

Lam.Rim Outlines

Beginners' Meditation Guide

Compiled by Karin Valham

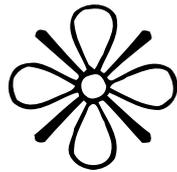


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LAM-RIM OUTLINES

BEGINNERS' MEDITATION GUIDE



COMPILED BY

KARIN VALHAM



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Preface

This meditation manual is meant as an introduction to meditations on the Graduated Path to Full Awakening, and is compiled from many different sources. It covers The Three Scopes in brief, starting with The Small Scope of taking an active interest in avoiding a lower suffering rebirth in the future life, and gaining a happy rebirth as a human or a god. This is achieved by recognizing that a precious human life has the full potential for this and even much more. Yet, the present life will not last forever and one must die.

Contemplating the possibility of falling into a lower realm of rebirth motivates one to seek a definite solution to this problem. Then, taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, who provides the infallible inner method for overcoming suffering forever, gives life and death a safe and sound direction. The first advice they give is to live one's life in harmony with the law of cause and effect, i.e. to avoid non-virtue and practice virtue as much as one can.

The Medium Scope is the next step and focuses on generating the state of mind in which one takes an active interest in becoming free from the whole of cyclic existence; uncontrolled rebirth due to the force of delusion and karma. This is achieved by contemplating in general, all the sufferings in cyclic existence and especially the sufferings of the higher rebirths of celestial beings and humans. Then, familiarizing oneself with the path that leads to liberation one contemplates the causes of cyclic existence; the delusions, and how delusions arise, and diligently apply their antidotes. With mindfulness and awareness of one's mental attitudes one learns to become skillful in reducing negative actions of body, speech and mind, and eventually overcome them altogether.

The Great Scope is the wish and the will to attain the state of full enlightenment in order to free all universal living beings from suffering and lead them to the fulfillment of their highest potential, enlightenment. To accomplish this extraordinary and most beautiful thought, first of all one needs a leveled mind, an even attitude towards others, in other words, equanimity. Then, on top of that, like building a magnificent house, one trains one's mind in the seven-fold cause and effect instructions and in exchanging oneself for others.

As Lama Yeshe used to say:

Bodhicitta is the intoxicant that numbs us against pain and fills us with bliss. Bodhicitta is the alchemy that transforms every action into benefit for others. Bodhicitta is the cloud that carries the rain of positive energy to nourish growing things.

A pure bodhicitta motivation, even if it is created with effort, will make one's practices of calm-abiding and analytical meditation on emptiness a cause for enlightenment especially when dedicated singlepointedly, solely for this purpose.

Since any qualities of knowledge and wisdom are completely non-existent from my side, I fervently ask for your generous forgiveness for all mistakes, and gratefully invite any constructive suggestions.

Whatever merits that have been accumulated by the completion of this book I dedicate to the long life of all true spiritual masters and to the temporary and ultimate happiness of all living beings.

Preliminary Practices

AT THE START OF EACH SESSION practice breathing meditation for a few minutes in order to empty your mind of distracting thoughts, and bring your mind to a neutral state.

The Visualization of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha

Merely to remember the Buddha, let alone making visualization, is of great benefit — we become closer to him, create merits and protect ourselves from evil actions and obstacles.

Visualizing, or imagining the Buddha, lessens our negativities and arouses the desire to become like the enlightened one; our faith in him increases, and the desire to seek his supreme knowledge grows stronger, making our mind calm and peaceful and preventing the arising of negative thoughts.

This whole visualization is seen as made of pure light, having nothing to do with physical matter. The object is at the height of the forehead, at a distance of one body length, as large as possible and facing yourself. Visualize Guru Shakyamuni's throne, a square platform fully and perfectly adorned with all precious jewels, and supported by eight white snow-lions (two at each corner). The snow lions are transformations of great bodhisattvas and are visualized alive and made of light.

On the throne there is a white lotus and on the lotus are the sun and moon disks, cushions of light for Guru Shakyamuni who is seated upon them.

His holy body is transparent, made of pure golden light, and light rays emanate from every pore, streaming outward in all directions, and through each beam go numberless manifestations, which ripen sentient beings.

He is clad in monk's robes which do not touch his body, but remain about one inch from it, showing the power of his realizations. His aspect is very peaceful. Every atom of his holy body has the power to give realizations.

The right hand over his knee is touching the moon disk in the earth-touching mudra, symbolizing his control of evil (Mara) by his infinite great love. His left hand holds a bowl containing the four nectars, of immortality, universal medicine, purification and transcendental wisdom.

Buddha's face is very beautiful; his loving, smiling, compassionate gaze is directed towards you and simultaneously encompasses all sentient beings. He is free of all judgmental, critical thoughts and accepts you just as you are. His eyes are long, narrow and very peaceful. His lips are red and his earlobes long. His hair is blue-black and each hair is individually curled to the right. Each feature of his holy body represents an aspect of his omniscient mind. He is the supreme refuge encompassing the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

He looks at you with his compassionate eyes and says, "You daughter or son of the lineage, if you want to be liberated from the suffering of samsara, I will guide you."

Refuge and Bodhicitta

I go for refuge until I'm enlightened
To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Supreme Community
From the merits that I create by practising meditation
May I become Buddha for the sake of all universal living beings.

Special Bodhicitta

In particular, I must achieve enlightenment quickly in order to free all the numberless kind mother sentient beings from the unimaginable oceans of samsaric suffering and causes of suffering and lead them to peerless full enlightenment. Therefore I am going to meditate on the stages of the path to enlightenment.

Prayer of the Seven Limbs

Respectfully I prostrate with my body, speech and mind.
I present clouds of every type of offering, actual and imagined.
I confess all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time
And rejoice in the virtuous actions of all ordinary and noble beings.
Please, Buddha, remain as our guide,
And turn the wheel of Dharma until samsara ends.
Through the merits created by myself and others, may the two bodhicittas ripen
and
May I attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

The Four Immeasurables

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity,
Free of hatred and attachment!

May they abide in equanimity!

I myself will cause them to abide in equanimity!

Please, guru-Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and the cause
of happiness!

May they have happiness and its cause!

I shall cause them to have these!

Please, guru-Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free of suffering and its
cause!

May they be free of suffering and its cause!

I myself will free them from suffering and its cause!

Please, guru-Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never separated from
the happiness of higher rebirth and liberation!

May they never be separated from these!

I myself will cause them never to be separated from these!

Please, guru-Buddha, grant me blessings to be able to do this.

Short Mandala Offering

By the virtue of offering to you assembly of Buddhas

Visualized before me, this mandala built on a base

Resplendent with flowers, saffron water and incense,

Adorned with Mount Meru and the four continents,

As well as the sun and the moon,

May all sentient beings share in its good effects.

Inner Mandala

The objects of my attachment, aversion and ignorance —
Friends, enemies and strangers,
And my body, wealth and enjoyments —
I offer these without any sense of loss.
Please accept them with pleasure
And bless me and others to be free from the three poisonous attitudes.

Idam Guru Ratna Mandalakam Niriyata Yami

Mantra Recitation

Visualize light and nectar beams, white in color, flowing from the heart of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. These enter your body, speech and mind, purifying disease, spirit harms, negative karma and obscurations. They are washed out of you just as dirt leaves clothes when they are washed.

[Tayata] Om Muni Muni Maha Muniye Soha

Continue to recite the mantra, and visualize yellow light and nectar flowing from Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's heart entering your body, speech and mind, filling you with great happiness and dispelling all wrong and impure conceptions. You receive the infinite knowledge of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind.

Then visualize that the Buddha melts into light which absorbs within you. Your body, speech and mind become one with Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind, in the form of all-encompassing space; concentrate on this for as long as possible.

Then beams are emitted from the pores of one's own body, which is in the aspect of Buddha, towards all sentient beings. All their obscurations and

negative karma of body, speech and mind are completely purified and they all become Buddha. In this way any beings that appear, appear as Buddha and all the places that appear, appear as pure places. Then rejoice thinking how wonderful it is that I have enlightened all sentient beings.

Dedication

Due to all my own merits of the three times

And the merits of all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and sentient beings,

May the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment be generated in my mind

And in the mind of all sentient beings without delay for even one second,

And may that which has been generated be increased.

The Small Scope

‘Mind is beginningless because it is mind’

Pramanavartika

MIND IS NOT MADE OUT OF MATTER like the body. It is the continuity of clarity and knowing, which arises out of its previous moment and is dependent on its object of knowledge. The mind has always been clear and knowing and always will be. At the moment our knowing is limited, but it can become limitless.

- ❖ Since the mind is not physical one cannot receive a piece of someone else’s mind.
- ❖ Children do not share their parent’s minds, each have their own characteristics.
- ❖ Many people, especially children are able to accurately remember past life experiences.
- ❖ There are no valid reasons for the opposite to be true. None has yet disproved the mind being beginningless.
- ❖ If it was proved that mind has a beginning, then surely we should request all the universal supreme beings to produce all the children and this way fill our world with baby-buddhas, but this is obviously not the case.

Meditate like this

Check the continuity of your mind by following it back in time from the present to as far as your memory will allow you. Having memory itself is a proof of the continuity of the mind. As you follow the natural flow of your memories back in time, you will come across both joyful and miserable experiences. You are supposed to recognize them and also how you felt at that time, but then carry on back in time without indulging in any one of your recollections.

When your memory starts to fade, use your imagination and reconstruct how it must have been like, being an infant, and a fetus in mother’s womb as well as at the time of conception.

What happened then?

The sperm and the egg from the mother and the father met and united. This is the start of our body, but what about the mind?

Check these and other reasons for the beginningless continuity of the mind. Such as the mere fact that mind is an impermanent phenomenon and thus must be preceded by a cause of a similar nature. Matter cannot produce mind.

When you bring back your memory of the mind to the point of birth there are only three choices from where the mind could arise. Either the mind comes from the parents' minds, which is not possible since one can not receive a piece of someone else's mind. Or it pops into existence without a cause, which is also not possible, since an impermanent phenomenon has to have a previous cause. Therefore, mind arises out of its own previous continuity in accordance with the law of cause and effect.

Dedication

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Just as a flash of lightning on a dark, cloudy night
For an instant brightly illuminates all,
Likewise in this world, through the might of Buddha,
A wholesome thought rarely and briefly appears.

Shantideva

The Eight Leisures

1. Freedom from being born in the hell realms.
2. Freedom from being born as a hungry ghost.
3. Freedom from being born in the animal realm.
4. Freedom from being born as a long life god.
5. Freedom from being born at a time when a founder Buddha has not appeared.
6. Freedom from being born in a place with no Dharma.
7. Freedom from being born with defective senses.
8. Freedom from holding wrong views.

The Ten Endowments

Five Personal Endowments:

1. Being born as a human being.
2. Being born in the center of a religious country.
3. Being born with a well-functioning body and mind.
4. Not having committed any of the five heinous crimes.
5. Having faith in the Dharma.

Five Circumstantial Endowments:

6. Being born in the fortunate period when a Buddha has appeared.
7. Being born in the fortunate period when a Buddha has taught the Dharma.
8. Being born in the fortunate period when Dharma exists and flourishes.

9. Being born in the fortunate period when we are able to meet with pure followers of Buddha's teachings.
10. Being born in the fortunate period when practitioners can enjoy kind support.

The Usefulness of Having Received a P.H.R. [Perfect Human Rebirth]

1. For temporary goals and knowledge
2. For ultimate realizations
3. Moment by moment

Leisure and endowment are very hard to find;
And since they accomplish what is meaningful for man,
If I do not take advantage of them now,
How will such a perfect opportunity come about again?

Shantideva

The Difficulty of Obtaining the P.H.R.

1. From the point of view of the three causes: ethics, generosity and prayers.
2. From the point of view of examples.
3. From the point of view of numbers.

Relying upon the boat of a human body,
Free yourself from the great river of pain!
As it is hard to find this boat again,
This is no time for sleep, you fool.

Shantideva

Meditate in this way

From Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings:

“When the weather is extremely hot I cannot meditate. I am so hot and so lazy that I cannot even sit up. Even to do ten minutes of meditation is very difficult”. Think of yourself as born now into the sufferings of one of the different

categories of the hot naraks, standing on the red-hot burning iron ground, or trapped in the red-hot burning iron house with no way to escape. “If I were to be born now in the hot naraks, it would be unbearable. There would be no opportunity at all to practice Dharma. Check whether you could practice Dharma with that kind of suffering. If you were like that now, could you practice Dharma or not? You couldn’t! No way!

It is similar with the cold naraks and all the other unfree states of existence. Check each one in turn how it would be like if I was born like that now, whether I could practice Dharma. Check how these states don’t give one the opportunity to even think of practicing Dharma. Then come back to your present state as a human being. “How fortunate I am that I have the freedom to practice Dharma.”

Also think: “Today, not being born in the naraks etc., and having this freedom to practice Dharma I can accomplish the three great purposes. Within these twenty-four hours, within this hour, even within this minute, I have the freedom to obtain whichever I wish of the three great purposes. At any time I have the freedom to accomplish as many as I want, for as long as I want. Whenever I want to accomplish the three great purposes, I have the freedom to accomplish them.”

Now you can see that this freedom to practice Dharma by not being born in the naraks etc. is unbelievably precious. By comparing this freedom to material values, you can see that this freedom is so precious. With this freedom you are able to obtain the first great purpose: a good rebirth in your next life. This freedom to obtain a good rebirth because you have not been born in the naraks now and can practice Dharma, is much more precious than diamonds piled up to the size of your body.

The second great purpose is to achieve the sorrowless state. “This freedom is much more precious than diamonds piled up to the size of this Dharamsala mountain. And having the freedom to achieve enlightenment by not being born in the naraks is much more precious than diamonds equalling the number of atoms of this earth.” Even if you possess diamonds or dollars equalling the number of atoms of this earth, if you don’t have the freedom to practice Dharma by not being born in the naraks, as a preta, or as an animal,

what is the use? Even if you have that many possessions, with that alone you cannot achieve enlightenment. You cannot achieve any of the great purposes.

In some ways, meditating on the eight freedoms and ten richnesses also becomes a meditation on compassion because you have to think about the problems of these other sentient beings who do not have the opportunity to practice the holy Dharma. You have to think about the animals and the human beings who don't have the opportunity to practice Dharma. When you think like this, you feel much compassion for these other sentient beings. Your having the opportunity and incredible freedom that they do not have becomes a great cause of generating compassion. There is no choice: compassion has to arise.

You can also recite the Chenrezig mantra while going over the eight freedoms and ten richnesses one by one. Be aware of each freedom and richness that allows you to practice the holy Dharma. Remember the other people who do not have the freedom to practice Dharma. Recognize your own freedom, and be aware of the three great purposes you can accomplish with this. Try to be aware of the great advantage of each of these freedoms and richnesses. After each of them, think: "This human body is so precious. Without wasting time I must practice bodhicitta." Come to this conclusion after thinking of each freedom and richness.

