

A Door of Entrance to the Heart Advice Called
A Ship Sailing to Liberation
A Commentary to the Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar

Embodiment of the three times' Buddhas in nature, O root Guru whose kindness is inconceivable, with great devotion of body, speech, and mind, I prostrate to you and go for refuge. Please grant your blessings to be cared for by you inseparably in all of my lives!

On a ground of pure ethical discipline
Is a beautiful garden of unshakeable samadhi
Rich with fruit of non-conceptual samadhi
Respectful homage to the Founder, Sovereign of the Three Trainings!

Being unsubdued in one's own three doors of action
Is incompatible with instructing others.
Yet, in order to benefit those of lesser intelligence like myself,
I shall comment on the Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar.

Even though eloquence is received through the voice of a fool,
Listen to it like a bee extracting the essence of the honey.
Wise are the ones who can derive the most profit from it;
So listen single-pointedly, without distraction, O fortunate ones!

Having first respectfully expressed homage with my body, speech, and mind to the kind root Guru and Founder Buddha, and having made a promise to compose this, the activities for this stage are done.

I have recently been traveling in a few Eastern countries such as Singapore and Malaysia where some of my old students hold this little book that I have written with devotion to be of great importance, keep it with them inseparably, and include it in their recitations every day without fail, with an aim to practicing it. Seeing this with my own eyes, in accordance with their confidence and enthusiasm for it, today I thought I should write some notes of commentary on what I know about it in brief. Because the words of the root text are very clear and easily understandable, it should not be necessary to give extensive explanation. I shall try to give the essential meaning of each verse in everyday language to make it even more clear.

Respectfully, I am not at all someone with holy qualities to be giving advice to others. Nor am I someone who is particularly skilled in composition and poetry. Yet, as said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

I have nothing to say that has not been said before
I have no mastery in writing books
Therefore I do not expect it to benefit others;
I write it to familiarize my own mind.

As said, I definitely do not have anything special to say that has not been taught in the Kangyur and Tengyur — the Buddha's Teachings and their Commentaries — so someone who wishes to practice will not find something special here that goes beyond what is taught there. So you ask, "If there is nothing said here that is not in the Kangyur and Tengyur, aren't they enough? Doesn't that make this little book of yours unnecessary?"

That is true, but these days when people are so busy, forget reading every volume of the Kangyur and Tengyur; people don't even know what books are there! Those scriptures, over three hundred in number, stack up as high as a mountain! Yet, what could be wrong with expressing the meaning of the Kangyur and Tengyur in brief for the benefit of beginners who seek liberation?

However, if you think that this small book is directed solely outwards, for the benefit of others, that is not the case. I, the writer, hope to take this opportunity to be able to benefit my own mind and exhort myself towards virtue, as well. I am a lowly person who is still learning and meditating on the ordinary path of accumulation, first of the five paths; I am an ordinary person. Some people might imagine that I can practice one hundred percent of everything I am writing and talking about; that is not at all the case. What I am explaining here is what I have heard from many qualified lamas from the time I was young up to the present, and from my own slight experience of contemplation and meditation. With a good motivation for the liberation of all beings, without pretense, I offer it up as my gift to you. I am not saying you must accept everything I say, or that I am faultless. For someone to be fully qualified to teach others Dharma and accomplish their welfare, they must have realized the true nature of reality on the third path, the path of seeing. If someone has seen the truth, the way things actually exist, gives advice to others, it will definitely be of great benefit. As said in Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment.

Just as a bird which has not grown wings
is unable to fly through the sky,
likewise, one without power of clairvoyance
cannot accomplish the welfare of sentient beings.

As said, a fully qualified lama should be someone who can read the minds of disciples! Otherwise, it's nothing but the blind leading the blind.

In these difficult times, however, when the five degenerations are spreading, it is difficult to find a teacher who knows others' minds without impediment. At least, a teacher should be someone who emphasizes practice and accomplishment of whatever study of the scriptures, contemplation, and meditation that they do, and someone purely motivated with heartfelt love for their disciples. Why would it not be okay for such a person to give heart advice of holy Dharma to others during these times?

For these reasons, with a motivation of compassion, to bring just a little benefit to those who have newly entered the path of Dharma like myself, I thought that if I were to write a commentary to my Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar, since I am the author of

the root text, I could give a clearer explanation of what I meant; and make it easier to understand and of greater benefit for disciples. Therefore I have written a brief explanation of each of the verses in plain, everyday language. Everyone, please practice according to this precept: rely, not upon the person, but upon the teachings they are giving. In other words, who I am is not important. What I am saying is.

There is some general advice I should give here. If you read this like a book on an ordinary subject, or like a newspaper, feet stretched out in the sun, sipping coffee, it won't be very beneficial to your mind. When you read Dharma books on the stages of the path to enlightenment like Lamrim Chenmo, The Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment by Tsongkhapa, the Jewel Ornament of Liberation by Gampopa, or Words of My Perfect Teacher by Patrul Rinpoche, etc, first set your motivation like when you are listening to teachings, then touch the book to your crown. Then, in your shrine room, or if you don't have one, in a quiet, isolated place, if you read it slowly, it will definitely benefit your mind. It is said that Dharma books are the most beneficial teachers. Ultimately, however, to develop realizations of the path, there is no way to accomplish this with just books, without relying upon a lama's instructions. Here I digressed a bit on how to read Dharma texts, as related to my own experience.

Now, as for the main subject, starting with the name of the root text:

Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar

Heart advice is what we call talk that is given to disciples with extreme love, not just words but the lama's own core practice expressed in the form of personal instructions. Such heart advice is like a nectar that destroys the disease of living beings' mental afflictions. This holy Dharma is definitely like a nectar or medicine that is the unexcelled remedy to destroy both the disease of delusion in your mind and the great demon of the lord of death.

As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct

This, as well, is the supreme nectar
which destroys the lord of death of beings.
It is like an inexhaustible treasure
which dispels the poverty of beings.
It is the supreme medicine
which completely eliminates sickness of beings.

