄNDO PASAM KRAMANA VAJRE / SARVA KARMA
AVARANA VISHO DHANA VAJRE SVAHA (X3)

THE POWER OF TRUTH

By the power of truth of the Three Rare Sublime Ones,
The blessings of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas,

The great wealth of the completed two collections, and the sphere of
phenomena being pure and inconceivable;
May these piles of clouds of offerings arising through transformation
by the bodhisattvas Arya Samantabhadra, Manjushri, and so forth

–

Unimaginable and inexhaustible, equaling the sky – arise and, in the
eyes of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, be
received.

SEVEN LIMBS

GO-SUM GÜ-PÄI GO-NÄ CHAG-TSÄL-LO
NGÖ-SHAM YI-TRÜL CHÖ-TRIN MA-LÜ-BÜL
TOG-ME NÄ-SAG DIG-TUNG TAM-CHÄ-SHAG
KYE-PAG GE-WA NAM-LA JE-YI-RANG
KOR-WA MA-TONG BAR-DU LEG-ZHUG-NÄ
DRO-LA CHÖ-KYI KOR-LO KOR-WA-DANG
DAG-ZHÄN GE-NAM JANG-CHUB CHEN-POR-NGO

Reverently, I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind;
I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined;
I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless
time

And rejoice in the merit of all holy and ordinary beings.

Please, remain until the end of cyclic existence

And turn the wheel of Dharma for living beings.

I dedicate my own merits and those of all others to the great
enlightenment.

MANDALA OFFERING

SA-ZHI PÖ-KYI JUG-SHING ME-TOG-TRAM
RI-RAB LING-ZHI NYI-DÄ GYÄN-PA-DI
SANG-GYÄ ZHING-DU MIG-TE ÜL-WA-YI
DRO-KÜN NAM-DAG ZHING-LA CHÖ-PAR-SHOG

This ground, anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,
Adorned with Mount Meru, four continents, the sun and the moon:
I imagine this as a buddha-field and offer it.
May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

INNER MANDALA OFFERING

DAG-GI CHAG-DANG MONG-SUM KYE-WÄI-YÜL
DRA-NYEN BAR-SUM LÜ-DANG LONG-CHÖ-CHÄ
PANG-PA ME-PAR BÜL-GYI LEG-ZHE-NÄ
DUG-SUM RANG-SAR DRÖL-WAR JIN-GYI-LOB

The objects of my attachment, aversion and ignorance -
Friends, enemies, strangers – and my body, wealth, and enjoyments;
Without any sense of loss I offer this collection.
Please accept it with pleasure and bless me with freedom from the
three poisons.

PRAYER OF THE THREE GREAT PURPOSES

I prostrate and go for refuge to the Guru and the Three Precious
Gems: Please bless my mind.
I am requesting you to immediately pacify all the wrong conceptions,
from incorrect devotion to the Guru up to the subtle dual view of
the white, red, and dark visions, that exist in my mind and in the
minds of all mother sentient beings.
I am requesting you to immediately generate all the right realizations
from guru devotion up to enlightenment in my mind and in the
minds of all mother sentient beings.
I am requesting you to immediately pacify all outer and inner
obstacles to actualizing the entire graduated path to
enlightenment in my mind and in the minds of all mother sentient
beings. (x3)

IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAYAMI

17. SECOND ALTERNATIVE MORNING PRACTICE: MEDITATION ON SHAKYAMUNI BUDDHA



THE PRACTICE

Calm your mind by doing a few moments of breathing meditation.
Then, contemplate the prayer of refuge and bodhicitta.

I take refuge until I am enlightened,
In the buddhas, the dharma and the sangha.
Through the merit I create by practicing giving and the other
perfections,
May I attain buddhahood for the sake of
all living beings.

Recite other prayers if you wish, such as those in chapter 16.

Generate love and compassion by reflecting briefly on the predicament of all beings: their wish to experience true happiness but inability to obtain it, and their wish to avoid suffering but continual encounters with it.

Then think: “In order to help all beings and lead them to the perfect peace and happiness of enlightenment I myself must attain enlightenment. For this purpose I shall practice this meditation.”

VISUALIZATION OF THE BUDDHA

Every aspect of the visualization is of light: transparent, intangible and radiant. At the level of your forehead and between six and eight feet away is a large golden throne adorned with jewels and supported at each of its four corners by a pair of snow lions. These animals, in reality manifestations of bodhisattvas, have white fur and a green mane and tail.

On the flat surface of the throne is a seat consisting of a large open lotus and two radiant discs representing the sun and the moon, one on top of the other. These three objects symbolize the three principal realizations of the path to enlightenment: the lotus, renunciation; the sun, emptiness; and the moon, bodhicitta.

Seated upon this is the Buddha, who has attained these realizations and is the embodiment of all enlightened beings. His body is of golden light and he wears the saffron robes of a monk. His robes do not actually touch his body but are separated from it by about an inch. He is seated in the vajra, or full-lotus, posture. The palm of his right hand rests on his right knee, the fingers touching the moon cushion, signifying his great control. His left hand rests in his lap in the meditation pose, holding a bowl filled with nectar, which is medicine for curing our disturbing states of mind and other hindrances.

Buddha's face is very beautiful. His smiling, compassionate gaze is directed at you and, simultaneously, towards every other living being. Feel that he is free of all judging, critical thoughts and that he accepts you just as you are. His eyes are long and narrow. His lips are cherry red and the lobes of his ears are long. His hair is blue-black and each hair is individually curled to the right and not mixed with the others. Every feature of his appearance represents an attribute of his omniscient mind.

Rays of light emanate from each pore of Buddha's pure body and reach every corner of the universe. These rays are actually composed of countless miniature buddhas, some going out to help living beings, others dissolving back into his body, having finished their work.

PURIFICATION

Feel the living presence of Buddha and take refuge in him, recalling his perfect qualities and his willingness and ability to help you. Make a request from your heart to receive his blessings to help you to become free from all your negative energy, misconceptions and other problems and to receive all the realizations of the path to enlightenment.

Your request is accepted. A stream of purifying white light, which is in the nature of the enlightened mind, flows from Buddha's heart and enters your body through the crown of your head. Just as the darkness in a room is instantly dispelled the moment a light is switched on, so too is the darkness of your negative energy dispelled upon contact with this radiant white light.

As it flows into you, filling your body completely, recite the following prayer three times.

To the guru and founder,
The endowed transcendent destroyer,
The one-thus-gone, the foe destroyer,
The completely perfected, fully-awakened being,
The glorious conqueror, the subduer from the Shakya clan,

I prostrate, turn for refuge and make offerings:

Please bestow your blessings.

Now, recite Buddha's mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA (pronounced *ta-ya-ta om mooni mooni ma-ha moon-aye-ye so-ha*).

Repeat it out loud, or chant it, at least seven times, then say it quietly to yourself for a few minutes.

When you have finished reciting, feel that all your negative energy, problems and subtle obscurations have been completely purified. Your body feels blissful and light. Concentrate on this for a while.

RECEIVING INSPIRING STRENGTH

Visualize that a stream of golden light descends from the Buddha's heart and flows into your body through the crown of your head. The essence of this light is the excellent qualities of his pure body, speech and mind.

He can transform his body into different forms, animate and inanimate, to help living beings according to their individual needs and particular states of mind.

With his speech he can communicate different aspects of the dharma simultaneously to beings of various levels of development and be understood by them in their respective languages.

His omniscient mind sees clearly every atom of existence and every occurrence - past, present and future - and knows the thoughts of every living being: such is his awareness in each moment.

These infinite good qualities flow into every part of your body. Concentrate on this blissful experience while again repeating the mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

When you have finished the recitation feel that you have received the infinite excellent qualities of Buddha's body, speech and mind. Your body feels light and blissful. Concentrate on this for some time.

ABSORPTION

Now, visualize that the eight snow lions absorb into the throne, the throne into the lotus and the lotus into the sun and moon. They, in turn, absorb into the Buddha, who now comes to the space above your head, melts into light and dissolves into your body.

Your ordinary sense of I - unworthy and burdened with faults - and all your other wrong conceptions disappear completely. In that instant you become one with the Buddha's blissful, omniscient mind in the aspect of vast empty space.

Concentrate on this experience for as long as possible, allowing no other thoughts to distract you.

Then, imagine that from this empty state there appear in the place where you are sitting the throne, lotus, sun, moon and upon these yourself as the Buddha. Everything is of the nature of light, exactly as you had visualized before in front of you. Feel that you *are* Buddha. Identify with his enlightened wisdom and compassion instead of with your usual incorrect self-view.

Surrounding you in every direction and filling all of space are all living beings. Generate love and compassion for them by recalling that they too want to achieve happiness and peace of mind and freedom from all problems. Now that you are enlightened you can help them.

At your heart are a lotus and a moon. Standing upright around the circumference of the moon, reading clockwise, are the syllables of the mantra, *tayata om muni muni maha munaye soha*. The seed-syllable *mum* (*moom*) stands at the moon's centre.

Visualize that rays of light - actually your wisdom and compassion - emanate from each letter and spread in all directions. They reach the countless sentient beings surrounding you and completely purify

them of their obscurations and delusions and fill them with inspiration and strength.

While imagining this, again recite the mantra,

TAYATA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA

When you have finished reciting, think: “Now I have led all sentient beings to enlightenment, thus fulfilling my intention for doing this meditation.”

Visualize that everyone surrounding you is now in the form of Buddha and is experiencing complete bliss and the wisdom of emptiness.

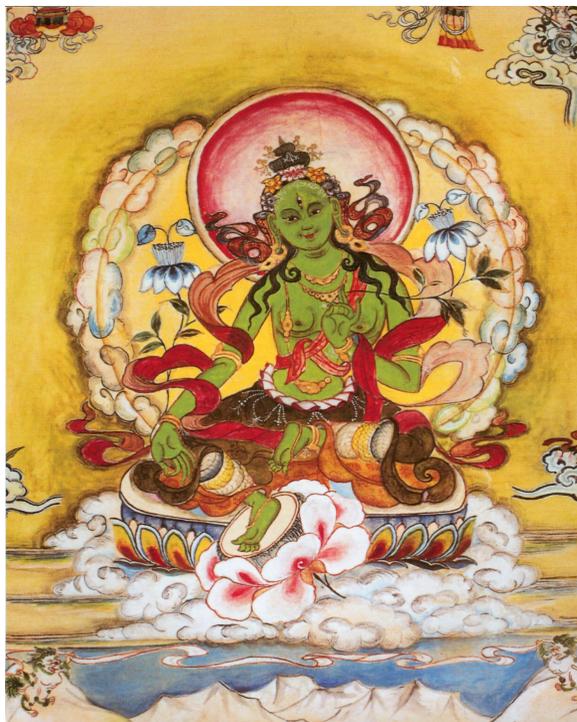
You should not worry that your meditation is a sham and that you have not helped even one person achieve enlightenment. This practice is known as “bringing the future result into the present path” and is a powerful cause for our own enlightenment. It helps us develop firm conviction in our innate perfection – our buddha-potential; that what we have just done in meditation we will definitely accomplish one day.

DEDICATION

Conclude the session by dedicating all your merit and insight from doing this meditation to sentient beings. ***See chapter 19.***

From How to Meditate, by Kathleen Macdonald, Wisdom Publications.

18. THIRD ALTERNATIVE MORNING PRACTICE: MEDITATION ON BUDDHA TARA



VISUALIZATION

Visualize Tara in the space in front of me. Radiant green light body, so beautiful. Sitting on a multi-colored lotus, her left foot drawn in and her right foot out resting on a little multi-colored lotus.

Her left foot drawn in indicates her complete and effortless control over desire energy and her right foot out indicates her willingness and capability to get up quickly and act for sentient beings. Often she's referred to as the Wish-fulfilling Buddha. She

represents the courageous ability to cut through the obstacles, to get things done, to be successful.

Imagine Tara as beautiful as possible: young, radiant, full of energy, full of bliss. She wears colored silken garments and jewelry on her ears, ankles, arms and neck.

Imagine that she is the manifestation of my lama's mind, who is appearing as Green Tara for my benefit. As Pabongka Rinpoche says, "If the lama is not the buddha, then who is?"

PRELIMINARY PRAYERS

I take refuge until I am enlightened,
In the buddhas, the dharma and the sangha.
Through the merit I create by practicing giving and the other
 perfections,
May I attain buddhahood for the sake of
all living beings.

Recite other prayers if you wish, such as those in chapter 16.

RECEIVING BLESSINGS

Now imagine, one chakra at a time, powerful, blissful light coming from each of her three chakras, entering my chakras and filling me completely, first purifying and then filling me with blessings.

Body First, Lama Tara sends powerful blissful **white light** from the **om** at her brow chakra, which enters my brow and completely fills me. Imagine that all my problems and sufferings and heaviness of my body are purified by this light, and all the harm I have ever done to any living being with this body and all my infinite past bodies is also purified, eradicated completely, not one atom left.

