

The Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices
by
Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo

Homage to Lokeshvaraya!

At all times I prostrate with respectful three doors of body, speech and mind to the supreme guru and the protector Chenrezig, who through realizing that all phenomena neither come nor go, make single-minded effort for the sake of all sentient beings.

The perfect Buddhas, source of benefit and happiness, arise from accomplishing the sublime Dharma. And as that [accomplishment] depends on knowing the Dharma practices, I will explain the bodhisattvas' practices.

1. At this time when the difficult-to-gain ship of leisure and fortune has been obtained, ceaselessly hearing, pondering and meditating day and night in order to liberate oneself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence is the bodhisattvas' practice.
2. The mind of attachment to loved ones wavers like water. The mind of hatred of enemies burns like fire. The mind of ignorance which forgets what to adopt and what to discard is greatly obscured. Abandoning one's fatherland is the bodhisattvas' practice.
3. When harmful places are abandoned, disturbing emotions gradually diminish. Without distraction, virtuous endeavors naturally increase. Being clear-minded, definite understanding of the Dharma arises. Resorting to secluded places is the bodhisattvas' practice.
4. Long-associated companions will part from each other. Wealth and possessions obtained with effort will be left behind. Consciousness, the guest, will cast aside the guest-house of the body. Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice.
5. When evil companions are associated with, the three poisons increase, the activities of listening, pondering and meditation decline, and love and compassion are extinguished. Abandoning evil companions is the bodhisattvas' practice.
6. When sublime spiritual friends are relied upon, one's faults are exhausted and one's qualities increase like the waxing moon. Holding sublime spiritual friends even more dear than one's own body is the bodhisattvas' practice.
7. What worldly god, himself also bound in the prison of cyclic existence, is able to protect others? Therefore, when refuge is sought, taking refuge in the undeceiving triple gem is the bodhisattvas' practice.
8. The subduer said that all the unbearable suffering of the three lower realms is the fruition of wrongdoing. Therefore, never committing negative deeds, even at peril to one's life, is the bodhisattvas' practice.

9. The pleasure of the triple world, like a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass, is imperiled in a single moment. Striving for the supreme state of never-changing liberation is the bodhisattvas' practice.
10. When mothers who have been kind to one since beginningless time are suffering, what's the use of one's own happiness? Therefore, generating the mind of enlightenment in order to liberate limitless sentient beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.
11. All suffering without exception comes from wishing for one's own happiness. The perfect buddhas arise from the altruistic mind. Therefore, completely exchanging one's own happiness for the suffering of others is the bodhisattvas' practice.
12. Even if others, influenced by great desire, steal all one's wealth or have it stolen, dedicating to them one's body, possessions and virtues accumulated in the three times is the bodhisattvas' practice.
13. Even if others are going to cut off one's head when one is utterly blameless, taking upon oneself all their negative deeds by the power of compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.
14. Even if someone broadcasts throughout the billion worlds all sorts of offensive remarks about one, speaking in turn of that person's qualities with a loving mind is the bodhisattvas' practice.
15. Even if, in the midst of a public gathering, someone exposes faults and speaks ill of one, humbly paying homage to that person, perceiving him as a spiritual friend, is the bodhisattvas' practice.
16. Even if someone for whom one has cared as lovingly as his own child regards one as an enemy, to cherish that person as dearly as a mother does an ailing child is the bodhisattvas' practice.
17. Even if, influenced by pride, an equal or inferior person treats one with contempt, respectfully placing him like a guru at the crown of one's head is the bodhisattvas' practice.
18. Though one may have an impoverished life, always be disparaged by others, afflicted by dangerous illness and evil spirits, to be without discouragement and to take upon oneself all the misdeeds and suffering of beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.
19. Though one may be famous and revered by many people or gain wealth like that of Vaishravana, having realized that worldly fortune is without essence, to be unconceited is the bodhisattvas' practice.
20. If outer foes are destroyed while not subduing the enemy of one's own hatred, enemies will only increase. Therefore, subduing one's own mind with the army of love and compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.

21. Indulging sense pleasures is like drinking salt water – however much one indulges, thirst and craving only increase. Immediately abandoning whatever things give rise to clinging and attachment is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
22. Appearances are one’s own mind. From the beginning, mind’s nature is free from the extremes of elaboration. Knowing this, not to engage the mind in subject-object duality is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
23. When encountering pleasing sense objects, though they appear beautiful like a rainbow in summertime, not to regard them as real and to abandon clinging attachment is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
24. Diverse sufferings are like the death of a child in a dream. By apprehending illusory appearances as real, one becomes weary. Therefore, when encountering disagreeable circumstances, viewing them as illusory is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
25. If it is necessary to give away even one’s body while aspiring to enlightenment, what need is there to mention external objects? Therefore, practicing generosity without hope of reciprocation or positive karmic results is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
26. If, lacking ethical conduct, one fails to achieve one’s own purpose, the wish to accomplish others’ purpose is laughable. Therefore, guarding ethics devoid of aspirations for worldly existence is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
27. To bodhisattvas who desire the pleasures of virtue, all those who do harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore, cultivating patience devoid of hostility is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
28. Even hearers and solitary realizers, who accomplish only their own welfare, strive as if putting out a fire on their heads. Seeing this, taking up diligent effort – the source of good qualities – for the sake of all beings is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
29. Having understood that disturbing emotions are destroyed by insight possessed with tranquil abiding, to cultivate meditative concentration which perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
30. If one lacks wisdom, it is impossible to attain perfect enlightenment through the other five perfections. Thus, cultivating skillful means with the wisdom that doesn’t discriminate among the three spheres is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
31. If, having merely the appearance of a practitioner, one does not investigate one’s own mistakes, it is possible to act contrary to the Dharma. Therefore, constantly examining one’s own errors and abandoning them is the bodhisattvas’ practice.
32. If, influenced by disturbing emotions, one points out another bodhisattva’s faults, oneself is diminished. Therefore, not speaking about the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle is the bodhisattvas’ practice.

33. Because the influence of gain and respect causes quarreling and the decline of the activities of listening, pondering and meditation, to abandon attachment to the households of friends, relations and benefactors is the bodhisattvas' practice.
34. Because harsh words disturb others' minds and cause the bodhisattvas' conduct to deteriorate, abandoning harsh speech which is unpleasant to others is the bodhisattvas' practice.
35. When disturbing emotions are habituated, it is difficult to overcome them with antidotes. By arming oneself with the antidotal weapon of mindfulness, to destroy disturbing emotions such as desire the moment they first arise is the bodhisattvas' practice.
36. In brief, whatever conduct one engages in, one should ask, "What is the state of my mind?" Accomplishing others' purpose through constantly maintaining mindfulness and awareness is the bodhisattvas' practice.
37. In order to clear away the suffering of limitless beings, through the wisdom realizing the purity of the three spheres, to dedicate the virtue attained by making such effort for enlightenment is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Following the speech of the Sublime Ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras and their commentaries, I have written the *Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices* for those who wish to train on the bodhisattvas' path.

Due to my inferior intellect and poor learning, this is not poetry that will please scholars, yet as I have relied upon the sutras and the speech of the Sublime Ones, I think the bodhisattva practices are not mistaken.

However, because it is difficult for one of inferior intellect like myself to fathom the depth of the great deeds of bodhisattvas, I beseech the Sublime Ones to forbear my errors such as contradictions and incoherent reasoning.

By the virtue arising from this may all sentient beings become, through excellent conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, like the protector Chenrezig who does not abide in the extremes of existence or peace.

This was written for the benefit of himself and others by the monk Thogme, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngulchu Rinchen.

Commentaries given by His Eminence Garchen Triptrül Rinpoche

Homage to Lokeshvaraya!

First of all, the first sentence is *Homage to Lokeshvaraya*. When we read this sentence, we have to contemplate on its meaning while reading. The meaning of this sentence is *Prostrate to Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara*. From the outer image, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is one of the many forms of the Buddha. However, the real meaning is the inner Buddhist teaching of bodhicitta (the heart or the mind of loving kindness and compassion). Therefore, what our eyes are looking at is not only the outer appearance of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara but also, more importantly, bodhisattva's inner bodhicitta heart. If the inner bodhicitta heart is missing, then the outer forms do not have much meaning either.

Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is the heart of all Buddhas. The heart of all Buddhas refers to Buddhas' great compassionate heart towards all the sentient beings in the six realms. Within the three worlds (desire world, form and formless world), there exist Buddhas and sentient beings. Unlike sentient beings, Buddhas do not really dwell in the six realms. However, sentient beings dwell in each of the six realms – hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, demigod and god realm. If the non-virtuous deeds are committed, sentient beings dwell in the three lower realms and if virtuous deeds are committed, sentient beings dwell in the three upper realms. Like that, sentient beings dwell back and forth within these six realms.

At all times I prostrate with respectful three doors of body, speech and mind to the supreme guru and the protector Chenrezig, who through realizing that all phenomena neither come nor go, make single-minded effort for the sake of all sentient beings.

But why is it that Buddhas do not really dwell in the six realms? It is because they are without any coming nor going, they are just like all pervading emptiness that does not dwell in coming nor going. Who understands this point? Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara does. Therefore it says in the text: *who through realizing that all phenomena neither come nor go, make single-minded effort for the sake of all sentient beings*.

Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara realizes that the true nature of all phenomena is without coming nor going, but he insists in continuing to benefit all sentient beings and to remain with us. We dwell back and forth in the six realms. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara manifests numerous forms to teach and tame us so that we may understand and realize the method of how not to fall into the cyclic existence of the six realms.

Supreme guru and Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara are one and the same. The guru has the same diligence to benefit us. The supreme guru possesses great compassionate heart, therefore he too just like Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara benefits all sentient beings at all times. One who possesses the great compassionate heart is indeed Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. As long as one possesses the great compassionate heart, that person does not necessarily need to have many heads, hands or legs. Therefore, the image of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is merely a representation of the great compassionate heart or mind. And whoever possesses the great compassionate heart, that someone is indeed Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. We should show respect to and confidence in that person.

Supreme guru and sublime spiritual friends, due to their possession of the great compassionate mind, benefit sentient beings persistently at all times. Therefore, they are indeed not different from Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. This is the reason why we should at all times prostrate with respectful three doors of body, speech and mind to them. We pay respect with the body by doing prostration, with the speech by chanting the text and with the mind by understanding and contemplating persistently in our heart on the merit of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara's great compassion and by not departing from it. This is how we at all times prostrate with respectful three doors of body, speech and mind.

The perfect Buddhas, source of benefit and happiness, arise from accomplishing the sublime Dharma. And as that [accomplishment] depends on knowing the Dharma practices, I will explain the bodhisattvas' practices.

Those who can open our mind, introduce and explain to us the path to benefit all sentient beings are the perfect Buddhas. Therefore, it is said that the source of benefit and happiness of all sentient beings comes from Buddhas. Where do Buddhas come from? In the very beginning, Buddhas and sentient beings were exactly the same. But because of their diligent practice of the sublime Dharma, Buddhas gain the fruit of complete accomplishment. Therefore, it is said that the perfect Buddhas arise from accomplishing the sublime Dharma.

To practice the Dharma, the most important is to understand the practical methods of practicing. The practical methods include different chanting, visualization, mantras and so on but what is the root of these practical practices? It is the heart of loving kindness and compassion (bodhicitta). When we chant, we chant with bodhicitta; when we visualize, we visualize with bodhicitta. We apply and sustain bodhicitta in all of our daily activities. That is why bodhicitta is the life essence of all Buddhas. The realization of bodhicitta is the fruit of accomplishment of the Buddhas.

In order to become Buddha, we must practice solidly. Prior to that, we need to know the method to practice. There are many who do not know the method of practicing and as a result their practices cause them to fall into the hell realm. This we have heard quite often. Therefore, knowing the ways to practice is extremely important. Thus it says in the text: *And as that [accomplishment] depends on knowing the Dharma practices, I will explain the bodhisattvas' practices.*

Source of benefit and happiness, benefit and happiness refer to both temporary and long-lasting happiness. These two types of happinesses come truly from Buddha. After chanting this sentence, we have to think about it for a moment. In this world there are those who like Buddha Dharma and there are those who do not like Buddha Dharma. There are many buddhist practitioners who go through lots of suffering and there are many non-buddhists who are wealthy and happy. So, no matter who we are, half of the time we suffer and half of the time we are happy. Therefore, many people have great doubt about the fact that the source of benefit and happiness come from Buddha. They think that even after knowing the Dharma, still there is no solution to suffering. So whether or not we know the Dharma, it does not make any difference.

But is that really the case? No, it is not. Instead, this very body that we have is a result of what we have long prepared from our previous lives. Therefore, there is this saying: *If we wish to know our previous lives, just look at ourselves in this very life.* Everything

that we have in this life have long been prepared in our previous lives. Temporary happiness that we currently have is worldly happiness including longevity, freedom from sickness, wealth and so on or even having very good friends. Having been able to obtain this exceptional precious human life, we naturally obtain lots of happiness.

But, we should contemplate for a moment on from where does the happiness come? First of all, we have to understand that because of generosity, we can accumulate great wealth. When we uphold the purity of the moral ethics, we obtain a human body with good appearance. When we have good patience, we have many good friends, become free from sickness, enjoy longevity and so on as a return. All these refer to worldly temporary happiness. Meditative concentration and wisdom allow us to obtain the ultimate happiness. On top of the five, we need perseverance. Perseverance is indispensable both from the Dharma point of view and for the worldly matters.

These six paramitas (generosity, moral ethics, patience, perseverance, meditative concentration and wisdom) are Buddha's teaching on the six aspects of the wish-fulfilling tree and this is the path to our practice. The six paramitas resemble the tree's trunk, branches, flowers, fruits, leaves and the foundation of wisdom is the root of the tree which is bodhicitta. Bodhicitta (the loving and compassionate heart) penetrates the six paramitas. If there is lack of bodhicitta, the six paramitas will not be adequate. If there is bodhicitta, the six paramitas will be sufficient. Therefore, bodhicitta is the foundation of the six paramitas.

We have to understand that the source of all happiness whether worldly temporary or ultimate happiness come from Buddha. And we need also to understand that in our future, we will have both suffering and happiness. Buddha has said: *In the cyclic samsara, there is both suffering and happiness. But virtuous deeds bring more happiness than nonvirtuous deeds.* But Buddha also said: *The enjoyment of happiness in samsara is like poison.* The moment we eat, we feel very happy and it is delicious, but after we have finished, it is gone. In fact, the happiness in the three worlds are like that. Therefore, in the future, no matter if we have happiness or suffering or if we alternate between happiness and suffering, we need to contemplate in our mind on how we can cut the root cause of suffering. We need to understand that it is only through the practice of Dharma can we obtain that result. Therefore, we need to practice the Dharma right now. We need to contemplate on the precious human life and practice the Dharma well. Meditate on how the power of bodhicitta penetrates the six paramitas and thus cuts the root of all suffering.

After we have entered the Dharma path, we should be diligent to practice it thoroughly and well. In order to do that, we need to build a good foundation. This foundation is the four immeasurables. Therefore, the content of the very first verse is on the meditation on the precious human life.

1. At this time when the difficult-to-gain ship of leisure and fortune has been obtained, ceaselessly hearing, pondering and meditating day and night in order to liberate oneself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence is the bodhisattvas' practice.

First of all, we should know that to be able to obtain this ship of leisure and fortune – the precious human body – is not easy. You might think that there are so many people in this

world so how can it be so difficult to obtain a human body? But to understand the rarity of this difficult-to-gain human body, it should be compared to the number of other sentient beings in the six realms. When it is compared with the species and numbers of other sentient beings in the six realms, the number of human beings is really very, very small.

Furthermore, to be just a member of human beings is not so difficult. While seeing a Buddha image, one may generate a deep confidence in one's heart. And as long as there is no retreat from this confidence, there is a chance to obtain a human body because of this karma. But to obtain the conditions of leisure and fortune is very difficult – among one hundred people there is only about one or two persons who can obtain the conditions of leisure and fortune. You have to really understand this point. The meaning of leisure (being free from the eight unfavorable conditions) and fortune (the ten endowments) have already been mentioned by other previous masters (*please refer to the Jewel Ornament of Liberation, chapter 2 or Transformation of Suffering, chapter 1*) and I think that the Sangha of the Center should be able to understand them all.

We know that this precious human body with leisure and fortune is extremely difficult to obtain. However, just knowing that is not enough. We should frequently ponder and meditate in our heart in order to generate a genuine benefit. Just think – there are so many people in Taiwan and how many people enter the Buddha Dharma path? Very few. Among all the Buddhas' disciples, how many of them can really practice the Dharma correctly? Very, very few. Those who really practice the Dharma are the ones who are really equipped with the eighteen conditions of leisure and fortune. They are really very few. Therefore, those who can come to the Center and practice the Dharma can be said to be equipped with the eighteen accomplishments. Those who cannot practice the Dharma, no matter if they are poor or wealthy, inferior or powerful, and regardless of their background, they are still not considered as being equipped with these conditions.

Let us think – the number of fine sand that exists in the big ocean is so huge. This amount resembles the number of all sentient beings in the six realms. Here we only consider the sentient beings with forms. The number of sentient beings who are formless far exceeds that amount. With this comparison, we can understand how extremely rare this precious human life with leisure and fortune is. When we contemplate in this way, our hearts will generate a deep feeling from the rarity of obtaining leisure and fortune. Because of that feeling, we would think that we should make the best use out of this precious human life and not waste it.

This precious human body is like a ship. For those who make good use of it, they can use this ship to sail over the big ocean to obtain precious jewels. For those who do not make good use of it, they let this ship dwell aimlessly on the big ocean and soon the whole life will have passed away. The ocean of cyclic existence is just like that. For those who make use of this ship, they can accomplish enlightenment. For those who do not make use of it, they will constantly dwell back and forth in the samsara, that is, they will unceasingly fall into the samsara.

The body is very important to us and therefore, we would normally offer it food and clothing. When we get sick, we need to take vaccination and medicine. But we should not pay too much attention to our body. We have to understand that this body is just like an empty house that we have borrowed in order to fulfill the goal of this and future lives.

This is just a process. We borrow this body in order to accomplish the matters in this world and we borrow it so that we can obtain the benefit for the next life. Therefore, we should not pay too much attention to this body. Because if we do that, we will definitely generate the greed and desire of the five-sense pleasures and the fruit of that is to fall into the three evil realms.