As said, the holy Dharma is the remedy which protects living beings from dangers created by the four maras. The four maras are: the mara of the aggregates, the devaputra mara, the mara of the delusions, and the mara of the lord of death. These four maras take the life and breath of beings, and their very antidote is this nectar of holy Dharma.

It is indeed medicine because it is an unexcelled mental antidote that destroys the worst disease we have had from beginningless lifetimes up to now: attachment,

anger, confusion, pride, jealousy, and so forth. It destroys the hundreds of diseases, this medicine of holy Dharma. I see it as something of great importance.

**The sole source of all goodness, benefit and bliss,
Is a Virtuous Guide who shows the unmistakable path
I beg the root Guru whose kindness can never be repaid:
Watch over us with eyes of timeless wisdom!**

This verse is an homage to my benevolent holy gurus such as my root guru Kyabje Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche, a buddha in human form, which I make before writing the commentary in order to prevent obstacles from arising as I wrote it, and so that it may benefit many living beings.

The root guru is the sole door to all temporary benefit and ultimate bliss, to all that is good in this and all future lifetimes. Why? Because the Guru reveals the excellent path of perfect holy Dharma without mistake. For example, like my root Guru. The Guru is like a captain who rescues me from the ocean of suffering of cyclic rebirth; like a bright light, a sun of transcendent wisdom which dispels the dense darkness of my ignorance; like a guide who guards me from falling off the cliff of terrifying samsaric existence; like a compassionate loving guide for the blind, who saves this blind one wandering on the endless plain of samsara. It is this kind of gratitude and devotion that I have felt my whole life, ever since I was young. I have followed many non-partisan Buddhist Spiritual Guides, Abbots, and Tulkus who were most learned, noble, and compassionate, each of whom brought immeasurable benefit to my mind. Yet, for me to now have slightly distanced myself from samsara, and to have developed some trace of Dharma in my body, speech, and mind, is thanks solely to the kindness of my root Guru. Knowing that his realized qualities are equal to Buddha's but that his kindness to me surpasses the Buddhas, to my root Guru Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche, Trachog Khenchen Karma Tseten and other precious teachers, not just in words but from the depths of my heart, I reverently prostrate physically, pray with my voice, and pray with my mind: Though you have temporarily withdrawn your Form Body from the world, this humble one has no one but You to place his hopes in! I pray that you look after me with your loving gaze and stainless wisdom bodies, unceasingly, throughout the day and night, at all times and situations, in this life, all my future lives, and in the bardo, until I attain enlightenment.

In this instance, the reason I must ask for the Guru's blessings is so that no obstacles may arise to my composing this Guide to the Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar; and so that this teaching might benefit the minds of many. Therefore I first pray to the Guru.

It is possible some might think, "The refuge of all Buddhists is the Three Jewels. Does the Guru surpass the Three Jewels?" As stated in Tantra:

Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha
Are the refuges for those who seek liberation.

You would be correct in your thinking, yet because Tibetan Buddhism is an unexcelled Dharma system which includes Secret Mantra, the Guru should be viewed as the embodiment of the Three Jewels. It is also said in the Tantras,

Guru is Buddha, Guru is Dharma,
Likewise, Guru is Sangha as well.
The Guru is the source of all goodness.
I prostrate to the supreme Guru.

Thus it is said. Furthermore, a Buddha is not someone who sprung up all by themselves without relying upon a Guru. As said in Tantras,

Before that which is called a Guru,
Even the word, Buddha, did not exist.
All thousand Buddhas of this eon
Emerged by relying upon a Guru.

Thus, as said, praying to the Guru is extremely important. Furthermore, my Kagyu tradition has a lineage of Gurus who were all blessed through their intense devotion to their Gurus. Therefore, I also first express homage to the Guru in order to develop realizations in my mind and remove obstacles to progressing through all the stages and paths.

**1 In the following Dharma advice for heart disciples
I have written down what I feel from my heart,
Keep it in your heart and practice it,
My heart advice for Vajra Dharma brothers and sisters**

This verse reveals, in brief, the meaning of this text, which is that these twenty-one verses are an exhortation to practice for all of my brother and sister Dharma friends. I am requesting all my Dharma friends to practice Dharma to the utmost of their capabilities and, in particular, not to disregard this small book that I have written with devotion, but to keep it with you, so as to keep the meanings in your mind, and to please put whatever you can into practice every day of your life. As for how to practice, that will be explained rather extensively below, so I need not say more here.

**2 This boat of a precious human life we've found
Just this once, is not found again.
To cross over the terrible ocean of samsara
Don't be lazy getting in the boat! That is my heart advice.**

This verse is an instruction urging you to use this life for the practice of holy Dharma. This extremely rare and difficult-to-find excellent base of a precious human life is more valuable than a precious jewel because a jewel can only dispel the suffering of poverty of this lifetime; but if you wanted to carry it to your next life it could not help you at all. Instead, if this excellent human life is used for sacred Dharma it will help you a

great deal in this life, and it will pave the way for a path that goes from happiness to happiness in future lives. This human life is not found just by chance. It is extremely difficult to find by way of causes, examples, and numbers. As for being difficult to find by way of causes, if you had not previously accumulated vast causal merit or virtue, good karma, you would not have an excellent human life such as this.

As for what you did in the past, look at your present body.
As for where you will go in the future, that depends on your current actions.

As said, you were born in your current human body by the power of great causal merit, not without cause or conditions. If we wish to have a fortunate rebirth we must definitely accomplish virtue and abandon negative actions. If, judging by our current actions, we do not, there is not much hope for us to again take rebirth as a fortunate human being. As Shantideva said in his Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

With conduct such as mine,
I shall not take human rebirth!
If I do not take human birth
There is only evil, no virtue.

Secondly, as for precious human life being difficult to find, contemplated by way of examples, suppose there is a blind tortoise in the vast ocean. The tortoise surfaces only once every hundred years. On the surface of the ocean floats a short plank of wood with a hole in it, buffeted around by the wind and waves. Is it possible that, when the tortoise surfaces, its head will poke through the hole in the wooden plank? It would be an extremely rare occurrence! The tortoise has no eyes to see the wood nor does the wood have a mind with knowledge of the tortoise's whereabouts. The ocean is so vast and the wood does not remain still for even an instant, constantly carried off by wind and waves. Even if it were possible that the tortoise might emerge through the hole in the wood, it is even more rare and difficult to take this precious human birth!