After a little time, imagine the light coming, this time visualizing that my body has become a blissful light body, just like Tara's; indestructible, just like it will be when I attain the deity's body, the

sambhogakaya. And imagine that it's not possible to ever harm others with this body, only to benefit.

Speech Second, she sends **red light** from the **ah** at her throat chakra to my throat, which purifies all the problems of my speech: inappropriate speech, useless speech, uncontrolled speech, angry speech, criticism, the inability to express myself appropriately, and that all the harm you have ever done to any living being with my speech of this life and in infinite past lives is also totally purified, eradicated by the blissful red light, not one atom left.

Then the light comes again, and this time I imagine that I am totally full of all the blissful, perfect, compassionate, wisdom, appropriate speech of Lama Tara, such that whatever sound I utter is necessarily beneficial to any living being who hears it, all of which is my potential. Feel full of this powerful energy.

Mind Third, Lama Tara sends powerful beams of **blue light**, like the sky, from the blue **hum** at her heart chakra, which enters my heart. Imagine that all the unhappiness of my mind: confusion, arrogance, anger, jealous, pride, resentment, hurt, anxiety, self-hate, is all totally purified, and that all my delusions, including the root ego-grasping, which are the cause of my own suffering and of why I harm others, is totally eradicated by the powerful blue light, not one atom left.

The blue light comes again and this time I feel full of the blissful, omniscient, compassionate mind of Lama Tara, which is my potential.

Body, speech, and mind Then visualize the three lights coming from Lama Tara's three chakras simultaneously, penetrating my three places, this time feeling that even the subtlest stains of all delusion are totally eradicated, not one atom left. Feel very blissful.

Stay in this blissful state, concentrating on being oneness with the energy of Mother Tara.

BECOMING ONENESS WITH LAMA TARA

Now visualize Lama Tara's lotus dissolving upwards into her body. Then she comes to sit above my crown, facing the same way as me.

Then, out of her wish to be oneness with my mind – and she is my guru, remember – she dissolves into green light and melts into me through my crown, merging with my body, speech and mind. Think: I am oneness with Lama Tara. And feel blissful.

BENEFITING OTHERS

Think: Now that I am Tara, I must lead them to enlightenment. Imagine right in front are my enemies, in front to the left, my friends, and to the right and everywhere else, all the rest of sentient beings, the strangers: above, below, left right, behind, in front – pervading space.

Think: they're all the same: they want happiness, don't want suffering, all possess buddha nature.

Now imagine from my heart millions and millions of tiny green Taras emanate out, entering the friends, enemies and strangers, taking away all their suffering and giving them everything they need, and transforming them into their own Tara.

Imagine this, want this, as I recite the mantra (as many times as you like).

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

Finally, all these transformed Taras absorb into me, enhancing my own Tara nature.

DEDICATION PRAYERS

Finally, dedicate all the merit you have created by doing this purification to all living beings. *See chapter 19.*

CONCLUSION

When I arise from the meditation, remember I am oneness with Mother Tara; that I will watch my mind every second, purifying all the negative thoughts and rejoicing and growing the positive; and aspiring to bring benefit to all.

By Robina Courtin, based on the teachings of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Painting of Buddha Tara by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

19. DEDICATION PRAYERS

RECOMMENDED BY LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May bodhichitta – from which the happiness of all sentient beings
comes –
Be generated in the minds of self and other sentient beings without
delay, even for one second.
And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May emptiness be generated in the minds of self and others sentient
beings, without delay, even for one second.
And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May I, who am empty from my own side,
Achieve Buddha Tara's enlightenment, which is empty from its own
side.
And lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side,
To that enlightenment, which is empty from its own side,
As quickly as possible, by myself, alone.

Whatever dedication the Victorious Ones Gone to Bliss
Of the three times have admired as best,
I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same way all these roots of virtue
So that I may perform good works.

Because of the past, present, and future merit created by me and by
the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and sentient beings,
May I, my family, students, and all sentient beings

Be able to actualize completely in this very lifetime
Lama Tsong Khapa's path of unified sutra and tantra,
Which is pure like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsong Khapa
Spread in all directions and flourish forever.

Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me,
buddhas, bodhisattvas and all other sentient beings – which are
totally non-existent from their own side –
May the I – which is also totally nonexistent from its own side –
Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment – which is also
totally non-existent from its own side –
And lead all sentient beings – who are also totally non-existent from
their own side –
To that enlightenment – which is also totally non-existent from its
own side –
By myself alone – which is also totally non-existent from its own side.

20. LONG-LIFE PRAYERS

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

GANG-RI RA-WÄ KOR-WÄI ZHING-KHAM-DIR
PÄN-DANG DE-WA MA-LÜ JUNG-WÄI-NÄ
CHÄN-RÄ ZIG-WANG TÄN-DZIN GYA-TSO-YI
ZHAB-PÄ SI -TÄI BAR-DU TÄN-GYUR-CHIG

In the land encircled by snow mountains
You are the source of all happiness and good;
All-powerful Chenrezig, Tenzin Gyatso,
Please remain until samsara ends.

Prayer That Spontaneously Fulfills All Wishes

Savior of the Snow Land teachings and transmigratory beings,
Who makes extremely clear the path that is unification of emptiness
and compassion,
To the Lotus Holder, Tenzin Gyatso, I beseech –
May all your holy wishes be spontaneously fulfilled!

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

TUB-TSHÜL CHANG-ZHING JAM-GÖN GYÄL-WÄI-TÄN
DZIN-KYÖ PEL-WÄ KYN-ZO DOG-POR-DZÄ
CHOG-SUM KUR-WÄI LEG-MÖN TU-DRUB-PA
DAG-SOG DÜL-JÄI GÖN-DU ZHAB-TÄN-SHOG

You who uphold the Subduer's moral way;
Who serve as the bountiful bearer of-all,
Sustaining, preserving, and spreading Manjunath's victorious
doctrine;

Who masterfully accomplish magnificent prayers honoring the Three
Jewels,
Savior of myself and others, your disciples: please, please live long!

LAMA TENZIN OSEL RINPOCHE

Venerable One, to you whose kindness exceeds that of all the
conquerors,
For those wanderers in far-off places, especially the West,
Mindful of your loving concern for us in intentionally descending
again into a family of a far distant land,
We make this request:
Oh, Lama, please, please live long!

Also recite the long-life prayers of your other lamas.

21. BLESS YOUR FOOD AND OFFER IT TO THE THREE JEWELS

Having taking Refuge in the Three Jewels, you are committed to offering the first mouthful of your food and drink to them.

1. Think that the food is empty of existing from its own side; for example, think how it's a dependent arising: it's come into existence in dependence upon the animals who died for it, including the insects who died during the growing and picking of the vegetables; all the people involved in growing it, picking, driving it to the shops, selling it, etc. etc.
2. Then imagine it is in a huge container in the sky. You recite three times OM AH HUM and imagine it is now blessed with the energy of the body, speech, and mind of all the Buddhas.
3. Then offer it, the most important part, Lama Zopa Rinpoche says: imagine all the gurus, buddhas, bodhisattvas, holy beings, and all the sentient beings of the six realms, pervading space.
4. Then imagine all these beings turn into our guru in the form of the Buddha we feel close to: this is the most potent object of our merit.
5. Then, finally, imagine that they all experience the joy of receiving this ocean of nectar as you recite:

To the supreme teacher, the precious Buddha,
To the supreme practice, the holy precious Dharma,

To the supreme guides, the precious Sangha,
To all the objects of refuge I make this offering.

Source: Robina Courtin, based on the teachings of her lamas.

22. EVENING PURIFICATION PRACTICE: VAJRASATTVA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS



According to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, “We are insane not to do this practice every day.”

There is no negativity that cannot be purified. The purification process is basically a psychological one. As Lama Yeshe says, it is our mind (and on the basis of that our actions) that create the negativity and it is our mind that transforms it by creating positive energy. Although we rely on Buddha’s methods for the purification, it is not as if it is Buddha purifying us or forgiving us; we ourselves do the purifying.

We purify by applying, the Four Opponent Powers.

THE PRACTICE

Prostrate three times then sit. Bring your mind to a quiet state.

PRELIMINARY PRAYERS

I take refuge until I am enlightened,
In the buddhas, the dharma and the sangha.
Through the merit I create by practicing giving and the other
 perfections,
May I attain buddhahood for the sake of
all living beings.

Recite other prayers if you wish, such as those in chapter 16.

1. THE POWER OF REGRET

First, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remember the definition of negative karma: any action that results in suffering, usually motivated by attachment, ignorance, or aversion.

“Almost every action I do, twenty-four hours a day, is motivated by worldly concern, attachment to the comfort of this life. It is like this from birth to death in this life and has been like that from beginningless rebirths. Nearly every action I have ever created has been non-virtuous, the cause of suffering.

“Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my pratimoksha, bodhisattva and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends – getting angry at them, generating wrong views, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body and disobeying their advice.

“Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It’s as if I’ve swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice

the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second's delay.”

The reason to regret is based on the logic of karma: We experience everything due to our past karma, our past actions; so having harmed others we ourselves will necessarily experience suffering in the future. Having broken my vows, I will experience suffering in the future. Thus we cannot bear the thought of the future suffering that we ourselves will experience.

Go through the three non-virtuous action of the body and four of the speech, regretting those we remember and those we don't, in other words all the harm we have ever done to any sentient being since beginningless time.

Go through our vows and regret having broken them specifically: pratimoksha vows, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows.

For all of these, think like this: “I regret from the depths of my heart having harmed others, broken my vows, etc., because I do not want the future suffering. I am sick of suffering.”

Then think, “What can I do about it? Whom can I turn to?”

REMEMBER IMPERMANENCE & DEATH

Then, as Rinpoche says, remember impermanence and death: “Many people my age or younger have died. It's a miracle that I'm still alive and have this incredible opportunity to purify my negative karma. Death is certain but its time is most uncertain. If I were to die right now, I would definitely be born in the lower realms. Because I could not practice Dharma there I would remain in the lower realms for countless eons.

Therefore, how unbelievably fortunate I am to be able to purify my negative karma right now, without even a second's delay, by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.”

2. THE POWER OF RELIANCE

a. Refuge

We rely upon, turn to, the Buddha, the doctor, who has the methods that we can use the purify.

On the crown of my head, a syllable PAM transforms into a lotus, an AH into a moon cushion, upon which, from HUM a white five-pronged vajra emerges, marked by a HUM at its center.

From the HUM light shines forth and the two purposes are accomplished. The light returns and transforms into white Vajrasattva with one face and two hands holding vajra and bell.

Seated in the vajra position, he embraces his consort, the white Vajra Prabhavati, who sits in the lotus posture and has one face and two hands holding curved knife and skullcup. The father is adorned with six mudras, the mother with five.

Both are adorned with silks and various precious ornaments. At their crown is an OM, at their throat an AH, and at their heart a HUM. On the moon disk at his heart stands the syllable HUM encircled by the hundred-syllable mantra.

Guru Vajrasattva's right hand, holding a vajra, which represents compassion and bliss, is at his heart; his left, holding a bell, which represents the wisdom realizing emptiness, is resting in his lap.

Think: "Vajrasattva is my root guru, the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, who out of his unbearable compassion, which embraces me and all other sentient beings, appears in this form to purify me and all others." In this way your mind is transformed into guru devotion, the roof of all blessings and realizations of the path of enlightenment.

Now invite the wisdom beings to merge with your visualization, the commitment being: imagine light goes out of from the HUM at Guru Vajrasattva's heart to all the ten directions and hooks the energy of the body, speech and mind of all the enlightened beings of the universe. This light comes back and dissolves into the heart of Guru Vajrasattva, who now embodies all their energy. He is even more brilliant and blissful than before.

Now, say a prayer of refuge:

I forever take refuge in Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
And in all the three vehicles,
In the dakinis of secret mantra yoga, in the heroes and heroines,
In the empowering goddesses and the bodhisattvas.
But most of all, I take refuge in my holy guru forever. (3x)

b. Bodhichitta In order to develop compassion, we need to rely upon other beings, the very beings we have harmed and who have harmed us, by developing compassion for them.

As Lama Zopa Rinpoche says: “But I am not practicing this Vajrasattva purification for myself alone – the purpose of my life is to release all hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, suras, and intermediate state beings from all their suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment.

In order to do this I must first reach enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation.”

Think in particular of people you have harmed recently; and in the past; and then, in general, all beings we have ever harmed since beginningless time.

Then remember those who have harmed you: have compassion for them because they will suffer as a result of the harm they have done to you.

Make the strong aspiration to do this practice of purification for the sake of all these sentient beings. “I must purify for their sake.”

3. THE POWER OF THE REMEDY

Think: “O Guru Vajrasattva, please clear away all negative karma and obscurations of myself and all living beings and purify all degenerated and broken commitments.”