Therefore, the most important is to make use of this valuable body. How? For example, use it to do the five-point full prostration. Even though while doing it, we have pain in our hands, waist and back, but doing it in this way really enhances our Dharma practice. Through that we can reach the fruit of accomplishment both for ourselves and for others. Otherwise, what is the use of taking care of this body? This is just like spending lots of money to buy a car. The purpose is to use the car to do business to earn even more money. If our purpose is not to use it, why do we buy the car? Therefore, since we have already borrowed this body, we should make good use of it, discipline it and use it to practice the Dharma. This is just like we should use the car to earn lots of money. We should use this body to earn lots of virtuous deeds, loving kindness and compassion (bodhicitta) which we can use in our future lives.

Therefore, when we obtain this difficult-to-gain ship of leisure and fortune, we have to make very good use of this ship. How? Just like what it says in the text: *in order to liberate oneself and others from the ocean of cyclic existence*. This is because all sentient beings have been our parents, and therefore we should at all times contemplate on liberating oneself and others from the suffering of samsara. But what can we do in order to liberate oneself and others from the suffering of samsara? We have to cultivate the heart of loving kindness and compassion, and to benefit all sentient beings at all times.

Many people may think in this way; I am busy working day and night and really do not have time to benefit sentient beings nor to practice the Dharma. In fact, this is not really the situation. Those who are busy working day and night are those who can practice the Dharma the most. How come? If we work for a boss and when the job is done, we are rewarded with a salary. We can use the money to take care of our children and relatives. We have to know that no matter when we take care of our children and relatives or when we work for our boss, they have all been our parents in our past lives. When we generate our heart to benefit them, we are using bodhicitta in our work. Because of our work, we receive reward. This fulfills our own benefit. Therefore, no matter what we do, so long as we generate our bodhicitta heart to benefit sentient beings, this is the Dharma practice. That is why I said that those who are busy working day and night are those who practice the Dharma day and night.

Next, we discuss the phrase *ceaselessly hearing, pondering and meditating is the bodhisattvas' practice*. First of all, hearing the Dharma teachings instructed by spiritual masters, as you normally come to the Center to listen to those teachings is a kind of hearing. While at home or driving a car, listening to the mantra of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara or Tara is also a kind of hearing. While listening to the sound of the mantra of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, we have to think – what is its inner meaning? Its meaning is the heart of loving kindness and compassion. Because sentient beings lack compassion, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara is the provider of the compassion to all sentient beings. We should ponder in this way.

When we visualize what should we think about? We visualize that all sentient beings be liberated from suffering and obtain happiness. Moreover, they have eliminated the causes of suffering and the fruit of suffering. When we visualize in this way, we can generate compassion. Ponder and meditate day and night on the suffering of all sentient beings. Ponder and meditate day and night that the only way to eliminate suffering is by the heart of loving kindness and compassion (bodhicitta). Our ability to arouse sentient beings to the generation of the heart of loving kindness and compassion is the true method of liberating sentient beings from suffering. This is the Dharma practice.

When we practice the Dharma, we do not think of our own suffering. Rather, we think of the suffering of all sentient beings. If we think of the suffering of all sentient beings, our own suffering is really nothing. Moreover, we hope that the suffering of all sentient beings can soon be eliminated while feeling that the suffering of oneself is nothing. If you have this kind of thinking, it is a sign of the generation of bodhicitta. Pondering and meditating on the unbearable suffering of all sentient beings which causes us to often cry uncontrollably is also a sign of bodhicitta. Many people often ask: How can we practice bodhicitta? Does visualization really have any strength? To this we need only to reflect for a moment and then we can understand. Take as an example in the past when a big earthquake shook Taiwan, when thinking of all the suffering we might then cry uncontrollably and wish that all the victims can soon be free from suffering and obtain happiness. This is also a sign of the generation of bodhicitta.

Therefore, we need to listen often to the Dharma teachings and to the sound of mantra. After hearing, we need to ponder on its meaning. Then we need to always visualize its meaning in our hearts and hope that all sentient beings can be free from suffering and obtain happiness and so on. These are the three ways of hearing, pondering and meditating.

It is not easy to train the visualization practice of the heart of loving kindness and compassion. Why is that so? This is because there are lots of destructive forces. Which kind of destructive forces can destroy bodhicitta? This is what we are going to talk about next.

2. The mind of attachment to loved ones wavers like water. The mind of hatred of enemies burns like fire. The mind of ignorance which forgets what to adopt and what to discard is greatly obscured. Abandoning one's fatherland is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Normally, we treat our own children, parents and relatives with love. This is a kind of loving kindness but this kind of loving kindness does not last very long because it can quickly turn into a kind of attachment. Take an example where our relatives are hurt by someone, we would then very quickly generate anger toward that person. At that time, the loving kindness and compassion turn immediately into hatred. So long as there is attachment, there is definitely ground for hatred. Therefore, this kind of attachment toward parents, children and relatives is not really loving kindness and compassion because attachment can turn into hatred.

Suppose there is a friend who has helped us very often, but one day he does something that hurts us, we then forget completely about all his earlier help. This is a situation where attachment often transforms into hatred.

When attachment or hatred is very strong, we will fall into darkness just like the sun becomes covered by dark clouds. When our attachment toward relatives is too strong, we will fall into ignorance. Therefore, we should not have too strong attachment toward those whom we care for. In fact, many of them are our creditors and therefore they come in this life to take care of our money and wealth, live in our house and use our property. Are they not our creditors? Toward external enemies, we should not have hatred because among them, there are some who have been our children and there are some who have helped us. Therefore, no matter if they are enemies or relatives, we have to treat them as equals. We should care for them all with loving kindness.

If we cannot do it in that way, we will fall into the trap of right and wrong, good and bad, and we will fall into the trap of ignorance. If we possess equanimity, our heart would be like the sun, and it would be far from darkness. Therefore, it is very important for us not to fall into attachment. Why is it that the last sentence says: *Abandoning one's fatherland is the bodhisattvas' practice*? It is because when you stay at one place for too long, the enemies that we accumulate will constantly hurt us which causes us to regenerate hatred. In addition, the relatives and friends that we like causes our attachment to regenerate in the same way. Therefore, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas abandon their fatherland, travel from place to place for the practice of the Dharma.

But just thinking of wanting to abandon the fatherland in order to practice the Dharma is useless. It is because just wanting to leave the fatherland without cutting the root of attachment and hatred in our heart, the Dharma practice will not be successful. This is just like someone leaving Taiwan for the United States but over there, there are still enemies and the generation of hatred, there are still lovers and the generation of attachment, then just leaving the fatherland does not make any difference. Therefore for those who practice the Dharma, the important point is not whether or not we leave the fatherland, but rather whether or not we cut the root of attachment and hatred in our heart. We need to have equanimity toward lovers and relatives as well as toward enemies. This is so because if we have too much attachment to relatives, at the time of death, there is no way to be liberated because of the attachment and there is no way to reach Amitabha's pureland. There will be a decline in bodhicitta. Therefore even though Buddhas and bodhisattvas show us their abandoning of the fatherland to practice the Dharma, but I am telling you here that the real inner spirit of it is to abandon the root of attachment and hatred in our heart. All of us need to understand this point.

Everyone shows care and thoughtfulness toward relatives and friends. But if we cannot extend the same kind of care and thoughtfulness to all sentient beings, it will transform into attachment and this kind of care and thoughtfulness cannot be sustained. When we face negative circumstances and obstacles, anger will be generated. For example, when we are planting a tree, it grows a little bit every day. But if we just cut that little bit away every day from the tree, can the tree still grow? It is impossible. Likewise, in the beginning we possess just a little compassion in our heart. But because of attachment and hatred that hurt compassion, it is impossible for compassion to grow. For example, two children from two different families are quarrelling. The parents from one family believe that the child from the other family is the troublemaker and therefore they want to punish the child. But think for a moment: this child has been our parent in our past lives, so even though right now the behavior of the child is not good, we still want both children in the future to have very good manners and upright conduct. In this way, they would not like

to hurt the child from the other family. Sometimes when we witness a boyfriend and a girlfriend quarrelling, we should not just defend the one that we know, we should hope that both are well and have harmony and hope that every sentient being have peace and harmony. Therefore, even though we have compassion, we have to reflect for a moment whether or not it can gradually be extended. We should try all methods to let the innate heart of loving kindness and compassion to be extended. Then we will not fall into the trap of ignorance.

3. When harmful places are abandoned, disturbing emotions gradually diminish. Without distraction, virtuous endeavors naturally increase. Being clear-minded, definite understanding of the Dharma arises. Resorting to secluded places is the bodhisattvas' practice.

The third verse says that we have to distance ourselves from harmful places. Harmful places means places where our attachment and hatred would arise. But to be practically distanced from harmful places is extremely difficult. To avoid harmful places that make our attachment and hatred to arise is not easy. Therefore, we have to understand that the main problem is not the place itself but rather our heart. Suppose a situation manifests in front of us that can potentially give rise to anger but our heart does not generate any hatred, at that time whether or not there is such thing as a harmful place is no longer relevant. We have to understand a heart filled with hatred is our real enemy and what we need to overcome is not outside adversary places but rather an inner heart of hatred. Therefore, to practice to a point where our heart is unmoved when facing adversary conditions that could otherwise give rise to hatred, this is the goal that everyone should vow to strive for.

When we can practice in this way, trouble and worry will gradually decrease. This gradual reduction of trouble and worry is not noticeable in the beginning. It is just like reading the thick book that I have in my hands. We read one page every day. Of course it is impossible to finish reading the book within one day, but if we keep reading regularly, at the end we will have finished reading the book. Likewise, if we reduce some hatred every day, with the accumulation of time, we will some day be able to cut hatred completely. The ability to cut hatred completely comes from the daily accumulation of our practice.

Without distraction, virtuous endeavors naturally increase. This is because without being disturbed by trouble and worry, the virtuous deeds of the heart of loving kindness and compassion and so on increase uninterruptedly. This is just like a shoot of a plant, without being hurt, it grows up a little bit every day. In the future, it will become a big tree. When the heart of loving kindness and compassion is not being hurt by trouble and worry, and in addition, when we also try all methods to let it grow and expand, then we will be able to see the innate nature of our heart. *Being clear-minded, definite understanding of the Dharma arises.* At that time we possess lucid wisdom. When we have lucid wisdom, we will not be confused about what is virtue or what is nonvirtue, what to adopt and what to abandon. Then we will develop a real faith in the content of the Dharma. The content of the Dharma all the way from the difficult-to-gain human life, the unpredictable death, the karma cause and effect up to the suffering of samsara, can be revealed vividly in our heart and we develop a real faith in it. This is the result of letting virtuous deeds grow and extend. At that time, we have an unmoving faith that all sentient beings have once been our parents and an unmovable faith in the Three Jewels. This is

the generation of the right view by having a clear mind. There is a firm faith in the Dharma as bestowed upon us by the Buddha.

To be able to do this, we need to have a quiet place. This quiet place refers to the external environment, that is, the body should be placed in a quiet place. This means that we should go to a secluded place in the countryside to do a retreat and practise. This is like Milarepa who went to a cave in a sparsely populated area to do a retreat and practise. When relying on this karma, our inner thoughts gradually decrease. When our inner thoughts gradually decrease, our heart is in a quiet place. Most people do not take the opportunity to obtain a physical quiet place for the body. But we have to understand and know that the purpose of placing the body in a quiet place is to place the heart in a quiet place. Therefore, we have to find all ways to let our inner thoughts gradually decrease. If you can be completely without trouble and worry, feel free and relaxed without losing concentration, and dwell peacefully within the innate nature, then it is exactly the same as doing a retreat in the mountain.

When our thoughts are scattered all over the place, we have to pray to our teacher Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara to grant us blessing support, to eliminate our scattered thoughts. After praying in this way, our heart will be focused and concentrated. This has the same effect as doing a retreat in mountain. If we stay in the deep mountain but our heart is very scattered, it does not have any meaning at all. Therefore we should be aware of whether or not our heart is in peace and quietness, a standard that we should strive for. Then what should we do in order to keep our heart in peace and quietness? Normally, we work and when the workload keeps increasing, sometimes, we will inevitably get upset. When we get upset, we should immediately think that this is due to the scattering of our mind and we should immediately get rid of the angry thought. We should use the right thoughts and the right consciousness to immediately become aware of the fact that we are angry and we have to understand that the subjects of our anger have once been our parents. How can we be angry toward our own parents? We have to examine if it is because we have not paid enough attention? Whether or not it is our own fault? And regardless of whether or not it is the opposite side that has harmed us with their behavior, we have to immediately think that it does not matter, it is not important, do not pay attention, do not bother and so on. The mind has to think in this way and do not let your thoughts scatter and do not hurt the opposite side.

If you can always generate this kind of thinking, it is the sign that the compassionate heart is gradually growing and our compassion will not be lost. If our compassionate heart is not lost, our heart can remain in lucid wisdom and it will not be like stormy waves. But if we cannot do this, whatever the opposite side says or does, we will generate doubt in our mind and wonder if he or she will hurt us and think that they will not benefit us. This kind of wild and obscure thoughts will destroy the peace and quietness in our heart. Therefore, we need to follow what we discussed above in order to keep our inner heart in peace and quietness.

Above we discussed the difficult to gain precious human life with leisure and fortune. Next we are going to discuss the unpredictable death. This is according to the order of what we mentioned earlier. How should we view that death is unpredictable and how should we practise. The fourth verse says:

4. Long-associated companions will part from each other. Wealth and possessions obtained with effort will be left behind. Consciousness, the guest, will cast aside the guest-house of the body. Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Can our long-associated companions like boyfriends, girlfriends and relatives be with us forever? No, they cannot. Wealth and possessions that we have accumulated with effort, no matter how great they are, will not remain in our hands forever. It is not only relatives, friends, wealth and possessions that we cannot permanently retain, but also our own body is just like a guest house and our consciousness is like the guest. The next day when the guest wakes up, he leaves the guest house. Will the guest after he has left, still carry the guest house with him? It is impossible! After understanding this, we know that the relatives and friends are not ours, the wealth and possessions are not ours and even our body, the guest house, is not ours. Therefore, it says – *Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice.*

Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice. Does it mean that we should abandon our house, children, wealth and possessions, and that the best would be to abandon everything? If anyone thinks like that, he / she would make his / her life very difficult and would not be able to do anything. What we meant above is to abandon these things in our heart. In our heart, we do not think that the house belongs to us, or that wealth and possessions belong to us, or that children belong to us or that our body belongs to us. We have to understand that those things are borrowed by us to be associated with us temporarily. Even if we have desire and attachment to those objects, after some time when we die, we still have to depart from them.

If we in our heart do not need those objects, what then do we really need in our heart? What we really need in our heart is the heart of bodhicitta, the heart of loving kindness and the heart of compassion. They are what we really need. Moreover, they can be carried with us forever. When we pass from this life to the next, our real and necessary friend is Buddha Amitabha, our real and necessary wealth and possessions that are available for us to use are the heart of bodhicitta. We also need a real body – males need the body of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and females need the body of Bodhisattva Tara. Those are what we need and those belong to us and can be carried with us forever. Therefore, when we leave this world, the body that a man can carry with him is Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and the body that a woman can carry with her is Bodhisattva Tara. The wealth and possessions that we can bring along are the heart of bodhicitta and the heart of loving kindness and compassion. A friend who can always accompany us is Buddha Amitabha.

The situation is just like going to the United States. Before departing, we need to prepare lots of baggage and lots of people come to help us. Because of our early preparation, traveling to the United States goes very smoothly. In the same way, why does it say: *Letting go of this life is the bodhisattvas' practice?* During this life, we prepare in advance for our future lives. Therefore, we prepare Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara and Tara as our own venerable masters, we prepare bodhicitta and the heart of loving kindness and compassion as our wealth and fortune, we prepare Amitabha Buddha to accompany us and to take care of us on the path. If we make these preparations in advance, in the future when we go to the Pureland of Ultimate Happiness, everything will go very smoothly.

For a living, we have to work to earn money. In the same way, what should we live on in our next life? The wealth and money that we use in our next life is the six-syllable mantra, it is the holy name of Buddha Amitabha, it is Bodhisattva Tara's mantra. Therefore, if we can recite these mantras 100 000 times and after chanting each mantra so many times, how could we possibly lose them? These mantras are the wealth that we will bring along in our next life. How can we use these mantras? When we chant the mantra, we use the mantra to offer to the Three Jewels and to offer to all the sentient beings. How can we use the mantras to offer to all the sentient beings? When we chant the mantras, one method is to visualize that the sentient beings in the hell realm receive blessings and support from the mantra. In fact, we can use the mantras in many ways. This money and wealth of the mantras can be used so in many broad ways. Many people turn to me and ask: Everyday I recite certain mantra 100 times or some mantra forty, fifty times, can I really do in such a way? I use what we have discussed above to answer them. Now we turn to the fifth verse.

5. When evil companions are associated with, the three poisons increase, the activities of listening, pondering and meditation decline, and love and compassion are extinguished. Abandoning evil companions is the bodhisattvas' practice.

No matter whom, boyfriend, girlfriend or any friend – it is a bad friend for us if after associating with that person, our desire, hatred and ignorance grow unceasingly (for example, after associating with a certain friend, we pick up his/her habit of smoking, drinking alcohol or any other bad behavior, perhaps unconsciously). In such a situation, we have to slowly disassociate with that person. This does not mean that we have to quarrel with him/her, but rather the most important is to not follow their behavior. When we do not agree with his/her behavior and do not pick up his/her behavior, that person will naturally leave us.

If we associate with such a friend, it will cause our activities of listening, pondering and meditation to decline unceasingly. For example, such a friend might say that we can kill sentient beings and other similar things; and gradually, we may do those same things and then we will fall into the hell realm. Our friend might say that we can commit theft, robbery and similar things, but we have to remember that stealing can cause us to fall into poverty for many lives to come. Or our friend might say that Dharma is not true, that there is no such thing as a next life and that there is no karmic cause and effect, slowly we will believe in them. Then we would fall into ignorance and we would no longer be able to distinguish between virtue and non-virtue, what to adopt and what to abandon.

When we hear talk like this that there is no such thing as karmic cause and effect or that there is no Dharma and so on, and when we hear this a few times, then we will start believing in them. Consequently, our hearing, pondering and meditation will gradually decline. When we do not believe in the Dharma truth, our heart of bodhicitta will gradually be eroded. Generally speaking, the activities of hearing, pondering and meditation all hang together. When there is no hearing of the Dharma, there is no pondering on the meaning of Dharma and there is neither meditation nor practice. At that time, it is like a blind person who runs around on the plains having no idea where he/she came from or where he/she is heading. Toward such friends, there is no need for us to feel hatred and there is no need to quarrel with them. Rather we need to generate the same heart of loving kindness and compassion toward them. We have to understand that that person's behavior is as ignorant as an animal. As long as we do not pick up their bad

habits and we still maintain our compassion toward them, then gradually, they will leave us.