After the analytical meditation, do fixed meditation on the eight freedoms and ten richnesses. By going over them one by one, generate the feeling of how precious each is. Then with the whole eighteen, do analytical and fixed meditation.

"This body is qualified with these eighteen very rare characteristics, these eight freedoms and ten richnesses. It has been so difficult to gather all eighteen. Before, some have always been missing. Now, just this once, all these eighteen extremely rare characteristics are gathered in this present body. It is unbelievably precious — like a dream."

All other possessions on this earth, even wish-granting gems are nothing."

Remember all the possessions that are in the rich department-stores and the banks. Compared to the preciousness of this perfect human body, all

other possessions are completely valueless, like garbage. There is nothing more precious than this perfect human rebirth. Worldly people may use the perfect human rebirth as a servant to material possessions, but this perfect human rebirth is much more precious than diamonds equalling the number of atoms of this earth. Wasting this perfect human rebirth without practicing Dharma for one hour, or even one minute, is an unbelievable loss — a greater loss than losing that many diamonds. “Therefore I am going to practice bodhicitta continuously and make my life highly meaningful”.

One-pointedly concentrate on how precious this perfect human rebirth is, with the awareness that you can accomplish the three great purposes. There is nothing more important than this perfect human body. Recite the Chenrezig mantra while you are doing this one-pointed concentration.

Om Mani Padme Hum...

Dedication

Please bless me and all sentient beings to realize that this perfect rebirth, found only once, is difficult to attain and is quickly lost, and to be able to make the life essentially meaningful, without being distracted by meaningless work.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Craving for pleasures of the six senses.

Craving to be free of the unpleasant.

Craving to hear sweet, ego-pleasing words or sounds.

Craving to not hear ugly, displeasing words or sounds.

Craving to acquire material things.

Craving to avoid losing or not obtaining material things.

Craving for personal praise and admiration.

Craving to avoid personal slander, blame and criticism.

The Disadvantages of Becoming Preoccupied with the Eight Mundane Concerns

- ❁ This life is always full of ups and downs.
- ❁ One will take lower rebirth in the future.
- ❁ Future lives will be spent also with uncontrolled attachments.
- ❁ One cannot enter the mahayana path.
- ❁ One cannot reach liberation.
- ❁ One will constantly experience hindrances in one's meditation practice.
- ❁ The practice becomes only service to the eight worldly concerns.
- ❁ One's anger destroys one's merits.

Antidotes: think in this way

- ❁ If one follows the eight worldly concerns one is no better than an animal.
- ❁ The object one sees is a projection of one's deluded mind.
- ❁ Change the object into an object you are not attached to.
- ❁ There is nothing new in samsara.
- ❁ It will not bring true happiness, it is in fact in the nature of suffering.
- ❁ No matter how hard one tries, it will only lead to dissatisfaction.
- ❁ It is impermanent by nature, no choice, it doesn't last.
- ❁ See it in voidness, its true nature.

If I care so much about any momentary sufferings and sicknesses why do I not care about the tremendous, continuous suffering of my future lives; why do I not worry about and try to eliminate the true cause of suffering?

Spending this perfect human rebirth desiring only the eight worldly concerns and working for the enjoyment of samsaric pleasures is like trading universes full of jewels for ka-ka. But even this very dirty thing is much more useful than attachment — it can be used by both people and animals.

From Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teaching:

Worldly dharma and holy Dharma are different. Any action of the body, speech and mind done with worldly concern, clinging to the happiness of this life, is worldly dharma or non-virtue. Mantras and prayers may be holy Dharma, but if the person's action of reciting these is done with worldly concern, clinging to this life, it becomes worldly dharma. Such an action does not become holy Dharma. Actions done with renunciation of this life, without the attitude being possessed by worldly concern, are the pure holy Dharma.

When Drom Tönpa asked: "What result do actions done with ignorance, anger and attachment bring? And actions not possessed by ignorance, anger and attachment?" Lama Atisha answered: "Actions done with ignorance, anger and attachment bring rebirth in the lower realms as a suffering transmigratory being. Actions done with the attitude not possessed by the three poisonous minds brings the result of rebirth as a happy transmigratory being."

Understanding Lama Atisha's answer as to what becomes worldly dharma, or non-virtue, and what becomes holy Dharma, look at the human beings who have no understanding of Dharma at all, no faith in refuge, no faith in karma. All day and night in their minds they have nothing more than just this life. They are concerned for nothing more than the happiness of a few years of life, or a few months. All day and night, they keep busy just from this motive of worldly concern. You see that is all non-virtue, and Lama Atisha answered the question as to what result comes. All these activities of body, speech and mind done with that attitude of worldly concern result in rebirth as a suffering transmigratory being.

Meditate like this

Imagine yourself floating comfortably on top of a fluffy cloud over your own home town. From that position of advantage look at people and beings below and how they conduct their lives. Not with a judgmental attitude, but just from your own experience and understanding. See how busy people are with worldly concerns, running here and there speedily trying to get things done, while getting caught up in emotional afflictions and at the same time unaware of what is happening to them. Is there anything other than worldly concerns on their mind?

Then take a good look at your own life, how has it been so far? What is it that your mind keeps returning to even during meditation time? One of the eight worldly concerns? Check up!!

This human form endowed with freedom,
More valuable than a wish-granting gem,
Obtained only this once
Is difficult to acquire and easily lost.
Passing like a flash of lightning in the sky.
Remembering this and understanding that
All worldly activities are like husks,
At all times, day and night you must try to take advantage of
Its essential significance.
I, a yogi have practised in this way
You, O liberation-seeker, please do likewise.

Lama Tsong Khapa

Dedication

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

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings without exception, into that enlightened state.

Impermanence and Death: The Death Process

5

This day is a special day,
It is yours.
Yesterday slipped away
It cannot be filled with more meaning.
About tomorrow nothing is known.
But this day, today, is yours,
Make use of it.
Today you can make someone happy.
Today you can help another.
This day is a special day,
It is yours.

Indian poem

The Disadvantages of Not Remembering Death at All Times

1. You will not remember the Dharma.
2. Even though you remember it you will postpone the practice.
3. You may try to practice but your Dharma practice will not be pure.
4. You will lose your determination to practice Dharma and will eventually drop it altogether.
5. You will continue creating negative actions and become unsuitable for liberation.
6. At the time of death you will feel intense regret at having wasted your precious opportunity.

The Advantages of Remembering Death at All Times

1. Your Dharma practice becomes very pure.
2. Your Dharma actions become powerful and effective.
3. Beneficial in the beginning of one's Dharma practice.
4. Beneficial in the middle of one's Dharma practice.

5. Beneficial at the end of one's Dharma practice
(no. 3–5, in order to avoid the thought of the eight worldly concerns.)
6. In the hour of death you will go with satisfaction, for you know you have spent your life meaningfully.

Meditate like this

Read the points of the disadvantages etc. then contemplate why and how. Do the same with the advantages etc. Then make a conclusion remembering Milarepa's words: "In horror of death I took to the mountains — again and again I meditated on the uncertainty of the hour of death. Capturing the fortress of the deathless, unending nature of mind, now all fear of death is over and done."

The Nine-Point Death Meditation

Contemplate each of these points:

Death is certain

No power in the universe can stop death.

- ❁ Every person born will have to die, also great bodhisattvas and yogis, even Buddha.
- ❁ In 100 years from now nearly everyone alive today will be dead.
- ❁ We cannot run away from death, there is nowhere we can escape to.
- ❁ Even if we are very wealthy, we cannot bribe death.
- ❁ Even if we are very strong and powerful, we cannot defeat death.
- ❁ Even if we have miraculous powers and clairvoyance, we cannot evade death.

One cannot add time to life, one gets closer to death every minute.

- ❁ With each moment of our life that passes, we come closer to death.
- ❁ From the time of birth onwards, we are racing towards death.

- ❁ With each breath we take, we come closer to death.
- ❁ Even when we are asleep or distracted, we come closer to death.

While still alive free time to practice Dharma is extremely limited before one has to die.

- ❁ If we live for 70 years, half is spent sleeping. The rest is spent working, eating, quarreling, shopping, traveling, watching television, etc. Very little time is spent actually practicing the Dharma.
- ❁ When we are young we put off our Dharma practice till later. When we are middle-aged we are too distracted by other things. When we are old we look back with regret that we didn't practice.

Generate the resolution: knowing that I shall have to die, I must resolve to practise Dharma.

The time of death is uncertain.

The life-span in our time and realm is uncertain :

- ❁ Age is no guarantee; children often die before their parents.
- ❁ Health is no guarantee; a healthy person can die before a sick one.
- ❁ Future plans are no guarantee; we can die before we complete our work.

The things that kill us are many, the things that keep us alive are few.

- ❁ External conditions like accidents, natural catastrophies etc.
- ❁ Internal conditions like illness etc.
- ❁ Even those things that normally sustain life can become the conditions for death; food, house and medicine.

In general the body is extremely fragile :

- ❁ Since huge trees, forests, and even mountains and planets get destroyed, no wonder our frail bodies will not last long.

Generate the resolution: knowing that I could die at any time, I must stop sacrificing my life to worldly concerns and immediately practice Dharma from today on.

Only Dharma helps at the time of death

No money or possessions help us.

- ❁ Naked and empty-handed we leave this life.
- ❁ A king and a beggar experience death in a similar way.

Friends and family cannot help.

- ❁ Near and dear ones often give rise to attachment and pain.
- ❁ No one can share our experience of death.
- ❁ Death is experienced by ourselves alone.

Not even our own body can help us at that time.

- ❁ Our body which we pampered and cared for so much is helpless.

Generate the resolution: Finally, since nothing else can help me, I must devote myself fully to pure Dharma practice.

Dedication

When the doctor gives me up,
When rituals no longer work,
When friends have given up hope for my life,
When anything I do is futile,
May I be blessed to remember
My guru's instructions.

The Panchen Lama

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Meditation on the Death Process

The four elements earth, water, fire and air cease functioning from the grosser to the more subtle at the same time as the five aggregates absorb. In connection

with this certain outer and inner signs manifest, explained as the eight signs of dissolution.

When you meditate on the death process, in order to make the experience real for you, like a rehearsal of your own death, you may imagine a scenario in which you have suddenly come face to face with death. For example you may be in a hospital-bed, surrounded by doctors and nurses, maybe some friend or relative anxiously watching your face and clutching your hand. You are on your back in the bed staring up onto the ceiling wondering what's next.

1. The Earth Element Dissolves

- When the earth element loses its power, the body becomes very thin, limbs loose and you feel as if the body is sinking under the earth.
- When the aggregate of form absorbs, the limbs become smaller, the body becomes weak and powerless, the luster of the body diminishes and all one's strength is consumed.
- When the basic mirror-like wisdom dissolves, the sight becomes unclear and dark.
- Eye sense: one cannot open or close one's eyes.
- Internal sign: appearance of mirages.

2. The Water Element Dissolves

- When the water element loses its power, saliva, sweat, urine, blood etc. dry greatly.
- When the aggregate of feelings absorb, the body consciousness can no longer experience the three types of feelings that accompany sense consciousnesses.
- When the basic wisdom of equality (our ordinary consciousness mindful of pleasure, pain and neutral feelings as feelings) dissolve, one is no longer mindful of the feelings accompanying the mental consciousness.

- Ear sense: one no longer hears external or internal sounds.
- Internal sign: appearance of smoke.

3. The Fire Element Dissolves

- When the fire element loses its power, one cannot digest food or drink.
- When the aggregate of discrimination absorbs, one is no longer mindful of affairs of close persons.
- When the basic wisdom of analysis dissolves, one can no longer remember the names of close persons.
- Nose sense: inhalation weak, exhalation strong and lengthy and one cannot smell.
- Internal signs: appearance of fireflies or sparks within smoke.

4. The Air Element Dissolves

- When the wind element loses its power, the ten winds move to the heart and the inhalation and exhalation ceases.
- When the aggregate of compositional factors absorbs, one cannot perform physical actions and one cannot experience smoothness or roughness.
- When the basic wisdom of achieving activities dissolves, one is no longer mindful of external worldly activities, purposes etc.
- Tongue sense: tongue becomes thick and short and the root of the tongue becomes blue.
- Internal sign: appearance of a sputtering light about to go out.

5. The Fifth to the Eighth Signs of Dissolution:

- When the aggregate of consciousness absorbs, the eighty conceptions dissolve.
- Cause of appearance: winds in the right and left channels above the heart enter the central channel at the top of the head.
- Internal sign: clear vacuity filled with white light.

6. The Mind of White Appearance Dissolves

- Cause of appearance: winds in right and left channels below heart enter central channel at base of spine.
- Internal sign: very clear vacuity filled with red light.

7. The Mind of Red Increase Dissolves

- Cause of appearance: upper and lower winds gather at heart and then the winds enter the drop at the heart.
- Internal sign: at first, vacuity filled with thick darkness; then, as if swooning into unconsciousness.

8. The Mind of Black Near Attainment Dissolves

- Cause of appearance: all winds dissolve into the very subtle life-bearing wind in the indestructible drop at the heart.
- Internal sign: very clear vacuity, the mind of clear light of death.

Focus on this clear light for as long as you can.

When the clear light of death ceases, the consciousness passes back through the stages of dissolution in reverse order.

As soon as this reverse process begins, the person is reborn into an intermediate state (Tib. bar-do) between lives, with a subtle body that can go anywhere, through mountains etc., to find a place of rebirth. Or the person revives into the old body, a so-called near-death experience.

A lifetime in the intermediate state can last from a moment to seven days, depending on whether or not a suitable birthplace is found. If one is not found, the being undergoes a 'small death', experiencing the eight signs of death as laid out above, but very briefly. He or she then again experiences the eight signs of the reverse process and is reborn in a second intermediate state. This can happen for a total of seven rebirths in the intermediate state, making forty-nine days, during which time a place of rebirth is necessarily found.

Dedication

Leaving all I must depart alone.
But through not having understood this,
I committed various kinds of evil
For the sake of my friends and foes.

My foes will become nothing.
My friends will become nothing.
I too will become nothing.
Likewise all will become nothing.

Just like a dream experience,
Whatever things I enjoy
Will become a memory.
Whatever has passed will not be seen again.

Even within this brief life
Many friends and foes have passed,
But whatever unbearable evil I committed for them
Remains ahead of me.

Shantideva

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Suffering in the Three Lower Realms

6

If when I have the chance to live a wholesome life
My actions are not wholesome,
Then what shall I be able to do
When confused by the misery of the lower realms

Shantideva

The Hot Hells:

1. The Reviving Hell, 2. The Black Thread Hell, 3. The Hell of Mass Destruction, 4. The Howling Hell, 5. The Loud Howling Hell, 6. The Heating, and 7. The Intense Heating Hell, 8. The Hell Without Respite.

Among all causes of happiness,
The elimination of craving
Is the lord of happinesses.
Among all suffering,
The suffering of the Hell Without Respite
Is similarly the most intolerable.