Thirdly, as for rarity by way of numbers, beings in worse realms of existence number as many as the stars of the night sky; whereas the number of beings in fortunate realms are like the very few stars seen during the daytime.

Thus, it is extremely difficult to find human birth, whether you think in terms of causes, examples, or numbers. Plus, it is as if we have only borrowed this precious jewel of a body from someone else for a short time. If we don't make good use of it while we have it, that would be very foolish! We should use this body while we have it. For example, like a boat whose only use is to get across a river, nothing else. As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

In dependence upon the boat of a human life
The river of suffering can be crossed.
Since this boat is difficult to find later on,
Foolish one, don't fall asleep at this time!

As said in the same scripture,

This body of ours is to be put to use, that's all.

If we put this body to good use for the path of holy Dharma it will bring happiness for ourselves and others in this and future lives. We must not waste this excellent human body which, as we have seen, is so rare by way of causes, examples, and numbers, no matter how you look at it, which we will not find again in the future, but have found just this once. As long as they have taken birth in a body propelled by karma and delusions, all beings of the six realms of samsara are not free from a nature of suffering. That suffering is terrible and frightening. There is so much suffering, not only the suffering of birth, aging, suffering, and death; there are all the sufferings of pain, change, and pervasive karmic conditioning; it is like a vast ocean of suffering. We should not fall prey to the pitfalls of laziness and distraction, or using our body for bad purposes or mistaken paths, but instead, use this boat of an excellent human birth to persevere correctly in the path of holy Dharma in order to attain Liberation from this ocean of suffering. That is the instruction.

**3 When we've attained this excellent basis, so difficult to find,
If we throw it away in meaningless, harmful conduct
We are trading gold for worthless rocks;
Don't waste this life! That is my heart advice.**

This verse instructs us not to waste our human life. Now, when they have managed to find such a human birth, just this once by the force of tremendous meritorious energy created in the past, there are some people these days who seem to look human, but act as if they are possessed by demons, committing acts that destroy themselves and others. For example, in the name of a nation state, brandishing nuclear weapons that could destroy the earth, terrorizing all the peoples of the world. Some misuse their power to seize the people's wealth for themselves, and to oppress others. Those are really evil kinds of acts.

Some people become a slave to wealth, indifferent to whether they create virtue or evil, thus wasting their human life. This is so foolish. Nagarjuna said, in his Letter to a Friend,

Compared to someone who uses
A jewel-studded golden vase to clean up vomit
Someone who, having been born human,
Uses it to create bad karma, is much more foolish.

As said, for example, if a poor person who knew nothing at all was, by chance, given a big piece of gold, but someone who knows that it is real gold, fools them into trading it for a clod of dirt or another rock, not using your gold-like human body for the good purpose of holy Dharma, if we use it for senseless, harmful activities, it is an even more grave mistake. As the Kadampa master Shang Lama said,

Do you see these people who,
Having found precious human life,
Do not realize they have found a jewel
And waste it for nothing, without remorse?

As said, at this crossroads of our current human birth, when the choice to go up or down is in our hands, it is important not to waste it meaninglessly, but to try to skillfully practice the essence of the holy Dharma. That is what this verse teaches in the form of heart-felt advice.

**4 A son of the incomparable Shakyas said
If intentions are good, the path and destination will be good.
But if intentions are bad, the path and destination will be bad.
Call up good intentions! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches the division between good and bad intentions. Generally speaking, in order to subdue sentient beings, Buddha taught eighty-four thousand collections of Dharma as the antidote to eighty-four thousand delusions. In brief, all Buddha's teachings are taught solely as means to subdue your own mind.

Developed by giving up harm to others along with its basis, and practicing benefit to others along with its basis, having a good intention to benefit others is really the essence of Buddha's teachings. If you have the good intention in your mind to benefit others, even if you don't call yourself a Buddhist, that is the real meaning of being a Buddhist. The ultimate altruistic intention is bodhicitta, and whoever has it is called a Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva is not necessarily a person separate from yourself who looks like a Deity with different garments and ornaments! A Bodhisattva is someone who regards a self-important attitude as faulty and an attitude that cherishes others as full of good qualities, and has a compassionate attitude concerned with nothing but the welfare of aged mother sentient beings. Someone with this attitude, regardless of their name or clothing, is a Bodhisattva in actuality. Someone who conceals a negative attitude and harbors ill-will, no matter what their title or clothing, has already expelled themselves from the ranks of Buddhists. Buddha said,

My Dharma system is not one of harm to others.
A person who harms others is not a follower of mine.
I am not their teacher.

As he said, a compassionate attitude wishing to benefit others is very important. If someone consistently has a compassionate wish to help others, regardless of whether they are Buddhist or not, they will naturally have much happiness and good quality in their life. You could say that their path and destination will be good. If such a person practices Buddha's teachings, even more so, their realized and liberated qualities, such

as progress through the five paths and ten grounds, will expand like the waxing moon. Again, we can say that their path and destination will be good.

To tell a short story about good and bad intentions, in the time of Buddha there was a Dharma King of a state in India who was named Gupdurwa who invited Buddha and his entourage of five hundred Shravakas to a feast. Many people of the area came to see Buddha and his retinue. Along with them came two young beggar boys. Because the king was extremely rich, he not only served Buddha and his retinue, he also satisfied everyone who was there that day with a sumptuous feast. The two beggar boys also ate their fill and saw with their own eyes Buddha and his entourage, as well as the power and wealth of the king.

After the ceremony was over the two children were returning home when they stopped to rest in the shade of a tree along the way. Amazed by what they had seen they talked to each other, lamenting that the king was so rich and powerful, and that the two of them were so poor and weak. Then one of the boys thought to himself, 'The two of us, because of having accumulated little merit in our previous life, are again born poor in this life. King Gupdurwa, because of having accumulated great merit in his previous life, has again become a king and offered alms to Buddha and five hundred Arhats, as well as giving generously to all the beggars! Planting such powerful roots of virtue will undoubtedly lead to his good rebirth again in the future!' Thinking this, he rejoiced from the depths of his heart in the king's roots of virtue.