One thing, which has great consequence, is that worldly people like us treat someone that we like as the best person, even though he or she might be a bad person. We do not analyze and think whether or not what that person says is the truth. Concerning someone that we do not like, even though he or she might be a very good person, we think that that person is the worst person and similarly, we would not analyze what he or she says. This kind of philosophy is very incorrect. We need to understand that everyone has both strengths and weaknesses. These strengths and weaknesses all blend together and thus it is impossible in this world to find somebody who possesses only strengths and no weaknesses and it is impossible to find somebody who only possesses weaknesses and no strengths. Therefore, whoever it is, we need to often examine what he or she says and his or her behavior. This is the correct way of doing. We should not assume that whoever is our friend always say what is true and whoever we dislike always say what is untrue.

No matter who that person is, we should not have a heart filled with attachment or hatred. We have to understand that his or her strengths and weaknesses all blend together. We should always pray to the Three Jewels and wish that every sentient being is getting better and better and we should not treat any group of sentient beings with strong attachment or hatred. We should treat everybody equally.

To ordinary people, the heart of jealousy is very strong. Many boyfriends and girlfriends quarrel because of jealousy and cause damage as a result. This kind of situation happens often. We should not listen casually to what other people say. We should use our brain to think carefully and we should use our eyes to make good observations. If someone causes some damage to us and another person, because of jealousy, says a lot of bad things about that person; at that time, we need to think what I have mentioned earlier: everyone has both strengths and weaknesses which blend together. When our relationship with that person has been long and a sound one, even though that person is doing something harmful to us, we should not care so much. In the past, he/she has helped us a lot. We should not be easily persuaded by others. We should use our wisdom to make good observations.

This situation is particularly important when it concerns the knowledge of our masters. For example, suppose that we receive an empowerment and listen to the Dharma teachings from one master. After a few days, if someone tells you that the master is not good in this and that way, we go to another place to receive empowerment and listen to the Dharma teachings from another master. After a few days, if someone tells us that this master is not good in this way and that master is not good in that way, the faith which is so difficult for us to generate will dissipate immediately. When our faith in our masters disappears, slowly our heart will fill with anger, hatred and wrong views; and our heart of compassion will gradually diminish and be scattered. To speak ill of any particular master is not good. That is because if we have faith in our master, even though our master is not good, our inner heart of compassion will increase. When our heart of compassion grows, it will bring us lots of benefits and merits.

No matter what, as long as our faith does not retreat, it will generate lots of benefits to us. Therefore, it is those who make our faith retreat and result in the loss of merit, it is those who are the real bad people. Therefore and foremost, after hearing the Dharma, no

matter what, the faith in our master should not decrease. As long as our faith is not moving backward, the blessing support will remain forever. That is because the blessing support is sent from the Three Jewels and this blessing support is very strong. Second, we should have a firm and stable relationship with our old friends. We should not pay attention to what is being said. Our firm relationship with our friend should be sustained and we should not sway. What is mentioned above is indeed very important and I hope that everybody can understand it. Next, we will explain the sixth verse.

6. When sublime spiritual friends are relied upon, one's faults are exhausted and one's qualities increase like the waxing moon. Holding sublime spiritual friends even more dear than one's own body is the bodhisattvas' practice.

If after associating with a friend, we find that our jealousy is not as strong as before and our right view and right knowledge are growing much deeper than before – all these are due to the influence of the virtuous knowledge. In general, our virtuous capacities increase mainly due to the teachings of our teachers. To grow merit for this life and future lives, we have to depend on our master and the virtuous knowledge. Therefore, our teachers and masters are like the kings of the treasure in this world. They are just like our human eyes, most cherished. Our parents gave birth to us and gave us one pair of eyes that enable us to see things during our whole life. The virtuous knowledge of our masters endows us with a pair of extraordinary eyes that enable us to see not only this life but our next life. Therefore, we should not slander our masters and their virtuous knowledge.

Next, we talk about relying upon the virtuous knowledge of our masters. We should not only listen carefully to this passage, but also contemplate upon it carefully. Why do we have to always respect our teachers and their virtuous knowledge even more dearly than our own body? Why? It is because if we use our body to do prostrations, to support their activities and to make offering to our teachers, masters and their virtuous knowledge, they feel very happy from within their heart. When they do so, all the karmic obscurations and defilements that are accumulated by our body will be purified. Moreover, they will pass down from their heart all their endowed capacity and merit to us. Then when we learn their knowledge, we will be able to receive it. On the contrary, if we are attached to our body and wealth and in our heart we do not want to learn the capacity and merit from our masters, naturally there is no way for us to learn the merit and capacity from our master's virtuous knowledge.

At present, what we do is just the opposite. We like to consume our wealth and property. In fact, this is a kind of self-grasping. It is our body that can enjoy the food, drink, clothes, wealth and property. However, when we die, our body is either buried under the ground or is burned totally by fire. If we right now whole-heartedly follow the master's virtuous knowledge and learn from them the teaching of the heart of bodhicitta, we will be able to achieve the heart of bodhicitta when we do visualization practice. Can this heart of bodhicitta ever be destroyed by fire? No, this is of course not possible. Not only that, the heart of bodhicitta will always be with us life after life. This is the real important wealth.

Many people study the knowledge of Chinese, English, modern science and so on. Some people can learn this modern knowledge very quickly and very well. This is because in their past, they highly respected their teachers and they studied diligently. Therefore, in

this life, they have very good ability to learn. On the contrary, if in the past life, we did not respect our teachers and we did not study diligently. This life, no matter what we are learning, we will find it very difficult. Moreover, if we do not respect our teachers and masters, this becomes a kind of accumulation of bad habit. But if we in this life always respect our teachers and masters, support their activities and give offering to them, it will generate great benefit as mentioned earlier.

How should those who seek the Dharma learn and practice the Dharma? Dharma seekers should learn from Marpa and Dharma practitioners should be just like Milarepa. We should take a good look at how these few masters study the Dharma. Marpa taught Milarepa and when Milarepa did the practice, the result was that he could achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime. Milarepa could achieve Buddhahood in one lifetime because of the great blessings granted and planted by his teacher. Therefore, we should be extremely grateful to our teachers, masters and parents. Masters, teachers and parents are our great grantors of blessing and merit. We should always have a respectful heart toward them and use a respectful heart to study. The method of study should be like what was described in the stories of Marpa and Milarepa.

Normally when we work, we should apply the six paramitas. When we listen to the Dharma, we should also equip ourselves with the six paramitas. While listening, we make offering. This kind of offering is generosity. While listening, we should restrict our behavior so not to be distracted. This is upholding ethics. When we are punished by our masters or when we face difficulties in our studies, we should insist to continue. This is patience and perseverance. After learning, we always put it in our heart and do not forget. This is concentration. From what we have learned, we form our ability and merit in our heart. This is wisdom. This is how we apply the six paramitas when listening to the Dharma.

Now, what our masters teach us are those precious phrases and sentences instead of the precious physical objects such as money, possessions etc. When we talk about “the heart of bodhicitta being the real rare treasure,” our masters explain to us why that is so. Where does the heart of bodhicitta come from? How to obtain this heart of bodhicitta? What is the method of generating the heart of bodhicitta? We have to know that every sentient being has been our father and mother. Therefore, we should generate compassion to every sentient being. If we can generate compassion toward every sentient being, it is like one drop of water dropping into the bowl. When water drops continue dropping down, the water will quickly fill the bowl. Likewise, if we everyday generate compassion toward every sentient being, compassion can quickly increase. After our masters have explained in this way, everybody can then understand the method of practice. Therefore, these explanations are the precious phrases and sentences. They cannot be seen and of course cannot disappear. Even when we die, they will not disappear. However, we will lose the materialistic treasures after we die.

Why do we say that the explanatory phrases and sentences by our masters are called treasures? It is because they can reduce our faults and increase our merit. That is why it says *when sublime spiritual friends are relied upon, one's faults are exhausted and one's qualities increase like the waxing moon*. What are the faults? They are our inner heart of desire, hatred, ignorance and jealousy. What is merit? Bodhicitta is the merit. When we meditate and contemplate often on Mahamudra, the Great Accomplishment within our heart, merit will naturally increase and faults will be reduced. Why is it that faults will be

reduced? When we observe our desire, hatred, ignorance etc in our heart, we can understand thoroughly, in this way, faults can be eliminated and merit will naturally increase. Milarepa has once said that the fact that we understand our trouble and worry in our heart is a sign of achieving Mahamudra. Therefore, we should use our heart to observe our own heart and this is the way to eliminate our faults in our heart.

We have to observe our heart carefully in order to eliminate the faults. For example, when we are insulted by a person, we should recollect that our master has taught us that all sentient beings are our own parents and therefore, we should not be angry at him/her. Moreover, our master has taught us that we will fall into the three lower realms by the karma that we create because of anger. When we meditate on the master's teaching on that all sentient beings have been our mothers and on karma – causes and result, we will not be angry at that person and that is patience. When we practice patience, there will be no quarrel. That person will see that you have such a good upbringing and he/she will slowly respect you. This is the reason for merit increasing. On the contrary, if we have not received teaching from our master and we do not understand what we have just mentioned, we would react violently like thunder and fight and quarrel with that person and at the end we would be locked up in the prison. Not only wasting money but also hurting our body and mind. All faults will be created as a result. We have to reflect carefully on this situation and if there is anything that you do not understand, please bring it up as soon as possible for discussion.

Because our masters have given us the treasure of teachings and explanations, we have to always respect them. We have to meditate often in our heart on what our masters have taught us. We have to recollect their merit. In this way, our merit will unceasingly increase.

7. What worldly god, himself also bound in the prison of cyclic existence, is able to protect others? Therefore, when refuge is sought, taking refuge in the undeceiving triple gem is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Next, we are going to talk about refuge. Why do we have to talk about refuge? It is because in the previous verse, we discussed about relying on the virtuous knowledge of our masters and learning from them. The first thing that the masters teach us on the virtuous knowledge is to take refuge in The Triple Gem. There are two kinds of refuges – the pure refuge and the impure refuge. What does impure refuge refer to? It refers to taking refuge in the worldly gods. There are many types of worldly gods. They can only give us temporary benefit but they cannot give us the ultimate benefit. Therefore, they cannot be the real savior. Since they themselves are also dwelling within samsara, there is no way for them to eliminate our suffering in samsara.

Only The Triple Gem, The Three Jewels can really eliminate our samsaric suffering. In our daily life, we chant the mantra of Tara and Chenrezig and we do practices, but still we suffer from illnesses and disappointments which cannot be resolved. At that time, we may think in our heart that our practice does not seem to help us because it cannot eliminate our suffering. However, we have to understand that the illness and suffering that we have now is the ripening of the karma that we have made before in our previous lives or in this life. Not only we, even many masters, Sanghas, monks and nuns, they also face lots of illnesses and sufferings. Therefore, we should not worry about the problem. We have to understand that our Lord Tara is the Lord of wisdom and the Lord

Tara is the Three Jewels. She can give us both temporary and ultimate benefit. We should rely on Tara and continue to practice with great diligence. The worldly gods can only give us temporary benefit and after the temporary benefit there is the long-lasting suffering. *Therefore, when refuge is sought, taking refuge in the undeceiving triple gem is the bodhisattvas' practice.* The Three Jewels are the real savior. The benefit that they can bestow upon us is genuine, not imaginary. We can explain the Three Jewels on different levels. First there are the outer Three Jewels. The Buddha Jewel refers to Buddha Shakyamuni. The Dharma Jewel refers to the Buddha's explanation of the teaching. It includes how to practice loving kindness and compassion and how to practice the two kinds of bodhicitta. In this way, we get to know the two kinds of bodhicitta and we let it arise. But not only that, we do not let it decline but instead we let it grow. This is the meaning of *Bodhicitta, the excellent and precious mind, where it is unborn, may it arise; where it is born, may it not decline, but ever increase higher and higher.* All this is contained in the Buddha's teaching, the Dharma. Next, those who practice according to the Buddha's teaching are known as The Sangha Jewel. Nowadays, we refer to them as masters, monks and nuns. We have to understand the meaning to all of this.

What is the meaning of having taken the outer refuge? After taking refuge in the Buddha, when we see any kind of large or small images of Buddha or come across any masters, no matter if they are of Hinayana or Mahayana tradition, ordained or not, Chinese or Tibetan master, no matter who they are; as soon as we see them, we have to think in our heart: they are the savior of sentient beings, Buddhas' representatives that give sentient beings peace and happiness. At that time, we have to meditate in our heart that we are really meeting the Buddha and we generate incredible confidence and respect in our heart. This is what we have to do after taking refuge in the Buddha. Next, when we come across any page of text that contains Buddha's teaching, no matter if it is written in Chinese, English or Tibetan; in our heart, we have to think that this is Buddha's precious teaching on the fact that all sentient beings have been our parents and the teaching about the heart of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, etc. It all comes from here. Therefore, we should generate the feeling of great respect for The Dharma Jewel. Finally, when we contemplate in our heart on the fact that all sentient beings have been our parents and we generate the heart of loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta towards them, when we have this kind of practice, we ourselves are The Sangha Jewel.

Therefore, when we take the outer refuge, we have to understand that the masters in this world, their body is The Sangha Jewel because they hold the loving kindness and compassion in their heart, their speech is The Dharma Jewel, and their heart is the same as the Buddha's and that is why they are The Buddha Jewel. Therefore, when we take the outer refuge, we have to understand that the master is equipped with the qualities of The Three Jewels. As long as our faith in each of the masters does not decline, our merit will definitely increase unceasingly.

How to take the inner refuge? When we take inner refuge, we examine inward in our heart. We find that there are often lots of scattered thoughts. When these thoughts are calmed down, we find that the nature of our heart is just like the sky, it is clear and bright. This is The Buddha Jewel and this is the innate nature of our heart. What is the effect of the innate nature of our heart? How should we use it? We should use it to generate the loving kindness and compassion to all sentient beings. Even though we can see the innate nature of our heart, most of the sentient beings cannot see it and that is why they

fall into the cycle of samsara. What is the situation in samsara? Sentient beings suffer unceasingly. Therefore, we have to generate loving kindness and compassion towards all the sentient beings in samara. This is The Dharma Jewel. Next, we use our body, speech and mind to unceasingly perform virtuous deeds. We use our body to unceasingly do all kinds of generous and beneficial deeds, we use our speech to unceasingly explain the karma causes and effects, and we use our mind to meditate on bodhicitta. We use our body, speech and mind to always benefit all sentient beings. When we can do that, we are virtuous seekers and this is the original meaning of Sangha. Therefore, our heart is The Buddha Jewel, our speech is The Dharma Jewel and our body is The Sangha Jewel. We are equipped with all The Three Jewels. This is the meaning of taking the inner refuge.

We have now finished explaining the meaning of taking outer and inner refuge. We have to always contemplate on its meaning. This is the reason why we have to chant often the Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices. After reading this book, we understand its meaning. When we read one particular verse in this book tomorrow or the day after, we can think of its meaning again. If we do not have this book to review, we would forget about the meaning after having heard about it only once. Next we are going to explain the eighth verse.

8. The subduer said that all the unbearable suffering of the three lower realms is the fruition of wrongdoing. Therefore, never committing negative deeds, even at peril to one's life, is the bodhisattvas' practice.

The wrongdoing that is done due to our worries and troubles will lead to immense suffering later on. This kind of suffering will sometimes reach to the level that is totally unbearable. Due to ignorance, there comes greed, hatred, stupidity, pride and jealousy; five kinds of worries and troubles. Each of these five worries and trouble includes other finer types and all together form a total of 84 000 worries and troubles.

The suffering created by wrongdoing is mainly the suffering of the three evil realms. However, because many people cannot see the relationship, they do not believe that. In fact, according to Buddha's teachings which are stated in the scriptures, this kind of suffering really exists. The suffering in the six realms is very hard to bear. But we have to understand the root cause of falling into the six realms in order to avoid falling once again into the midst of suffering. This is just like a patient with diabetes who knows that the cause of the illness is the eating of sweet things etc so in the future when someone gives him something sweet, he will not take it no matter what. This is because he has experienced the suffering of the illness. In the same way, the suffering of the hell realm comes from hatred; hungry ghost realm comes from misery; human realm comes from greed; god realm comes from pride; demigod realm comes from jealousy and animal realm comes from ignorance. Due to these six types of worries and troubles, these six realms are gradually formed as a result.

When we observe the nature of our inner heart, we see the worries and troubles in our inner heart. When our hatred toward a person is explosive like thunder, we get so upset that we would like to kill that person. It forces us to quarrel with that person and at that time, we experience the worry and trouble of hatred burning as fiercely as fire. Every worry and trouble has its power. This situation when we observe our heart, we can feel and experience it. The suffering we have in the human realm, when we meditate on it,

we can understand it. The suffering in the six realms is also like this. If we have not heard of this teaching, we should listen to it carefully. It is because if we do not know the suffering of the sentient beings in the six realms, we do not understand the fault of the worry and trouble and we would not try to figure out how to resolve it. It is not enough to just understand the suffering of the human realm. This book has not mentioned the suffering of the human realm but it mentioned the suffering of the three lower realms, we should read it carefully.

The study of the suffering of the six realms cannot be ignored. There are many people who have not learned the suffering of the samsaric six realms but go on and learn the Mahamudra or the Great Accomplishment directly. Even though under some occasions greed and hatred may leave our heart and sometimes we can see the nature of our heart, but hatred can suddenly arise. When worry and trouble arise, its power is so immense that all the realization will immediately disappear. This is quite common. But if we can understand the suffering of the six realms and what worry and trouble brings, we can understand that worry and trouble are just like poisons that we must eliminate. When our heart shows some small sign of greed and hatred, worry and trouble, we have to immediately observe it and remove it. In this way, our heart can remain pure. If the inner heart is very pure, then when we learn Mahamudra or the Great Accomplishment, these methods would become very easy. At that time, our achievement from Mahamudra or the Great Accomplishment will not disappear but steadily and securely stay in our heart.

Among the sufferings in the six realms, the first kind is the suffering of hell realm. This refers mainly to the suffering of cold and hot which includes eight cold hells, eight hot hells, isolated hell and near territory hell all together eighteen kinds. The suffering of heat is like being burned by fire and after death beings are revived again. Beings have to experience this kind of suffering for such a long period of hundred thousand millions of years. This kind of condition can be seen even in this world when someone has been burned to death during a fire accident. This resembles the suffering in the hot hell realm. Cold hell realm refers to the body being placed in ice for thousand million years. This situation can also be seen in the human world. This resembles the conditions in the snowy northern part of the Scandinavian countries. In this human world, we can see and experience the suffering of the six realms. The suffering of the hot hell realm resembles human beings burned to death in a fire accident. The suffering of the cold hell realm resembles the snowy season of the Tibetan winter; the whole world is sealed with snowy ice and some families with all their members being frozen to death. This situation we have already seen before.