Nagarjuna

The Neighboring Hells:

1. A Pit of Hot Coals, 2. A Swamp of Decomposing Quicksand, 3. Three Hells of Weapons and 4. An Acid River.

Such sufferings are utterly intolerable.
One will experience them billions of times;
So long as the non-virtue has not run out
One will not stop living that life.

Nagarjuna

The Cold Hells:

1. The Blistering Hell, 2. The Oozing Blisters, 3. The Shivering “achu” or “brrrr” Hell, 4. The Moaning “kyihu”, 5. The Lockjaw Hell, 6. The Cracking Like a Blue Water-Lily, 7. The Cracking Like a Red Lotus, 8. The Enormous Cracking Like a Great Crimson Lotus.

The Occasional Hells:

Temporary hellish situations found in any of the hells or in the human realm.

The suffering of being impaled
Three hundred times by a spear
In but a single day
Cannot compare to the least suffering in hell,
Cannot rival it, cannot come anywhere near it.

Nagarjuna

Meditate like this

Without looking at these realms of existence merely as external phenomena, try to imagine how it would be like to actually experience constant physical pain. Imagine yourself trapped in hell without any way out or even momentary relief. Imagine your body large as a mountain and every atom experiencing excruciating suffering. Feel how unbearable it is and generate compassion for all the living beings who are undergoing such intense misery.

The Spirit or Hungry Ghost Realm

Suffering from heat, cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue and fear.

Problems peculiar to being a hungry ghost or spirit:

1. External hindrances
2. Internal hindrances
3. Hindrances in respect to food and drink.

Their stomachs are like mountains;
Their necks blocked; their limbs
As thin as grass;
Their dry bodies covered in dust;
Their bone-joints give off sparks like flints;
Their merest glance dries up rivers;
They are always weary,
Tormented by hunger. May a shower
Of food, drink, and nectar rain down
Upon these hungry ghosts.

The Seventh Dalai Lama

The Animal Realm

1. Being eaten by others, being extremely ignorant, suffering from heat and cold, suffering from hunger and thirst, being exploited and used for work.

Problems peculiar to being an animal:

1. Fear and aloneness
2. Endless roaming.

The good quality of suffering is that
It removes arrogance through sorrow.
One develops compassion
For the beings in samsara,
Avoids sin and rejoices in virtue.

Shantideva

Meditate like this

The image of the hungry ghosts is the 'Biafra-child' with a big belly and thin neck not completely uncommon even in this world. Also, when our mind is obsessed with sense-objects we get such a mental image of ourselves as having an immense hollowness or emptiness at the center of our being at the same time being unable to fill it, or satisfy it, no matter how much we try.

The sufferings of the animals are much easier to relate to. It is something we can see and know through our own experience. The biggest threat to the very existence of animals in our time is human beings. Look into the hunting trade, as well as slaughterhouses. How we end up treating animals; as if they were mere inanimate objects for humans to use. Then also imagine yourself in such a body, how it would be like to live one's life totally under the control of others.

End the session with the practice of giving and taking, completely emptying the lower realms of existence of suffering and establishing all beings in peace, happiness and prosperity all according to their own needs. Send a cooling rain to the hot hells, warm sunshine to the beings in the cold hells, a banquet of delicious food and drink to the hungry ghosts and so on. Offer them the precious Dharma until they become completely fully awakened Buddhas. In

the process oneself becomes free from the self-cherishing thought and the dualistic mind and achieves the Dharmakaya and Rupakaya of the perfect, unsurpassable state of enlightenment.

Dedication

Due to all these merits may all the father and mother sentient beings have all happiness, and may the lower realms be empty forever. Wherever there are bodhisattvas may all their prayers be accomplished immediately. May I cause all this by myself alone.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Taking Refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha

7

Who will protect me
From these great terrors?
With staring eyes
I'll scour the four directions
Looking for a refuge.
But when I see no refuge
In the four directions
I will give way to utter despair.
If these places have no refuge,
What will I do then?

Shantideva

A. The Causes for Taking Refuge

1. Fear of the suffering in the three lower realms and in the whole of samsara.
2. Conviction that Buddha, Dharma and Sangha have the power to protect oneself.
3. Compassion for all transmigratory beings.

B. The Objects of Refuge

1. Buddha, the completely purified and fully developed one.
2. Dharma, that which protects from suffering, the realization of reality and the path to achieve it.
3. Sangha, the helpers on the path, the spiritual community.

There are Three Kinds of Faith

1. Admiring Faith; feels joy and happiness towards Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.
2. Aspiring Faith; wishes to attain their qualities.

3. Conviction; establishes them as valid bases for taking refuge.

Take refuge in whomever
Has absolutely no shortcomings,
Absolutely no blindness, and in whom resides
Every aspect of all good qualities.
When you think of this,
Respect those who praise him
And abide by his teachings.

From 'The One Hundred and Fifty Verses of Praise'

Some of Buddha's Qualities

- ❁ Buddha is free from all fears.
- ❁ Buddha has skillful means to free others from fear.
- ❁ Buddha has great compassion for all living beings, whether or not they are close to him.
- ❁ Buddha fulfills the aims of all living beings whether or not they have helped him.

The Ten Powers of a Buddha

1. The power of knowing the consequences of all karmic actions.
2. The power of knowing the previous causes for all karmic results in detail.
3. The power of knowing the various wishes of all living beings.
4. The power of knowing the various predispositions of all living beings.
5. The power of knowing the scope of all beings.
6. The power of knowing the spiritual paths of all beings.
7. The power of knowing the different meditations appropriate for the liberation of each being.
8. The power of knowing the previous lives of all beings.
9. The power of knowing the body-leaving process in death and rebirth of all living beings.
10. The power of knowing which obstacles have been abandoned by each living being.

The Eighteen Qualities of a Buddha Not Shared by the Arhants.

1. A Buddha's body does not have any displeasing qualities.
2. A Buddha's speech does not contain any exclamations.
3. A Buddha's mind never forgets anything.
4. A Buddha never leaves his meditative concentration on reality (even when acting).
5. A Buddha does not experience any false appearances.
6. A Buddha is never so indifferent as not to check who is ready to make spiritual progress and to help him or her accordingly.
7. A Buddha's good intentions never decline.
8. A Buddha's enthusiastic perseverance never declines.
9. A Buddha's mindfulness of all beings never declines.
10. A Buddha's single-pointed concentration never declines.
11. A Buddha's wisdom understanding voidness never declines.
12. A Buddha's enlightened qualities never decline.
- 13–15. All the actions of the body, speech and mind of a Buddha are preceded by and carried through with deep awareness of both appearances and their absence of true existence, maintaining his omniscient awareness, spontaneous and non-conceptual.
16. A Buddha sees the past with his omniscience, being neither attached to it nor hindered by it.
17. A Buddha sees the future with his omniscience being neither attached to it nor hindered by it.
18. A Buddha sees the present with his omniscience, being neither attached to it nor hindered by it.

Body born of ten million virtues and excellences,
Speech that fulfills the hopes of infinite beings,
Mind that sees all knowables as they are:
I pay homage to the head of the Shakya tribe.

Lama Tsong Khapa

The Measure of What is Considered Having Taken Refuge

- ❖ Taking refuge by knowing the good qualities of the three objects.
- ❖ Taking refuge by knowing the differences in the qualities of each of the three.
- ❖ Taking refuge by accepting the three objects as ideal.
- ❖ Taking refuge by thinking there are no other true objects of refuge.
- ❖ Taking refuge by knowing the three ultimate objects of refuge.

Outer and Inner Objects of Refuge

Outer Buddha = The omniscient one.

Inner Buddha = one's own Buddha nature or the potential for full awakening within.

Outer Dharma = Buddha's teachings, especially the liberating wisdom of reality in the mind of an arya being.

Inner Dharma = one's own wisdom-light.

Outer Sangha = The arya beings and the spiritual community who inspire one.

Inner Sangha = one's own determination or bodhicitta.

In General; Buddha shows the way
Dharma is the real refuge
Sangha are the followers

You should look at yourself as a patient seeking the advice of the all-knowing physician Lord Buddha, his teachings as the medicine and the Sangha as caring nurses administering it.

Meditate like this

Lama Yeshe used to say; "taking refuge is nothing new, we are taking refuge all the time, but always in temporary objects. When we are sick we take refuge in a physician and medicine, when we are depressed we seek refuge in a friend, when lonely in sense pleasures even in chocolate and cheese-cake etc." These objects of refuge can obviously only give us a momentary relief from whatever suffering we experience. They do not have the power to liberate us from suffering permanently like The Three Jewels; Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. Check with your

own life experience and investigate how and why these worldly objects, enjoyments and people do not have the power to liberate us. Because they are just as imperfect as us, because external things lack the ability to satisfy us etc.

Only someone or something that is free can free another. Only someone who is perfect can lead another to perfection. That is the purpose and function of The Triple Gem. Contemplate the various unimaginable qualities of Buddha and generate faith, as much as you can.

End the session by visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha before you and recite his mantra with a deep feeling of faith and admiration as well as a great joy in having been fortunate enough to meet with Buddha's teaching.

The Advantages of Having Taken Refuge

- ❁ You become an inner being or Buddhist.
- ❁ You have gained the basis for further vows.
- ❁ You purify past negative karmic imprints.
- ❁ You quickly accumulate vast amounts of merit.
- ❁ You cannot be harmed by humans or non-humans.
- ❁ You will not fall into lower rebirths.
- ❁ Your virtuous purposes will easily be fulfilled.
- ❁ You will quickly attain Buddhahood.

Advice and Commitments of Refuge

- ❁ When you take refuge in Buddha, you should not take refuge in any worldly gods.
- ❁ When you take refuge in Dharma, you should avoid intentionally harming others.
- ❁ When you take refuge in Sangha, you should not let yourself be influenced negatively by irreligious friends.

Specific Commitments

- ❁ Generate respect for all images of Buddha even if the quality of the artwork is poor, and regard them as an actual Buddha.

- ❧ Generate respect for even one letter of Dharma as you would the true Dharma, and take care of Dharma-materials.
- ❧ Generate respect for monks and nuns and dharma friends, and regard them as you would the true Sangha.

General Commitments

- ❧ Take refuge repeatedly and remember the good qualities of each of the Three Jewels.
- ❧ Remembering the kindness of the Three jewels, offer them the first portion of your food and drink.
- ❧ Encourage others to take refuge.
- ❧ Do whatever actions you do with complete trust in the Three Jewels.
- ❧ Never forsake the Three jewels even at the cost of your life, or even as a joke.

After having taken refuge in the Three Jewels, Buddha's first advice to us is to be mindful and observe our karma, i.e. to abandon non-virtue and practice virtue as much as we can.

Dedication

Please bless me and all sentient beings to fear the burning fire of the three lower realms of suffering, to take heartfelt refuge in the Three Precious Gems, and to continue putting enthusiastic effort into the practice of abandoning negativities and accumulating virtuous deeds.

From the Guru Puja

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

The Medium Scope

“Nothing exists the way it appears, it is all up to our karma”

Padmasambhava

All actions of body, speech and mind treated with an attitude of greed, hatred and ignorance lead to suffering. From all actions created with the opposite attitudes of love, compassion and wisdom, only happiness comes.

Nagarjuna

The more convinced one becomes of the inner law of cause and effect, the more energy one gets to change and improve oneself and one's life.

Lama Yeshe

The Four Outlines of Karma

1. Karma is definite in that virtuous actions lead to happiness and non-virtuous to suffering.
2. Karmic imprints increase; the result is greater than the cause.
3. One will never experience a karmic result one did not create the cause for.
4. Karmic causes created are never lost.

For an action to lead to a throwing karmic result that ripens in a future rebirth it needs four conditions; intention, object, action and rejoicing.

The Ten Non-Virtuous Actions to be Abandoned

- ❖ Three of body; killing, stealing and sexual misconduct
- ❖ Four of speech; lying, slander, harsh words and gossip
- ❖ Three of mind; covetousness (greed), harmful intent (hatred) and wrong view (ignorance)

If you knew how hard it is to acquire,
Living the average life would be impossible.
If you saw its great benefits

You would be sorry if it stayed meaningless.
If you thought about death,
You would make preparations for your future lives.
If you thought about cause and effect
You would stop being reckless.

Lama Tsong Khapa

Different Types of Karma

- ❖ Virtuous, which leads to rebirth in one of the three upper realms of existence.
- ❖ Non-virtuous, which leads to rebirth in one of the three lower realms of existence.
- ❖ Non-fluctuating karma; actions done in connection with different kinds of concentrations, which results in birth in the form and formless realms of existence.
- ❖ Throwing karma is a karmic imprint presided by all four conditions and with the potency to throw one into one of the six realms of existence at the time of death.
- ❖ Completing karma on the other hand is a karmic imprint not presided by all four conditions for a complete karma and therefore doesn't have the power to throw us into a particular realm, but instead it completes the circumstances of the rebirth. It manifests as either pleasant or unpleasant experiences during the life, in accordance with the nature of the karmic imprint.

The Differentiation of Karmic Weight

- ❖ Heaviness according to the nature of the non-virtue.
- ❖ Heaviness according to the basic object of the non-virtue (holy or ordinary).
- ❖ Heaviness according to your intention of the non-virtue.
- ❖ Heaviness according to the action involved (keeping vows or not). Heaviness according to the frequency of the non-virtue.
- ❖ Heaviness according to your non-virtue being without any opponent.

The Four Results of the Ten Immoralities

1. The fruit that ripens in the form of rebirth.
2. The fruit that corresponds to its cause.
3. The fruit of possessing the cause.
4. The fruit that ripens in the environment.

Do not think a small sin
Will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water
Will fill a large container,
The little sins
A churl accumulates
Will completely overwhelm him.

The Buddha

Confession; the Four Opponent Powers

1. The power of reliance on the objects of refuge and the generation of bodhicitta.
2. The power of regret.
3. The power of determination not to engage in negative actions.
4. The power of solution i.e. applying an antidote.

These oppose the four results of negative karmic imprints.

Whoever was once reckless,
May later become scrupulous;
They are then as comely
As the cloudless moon,
Just like Nanda, Angulimala,
Ajatashatru and Shankara.

Nagarjuna

The Ten Virtuous Actions to be Adopted

Of Body: Saving and protecting the lives of others (to value and cherish life).
Generously giving what one can to help others.

Cultivating trust and honesty in one's relationships by respecting others' feelings.

Of Speech: Speaking the truth.

Uniting people; encouraging virtue by speaking about others' good qualities.

Talking in a pleasant manner with soft, gentle and loving words.

Speaking about meaningful things.

Of Mind: Having a loving attitude and rejoicing in others' happiness.

Generating a compassionate attitude towards all living beings.

Cultivating wisdom and a realistic attitude to life.

Do not think a small virtue
Will not return in your future lives.
Just as falling drops of water
Will fill a large container,
The little virtues
The steadfast accumulate
Will completely overwhelm them.