The other child was jealous of the king's good deeds and thought, 'Wouldn't it be nice if he was right now beheaded by an executioner and I became king in his place and sat on that golden throne!' He harbored this impossible evil wish as the two beggar boys fell asleep in the shade of the tree.

After a little while, unfortunately, a chariot driver came by driving too fast. His chariot swerved and hit the child with the bad intentions and killed him on the spot. The karmic fruition of his harmful thoughts ripened instantly.

The king's queen had not had any children and the king was the last of his line. After the ceremony the king ordered his ministers to search the land in all the villages for remarkable children. The ministers followed the king's orders and looked everywhere for qualified children. As they were returning they noticed a rainbow of light near a tree along the road. The ministers gathered there and discovered a young child sleeping under a tent of rainbow light. The child was the one who had been rejoicing in the king's activities. When the king heard the account of the ministers finding the child he was very pleased. The king and his entourage welcomed the child with a grand reception and immediately set him on a golden throne. Wherever the child went he was encircled by a halo of rainbow light. The result of the virtue of his rejoicing in the good deeds of others ripened instantly. That is the nature of good and bad intentions.

In particular, rejoicing in the virtues and good deeds of others is especially important. The great master Karma Chagme said,

When you hear of the virtue others have created
Abandon non-virtuous jealousy towards them.

If you sincerely rejoice in what they have done
You will receive equal meritorious potential.

The real foundation for the happiness of both yourself and others is the compassionate intention to benefit others. Here my heart advice is urging you to call up a compassionate intention in all times and situations.

**5 Mind is the king, with power over all.
The body is the slave, whether of virtue or vice.
Not emphasizing 'imitation virtue' of body and speech
Always watch your mind! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches that we must always always check our mind. In general, the need to channel body, speech, and mind into positive ways of being, and to stop them from going in negative directions is indispensable for Dharma practitioners, but is also a noble lifestyle for anyone. All beings are like a huge container for collecting virtue and non-virtue. The body, speech, and mind of an immoral person, for example, are filled with garbage of non-virtue. The ten non-virtues are physical actions of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct; vocal actions of lying, divisive speech, harsh speech, and meaningless speech; and mental actions of malice, covetousness, and wrong views. The body, speech, and mind of a noble, ethical person is filled with jewels of virtue. The ten virtues are not just abstaining from the ten non-virtues. Not just refraining from the ten non-virtues, you must also engage in virtue. Virtue is the opposite of the non-virtue. For instance, opposite to abandoning the first physical non-virtue of killing is saving and protecting life. Opposite of stealing is giving. Opposite of sexual misconduct is living ethically or maybe taking brahmacharya vows of celibacy, etc. It is similar for the non-virtues of speech and mind.

Furthermore, the most important point is that actions of body and speech arise under control of the mind. For example, without the ill-wish to kill, it is impossible for killing to take place. Stealing and sexual misconduct also arise under the control of the mind. For example, to cut down a tree, three things — a tree, an axe, and a person — must come together. Without a person to wield it, no matter how long the axe and the tree are left together, the axe will do nothing to harm the tree. Similarly, all that is necessary is for one of the three: object, body, or mind, to be missing for the harm to be averted. Like the example of the tree, the axe, and the person, without mental motivation, it is impossible to engage in physical and vocal actions. For this reason the mind is like an all-powerful king, and the body and voice are like servants.

In general, if motivation is sustained by a good, compassionate intention, the seven non-virtues of body and speech can even be transformed into virtue. Here is a short story about non-virtues of body and speech being transformed into virtue. During Buddha's life there was a Brahmin youth who lived in India named Kyebu Karma, a good-looking young monk. He always held ethical discipline in high regard, kept his sense faculties restrained, and was supreme in meditations such as the four close placements of mindfulness.

One day there was a Buddhist merchant in the area who invited Kyebu Karma for Sutra recitation and to conduct rituals.

Kyebu Karma said to the merchant, I like to meditate all the time. If I come to your house it will probably create hindrances for my samadhi and Dharma, so invite another monk.

The merchant replied, Dear Kyebu Karma, you are the sole favorite monk of my whole family. I have been sent as a representative of everyone in my family. You must come for my sake and again in the future. He kept insisting.

Unable to refuse the merchant's urgent request he agreed to come. Putting his clothes and alms bowl on his back, he went to the merchant's home. There were only three in the merchant's family: the merchant, his wife, and his unmarried daughter. They provided perfect service for Kyebu Karma.

The merchant said to Kyebu Karma, You must stay here for a week! There is a famous astrologer local to this area and his astrological predictions have required my family to perform many rituals. My wife and I are always going to town for business to obtain things required for a ritual that he has prescribed. What service would you like my daughter to do for you?

Kyebu Karma replied to the merchant, Dear merchant! According to my rules of discipline, without other monks accompanying me I should not stay alone more than a day in a family's house. If I were to stay a week in your house it would transgress my vows. I can stay no longer than three days. He insisted but the merchant also kept insisting and finally Kyebu Karma had no choice but to accept.

As soon as the daughter saw Kyebu Karma's conduct and his beautiful face she fell helplessly and completely in love with him. The merchant and his wife would leave early for town to do business and not be able to return before nightfall. The girl flirted with Kyebu Karma a lot every day, but Kyebu Karma was very good at restraining his sense doors and she could not attract him.

One day the girl said a very terrible thing to Kyebu Karma: 'If you don't sleep with me I'm going to kill myself!'

The monk replied to her, 'I received bikshu ordination from Buddha himself only two years ago. Please don't say that. If you say anything else, I will accept.'

The girl said, 'There is nothing else that I need. If I cannot sleep with you one time I am definitely going to kill myself!' She took a sword out of her father's bedroom and was about to stab herself in the heart with it.