The suffering of the hungry ghost realm resembles some areas in the African countries, where there are often disasters and famine and as a result there is neither food nor drinking water which creates immense suffering. Everybody due to their karma falls into the six realms and create all kinds of suffering. The suffering of the animal realm in the human realm can also be seen. Some people in the past did not know how to respect the Three Jewels, did not know how to respect their teachers. This whole life even though being born as humans, their behavior of stealing, robbing and cheating are not different from that of animals. The basic suffering of the human realm is birth, old age, illness and death. If we examine and meditate carefully on the suffering of birth, we cannot tolerate it for even five minutes.

The suffering in demigod realm is fighting and warfare. In the human society, similarly, there is warfare between big countries and between small countries. Even within one country, there is fighting among people, communities and families. Take even smaller groups, within a family, there is fighting between family members and between boyfriend and girlfriend. Why is it so? It is because the emotion of jealousy exists everywhere.

Just now we mentioned the suffering of the human realm. Dharma Lord Gampopa described the suffering of the birth of a child from a mother's womb as follows: it is just like you are being tied up really tight and being put into an oven for one hour. Is this not great suffering? There is no air for you to breathe for one hour. Isn't it great suffering? A child living inside the mother's womb suffers greatly from extreme heat. When the child is about to be born, it suffers from near suffocation. Moreover, there is suffering of great darkness inside the womb. Therefore, children suffer quite a lot. With this contemplation, we know that to be born in the human realm has great suffering and therefore, it is better not to reborn here again. The suffering of old age and sickness can be easily understood. In general, we need to teach the youngsters about the suffering of old age and illness and teach the elderly about the suffering of death. We hear often people thinking that we will not die if we eat medicine or healthy foods and drinks. In fact, when death strikes, there is nothing that we can do.

In god realm, there is suffering of decline. For example, currently you have lots of wealth and it is the result of your generous offering to the Triple Gem and to the poor. However, due to the lack of great bodhicitta heart at the time of giving offering one wish to get some benefit in return and wish to be able to enjoy the wealth in a complete way. Therefore, in the next life, you have access to great wealth. However, this wealth can disappear some day and it is just like a burning oil lamp that when the oil runs out will eventually be extinguished. When the good karma and blessing deplete, things will not go as smooth and bad fortune comes. The wealth that you have access to disappears. The situation in the god realm is just like that. When our blessing and fortune is very complete, we are extremely happy. However, when the time comes, everything disappears and you cannot even find one cent. And at the end, beings fall somewhere into the six realms.

When we understand this kind of suffering, we should avoid the cause to this suffering. Therefore in the text it says: *never committing negative deeds, even at the peril to one's life, is the bodhisattvas' practice*. In fact, negative deeds are not "committed" by us or others. It is due to worry and trouble being pushed from behind and all the ten non-virtuous deeds are committed. But worry and trouble lie within our heart. Therefore, as soon as worry and trouble is generated within our heart, we have to understand that they are the real enemies that bring us suffering. No matter what, we can absolutely not let our worry and trouble have a free hand. Even when we have to die, we cannot let worry and trouble act freely. We have to make vows not to hate, quarrel, steal or rob. This is the meaning of the text. Just because we understand the suffering brought by the evil deeds, we have to cut the root of the worry and trouble in our heart.

When karma has not ripened yet, our worry and trouble in our heart is just like a seed and at that time to remove the seed is very easy. When we notice that there is generation of worry and trouble in our heart, we should pray to our master and the Triple Gem for support. We have to understand that our worry and trouble is our real enemy that we must get rid of. If we do not get rid of our worry and trouble in our heart, then when we

have created karma and done the ten non-virtuous deeds, it is like the seed has been buried in the soil. With the nourishment from sun and water, the seed has cultivated into a big tree. Suffering has already developed. At that time it is extra difficult to remove it if we do not try very hard. If we do not make effort, it is not possible to remove it. Therefore, we have to understand that when worry and trouble is generated in our heart, we must immediately remove it. It is relatively easy to remove it at this stage.

Why does it say: *never committing negative deeds, even at the peril to one's life*? This is a very important point. All the Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past, when they practice, they often face outer enemies who assassinate and kill them. Even at that time, there is no generation of anger in their heart. Why is it that there is no generation of anger? It is because the person who uses knife kills their body but not their heart. If at that time they generate hatred in their heart, it is like killing their heart of bodhicitta. The death of the body resembles a piece of old cloth being thrown away. Therefore, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the past, treated all those who kill or harm them with the practice of patience and would not let the inner heart be bothered or swayed. Because the heart is not swayed, they would not generate hatred toward their outer enemies. Not only that, they practice bodhicitta toward their outer enemies in order to increase the generation and the unceasing growth of bodhicitta. Even if we cannot do the same as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, we should still be able to understand the meaning of this text. Therefore no matter what, we cannot let our heart generate hatred. But if we already feel upset, we have to eliminate the heart of hatred.

9. The pleasure of the triple world, like a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass, is imperiled in a single moment. Striving for the supreme state of never-changing liberation is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Where does evil deed come from? Why would anyone be angry? This is what the ninth verse is about. It comes from the desire and attachment to the happiness of the triple world. The happiness of the triple world is temporary. Its size is tiny like the dewdrop in the morning. However, underneath this happiness there is a lot of suffering. Even though happiness exists, it will quickly disappear. This is the nature of all happiness of the triple world. Many people think that right now they are very healthy, young and have good education; therefore they generate some kind of pride in their heart. This heart of pride comes actually from the heart of desire and attachment. If you have this kind of view, you should contemplate on whether these conditions can exist permanently. For example, right now you are very young; will you never get old in the future? Go and take a look at those old people, you will realize that some day you will also get old. If we do not think about this question, in the future when you get old, you will definitely suffer a lot from it. If you know that you will also get old some day, when you do get old, you will not suffer that much.

The same is true for wealth. When you are very wealthy, have you ever contemplated on whether or not wealth can be lost some day? If you have contemplated on that, then when you lose the wealth, you will not suffer so much. All other matters work in the same way. Just because this kind of happiness does not exist permanently, it cannot be relied upon. Since it cannot be relied upon, we should not generate desire or attachment to it. In this way, even if we lose it, no suffering will be generated.

Even though the world we live in is very small, there is great diversity of habits among people. Some people, when they have food, they will divide it into tasty and not tasty. When they have some clothing, they will divide it into good-looking and not good-looking. If they like a certain thing, they consider that thing as good and if they do not like a certain thing, they consider it as not good. In this way, when they wear the clothing that they like, they will feel very happy and when they wear the clothing that they do not like, they will feel very uncomfortable. Wealth, gifts, friends and material things are all due to our subjective differentiation and as a result generate pleasure and displeasure. The enjoyment of all the merits and five sense pleasures are all marked with our heart of differentiation. In fact, clothing provides us warmth and shelter. Whether the clothing is good or not is generated by our differentiation. When we think that an object is good, then it is good and the contrary is bad. When we think that the food is good, then it is good and the contrary is bad. Our heart of differentiation generates all these. For example, for those who do not like hot spicy food would think that spicy food is not good. People have different opinion about good and bad when it comes to cigarettes and alcohol. Therefore, we have to understand that material things like clothing that we use everyday, as long as they serve the purpose and keep us warm, that is enough. Do not generate desire and attachment to it. If we can often contemplate in this way, it will reduce a lot of suffering and it can generate great benefits.

If we would like to go one step further in our study, we should contemplate: Who needs the enjoyment of the five sense pleasures? The enjoyment of the five sense pleasures refers to the pleasures of sight, sound, scent, taste and touch. Sight is to fulfill the need of the eyes, sound is for the need of the ears, scent is for the need of the nose, taste is for the need of the tongue and touch is for the need of the body. Contemplate further: just like when our body puts on one piece of soft clothing, it generates happiness; in the same way, eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body generate happiness from sight, sound, scent, taste and touch. But the real cause to this happiness is our desire and attachment in our heart to the five sense pleasures. Therefore, when sight, sound, scent, taste and touch occur under favorable conditions, our heart of desire and attachment generates happiness. But what is the real nature of our inner heart? The innate nature of our inner heart is emptiness and therefore, it does not need anything. After our death, our body no longer exists. At that time, do we still need to wear any clothing? Of course, we don't. Just because the innate nature of our heart is emptiness, if we can often observe the emptiness-innate nature of our heart and constantly practice the emptiness nature, our desire and attachment to the five sense pleasures would gradually decrease. In this way, we can strive for the never-changing liberation. This is the same as having found the emptiness-innate nature of our heart.

10. When mothers who have been kind to one since beginningless time are suffering, what's the use of one's own happiness? Therefore, generating the mind of enlightenment in order to liberate limitless sentient beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.

This verse explains the source of the heart of bodhicitta. From where does the heart of bodhicitta arise? It arises from the heart of benefiting others. But where does this heart of benefiting others come from? This heart of benefiting others exists between mother and son. In particular, mothers have a very strong heart of kindness toward their children. Children have the heart of respect and reverence toward their mothers. From beginningless time, we have reincarnated hundreds of thousands of millions and billions

of times and therefore, all sentient beings have once been our parents in our past lives. This is taught in Buddha's holy teaching, and it is true and not imaginary. So where are all fatherly and motherly sentient beings right now? We really want to know the answer. Thus, we should know that wherever in the six realms there is suffering of sentient beings, there are our fathers and mothers. Even a small ant is our parent. All the suffering that these sentient beings experience, if we do not contemplate on the method of eliminating it but only seek our own peace and happiness, do we not feel ashamed?

What is the actual total number of sentient beings? Sentient beings pervade throughout emptiness. Wherever emptiness pervades, there are sentient beings and these sentient beings have all been our parents. The number of sentient beings is just like emptiness – without borders and limits. This is what the Buddha said. Therefore, to all sentient beings throughout emptiness, we have to generate the heart of compassion. This heart of compassion has to embrace all sentient beings. Moreover, we have to contemplate on which method to use for eliminating the suffering of sentient beings and really hope to be able to eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings. This is the heart of compassion and this heart of compassion has to be able to embrace all sentient beings. If the heart of compassion can without bias embrace all sentient beings, it is called the heart of bodhicitta. Hence, the tenth verse says: *Therefore, generating the mind of enlightenment in order to liberate limitless sentient beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.*

What is the property of this heart of bodhicitta? The heart of bodhicitta is the heart of awakening and the heart of realization. Awakening means purification and the heart of awakening means the heart of eliminating all selfishness and all selfish gains, in order to gain the heart of liberation. Realizing means achieving and the heart of realization means the heart of achieving the generation of benefits for all sentient beings. Therefore, the thought which eliminates all selfish benefits and generates benefits for all sentient beings is called the heart of awakening and realization. What are the actual benefits that come with the generation of the heart of bodhicitta? First of all, we ourselves can get benefit because we gain peace and happiness. Second, we can benefit all other sentient beings so that they gain peace and happiness. Therefore, sutras often mention: *The source of benefit and happiness exists only in one place, it securely abides within the righteous Dharma of the Buddha.* The source of benefit, peace and benefit of all sentient beings comes from the righteous Dharma. The righteous Dharma refers to the eighty-four-thousand Dharma teachings and the key to all these teachings, that is, the sole seed is the heart of bodhicitta. If bodhicitta is lacking, all the eighty-four-thousand Dharma teachings will lose their effect. If we get hold of the heart of bodhicitta, we grasp all the eighty-four-thousand Dharma teachings.

11. All suffering without exception comes from wishing for one's own happiness. The perfect buddhas arise from the altruistic mind. Therefore, completely exchanging one's own happiness for the suffering of others is the bodhisattvas' practice.

All suffering without exception comes from wishing for one's own happiness. The perfect buddhas arise from the altruistic mind. Therefore, completely exchanging one's own happiness for the suffering of others is the bodhisattvas' practice. This verse is about the practice of the heart of bodhicitta.

All suffering without exception originates from selfishness and self-gain which come from self-attachment. From where do perfect Buddhas originate? They originate from the heart of benefiting sentient beings. Whoever generates the heart of benefiting sentient beings can become Buddha. This heart of benefiting sentient beings is the heart of Buddha. Then from where does this self-attachment which causes us to suffer come? This self-attachment from beginningless cyclic rebirths, like snow falling continuously without interruption, continues to increase and accumulate. Moreover, since this goes on continuously with unceasing accumulation, it is very difficult for us to be aware of it. As an example, when we put this tea cup on the table, in our heart, we would think “I want to drink tea”. At that time, the “I” will be generated. When we come home after the teaching, there comes “my house”, “my son”, “my daughter”, and this “I” will be generated unceasingly. That is, no matter what our situation is, this “I” will appear and increase. Therefore the “I” pervades everywhere and continues to increase. To overcome this, when we drink tea, we first have to offer the tea to the Three Jewels. When we in our heart think about offering it to the Three Jewels, then when we drink tea, the power of this attachment to “I” will be reduced. If it is not because of that reason that we are making offering to the Three Jewels, perhaps we instead think that the Three Jewels will feel thirsty? Or that the Three Jewels will feel hungry? But of course this is not the case. For the reason of reducing our self-attachment, we make offering to the Three Jewels. When we think about the Three Jewels in our heart, we should not think about “I” in our heart; otherwise, this “I” would appear unceasingly.

When we see a beautiful flower, in our heart we think “how wonderful it is to have such a beautiful flower and we will carefully take it to offer to the Three Jewels”. However many people do not think in this way. Instead, when they see a beautiful flower, in their heart they think “how wonderful it is to have such a beautiful flower so I will buy it, take it home and put in a vase. How beautiful it will then look”. During this process, self-attachment will unceasingly accumulate and increase.

Since Buddha is equipped with skillful means and wisdom, in order to eliminate the self-attachment of sentient beings, Buddha taught the method of mandala offering. Offering the mandala can fully accomplish the accumulation of merit. We use physical wealth to make the offering and in return we obtain the wisdom wealth. Offering mandala can generate great benefit for sentient beings. How can sentient beings obtain great benefit by offering the mandala? Here we need to think carefully.

Right now, many of you are doing the Ngöndro. Very often people raise questions concerning the part on mandala offering in the Ngöndro. Why do we need to do mandala offering and what is the effect of mandala offering? Usually this generation of “I” does not happen only once or twice but rather hundreds and thousands and millions and billions of times with unceasing accumulations. When we make mandala offering, we offer our physical wealth. At that time we have to contemplate, from where does this offering of physical wealth come? When we are asked, “How much money do you have?” We would think “I have one krona, ten kronor, one hundred kronor, one thousand kronor, one million kronor, one billion kronor, and so on.” We know how much money we have. But in fact each and every krona is a “I” and when we have one million kronor, we have one million “I” in our heart. The burden of this one million “I” is very heavy and strenuous and we cannot bear it in our heart.

Therefore, when we offer the mandala, we offer all our physical wealth and goods to the Three Jewels. After the offering, these material things will no longer belong to us and these things are not any more ours. In this way, our heart will have fewer burdens to bear and the self-attachment will eventually be completely eliminated. Therefore, we need to repeat doing the practice of mandala offering. Later when we see our house and other physical wealth and properties, we will think that they all belong to the Three Jewels and we are just using them but not actually owning them. For that reason, our self-attachment will gradually decrease. When our heart is purified, we become Buddha. This is just like a cup of water, when there is no vibration, it becomes very pure. When the murky part of the heart disappears, the lucid part of the heart will appear. This is the Buddha nature and is the wealth of wisdom. In this way, through making physical offering, we can obtain the wealth of wisdom. This is because through this action, the self-attachment of the practitioner will be eliminated. We should often meditate on this point.

In the past, most of our thoughts were selfish and focused upon self-gain rather than thinking of benefiting sentient beings. In this way, there is no way to obtain the great achievement of Buddhahood. Therefore this verse says: *Therefore, completely exchanging one's own happiness for the suffering of others is the bodhisattvas' practice.*

All the Buddhas in the past gave away all their happiness to all sentient beings in exchange for their suffering. Only Buddhas can give away their own real bodily lives to sentient beings and we cannot do that. Then what method should we use? This is the part that I am going to teach you now.

When we offer the good things that we have to our parents, children, teachers, masters, and elderly, this is a kind of small exchange of self with others. These things are for us to use but instead, we give them away to others and this is called exchanging self with others. Secondly when we visit a certain place where there is war, assassinations, quarrels and all kinds of suffering, at that time even though we are not directly involved in it, in our heart we can still contemplate: if I am myself reborn in such a place, how would the suffering be like? We contemplate on this until we get a real sense of their suffering as if we were really receiving their suffering. This is another method of exchanging self with others. Even though we do not really fall into such a situation, through continuous prayers to our masters and the chanting of the six-syllable mantra of Chenrezig, we would be able to understand the suffering of sentient beings. This is a method of exchanging self with others.

Consider someone who does not have much money and who faces difficulties such as illness and suffering, if under those circumstances, that person can still make offering to the poor and take care of others – this is considered as exchanging self with others. In Tibet I have seen some people who are not rich but when they come across some even poorer beggars, they will give offering to the beggars. Even though the merit of such offering is quite small, such merit should be dedicated with the wish that one can offer much more for the exchange of self with others.

Another situation concerns the relationship between parents and children. Usually as parents, no matter under what circumstances, even when they themselves are in a difficult situation, they will still try their best to take care of their own children even though the children may not be able to repay them. Whether or not the children can repay their parents depends on the karma of each individual but for parents no matter what, they will

whole-heartedly take care of their own children. If we can use this kind of whole-heartedness of parents when taking care of their children and apply it without bias to all sentient beings, that is, if we can benefit all sentient beings without discrimination and take care of all sentient beings as our own children; this is the way to act out from the real heart of bodhicitta. In other words, one does not consider whether or not one will get anything in return. Since parents take care of their children unconditionally, in the same way we should generate the same kind of attitude toward all sentient beings in order to benefit them unconditionally.

In the country of Taiwan, because people know about Buddhism, they will often provide assistance to those people who are in difficulties and who suffer. This is a very good phenomenon. However, in the process of helping our friends we should also think that whenever we are dealing with a complete stranger with whom we do not have any relationship whatsoever, we should still help that person; in this way, the meaning is even greater. It is because helping someone with whom we do not have any relationship is real help and for this kind of help we do not expect to get anything in return. Sometimes when helping our friends, we will inevitably wish to get something in return, however, when helping without any expectation, the merit is much greater.