The Buddha

Meditate like this

Start by first going through the ten virtuous actions and recognize how much you have managed to accomplish in this life, or tried to accomplish. Pat yourself on the back a bit and rejoice in yourself and make a determination to increase such initiatives. Also acknowledge your own capacity for love, compassion and kindness.

Then contemplate each of the ten non-virtuous actions. Pick a few that you recognize are more common in your life. Maybe killing, lying and gossip as an example, and meditate on these in particular. Think back in your life to instances when these negative actions were committed, and try to understand what your motive was, why did you engage in these actions, what benefit did you expect? Which one of the three poisonous minds was the driving force behind?

Attempt to understand the whole picture of motive — action — result, and generate a feeling of regret.

When we check up previous actions and we realize how many mistakes we have made, when we remember all the actions we did out of ignorance, without knowing karma, then we feel kind of embarrassed. Oh, I have made such a mistake in such a time. To feel embarrassed like this is just natural. But actually to discover each of the previous negative actions is something to rejoice about, that our mind is capable of recognizing and understanding karma. It means that our mind has developed Dharma-wisdom.

What I have been thinking before as the cause of happiness was a completely wrong idea, not having perfect understanding of what is the right cause of happiness. Since I now have received Dharma-wisdom I always have the chance, if I wish, to stop create the cause of suffering and I also have the chance to create the cause of happiness. Think, “how fortunate I am. This is the root of all happiness and peace, also ultimate happiness. It makes me so free.”

Remembering past negative actions with Dharma-wisdom is the door to one's happiness. It makes you seek a method. What to do now? The answer to that question is purification and creating merits. Without realizing one's own delusion and karma there is no energy to make purification, one does not seek the method to be free from it. E.g. the more one recognizes that one's house is dirty the more one has the chance to make it clean, and live in a healthy environment. Trying to believe that one has no delusion and one did not create negative karma does not benefit, it only produces more confusion in the mind, not solutions to life problems.

End the session with a visualization of Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, contemplate the Four Opponent Powers and practice purification of all negativities created since beginningless time, while reciting the mantra.

Om Muni Muni Mahamuniye Soha...

Not to commit any evil actions,
To accumulate a wealth of excellent virtue
And to subdue ones own mind —
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

Dedication

Due to these merits may my actions never cause even the slightest of harm to any sentient being. Instead may they only bring the greatest of benefit. Whatever suffering or happy life I experience may it only be of greatest benefit to others, causing them to achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Suffering is to be known,
The cause is to be abandoned.
Health is to be achieved and
The medicine is to be taken

Maitreya Buddha

Question: How can we perceive or know the fact of cyclic existence?

Answer: This is difficult. There is a continuum of mental and physical aggregates that are under the influence of contaminated actions and afflictive emotions and that serve as a basis of suffering. This is cyclic existence. In order to establish its existence, one first has to understand how these mental and physical aggregates come to be a basis of suffering by way of former actions. To do this, one must understand how contaminated actions and afflictive emotions come to be. One must understand how an unbroken continuum of such exists. If one were logically proving the existence of cyclic existence, one would state these reasons which then would have to be established individually — that contaminated actions and afflictive emotions exist in general, that these have a connection with our mind and with our experience of pleasurable and painful effects, that there is an unbroken and beginningless continuum of consciousness between lives, that the mental and physical aggregates that are impelled by contaminated actions and afflictive emotions, the continuum of which has existed unbrokenly from lifetime to lifetime, have a nature of suffering and serve as a basis of suffering, and that the root of all this meets back to a mistaken awareness which perceives the nature of phenomena wrongly.

Once it is established that these thoroughly afflicted phenomena are generated with a mistaken consciousness as their root, it can be understood that when this mistaken consciousness is removed, the afflictive emotions generated in dependence upon it are also removed, whereby the contaminated actions generated in dependence upon them are also removed. Through that, birth in cyclic existence that is produced in dependence upon contaminated actions is

overcome. In this way, the twelve branches of the dependent-arising of cyclic existence are overcome. It is through such a combination of understandings that one can gain ascertainment with respect to the process of cyclic existence; it is not something that can be explained all in one piece.

From *H.H. the Dalai Lama at Harvard*

The Noble One's Four Truths and its Sixteen Aspects

The Truth of Suffering, its Cause, the Cessation of all Suffering and the Path Leading to that Cessation.

The Truth of Suffering

Has Four Aspects: impermanent, suffering, empty and selfless.

The example is: the contaminated aggregates.

1. The contaminated aggregates are impermanent because of being temporary.
2. These aggregates are suffering because they are under the influence of another power, the force of contaminated actions and afflictions.
3. These aggregates are empty because they are empty of an independent self-existent person, separate from the aggregates.
4. These aggregates are selfless because they are not established as a self that exists under its own power i.e. not one with the aggregates.

Four Distortions

To grasp the aggregates as permanent

To grasp the aggregates as pure

To grasp the aggregates as happiness

To grasp the aggregates as the self

The Truth of the Cause of Suffering

Has Four Aspects: cause, source, strong production and condition.

The example is: ignorance and craving.

1. Ignorance and craving are causes, because they are the root of suffering.
2. Ignorance and craving are sources, because they give rise to suffering again and again.
3. Ignorance and craving are strong production, because they cause severe suffering.
4. Ignorance and craving are conditions, because they act as cooperative conditions.

Four Distortions

Holding suffering as causeless

Holding suffering as produced from wrong causes

Holding suffering as produced by one cause

Holding suffering as by nature permanent but momentarily changing

Delusions are states of mind which, when they arise within our mental continuum, leave us disturbed, confused and unhappy. Therefore, those states of mind which delude or afflict us are called delusions or afflictive emotions.

H.H the Dalai Lama

The Truth of Cessation

Has Four Aspects: cessation, pacification, perfection and definite emergence. The example is: separation from suffering and its causes by applying its remedies.

1. Separation from suffering and its causes by applying its remedies is cessation, because it is separation from suffering forever.
2. Separation from suffering and its causes by applying its remedies is pacification because it is separation from delusions forever.
3. Separation from suffering and its causes by applying its remedies is perfection, because it is ultimate happiness and panacea.
4. Separation from suffering and its causes by applying its remedies is definite emergence, because one will never experience suffering again.

Four Distortions

Holding liberation as non-existent

Holding contaminated meditative absorptions as liberation

Holding certain aspects of suffering as liberation

Thinking that suffering can cease, but will always recur

The Truth of the Path

Has Four Aspects: path, suitability, achievement and deliverance.

The example is: wisdom realizing selflessness.

1. Wisdom realizing selflessness is the path, because it has the capacity to achieve the state of liberation.
2. Wisdom realizing selflessness is suitable because, being aware of the disadvantages of delusions, it counteracts them.
3. Wisdom realizing selflessness is achievement, because it is transcendental wisdom, which understands the nature of all phenomena.
4. Wisdom realizing selflessness is deliverance, because it eliminates the root of cyclic existence completely.

Four Distortions

Grasping at total non-existence of the path

Grasping at the disbelief in wisdom realizing selflessness as the path

Grasping at certain meditative absorptions as the path

Thinking no paths can remove suffering forever

If one does not think hard
About the drawbacks of suffering,
One has not sufficient yearning for liberation.
If one does not think of
The source of all suffering
— The gateway to samsara —
One cannot properly know eradication of samsara.

Be moved to renounce this existence,
Weary of it, and cherish the knowledge
Of what binds one to samsara.

Lama Tsong Khapa

Dedication

Until samsara ends, may the teaching that benefits not be moved away by the veil of superstitions. May the whole world be always filled with people having understood and found stable faith in the true teachings.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain Buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Chart One : The Realms of Samsara

There are three realms and six types of transmigratory beings in samsara.

	4	Peak of cyclic existence	
FORMLESS	3	Nothingness	
REALM	2	Infinite consciousness	
	1	Limitless space	
	17	Topmost realm	
	16	Seeing clearly	
Exclusive to Arya Beings	15	Beautiful-looking	Pure Lands
	14	Not depressed	
	13	Not big	
Ordinary and Arya Beings	12	Great Result	
	11	Born from Merit	Fourth Absorption
	10	Cloudless	
FORM REALM	9	Vast Bliss	
	8	Limitless Bliss	Third Absorption
	7	Small Bliss	
Ordinary Sentient Beings	6	Bright light	
	5	Limitless light	Second Absorption
	4	Small light	
	3	Great Brahma	
	2	Entourage of Brahma	First Absorption
	1	Family of Brahma	
DESIRE REALM	6	Controlling Other's Emanations	
	5	Enjoying Emanations	
God realms	4	The Joyous Land	
	3	Land Without Combat	
	2	The Heaven of the Thirty-Three	
	1	The Four Royal Lineages	
Demi-God realm			
Human realm			
Animal realm			
Hungry Spirit realm			
Hell realms			

— Whatever is samsaric in nature brings suffering —

The Six Sufferings in Samsara in General

1. The suffering of the indefinite nature of samsaric pleasures, whatever happiness they bring never lasts.
2. The suffering of dissatisfaction. Constant striving for more and better samsaric pleasures.
3. The suffering of leaving the body again and again.
4. The suffering of joining with suffering again and again.
5. The suffering of rising and falling. The result of being higher is to become lower; the result of a collection is its dispersion; meeting leads to parting and life itself ends in death.
6. The suffering of loneliness, of being without a helper; born alone, alone we die.

He eats his father's flesh and hits his mother.
The enemy he killed sits on his knee.
A wife gnaws her husband's bones.
Samsara can be such a farce!

Shariputra

Meditate like this

From Lama Zopa Rinpoche's teachings.

To understand suffering, especially the first two. The indefinite nature, uncertainty and not finding satisfaction are the most important to contemplate.

“How much we follow object of desire we expect to have satisfaction, but the result is dissatisfaction. We hope for satisfaction so we try one more, I'll do it again, to have an end to desire, to fulfill the desire, I'll do it again, I'll try again. You expect satisfaction, but in reality the result is only dissatisfaction. Again want more. Also following desire many other disturbing negative thoughts

arise, such as jealousy, pride etc. harmful thoughts and misery. So, no end to suffering.” By thinking this, we can keep our morality pure. Contemplate this and relate it to your own life experience.

The Eight Sufferings of Human Beings

1. The suffering of birth, 2. ageing, 3. sickness and 4. death.
5. The suffering of separation and being parted from what you like.
6. The suffering of encountering what you dislike.
7. The suffering of not obtaining objects of desire.
8. The suffering of the contaminated aggregates being in the nature of suffering.

The enjoyment of pleasures stemming from desire
Is as empty as reflected moonlight,
As fleeting as an echo,
As illusory as a mirage,
As dependent as a reflection.
Into this vast ocean of klesas
The rivers of birth, decay, sickness and death flow unceasingly.
In the past, I was bound by the karmic power of impure deeds;
But today I am able to fulfil this life, so why not seek after Dharma?

Atisha

The Three Kinds of Sufferings

- ❖ Suffering of misery: is the common, gross mental and physical suffering experienced by all living beings.
- ❖ Suffering of change: is more subtle and in fact mistaken for happiness. It means that the sense-pleasures we experience, by their very nature, eventually change into pain.
- ❖ Pervasive compounding suffering: is even harder to discern, it is related to the continuity of our delusions and karma. As long as these two exist unchecked in our mental continuum our five aggregates will experience suffering without any choice.

The Suffering of the Gods

- ❖ Their suffering is mainly experienced within seven days of their death when due to karma they lose their splendors of smell, appearance, garlands, cloths and thrones. Their body gives off less light, water adheres to their bodies when they wash, the jewelry gives off an unpleasant sound, their eyes blink and they keep to one place.
- ❖ The suffering of perceiving their future rebirth in a lower realm.
- ❖ The suffering of always being involved in fighting the asuras.

You can see that no matter how much
Happiness increases, it will end.
Similarly, suffering also increases
But there is no end to it.

Aryadeva

The Suffering of the Demi-Gods

- ❖ They suffer from jealousy towards the gods.
- ❖ Constantly fighting and being killed by the more powerful gods.

The demi-gods, by nature, have great suffering
For they are jealous of the glory of the gods.
Though they are discerning, they will not
See the truth, for this migration is obscured.

Nagarjuna

The Suffering in the Form and Formless Realms

- ❖ The suffering of being powerless in maintaining one's state.

Those in the Form and Formless Realms
Transcend the suffering of suffering for a while,
But these lords of single-pointed concentration
Remain motionless for eons, so
It is most certain they'll not be liberated,
And will later fall from there.

Vasubandhu

Meditate like this

In order to not arise attachment to samsaric rebirths, the best method is trying to realize that all the samsaric realms of rebirth are in the nature of suffering. From that aversion arises, then renunciation of samsara arises. Whenever the person achieves fully renounced mind of samsara, through meditation, at that time the person enters the path. If the person has bodhicitta, then that person enters the mahayana path.

Contemplate each of the eight sufferings first according to your own experience then others'. When you contemplate the three kinds of sufferings, check if you can find any type of experience in your life that does not fit into one of those categories?

At the end of the meditation visualize all transmigratory beings surrounding yourself and feel how they are living in the same intolerable suffering. Like being locked up in the prison of samsaric existence or like living in a pit of fire. Then visualize Chenrezig, The One Who Looks With Compassion on all living beings, and practice the Four Immeasurable Thoughts of Equanimity, Love, Compassion and Rejoicing, see p.1, and recite the mantra:

Om Mani Padme Hum...

Dedication

Violently tossed amidst waves of delusions and karma,
Plagued by hordes of watery denizens — the three kinds of suffering —
We seek your blessing to develop an intense longing to be free
From this monstrous ocean of boundless and vicious existence.

From the Guru Puja

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Even those who wish to find happiness and overcome misery
Will wander with no aim nor meaning
If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind —
The paramount significance of Dharma.

This being so,
I shall hold and guard my mind well.
Without the discipline of guarding the mind,
What use are many other disciplines?

Shantideva

The Six Root Afflictions

1. **Desire**, which is attached to internal or external objects.
2. **Anger**, which is hatred upon observing any of nine sources of generating harmful intent; someone who has harmed oneself, is harming oneself, or will harm oneself. Someone who has harmed one's friend, is harming one's friend, or will harm one's friend, or someone who has helped one's enemy, is helping one's enemy, or will help one's enemy.
3. **Pride**, of which there are seven types:
 - a. Pride of thinking of an inherently existent I.
 - b. Puffed-up pride thinking oneself superior to lower persons.
 - c. Fancying oneself superior to those who are equal.
 - d. Thinking oneself slightly inferior to others, who are actually considerably superior, as in pretending, "Oh, I know almost as much as so and so does."
 - e. Pride beyond pride, conceiving oneself to be even greater than superior people.
 - f. Pride in which one fancies that one has powers such as clairvoyance not actually attained.
 - g. Thinking one has attained special powers whereas one has actually been carried away by a spirit, for instance.

4. **Ignorance**, which in this context is a non-realizing consciousness that obstructs one from seeing the actual mode of subsistence of objects. Ignorance is of two types, of actions and their effects and of suchness.
5. **Doubt**, is a two-pointed mind with respect to the four noble truths, actions and their effects, and to forth. It has the function of serving as a basis for non-engagement in virtue.