Kyebu Karma was very frightened and grabbed the sword. With compassion he said to her, 'This ordination vow that I received from Buddha's is like my eyes and my life to me. But for you, poor girl with bad karma from the blazing fire of desire in your body and mind, out of love and compassion I shall give up my vowed morality that I cherish like my eyes and life, not only to save your life, but to fulfill all of your desires.'

With realization of the emptiness of desire, the monk fulfilled her desires completely. If Kyebu Karma had said to her, No, I'm a monk, I keep pure moral discipline, if he had not fulfilled her desire there was a real danger that she would commit suicide. By saving the girl's life out of compassion, and fulfilling her desires out of love, not only did Kyebu Karma not commit a fault that broke his vows, it actually purified ages of negative karma and obscurations and amassed powerful merit.

Sometimes people think that serious non-virtues like killing and sexual misconduct can be transformed into virtue by just having a strong compassionate motivation. That alone is not enough. The person must also have direct perception of selflessness. Until selflessness is directly perceived, it is impossible to transform serious non-virtuous actions into virtue. For other non-virtues committed for the sake of others, a compassionate motivation is sufficient to transform them into virtue. For instance, lying to a hunter in order to save the life of an animal they are hunting. Suppose you see a deer running through the forest and then you meet a hunter who is chasing the deer carrying a bow and arrow. He asks you, Did you see a deer run through here? If, out of compassion for the deer you were to say, 'No!', even though it is a lie, your compassionate motivation will transform your speech into virtue.

Sutra says,

Mental virtue is bliss

Mental virtue is without fault.

In any case, when alone, do not do anything that would displease the Deity; and when among others, do nothing that shames your companions. If someone makes a show of pure morality of body and speech through different external appearances, but their inner mind is like a container for delusions, attachment, anger, pride, competitiveness, jealousy, etc, it is no good. The main thing is to control the mind. That is why the Kadampa masters perceived the delusions as enemies, and battled with them throughout the day and night with conscientiousness, mindfulness, and alertness.

Again, on the need to be mindful, alert, and conscientious in actions of body, speech, and mind, Gungthang Tenpay Dronme instructed,

With pure conduct, it suits others minds.

With less talk there is no insult or distraction.

With stable faith, effort, mindfulness and alertness,

Realized qualities will expand every day like the waxing moon,

So be careful with your body, speech, and mind!

6 All beings have Buddha nature.

Just as milk is pervaded by butter

When the two accumulations¹ are 'churned' with effort

At some point Buddha nature will manifest! That is my heart advice.

¹ merit and wisdom accumulated with bodhicitta motivation

This verse teaches that all sentient beings have the essence of Buddhahood. All sentient beings are primordially Buddhas but, not realizing it, bedazzled by fleeting deception, sentient beings wander in samsara. As said in Sutra,

Sentient beings are nothing but Buddhas
But they are obscured by fleeting defilements.
Dispelling the defilements, they are actually Buddhas.

As said, all sentient beings intrinsically have Buddha nature, the cause that we may become a Buddha. Described by many examples, like butter pervading milk, like oil pervading sesame seeds, like gold pervading ore, no matter how bad sentient beings have been, they are all pervaded by Buddha nature.

It is not enough, however, just to know that milk is pervaded by butter. It is by working hard to churn the milk that butter is obtained. Similarly, it does no good just to say that you have Buddha nature in your mind. The Buddha nature that is present in your mind at present has been obscured for many lifetimes by ignorance giving rise to the many delusions of attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, and so on. Having entered the door of holy Dharma through the path of the two accumulations, if your practice of listening, contemplating, and meditating goes well and correctly, the Buddha Nature which has been obscured in your mind will manifest like the sun emerging from the clouds. As Tilopa instructed Naropa in a song of realization,

Son, until you have realized that these
contingently arising appearances are unborn in actuality,
Never be separated from the two accumulations
Which are like the wheels of your chariot, Naropa!

Until we nakedly manifest the profound ultimate nature of our mind we must emphasize the path of the two accumulations of merit and wisdom. That is the instruction I am giving here in the form of heart-felt advice.

**7 What are called 'Buddhas' and 'sentient beings'
Is a difference of knowing or not knowing.
If you don't cling to duality of permanence and nihilism,
You will find Buddha within! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches the difference between Buddhas and sentient beings. The word for Buddha in Tibetan, sangye, has deep meaning associated with each of its two syllables, sang and gye. Sang, awakened, means that a Buddha has awakened from the sleep of ignorance and delusions. Gye, increased, means that a Buddha's wisdom has increased to the point of comprehending all phenomena to be known. Sentient beings are defined as living beings who take birth out of delusion and karma. So what is the difference between Buddhas and sentient beings? Buddha was first like ourselves, born about twenty-five hundred years ago in Lumbini, Nepal, the son of King Shuddhodana. He had an incredible kingdom and wealth. But seeing the things of

samsara to be essenceless when he saw birth, aging, sickness, and death, and so on, he became a monk, went through austerities for six years, and finally attained enlightenment. That was our Teacher, Lord Buddha. Having seen delusion to be the real enemy, Buddha completely abandoned it and finally attained the peace of nirvana. We sentient beings, born as a result of ignorance, have wandered in the worst realms of existence from time immemorial up to the present. Like a bee caught in a jar, we migrate, sometimes in upper realms, sometimes in the lower realms, like a bee that can fly up and down in the jar but can't get out. Similarly, we have wandered in samsara, with ignorance acting as the cause, and with all three poisonous delusions. So, the difference between Buddhas and Sentient Beings arises from knowing or not knowing the hidden faults of the delusions. Buddha has awakened from the faults of the delusions by recognizing them, using antidotes, and finally being victorious over them, to become the real hero, which we call a Buddha. Sentient beings are under control of the deceptive delusions and still wander around in samsara. If we wish to free ourselves from samsara, we should henceforth train in this path, certain that Buddhahood has always been present within us.

As said in Uttarat Tantra,

Because bodies of buddhas emanate,
Because suchness is indivisible,
And because they have the lineage, all embodied beings
Always have the essence of buddhahood.