Milarepa once said that, “If we have the intension of receiving reward when helping or delivering beautiful speech with some specific goal in mind, the merit from those acts are very small.” This is because it involves the heart of desire. Therefore, we should often practice exchanging self with strangers with whom we do not have any relationship.

Now that we have obtained this booklet of the Thirty-Seven Bodhisattvas practices and if you have two or more copies, we should give one to our Dharma friend. This is because this book is extremely important and was written by Ngulchu Thogme Zangpo who is a real great bodhisattva. Not only that, this book contains the mantra of liberation and whoever sees that can obtain liberation. It has great supporting and blessing power. If you have group Dharma study every Sunday, I hope that you all chant this once before the study. If you do not understand the content of this book, you can bring it up and discuss it. Those who do not understand should turn to those who have already understood and those who understood should explain patiently to others. In this way, the merit, knowledge and practice from the group will unceasingly increase and develop. You should not feel shy or withdraw when you do not understand because when we do understand, your merit and ability will unceasingly increase. The benefit of providing others with 100 kronor or one thousand kronor or ten thousand kronor is much inferior when compared with the benefit of teaching others the meaning of one or two verses. It is because the benefit we can obtain from these verses is sustained life after life and its greatness is without limit. Therefore we should respect the book in this way and we should search for an even deeper meaning from the content.

12. Even if others, influenced by great desire, steal all one’s wealth or have it stolen, dedicating to them one’s body, possessions and virtues accumulated in the three times is the bodhisattvas’ practice.

There are many different types of stealing ranging from pick pocketing to great assaults. There are many law-suits related to these matters. What are the underlying causes to these thefts? Maybe it is due to the fact that we, in our past lives, without seeking permission, have committed theft or have deceived others. Another possibility can be

that we, in our past lives, have enjoyed the wealth of our parents but have failed to repay their kindness. Now, once again, they are connected to us and want us to pay back the debt. All this is due to the karma from our past lives.

Therefore, the thefts that occur to us in this life are in fact just as if we had borrowed a huge amount of wealth from others but have not paid them back. As a result, we are in debt. If we can understand the underlying causes and effects, we will not generate hatred in our heart. We will not be angry towards those who have robbed us of our properties. Not only that we are not angry at them, but we will even, as it says in the text, dedicate our merit to them. Why should we dedicate our merit to them? This is because we have understood that maybe in our past lives, we owed them debts that we have not repaid; or maybe in our past lives, we have not repaid our parents' kindness of nourishing and taking care of us. So, right now, we have to repay the debts and the kindness that we owed in our past lives. Moreover, we need to dedicate our merit and make wishes in this way: May the karma of all sentient beings who are facing the same situation as me, be ripening on my body so that I, on behalf of all sentient beings, will repay all their debts. After contemplating in this way, we have to even dedicate our merit to the robber, wishing that he or she can perfect the heart of bodhicitta and that his or her wealth will increase and grow without hindrance. If you can dedicate sincerely in this way, this kind of generosity is most valuable. In this way, the things that have been robbed would not be wasted.

In particular, in this modern society, borrowing among business people is very common. Many people suffer greatly due to the fact that their debtors cannot repay their debts. We have to contemplate on this carefully. On the one hand, we hope that we can pay all our debts so that we feel happy in our heart. To our friends whose debtors cannot repay their debts, we should tell our friends about the karma cause and effect so that they feel much released and have much comfort. It is because in the past, if we really have never owed any debts, in the future, through laws and other circumstances, the wealth can still be sought back one way or another. However, if it is due to our debts in the past, even if we try all methods, still there is no way for us to get the money back. Therefore, when facing these matters, we should not generate anger in our heart.

We have to understand that contemplating as above is a very good method for helping us to reduce our suffering. If we do not contemplate in this way, when we lose our wealth, first, we would suffer from the loss of wealth and second, we would suffer from the generation of anger. Hatred will lead us to fall into the hell realm. We have to contemplate on the suffering in the hell realm, can we bear that? Therefore, we should not feel any suffering in our heart. Even though we lose lots of wealth, the heart of bodhicitta is still intact in our heart. If we lose the heart of bodhicitta and just think everyday about the loss of wealth, then even if Buddha Amitabha one day would like to pull us up, it would not be possible. Instead, we will definitely fall into the hell realm. Why is it so? It is because after losing the wealth, we are in the state of anger day after day and at the end we will fall into the hell realm.

If after losing our wealth, in our heart we contemplate that we should pay back our debts to them, we will not generate hatred. When we have paid back our debt, we acquire generosity as well. When the paramita of generosity is perfected, it will generate virtuous effects. Contemplate even one step further: Running into the thief is better than not doing so. It is because through this process, we have the opportunity to pay back our debt

and perfect the paramita of generosity. Therefore, we should be grateful to the thief. If we can think in this way sincerely in our heart, all our suffering and the suffering of other people will be pacified. Isn't that very good?

13. Even if others are going to cut off one's head when one is utterly blameless, taking upon oneself all their negative deeds by the power of compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.

This verse says that even though we have not done anything wrong or in any way hurt a person, that person comes to hurt us and even want to cut off our head. When we face such a situation, how should we handle it? This happens because in the past lives, we have killed that person and that is why he comes to hurt us and kill us. In that case, should we be angry with that person? We have to read this passage and meditate on it thoroughly. We have to know that it is due to the evil deeds that we have committed in the past as a result of our troubles and worries. This is the ripening of that karma. If we get angry and even take revenge, we will lose the heart of bodhicitta. In that way, we do not only lose our body, but also lose our heart of bodhicitta as well.

If we do not want to lose the heart of bodhicitta, we should right at that moment practice patience. It is because our body is only an object and the destruction of the object does not really matter. The most important is that we do not lose the heart of bodhicitta. If we do not lose the heart of bodhicitta, we can in the future be reborn in a better place and our heart of bodhicitta will be even stronger. Since in the past, we have killed that person and now he wants to hurt us and kill us, this is just like paying back our debt. Therefore, facing this situation, we have to wish that we are able to pay back all the debts and that the karma from the evil act of killing us will never ripen but instead be transformed into a virtuous deed. We need to have this kind of loving kindness and compassion towards the perpetrator.

We have to contemplate on its meaning again and again on a regular basis. Why? It is because if this situation really occur say tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, would we not get upset? That is why it is so important to contemplate on this on a regular basis. If we do not contemplate regularly, when we really face this kind of situation, we would immediately take out the gun and kill that person. If we are being killed and we lose our heart of bodhicitta as well, it would be the worse that can happen. Therefore, we need to contemplate on this verse thoroughly.

In general, when we face this kind of situation, we would of course feel very upset and think that the best way is to put the criminals to death. However, this kind of attitude is not correct. We should have the heart of compassion towards both the victims and the offenders. We have to know that the situation happened between them is because of the force of their past karma. If it is not due to the karma cause and effect, they would not come together in this way. Moreover, the one who killed will definitely in this life get the lawful punishment and thus have no peace. When he dies, he will fall into the hell realm and the suffering will be even more intense. His relatives and friends will look upon him as an enemy and as a result no matter where he goes, he has neither any relative nor friend. Therefore, we should be compassionate towards that person. We have to understand that the coming together of both sides is the result of their past karma. Regarding the victim, we have to think that he has just paid back all his outstanding debt. We should generate compassion towards both sides and contemplate in this way.

14. Even if someone broadcasts throughout the billion worlds all sorts of offensive remarks about one, speaking in turn of that person's qualities with a loving mind is the bodhisattvas' practice.

This point is very important when we face the samsaric world. It is especially important to adhere to this in the Dharma center. In fact, it is even more important among Dharma practitioners. It looks like a trivial matter, so why is it important? The sound that we hear, whether it is pleasant or not, is just like the wind. Its nature is emptiness. However, when it is thrown into our heart, it can generate strong winds and big waves that turn into strong attachment and hatred. For example, when someone scolds you with some unpleasant words, you become so angry that you take out the gun and shoot that person to death. Afterwards, you receive the legal punishment and is put into prison for many years and pay a huge fine. All these consequences come from a single sentence spoken by your opponent when he scolded you. It is just so simple. Therefore, we have to contemplate on this carefully.

Suppose someone said that I am not good, then I have to contemplate in this way: even though that person said that I am not good but there are many people said that I am good. In any case, no matter what he said, I have to examine whether or not I have the fault that he mentioned. If I have that kind of fault, that person would be correct. It is just as if that person has given us a good prescription for medicine. This is the real blessing from the Buddha Dharma. I should feel very pleased and happily accept the comment. If I do not have that kind of fault, then that person would be wrong. As a result, others would not trust him in the future and he will have any friends. What a pity! Therefore, it does not matter what he said. Our mind should not be swayed but instead we should contemplate on what the real situation is.

When someone speaks some unpleasant words to me, I have to say to myself that this is due to the impermanent thoughts of coming and going that are created by our mind. I have to swear not to speak such words myself. Especially, in the secret mantra yana, after receiving the empowerment, only sounds of the secret mantra yana exist. All sounds that are transmitted is of emptiness in nature. If we treat the transmitted sounds as real and generate attachment and hatred as a result, we damage the vows. Therefore, when we understand that the nature of sound is emptiness, we should not be influenced by it so that instead the inner heart can rest peacefully in its own nature.

When we hear someone speak some unpleasant words about our friend, we have to contemplate – maybe it is because he is jealous of the good relationship between me and my friend. Therefore, he would like to separate us. This is what we call divisive speech or non-virtuous speech. We have to understand that this will bring trouble and separation between me and my good friend. If we endorse this kind of action, the result will be that in the future, one will not have any relatives or friends. We ourselves should not speak those unpleasant words as well. When we all understand this point, we should make vows not to speak any unpleasant words to each other so that instead our inner heart can remain quiet and peaceful.

Sometimes, among Dharma brothers and sisters at a Dharma center, they speak carelessly about shortcomings of each other. People have ill-feeling and hatred towards each other which causes unrest. As a result, they do not want to stay at the center. This happens

very often. This is a very serious fault. If I stay at a center and meet someone who speaks ill of me, I should speak in front of others in this way: “He and I are in fact good friends and his ability is indeed very good!” Then I go on to praise him highly. If these praising words are transmitted to his ears, he would feel embarrassed. It is because he would reflect on himself speaks ill about me, while I still say many good things about him. In this way, he would not once again create more slandering wind and storm. In this way, everybody will unit even more closely. Therefore, we should use loving kindness to praise his merit and say to everyone that “He and I are good friends and he would not hurt me” and indicate that “in case he did hurt me, it was not his intention”. In this way, the gap and fault between each other will gradually be transformed into virtuous merit. If someone keeps speaking ill about us, we should continue speaking good about that person who will eventually hear those words and reflect on it over and change. He will then pay much more attention to his behavior. In this way, merit will only increase among each other instead of decreasing and causing damage among each other.

15. Even if, in the midst of a public gathering, someone exposes faults and speaks ill of one, humbly paying homage to that person, perceiving him as a spiritual friend, is the bodhisattvas’s practice.

Suppose we are in a place where many people gather together and someone rushes by and yells at you, saying that you are a bad guy. When we face this circumstance, we will definitely be upset. While our fires of anger rages, we should immediately remind ourselves of bodhicitta and warn ourselves that something dangerous is going to happen. Just because of the fact that someone uses bad words and unpleasant language towards us, we are upset. But, if we are upset, we create bad karma. Therefore, being upset is our real enemy. So, at that time, we must practice bodhicitta and make the determination that even if we have to die, we will not use evil speech, but rather, we will handle it by practicing patience.

When we are upset, it is as if we are sick; while practicing patience is like having an operation which cures our sickness of rage. Therefore, when someone uses unpleasant speech towards us and if we are able to remain unshaken, it is just like after having an operation, the pain from the sickness is completely removed. Therefore, we should be grateful towards the person who harmed us. It is because that person is just like a great master, an achieved one. Because of that person, we have overcome our anger. Thus, we have to vow to practice patience unceasingly. We should practice this regularly. Why? It is because if we, in our everyday life, continuously contemplate on the methods of handling our anger, one day, when the real situation happens, we will be able to overcome our heart of anger. If we do not practice regularly, when we face the real situation, we will definitely light up the fire of rage.

We have to contemplate on the meaning above. What I have taught are some methods of transforming suffering into happiness. You may wonder if these methods can really transform suffering into happiness. The answer is yes. Making use of these methods will definitely enable us to turn fault into merit. When everybody has time, we should chant these verses and contemplate on their meaning. I myself have already studied and chanted it for fourteen or fifteen years and still continue contemplating on it on a daily basis. Everybody possesses this little booklet and you should value it greatly.

16. Even if someone for whom one has cared as lovingly as his own child regards one as an enemy, to cherish that person as dearly as a mother does an ailing child is the bodhisattvas' practice.

There are many situations which are similar to what is mentioned in this verse. These situations happen very often nowadays. For example, a son and a daughter take the lives of their parents, or someone kills his or her girlfriend, boyfriend or best friend. When these situations happen, we have to contemplate that we are Buddhists and we have studied the Dharma teachings and the teaching on bodhicitta. Bodhicitta is the method to transform suffering into happiness. Therefore, when facing these circumstances, we should meditate that the actor is like a very sick patient who falls deeply into the karma of worry and trouble. Thus, that person does not realize the serious consequences of hatred and ignorance and therefore has no method to improve. That person is just like what Padmasambhava characterized as a “utterly worried and troubled person”. That person resembles a doctor who is completely handicapped in doing anything for a dying patient. We should generate great compassion towards that person and think carefully on how to benefit that person and hope that the person can remove the poison of desire, hatred and ignorance.

When we contemplate and practice in this way, our heart of compassion will increase hundreds and thousands of times and the power of compassion will be strengthened hundreds and thousands of times. When we continuously practice and contemplate on subduing the hatred and ignorance of that person, even if that person still does not seem to change at all, our heart of loving kindness and compassion will never be lost. So long as we practice patience in a relaxed way, the heart of bodhicitta, like a wish-fulfilling jewel, will increase even stronger. Even if that person commits more and more evil deeds and creates bad karma, our heart of compassion will only increase more and more. In modern society, it is very common to see the separation of boyfriends and girlfriends. In dealing with this problem, we have to analyze it. If this is due to our previous karma, then of course, there is not much we can do about it. However, if it is due to strong inner worry and trouble then we have to understand that when someone's bodhicitta is not strong enough, it is impossible for him or her to subdue the inner heart of worry and trouble. Because of that, most people will fall deeply into the worry and trouble and be unable to free themselves from it. Therefore when someone is upset, we should face it by generously generating our heart of loving kindness and compassion. In this way, it will strengthen and increase our heart of bodhicitta.

This way of practice and meditation should be used especially when encountering those who are non-Buddhists, who dislike Buddhism or who disparage the Dharma. For those people we should equip ourselves with the heart of loving kindness and compassion. It should be like this verse mentions that parents generate even greater compassion towards their seriously sick children. We should treat those who do not like Buddhism in the same way. The heart of bodhicitta is just like fire and these situations are like pieces of fire wood. After receiving more and more fire wood (adverse situations), the fire (of bodhicitta) will only burn stronger and stronger and the fire wood will of course never weaken the fire itself.

17. Even if, influenced by pride, an equal or inferior person treats one with contempt, respectfully placing him like a guru at the crown of one's head is the bodhisattvas' practice.

This verse means that when we come across someone whose capacity or wealth is equal or inferior to ours and that person always despise and tease us, we should contemplate really carefully on whether or not that person's behaviour is caused by our own pride and arrogance which we have not yet discovered. If that is really the case, we can say that this person's behaviour is just like that of a doctor who has correctly diagnosed and cured our problem. Therefore, our ability is nothing to be proud of and that person's ability is really superior to ours. Thanks to the behaviour of that person, we have eliminated our own fault. That person is like our doctor or teacher. We should not arouse any anger towards that person but rather we should feel grateful in our heart.

18. Though one may have an impoverished life, always be disparaged by others, afflicted by dangerous illness and evil spirits, to be without discouragement and to take upon oneself all the misdeeds and suffering of beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.

The situation that this verse mentions is the following: nowadays there are many people who study the Dharma and practice cultivating bodhicitta. We hear from others that practicing the Dharma can bring us comfort and happiness in this life and in all future lives. Therefore, during the time when we practice the Dharma, we have high expectation that it will bring immediate comfort and happiness in this and future lives. However, this may not necessarily happen as predicted. This is because we are not able to understand what karma causes and effect we have generated earlier and what kinds of bad deeds we have done. Therefore, in this life, we have unexpected suffering, sickness, poverty etc. We have to understand that when these circumstances occur, it is an indication of the ripening of our previous bad deeds. We can see that there are many masters who went through great illnesses or were imprisoned. Why?

This is like we are about to set out for a long journey. But if we still have lots of debts to be repaid, can we really take off without repaying that debt? Of course not, we must repay all the debts swiftly. For the same reason, the masters have to quickly eliminate all their bad deeds before reaching Enlightenment.

Therefore, when we are entangled by our illness and suffering, we have to contemplate in this way – there are many sentient beings who suffer from similar illnesses as mine and many more who suffer from much more serious illnesses. Therefore, I will bear the suffering for them. Since all sentient beings have been our mothers, I am willing to bear their sufferings and wish that their illnesses and sufferings will ripe on my body. I wish that they can be free from suffering and have all the comfort and happiness. We should contemplate in this way and practice exchanging oneself with others joyfully.

This verse mentions that *to be without discouragement ... is the bodhisattvas' practice*. It means that our determination has to be strong. Why is that so? It is because while we practice the Dharma and bodhicitta, we may face illness, sufferings and all kinds of adverse circumstances. If we then feel that Dharma is of no use, that would be a sign of discouragement and disappointment. We have to understand that all the adverse karmas that arise in relation to our Dharma practice are the signs of eliminating all previous debts. If we abandon the Dharma, not only can we not pay off the outstanding debts, the accumulation of debts will just increase. This is just like we have to eat medicine when

we are sick. If we abandon medicine, how can we be cured? The sickness will only be more and more serious.

With this understanding, when the adverse circumstances occur, even when we have to face death, we should cherish even more our heart of bodhicitta and the Dharma. Bodhicitta is our ally in the battlefield and our reliance that can eliminate all the obstacles. If we can contemplate in this way, our heart of bodhicitta will increase and expand to benefit even more sentient beings.

If we think that Dharma is useless and cannot eliminate our adverse circumstances, this is to perceive Dharma as if it were a method of temporary relief. Nowadays, there are many people who hold this kind of view towards the Dharma. The view that Dharma practice is useless when it cannot solve our immediate problems and sufferings is an incorrect view. Dharma explains the karma cause and effect. This is like the saying “if we would like to know the karma cause of previous lives, look at how we have it in this life”. Many karmic causes and consequences that we face right now were made in our previous lives. If we can understand this point, we would practice the Dharma even more diligently.