These are all intellectually formed.

6. **Five Afflictive Views**

An afflictive view is an analytical mind that has reached a wrong conclusion and thus is an afflictive knower.

a. *View of the transitory collection* as inherently existent ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ which is an afflictive cognition that, upon observing the disintegrating collection of the mental and physical aggregates, conceives of an inherently existent ‘I’ and an inherently existent ‘mine.’ There are intellectual and instinctive views, and here this view is the latter kind. There are two types of instinctive views: grasping at ‘I,’ and grasping at ‘mine.’ The view of equating the self with the transitory collection is a grasping at ‘mine.’ To obtain liberation from samsara, this is the main mental factor to be recognized and overcome. The view of the transitory collection acts as a basis of all afflictions.

b. *View holding to an extreme*, which is an afflictive cognition that, upon observing the ‘I’ that is conceived by the view of the transitory collection, views it either as permanent, stable and unchanging or as not connecting to a future life. These two, respectively are views of permanence and annihilation.

c. *Conception of (afflictive) views as supreme*, which is an afflictive cognition that, upon observing either the view of the transitory collection as inherently existent ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ a view holding to an extreme, a wrong view, or the mental and physical aggregates in dependence upon which these views arise, considers it to be supreme.

d. *Conception of (bad) ethics and modes of conduct as supreme*, which is an afflictive cognition that, upon observing either faulty systems of ethics or modes of conduct such as those that call for behaving like dogs or other animals, or the mental and physical aggregates in dependence upon which these arises, considers such as supreme.

e. *Wrong view*, which is an afflictive cognition that denies what actually does exist or superimposes existence on what does not exist. In the list of ten non-virtues, wrong view refers only to the former, but here in the context of the five views it is both.

Save me from doubt, that terrible ghost,
That cruel one who flies in a sky
Of utter blindness, who harms
My yearning for conviction,
Who murders my liberation.

The First Dalai Lama Gedun Drub

Think about The Faults of Attachment:

1. The object never lasts; impermanence.
2. A contaminated object is in the nature of suffering, leading to dissatisfaction.
3. The object is not truly existent, but illusory.
4. The uncertainty of the fulfillment of desire.
5. Other negative minds arise like possessiveness, anger, jealousy, pride, fear and insecurity.
6. It exaggerates the importance of the object leading to disappointment, thus cheating us.
7. It keeps us in samsaric suffering endlessly, stopping the experience of true happiness.
8. It distracts us from achieving meaningful realizations of The Three Principles of the Path; renunciation, bodhicitta and wisdom realizing emptiness, and attaining enlightenment.

The Remedies

Meditate on impermanence and death.

Meditate on the thirty-two impurities of the body.

Meditate on the non-true existence of the object.

Generate faith in the Dharma.

Generate love for others.

Twenty Secondary Afflictive Emotions

Disturbing Conceptions Derived from Anger:

1. aggression, belligerence 2. resentment 3. spite 4. jealousy 5. cruelty.

Disturbing Conceptions Derived from Attachment:

6. miserliness, avarice 7. haughtiness 8. excitement.

Disturbing Conceptions Derived from Close-Mindedness:

9. concealment, suppression of faults 10. lethargy, dullness 11. non-faith
12. laziness 13. forgetfulness 14. inattentiveness.

Disturbing Conceptions Derived from Both Attachment and Close-Mindedness:

15. deceit, pretension 16. dishonesty.

Disturbing Conceptions Derived from All Three Poisons:

17. shamelessness 18. inconsideration for others, non-embarrassment 19. unconscientiousness 20. distraction.

Meditate like this

Memorize the different delusions and learn to recognize them as they arise in your mind during meditation sessions and in daily life. Learn the antidotes for each and generate a determination to apply them.

Like Geshe Ban Gun-gyal said: I guard the entrance to the fortress of my mind with a spear — the antidotes. At no time am I not doing this. When delusions are at the ready, so am I. When they relax, so do I.

Transforming Anger into Compassion in the Practice of Patience:

Begin this meditation by visualizing a person in front of you with whom you have had a fearful and angry relationship. Then try to transform your view towards him or her by going through each of these points.

1. The patience of voluntarily bearing, or accepting suffering. **How?**
By remembering it is our samsaric nature.
By remembering it is our own karmic creation.
Replace the nagging question **WHY** this should befall me? with **WHY NOT!**

2. The patience of thinking about the Dharma. **How?**
 By blaming the experience on one's own self-cherishing thoughts.
 By recognizing that the object of our anger is in fact very precious and useful and essential for us to overcome hatred forever.
 By taking the opportunity of turning the experience into a sincere Dharma practice. Replace the thought, this is a **BAD** experience, with, this is **GOOD!**

3. The patience of having compassion for the enemy. **How?**
 By remembering the faults of delusions and karma and wanting to stop them.
 By recognizing the weakness of the other and refusing to retaliate.
 By generating genuine forgiveness from the depth of ones heart.
 Mentally extend your feeling of forgiveness towards all living beings.
 Concentrate for as long as you can in this state and then dedicate the merits.

Changeable Mental Factors

1. Sleep. If, prior to sleeping, your mind is virtuous, the factor of sleep also will be virtuous, but if, prior to sleeping, your mind is non-virtuous, involved with an afflictive activity, then the factor of sleep will also be non-virtuous.

2. Contrition, which is a factor of regret. If one regrets having done a virtuous action, such contrition is non-virtuous, where as if one regrets having done a non-virtuous action, such is virtuous.

3. Analysis, which is to look into objects in a detailed fashion. Investigation and analysis are changeable in the sense that if they occur within the context of objects of desire and hatred, for instance, they are non-virtuous, but if they are done within the context of virtuous objects, they themselves are virtuous.

Eleven Virtuous Mental Factors

1. Faith
2. Conscience, which brings about avoidance of improper behavior from thinking that it would not be suitable from one's own viewpoint to do it.
3. Embarrassment, which brings about avoidance of improper behavior out of concern for what others might think.
4. Non-attachment, which views desire as faulty, thereby deliberately restraining desire.
5. Non-hatred, which views hatred as faulty, thereby deliberately restraining hatred.
6. Non-ignorance, which views ignorance as faulty, thereby deliberately restraining ignorance.
7. Effort, which is enthusiasm for virtue.
8. Pliancy, which is physical and mental serviceability induced by developing meditative stabilization.
9. Conscientiousness, which is self-examination, self-checking; this is very important in daily practice.
10. Equanimity
11. Non-harmfulness.

After such meditations, when you do not long
For the splendors of samsara for even a moment,
When your thoughts day and night
Always yearn for liberation,
You have developed renunciation.

Lama Tsong Khapa

Dedication

It is solely from the kindness of the gurus who have taught us that we have come to be acquainted with the peerless Buddha's words. Thus, I dedicate this merit so that every sentient being may be cared for in the future by most kind and holy gurus.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Twelve Branches of Dependent Arising 12

How delusion and karma bind us to samsara.

“First there is the thought that simply labels I upon the aggregates, then there is the appearance of this I to exist from its own side, and as soon as the thought believes in this appearance to be real, that thought becomes ignorance. It is a wrong conception because the object does not exist in reality. This is how the object is a hallucination; the ignorance that motivates karma is hallucinated with respect to the nature of the I.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Another way, beside the four noble truths, to understand the suffering nature of samsara is to meditate on the gradual evolution of the twelve dependent links, as Guru Shakyamuni showed. This is represented by the symbolic drawing of the wheel of life, also called the twelve dependent links of origination. It is held in the mouth of the Lord of Death, showing how all beings who live in the six realms of samsara are controlled by impermanence and death. The wheel is also supported by his hands and feet, symbolizing being trapped by true suffering and the true cause of suffering — delusion and karma.

1. **Ignorance**, a consciousness conceiving inherent existence.
The blind person shown in the wheel of life symbolizes the ignorant person, who does not see where he is going, where he will be reborn, what he has suffered or what he will suffer in rebirth. Ignorance is the root cause of all delusions.
2. **Compositional Action** or Karma
Ignorance generates compositional action.
This is symbolized by a man producing clay pots. Just as a clay pot can be fashioned into many sizes and shapes, so does the creation of different karmas bring different results.
Karma may be meritorious, non-meritorious or non-fluctuating.



3. **Consciousness**

Compositional action generates consciousness.

This is symbolized by a monkey with fruit in its hand, swinging from tree to tree, to show that consciousness, bearing karmic imprints, joins past to present and present to future.

4. **Name and Form**, the mental and physical aggregates

Consciousness generates name and form.

This is symbolized by a man rowing a boat. The boat symbolize the aggregate of form, and the person in it the aggregates of feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness, inside the fertilized egg.

5. **Six Sense Spheres**, the sense powers

Name and form generate the six sense powers.

This is symbolized by an empty house. Since this link refers to the embryo inside the womb, it shows that the sense powers are formed but have not yet met with their respective objects.

For the six sense spheres there are also six outer objects & six consciousnesses.

6. **Contact**

Six sense spheres generate contact.

This is symbolized by the contact of a man and a woman, the meeting of sense spheres with their objects.

Contact distinguishes objects as attractive, unattractive or neutral and arises upon the coming together of the sense power, consciousness and respective object.

7. **Feeling**

Contact generates feeling.

This is symbolized by a man who, with an arrow in his eye, is suffering because of his contact with an object. Without contact there is no feeling; therefore, if my mind is uncontrolled, I am better off to avoid contact with objects that lead to more greed and further suffering. This is why

Guru Shakyamuni, with great compassion, made the rule that one should be well contained and have few possessions.

There are three kinds of feelings: pleasure, pain or neutral.

8. **Craving**

Feeling generates craving.

This is symbolized by a man drinking wine. Just as this man's thirst is never satisfied, so the person deluded by greed is never satisfied and craves more things.

The craving of not wanting to separate from pleasure and the craving of wanting to separate from pain.

9. **Grasping**

Craving generates grasping.

This is symbolized by a monkey picking fruit from a tree. Having tasted one fruit, he clings to the tree for more and more. Grasping is created by craving and procreates existence, just as human beings grasp at and cling to their physical bodies.

Four kinds of grasping: a. desirous grasping, which is desire involving strong attachment to visible forms, sounds, odors, tastes and tangible objects. b. grasping at afflictive views. c. grasping at bad ethics and conduct. d. grasping at views of self.

10. **Existence**

Grasping at the body generates existence.

This is symbolized by a pregnant woman. At this point the karma leading to next rebirth is ready to be actualized, just like a woman in her late pregnancy has a completely developed child in her womb. Existence is the fully potentialized karma.

11. **Birth**

Existence generates rebirth.

This is symbolized by a woman giving birth.

12. Ageing and Death

Birth generates ageing and death.

This is symbolized by an old man walking with a cane and carrying a corpse. Thus death ends life, and the round of existence circles again.

In this way arise what are
Just aggregates of suffering

These aggregates, appropriated through contaminated actions and afflictive emotions and having a nature of just suffering, cease through overcoming ignorance.

In how many lifetimes does one pass through this cycle of twelve? At the fastest, two lifetimes. In the first lifetime, motivated by ignorance, one engages in an action, thereby accumulating that karma, the potency being infused in the consciousness, and near the time of death craving and grasping nourish that karmic potency, which, when fully potentialized, is called existence. Then, in the next lifetime one undergoes the effects of those — name and form, the six sense spheres, contact, and feeling as well as birth and ageing/death.

At the longest, one cycle of the twelve takes three lifetimes. In one lifetime a person engages in an action motivated by ignorance, thereby depositing a potency in consciousness — these being the first three branches. Then, at the end of a later lifetime (with any number of lifetimes in between) craving and grasping serve to nourish the particular potency established by that action done in the earlier lifetime, thereby actualizing the tenth branch — existence. Then in the very next life, the remaining dependent arisings — name and form, six sense-spheres, contact, feeling, birth, ageing and death — are actualized.

Due to the existence of this, that arises.

Due to the production of this, that is produced.

The unwanted sufferings of ageing and death are produced in dependence upon birth; birth is produced in dependence upon the potentialized level of action called existence; existence is produced in dependence upon grasping; grasping is produced in dependence upon craving; craving produced in dependence upon feeling; feeling is produced in dependence upon contact; contact is produced in dependence upon the six sense spheres; the six senses are pro-

duced in dependence upon name and form; name and form are produced in dependence upon consciousness; consciousness is produced in dependence upon action; action is produced in dependence upon ignorance.

Here the emphasis is on the first of the four noble truths, true sufferings themselves, which are the effects.

Then, in terms of the process of purification it is explained that: when ignorance ceases action ceases; when action ceases, consciousness ceases; when consciousness ceases name and form ceases etc.... until when birth ceases ageing and death cease.

H.H. the Dalai Lama

Meditate like this

Try to become aware of the whole evolution of samsara. That ignorance is like a farmer planting the seeds of karmic imprints into our consciousness, the field. From that arises all the rest of the links of dependent-arising; in this way, it can be seen that while one cycle of dependent-arising from the time of the first cause to the full production of its effects is occurring, many other cycles of dependent-arising revolving around other contaminated actions, motivated by ignorance, are occurring. This is like committing a crime, being put in jail, and committing more crimes while in jail. Thus until ignorance is removed, it is as if endless — there does not seem to be any way to end it. That is why samsara is called a prison, and no matter what one does, even engaging in virtue one can only reap the limited effects within samsaric existence. Never any true happiness — nowhere to be found. The only way out is to put the right key into the lock; the wisdom realizing the true nature of reality, which has the power to eliminate ignorance, the root cause of cyclic existence.

Dedication

Please bless me and all sentient beings to uphold liberation's banner and to partake of the treasures of the aryas' jewels and the three higher trainings and to abandon seeing the unbearable prison of cyclic existence as a pleasure grove.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

The Great Scope

In the lam.rim, the way to meditate on equanimity as a preliminary to the meditation on seeing all sentient beings as one's mother, usually just involves recognizing that the feeling which arises towards friend, enemy and stranger, is not reliable, not always true, because it changes. Sometimes in the past our present friend was our enemy or a stranger to us and our hated enemies were our trusted friends. This changes from life to life and even within one lifetime. Therefore they are in fact all equal and there is no reason at all to discriminate with attachment and hatred between beings by holding some close and others distant with a concrete, judgmental conception.

*The following meditation on equanimity, introduced by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in *The Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun*, is a more elaborate meditation which includes the above method as well as methods to overcome the self-grasping attitude that holds oneself as more important than others. It is a very effective psychological method to subdue and transform the negative mind*

All other virtues are like the plantain tree;
For after bearing fruit they simply perish.
But the perennial tree of the awakening mind
Unceasingly bears fruit and thereby flourishes without end.

Shantideva

Meditate like this

Visualize a disturbing enemy, a helping friend and a stranger, surrounded by all sentient beings. After contemplating each section of this meditation, think: there is no reason to be attached to, and help the friend, nor to hate the enemy and return harm.