Recite the mantra seven or twenty-one times or as many times as possible, practicing the three techniques of downward cleansing,

upward cleansing and instantaneous cleansing.

First method: Visualize the white blissful kundalini energy flows down from Vajrasattva father/mother in union into your central channel. It spreads throughout your nervous system, flowing very strongly like water coming from a hose or like a very powerful shower, and flushes out all negativities of your body, speech, and mind through the openings and pores of the lower part of your body. All this negative energy is expelled in the form of snakes, scorpions, ants, long worms, etc. or as black tar or dirty black oil. Feel that you are completely purified, clean clear, especially your gross negativities, and overcome with blissful energy.

Recite the mantra as you visualize (3 or 7 or as many as you wish):

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA / VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA
/ DIDO MAY BHAWA / SUTO KAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO KAYO MAY BHAWA
/ ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA / SARWA
KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA MAY MU TSA / VAJRA
BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Second method: The blissful kundalini energy slowly fills your body starting from below. As the level of amrita rises, your negativities start to rise as well, floating on top of the nectar, like oil floating on water. Your negativities and defilements are slowly pushed upward by the pure amrita kundalini energy; it gradually overflows out of your body through all your upper orifices and your crown chakra. You experience great bliss.

Recite the mantra as you visualize this.

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA / VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA
/ DIDO MAY BHAWA / SUTO KAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO KAYO MAY BHAWA
/ ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA / SARWA
KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /

BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA MAY MU TSA / VAJRA
BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

Third method: An immense amount of powerful light energy, limitless blissful kundalini energy in the form of light, radiates from Vajrasattva's heart. Immediately as it makes contact with your crown chakra, the negative energy, especially your ignorant attachment energy, completely disappears, just as when a bright light is switched on in a dark room, the darkness instantly and completely disappears. You cannot say that the darkness leaves through the window or through the door when a light is turned on. It just disappears, no longer existing anywhere at all.

Recite the mantra as you visualize this. (See page 136 for the meaning of the mantra.)

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANU PALAYA / VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA
/ DIDO MAY BHAWA / SUTO KAYO MAY BHAWA / SUPO KAYO MAY BHAWA
/ ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA / SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA / SARWA
KARMA SU TSA MAY / TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAWAN / SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MA MAY MU TSA / VAJRA
BHAWA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA / AH HUM PHAT!

4. THE POWER OF RESOLVE

The fourth step in the purification process, and such a crucial one, is the determination not to harm with our body, speech and mind again. Without this, we keep doing the same old things. The determination, the aspiration, to not harm again is like a beacon that guides our body, speech and mind in new directions. Remember, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says, "Everything exists on the tip of the wish, the aspiration."

Think: "I will never break my pratimoksha vows. I will never break my bodhisattva vows. I will never break my tantric vows and commitments."

As for our other old habits, if we can't commit to never do them again, then don't lie to ourselves, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche says. So think carefully and then decide to refrain from them for a year, a month, a day, even a minute – whatever is realistic. Then in general vow to make the effort to avoid the others.

This determination not to do again is what gives us the strength to change.

HAVE FAITH THA YOU HAVE BEEN PURIFIED

From the crown of my head, Guru Vajrasattva says, “Child of the race, your negativities, obscurations and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified.” Generate strong faith that all is completely purified just as Guru Vajrasattva has said.

Wanting to merge with your mind, he melts into white light and absorbs into you through your crown.

Think: “My guru's body, speech and mind, Vajrasattva's body, speech and mind, my own body, speech and mind: same thing.”
“Union-oneness,” as Lama Yeshe would say. Meditate on this.

EMPTINESS OF THE THREE CIRCLES

Next, as Lama Zopa Rinpoche recommends, meditate on the emptiness of the three circles:

In emptiness, there is no I, creator of negative karma;
There is no action of creating negative karma;
There is no negative karma created.

Place your mind in that emptiness for a little while. In this way, look at all phenomena as empty – they do not exist from their own side.

DEDICATION PRAYERS

Finally, dedicate all the merit you have created by doing this purification to all living beings. *See chapter 19.*

THE FOUR TYPES OF KARMIC RESULTS THAT THE FOUR OPPONENT POWERS PURIFY

1. The power of regret purifies the *experience similar to the cause*, which, let's say for killing, is to get killed, to die young or to get sick.

2. The power of reliance, *Refuge and bodhicitta* purify the *environment result*, which for killing is living in a place where the food and medicine are not conducive to good health.

3. The power of the remedy, in this case the *visualization and recitation of mantras* – or whatever action one does as the actual antidote – purifies the *throwing karma* that causes birth in the lower realms.

4. The power of the resolve or *determination not to do* again purifies the *action similar to the cause*, which in a sense is the worst result: it's the habit to keep killing, which propels one back into the lower realms.

THE MEANING OF THE MANTRA WORD BY WORD

OM the qualities of Buddha's holy body, speech, and mind; all that is auspicious and of great value

VAJRASATTVA the being who has the wisdom of inseparable bliss and emptiness

SAMAYA a pledge that must not be transgressed

MANU PALAYA lead me along the path you took to enlightenment

VAJRASATTVA DENO PATITA make me abide closer Vajrasattva's vajra holy mind

DIDO MAY BHAWA please grant me a firm and stable realization of the ultimate nature of phenomena

SUTO KAYO MAY BHAWA please grant me the blessing of being extremely pleased with me

SUPO KAYO MAY BHAWA bless me with the nature of well developed great bliss

ANU RAKTO MAY BHAWA bless me with the nature of the love that leads me to your state

SARWA SIDDHI MEMPAR YATSA please grant all powerful attainments

SARWA KARMA SU TSA MAY please grant all virtuous actions

TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU please grant your glorious qualities

HUM the vajra holy mind

A HA HA HA HO the five transcendental wisdoms

BHAGAWAN one who has destroyed every obscuration, attained all realizations, and passed beyond suffering

SARVA TATHAGATA all those who have realized emptiness, knowing things just as they are

VAJRA MA MAY MUTSA do not abandon me

VAJRA BHAWA the nature of indestructible inseparability

MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA the great pledge being; the great being who has the pledge, the vajra holy mind

AH the vajra holy speech

HUM the transcendental wisdom of great bliss

PHAT! clarifying the transcendental wisdom of inseparable bliss and emptiness and destroying the dualistic mind that obstructs it

THE GENERAL MEANING OF THE MANTRA

You, Vajrasattva, have generated the holy mind (bodhichitta) according to your pledge (samaya). Your holy mind is enriched with the simultaneous holy actions of releasing transmigratory beings from samsara (the circling, suffering aggregates). Whatever happens in my life – happiness or suffering, good or bad – with a pleased, holy mind, never give up but please guide me. Please stabilize all happiness, including the happiness of the upper realms, actualize all

actions and sublime and common realizations, and please make the glory of the five wisdoms abide in my heart.

By Ven. Robina Courtin, using the teachings of her lamas, Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Statue of Lama Vajrasattva in the Vajrasattva gomba at Tushita Retreat Centre in Dharmasala, India, commissioned by lama Zopa Rinpoche in the likeness of Lama Thubten Yeshe, as a reminder to students that the Buddha is the Guru.

PART SIX
RECOMMENDED READING

23. THE FIFTY VERSES OF GURU DEVOTION

A COMMENTARY BY GESHE NGAWANG DHARGYE

The great Indian pandit Naropa said, “Before the existence of the lama there was neither buddha nor deity.” He said this because buddhas and meditation deities are emanations, or embodiments, of the guru; that’s why there was neither buddha nor meditation deity before the guru.

The great siddha Tilopa said to the great siddha Naropa, “The great results, blessings and inspiration you get from having fervent respect for your guru is due to your guru, therefore you should have fervent respect for him.”

Jetsun Milarepa said, “Try to see your guru in his actual aspect of dharmakaya. If you can, you will receive all blessings and inspiration effortlessly.”

Vajradhara himself also spoke often about the importance of guru devotion. Since all these great beings have said these things, there’s not much need for me to comment further. However, at the beginning of his commentary to the *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*, Je Tsong Khapa said, “The only door for disciples who want to experience great bliss and gain the highest attainments without much effort is the proper cultivation of guru devotion. In order to open this door, I am going to explain the *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*.”

Thus, in all the commentaries by Je Tsong Khapa, everywhere – at the beginning and the end, in the dedication as well as in the introductory verses – he prays to cultivate pure and proper guru devotion.

Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang often says, “Although the sutras and tantras all have the two types of meaning – definitive and interpretive – with respect to guru devotion, they’re unanimous on

the importance of guru devotion; there's no controversy on that point." To show the pure lineage of whatever teaching we're studying – if it's tantra its source should be Vajradhara and if sutra, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha – the great gurus are quoted in this way.

Atisha, for example, cultivated 157 gurus and his deeds in both India and Tibet were very extensive and he became extremely famous as a result. This was because of his guru devotion. Although he had 157 gurus, he said that he didn't displease even one of them for even a single moment – that's why he was able to do such extensive deeds.

Dromtönpa, too, although a layman, became one of the most famous of the Kadampa geshe – most of whom were monks – because of his guru devotion. He cultivated such pure, stainless guru devotion that even Atisha praised it. As a result, he, too, was able to perform extensive deeds to greatly benefit sentient beings.

Then there's Jetsun Milarepa. From the point of view of realization and insight, many other siddhas were equal to or comparable with him, but because of his extraordinary devotion to his guru, Marpa, he became much more famous and widely renowned than any of them.

A story from the life of Sakya Pandita gives us a different look at guru devotion. He once requested his uncle, Dragpa Gyaltsen, to teach him guru yoga but he rejected the request, saying, "You regard me only as your uncle, not as a buddha, so it's useless giving you such profound teachings." However, later on, Dragpa Gyaltsen pretended to be sick just for the sake of Sakya Pandita, who nursed him so single-pointedly that he forgot to eat during the day or sleep at night – his mind was completely focused on taking care of his uncle. Because of his great guru devotion, Sakya Pandita was able to see his guru as Manjushri and achieve the ten kinds of knowledge. He became very famous and was invited to give teachings in Mongolia.

These examples of Dharma practice are not for your amusement but to show you that if you want to attain the levels of realization that these great beings did and become as renowned as they were, you should cultivate the kind of guru devotion that they did.

Lama Tsong Khapa's relationship with his first teacher, Chöje Döndrub Rinchen, who cared for him from the ages of three to seventeen like a mother and gave him all the teachings, is also an excellent example of guru devotion. Whenever Lama Tsong Khapa mentioned this great teacher's name, tears would come to his eyes as he remembered his great kindness, and in his lam-rim teachings he praised the great teachers under whom he studied.

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DEVOTION

Now we come to the topic of guru devotion. There are two ways of cultivating guru devotion: mentally and physically. The mental cultivation of guru devotion is elaborately explained in the lam-rim. The guru devotion expounded in *The Fifty Verses* is mainly the physical type.

In Tibetan, the title of this text, *Lama Nga-chu-pa*, literally means "Fifty Lamas" because it is composed of fifty verses on how to cultivate guru devotion. However, the meaning behind each verse is extremely profound because it contains words spoken in the tantras by Vajradhara himself. This makes it a most unfathomable teaching. There's no Indian commentary on the Fifty Verses but we have the Tibetan one by Lama Tsong Khapa, which is widely renowned and the most famous commentary on this important text.

The teaching I am giving here accords to the root verses without the commentary. In order to properly give this profound transmission to his disciples, the guru should also have received the perfect transmission. If he hasn't, his teachings will be of little use to his disciples. If he tells them, "I haven't received it completely but since you have, you're very fortunate," that's also incorrect. However, I received the complete teaching of *The Fifty Verses* from Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang – who heard it from Kyabje Pabongka – several times in Tibet and also here in Dharamsala at the Tibetan Library, with a commentary by Khenchen Losang Thubgyen, root guru of the first Trijang Rinpoche.

The direct lineage of this teaching can be traced all the way back to Buddha Vajradhara himself, and since I have received the transmission and listened to the teaching a number of times, you can definitely receive the blessings and inspiration of this lineage.

Homage to the Bhagavan Vajrasattva

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXPLANATION

Homage & commitment to the undertaking

VERSE 1

Bowing in the proper way to the lotus feet of my guru,
Who is the cause for me to attain the state of a glorious
Vajrasattva,

I shall condense and explain in brief what has been said in many
stainless tantric texts about guru devotion.

(Therefore) listen with respect.

The best way to gain the high realizations or pure abodes of Vajrasattva or Vajradhara, the doorway to these, is to cultivate the guru who can lead us there. Therefore, he makes obeisance to his guru's lotus feet; he touches his forehead to the lowest part of his guru's body.

Ashvagoshā then says that, having made obeisance in this way, he will now tell us about the fifty verses of guru devotion, the fifty verses that show us how to cultivate proper guru devotion, which is the root of all insights. He also says that what he is about to write is not his own fabrication but is in accord with the tantric scriptures written by Vajradhara; by taking the essence of these scriptures, he will now write these verses.