Below is the supplementary commentary which is related to verse seventeen. Seeing that masters, who after studying and practicing the Dharma, receive abundant praises and offerings; we might think in our mind that we should also study the Dharma. However, after becoming monks or nuns and having sincerely practiced, we may neither be particularly respected by others nor may we receive any offering. At that time, we might think in our heart that Dharma is of no use and it is better to give it up. This kind of thinking is to treat Dharma as a temporary pacifying method that will only give temporary benefit. Whether or not we receive others’ respect or whether or not we receive great offerings, it has to do with whether or not we have accumulated merit in our past lives. It does not necessarily have anything to do with whether or not we practice the Dharma right now.

For example, Venerable Milarepa, because of his poverty, was often humiliated by others. Many other highly-achieved masters, who are often not known by others, also face similar situations. Therefore, when we practice the Dharma, we should not be concerned with whether or not others respect us or despise us as long as our merit keeps increasing and our heart of bodhicitta is not lost. When our bodhicitta (wish-fulfilling jewel) is growing strong, respect or despise from others is just emptiness without any meaning. Therefore, when others despise us, we should not feel discouraged. Most important is to not abandon the Dharma.

Dharma practitioners, sometimes when they practise, are attacked by illnesses or disturbed by some evil spirits. At that time, we have to think that only the three jewels – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha – can rescue us while no human or god can help us. Then we chant the text from the refuge prayer and all the way to the Tara mantra sincerely. While chanting, we need to have very strong determination and devotion. We have to understand that evil-spirits do not really exist and they come from our inner illusion and that is why we feel afraid of them. Their nature is emptiness and does not exist. In this way, we should keep chanting sincerely and not be afraid.

Usually when harm and disturbances occur to us, it is a sign that we need to purify the obscuration. This can be seen in Milarepa’s life story. Milarepa has great miracle power

and he has gone through many experiences and many of us have already heard about them. Many people ask me questions related to this. When we face harm and disturbances, we should chant sincerely the mantra of Milarepa, Tara, Chenrezig etc. As long as we chant them sincerely and with great devotion, the problems will naturally disappear.

Normally, we should practice meditation whole-heartedly so that our heart will generate a strong habitual force. If I tell you to chant the text up to Tara mantra, but you only chant it for one day, this will not generate a very strong force. Our heart is like a mirror, we have to control what it reflects. If the mirror reflects the face of Buddha, then of course the image of evil spirits cannot appear. It is because there is only one heart and if it is completely occupied with one image, there is no room for another image. This is the reason why we have to always practice meditation and visualization in order to make it into an unbroken habit. We have now talked about how to face the disturbances from adverse circumstances and we will next talk about how to face favourable circumstances.

19. Though one may be famous and revered by many people or gain wealth like that of Vaishravana, having realized that worldly fortune is without essence, to be unconceited is the bodhisattvas' practice.

If your fame pervades the whole world or other people say that you are a very good master or other perceive you as a very knowledgeable person or you are an incredibly wealthy person, we should think that all these do not have any real meaning. The most important is to be able to secure our heart of bodhicitta. Do worldly wealth, relatives, position, prestige, fame and so on really exist? At the time when we are going to die and if we have not used our wealth to offer to the Three Jewels or to offer to the poor, we can say that we have wasted our wealth and it would be of no use. The one that is useful and can be brought along with us is our heart of bodhicitta. Besides that, our worldly wealth or relatives do not have any real use and cannot be brought along with us after death.

If we can normally think in this way, we can separate our heart and the worldly wealth. Why do we have to separate them? It is because if we do not separate them, when we die, it is very difficult to reach the Blissful Pureland since our heart is too attached and tightly holding onto the wealth and hence cannot be set free and let go. If we understand that wealth does not have any purpose, our heart will naturally release the attachment. In this way, it would be much easier for us to reach the Blissful Pureland. Therefore, we have to understand that all the substances from the three worlds have no real essence and there is no need to arouse attachment in our heart. Thus the verse says that *having realized that worldly fortune is without essence; to be unconceited is the bodhisattvas' practice.*

Attachment to wealth and fame has two faults: first, when the heart of attachment increases, it is very difficult to liberate oneself in the next life. Second, when we are too attached to wealth and fame, the heart of jealousy will unavoidably grow tremendously. Why? It is because when we have fame and wealth, we feel very happy. But when we find out that somebody else's wealth and fame exceed yours, you will inevitably feel upset. This is the reason why relatives and friends can turn into enemies. This is due to the heart of jealousy.

Jealousy can make our heart tighter and tighter, and at the end lead to total suffocation. We would then feel happy when seeing other people suffer. This is the sign that merit will soon be completely exhausted. Therefore, we should not be attached to fame and wealth. When we do not have attachment, the heart of jealousy will not be aroused. We have to understand that worldly fame and wealth do not have any real meaning and in this way we will avoid the arousal of the heart of attachment and jealousy.

20. If outer foes are destroyed while not subduing the enemy of one's own hatred, enemies will only increase. Therefore, subduing one's own mind with the army of love and compassion is the bodhisattvas' practice.

If we have not subdued our inner enemy of hatred, our external enemies will only increase. In the beginning, maybe only five or ten persons but at the end the whole village will become one's enemies. This is because of the forceful power from the heart of hatred which leads to the number of enemies continuously increasing. When we have hatred, it is just like a sharp thorn in our feet and we ourselves are the only victims who suffer. We can see that no matter whether it is between a boyfriend and a girlfriend or between parents and children, when one gets upset, one expresses an uptight and dreadful facial expression which is very unpleasant. Moreover, when one gets upset, no matter how beautiful words one tries to say, no one would like to listen. Hatred itself is suffering and of course, the one who has hatred will naturally generate suffering.

Some parents when they get upset, their children do not like to get close to them. It is because when children see that their father holds such a dreadful facial expression, they are afraid to get close to their father. When fathers reflect upon the reason why their children do not like them and do not like to be close to them but would like to run away, they realize that it is often due to their anger. Such are the consequences that are brought about by hatred. With hatred, the number of external enemies will increase unceasingly. So anger will first make us fall into the midst of suffering, then gradually make the people around dislike us and finally we will fall into the hell realm in future lives. Thus, the real enemy is only one, that is, the heart of anger and hatred. The antidote to that is love and compassion.

When our heart is placed with love and compassion, there will not be enough room for anger. On the contrary, when our heart is placed with anger, there will not be enough room for love and compassion. This is just like a chair that can place only one person at a time. Love and compassion cannot coexist with anger. Therefore, we have to practice diligently the heart of love and compassion and to eliminate anger.

Once there was a monk who was always preoccupied with hatred. People around him tried to make him change but without success. In his dreams, he often saw sights with killings, arson and so forth. After receiving teachings from the master, he started to practice the heart of bodhicitta and then his suffering gradually diminished. We have to understand that the hell realm is the actualized reality of the illusions created by hatred. The heart of hatred is formless but the hell realm is manifested as real, concrete and substantial. When there is hatred in one's heart, even if one is dreaming, one can see scenes of beatings, killings, gun fire and so on. After the monk had practiced bodhicitta unceasingly, the killings and beatings in his dreams gradually disappeared.

The situation in the world is also like this. Once there was a person with a very bad temper. At first he lived in Taipei where he did not have any friends. It was because he had upset everyone. Then he moved to Taichung, he still faced the same problem. He

kept on moving from one place to another. This is because there is only one enemy, that is, the heart of anger. If we can subdue the anger, there will not be any external enemies. Therefore, the merit of patience is very great. The Buddha said, the power of patience can transform all the enemies into friends. When one is often upset, even friends will some day turn into our enemies.

Someone who always practices patience has many good friends everywhere. The people they meet in the dreams are very harmonious and happily together. When they die, they will of course land in the Blissful Pureland because everybody is harmonious and happily together there. Why is it that when one is upset, one will be reborn in the hell realm? It is because in the hell realm everybody is an enemy and as soon as one sees somebody, one would immediately kill that person. Therefore, the Blissful Pureland is the manifestation of the heart of bodhicitta while the hell realm is the manifestation of the heart of hatred.

After knowing this, we should immediately make a vow – when we get upset, no matter if it is between a husband and a wife or between a boyfriend and a girlfriend, we should remain silent. We have to wait until we have calmed down and then explain our situation. We have to let the other know the whole process and our viewpoints. In this way, we can avoid many problems and troubles.

Why is it that the verse mentions *subduing one's own mind with the army of love and compassion*? The army of love and compassion means that we should not only once or twice meditate on love and compassion but do it repeatedly. For example, if we often feel upset, we should contemplate in the following way – from beginningless time up to now, every sentient being has once been our father and mother and therefore we can all be together like in a family. It is a very precious karma cause to be together and therefore, there is really no reason to be upset. Moreover, we have to think about the consequence of being upset, which is to be reborn in the hell realm in the future. If we think in this way, we will generate the heart of regret towards being upset and thus removing the anger.

We have to know that the time of death is uncertain and we do not know for how long we will be together. Before our death, we do not know for how many days we will be together. Therefore, we should live happily together. If someone harms us, we should practice patience because everyone has good sides and bad sides. The fault is indeed very small and therefore nothing matters very much. Instead, we should find the good sides of that person and often think about his good points. If we can always contemplate in this way, anger will decrease and everybody will take care of each other.

We should always contemplate on all sentient beings in our external environment as being our parents. Then each time when we see a sentient being, one after the other, it is just like seeing our parents again and again. In this way, our inner love and compassion will again and again be enhanced. This is just like the accumulation of wish-fulfilling jewels that increases and our heart is full of love and compassion. Since the heart consciousness accumulates from moment to moment, likewise our heart consciousness of love and compassion will accumulate little by little in this way. The external world is the accumulation of “tiny particles”. At present, it is still unclear to scientists whether or not the heart, like any other external object is the accumulation of “tiny particles” or something more. No matter what, we have to think about the good sides of our friends because if we do the opposite and often think about the bad sides, then some day there will definitely be a big quarrel.

The content of this commentary is for everybody to study and practice. If someone has very strong hatred, we have to again and again read through and contemplate on its meaning. After hearing, we have to contemplate and after contemplation, we have to practice. That is, we have to hear the teaching and then to contemplate on the benefit and the harm of being upset. We should carefully contemplate and visualize how we might get upset in the future, and how we then should deal with those situations. In this way, we prepare ourselves before anger arises.

In fact, anger is just like the wind and it has no real substance. At the time of anger, we have to pray sincerely to our master. Before long, anger will disappear. Therefore, after the process of hearing, contemplating and practicing, we will not be afraid of anger any more. It is because when anger appears, we should just calm down and it will disappear. If we keep repeating the process of hearing, contemplating and practicing, the result will manifest swiftly.

21. Indulging sense pleasures is like drinking salt water – however much one indulges, thirst and craving only increase. Immediately abandoning whatever things give rise to clinging and attachment is the bodhisattvas’ practice.

There are five kinds of desire and attachment that are related to our senses –eyes are fond of seeing beautiful things, ears are fond of hearing charming music, nose likes pleasant fragrances, tongue likes good taste and our body likes to wear soft clothing. However, everyone has a different tendency to what they are attached. Someone likes to eat fabulous food but may not care so much about clothing. Someone likes to wear expensive and high quality clothing but may not care so much about food. Therefore, everybody’s habit is different. Even some ordained masters may be attached to fame. In spite of some masters having quite a good capacity and practicing on a high level, they think that they must have fame in order to feel comfortable. All this is due to the heart of desire and attachment.

Because of possessing eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body consciousness, there are colors, sound, smell, taste and sense objects that are the objects of desire and attachment. Is there any benefit to these desires and attachment? In fact, there is no benefit at all because within the heart of desire and attachment, our heart of bodhicitta is completely buried beneath it. When we still have our body, we feel that color, sound, smell, taste and sense objects are the very necessary five sense pleasures. But if we analyse carefully, we find these five sense pleasures are our subjective needs and do not concretely exist. For example, one person may like a particular kind of food but another one may not like it at all. Therefore, the food itself does not possess the nature of good taste. Depending on individuals’ habit, different persons have different preferences.

When we practice, we have to identify where the heart of desire and attachment is the most serious. During the practice, we have to identify the kind of suffering and fault the objects of desire and attachment bring to us; and what kind of benefit there would be if we did not have this desire and attachment. Some people must have meat when they eat a meal. To them, not eating meat is like not eating any meal at all. Some people like to drink wine. Together with wine, they will find any kind of food delicious, but without wine, even if there were fabulous dishes in front of them, they would not be interested at all. At the time of craving, we have to contemplate on how much money we have to

spend in order to get those items. Attachment to food and drink is empty in nature and there is no real meaning.

In fact, food that can cure our hunger is good food and clothes that can keep us warm are good clothes. Other than that, there is no use when adults drink wine and children buy expensive clothes spending so much money. If we had used that money to offer to the poor beggars, what great benefit it would have generated. Instead, we waste all our money and in this life we exhaust our accumulated merit. At the time of death due to our clinging and attachment, when the four elements depart from our body, there is no way for our body to bring anything along with us except for the inner heart of attachment. We will then definitely fall into the hell realm. All these sufferings originate from our clinging and attachment to the five sense pleasures. There are yet some other sufferings related to clinging and attachment which cannot be observed by us.

We have to understand that all the worldly clinging and attachment to pleasures are illusory and not real. Therefore, we should not be attached to clothing and food. If we do not have the heart of clinging and attachment, any clothing and food would be sufficient for us. There are many people who due to their strong clinging and attachment to alcohol die or go through surgeries. Similar outcomes apply to smokers. Before the consumption of these harmful things becomes a habit, we have to completely cut it. If it has already become a habit, we will only fall deeper and deeper into it. When it becomes a habit, we have to meditate as we have discussed – what are the disadvantages of clinging and attachment? What are the benefits of not having clinging and attachment? What are the disadvantages to this life? What are the disadvantages to future lives? If we can meditate in this way, whether in this life or future lives, we will obtain peace and happiness.

All the practitioners in the Dharma center like me very much. It is because of my heartfelt devotion to the precious Three Jewels. It is neither because I am a very good practitioner, nor because my merit and education are very good. The reason is that each of you has merit and has faith in the precious Three Jewels. Besides your sincere devotion, you give me lots of offerings and assistance. Therefore, I always think of how to benefit all of you. For that reason, I have printed this small booklet of the 37 bodhisattvas' practices in order to build good karma. In fact, there is not much use for me to always stay in this center. My responsibility is to teach the heart of bodhicitta to everyone. After listening to the teaching, all of you should practice it. At the end, the practice generates benefits. In this way, I have fulfilled my responsibility and everybody obtains the beneficial effects. This is the way to mutually care for and support each other. On the other hand, if everyone likes me very much and gives me lots of money for offerings, but are not willing to practice the heart of bodhicitta that I taught, we would then be hurting each other. From my side, I would have done serious wrongdoing, and each one of you would leave empty-handed, not even money in your hand. Is that not a serious harm? I come from a very distant place and all of you come from different places. To be able to teach the practice of the heart of bodhicitta is really a very precious karma cause and we should definitely not waste our time.

Today everyone is able to practice the 37 bodhisattvas' practices. This is very meaningful. It is because all the Buddhas' teachings are summarized in it. Therefore, we have to chant it often and dedicate all the merit to all sentient beings. When we make wishes, we should not only think of Taiwan, but we should spread it to the whole world and wish that everyone, human and nonhuman, will be able to generate love and

compassion in their heart. When we dedicate in this way, everyone will be able to obtain benefit.

When we chant, we visualize that we ourselves are bodhisattva Chenrezig. While chanting, we visualize that bodhisattva Chenrezig bestows the heart of love and compassion to all sentient beings and wishes that the heart of love and compassion will generate within the heart of every sentient being. If every sentient being in the world had the heart of love and compassion, the world would be quite different, or would it not? Therefore, we have to constantly chant the six-syllable mantra, visualize bodhisattva Chenrezig, and practice continuously and diligently.

Because of the above reasons, I have printed this booklet of the 37 bodhisattvas' practices for everyone. I do the same to whichever part of the world I am going. The centers should let this small booklet circulate widely. If all the centers can do that, I will feel very happy. You have to understand that this small booklet is me and when I die, I will be represented by this small booklet. When everyone sees this booklet, it is just like seeing me and there is really no difference between the two.

Everyone should chant this booklet often. While studying, we have to think that it is not an easy job to spread the Dharma widely. The centers that spread the Dharma widely, their Sanghas are the manifestation of great bodhisattvas. The contributors to the centers are also the manifestations of bodhisattvas. Therefore, we should appreciate their merits and not freely criticize or make trouble.

Every year I will teach this small booklet and as long as you are willing to listen and can put the heart of bodhicitta into practice, I will take the responsibility to teach the content of the verses. In this way, I have done my responsibility and you can practice. Is that not a very happy deed? Next we are going to chant the six-syllable mantra and the dedication prayer. This concludes the third session of the teaching.

22. Appearances are one's own mind. From the beginning, mind's nature is free from the extremes of elaboration. Knowing this, not to engage the mind in subject-object duality is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Within our heart, there are many virtuous thoughts as well as nonvirtuous thoughts. An example of a virtuous thought is the thought of bodhicitta while nonvirtuous thoughts can be such as worries and troubles due to our ignorance. However, all these are just thoughts. In bardo there are many appearances like clothing, food, five-sense pleasures and so on. When we have attachment to comfort and material things, we have an urge to own all these things. But does our heart really need all these things? No. It is our body that needs clothing and food. In fact, our heart does not need anything at all.

All phenomena, no matter good or bad, appear in our heart. But what is the true nature of our heart? The nature of our heart is emptiness. Even though virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts appear in our heart, but if we let go and dissolve all the thoughts, the heart will show its emptiness nature. At that time, all the conceptual thoughts of good and bad will disappear. How happy it will be within our heart! If we can meditate in this way, our heart will reach a state of comfort, beyond suffering.

As an example, when we see a flower, we think that the flower is so beautiful. At that time, because of the attachment in our heart, it creates the cause of suffering. The beauty of the flower is only an appearance in our heart and it is not substantial, not real. When we see a flower and we feel that the flower is very beautiful, we have to ask ourselves, is the beauty a fundamental appearance of the flower itself? In fact, the beauty comes from our subjective judgement in our heart. If we can eliminate these subjective judgemental thoughts, how wonderful it would be!

Just because we have so many disturbing thoughts that unceasingly bring about even more thoughts, there comes a lot of suffering. For example, when someone in our family dies, we would think in our heart: Oh! He was my father or she was my mother and we have lived together several years. We then go on and think about all the things that have happened in the past and hence, the suffering in the heart will gradually be generated. However, if we think carefully that death does not only happen in this case but it happens to all lives, there is no need to think about events that will definitely happen to everyone. Would there then be any suffering? Next we are going to talk about the twenty-third verse.