Thus, since Buddha nature is present in our mind, ready to awaken, give up doubting whether it exists or not. Also give up the laziness that doubts whether you could attain Buddhahood even though you have Buddha nature. When you practice the path, abandoning both these bad attitudes of nihilism or permanence, Buddhahood is not something far away; it is found within your own mind. This is the instruction here, given in the form of heart-felt advice.

**8 Samsara and nirvana are no more different
Than the two sides of one hand.
Abandon dualistic discrimination;
Pure lands are nowhere else! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches the difference between samsara and nirvana. The word 'samsara', 'kor-wa' in Tibetan, 'the round', means uninterrupted. This refers to the uninterrupted torment of many sufferings such as birth, aging, sickness, and death. All sentient beings are tormented by the three root sufferings: pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning, suffering of change, and suffering of pain. Pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning is the source of the other two. As long as we are not free of the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning we cannot escape the suffering of samsara. The only antidote to the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning is none other than the path realizing the view of shunyata, selflessness. The view of selflessness is a term that refers to knowledge of the actual way things exist. When you see the way things have

forever existed, without fabrication, at that point you can be rid of, or sever from the root, the pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning. Pervasive suffering and ignorance together are the root of building up karma and delusions.

Wisdom awareness is like the light inside a room, where pervasive suffering and ignorance are like the darkness. The word, 'nirvana' in Sanskrit, is translated as 'nyang-de', 'beyond sorrow' in Tibetan. 'Nyang', sorrow, refers to being under the affliction of all those above mentioned sufferings. 'De', beyond, means being completely liberated from those sufferings. If you can attain liberation from those sufferings you find real lasting, uncontaminated happiness. If you can cut through sufferings and their cause, ignorance, from the root, you can attain complete freedom from suffering.

In any case, sentient beings bound by ignorance and pervasive suffering are living in what is called 'samsara;' and the liberation of having abandoned ignorance and pervasive suffering, karma and delusion, by realizing wisdom awareness, just as it is, is called nirvana. In short, if you understand, it is nirvana, and if you don't, it is samsara. For someone who practices with perseverance this is not difficult; they are no more different than the front and back of a hand.

The root cause of wandering in samsara is attachment and aversion. Attachment develops towards people who are experienced as pleasant, and aversion develops towards those who are experienced as unpleasant. People who are experienced as neutral are regarded with indifference. Here, I express the imperative to completely abandon the negative, dualistic minds of prejudice, attachment and aversion towards friends, enemies, and strangers, which are the principal cause that has propelled us into samsaric rebirth from beginningless lifetimes. If you can abandon the harmful attitudes of attachment and aversion, what are called Purelands, realms of the Buddhas, are not at all someplace inaccessible and far away. 'Purelands are nowhere else' is my heart advice.

**9 The tracks left by all Buddhas, past, present and future
Quintessence of the 84,000 Teachings
Are the instructions on altruistic Bodhicitta;
Don't forget them, practice them! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches that the essence of Dharma is Bodhicitta. When the thousand and two Buddhas come to our world and their Teachings still exist, this gives rise to happiness for sentient beings; and when the Teachings disappear from the world this causes suffering. While the happiness and suffering of beings is, in general, caused by their own individual positive or negative karma, still, the flourishing or disappearance of Buddha's Teachings in the world makes a big difference in whether sentient beings are happy or not.

Out of the thousand and two Buddhas who will come to our world, the first was Krakucchanda Buddha, the second was Kanakamuni Buddha, and the third was Kashyapa Buddha. Our current Buddha Shakyamuni was the fourth. It has been over 2500 years since he passed into paranirvana. Those three past Buddhas, our current

Buddha Shakyamuni, and all of the future nine hundred and ninety-eight Buddhas, cross the great sea of suffering of samsara, attain the Dharmakaya, the Truth Body, accomplishing their own welfare; and they attain the Rupakayas, Form Bodies, to accomplish the welfare of others. Although the paths they have taken, the methods they have used, are many, briefly it comes down to having found that a selfish, self-cherishing attitude is full of faults and creates problems, while a loving attitude cherishing others has many good qualities and advantages; and that it is only in dependence upon Bodhicitta, an altruistic wish for Buddhahood, that enlightenment is attained. Buddha taught 84,000 collections of Teachings as the antidote to 84,000 different types of delusions in the minds of sentient beings. Bodhicitta is the very quintessence of those Teachings, including the profound points of them all.

When meditating on it you need to start with your close relations. As taught in Mind Training,

Start with equalizing yourself and others,
In the middle, exchange yourself with others,
Finally, cherish others as yourself.

Thus, meditate on Bodhicitta in all times and situations. This is said to be the unexcelled instruction. It is said, with certainty, that there is nothing superior to it.

Realizing that, with such an unexcelled profound practice, all is possible, and that without it, there is no way to attain Enlightenment; never forget Bodhicitta. In all times and situations cultivate love, wishing sentient beings have happiness, and great compassion, wishing that they be free of suffering, every day of your life. I am not just saying this; it is my advice arising out of my deepest heartfelt wish.

The root cause of our wandering in samsara is selfishness, like when we are attached to our 'own side', averse to the 'other side', and indifferent about those in between, thus categorizing everyone as friends, enemies, or strangers. If you check, however, it is just a mental fabrication dividing those who are in actuality all our dear mothers, into types who agree with you as friends, those who don't agree with you as enemies, and those with whom you have no current connection as strangers. These are mental creations. Just like ourselves, all those sentient beings want happiness and don't want suffering; the problem is our not having thought about this. By being competitive towards those above us, jealous of those equal to us, and disdainful of those beneath us, we accumulate a lot of negative karma in our mind in relation to other sentient beings and continue to wander in the suffering of samsara. From now on we must recognize that this attitude that cherishes self above others is the main self-destructive obstacle blocking our path to enlightenment, as well as the principal cause of all unhappiness and disturbance of our peace of mind during this life. As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct

If you don't exchange your own happiness
For the suffering of others,
Buddhahood will not be attained

Nor will you find any happiness in samsara.