With respect to cultivating proper guru devotion, as it is said in the lam-rim, the disciple who wants to attain liberation or enlightenment has to cultivate proper guru devotion. As we all desire

advantage and none of us wants disadvantage or loss, there's only one thing to do – we have to cultivate proper guru devotion.

PRESENTATION OF THE EXPLANATION

The way to be devoted to a guru

How to be devoted in general

Actual subject matter

BRIEF EXPLANATION

Correctness of being reverent toward a guru

VERSE 2

All the buddhas of the past, present and future,
Residing in every land in the ten directions,
Have paid homage to the tantric masters from whom they have
received the highest initiations.
(Is there need to mention that you should too?)

Just as the buddhas of the three times have revered the gurus from whom they received initiations, oral transmissions and tantric vows and teachings, so should we revere and respect them and cultivate proper guru devotion.

It's a mistake to regard only the guru who confers initiations as a vajra guru; we should also regard the guru who gives tantric teachings in the same way. Lama Je Tsong Khapa clarified this point.

So, it mentions here receiving the highest initiations from a guru. Just because a vase is put on our head doesn't necessarily mean we have received the initiation. An initiation should be given as the tantric scriptures state, by having its meaning explained: the initiations we have achieved and the paths that we have the karma to follow. When we have gained all this knowledge we have received a proper initiation.

Initiations are of three types: **causal**, to ripen our mind stream; **pathway**, through which we progress towards enlightenment; and **resultant**, into the fully enlightened state.

The initiation referred to here is the causal one, which is a bit different to the four initiations: vase, secret, wisdom and word.

The importance of cultivating proper guru devotion is stated in the seventeenth chapter of the Guhyasamaja Root Tantra, [*Sangdü Tsa Gyü*], which has 18 chapters.

HOW ONE GOES ABOUT BEING REVERENT

GENERAL TEACHING ON HOW TO BE DEVOTED

VERSE 3

Three times each day with supreme faith

You must show the respect you have for your guru who teaches
you (the tantric path)

By pressing your palms together, offering a mandala

As well as flowers and prostrating (touching) your head to his feet.

The buddhas of the three times prostrate to the vajra guru three times a day – morning, noon and evening. This shows that we, too, should cultivate proper guru devotion. That's the actual meaning of this verse.

This verse also describes in a general way how we should make offerings to our gurus: we should fold our hands in reverence, offer mandalas and flowers, and prostrate to the feet of our guru three times a day.

Once we have received an initiation, we have pledged, or given our word of honor [*Skt: samaya; Tib: dam-tsig*], to offer a mandala to our guru three times a day, and it's a great transgression if we forget. (Samaya means not to be transgressed.) However, this pledge is fulfilled by reciting *The Six-session Guru Yoga* daily.

So now there is an exception:

VERSE 4

If you hold ordination vows and (your guru) is a layman or your junior,
(In public) prostrate while facing such things as his scriptural texts in order to avoid worldly scorn
But in your mind (prostrate to your guru).

It's not appropriate for a fully ordained monk [*Skt: bhikshu; Tib: gelong*] to prostrate to a novice monk or a layman in public, because it can cause ordinary people to criticize and disparage the Dharma.

So what should you do in a gathering if you, the vajra disciple, is a bhikshu and your vajra guru is a novice or a layman? On such occasions, you should prostrate physically to a statue, stupa or scripture on your guru's altar but mentally prostrate to your guru.

By physically offering prostrations to scriptures or other holy objects you avoid causing the laypeople to generate bad feelings in their mind, but since mentally you are prostrating to your guru, you're fulfilling your commitment in that regard.

This is illustrated by an incident from the lives of the great masters Chandrakirti and Chandragomin, who often used to debate with each other. One day Chandrakirti, a monk, invited Chandragomin, a layman, to Nalanda Monastery, telling him he'd organize a grand procession of monks to greet him. But Chandragomin objected, saying that that would give the local laypeople a bad impression. However, Chandrakirti said he had a way around this: he was going to put a statue of Manjushri on a throne on a chariot just in front of Chandragomin, and in that way the people would think that the procession was for Manjushri.

So this is the kind of situation that this verse is talking about, but in a secluded area where there are no laypeople to generate a negative mind, you should prostrate directly to your lay guru, as is your commitment.

VERSE 5

As for serving (your guru) and showing him respect,
Such as obeying what he says, standing up (when he comes in)
and showing him to his seat –

These should be done even by those with ordination vows (whose
gurus are laymen or their juniors).

But (in public) avoid prostrating and unorthodox actions (such as
washing his feet).

This next verse shows the limits of the exception mentioned in the
previous one, where it explains what a fully ordained vajra disciple
should do in relation to a lay vajra master, even in public.

You can make material offerings, show general reverence, offer
him a cushion, stand up whether he's nearby or even far away, do
things to help him accomplish his plans or projects and so forth.

What you should avoid is offering physical prostrations directly or
washing his feet and so forth in the presence of lay people, as to do so
might give laypeople the wrong impression and cause them to
criticize.

THE REASON A MUTUAL INVESTIGATION IS NECESSARY

VERSE 6

In order for the words of honor of neither guru nor disciple to
degenerate,

There must be a mutual examination beforehand

(To determine if each can) brave a gurudisciple relationship.

We should try to examine a spiritual teacher before beginning a
guru-disciple relationship with him. Similarly, a guru should examine
a student before accepting him or her as a disciple.

This is very important, right from the start. Before cultivating
such an intimate relationship both should check each other very

carefully because if, once established, this relationship is broken, it is a transgression of samaya – bad for both guru and disciple.

However, once we have accepted a teacher as our vajra guru, we shouldn't continue examining him. That is to be done before accepting him as guru, and once we have done so we should only regard our guru as an enlightened being.

Further examination can only lead us to the vajra hell. Jetsun Milarepa said that when we are with our vajra guru we shouldn't seek out his faults; we should cultivate a proper outlook and regard him as a perfect being.

If we are successful in this we will be successful in our practice. If we want to practice properly we must cultivate proper guru devotion. Without it, despite diligent practice, we won't achieve anything worthwhile.

One great practitioner said: "No matter how much you try to seclude yourself in an isolated area, if you regard the buddhas and your gurus as enemies, your practice will be of no value because it will lack the root of substantial achievements."

Guru devotion is essential for success in practice. Certain sutras recommend that examination go on for as long as twelve years, if necessary. It is very important that such examination be done properly. When both guru and disciple are satisfied, the relationship can be established.

If the guru-disciple relationship is established without proper examination from either side, the sacred words of honor are in danger of degeneration. Therefore, we have to be very careful in this.

THE GURU WHO IS TO BE RELIED UPON OR AVOIDED

THE CHARACTER OF ONE TO BE AVOIDED

VERSE 7

A disciple with sense should not accept as a guru someone
Who lacks compassion

Or is prone to anger,
Is vicious, arrogant, possessive, undisciplined
Or boastful of his knowledge.

This verse explains the kind of guru we should not cultivate; it mentions some disqualifications.

An intelligent disciple should not cultivate such a guru.

He should possess great compassion – the wish that sentient beings be free from suffering and its cause. This is the most important qualification. If our guru is not compassionate there's the danger that he'll give up on us at the first sign of bad behavior. If he has great compassion, then no matter how offensive our actions, he won't forsake or neglect us. Therefore it's very important that our guru have great compassion.

As stated in the great commentary on Lama Chöpa by Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen, "However the mischievous child offends his parents and misbehaves and worries them, they won't lose love and compassion and will continue to value him. Although I, a vulgar rascal, don't deserve your compassion, please don't forsake me and guide me as parents guide their child.

- He shouldn't be prone to anger.
- He shouldn't be sadistic or hold a grudge.
- He shouldn't be arrogant.
- He shouldn't have a strong desire for possessions or wealth or cling strongly to material things.
- He should not be loose of character of body, speech and mind or careless in his practice of morality.

If the guru gambles and takes intoxicants, his disciples will follow the same path. We should try not to fall under the influence of such a guru. If possible, our guru should be like Nagtso Lotsawa's: he lived with Atisha for nineteen years during which time he couldn't see the tiniest stain or fault in him. We should try to cultivate a guru like that – one in whom we can't find even a single shortcoming.

Similarly, Khädrub Rinpoche offered praise to Lama Tsong Khapa: “No matter how the buddhas, with all their wisdom, try to see if you have breached any of your vows, even a minor downfall, they won’t be able to find a single one.” This emphasizes that we should choose a guru who keeps his vows properly.

- He should not boast of his abilities or be fond of revealing his qualifications all the time.

THE CHARACTER OF ONE TO BE DEVOTED TO

VERSE 8

(A guru should be) stable (in his actions),

Cultivated (in his speech),

Wise, patient and honest.

He should neither conceal his shortcomings nor pretend to possess qualities he lacks.

He should be an expert in the meanings (of the tantra) and in its ritual procedures (of medicine and turning back obstacles).

He should also have loving compassion and a complete knowledge of the scriptures.

This verse explains the kind of guru we should cultivate; it mentions some of the qualifications we should look for in a guru, the characteristics of the kind of guru who should be cultivated by an intelligent disciple.

- Stable means that he should have very subdued actions of body; he should abstain from non-virtuous actions of body, keep his bodily actions proper and moral; immutable.

- Cultivated refers to his speech; he should abstain from non-virtuous actions of speech, keep proper morality of speech, not hurt others by means of speech, sharp words, etc.

- Mentally, he should abstain from the three non-virtuous actions of mind as well as from pretentiousness; his mental attitude should be very pure.

- He should possess intelligence and discretion; if he doesn't, he can't lead us on the path to liberation.
- He should possess the three types of forbearance, or patience: a. forbearance of harm received from others; b. the ability to endure hardship; and c. the ability to hear profound teachings without being terrified.
- He should be true and unbiased, or impartial; not biased towards near relatives or repulsed by enemies; he should be even-minded towards all sentient beings.
- He shouldn't be pretentious or conceal his shortcomings. Pretentious means pretending to have supernatural knowledge that he doesn't have and concealing his shortcomings means always trying to hide his faults from others, especially with the intention of getting offerings.
- He should have the power to drive out interferences by means of mantras and tantric practice.
- He should be able to practice medicine, which actually means to help and benefit others by means of his teachings; to really pacify them.
- He should possess great compassion, the wish that all sentient beings' suffering be alleviated.
- He should have profound knowledge of the scriptures, especially the Tripitaka.

VERSE 9

He should have full expertise in both ten fields,
 Skill in the drawing of mandalas,
 Full knowledge of how to explain the tantra,
 Supreme pure faith
 And his senses fully under control.

He should possess the two sets of ten qualifications, as mentioned in *The Guru Puja*. These twenty things are the ten externals and the ten internals that a Highest Yoga Tantra guru should possess.

A vajra guru of the lower tantras needs only the external ten; the internal ten are not necessary, although if he does possess them it's all well and good. It's important to be familiar with these various qualities.

THE TEN INNER QUALITIES OF A GURU

1. The ability to visualize protection wheels and can eliminate interferences. Protection wheels are visualized just outside the mandala and the mere sight of it is enough to terrify negative forces.

2. The ability to tie protection knots.

3. Skill in conferring the vase and secret initiations, that is, the first and second initiations, which plant the seed to receive the buddha's form bodies.

4. Skill in conferring the transcendent wisdom and word initiations, that is, the third and fourth initiation, which plant the seed to receive the buddha's wisdom bodies. In the fourth – the word – initiation, the disciples are made to understand the meaning of yuganatha, or great union.

5. Skill in separating enemies of Dharma from their protectors, after which those enemies are eliminated.

6. Skill in making sculpted tormas and the offering ceremonies.

7. Skill in reciting mantras both verbally and without uttering words, that is, mental recitation, such as found in the Vajrayogini practice. Mental recitation is very profound and usually taught only during the giving of a tantric commentary.

8. Skill in the wrathful rituals. In order to be able to do this, the initiation must be taken properly, the words of honor kept purely and the deity actualized correctly.

9. Skilled in consecrating holy objects.

10. Skill in self initiation, offering mandalas and so forth.

THE TEN EXTERNAL QUALITIES OF A GURU

1. Skill in visualizing, drawing and constructing mandalas of deities.

2. Skill in single-pointed concentration on meditation deities.
3. Knowing how to do mudras correctly.
4. Skill in performing ritual dances.
5. Skill in sitting in the vajra posture and the half lotus as well.
6. Skill in mantra recitation.
7. Skill in making fire offerings [Tib: *jin-seg*].
8. Skill in all the other offering ceremonies.
9. Skill in the rituals for subduing enemies of the Dharma, the teacher and sentient beings; who always harm sentient beings.
10. Skill in concluding ceremonies. The buddhas and deities invoked in front at the beginning of a practice should be made to return to their former place from where they were invoked, although some may be made to dissolve into the images.