23. When encountering pleasing sense objects, though they appear beautiful like a rainbow in summertime, not to regard them as real and to abandon clinging attachment is the bodhisattvas' practice.

There are many kinds of pleasing senses such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and so on. For example, when a man and a woman are young, their bodily forms are beautiful; however, when they grow old, they lose that beauty. Nevertheless, they are the same persons! Therefore, the appearance of beautiful forms is not reliable, not stable and not permanent. The same is true for sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Take food as an example, we have opinions about what is tasty and what is not tasty; but after being consumed, the end product is the same. Therefore, our opinion about whether or not it is tasty is not reliable. The same is true for clothing. We like to wear expensive, good clothing and at the same time, we generate the heart of stinginess because of our obsession with extreme carefulness and alertness in the protection of this expensive clothing. That is why the verse says *abandon clinging attachment is the bodhisattvas' practice*.

Right now, we have lots of happiness and sufferings. If we generate strong attachment to happiness, we will experience great suffering when happiness disappears. Next, we will talk about how to deal with situations when suffering occurs.

24. Diverse sufferings are like the death of a child in a dream. By apprehending illusory appearances as real, one becomes weary. Therefore, when encountering disagreeable circumstances, viewing them as illusory is the bodhisattvas' practice.

For example, some people who are very fond of eating tasty food, they will feel very uncomfortable when they eat ordinary food. But if one does not have strong prejudice toward food and can eat both ordinary and tasty food, one would not have such kind of suffering. For similar reason, since we are often together with our father, mother and friends, suffering will be generated when we have to depart from them. The suffering due to such losses has the same nature.

In fact, suffering refers to uneasiness in our heart. There are many different causes which lead to the confusion in our heart. Some people suffer due to lack of money and wealth while some people suffer due to lack of friends and yet others suffer due to strong jealousy. Even though circumstances under which sufferings occur can be different, the inner confusion and uneasiness in the heart is not different. It is because there is only one suffering.

However, the feeling toward suffering can change. Someone whose father died feels a lot of suffering, but because of the preoccupation with that suffering, all the earlier sufferings disappear. Similarly, the suffering that the person faces right now due to the death of the father may also disappear in a few months. Therefore, the verse says *diverse sufferings are like the death of a child in a dream* and when we wake up, the dream disappears and all the suffering in the dream will also disappear. Thus, we have to understand that suffering is in fact generated from our inner attitude. Since suffering comes only from our inner attitude, it does not remain unchangeable. Its nature is emptiness and it is not real. If we do not attach to suffering as something real, suffering will disappear. This is just like the death of a child in a dream, which is not real but illusory.

However, if we are very attached to our suffering and think that the suffering is real, suffering will become more and more serious and finally when we cannot bear it any longer, we commit suicide. This kind of situation does actually occur. Therefore, we should not attach to suffering as something concrete and real. We have to understand the emptiness nature of suffering which is illusory and not real. If we meet unfavorable conditions, we have to think that there are many people in this world who go through the same situation as me. I am not the only one who faces this adverse situation. At the same time, we should not treat the suffering that we face as real and we have to understand that it is illusory and not real. If you can do this, we are really doing the bodhisattva's practice.

Why is it that when our parents, relatives and children die, it generates lots of suffering? This is because they are the objects of our love and care. Therefore, when we lose them, we suffer. Thus, the primary reason for the generation of suffering is our clinging and attachment to objects and situations. When they are lost, we will naturally generate suffering. At that time, instead of letting us fall into the trap of suffering, we should let the heart attach to some other objects. We should think of Buddha Amitabha and the Pureland. We should not think that the deceased person has passed away, but instead think that the person has already reached the Pureland of bodhisattva Chenrezig or the Pureland of Buddha Amitabha. Under these circumstances, we chant the name of Buddha Amitabha. If we can think in this way, it can generate very great benefit. If we only think that the person has died and we are attached to that thought, it will bring very serious consequence. Next, we are going to talk about the twenty-fifth verse.

25. If it is necessary to give away even one's body while aspiring to enlightenment, what need is there to mention external objects? Therefore, practicing generosity without hope or reciprocation or positive karmic results is the bodhisattvas' practice.

All Buddhas in the past, when they were on the bodhisattvas' path, could wholeheartedly offer their own hands, legs, body and even used their liver and brain to paint floor as a way to practice generosity. Even now, there is a tower in Nepal in remembrance of

Buddha's act of offering his body generously to halt the hunger of a tiger. From that, we can see that Buddha can offer fearlessly and generously to any sentient being. But can we do that? At present, we cannot do that. We have very strong attachment to our possessions of money, wealth and things. We consider them as ours. This way of thinking brings us great harm. Generally speaking, we put too much emphasis on "I". If we would like to reduce that burden, we have to learn to practice generosity. This is the great benefit that generosity brings.

There are different ways of practicing generosity. The practice of generosity has four aspects. Offering of food and clothing to the poor is one way of practicing generosity. But if we do not have money or wealth, what can we give them? In that case, we can give them Dharma, another way of practicing generosity. Yet another way is our frequent practice of the heart of bodhicitta, chanting the six-syllable mantra and contemplating on how we can bring benefits to them. When it comes to the consumption of clothing, food and so on, we need just a little, just enough is fine. In our heart, we have to always think of benefiting all sentient beings. In our everyday life, we have to practice generosity to those who are poor and we can even offer our food to a dog or a chicken. When we practice generosity, we should think in our heart that we are making offering to our own parents because all sentient beings have been our parents. While offering, we should not think that today I give him something and tomorrow he will pay me even more back. The thought of receiving something back should not arise. What we have now described is the practice of generosity with wealth and Dharma – two of the four aspects of practicing generosity. Offering to the Three Jewels, such as offering to the Master, the Sangha and the Center, all these are offerings. If we can offer some money to the Center so that the Center can keep operating for many years to come, during which we can all practice the Dharma. Would that not be a very great benefit? We should learn and practice in this way.

The third aspect of practicing generosity is to offer fearlessness. For example, animals, like birds, chickens, fish etc., face death after they have been caught. If we rescue them and set them free, this would be the generosity of giving fearlessness and life. The resulting karma of this kind of generosity is to have a long life. If we practice generosity with money and wealth, the resulting karma in the future is to have great wealth. We see that some people are very wealthy and have great power. All this is the resulting karma of having practiced generosity towards poor beggars and by often making offering to the Three Jewels life after life.

As parents, we give clothing and food to our own children and send them to school and we need to spend lots of money on them. Therefore, many people think that children are their past life creditors. Instead, we should think in this way: no matter if they are our relatives or non-relatives, they have all once been our parents but not past life creditors. We should think in this way when we make offering to our children or any other people.

Consider the following example. The government builds houses, opens up new land and constructs new roads for us and for that we have to pay some fees. Sometimes in our heart, we are unwilling to pay and generate a heart of stinginess. This kind of attitude is very bad. In order to dispel this kind of stinginess, we have to practice generosity. Regarding roads, schools, hotels etc. that are constructed by government, we have to think that after all these constructions, they can be used by everyone and can benefit everyone in the society. Therefore, the money that we pay brings benefits to people at

large. Being able to think in this way is a kind of practice of generosity. The benefit of this kind of practice of generosity is also very great.

We have to make payments for housing. When we have to pay out money, we suffer so much in our heart. This kind of unwillingness to give is the heart of stinginess. If this heart is getting more and more serious, what will be the consequences? The result is to fall into the ghost realm. So instead of holding the thought of not willing but having to give away, which is a kind of suffering in our mind, we should think that I want and should give away. Being able to think in this way is a great practice of generosity.

Consider yet another example by examining why there is electricity. It is only possible to have electricity when people have paid for it. Likewise, since people pay for flying, there exist airline companies and factories producing airplanes. People can then use the planes. Are people not receiving benefits? It is all thanks to people's payments and as a result, everybody gets benefits from it afterward. If we have this kind of thinking, it can generate a strong heart of giving and concerning the fees that we have to pay, we will pay them very willingly. Therefore, when we buy an air ticket, we have to understand that if everybody pays for their tickets, there will be more and more planes. Similarly, when everybody pays the fees for automobiles, automobiles will become better and better. The same is true for roads. Since there are people who have paid for them earlier, the roads are getting better and better. When people keep on paying the fees in the future, the roads will only become better. If we can think in this way, the heart of giving will grow stronger and stronger. Thus, the heart of stinginess is dispelled.

We should also use our body to practice generosity, the fourth aspect of practicing generosity. What does that mean? For example, when we work in the government sector or in private sector, we use our body to do many things. If we use our body to perform the job sincerely, our country will grow stronger and stronger and the industry will develop further and further. Therefore, when we work, we have to think that our boss is like our parents. Our work is like the offering to our parents. The money and wealth that our boss gives us is like our parents giving us something. In our past lives, our parents gave us food and clothing and in this life, our parents have become our boss and continue giving us money and wealth. This is such a great blessing. Therefore, in our heart, we should not think that we do not have enough money and that we wish to have even more before feeling satisfied.

How should someone who is a boss think? In their heart, they should think that all subordinates perform their jobs and they should treat them like their own children, take good care of them and reflect on how one should normally treat one's own children. If both the boss and all the workers can think in this way, they can get along harmoniously, work happily together and receive mutual benefits. Next, we are going to talk about the twenty-sixth verse.

26. If, lacking ethical conduct, one fails to achieve one's own purpose, the wish to accomplish others' purpose is laughable. Therefore, guarding ethics devoid of aspirations for worldly existence is the bodhisattvas' practice.

The second of the six paramitas is upholding ethical conduct. There are many types of ethical conduct – the ordained have the ordained's ethical conduct, lay people have lay people's ethical conduct, and small children have small children's ethical conduct. All

these are a kind of discipline that give us inner happiness, prevent us from harming others, and help us to assist and benefit each other. A country has its ethical conduct and that is different kinds of laws. If one violates the law, one will be put in prison. At that time, it is not only difficult to help others, but it is even difficult to help oneself. The result is that if one does not get the death penalty, one is put in prison for quite some years. Therefore, we understand the importance of upholding ethical conduct.

Everyone here likes to practice the Dharma, so what is the ethical conduct of practicing the Dharma? That is to cut the ten non-virtues by not killing, not stealing, not drinking and so forth. If we can do this well, we are upholding and protecting the ethical conduct. At home among family members, there is also ethical conduct to observe. This conduct is not to hurt others. If every member in the family does not have the heart of hurting others, there will not be much quarrel and everybody can live harmoniously together. In this way, everybody will be very happy in their heart. This is the ethical conduct of the family.

Within the family, there is also ethical conduct between parents and children. Parents should nourish and educate their children properly, let them understand what they should and should not do. The ethical conduct of the children is to listen carefully to what the elders teach them and learn it well. When the children grow older, the parents should send them to school to learn and to give them higher education.

Between a boyfriend and a girlfriend, there is also ethical conduct to observe. First of all, they have to observe and understand each other. You have to reflect upon how much love you have toward your partner and if you find that you have lots of love and care towards each other, you two can then take vows that you will always live together until you die. If you two make such vows to live together, this is the formal declaration of being a husband and a wife. Suffering will arise if you just feel that your partner is very good without careful analysis, and then you live together for several months before separating. Subsequently, you might look for another partner and once again feel that the new partner is very good. In this way, changing from partner to partner; in the next life, we will lose our human body. If we cannot obtain a human body, the sufferings will follow one after another. This is a very serious matter and where does the suffering coming from? It is because of the unceasingly changing of partner and as a result you break the vows that you have originally made.

Therefore, a boyfriend and a girlfriend must first observe and analyse. What we mean here is not to observe and analyse the outer appearance, but to understand how the inner heart of the partner looks like. Does your partner believe in karma cause and effect, and does your partner have a sincere heart? It is not reliable to just observe the outer appearance. If you know the inner heart of your partner, it will bring good result in the future. What we have talked about so far is the part that deals with the discipline in ethical conduct.

The second part has to do with upholding virtuous Dharma conduct. There are rules to everything we do in this world. There are also rules for practicing the Dharma for the benefit of next life. For example, there is a schedule of doing morning practice and prostrations and when others take a rest, you will still keep the Dharma in the heart and practice diligently, chant the six-syllable mantra for a hundred times and so on. All these are a discipline. Therefore, we have to understand that discipline is not used for the

purpose of fighting with others but rather used to protect ourselves and this is the way to collect virtue by keeping Dharma discipline. Keeping discipline means that we should not commit non-virtue and we should cultivate virtue diligently. Why is it that we must perform virtuous deeds? It is because if we do not perform virtuous deeds right now, it will generate lots of suffering in the future. If we let ourselves fall into drowsy and lazy sleeping habits, it will bring lots of suffering circumstances in the future. Therefore, we should collect virtue by keeping Dharma discipline.

Bodhisattvas' conduct consists of three parts – as mentioned above, the first two are upholding the discipline of ethical conduct and upholding virtuous Dharma discipline, and the third one is upholding the discipline of benefiting all sentient beings. Why do we have to benefit sentient beings? First of all we have to think that we are Dharma practitioners, and practitioners' work is to benefit sentient beings. We use our body to service sentient beings as if we are servicing our parents. We use our speech to chant the Mani mantra, other mantras and sutras, and to teach sentient beings about the karma cause and effect. If we in our speech can make very good presentations but in our heart, we still have hatred toward some people, this would not live up to the spirit of the bodhisattvas' conduct. In our heart, we have to think that these people are like our own parents and we should not be upset with them, but rather benefit them well. When we get upset, we have to think how can we get upset with our parents? In this way, we can control our behaviour and this kind of control is the discipline.

Benefiting sentient beings means that we have to discipline ourselves in order to vastly benefit all sentient beings. Every day we have to remind ourselves at least one hundred times to benefit all sentient beings. We have to make this kind of diligent effort before we can say that we are upholding the discipline of benefiting sentient beings. Next we are going to talk about the twenty-seventh verse.

27. To bodhisattvas who desire the pleasures of virtue, all those who do harm are like a precious treasure. Therefore, cultivating patience devoid of hostility is the bodhisattvas' practice.

To practice patience, we first have to start practicing with our own parents. When they give us hard times, cause us harm, bring us trouble and so on, the first thing we have to do is not to speak but to remain quiet, not arguing back and not reacting negatively. This is what we have to do when we get upset. In this way, our anger will naturally dissipate. The reward that is generated from virtuous merit is different than those from worldly affairs. Worldly rewards can be such as cars, houses and so on but the reward from virtuous merit is invisible. For example, someone hurts us today and because of that we get upset. In this way, we injure our heart of bodhicitta and as a result the heart of bodhicitta is weakened and damaged. We have to know that the reward of virtuous merit is the heart of bodhicitta and we should, life after life, strive to protect the heart of bodhicitta. Until we become Buddha, our heart of bodhicitta will stay with us.

We can see that there are many people whose wealth and rewards are abundant, and relationships between boyfriends and girlfriends that are excellent. This is the karma effect of having practiced the heart of bodhicitta in their past lives. In their past lives, they have done numerous generous deeds and this is the ripening of the karmic result. In fact, all the peace and happiness in this world is the result of the heart of bodhicitta. For example, from the root of the tree come different tree trunks and from each tree trunk

grows lots of leaves and among the leaves comes many flowers. All these come from the root of the tree and this root is the heart of bodhicitta. So, for those bodhisattvas who desire the pleasure of virtue, how should they proceed in the right way? The verse says *all those who do harm are like a precious treasure*. That is, we have to treat all enemies who harm us as our treasure. When we meditate on the Dharma and if someone comes to harm us, we have to rely on the strength of our strong loving kindness and compassion in our heart in order to tame and overcome our anger and hatred. When we are hurt, hatred will arise in our heart. If we can overcome the hatred before it arises, our heart of bodhicitta will grow stronger and stronger. After understanding this, we know that all those who harm us are in fact our great saviors. They being upset can bring such tremendous benefits to us. If they were not upset, there is no way for our heart of bodhicitta to grow so rapidly. Therefore, we should pray to be able to use their anger to help us to practice the heart of bodhicitta. Every time when we are hurt by others, we can once again practice patience and cultivate the heart of bodhicitta. This kind of cause and effect is completely understood by Buddha.

In order to completely eliminate all sufferings, we have to practice patience. Those who do us harm are in fact our great saviors, like a precious treasure. Why is that so? It is because a treasure can give us great benefit. To those who harm us and all sentient beings, we should give up hatred and wholeheartedly practice patience without swaying. This is what the verse says: *therefore, cultivating patience devoid of hostility is the bodhisattvas' practice*.

What we have now described is the patience of receiving harm. Another kind is the patience of receiving suffering. We have to especially understand this kind of patience when practicing the Dharma. Sometimes, in our heart, we would really like to practice the Dharma but we face lots of obstacles. We have pain in our arms, our legs and all kinds of suffering, feeling too cold or too hot and so forth. Under these circumstances, we have to practice patience. We should know that when Milarepa practiced the Dharma, he could overcome all kinds of sufferings. Now we have a slight pain and we should be patient with that. For example, when we would like to go to sleep because we feel very sleepy and drowsy and feel like sleeping at once, we have to think in our heart that sleeping is a waste of time and a waste of our precious life. If we can make use of this period of time to often chant the six-syllable mantra one hundred times, it would benefit not only ourselves but also all sentient beings. Would it not be great to be able to sleep a little less every day? Five hours, six hours and a maximum of not over seven hours of sleep. We have to vow that we will at most sleep seven hours. This is the practice of being patient with all the sufferings related to the Dharma practice, that is, the patience of receiving suffering.

With what else do we need to practice patience? We have to conquer the habits of smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs and all other kinds of bad habits. Smoking and drinking alcohol can only give us temporary happiness but they will bring us lots of suffering in the future. Not only that, we will waste some money every day when we smoke a little every day. In the long run, we will waste lots of our money. Besides that, smoking will bring lots of trouble after death. Therefore, we have to be determined to make a vow that we will never smoke, drink alcohol and take drugs again. We have to be patient and tame all temptations. When people insult us, we have to be patient and not respond with harsh words. When others harm us, we should not think of revenge but instead practice patience. All these are just small acts of patience and we can all do that.

The most important is at the time when harm comes, we should not let our heart of bodhicitta sway and this is the practice of patience.

Sometimes we generate anger, sometimes we generate jealousy and sometimes we feel drowsy and want to sleep. All these are harmful to us and to others. When these situations arise, we must practice patience and under all circumstances, we have to protect our heart of bodhicitta and not lose it. Why do we have to protect our heart of bodhicitta? Everybody, please think carefully – we have now obtained this precious human life with leisure and endowments, and it is indeed very difficult to obtain such a life. This very life, we must use it to achieve Buddhahood. Do not wait until next life or the life after that because it is not sure if we have this opportunity again. Therefore, in this very life, we must protect our heart of bodhicitta diligently.