1. If I were to work only to gain my own self-peace, there would be no reason to have been born human, because, even as an animal, I could strive for this.

2. The main purpose of my being born human is to strive for and achieve higher aims; to bring every sentient being into everlasting happiness. This is something that no animal can do.
3. Just as I wish to avoid suffering and find happiness, so do all other sentient beings.

Therefore, I and all other sentient beings are equal; therefore, there is no logical reason to care more for myself than for another and I should harm neither enemy nor any other sentient being.

4. For countless rebirths I have been discriminating all beings as either friend, enemy or stranger with a self-grasping attitude.

If there is a self-existent I, then there is the discrimination of self-existent others.

Päl.dän chö.drag

Attachment and hatred arise from discriminated partisanship between self and others. All negative things arise from acting under the influence of these negative minds.

How?

The self-grasping (ignorance, wrong conception)

causes

Attachment to me (greed)

producing

Attachment to my happiness (possessiveness).

All the different functions of the negative mind arise from the above

- ❖ Anger is caused by greed and self-attachment; it makes me discriminate against whoever disturbs my happiness, thus producing the enemy.
- ❖ Greed points out the friend who helps, and the enemy who hinders. Such reasoning comes from past, present and future instances of help and hindrance.
- ❖ Ignorance discriminates the stranger, who neither helps nor hinders.

RESULT:

- ❖ Anger makes me hate and harm the enemy.
- ❖ Greed causes me to be attached to, and help the friend.
- ❖ Ignorance makes me see the stranger as of a permanent self-nature.

By following the advice of these negative minds, I become involved in suffering and complicated situations. Greed creates suffering and danger for myself and all other beings. The whole earth is in danger of total destruction. Attachment offers no peace, and only causes suffering.

5. The two negative actions, helping with greed and harming with anger, have thrown me into samsaric suffering for beginningless lives, making perfect peace and enlightenment impossible to achieve.
6. To continue in this way will cause me the same suffering, receiving neither realizations nor enlightenment, for countless eons.
Negative actions leave negative impressions on the consciousness. These ripen into negative karma, and create suffering *ad infinitum*.
7. The three objects — friend, enemy and stranger — are not definitely true. The reasons for their being what they are are very temporal.

The present friend, enemy and stranger have not always been the friend, enemy and stranger in past countless lives. Even the enemy of last year may be the friend of this year, or the friend of this morning become this afternoon's enemy. It can change within the hour, and does so because of attachment to food, clothing and reputation.

If one tries to befriend an enemy for a moment, he becomes your friend. The same thing occurs when one treats a friend as an enemy. Therefore, knowledgeable ones are never attached to food, clothing or reputation, nor to friends or enemies, by understanding the impermanence of temporal relationships.

The father becomes the son in another life,
Mother becomes wife, enemy becomes friend;
It always changes. Therefore, there is
Nothing definite in samsara.

Shakyamuni Buddha

Therefore, there is no reason to be attached to friends nor to hate the enemy.

8. If that ignorant, self-grasping and all of its objects were true, these three distinctions (friend, enemy, stranger) should exist from countless previous lives to the present, and even beyond enlightenment.

This contradicts the significance of buddhahood, for the enlightened being is called Buddha because his wonderful sublime knowledge has not a tiny atom of the delusions and illusions that cause such discriminations.

The fully-understanding one showed his compassionate method, the equilibrium meditation, to free me from delusions, illusions and discriminations.

The discriminations are not true because that conception and its objects are totally illusive. There is no self-existent I.

9. My afflictions are not created by the enemy but by myself. In my previous lives I afflicted others through ignorance, and the results of this return during my present life.

I have killed all of you before and was
Chopped up by all of you in previous lives.
We have all killed each other as enemies,
So why should we be attached to each other?

From a sutra

It is very foolish and ignorant to retaliate with spite,
In the hope of ending the attack of the enemy, because
The retaliation itself only brings more suffering.

Chandrakirti

Therefore, there is no reason to retaliate.

10. The enemy is the object of my practice of patience, to control my anger. I should not hate the enemy who, by strengthening this practice, brings peace into my mind.
11. The enemy is infinitely more precious than any possession. He is the source of my past, present and future lives' happiness. I should never hate. Any material possession can be given up for his peace.
12. The enemy is my greatest need. He is the cause of all beings' enlightenment, including mine, he is my best possession; for his peace I can give up myself.

From now on I must never hate nor harm the enemy, nor any other being.

13. The enemy harming me physically and mentally is under the control of his negative mind. He is like a stick which someone uses to beat another. There is no reason to get angry, harming the person in retaliation — it is not his fault; as the pain of the beating is not the fault of the stick.
14. If I had clear wisdom, I would see that harming others with hate is, in fact, harming myself with hate. Obviously, I should not do it.
15. The enemy, as well as every other being, is the object of the Buddha's compassion. The numberless Buddhas hold the enemy and every other being as dear as their own heart.

Therefore, even lightly harming any being is like harming the infinite Buddhas.

16. The Buddha always considers all sentient beings, even enemies, more important than himself. Mindlessly harming any being for my own peace is the act of a mind like stone.
17. The enemy and all other beings have been my mother countless times. The holy body, speech and mind of the infinite Buddhas are servant to all beings, enemies included. So I must not give harm.

18. Not harming the worst enemy, which is in my mind, and destroying the outside enemy instead, is like shooting a friend and not shooting the enemy by not recognizing the object .

I should not harm the outer enemy but the inner one that causes all the suffering.

19. Because of high realizations based on this meditation, a bodhisattva would see no sentient being as an enemy even if all should rise against him.

The enemy is merely the conception of my hate, just as friend and stranger are conceived by greed and ignorance. I should not believe as my negative minds discriminate.

20. I should check up with my inner wisdom eye: the attached friend and hateful enemy will never be found anywhere, neither inside nor outside either of their bodies. With the true wisdom eye, I can see that these are only names.

Realization of this meditation is our most beneficial possession. It brings peace to numberless beings as well as to our many future lives. Inner realization of this meditation brings the true, well-subdued peace — as indestructible as a diamond. The enjoyment of this peace is invaluable and has no end.

Dedication

Please bless me and every sentient being to think continually that all others should have happiness and its cause, and to be happy when seeing another being create even the tiniest merit. For there is not the slightest difference between myself and all other beings, never finding satisfaction, even in dreams, nor desiring the smallest suffering.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Notes:

Generating Bodhicitta; The Totally Open Heart

14

I. Recognizing All Sentient Beings as One's Mothers

That all sentient beings have been my mother is shown by:

Scriptural authority:

If we divided this earth into pieces the size of juniper berries,
The number of these would not be as great
As the number of times that
Each sentient being has been our mother.

Nagarjuna

Logical reasons:

- ❖ Because of the beginningless nature of mind, samsaric transmigration is beginningless and my previous lives are numberless. But, due to different individual karmas, my present mother has not been my mother in all previous lives.
For instance, when this mother was an elephant I was an ant, born from a mother ant; when I was a yak, she was a flea; and so on.
- ❖ However, the mother of my present, human life has been my human mother numberless times.
She has also been my mother when we were turkeys, hens, cows, etc., countless times each.
- ❖ Of all the realms of samsara, there is none in which I was never born. I have been born in every single place throughout the entire extension of space. Each and every physical form in existence, even the most ugly and miserable of all, seen or not seen by me, I have taken innumerable times.
- ❖ Finally, the time when sentient beings began to be mothers does not exist. Such a time is not the object of even the omniscient mind of enlightened beings.

What is true, as above, for my present mother is also true for all other sentient beings.

2. Remembering the Kindness of All Mother Sentient Beings

Even worldly people are grateful for the kindness of the mother, which extends from conception until death.

My mother's kindness is responsible for all the opportunities I have, of making use of my physical body and of leading the sort of life that I do.

If she hadn't taken care of me when I was in the womb, I wouldn't have been born alive. If she hadn't fed me well afterwards, I wouldn't have enjoyed the various functions of my physical body, such as using

my eyes to see the most beautiful objects,
my ears to hear the most beautiful sounds,
my nose to smell the sweetest perfumes,
my tongue to enjoy the most delicious tastes, or
my body to enjoy sexual love, and have many children.

Also, becoming rich by working with my body, speech or mind, and being skillful and creative with my hands; all this depends on my mother's kindness. My mother always took good care of me, feeding me properly, protecting me from many dangers, directing my life, and making me study so that I could have a comfortable life and good reputation.

From the time of my conception she has been worried and concerned about me. When I was in the womb she worried day and night, didn't move as freely as before, and always took more care of me than of herself, because of the great love and compassion she had for her baby. She took much care in eating — renouncing desirable food, and eating only that which would not give me harm, avoiding foods that were too hot and too cold, etc.

At the time of my birth, she bore the extreme suffering of feeling as if her body were about to split apart, and had fear that her life was in danger. If my mother hadn't wanted to bear the suffering of childbirth, I wouldn't have been born.

When I was a baby, in spite of disgust, she always kept me clean of ka-ka, pi-pi, snot, etc. She always tried to keep me warm and protected, and gave me the best clothes and food that she could. She would also keep the best part of her own food and other enjoyments for me.

My mother told lies to give me a good reputation, and to hide my faults and bad behavior. To protect me from danger she fought or did anything possible to help, taking more care of me than of herself.

In all, my parents took great care of my life with much suffering, creating bad karma by making other beings suffer so that I would be happy.

Moreover, because my present mother has been my mother in countless human lives, she has been infinitely kind to me since time without beginning.

The amount of milk we have drunk from the one mother
Is greater than the amount of water in the oceans.

Nagarjuna

Besides the kindness she gave me as a human, there are those she gave as all different beings. I have received exactly the same amount of benefits from each sentient being. Therefore, as my present mother has been infinitely kind to me, so has every other sentient being.

Throughout all my rebirths since beginningless time all sentient beings have provided me with every single enjoyment and need. From food and drink, clothes and shelter, education and medicine, to transportation and gadgets of all kinds and love. In fact there is nothing I can point out as not coming from others' hard work, and there is no one I can point to saying, 'this person has never benefited me.'

In fact, the kindness of others is inconceivable and unimaginable and they all deserve my respect and full attention and to serve my kind mothers is the only reasonable response towards them.

3. Repaying All Mother Sentient Beings for Their Kindness

Developing bodhicitta depends on having great compassion. This depends on great love, which comes from the unselfish love that sees only beauty. This can be easily achieved by considering sentient beings as mother and remembering their kindness to me. This is done because, of the two parents, living beings generally cherish their mother more than their father.

Even worldly people feel the responsibility of repaying help received from their mother or from other people, even if this help is in small insignificant things. For instance, this help may be in satisfying my desires, by giving invitations to parties, food, or cups of tea, or by saying one or two sweet, empty words, pleasing to my ears. Also, even deeply ignorant animals such as dogs help their master in return for kindness received, so why can't I do the same?

Yet, repaying mother sentient beings in their worldly needs is not enough nor is it the best way, because it can't extinguish their suffering or its cause.

The best method of repayment is by helping them with the true realization of Dharma, because this will help them overcome their problems and fulfill their wishes for happiness both now and in the future.

Dedication

Please bless me to generate true effortless compassion, such as a mother has for her beloved, beautiful baby, by thinking that all living beings are equally tormented, and that all are my mother, and have been constantly kind to me.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

4. Equalizing and Exchanging Oneself with Others

The practice of equalizing oneself with others
Is a holy and mystical practice.

Shantideva

How is this?

The greatly courageous mind takes on the suffering of others by taking more care of others than of itself and gives its own happiness and merits to others.

The importance of this teaching is not grasped by those of lower understanding, and it is difficult for them to rejoice at this action. Therefore, this practice is recognized as holy and mystical.

Even the breath running in and out can become a great method of helping other beings — by making them receive the highest, most magnificent state, obtained through

the practice of a bodhisattva's deeds, characterized by
bodhicitta: taking more care of others than of oneself.

Lama Tsong Khapa

I should equalize myself with others because we are equal in fact — all sentient beings, myself included, desire happiness and dislike suffering.

We should primarily train ourselves in the practice of
equalizing oneself with others.

Shantideva

As all beings are equal in happiness and suffering, they should be protected as oneself.

There are many parts of the body, yet they protect each other from suffering, equally. Similarly, although the suffering of other beings is separate from me, we are all equal in desiring happiness. The action of curing the suffering of others should have no expectations, just as I don't expect to receive anything by curing my own suffering.

Therefore, as there is no reason to cherish myself more than others, I should take more care of others than of myself.

By deeply thinking of the numberless shortcomings of cherishing myself, and the numberless benefits of cherishing others, I can raise the greatly courageous thought: thinking of curing the suffering of all other beings by feeling even their smallest suffering as unbearable, and not being upset even by the thought of suffering all their sufferings.

Whatever joy there is in this world
All comes from desiring others to be happy,
And whatever suffering there is in this world
All comes from desiring myself to be happy.

But what need is there to say much more?
The childish work for their own benefit,
The Buddhas work for the benefit of others.
Just look at the difference between them!

Shantideva

Dedication

Due to all the merits of the three times, accumulated by myself and by others, may any being just by seeing, hearing, remembering, touching and talking to me be freed in that very second from all their sufferings — disease, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations, and abide in the peerless happiness of full enlightenment forever.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

5. Recognizing the Shortcomings of Self-Cherishing

On the basis of the following short explanation, I should think about the shortcomings of self-cherishing thoughts.

The self-cherishing conception:

- ❁ Has kept me locked in the prison of samsara for numberless lives, compelling me to bear the sufferings of the six realms as much as possible,
- ❁ has kept me in ignorance, continuously obsessed by countless problems,
- ❁ has prevented all opportunities of reaching enlightenment,
- ❁ has stopped my receiving any other realizations,
- ❁ has prevented the understanding and practice of Dharma,
- ❁ has not even allowed the enjoyment of temporal happiness,
- ❁ will continually destroy me in the future, as it has done in the past, and
- ❁ changes helpful living beings and inanimate objects into enemies who destroy me.

My guru becomes my enemy, so do my friends — relatives and non-relatives — my self and my body, and possessions and non-possession.

All the defects and sufferings are the faults of only one thing — the self-cherishing conception. From the beginninglessness of samsaric life, how much suffering has been experienced in all three samsaric worlds? But still the creator of all faults has not been recognized, and is sought in external objects. Because of this ignorance, I have held and harmed the wish-fulfilling

mother sentient being as an enemy. On the other hand, my worst enemy, the self-cherishing conception, the cause of all suffering, has been held as the dearest friend. Whatever the action performed, it is under the control of the self-cherishing conception.

Lama Tsong Khapa

How much suffering and fear, and
How many harmful things are in existence?
If all arise from clinging to the “I”,
What should I do with this great demon?

Shantideva

This wrong conception makes me create much evil karma by forcing me to work for self-happiness, self-perfection, good reputation, etc. It makes me jealous of those who possess even the most insignificant thing, proud of being rich and powerful, angry when I hear rude words or see ugly objects, regard other beings as enemies, break my relationships with friends, and not get along with my teacher, parents, spouse, brothers and sisters.