Question: How can we know if the guru has these qualities and qualifications?

Gen Rinpoche: Actually, if the guru is really an authentic teacher, most of the qualifications would be known because of his reputation as a learned lama and great practitioner, but you yourself can understand after you have examined him properly. As I mentioned before, you should cultivate a guru about whom you can confidently think, “If I take this teacher as my guru my faith won’t degenerate later.”

When your faith in him is resolute you can cultivate that teacher as your guru.

We have finished enumerating the two sets of ten qualifications that the vajra guru should possess. Just as when we go to an unknown place we have to cultivate friendship with somebody who knows the way and can lead us to it, in the same way, when heading for enlightenment we have to cultivate a guru who possesses the necessary qualifications to lead us there.

As Sakya Pandita said, “Even when buying a cow or a buffalo we check very carefully and throw dice to see if we should do so, how much more so, when seeking enlightenment, should we check carefully and cultivate the right guru?”

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A DISCIPLE

Now we come to the qualities a disciple should possess. It is important that the right teaching be given to the right disciple, a disciple with the right qualities, otherwise it's uncertain whether the teaching will benefit or not. If you lack some of the qualifications of a perfect disciple, you should purify your mind and accumulate merit. You have to create your enlightenment by yourself; nobody will bestow it upon you.

Vajradhara said, "Enlightenment cannot be found anywhere. Only by practicing the methods taught by the guru, purifying your mind and accumulating merit can you find enlightenment."

The qualities a disciple needs are given in two parts: the qualities of the disciple in general – the disciple of the graduated path to enlightenment – and the qualities of the advanced, extraordinary disciple, that is, a disciple of tantric practice.

THE THREE GENERAL QUALITIES OF A DISCIPLE

1. The disciple should be impartial and not have a biased attitude. This is most important.

2. The disciple should have discretion or intelligence, a good faculty of discernment.

If the disciple is dull and doesn't understand the subject even though it's taught a hundred times, there's little value in teaching that student.

For disciples with sharp intelligence, or discriminating awareness, everything becomes a teacher because they know what to cultivate and what to abandon. For dull, deluded or closed-minded students, making a guru-disciple relationship is like purposely seeking the lower realms because can't observe it properly.

There's an illustration to clarify this point. In Lord Buddha's time, the great benefactors would invite the Buddha and his *shravakas* for lunch and it was customary that a discourse would be given after lunch. The eldest monk would sit on a cushion and give a discourse. Once the eldest was a monk who didn't know anything and he sat on

the cushion saying repeatedly, “Knowing nothing is suffering,” referring to himself.

The others thought that he meant that ignorance is the cause of suffering and contemplated the thought that all suffering comes from ignorance.

As a result of this, they achieved liberation. This shows how important intelligence is.

3. Not only should the disciple have an impartial, unbiased attitude and intelligence but also keen interest.

This is probably the most important quality, because if the student isn’t enthusiastic, it’s like giving a discourse to a scarecrow; the teachings won’t be kept in mind.

As a great Kadampa geshe said, “It’s no use giving teachings to those without keen interest. No matter how many you give, they’re of little value. You can lead a horse to water but you can’t make it drink. Even if you push its head into the water, it’ll just shake off the little water that does stick.”

So these are the three general qualities that a disciple should possess.

THE THREE QUALITIES OF A TANTRIC DISCIPLE

The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion contains the essential teaching of Vajradhara himself as summarized by Ashvagosha. In other words, these teachings were actually given by Vajradhara in the same way that *The Guru Puja* also has its source in the tantras. Every verse comes from the tantras and contains their essential meaning.

1. The disciple should be fond of doing virtuous actions and practicing the meditations.

2. The disciple should always show respect to the guru. This has great significance. It says “always,” that is, all the time. It doesn’t mean that when your guru is telling you some story you respect him and when he’s rebuking you, you don’t. You must always respect him, all the time, just as Jetsun Milarepa always showed respect to Marpa, no matter what.

3. The disciple should always have strong devotion and make offerings to the meditation deity and always practice the yoga method of that deity.

Whatever initiations we have taken, we should continue that practice for the rest of our life.

Geshe Potowa said that when we engage in our tantric practices we shouldn't be like a dog eating. If you give a dog a piece of meat he'll swallow it whole without tasting or enjoying it and then look around for the next bit. We shouldn't be like that. Having taken an initiation, we should practice it with care and enjoyment.

Disciples possessing these qualities are the really good ones. The qualities that make a disciple a bad one are similar to those of the guru we shouldn't seek. A disciple should not lack compassion, be prone to anger, have sadistic views or lack faith in the guru or meditation deities. This concludes the discussion of the qualities of the guru to be cultivated and the disciple who cultivates the guru. Next comes how to avoid disrespect for the guru and how to cultivate respect. This has two parts: how to abandon disrespect and how to cultivate respect.

EXTENSIVE EXPLANATION OF HOW TO BE DEVOTED TO A GURU

Giving up irreverence

- (a) Abandoning belittling or deriding your guru;**
- (b) Abandoning disturbing your guru's mind;**
- (c) The invisible consequences of disrespecting your guru;**
and
- (d) The summary of the meaning of all these verses.**

Abandoning and belittling the guru: general

VERSE 10

Having become the disciple of such a protecting (guru),

Should you then despise him from your heart,
You will reap continual suffering as if you had disparaged all the
buddhas.

If, having become a vajra disciple, you intentionally belittle your vajra guru – the guru who has given you initiations, taught you tantric practices and conferred tantric vows upon you – you will have to undergo immense and constant suffering.

Why? Because belittling your guru is the same as belittling all the buddhas. In the same way that making offerings to just one pore of your guru creates the inconceivable amount of merit of making offerings to the three time buddhas, so too does any negativity created with your guru become extremely heavy.

How do we belittle our guru? When we say things like “He doesn’t have good morality,” “He has no enthusiastic perseverance,” “He’s stingy,” or “He’s so short-tempered,” we’re creating that kind of negative karma – belittling means deriding, disparaging and so forth.

Geshe Potowa said, “In degenerate times disciples will belittle their guru in an honorific way,” that is, they’ll do it politely. This might seem not so bad, but it’s still belittling.

When Atisha came to Tibet he told the Tibetans, “All the major and minor realizations are developed by relying on the guru but since you Tibetans regard your guru as simply an ordinary man, there’s no way you can develop any realizations.”

Geshe Potowa also said that we should carefully examine a potential guru before establishing a guru-disciple relationship, but once we have taken him as our guru, we should cultivate proper guru devotion.

Even though he might pretend to be poorly educated, we still shouldn’t belittle him but instead cultivate pure guru devotion. Since the law of cause and effect is inevitable, if we behave in this way, in future we will meet with gurus such as Manjushri or Maitreya Buddha.

The benefits are infinite.

Vajrapani once asked Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, “What are the negative consequences of belittling the guru?” Taken aback, Guru Shakyamuni replied, “Oh, Vajrapani, please don’t ask me that! If I were to enumerate those consequences, humans, gods and even dauntless bodhisattvas would be terrified and die of shock. However, if you steel yourself by developing great courage before listening, although the negative consequences of belittling the guru are limitless, I’ll summarize a few for you.”

The consequences of belittling the guru are so unbearable that spelling them out would terrify even Vajrapani.

Abandoning and belittling the guru: specific

VERSE 11

If you are foolish enough to despise your guru,
You will contract contagious diseases and those caused by
harmful spirits and will die (a horrible death) caused by
demons, plagues or poison.

The invisible consequence is rebirth in hell.

Here, the visible consequences are enumerated. If you belittle your guru you will suffer from infectious diseases and die from harm inflicted by other sentient beings, such as snake bite or tiger attack.

Other ways you can die as a result of despising your guru are demonic interference, incurable disease and poison.

As has been said, “The greatly deluded and extremely ignorant belittlers of their guru will die from such diseases.”

As this implies, even those who have a little knowledge will not belittle their guru; only the extremely ignorant will do so.

VERSE 12

You will be killed by (wicked) kings or fire, by poisonous snakes,
water, witches or bandits,
By harmful spirits or savages, and then be reborn in a hell.

As a consequence of belittling your guru you can also be executed by the king or die from snake bite, drowning or bandit attack.

Having been deprived of life by such interferences, you will be born in the great hell.

The source of these consequences is *The Great Hevajra Tantra*.

Abandoning disturbing your guru's mind

VERSE 13

Never disturb your guru's mind.

Should you be foolish enough to do so, you will surely boil in hell.

At no time, by neither body, speech nor mind, should you disturb your guru's holy mind.

But if, out of deep ignorance or closed-mindedness, you do, you'll be born in the great hells and from all sides be burned by fire.

The source of this statement is *The Secret Ornamental Moon Spot Tantra*, one of the great tantric scriptures.

It is also very clear in many sutras that you shouldn't cultivate friendship with those who have belittled their guru; you shouldn't even drink water with them.

If you do associate with them, your sacred words of honor will degenerate and, no matter how hard you try, you won't be able to achieve any powerful attainments.

The invisible consequences of disrespecting your guru

VERSE 14

Whatever fearful hells have been taught, such as Avici, the Hell of Uninterrupted Pain,

It is clearly explained that those who disparage their guru will have to remain there (for a very long time).

Visible consequences are those bad results that you can see in your lifetime; invisible ones are those that you have to experience in future lifetimes.

This verse refers to the latter. The great hell – Avici, the Hell of Uninterrupted Suffering [*Tib: rab-tsor, immense heat*], the Hell Without Respite – the worst hell, as described in the sutra teachings.

Disciples who belittle their guru will be reborn in that hell and will have to remain there for a very long time.

One of the great tantras, *The Ornament of Vajra Essence Tantra*, says that no matter how hard they try – abandoning sleep by night and food by day, even for eons – disciples who belittle their guru will not only be unable to achieve any powerful attainments, they won't even have auspicious dreams, and all their practices will become causes for rebirth in hell.

These are some of the invisible consequences of belittling the guru.

The Heruka Root Tantra [Demchog Tsa Gyü] says that no matter how hard they try to receive initiations, enter the mandala and engage in tantric practices, disciples who have a very weak relationship with their guru – that is, who have belittled their guru – won't be able to achieve any powerful attainments.

The Guhyasamaja Root Tantra says that – if they properly cultivate a vajra guru, receive initiations and practice correctly – even disciples who have committed the five immediate negativities, the most serious of non-virtues, can attain enlightenment in the one lifetime, whereas those who have not created any such negativities but have belittled their guru from the depths of their heart will never be able to attain anything, no matter how they practice.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that *The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion* was written especially for disciples who take profound teachings from any gurus who just happen to be around but don't cultivate devotion to any of them.

Out of his great compassion, Acharya Ashvagoshā summarized what such disciples should do in order to help them understand their commitments properly.

Another scripture says that if you don't regard the teacher from whom you hear even one verse of teaching as a guru, you'll be reborn as a dog a hundred times or as a being that feeds on the flesh of its own mother.

Thus, the great Tilopa told Naropa, "For all these reasons you should be skilled in cultivating proper guru devotion."

A great Kagyu lama once said that if you allow the sunshine of your fervent regard to fall on the holy physical form of your guru, the vajra river of inspiration and blessings will flow.

Another said that if you try to meditate on emptiness without supplicating your guru, you're like a cave facing away from the sun – it's impossible for the light to shine in. In other words, if you meditate on emptiness without making requests to your guru, your practice won't bring realizations and you won't be able to strike at the heart of your ego-grasping ignorance.

In his *Uttaratantra*, Maitreya Buddha said that you can realize emptiness only when you have fervent regard, or great respect, for your guru.

Gampopa's disciples once asked him how he had achieved the realization of mahamudra. He replied, "When I was able to keep my guru, Milarepa, in mind all the time, that's when I realized mahamudra."

Similarly, Jetsun Milarepa said that since the guru is the quintessence of all the buddhas, if you can see him in his real form of dharmakaya, you will spontaneously and effortlessly receive all the inspiration and blessings of all the buddhas.

So, I think that's enough citations clarifying these points; now please contemplate them properly.

The summary of the meaning of all these verses

VERSE 15

Therefore exert yourself whole-heartedly never to belittle your
tantric master,

Who makes no display of his great wisdom and virtues.

It's now clear that at no time should we belittle the vajra guru. The consequences of doing so are obvious. As mentioned above, Lama Tsong Khapa said, "*The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion* is made up of quotations of Buddha Vajradhara himself, summarized in book form for those disciples who seek out many gurus but don't cultivate proper guru devotion with any of them. In order to help such disciples, warn them, and save them from the worst consequences of belittling their guru and transgressing their guru-disciple relationship, Ashvagosha wrote this book."

When Sadaparudita first generated guru devotion for Dharmodgata he was on the highest path of accumulation, but as he cultivated proper guru devotion, he was able to attain the seventh bodhisattva stage within seven years – which, according to sutra, is impossible. However, his great guru devotion enabled him to do so.