Thus, as it says, whether you think in the short or long term, thinking of this attachment to self as faulty, direct your mind towards cherishing of others. The difference between sentient beings and buddhas arises from this as well. As said in the same Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

Whatever happiness exists for beings
Arises from wishing happiness for others.
Whatever suffering exists for beings
Arises from wanting just their own happiness.

What need is there to say much?
Childish beings act for their own self-interest,
While Buddhas act for the welfare of others;
Just look at the difference between them!

Thus it is said. In any case, the number of times each sentient being has been our mother from beginningless time up to the present is beyond counting. Strive in all means of bringing them happiness and freeing them from suffering just as you would your present dear mother. As said in the Thirty-seven Practices of the Bodhisattvas,

If those mothers who have cherished me from beginningless time,
Are suffering, how can I remain happy by myself?
Therefore, in order to liberate infinite sentient beings
Aspiring for enlightenment, Bodhicitta, is the practice of Bodhisattvas.

In short, strive from now on to benefit others through your actions of body, speech, and mind. Even if you can't benefit them, don't be impolite to them, combative, disdainful toward them, and abandon all deeds and thoughts to harm sentient beings who have all been your kind mother in the past. Great compassion is the very essence of Buddhism. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, 'My Dharma tradition is love and compassion.' This is not at all because he lacks knowledge of other teachings. He says it because it is his main intention to communicate that it is love and compassion which is the very essence of the teachings.

If you are someone with love and compassion in your heart you will naturally be happy, not only in future lives, but in this very life. Your life will be as happy as your mind becomes. If your life is happy, then the purpose of taking this good human form has been served. We are now at a borderline when a few people out of the larger society threaten to wreak havoc upon the world; it is obvious to everyone. This can only arise from a lack of love and compassion in the heart. It is really sad. Using this good human form for the sake of creating meaningless bad karma is so regrettable.

In short, whether we are considering the long or short term, if we feel overly self important, it is the real cause of our own and others' frustrations. Each day cultivate love

and compassion towards sentient beings, meditating on it at least three times a day. Whether or not your meditation on love and compassion immediately benefits others, the main greatest benefit will be to you. The cause of our lack of inner peace is negative thinking. Bodhicitta is the real antidote to uproot negative thinking. If we can abandon negative thinking we can find happiness and peace from now on. This happiness cannot come from outside; it must be found within.

**10 When among many, watch your speech,
When staying alone, watch your mind, it is taught.
In all actions, again and again
Check your body, speech, and mind. That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches the importance of conscientiousness, mindfulness, and alertness during all activities. In general, what we call Dharma should be understood as transforming our body, speech, and mind, especially our mind. If Dharma becomes nothing more than a country custom or monastic tradition, because it is just the culture of a country, it will not bring much benefit to the mind. Buddha himself said,

Commit not the slightest non-virtue.
Persevere in perfect virtue.
Fully control your own mind.
This is the Teaching of Buddha.

The last two lines of this verse are particularly relevant here. Since that is the case, we must take good care of our physical, vocal, and mental actions by checking them conscientiously with mindfulness and alertness. This is of utmost importance. When speech is used for giving advice, teaching Dharma, recitations, mantras, and so on, it automatically creates a storehouse of virtue, but when it is misused to speak to others harshly, dishonestly, meaninglessly, etc, it becomes a storehouse of non-virtue; the worst non-virtues come through speech! Although we need to always be mindful and introspective of all of our three doors of action, we must be especially careful what we say when we are among people. Before speaking, check whether what you are about to say will help others or hurt them. If it will help, say it, but if it will hurt, don't.

Just as we guard our speech when among people, we should even more so, in all times and situations, guard our mind. Especially when we are alone we definitely must take good care of our mind.

I want to tell a story. In ancient times in India there was a holder of the Brahmanical lineage who lived in the same village as his son. The son was usually impatient and angry. No matter how much the father advised his son about the faults of anger and so forth, it did no good. One day the father prepared a sumptuous noontime feast for his son's birthday and served it. His son suddenly came in and saw the food. Overjoyed, he knelt at his father's feet and felt happier than he ever had before.

Then, as they were eating, the father told his son, Oh, son of my heart! I have two wolves fighting in my mind! One of the wolves is love, compassion, peace and happiness. The other is anger and resentment, pride and suffering.

After thinking about it briefly, the son asked, Well, which wolf is going to win?
His father replied, Son, whichever wolf I feed is going to win!

The son immediately understood the meaning of the story and from that moment on regarded negative, harmful mental states like a wolf which he drove away and turned his mind in a positive direction. He became a good son.

This story has a great deal of meaning. Taking it as an example, we have both good and bad factors in our mind. On the good side, love and compassion are the root of all good qualities, and on their basis we can ultimately attain Buddhahood. We must take charge of our mind. Bad, non-virtuous mind is like a wolf of ignorance, attachment, hatred, pride, jealousy; it leads them all. Because of it, up to the present, we have never been able to get out of the prison-pit of samsara, and have been cast into such misfortune! On the basis of recognizing its faults we must expel it. As long as we have this bad-wolf-like mind we will not be happy. To distinguish positive and negative mental states, conscientiousness, mindfulness, and alertness are extremely important. As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

Better to be without wealth,
Veneration, body or livelihood;
Better that other virtues decline
Than those of the mind.

You who wish to guard your mind,
Guard mindfulness and alertness
Even at the cost of your life!
This, I request with folded palms.

Thus, it is extremely important to examine your mind at all times. There are many types of Dharma practitioners, some true practitioners, some who are practitioners in name only. To put it briefly, a Dharma practitioner should be someone who does not exhibit faults when encountering adversity. Buddha spoke of four types of practitioners. Taking a fruit as an example; it may look ripe on the outside but be unripe inside; ripe on the inside but not on the outside; ripe on both outside and inside; or unripe on both outside and inside. The meaning of this example is that a practitioner may look very nice on the outside with title, appearance, and so on, but be mentally undisciplined within. Then there are some who have good practice within, but externally, as a secret yogi, give no sign of being a practitioner. The third category would be practitioners who look like Dharma practitioners, with vows of novice or full ordination, and also have a good practice within. Fourth is the unfortunate person who has neither the outward appearance of a Dharma practitioner nor a disciplined mind within. It is best if we can be ripened within and without. As said in the Thirty-seven Practices of the Bodhisattvas,

If one does not check one's own mistakes
One may look like a Dharma practitioner but not act like one.
Therefore, continually examining and abandoning ones own faults
is the practice of the Bodhisattvas.