The self-cherishing conception disrupts the peace between all beings, and as long as this great demon lives in my heart, keeping peace from myself and others, there can be no method whatsoever by which permanent harmony can be found.

Until oneself has been recognized as one’s own enemy,
No realized guru can help.
When one sees oneself as one’s own enemy,
Then the guru can be helpful.

Sha.po.pa

This great enemy prevents my following the guru’s advices correctly, despite repeated warnings from Dharma friends. It makes me follow only my own habitual and very old, bad character. Thus, I appear hostile to those whose advice I ignore. Instead of recognizing my own bad habits as the cause of all these problems, I blame other beings for them.

Dedication

Please bless me to destroy the great demon of clinging to the ‘I,’ by seeing that horrible disease, selfishness, as a spiteful object and the cause of all the undesired suffering, and by blaming it for the creation of all faults.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

6. Recognizing the Benefits of Cherishing Others

“If one lives one’s life with the attitude that one has the responsibility of freeing all sentient beings from suffering and obtaining their happiness, then whatever actions one does, walking, sitting, eating, sleeping — everything becomes service for others. Everything done with this attitude is done for others’ benefit, thus it is unstained by the self-cherishing thought and becomes pure Dharma. And all actions aimed at freeing others is the best cause of happiness.

The ultimate goal of life is to be useful for other living beings. Even if one becomes useful for only one sentient being the purpose of living is fulfilled.

As oneself has the right to achieve happiness and eliminate suffering so also have others. As oneself needs and wishes everyone to be compassionate and loving to oneself, support oneself, help oneself, exactly like that every other living being needs compassion and loving kindness from me. Everyone wants you to help them, just as oneself want no harm only help”.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Therefore the Mighty One has said
That the field of sentient beings is (similar to) a Buddha-field,
For many who have pleased them
Have thereby reached perfection.

If I do not actually exchange my happiness
For the sufferings of others,
I shall not attain the state of Buddhahood
And even in cyclic existence shall have no joy.

Shantideva

Dedication

Please bless me to be able to hold sentient beings dearer than my life, even should they all rise against me as enemies, by seeing that the thought of taking the greatest care of sentient beings and leading them to enlightenment is the door to infinite knowledge.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

7. Giving and Taking; the Practice of Great Love and Great Compassion

Self-confidence should be applied to (wholesome) actions,
The (overcoming) of disturbing conceptions and my ability
(to do this).

Thinking, “I alone shall do it,”
Is the self-confidence of action.

Shantideva

The practice of giving generates great love successfully, and the practice of taking increases one's compassion quickly.

Before starting this practice, the great mahayana compassion should be meditated on deeply by thinking with feeling, how good it is that all mother sentient beings should be completely released from suffering, and by remembering all the different sufferings they are experiencing.

Also, the great mahayana love should be deeply meditated on with strong heart-felt feeling, by rejoicing at the thought that all sentient beings should have the great happiness, and by visualizing giving them all the greatest pleasures including enlightenment. The main purpose of this practice is to control and extinguish self-attachment, i.e., taking the greatest care of only ourselves. Such a mind often doubts, and is worried and afraid of temporal life sufferings, hot and cold, hunger and thirst, etc.

Besides all this, we should have deep understanding of the negative results and shortcomings of not giving, and the numberless benefits of giving. What our egotistic mind doesn't want to give away are:

our most cherished body,
our possessions and enjoyments and
our merits.

These three objects should be dedicated to control instantly our egotistic mind, which is the main destroyer of happiness and enlightenment, and the cause of all suffering and problems.

Visualize yourself surrounded by universal living beings and start the practice focusing on people dear to you, who easily spark a feeling of compassion in your heart: mother, father, friends and relatives.

Contemplate that you are taking over whatever suffering of sickness, hardships, emotional problems and delusions that you recognize in them, and imagine that they become completely free.

As you breathe in through your right nostril these sufferings enter in the form of very dark fog. This fog becomes a thunderbolt, or a lazer-beam, which plummets with the fierce force of the lightning of a dangerous electrical storm.

It strikes and shatters the unimaginably black, rigid, rock which is the wrong conception of the self-existent I, the attachment to taking more care of oneself than of others, and the ordinary conceptions, situated in the heart. It explodes into pieces, instantly disappearing, leaving only the mere emptiness of it all.

Now you fully receive the dharmakaya and rupakaya of Buddha. Your body, speech and mind are one with Buddha's holy body, speech and mind.

As you breath out through your left nostril you send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body to each of the beings surrounding you. Each atom of light becomes everything in the nature of happiness that the beings need to cure their sufferings, their fear and their distress. The pure white light becomes everything they wish for. Each of their enjoyments generates an understanding of Dharma and grants all the levels of realizations including enlightenment. All become awakened, their mind being dharmakaya and their body rupakaya.

Visualize a group of people surrounding you that you don't feel close to and whom you dislike. Do exactly the same practice as above.

Visualize the strangers: all the transmigratory beings scattered throughout the six realms of existence. Start with the hell-beings.

Contemplate that you are taking over all the different tremendous sufferings and problems, all the heavy and subtle obscurations of all the beings in hell, so that they become free.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through the left nostril you send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body to each of the beings surrounding you. Each atom of light becomes everything in the nature of happiness that the beings need to cure their sufferings, their fear and their distress.

For example: To the hot hells it appears a refreshing rain to cool. To the cold hells it appears as warm sunshine. To the hell beings nearby, the different things causing suffering become one with Buddha's holy body, and these things suddenly appear as enjoyments, giving great happiness, eradicating all suffering.

Each of their enjoyments generates an understanding of Dharma and all the levels of realizations including enlightenment. All become awakened, their mind being dharmakaya and their body rupakaya.

Visualize the animal realm.

Contemplate that you are taking over every different type of suffering that animals experience, such as deep ignorance, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, being eaten by others, torture and hard work.

As you breathe in through the right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through the left nostril you send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body, to each of the animals. It becomes everything in the nature of happiness that these beings need to cure their sufferings.

For example: it becomes food and drink and all kinds of help, and protection, which guide them from life's dangers and such sufferings as being eaten and beaten and tortured by other beings.

Each of their enjoyments generates an understanding of Dharma and all the levels of realizations including enlightenment. All become awakened, their mind being dharmakaya and their body rupakaya.

Visualize the hungry ghost realm.

Contemplate that you are taking over each hungry ghost's suffering of inner and outer hindrances and all their obscurations so that they become free.

As you breathe in through the right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body. It becomes one with the hot burning sufferings in their stomachs, instantly transforming pain into bliss. It becomes one with the filthy, stagnant lakes which they cannot drink, transforming them into pure crystal nectar lakes, and it becomes a banquet of delicious food and drink satisfying all their needs.

Each of their enjoyments generates an understanding of Dharma and all the levels of realizations including enlightenment. All become awakened, their mind being dharmakaya and their body rupakaya.

Visualize all human beings surrounding you.

Contemplate that you are taking over each human being's different sufferings and problems, like fighting, sickness, pain, confusion and every heavy and subtle obscuration that blocks their path to enlightenment.

As you breathe in through the right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body. It instantly turns into whatever they need to overcome their problems.

Shantideva said:

“May I become food and drink in the eons of famine for those poverty-stricken sufferers.

May I be a doctor, medicine and nurse for all sick beings in the world until everyone is cured.

May I become never-ending wish-fulfilling treasures materializing in front of each of them as all the enjoyments they need.

May I be a guide for those who do not have a guide, a leader for those

who journey, a boat for those who want to cross over, and all sorts of ships, bridges, beautiful parks for those who desire them, and light for those who need light.

And may I become beds for those who need a rest, and a servant to all who need servants.

May I also become the basic conditions for all sentient beings, such as earth or even the sky, which is indestructible.

May I always be the living conditions for all sentient beings until all sentient beings are enlightened.”

All these enjoyments give them infinite happiness; beginning with refuge they generate the three principles of the path: renunciation, bodhicitta and correct view in their mental continuum and become Buddhas — their mind becoming dharmakaya and their body rupakaya.

Visualize the realm of the demi-gods

Contemplate that you are taking over all their suffering, worry, jealousy and all their delusions, gross and subtle.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha’s holy body, to each of the demi-gods.

It becomes one with the enemies with whom they fight, becomes one with the weapons which injure them and transforms enemies into guru buddhas and bodhisattvas, showing the Dharma and leading them along the path.

It transforms weapons into a rain of flowers and beautiful rainbow-coloured clouds, making them receive realizations and infinite happiness. Their mind becomes dharmakaya and their body becomes rupakaya.

Visualise the realm of the gods

Contemplate that you are taking over all the sufferings and obscurations of the gods. Such sufferings as death, quarrels, fights, banishment and being controlled, as well as those of the gods in the form and formless realms.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha’s holy body, to each of the gods.

It becomes one with the amrita of immortality — to abolish the suffering of death. It becomes one with the weapons that injure them, and transforms it all into the path to enlightenment and into transcendental enjoyments; all interfering enemies are transformed into buddhas and bodhisattvas, leading them to enlightenment.

It becomes the whole path beginning with refuge for the cognitionless gods. They all become Buddhas, and achieve the dharmakaya and rupakaya.

Visualize bodhisattvas, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas

Contemplate that you are taking over all the subtle superstitions interrupting bodhisattvas from receiving enlightenment; and the subtle illusive mind of shravakas and the pratyekabuddhas and their self-cherishing conceptions.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light, which is my and Lord Buddha's holy body, to each of the bodhisattvas and arhants.

It becomes the higher tantric realizations for the bodhisattvas, bringing enlightenment quickly by purifying the subtle illusive minds. It also becomes fundamental mahayana realizations and higher tantric realizations for the arhants by purifying self-cherishing conceptions and every other negative mind.

Visualize all your gurus

Contemplate that you are taking over all hindrances to your gurus' lives until you receive all sutra and tantra teachings and realizations, especially to receive all the teachings that lead you immediately to enlightenment in this very lifetime.

Also the interruptions to your gurus' holy deeds spreading all over the samsaric realms, and to all their holy wishes becoming automatically successful.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril you send pure white light, which is my and Lord Buddha's holy body, to each of the gurus.

All the light becomes my gurus' possessions and enjoyments, increasing

their transcendental happiness for the sake of all sentient beings and myself.

Now all my gurus have eons of long life, until I receive all realizations and teachings, there being many chances to receive all the explanations and teachings from the gurus. All their deeds become capable of spreading throughout the universe without a single hindrance.

Visualize monasteries, dharma-centers, temples etc.

Contemplate that you are taking over all the negative influences — hindrances which cause degeneration or destruction of the teachings of Lord Buddha, as well as the hindrances to the teachings of the Buddha prevailing in the universe.

As you breathe in through your right nostril: As above.

As you breathe out through your left nostril send pure white light, which is your and Lord Buddha's holy body. This light becomes continuous and uninterrupted teachings, making degeneration impossible until every sentient being receives enlightenment.

May the teachings, which are the sole medicine for suffering
And the origin of every joy,
Be materially supported and honored
And abide for a very long time.

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then may I too abide
To dispel the misery of the world.

Shantideva

Dedication

Most venerable guru, please bless all sentient beings to enjoy happiness, all their suffering and defilements ripening within me, and may all my happiness and virtues be given away to them.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

8. Bodhicitta

Those who wish to destroy the many sorrows
Of (their) conditioned existence,
Those who wish (all beings) to experience a multitude of joys,
And those who wish to experience much happiness,
Should never forsake the awakening mind.

It is like the supreme gold-making elixir,
For it transforms the unclean body we have taken
Into the priceless jewel of a Buddha-form.
Therefore firmly seize this awakening mind.

Shantideva

Meditate like this

Think: As regards serving other sentient beings, obtaining their short-term happiness and comfort of this life is one thing. As much as one can, one must offer service for others, but more important than this is serving others in the long-term happiness of future lives.

Even more important service than this is to lead all the living beings, those who are suffering, into the everlasting happiness of liberation, the cessation of the whole entire suffering — all the problems of death and rebirth and all the rest of the sufferings. Bringing them to liberation from suffering and its causes, the disturbing negative thoughts and karma. This is more important than obtaining their temporal happiness in the future life.

Even more important service than this is offering to bring all sentient beings into the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, cessation of even the subtle mistakes and imprints of the subtle dual view.

In order to offer the service of bringing all the sentient beings into full enlightenment, first oneself should be a perfectly qualified guide, having ceased all the obscurations of the mind, and completed all the realizations. With omniscient mind one has perfect power to see all existence and perfect methods for all living beings' inner development. Therefore, I must achieve the state of a Buddha, the fully awakened mind, in order to benefit all living beings and lead them to the fulfillment of their highest potential, enlightenment.

Then, remain in a state of concentration on this most precious thought, the bodhicitta for as long as you can.

Live with compassion
Work with compassion
Die with compassion
Meditate with compassion
Enjoy with compassion
When problems come,
Experience them with compassion.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

The Benefits of Having Generated the Loving-Compassionate Thought of Bodhicitta

It is the entrance into the mahayana path.
You will be called 'Child of the Victorious Ones'.
You outshine the Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas.
You become the supreme object of offerings.
You amass an enormous accumulation of merit with ease.
You quickly purify sins and obscurations.
You accomplish whatever you wish.
You are not bothered by harm and hindrances.
You soon complete the entire path and its levels.
You become a fertile source of every happiness for other beings.