As Vajradhara said, we should pray not even to see – even in our dreams – or hear of those disciples who have violated their guru-disciple relationship.

This completes our discussion of the verses dealing with abandoning disrespect for the guru. Those on how to cultivate respect are next.

HOW TO GO ABOUT BEING REVERENT

Cultivating respect for the guru has eight divisions:

- (a) Offering material**
- (b) Perceiving the guru as buddha**
- (c) Acting according to the guru's word**
- (d) Looking after the guru's materials and entourage**
- (e) Purifying temporal behavior**
- (f) Offering body, speech and mind**
- (g) Abandoning pride**
- (h) Not acting according to your own wishes**

Arranging teachings in outline, or summarized, form helps us understand them properly. Those with sharp intelligence can understand the essence of an entire text just from its table of contents.

OFFERING MATERIAL

(i) Making offerings to purify disrespect

(ii) Offering ourselves and all our possessions

(iii) The validity of making such offerings

(iv) How to cultivate pure words of honor every day

Making offerings to purify disrespect

VERSE 16

(If, out of lack of awareness, you have shown disrespect) to your guru,

Reverently present an offering to him and seek his forgiveness. Then in the future such harm as plagues will not befall you.

If, because of our overabundant delusions and recklessness, we have generated or shown disrespect for our guru, we should make offerings to our guru with both respectful mind and respectful gesture – whatever we present we should offer with both hands.

In this, we should copy the great masters who were learned and well-skilled in this field. We can learn a great deal from the way they behaved. When observing great masters, we shouldn't be so concerned with the way they recite mantras and so forth as with how they behave purely in front of their gurus.

Also, the offerings we make to purify disrespect and ask for forgiveness should be charming, attractive things – good quality things that we like, not things we don't.

If we do this properly and ask forgiveness, then in future we won't be afflicted by infectious diseases or the other consequences mentioned above.

To show that he's not just making this up, in his commentary, Lama Tsong Khapa quotes *The Long Paramadya Commentary* as the source of this method of counteracting the effects of disrespectful behavior.

Offering ourselves and all our possessions

VERSE 17

It has been taught that for the guru to whom you have pledged your word of honor (to visualize as one with your meditation deity),

You should willingly sacrifice your wife, children and even your life, although these are not easy to give away.

Is there need to mention your fleeting wealth?

There's a Tibetan term in this verse, *dam-tsig lobpön*, samaya guru – the guru to whom you have pledged your word of honor – the guru you regard or visualize as inseparable from your deity.

For example, if you practice Yamantaka, the guru you regard as inseparable from the body, speech and mind of Yamantaka. That is your samaya guru. Of course, it's the same with any deity that you practice, such as Avalokiteshvara.

We should offer our samaya guru our wife, our children, our life itself. Therefore, if we're supposed to offer things like that, which are so difficult to give away, to practice generosity with, what need is there to talk about our fluctuating wealth?

The source of this statement is *The Samputa Tantra*.

The validity of making such offerings

Now we go into the details of the validity of this second offering, to prove that it is not meaningless, carries a profound meaning and was propounded by Vajradhara.

VERSE 18

(Such practice of offering) can confer even buddhahood on a
zealous (disciple) in his or her very lifetime,
Which otherwise might be difficult to attain even in countless
millions of eons.

The validity of making such offerings is that the pure abode of enlightenment, which is very difficult to actualize no matter how many eons we try, can be achieved within the hundred-year lifespan of this degenerate age by the pure cultivation of a vajra guru.

The Kalachakra Root Tantra clearly states that no matter how many offerings you make to the Three Jewels in a million eons or how much charity to sentient beings you practice over the same period, you still can't actualize enlightenment in a single lifetime, but if you cultivate pure guru devotion without transgression you can actualize enlightenment in a single lifetime of this degenerate age.

How to cultivate pure words of honor every day

VERSE 19

Always keep your words of honor.
Always make offerings to the enlightened ones.
And always make offerings to your guru, for he is the same as all
the buddhas.

There are several points here so we'll take them one by one.

“Always abide by your words of honor” means that your first word of honor to the guru who gave you the initiation of a certain deity is to always abide in that deity's yoga.

“Always make offerings to the buddhas” means always make offerings to the buddhas, like Vajrasattva and so forth, in order to complete the accumulation of merit.

There are four types of offering – external, internal, offering of suchness and secret offering – and you should constantly make these offerings, visualizing them as extensive as space itself, and thereby complete your accumulation of merit.

“Always make offerings to your guru...” means always make offerings to your guru because as an object of accumulating merit, he is like all the buddhas.

VERSE 20

Those who wish to (attain) the inexhaustible (state of a buddha's wisdom body)

Should give to their guru whatever they themselves find pleasing,
From the most trifling objects to those of best quality.

Alone, the word “inexhaustible” here is a bit vague, but through his kindness, Lama Tsong Khapa has clarified it. It means that we'll achieve the dharmakaya, which is as inexhaustible as space; infinite. So it's saying that disciples who wish to attain this inexhaustible state should make material offerings – from the smallest to the greatest – to their guru.

Furthermore, the guru, in order to help dissipate the disciple's craving desire, should accept these things.

VERSE 21

Giving (to your guru) is the same as making continual offerings to all the buddhas.

From such giving much merit is gathered.

From such collection comes the supreme powerful attainment (of buddhahood).

Making offerings to your guru fulfills the requirement of making continual offerings to all the buddhas, and by doing so you accumulate the merit that brings the supreme powerful attainment of enlightenment.

Since you actualize the highest powerful attainment of enlightenment, what need is there to mention all other ordinary powerful attainments?

Obviously, you accomplish these by the way. This and all the other ideas written down by Ashvagoshā have various tantras as their source.

So, now we have finished the first of the eight divisions of cultivating respect for the guru, that of making material offerings.

PERCEIVING THE GURU AS BUDDHA

This has two subsections:

- (i) regarding him as buddha and
- (ii) not stepping over his shadow

Regarding him as buddha

VERSE 22

Therefore, a disciple with the good qualities of compassion, generosity, moral self-control and patience
Should never regard the guru and Buddha Vajradhara as different.

First comes a description of the good disciple, one who has developed the qualities of great compassion – the root of the Mahayana path – who abides by the cultivation of pure morality, and has dedicated his or her body, speech and mind to the welfare of other sentient beings.

The disciple who is preoccupied by working for other sentient beings, abides by the three types of Mahayana morality and can endure all the hardships of the path should regard the guru as inseparable, not separate, from Vajradhara himself.

As Geshe Potowa said, “Disciples who regard Vajradhara as better than their own guru have no possibility of gaining powerful attainments.” This makes it clear that if, while practicing any meditation deity and doing the visualization, you regard the meditation deity and your guru as separate – the deity as very high and your guru as very low, separate – because of that great mistake, you won’t be able to actualize any powerful attainments, even if you meditate for a hundred years.

On the other hand, if you meditate on the inseparability of the meditation deity and your guru, it’s impossible that you won’t actualize any powerful attainments.

Furthermore, Vajradhara assured us that the guru is an emanation of himself. He said that in degenerate times such as this, we shouldn’t worry that we haven’t met Vajradhara because at such times he would manifest as the vajra guru.

Therefore, we should develop the skill of recognizing Vajradhara as our vajra guru, because that’s how he manifests at times like this.

So that’s the actual meaning of this subject, regarding the vajra guru as inseparable from Vajradhara.

Not stepping over your guru’s shadow

VERSE 23

If you should never step on even (your guru’s) shadow because the fearsome consequences are the same as destroying a stupa,
Is there need to mention never stepping on or over his shoes or seat, (sitting in his place, or riding) his mount?

The text says that the negativity of doing so is the same as demolishing a stupa, which is one of the five near immediate negativities.

And if the negativity of stepping over the shadow of the vajra guru is so grave, it's obvious that stepping over his shoes, mattress or cushions or riding his conveyance, such as his horse, must be much worse than that.

The instruction not to step over the guru's shadow was given by Vajradhara in the tantras.

Lama Tsong Khapa's elaborate commentary on *The Fifty Verses, The Fulfillment of All Hopes*, contains many quotations substantiating such advice. This commentary can be found in the first volume of the eighteen that make up Je Tsong Khapa's collected works [Tib: *Sung-bum*].

Now we come to the third division of cultivating respect,

ACTING ACCORDING TO THE GURU'S WORD

VERSE 24

(Disciples) having great sense should obey the words of their guru joyfully and with enthusiasm.

If you lack the knowledge or ability (to do what he says), explain in (polite) words why you cannot (comply).

This verse says that highly intelligent disciples should listen to the words, or orders, of their guru with great pleasure, or bliss; they should hear whatever he has to say with much enthusiasm and perseverance.

Whenever your guru speaks, listen with pleasure. If you can do what he asks, if you can act in accordance with his words, you should accept, but if it's too hard, then explain your difficulty politely.

Don't ignore what he's asking, but tell him intelligently why you can't do it. If your guru tells you to do something that you feel goes

against your three types of morality, you can avoid doing it, but explain intelligently and unemotionally why.

One of the Jataka Tales is about a previous life of Guru Shakyamuni when he was born as a Brahmin disciple. The Brahmin teacher told his disciples to go out and steal for him. His logic was that since the universe was made by Brahma, if, as sons of Brahma, Brahmins take things, it's no more stealing than if a son takes things belonging to his father – since they are his own possessions, he's not stealing.

However, the disciple who was the previous life of Buddha didn't go. His teacher said, "You don't seem to like me." Guru Shakyamuni replied, "Theft is at no time religious," and intelligently explained many ways in which stealing wasn't good. Later he became one of this guru's best disciples.

Intelligence is always stressed as one of the very best qualities a disciple can have.

The fine print at the beginning of *The Guru Puja* says that at all times we should look for our guru's qualities, not his faults or shortcomings. By seeing his qualities we will achieve all powerful attainments; by seeing his faults, we won't.

Lama Tsong Khapa said, "The practice of disciples who pretend to listen to teachings and meditate without cultivating pure guru devotion is merely an echo; it's nothing. It has no potential to yield any result."

Also, in his *Abhisamayalankara* commentary, Gyältsab Rinpoche said, "Listening to teachings without cultivating proper guru devotion is like turning medicine into poison; it has no potential to bring a good result."

All this shows that if we cultivate pure guru devotion, we're sure to attain realizations, as illustrated by a story of three of Atisha's disciples – Dromtönpa, his translator and secretary; Amé Jangchub Rinchen, his cook; and Gönpa Wangchug Gyeltsen (the Great Neljorpa, or Mahayogi), who spent all his time in meditation.

Atisha was always going to give him teachings and he remained in seclusion. So Mahayogi thought, “I spend all my time in meditation whereas the others don’t meditate at all. I must have higher realizations.”

Atisha was aware of this, so called them all together and examined them. He found that of the three, Dromtönpa had the highest realizations, Amé Jangchub Rinchen the second highest, and Mahayogi the least.

This example emphasizes the importance of guru devotion.

Question: So, we don’t always have to do what our guru tells us?

Gen Rinpoche: Ashvagosha says that we should always try to act in accordance with the words of our guru but are exempt if what we are asked to do is very heavy. In that case we can explain politely why we can’t do it. If your guru asks you to do something against the three types of morality – for example, say he asks you to kill a human being – you can decline.

Angulimala’s guru told him he could attain liberation by killing a thousand human beings in a week and wearing their fingers as a garland. So, you don’t need to doubt – these exceptions are mentioned in the *Lam-rim Chen-mo* and the *Jatakamala*, and the source of this advice is Vajradhara.

VERSE 25

It is from your guru that powerful attainments, higher rebirth and happiness come.

Therefore make a whole-hearted effort never to transgress your guru’s advice.

This verse tells us why we should follow our guru’s orders – we have to act according to his words because all powerful attainments, both common and supreme, are accomplished only by relying on him.

Through proper reliance on our guru we will achieve the prosperity of human beings and gods.

Once again, this statement comes from one of the tantras, *The Hevajra Tantra*. That text clearly states that if you abide by the words of your guru you will achieve all powerful attainments and even in this life receive all happiness.

However, going against what he says will only lead you to the lower realms, which is why Lama Tsong Khapa says that going against your guru's words or disrespecting him is an extremely grave negativity.

According to tantra, the speech of the buddha is the sambhogakaya, so one word of the guru is the equivalent of one sambhogakaya. That's why it's extremely negative to transgress the guru's words.

LOOKING AFTER THE GURU'S MATERIALS AND ENTOURAGE

VERSE 26

(Guard) your guru's belongings as you would your own life.
Treat even your guru's beloved (family) with the same (respect you show) for him.

(Have affectionate regard for) those closely around him as if they were your own dearest kin.

Single-mindedly think (in this way) at all times.

You should look after your guru's possessions properly – you should cherish them as much as you do your own life.