If we can see the nature of our heart, we will find that the nature of suffering is emptiness and the nature of happiness is also emptiness. To ordinary people like us, we feel that some worldly affairs can bring us happiness, but when happiness dissipates, it will bring us suffering. If we can give up the two extremes of suffering and happiness, it will bring us the real happiness and it is the ultimate happiness.

This kind of happiness is obtained through the realization of the emptiness nature. When we realize the emptiness nature, we realize that everything is non-substantial. Since everything is non-substantial, there is no duality thought of suffering and happiness. This kind of going beyond the extremes of suffering and happiness is the ultimate happiness, unlike other worldly happinesses which after dissipation will only bring us suffering. Therefore, to realize the emptiness nature is most supreme. Next, we are going to discuss the twenty-eighth verse.

28. Even hearers and solitary realizers, who accomplish only their own welfare, strive as if putting out a fire on their heads. Seeing this, taking up diligent effort – the source of good qualities – for the sake of all beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Solitary realizers, after seeing the suffering of samsaric cyclic existence, strive to liberate themselves from this kind of suffering. Therefore, they practice meditative concentration diligently. This is how they work hard. However, we will find that it is very hard for them to become Buddha because their road to Buddhahood is very distant. They only do the things that benefit themselves. We, on the other hand, have to benefit all sentient beings boundless as the sky. For that reason, we should work even more diligently. Solitary realizers practice already so diligently and urgently as if they were putting out a fire on their head. For us who would like to generate the heart of bodhicitta in order to benefit all sentient beings boundless as space, should practice much more diligently. Even when we are taking a bus, we should chant the six-syllable mantra. When we do things, we should also chant the mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG and we should not let our heart become distracted. To practice diligently in this way is as the verse says: *taking up diligent effort – the source of good qualities – for the sake of all beings is the bodhisattvas' practice.*

What is the difference between Hinayana and Mahayana? The Hinayana way of practicing is like a single person chanting one hundred times the six-syllable mantra while the Mahayana way of practicing is like visualizing all sentient beings together chanting one hundred times the six-syllable mantra. To be able to visualize in this way is

equivalent to all sentient beings together chanting one hundred times the six-syllable mantra. Why is that so? It is because all sentient beings are selfless. The way we visualize selflessness is to visualize that the body is empty and the heart is empty. Using this method to realize that we do not exist is really not very easy. But if we now visualize that the heart of all sentient beings are equally without a self, this is a better way of visualizing. This is just like water drops one after another flowing into the ocean, they become a big ocean rather than individual water drops. For the same reason, when our heart thinks about countless sentient beings, sentient beings are just like big ocean that is boundless and inexhaustible. At that time, the hearts of all sentient beings are just like the water in the big ocean and they are all the same. Visualize in this way that all sentient beings are chanting one hundred times the six-syllable mantra and all sentient beings will then indeed be chanting one hundred times the six-syllable mantra. Use this method to chant the six-syllable mantra in order to generate powerful strength. Therefore, we should not think that we are only one person and every morning when we do the refuge practice, we should not only think about ourselves, but we have to think of all sentient beings.

We have now talked about the practice of generosity, ethical conduct and patience. These three we should always practice diligently and ceaselessly. These three practices are the main causes for us to obtain a human body. However, if we wish to attain Buddhahood, we must also rely on the practice of meditative concentration. Therefore, the twenty-ninth verse says:

29. Having understood that disturbing emotions are destroyed by insight possessed with tranquil abiding, to cultivate meditative concentration which perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Samadhi or meditative concentration means calm abiding and pacifying. We have lots of troubles and worries in our heart and therefore our mind cannot be stabilized. The cause to this is different kinds of attachment that generate the troubles and worries in our heart. When the heart of instability, attachment, hatred and so on is brought to an end, at that time, there is calm abiding and pacifying. The verse says *having understood that disturbing emotions are destroyed by insight possessed with tranquil abiding*. It is like when the water in the big ocean calms down, we can then see clearly into the water. But when there is a storm with waves, we cannot look into the water. In the same way, calm abiding and pacifying mean that thoughts from the inner heart of attachment and hatred do not appear and all thoughts have been brought to an end. At that time, we can really see the original nature of our heart and this is superior insight.

What we mentioned above concerning calm abiding and pacifying is that before attachment, hatred and so on appear, there is calm abiding and the pacifying of thoughts. For example, when our enemy appears in front of us, we have to think that this enemy has been our parent in the past and how can we be angry at our own parent? This enemy has helped us in the past and when we think in this way, our anger will calm down.

We have the heart of strong attachment to our children. Because of that when someone hurts our children, we will generate strong hatred. In fact, we have to know that these children or relatives have been our enemies in the past. When we think in this way, our heart of strong attachment will calm down. Therefore, when our heart of hatred does not generate towards our enemies and our heart of attachment does not generate towards our

children and relatives but instead we generate equanimity, our heart can then be pacified. Why is it that the heart of calm abiding and pacifying can dispel all troubles and worries? When the heart is in a state of silence and pacifying, it is like the sky without clouds or like the ocean without waves.

All our thoughts arise from our heart so the origin of the thoughts is part of the heart. The heart and thoughts are inseparable. If we can let our heart abide in the state of silence and pacifying, it is the same as removing all thoughts and eradicating all worries and troubles. When we do not have worries and troubles, the heart of attachment and hatred will not arise. Instead, what arises is the original nature of the heart, we can then see the true appearance of the heart. This is the elimination of ignorance.

When we cannot see the true appearance of the heart, we are in the state of ignorance. In this state, we think that I exist. But when we examine our heart, is there an existence of I? In fact, there is not. If we can see the true appearance of the heart, we realize the emptiness nature of our heart. Since the nature of our heart is emptiness, we cannot say that I exist inside it. It is because inside the heart, there is no this or that so I cannot exist and this is the wisdom of emptiness. Therefore, I do not exist in the heart, so how can I exist? After understanding this point, it is called superior insight. Insight is to really see that there is no self and this is the wisdom of emptiness.

The verse mentions *to cultivate meditative concentration which perfectly transcends the four formless absorptions is the bodhisattvas' practice*. The four formless refer to formless realm that arises from four conditions. The main one is the belief in nihilism which denies the existence of anything – believing that emptiness means nothingness, like the heart is empty of thoughts. If we have this kind of thinking, we will fall into the formless realm in the future. The proper Buddhist view is that the universal law is neither existence nor non-existence, that is, it goes beyond the extremes of existence and non-existence. This is the meaning of Mahamudra. Right now it is not possible for us to explain in detail the meaning of Mahamudra. But in order to understand Mahamudra, we must have proper view and realization; otherwise, it is not possible to attain Enlightenment. Thus, the thirtieth verse says:

30. If one lacks wisdom, it is impossible to attain perfect enlightenment through the other five perfections. Thus, cultivating skillful means with the wisdom that doesn't discriminate among the three spheres is the bodhisattvas' practice.

If we do not have the wisdom of Mahamudra, it is not possible to attain Enlightenment. Buddhahood is the union of method and wisdom, and method refers to great compassion. The verse mentions the non-discrimination among the three spheres. Everybody believes that I exist, sentient beings exist and everything exists. With I there comes my practice of Dharma and my attainment of Enlightenment. During all processes, we view that these three items (subject, object and action) really exist and this is called the three wheels.

If we do not view that the heart really exists but on the other hand, since the heart can manifest hundred thousands of phenomena, therefore, we cannot say that the heart does not exist nor can we say that it exists. To depart the heart from the two extremes of existence and non-existence is emptiness. This emptiness is the innate nature of the heart. At the same time, the heart is equipped with luminous awareness of knowing the emptiness nature.

Many non-Buddhists view that this world is permanent and real. However, Buddhists view that this world is emptiness and does not really exist. Buddhists view that the nature of heart is emptiness but it contains the part that can understand the emptiness nature. This is called the self-luminous awareness. If we can understand that the nature of the heart is emptiness, we will not fall into the form realm. If we can understand the self-luminous awareness of the heart, we will not fall into the formless realm. We have to understand that the innate nature of the heart is emptiness and the self-awareness nature of the heart is luminosity. This is the meritorious quality of the three kayas (Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya) of the Buddha. All Buddhas possess this meritorious quality of the three kayas.

The heart of Buddha and the heart of sentient beings are the same. The only difference is that the heart of sentient beings is clouded with worries and troubles, but other than that, there is no difference. Since sentient beings are attached to self, they do not recognize the nature of the heart. Therefore, we have to show compassion towards those sentient beings with mad-men like behavior. What does it mean when we say that the heart of sentient being is the same as the heart of the Buddha? It is just like all the different rivers and streams on this Earth, at the end they all return to the great ocean. Even though the length of the rivers and streams can vary, but when they return to the great ocean, the water becomes one and the same. Even though human beings can be male or female, the nature of the heart is completely the same, there is no difference. The heart of Buddha and sentient beings, both are of emptiness nature. However, sentient beings do not understand this point and as a result, there is mad-men like confusion. The method is to generate compassion towards sentient beings who are in the state of confusion.

Therefore, when we often practice the heart of bodhicitta (loving kindness and compassion) towards sentient beings, wisdom will gradually appear. Then gradually, we will attain Buddhahood. This is what the verse says *to cultivate skillful means with the wisdom that doesn't discriminate among the three spheres is the bodhisattvas' practice*. If we do not understand the true appearance of the heart, there will be misunderstanding and it becomes a kind of deception. Deception will generate worries and troubles. Therefore, the thirty-first verse says:

31. If, having merely the appearance of a practitioner, one does not investigate one's own mistakes, it is possible to act contrary to the Dharma. Therefore, constantly examining one's own errors and abandoning them is the bodhisattvas' practice.

We have to investigate ourselves the worries and troubles in our heart. When we examine and reflect carefully, we know whether or not there exist worries and troubles. When our heart still has doubts, it means that we have not recognized its true nature. When we have attachment to something substantial, it will generate illusions, worries and troubles. Under these circumstances, we have to examine and reflect. We will know by looking within our heart. When we have negative and non-virtuous thoughts in our mind, as long as we look within our heart, we will be aware of it. When we have anger in our heart, just by looking in our heart, we will understand. Therefore, we have to constantly examine and reflect on our heart. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-second verse:

32. If, influenced by disturbing emotions, one points out another bodhisattvas' faults, oneself is diminished. Therefore, not speaking about the faults of those who have entered the Great Vehicle is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Nowadays, there are masters, monks (and nuns) and Dharma practitioners everywhere. We should not freely criticize these practitioners. If one master says bad things about another master but that other master has many disciples and many people who support him, it would reduce the faith of those supporters. This kind of depletion of faith is due to divisive talk. Sometimes, we say bad things about others because of our jealousy. If we point out others' faults, it will only reduce our own merit and we are the one who loses. It is because when we speak about the faults of others, the anger in our heart will diminish our heart of bodhicitta. Therefore, it is not necessary to criticize others' faults.

Especially when it comes to bodhisattvas from the Mahayana tradition, their behavior is not easy to understand. Moreover, we do not know whether someone is a bodhisattva or not. Therefore, we should make a vow not to use divisive talk to criticize others. Next time when someone comes to you and says "this and that person has this and that fault", we should not treat these words as real and we should not attach to these words as substantial. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-third verse:

33. Because the influence of gain and respect causes quarrelling and the decline of the activities of listening, pondering and meditation, to abandon attachment to the households of friends, relations and benefactors is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Just because that person is my friend, my benefactor, I told that person that I am good and others are not. Due to fame and beneficial gain, this kind of conflict arises. This kind of conflict is really very bad. Others after hearing those views will lose faith in their master and as a result, it creates obstacles to those who listen to the Dharma teachings. Moreover, I am a Dharma practitioner and practice often on the heart of bodhicitta and if I now within the heart of bodhicitta generate the conceptual thoughts of good and bad, it will cause my practice to decline. Therefore, we can say that it creates obstacles to both the listeners and to the speaker.

Thus, when we hear someone talking about this is good or that is bad, we have to be able to generate a positive view of both sides. We should abide on equanimity without differentiating between good and bad. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-fourth verse:

34. Because harsh words disturb others' minds and cause the bodhisattvas' conduct to deteriorate, abandoning harsh speech which is unpleasant to others is the bodhisattvas' practice.

We should never speak harsh or evil words. When one is angry, even though one would like to say something beneficial, somehow it will turn into something unpleasant and when the other hears those unpleasant words, he or she will inevitably be upset. For example, facing a sick patient who has a bad temper, we might say to him "Don't be stubborn! Hurry up and eat your medicine!" These words are meant to be supporting and the goal is to benefit the patient, but the patient would not like to hear them. Instead if we use very kind words to the patient, such as "Please take good care of yourself. Take

the medicine right a way and your body will recover soon.” In this way, the patient would eat the medicine gladly.

So, we have to always remain in the state of right mindfulness and right awareness. Under this condition, we can eliminate harsh and evil speech. Especially when we are angry, we must refrain from harsh and evil speech. When we are angry, even though we intend to benefit others out of our heart of compassion, our speech will still be unpleasant to the listeners. Therefore, when we are angry, we have to think that others have been our parents and we should practice patience. We should not speak any unpleasant words. This is the meaning of *abandoning harsh speech which is unpleasant to others is the bodhisattvas’ practice*.

Now, we talk from the point of view of karma - virtuous and non-virtuous karma. When we as Dharma practitioners are upset with someone, we lose our heart of bodhicitta. When we, because of anger, use harsh and evil words to another person, our face will turn black. Therefore, we have to understand that anger is like poison and will lead to non-virtuous karma. No matter what the other person has done, we have to gently express our view and we should not use the heart of anger to express ourselves. If we use harsh speech to criticize others, it will create bad karma. However, if we treat the other as our good friend and use the harmonious heart to explain, this is a kind of virtuous karma. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-fifth verse:

35. When disturbing emotions are habituated, it is difficult to overcome them with antidotes. By arming oneself with the antidotal weapon of mindfulness, to destroy disturbing emotions such as desire the moment they first arise is the bodhisattvas’ practice.

When worries and troubles first arise and if we do not pay any attention and let it gradually grow stronger, there is no way to handle the problem in the future. Therefore, we have to use right mindfulness and right awareness as a precious sword to face the problem. For example, when someone hurts us and we immediately feel upset in our heart. But just before anger is going to arise, we have to use right mindfulness and right awareness to observe that we are having anger and anger is the worst thing that we can have. Thus, under right mindfulness and right awareness, our anger will be dissipated and disappeared.

Hence, right mindfulness and right awareness is like a precious sword and anger is like our enemy. When the enemy appears, we have to use the precious sword to immediately destroy him. If we do not immediately destroy the enemy, there will be serious consequences. When anger arises once and twice in our heart and if we do not use right mindfulness and right awareness to handle it, the anger in our heart will accumulate unceasingly. At the end, we will have a serious conflict with the person. Therefore, when worries and troubles first appear, we should destroy them at once. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-sixth verse:

36. In brief, whatever conduct one engages in, one should ask, “What is the state of my mind?” Accomplishing others’ purpose through constantly maintaining mindfulness and awareness is the bodhisattvas’ practice.

In brief, no matter whether we are walking, staying somewhere, sitting and sleeping, we must watch our heart constantly. We have to clearly know what we are doing right now and what we are thinking in our heart. When worries and troubles arise, we have to immediately eliminate them. We use right mindfulness and right awareness to cleanse the worries and troubles. In the Three Jewels, we have faith and to all sentient beings, we have the heart of loving kindness and compassion. Everyday we have to purify non-virtuous mind such as jealousy and anger. Everyday we have to use right understanding to remove any non-virtue and walk solely on the virtuous path. We have to vastly dedicate all the virtues for the benefits of all sentient beings. While we are walking, we have to help all sentient beings and think that everybody is good and often say good things about others and treat everyone as our parent. We use this method in order to unceasingly benefit all sentient beings. Next, we are going to talk about the thirty-seventh verse:

37. In order to clear away the suffering of limitless beings, through the wisdom realizing the purity of the three spheres, to dedicate the virtue attained by making such effort for enlightenment is the bodhisattvas' practice.

Following the speech of the Sublime Ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras and their commentaries, I have written the *Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices* for those who wish to train on the bodhisattvas' path.

Due to my inferior intellect and poor learning, this is not poetry that will please scholars, yet as I have relied upon the sutras and the speech of the Sublime Ones, I think the bodhisattva practices are not mistaken.

However, because it is difficult for one of inferior intellect like myself to fathom the depth of the great deeds of bodhisattvas, I beseech the Sublime Ones to forbear my errors such as contradictions and incoherent reasoning.

By the virtue arising from this may all sentient beings become, through excellent conventional and ultimate bodhicitta, like the protector Chenrezig who does not abide in the extremes of existence or peace.

This was written for the benefit of himself and others by the monk Thogme, an exponent of scripture and reasoning, in a cave in Ngulchu Rinchen.

We use our body, speech and mind to perform innumerable virtuous deeds unceasingly. What is the purpose? The purpose is to wish that all sentient beings are able to be free from suffering and reach the ultimate attainment Buddhahood. In particular, through the wisdom realizing the purity of the three spheres, we understand that all sentient beings are in fact Buddhas and we should dedicate the root of all virtues to all sentient beings' attainment of Buddhahood.

The author of the text Thogme mentioned in the conclusion that the contents of the text follow the speech of the sublime Ones on the meaning of the sutras, tantras and their commentaries and that he have put that together and have written the *Thirty-Seven Bodhisattva Practices* for those who wish to train on the bodhisattvas' path.

Thogme continued by mentioning that he did not have much merit and ability but because of his heartfelt thought of benefiting all sentient beings, he still summarized and compiled this text. If there were any errors such as contradictions and incoherent reasoning, he beseeched all Buddhas and bodhisattvas for forgiveness.

Thogme is in fact a real Buddha. Therefore, if we rely on the teachings and practice of the text, it will generate great benefit. Even if we spend a whole year to study, it is not possible to learn all the content of the text. Commentaries of this text have already been published in Taiwan. If everybody studies it often, it will definitely generate beneficial merits. It is because all the teachings of the Buddha are included within here.

In the future, you can once again receive this teaching from other masters in order to further your study. In this way, there will be more and more progress. Personally, I wish that everybody can study and practice this teaching diligently and in the future we may still have opportunity to study this text again in this Center. I wish that in the future, we can swiftly reach Enlightenment together. Lastly, I wish that happiness and auspiciousness pervade everyone.