Dedication

In all our future lives may we never separate from the mahayana virtuous friend and the mahayana path, and continuously develop second by second the loving compassionate precious thought of bodhicitta.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

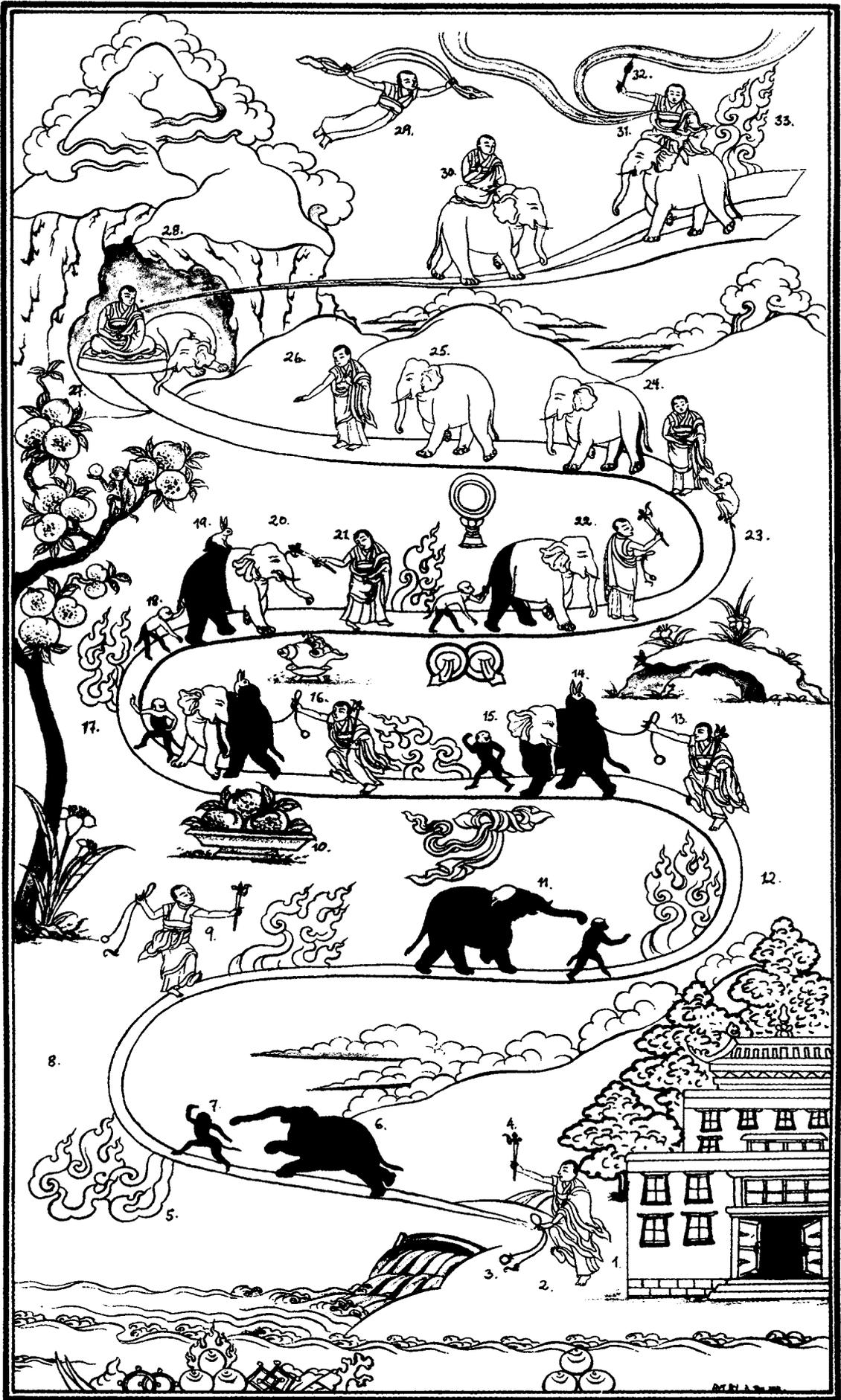
Samatha: Calm-Abiding Meditation 15

To fully achieve the perfection of calm-abiding one must eradicate the five faults by applying the eight antidotes:

Faith	}	opposes laziness
Aspiration		
Perseverance		
Pliancy		
Recollection	opposes forgetting the object	
Vigilance	opposes laxity and excitement	
Application	opposes non-application	
Equanimity	opposes over-application	

1. The first stage of meditation is attained through **the force of hearing**.
2. Fixing the mind on the object of concentration.
3. The force of recollection or mindfulness.
4. The force of vigilance, alertness or introspection.
5. From here until the seventh stage of mental absorption will be found a flame decreasing in size at each progressive stage until it becomes conspicuously absent. This difference in size, absence and presence of the flame denotes the measure of effort and strength of recollection and vigilance.
6. The elephant represents mind, its black color the mental factor of laxity.
7. The monkey represents distraction, and its black color the mental factor of excitement.
8. **The force of reflection**. This achieves the second stage of mental absorption.

9. Uninterrupted and continuous absorption on the object of concentration (lengthening of the period of concentration).
10. The five sensual desires are the object of the mental factor of excitement.
11. From here the black color, beginning from the head, changes into white. It denotes the progress in the clear grasping of the object of meditation and prolonged fixing of the mind on the object of concentration.
12. **The force of recollection.** The attainment of the third and fourth stages of mental absorption is achieved through the force of recollection.
13. To return and fix the strayed mind on the object of concentration.
14. The hare represents the subtle aspects of the mental factor of laxity. At this stage, one recognizes the distinct nature of the subtle and gross aspects of the mental factor of laxity.
15. Looking back means that having perceived the diversion of the mind, it is again brought back to the object of concentration.
16. Maintaining a clear conception of even the minutest details of the object of concentration.
17. **The force of vigilance.** Through this is attained the fifth and sixth stages of mental absorption.
18. The arising of the mental factor of excitement preceding the actual state of absorption is greatly reduced.
19. At the time of samatha meditation, even though thoughts of virtue arise these have to be eliminated and the mind tenaciously projected on the object of concentration. The reason is that such thought, in spite of its virtuousness, will act as interruption. Such elimination is not necessary when one is not doing samatha meditation.
20. The force of vigilance arrests the mind from drifting astray, and because of its sheer loftiness, the mind is drawn towards absorption.



21. The mind is controlled.
22. The mind is pacified.
23. Mental absorption is accomplished through **the force of perseverance.**
24. The mind becomes perfectly pacified. At this stage the arising of the subtlest laxity and excitement will not be possible. Even if there occurs some, it will be immediately removed with the slightest effort.
25. Here the black color of the elephant has completely faded out, and the monkey has also been left out. The meaning represented is: bereft of the interrupting factors of excitement and laxity, the mind can be settled continuously in absorption on the object of concentration with perfect ease and steadfastness, beginning with the application of a slight amount of the forces of recollection and vigilance.
26. One-pointedness of mind.
27. The ninth stage of mental absorption is attained through **the force of complete familiarity.**
28. Perfect equanimity.
29. Ecstasy of body.
30. Attainment of mental quiescence or samatha.
31. Mental ecstasy.
32. The root of samsara is destroyed with the joint power of samatha and direct insight into voidness as the object of concentration.
33. The flame represents the dynamic forces of recollection and vigilance. Equipped with these powers, one examines the nature of phenomena and the meaning of emptiness.

Meditate like this

Visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha the way it is described in the preliminary practice on page 1. Also, if possible, it is better to imagine the body as being very **small**; this makes it easier to gather the mind together on the object. In addition, it is helpful to meditate on the Buddha's body as being **heavy**, as this assists in keeping the mind from becoming scattered. Also, it should be imagined as being very **bright**; this helps to keep laxity from occurring.

You must stay with whatever you determine your object to be, not deviating from it. You cannot change the object day by day; the size, color, and shape must be fixed.

The meditative stabilization that you are trying to achieve has two attributes — stability and clarity. With regard to concentration, there is nothing fantastic about mere stability of mind — being able to stay on the object; what is very important is clarity, vividness of mind. Clarity here refers not just to the object but to the mind that is imagining the object; the mind itself must be very vivid. Not only that, but also there must be an intensity to the clarity — full alertness.

Dedication

By abandoning the faults of mental dullness and mental agitation, please bless me to accomplish the perfection of concentration, by single-pointed placement on the ultimate nature of the voidness of all things.

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

(Chapter 13–15 from Lama Zopa Rinpoche's book 'The Wishful-filling Golden Sun')

Whatever you perceive, whatever you proclaim — there is nothing that has not come from your own mind. Understand that this realization of mind is empty. Understanding the non-duality of the realization of mind and of voidness is **wisdom**.

Meditation is the continuous concentration on this wisdom without any distraction.

Deeds are accumulating merit and wisdom while you realize from the viewpoint of this meditation, that everything is like an illusion.

Once you are under the influence of these three, their practice will come even in dreams. Once it has come in dreams, it will come at the moment of death. When it comes at the moment of death, it will be present in the bardo.

Once it is present in the bardo, there is certain to be accomplishment of the superior Siddhi, and you will become a Buddha.

Atisha

Ascertaining the Non-Existence of a Personal Self

The Four Point Analysis

I. Identification of what is to be refuted or negated.

(Analyze how one is grasping on to the 'I')

Without contacting the true existence which the mind has projected, One will not apprehend its non-true existence.

Shantideva

In order not to refute too much of the object and fall into the extreme of nihilism, or for that matter not far enough, one has to fully understand what part of the object is to be negated. It is very subtle and Pabongka Rinpoche said about this:

While you are looking into exactly how the ‘I’ instinctively appears to you, the ‘I’ may present itself in various ways. Sometimes the ‘I’ may be something imputed on the body, sometimes on the mind. This is not the genuine way the ‘I’ presents itself to the instinctive grasping of the ‘I’. The body and mind, which are the bases of imputation, as well as the person — the imputed phenomenon — all merge into the one broad set. The self-evident ‘I’ plainly appears to be something rather more than an idea imputed on this set. It appears instead to be something established as being self-contained: a distinct unit on its own.... The self-evident ‘I’ will arise on top of the mind and body.... If the ‘I’ seems to be like this, you have rightly perceived the way the object to be refuted appears to you. Once recognized, it is easy to refute.

2. Determining the mode of existence of such an ‘I’.

(Concluding that it has to be either identical with or separate from the five aggregates)

In general, if a phenomenon exists, it must necessarily be singular or plural. Generally this is the full set of possibilities, and if a particular thing exists truly it must necessarily be either truly singular or truly plural. It is quite certain that this covers all cases.

This key point should lead you to the certainty that, ‘If it is neither of these two, it cannot exist.’

Pabongka Rinpoche

3. Examining the possibility of existing as one with the aggregates.

(In that case one ends up with five ‘I’ s, or five persons. Asserting the lack of such existence).

If the aggregates were the self, it follows that,
As they are many, the self too would be multiple.

Chandrakirti

You should now be clear about the way in which the object to be refuted is supposed to exist. The significance of the way in which the self and the aggregates could be established as the one thing is that they would not appear separately

to the mind: they would be completely inseparable, being necessarily the same thing. These reasons restrict them to the one distinct entity. Yet the way they appear does not accord with the way they are supposed to exist — this would make them false even at the relative level. But how could that happen when a thing is supposed to be established as true: the way it appears would have to correspond with the way it exists. Consequently, it would be pointless to posit a self. To say ‘the self’s aggregates’ would be no different from saying ‘the aggregates’ aggregates’ or ‘the self’s self.’ It would be pointless to make the distinction between ‘the self’ and ‘the self’s aggregates.’

Pabongka Rinpoche

4. Examining the possibility of existing different from the five aggregates. (Then it should be absolutely independent and unrelated. Asserting the lack of such existence.)

Now that you are certain they are not the same, you should feel, ‘All that remains is for the self and the aggregates to be established as separate by nature.’ If they were shown to be naturally separate then, as it says in *The Root of Wisdom*: It would be possible to perceive it without there being any aggregates, but it is not so perceived.

In other words, when you eliminate the goat and sheep from a group consisting of a sheep, a goat, and a bull, you are able to point to the remaining animal and say, ‘There’s the bull!’ You must similarly be able to identify something that is unconnected with the aggregates called the ‘I,’ which would be the residue after eliminating each of the five aggregates — form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness. But you do not, in fact, come to identify such a thing.

Pabongka Rinpoche

If it were different from the aggregates
It would not have
The characteristics of the aggregates.

Nagarjuna

Retain the understanding and its impact on the mind, keep analyzing. Analysis followed by space-like meditation on emptiness. In the break-time pursue the attitude that things are like an illusion.

Meditate like this: (In brief)

“While you are meditating there is an I which appears to exist from its own side. Right on top of that think, the I is merely labeled. Just meditate on the meaning of the I being merely labeled. I is a name; a name does not exist from its own side, a name is given, imputed by the mind. We can completely agree with that. This I is merely labeled; concentrate on just that. Try to feel that. This automatically eliminates eternalism, the view of a truly existent I.”

Lama Zopa Rinpoche

(More extensive) Question yourself:

What am I doing now, here?

I am meditating!

While thinking of I, part of the mind like a spy, search; where do I feel the I. Within the body or outside the body?

Now, if you find it hard to pinpoint the I simply from these questions, then use the more forceful means and imagine that you are being falsely accused of stealing, in front of your friends. At the same time as this is happening to you, watch the strong sense of I arising, when you think; “I’m not guilty of this.”

If you feel there is a self within the body, leave it there and check, where does it abide?

In the head, legs, arms, belly etc.?

Where do you feel the I to abide? In the chest? Somewhere from where desire and anger arises? If you feel this way it is good to use the meditation to analyze whether that is true or not.

Mentally go through your body from the top of your head to the tip of your toes and look for the I.

If you can’t find it make a conclusion in your mind and focus single-pointedly on the space-like emptiness of not finding.

When the doubt arises, that maybe the I really exists in the mind, then check the nature of mind. Mind also has parts; it is made out of moments such as the past, present and future. Analyze in which of these three moments the real I exists?

When you arrive at the experience of not finding, stay in the space-like meditation on emptiness and let go.

How does the I exist? By being merely labeled or imputed by the mind on the base, the five aggregates. That's all!

Ascertaining the Non-Existence of a Self of Phenomena

Un-conditioned and conditioned phenomena i.e. matter, mind and non-associated compositional factors do not truly exist.

All phenomena are dependent on three things:
Causes and conditions
Parts and directions or moments
Mental imputation or label

Then, is everything non-existent? If things did not exist, they could not affect us, but pain and pleasure do exist. When, with respect to any phenomenon, the object designated is sought, it is not found in the place where it was thought to exist; however, that it is non-existent is contradicted by experience, Therefore, since it is the case that the phenomenon being sought certainly exists but is not found under analysis, it can be concluded that it is not established under its own power but exists through the force of other conditions. What are those conditions? Conceptual consciousnesses that designate phenomena. Thus, it is inevitably established that phenomena exist through the force of, or in dependence upon, imputation by conceptuality.

H.H. the Dalai Lama

There are three criteria for existence:

1. The object is renowned among conventions.
2. There is no contradiction from a conventional valid cognition.
3. There is no contradiction from a valid cognition analyzing the ultimate. An object that fulfills these three criteria is posited as existing conventionally.

The way things now present themselves to us ordinary beings is nothing but the way the objects to be refuted through logic would appear to us. All consciousnesses within the mind-streams of ordinary beings have been affected by ignorance; because of this, any object that appears to us seems to be true.

Lozang Chökyi Gyältsän

Dedication

By pacifying distractions to wrong objects
And correctly analyzing the meaning of reality,
Please bless me to generate quickly within my mindstream
The unified path of calm abiding and special insight.

Lama Tsong Khapa

Due to these merits may I quickly attain buddhahood and lead all living beings, without exception, into that enlightened state.

Like Lama Tsong Khapa,
May I be able to offer extensive benefits equalling the limitless sky
To all sentient beings and the teachings of Buddha,
From now on in all future lives.

May all living beings abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger.
May all living beings have happiness and its causes,
May all living beings be free of suffering and its causes,
May all living beings not be separated from sorrowless bliss,
I will bring this about by myself alone.

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*The unimaginable beams of the sun's orb disperse
And there is the action of the sun illuminating the world;
Likewise, in the sphere of faultlessness,
Uncountable numbers of Buddhas merge,
And perform the action of illumination through
transcendental wisdom.*

From The Ornament of Mahayana Sutra