Before Dromtönpa met Atisha, he was studying with another guru. By night he would tend his guru's cattle; by day he would spin yarn with his hands, soften leather with his feet and, as his lama had a wife and many children, always carry his guru's children on his back.

When he met Atisha and told him about his previous realizations and merit, Atisha said, "Your greatest merit was created when you were serving that lama."

Therefore we, too, should respect and serve those closest to our guru – his family members, his foremost servants and helpers and so forth – learning from the lives of the great practitioners like Jetsun Milarepa and Dromtönpa.

When Gyälwa Dromtönpa was serving his guru in Kham, he used to lie in the mud so that his guru’s wife could sit on his back while she was milking the cows. Milarepa did the same thing; he had Marpa’s wife, Dagmema, sit on him while she milked the cows.

You should also treat your guru’s servants and so forth in the same way that you treat your beloved relatives. “Single-mindedly think (in this way) at all times” means that you must constantly keep this idea in mind so that it becomes very clear.

From the above you can now understand what Geshe Tölungpa meant when he said, “I get greater merit by giving food to my guru Loba’s dog than by inviting all the monks of Western Tibet and offering them a feast.” [He was called Tölungpa because he lived in Tölung; his ordination name was Rinchen Nyingpo. Similarly, Loba means a person from Lo; he was referring to Kadampa Geshe Chengawa.]

This is not a fabrication. *The Guhyasamaja Root Tantra* clearly states that it is much more meritorious to make offerings to one pore of your vajra guru than to the buddhas of the three times. As your guru is the representative of all buddhas, this merit far exceeds all others.

(If you make very clear, unmistakable notes during these discourses and keep them properly, they will form a commentary to *The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*. This commentary is very rare; the most famous is Lama Tsong Khapa’s. So if you preserve your notes, you’ll have a second commentary.)

PURIFYING TEMPORAL BEHAVIOR

This fifth section of cultivating respect for your guru has three subsections:

- (i) avoiding bad behavior;**
- (ii) cultivating good behavior;**
- (iii) avoiding other bad behavior in general.**

Avoiding bad behavior has two parts: ***what to avoid in the guru's field of vision*** and

what to avoid in the guru's range of hearing.

What to avoid in the guru's field of vision

VERSE 27

Never sit on the (same) bed or seat (as your guru), nor walk ahead of him.

(At teachings do not) wear your hair in a top-knot, (a hat, shoes or any weapons.

Never) touch a seat (before he sits down or if he happens to sit on the ground.

Do not) place your hands (proudly) on your hips or wring them (before him).

When he is standing you shouldn't sit on a cushion or a mattress. If your guru is sitting on the bare ground you shouldn't sit on a cushion.

When traveling or walking on a road together you shouldn't walk in front of him; he should go first.

All these points have their source in *The Ornament of the Vajra Essence Tantra*.

Similarly, you shouldn't wear your hair in a topknot or in a plait tied around your forehead while in the presence of your guru.

If there is a long mattress on which you are going to sit together, you shouldn't step over it before your guru sits down; if you do, it's a downfall and you create negative karma.

Also, you shouldn't sit with your hands on your hips or wring your hands in his presence.

VERSE 28

Never sit or recline while your guru is standing (or lie while he is sitting).

Always be ready to stand up and serve him skillfully in an excellent manner.

While your lama is standing, don't sit or lie down. This is not made up but comes from what was said by Vajradhara himself.

You should always be very quick to do whatever you can do for your guru. Don't be lazy or lethargic but very active in performing such tasks.

VERSE 29

In the presence of your guru never do such things as spit, (cough or sneeze without covering your head.

Never) stretch out your legs when at your seat, nor walk back and forth (without a reason before him.

And never) argue.

You shouldn't spit, expel snot or blow your nose in front of your guru. Nor should you stretch your legs out when sitting before him.

Similarly, in his presence, don't stroll about here and there in an arrogant manner, as if out for your morning walk, or quarrel or argue with others.

VERSE 30(a)

Never massage or rub your limbs.

Do not sing, dance or play musical instruments (other than for religious purposes).

As it says here, you shouldn't rub your limbs or your feet in front of your guru, just as you shouldn't wring your hands. Don't sing or dance in front of him or play musical instruments, unless it's during a religious ceremony. These are some of the things that you should not do within your guru's field of vision.

What to avoid in the guru's range of hearing

VERSE 30(b)

And never chatter idly or speak in excess (or too loudly) within range of (your guru's) hearing.

The rest of this verse says that you shouldn't gossip within earshot of your guru, where he can hear your frivolous talk and chatter.

These admonitions to curb such wrong behavior and bad habits within your guru's sense perception come from *The Ornament of the Vajra Essence Tantra* and *The Vajramala Guhyasamaja Explanation Tantra*.

Cultivating good behavior

VERSE 31

(When your guru enters the room), get up from your seat and bow your head slightly.

Sit (in his presence) respectfully.

At night or at rivers or on dangerous paths, with (your guru's) permission you may walk before him.

If you are sitting, stand up when your guru comes into view. When you sit, do so very demurely and not in a slovenly way that reflects your untamed mind.

If an apple tree is well laden, all its branches hang down; similarly, if your mind is well tamed, your behavior is very subdued.

Try to be on your best behavior in front of your guru and not reveal your unsubdued nature.

Verse 27 said that you should not walk ahead of your guru, but this verse offers an exception. If you are traveling in a dangerous place you can go first; under such circumstances, it's not right for your guru to go ahead. For the same reason you can also walk in front of him at night.

Similarly, when crossing a river by foot, you should go first to check the depth or for danger.

This advice also comes from the Ornament of *The Vajra Essence Tantra*. When checking the validity of such teachings, you should be able to trace them back to Vajradhara. If you can do so, there's no need to look for any other source, just as when you trace a river back to its source, you can't find any other origin for it.

Avoiding other bad behavior in general

VERSE 32

In the direct sight of the guru,
(a disciple) with sense should not (sit) with his or her body
twisted around or lean (casually) against a pillar and so forth.

Never crack your knuckles, (play with your fingers or clean your nails).

When in front of their guru, intelligent disciples endowed with discretion sit correctly, not in a slovenly or arrogant fashion. Nor should they lean on pillars or walls for support.

Furthermore, don't crack your knuckles etc. The sublime being who said this was Ashvagoshā, who cited Vajradhara in *The Ornament of the Vajra Essence Tantra* in support of this statement.

OFFERING BODY, SPEECH AND MIND

VERSE 33

When washing (your guru's) feet or body, drying, massaging or (shaving) him,
Precede such actions with (three) prostrations and at their conclusion do the same.
Then attend (to yourself) as much as you like.

Before you wash your guru's feet, bathe his body or cut his hair, offer three prostrations. When you have finished, offer three more. After that, you can attend to your own needs.

VERSE 34

Should you need to address (your guru) by name, add the title "Your Presence" after it.
To generate respect for him in others, further honorifics may also be used.

Next comes the offering of speech. Whenever you utter your guru's name, don't leave it naked. For example, when you quote him, say, "I heard it from his great, holy speech."

Pabongka Rinpoche said that we use our guru's bare name too casually, without praise or honorific, but that he felt very uncomfortable whenever he heard his own guru's name spoken like that. That's why when we quote our lama we should say something like, "I heard it from his radiant, holy mouth."

In the commentary, Lama Tsong Khapa says, "For example, if the guru's name is Rinchen Dorje, you should say, 'My precious lord Rinchen Dorje spoke of this and said....' By this, having caught the attention of others, they become reverent to the guru."

Similarly, in his commentary on the Vinaya Sutra, Acharya Gunaprabha said that whenever you take the name of the preceptor

who bestowed vows upon you, you should say, “From his great radiant mouth....”

Therefore we should act in accordance with the following short story. Once Lama Tsong Khapa was giving a teaching just above the site where Sera Monastery was later built, when Khädrub Rinpoche came to meet him for the first time. He asked a nun living there where the venerable Tsong Khapa could be found. She didn’t answer immediately but went inside, washed her mouth, lit some incense and replied, “I don’t know anything about the name you just said, but if you mean my Venerable Gracious Guru, His Presence Je Tsong Khapa resides over there.”

Khädrub-je was very impressed by this nun’s subdued behavior and said that this is how those who really abide by the vinaya should act.

Thus, when mentioning your guru’s name in front of others, in order to arouse respect in them for your guru, add honorifics before and after his name.

ABANDONING PRIDE

Now the seventh division of cultivating respect for your guru, the elimination of arrogance in front of him.

This has three subsections:

- (i) abandoning arrogance when taking orders from your guru;***
- (ii) abandoning arrogance when listening to discourses and so forth; and***
- (iii) eliminating arrogance in all actions.***

Abandoning arrogance when taking orders from your guru

VERSE 35

When asking for your guru's advice, (first announce why you have come).

With palms pressed together at your heart, listen to what he tells you without (letting your mind) wander about.

Then (when he has spoken) you should reply, "I shall do exactly as you have said."

First check the sincerity of your wish to work for your guru and your ability to do so. Go to him with folded hands and ask reverently, "Can I be of any help to you?"

When he does ask you to do something, listen to what he says without arrogance and with folded hands. When he has finished speaking, say, "I will do as you have said."

VERSE 36

After doing (what your guru has told you), report (what has happened) in polite, gentle words.

Should you yawn or cough, (clear your throat or laugh in his presence), cover your mouth with your hand.

Whenever you smile or laugh in front of your guru, cover your mouth with your handkerchief or hand. If you have to spit, you should take your handkerchief out slowly.

When you have finished doing the work he asked you to do, with reverence, fold your hands and tell him, "I have finished that work." This, too, has as its source the Ornament of *The Vajra Essence Tantra*.

Abandoning arrogance when listening to discourses and so forth

VERSE 37

If you wish to receive a certain teaching, request three times with your palms pressed together while kneeling before him with your (right) knee.

(Then at his discourse) sit humbly with respect, wearing appropriate clothing that is neat (and clean, without ornaments, jewelry or cosmetics).

When listening to teachings you should pay attention mindfully, dress properly, sit in a very subdued, well-composed way and keep your behavior in check.

When asking for a special teaching, kneel on your right knee and, with folded hands, make the request three times.

All the great, sublime beings attained realizations by cultivating perfect guru devotion; since we, too, want to attain realizations, we should also know these things.

Just as the great sublime beings of the past – Milarepa, Dromtönpa, Khädrub Rinpoche, Geshe Chengawa and so many others – cultivated proper guru devotion, served their gurus all their life and attained high realizations, so should we emulate these great beings and cultivate proper guru devotion as explained by Vajradhara.

In the *Lam-rim Chen-mo*, Je Rinpoche explained how to practice guru yoga. First we prove to ourselves that the guru is buddha through logical reasoning and various quotations, thus becoming fully convinced that our guru is, indeed, buddha.

Then, seeing that our guru is buddha but in the aspect of the deity we practice, our guru yoga practice will be effective. If we try to practice without this recognition, we won't achieve anything.

So, since we all cherish ourselves and none of us wishes the slightest of sufferings, we should really try to do the right thing. And as we do have high regard for Milarepa, we should try to emulate him and the way he cultivated guru devotion. Milarepa cultivated proper guru devotion with Marpa, and Marpa with his gurus, especially Naropa, and Naropa with Tilopa, and Dromtönpa with

Atisha. To really appreciate all this, we should read the scriptures that explain about guru devotion. Then when we practice meditation in the context of proper guru devotion, interdependently, our realizations will increase like a waxing moon.

Ra Lotsawa said, “During the final decline of the doctrine, although there’ll be many practitioners, few will actualize the end because they’ll lack the necessary skills. Only those who cultivate the perfect guru, deity and Dharma protector will be able to actualize.”

Therefore, when we request teachings from our guru we should approach him in a composed manner, kneel on our right knee, fold our hands and request three times.

Also, in his presence, we should wear proper, clean clothing and not wear jewelry or try to make ourselves beautiful.

Abandoning arrogance in all actions.

VERSE 38

Whatever you do to serve (your guru) or show him respect should never be done with an arrogant mind.

Instead you should be like a newly-wed bride, timid, bashful and very subdued.

However properly we have revered our guru and made offerings, it should not be sullied by arrogance. In his presence we should try to maintain subdued behavior all the time, without arrogance.

We should act with decency and not always be looking around here and there.

The text says we should act like a newlywed bride, who shyly bows her head and acts very quietly.

VERSE 39

In the presence of (the guru) who teaches you (the path), stop acting in a conceited, coquettish manner.

As for boasting to others what you have done (for your guru), examine (your conscience) and discard all such acts.

You should check with your own intelligence and try to avoid doing acting in these ways.

Also, when walking with your guru, if you walk right behind him you run the risk of stepping on his shadow, which is very bad.

Also, if you walk alongside him you might walk too fast and get ahead. Therefore, walk to his side, just behind him, in a very skillful way.

NOT ACTING ACCORDING TO YOUR OWN WISHES

This is the eighth and final section of cultivating respect for the guru.

There are four things here that we should not do by ourselves but instead get our guru's consent:

- (i) when working for the benefit of others – for example, when you are going to give an initiation or teaching – get your guru's consent;***
- (ii) offer back to your guru any offerings that you receive from that action;***
- (iii) avoid taking offerings or receiving others' respect, such as prostrations or hand blessings, in front of your guru – from your point of view as guru, you must avoid such things but from your disciples' point of view, they should do it; and***
- (iv) showing special physical respect.***

When working for the benefit of others – for example, when you are going to give an initiation or teaching – get your guru's consent;

VERSE 40

If you are (requested) to perform a consecration, (an initiation into) a mandala or a fire offering ceremony or to gather disciples and deliver a discourse,

You may not do so if your guru resides in that area, unless you receive his prior permission.

If your guru is in that locality, you should not do consecrations or fire pujas for others or give initiations and so forth without his prior consent.

Offer back to your guru any offerings that you receive from that action;

VERSE 41

Whatever offerings you receive from performing such rites as (the consecration known as) “opening the eyes,”

You should present all these to your guru.

Once he has taken a token portion, you may use the rest for whatever you like.

You should give your guru whatever offerings you receive from doing consecrations, giving initiations and so forth. He’ll take a small portion and give you the rest, which you can then use for whatever you want.

In contemporary Tibet there was no greater lama than Pabongka Rinpoche. He received all the Nyingma teachings Öser Tretog Dorje. The lineage of whatever teachings we hear today from the two tutors [Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche] comes from Pabongka Rinpoche. He is like both father and monarch. There’s no lama or aristocrat who hasn’t cultivated him as his or her guru.

When people talk about Lama Dorje Chang, they’re referring to Pabongka Rinpoche.

Avoid taking offerings or receiving others' respect, such as prostrations or hand blessings, in front of your guru – from your point of view as guru, you must avoid such things but from your disciples' point of view, they should do it

VERSE 42

In the presence of his guru a disciple should not act (as a guru) to his own disciples and they should not act towards him as their guru.

Therefore (before your own guru) stop (your disciples) from showing you respect, such as rising (when you come) and making prostrations.

Avoid receiving offerings in front of your guru. You shouldn't make disciples of your guru's disciples or give them an initiation without his consent.

If, in your guru's presence, your disciples stand up for you, offer you prostrations or come to take hand blessings, try to stop them and make them sit down.

Showing special physical respect

VERSE 43

Whenever you make an offering to your guru or whenever your guru presents you with something,

A disciple with sense will (present and) receive this using both hands with his or her head slightly bent.

Showing special physical respect means that whatever you offer to or accept from your guru should be done with both hands, not one. This is the type of behavior that a perfect disciple should cultivate.

In an assembly of disciples, offering a *khatag* with one hand is proof that you haven't heard *The Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion*.

VERSE 44

Be diligent in all your actions, (alert and) mindful never to forget
(your word of honor).

If fellow disciples transgress (what is proper) in their behavior,
correct each other in a friendly manner.

You should keep your vows and words of honor without any transgression, being mindful and alert all the time, and try to abide by the codes of conduct prescribed by Vajradhara.

If out of ignorance a vajra brother or sister – a disciple with whom you have taken the same initiation, together or apart – breaks a vow or breaches his or her words of honor, then, with compassion and a feeling of love and fondness, you should try to make that person avoid that wrong action.

You should regard your vajra brothers and sisters as more dear and sacred than your own relatives.

VERSE 45

If because of sickness you are physically (unable) to bow to your
guru and must do what normally would be prohibited,
Even without (his explicit) permission, there will be no
unfortunate consequences if you have a virtuous mind.

If we ask if we have to cultivate the behaviors taught in *The Fifty Verses* at all times, if there's any time we don't have to do them, there are certain exceptions. However, belittling the guru and disturbing his mind are not among them. At no time can we do these actions.

There are certain exemptions for the sick disciple who is too weak to get up but whose mind is virtuous: it's not required to stand or prostrate or to ask the guru's permission not to do these things.

The reverence of standing or prostrating can be done mentally.

SUMMARY OF THE WAY TO BE DEVOTED

VERSE 46

What need is there to say much more?

Do whatever pleases your guru and avoid doing anything he would not like.

Be diligent in both of these.

To summarize, we should try to do things that makes our guru happy and pleased with us and avoid doing things that make our guru unhappy and displeased with us.

VERSE 47

“Powerful attainments follow from (doing what) your guru (likes).”

This has been said by (the Buddha) Vajradhara himself.

Knowing this, try to please your guru fully with all the actions (of your body, speech and mind).

Why is guru devotion stressed from the very beginning? Because all common and extraordinary powerful attainments follow your cultivation of a proper guru, that is, by making your guru pleased.

This was said by Vajradhara.

By knowing this fact, then by all means – that is, by body, speech and mind – cultivate pure guru devotion and make your guru pleased with you.

TIME FOR EXPLAINING HOW TO BE DEVOTED

VERSE 48

After disciples have taken refuge in the Triple Gem and developed a pure enlightened motive [the vows of the wishing and engaging bodhichitta]

They should be given this (text) to take to heart

(How to abandon their own arrogant self-will and)

Follow in their guru's footsteps (along the graded path to enlightenment).

If perfect disciples – those with pure mind and intention – having taken refuge then follow their guru correctly, he will lead them to enlightenment.

This *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion* has been written in the form of a prayer so that we can recite it again and again and thus know what to cultivate and what to eliminate in order to correctly follow our guru.

HOW TO BE A SUITABLE RECEPTACLE AFTER THE EXPLANATION HAS BEEN GIVEN

VERSE 49

(By studying the prerequisite trainings of guru-devotion and the graded path common to both sutra and tantra,)

You will become a (suitable) vessel (to hold) the pure Dharma.

You may then be given such teachings as tantra.

(After receiving the proper initiations,) recite out loud the fourteen root vows and take them sincerely to heart.

As it says in verse 48, this text has been written especially for disciples distinguished by the two good qualities of having taken refuge and the vows of wishing and engaging bodhicitta and who really abide by the commitments of both these practices of refuge and bodhicitta.

After that, disciples who have studied the lam-rim and *The Fifty Verses* and acted accordingly become disciples ripened for tantric practice.

Therefore, they should obtain initiations, study the stages and paths of tantra, know the fourteen major tantric downfalls perfectly, remain aware of them by memorizing them and ask their guru for teachings on them.

In short, we should cultivate the sort of behavior that makes our guru pleased and happy and avoid that which makes him displeased and unhappy.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that the practice of guru yoga is regarding the guru as buddha and seeing the deity as the guru in the form of the deity. That's the actual practice of guru yoga; if we practice it in that way it will be effective.

The only way we can achieve all the major and minor good qualities is to depend on our guru and regard him as buddha.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that if we don't respect our guru, then no matter how much we declare that we are listening to teachings, meditating and so forth, we won't get anything worthwhile from whatever we do.

One of the root tantra s says, "I make obeisance to my gurus, who are the quintessence of all the buddhas, Vajradhara in nature – Vajradhara in the form of an ordinary being – and the root of all three objects of refuge."

Similarly, from the same text comes the prayer we often say:

The guru is Buddha, the guru is Dharma,
The guru is the quintessence of all Sangha, too.
The guru is the creator of all happiness.
To all gurus, I prostrate (or, go for refuge, or, make offerings).

At present, what we want is enlightenment, the state that has all good qualities and not a trace of fault, shortcoming or disadvantage. To accomplish this, we have to follow the guidance of a proper guru, and even if Buddha Vajradhara were to manifest in front of us right now, he wouldn't say anything different from what our guru has told us.

The Hevajra Root Tantra says that no matter how hard we try to find the great bliss of enlightenment, we won't be able to find it unless we follow the guidance of the right guru.

All these quotations come from the tantras; I'm not making anything up. But it's not only in the tantras that we find many quotations that prove that the guru is buddha.

The Buddha said that this is so in the sutras as well. For example, just before he entered *parinirvana*, Lord Buddha went to a mountaintop in south India, where he met a bodhisattva called Tongwa Dönden, who was crying and saying, "We are so lucky that the Buddha manifested on Earth, but after your parinirvana we'll have no Buddha." Lord Buddha said, "Don't worry. After that I'll manifest as gurus and abbots and at those times you should be smart enough to recognize me as such."

So these are not fabrications but authentic sayings of the Buddha. Thus, as verse 49 implies, we should memorize the fourteen major downfalls of tantra and imprint them in our mind so that we don't forget them.

If you can't abstain from breaking these root vows, taking initiations becomes like purposely creating the cause to be reborn in hell. Lamas are not supposed to give initiations or tantric teachings to disciples who can't keep these vows.

Vajradhara himself said, "You can't keep lion's milk in an earthen pot – the milk will sour and the pot will fall apart; both will be ruined. Similarly, Highest Yoga Tantra teachings should not be given to immature disciples lest they be reborn in miserable circumstances."

If you listen to *The Fifty Verses* attentively, you'll make yourself a mature disciple for tantra if you're not one already, and you'll recognize the importance of knowing the fourteen major downfalls and protecting yourself from them.

BRINGING THE EXPLANATION TO A CONCLUSION

VERSE 50

As I have not made the mistake (of adding my personal interpretation) when writing this work,

May this be of infinite benefit to all disciples who would follow their guru.

By the limitless merit that I have gathered in this way,
May all sentient beings quickly attain the state of Buddha.

LAMA TSONG KHAPA’S CONCLUDING REMARKS

VERSES OF DEDICATION

This is the conclusion of the text. The great Ashvagoshā said that he wrote this commentary with the intention of benefiting all mature disciples and dedicated the merit of doing so to the quick enlightenment of all sentient beings. This shows he is a great bodhisattva – he dedicates the virtuous actions he creates to the welfare of all sentient beings.

Actually, concluding by dedicating the merit of giving a commentary or doing other virtuous actions to the welfare of all sentient beings is a unique feature of the Buddhist doctrine; an exclusive feature not found in non-Buddhist texts.

In a text called *Praise to You, the Outstanding [Khye-par-phag-tö]*, the author writes, “In your doctrine, whatever merit you create you dedicate to the welfare of sentient beings. Such is not found in outsiders’ teachings. Therefore, I regard it as one of the best features of your doctrine.”

It would be good for you to study this text on the distinctions between the Buddha and other teachers to strengthen your faith in the Buddhadharmā.

COLOPHON

This *Fifty Verses of Guru Devotion* was rendered into Tibetan by the great translator Rinchen Zangpo and the great Indian Pandit, Padmakaravarma. There’s no Indian commentary but, as mentioned before, the great Tsong Khapa wrote an elaborate one, *The Fulfillment of All Hopes*, which he did at the request of two great Kagyu lamas.

He also wrote a commentary on the *Six Yogas of Naropa* at the request of Kagyu lamas and a very elaborate commentary on *dzog-chen* at the request of the great Nyingma lama, Tashi Palden.

Lama Tsong Khapa wrote his *Fifty Verses* commentary at Reting, where he also wrote the *Lam-rim Chen-mo*.

I received the transmission and teaching on *The Fifty Verses* from Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, who received it from Kyabje Pabongka, who received it from his root guru, and its direct lineage goes all the way back to Vajradhara.

If you want to have insights and realizations, guru devotion is essential. If you listen to teachings just for knowledge, guru devotion is not necessary, but it's the gateway for practice and achievement.

During the meditation session, meditate on guru devotion. In between sessions read texts such as *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, which describes Sadaprarudita's cultivation of Dharmodgata, or *The Flower Ornament Sutra [Skt: Avatamsaka Sutra]*, which describes the Youth Sudhana's cultivation of many gurus including Manjushri and Maitreya and his subsequent attainment of enlightenment.

You should also read other inspiring examples of the practice of guru devotion, such as Naropa's with Tilopa, Marpa's with Naropa and Maitripa, Milarepa's with Marpa Lotsawa, Dromtönpa's with Atisha, Geshe Chakawa's with Geshe Chengawa, Khädrub Rinpoche's with Lama Tsong Khapa and Sakya Pandita's with Dragpa Gyaltsen, which I detailed before.

And, of course, there's the original example of guru devotion in Ananda's relationship with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha.

The insights they received through cultivating guru devotion is all in print and their names are still renowned.

You should develop the attitude: "As those great beings cultivated guru devotion and received realizations, may I emulate their achievements in this practice."

And to think of a more contemporary example, there's the way Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang cultivated his root guru Kyabje

Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, and also his teacher when he was younger, Geshe Losang Tsultim, which is described in his autobiography.

The root text was composed by Ashvagosha in the first century BCE, translated into English by Sharpa Tulku, Khamlung Tulku, Alexander Berzin and Jonathan Landaw, and published by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in 1975.

Gen Rinpoche Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey gave this commentary at the LTWA in Dharamsala July–August 1976.

It was translated by Losang Gyaltzen and edited by Nicholas Ribush from his notes of the class.