Being conscientious in all activities of body, speech, and mind, examine them and, like in the story above, drive out the wolves of attachment, hatred, pride, and so forth and take care of the good wolves of love, compassion, and wisdom, and nurture them. This is my heart advice.

**11 Prepare with Bodhicitta, be undistracted in main practice,
And dedicate at the end. Full attention to these three excellences
Is cherished by those on the path to Liberation, it is taught.
Don't forget; keep it in mind! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches that any Dharma practice should be sustained by the three excellences. Omniscient Longchen Rabjam said,

Preparation is bodhicitta, main practice, undistracted,
Finally, dedication. Being fully sustained by these,
Are the three points cherished by those on the path to Liberation.

First, for roots of virtue to be embraced by skillful means, there is the preparation-excellence of bodhicitta. For roots of virtue to not be destroyed by conditions, there is the main-practice-excellence of being without conceptualization; and to multiply roots of virtue, there is the conclusion-excellence of dedication.

As for the first, preparing with bodhicitta, whatever Dharma practice we are doing should be transformed by a good, compassionate motivation. Receiving Dharma teachings, doing recitation or meditation, whatever virtue of body, speech, and mind we are doing, we should sustain it, support it, with a motivation of good intentions. If you are listening to teachings from a Guru, think, all sentient beings throughout space want happiness and don't want suffering just like me. Although they want happiness, however, they don't know how to create causes of happiness. Although they don't want suffering, they quickly create the causes of suffering throughout the day and night. As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

Though they want happiness, out of confusion,
They destroy their happiness like an enemy.
Although they want to get rid of suffering,
They rush right into it.

Thus, if you set your intention that you are receiving the teaching in order for sentient beings to have happiness and be free of suffering, you are preparing with the excellence of bodhicitta.

Secondly, as for the main practice being undistracted, whatever virtue of body or speech you are practicing, this means keeping your mind from being distracted to anything else, keeping it single-pointedly focused on that very practice.

The Tibetan words, mig-pa me-pa, literally, 'without object', has vast meaning. It means not only keeping your mind undistracted, but also maintaining the understanding that whatever practice of body, speech, or mind you are doing is empty, objectless. Any

practice of body, speech, or mind that is performed without an understanding of emptiness is defiled, or contaminated, practice. As long as practice is done with an object, it does not eliminate the cause of samsara, which is ignorance that grasps at the true existence of things. As long as it is not free from grasping things to be truly existent, it is not separate from delusion and karma. If it is not beyond delusion and karma, it cannot bring liberation from suffering. If you wish to be free of samsaric karma you must definitely realize the 'objectless' view of emptiness. As said in the Commentary on Bodhicitta,

One who does not understand emptiness
Is not a basis for liberation.
The six realms' beings, deluded,
Cycle in the prison of samsara.

This shows the importance of sustaining all virtue with emptiness realization.

Even if you are not sustaining your practice with emptiness realization, you should at least keep your mind from being distracted to other objects as previously mentioned. For example, like your body being in the temple and your mind being there in your body. Otherwise, your body may be present at teachings, but your mind might be off to the supermarket!

Thirdly, as for the excellence of dedication at the end, whatever practice of Dharma you do, such as teaching or listening to teachings, at best, dedicate it to all beings attainment of Buddhahood. Failing that, it should be dedicated to other sentient beings having happiness and being free from suffering temporarily, in this life. If dedication is not made, roots of virtue will be destroyed by conditions such as meeting someone who makes you angry.

If a virtue is sustained by these three excellences it becomes pure virtue. Such virtue is indispensable to the attainment of liberation. Therefore, these three excellences are a jewel worth cherishing from your heart, and in this verse I urge you to remember to create virtue with the three excellences, never forgetting them, putting them into practice. This is my heart advice,

**12 No matter how much glory, wealth,
Fame or knowledge we may have,
Pride never raises us higher;
Always keep a humble position. That is my heart advice.**

This verse instructs us to be humble in all activities. The causes of developing pride are wealth, figure, education, family, reputation, fame, and so forth. It is natural that when we temporarily have wealth, good looks, authority and so on, we have more friends, the respect of others, fame and renown, etc. If you don't always mindfully check your three doors, some people will develop pride. Not developing pride towards equals, competitiveness towards superiors, or disdain for those beneath us, etc, we should always keep a humble position. You only have wealth, renown, and fame for the moment; in reality it is impermanence itself. Rising ends in falling, gathering ends in

depletion, meeting ends in parting, birth ends in death, and so on; realizing this is the nature of samsara, remain humble. Why? You may be prosperous and happy today, but no one knows what will happen tomorrow. If wealth, happiness and fame of this life could follow you to your next life and help you, that would be useful, but you have no power to bring them. As said in the Instructions for the King Sutra,

Emaciated by time, the king must go,
and wealth, friends and relatives will not follow.
Wherever living beings go,
their karma follows them like their shadow.

If we spend this brief respite of a human life accumulating bad karma trying to profit from the loss of others, the attachment to that wealth at the time of death will be our real enemy which will cause our rebirth in a worse lifeform in the future. Therefore it is very important to be content with wealth and enjoyments that you have. As Buddha said,

Contentment is the supreme wealth.

If we don't know how to make use of this life, even if we want happiness, there is danger that what we do will only add to our problems and suffering. Not only do wealth and property become conditions that increase delusions like pride, competitiveness, etc, at worst they can even lead a person to suicide; there is no certainty, so we should be careful.

I am not saying that wealth is bad and that there is no need for it. What I am saying is, even if you have wealth, always be humble about it, never proud. Also, you should use your wealth in a good way. My root Guru Kyabje Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche, from his side had become a great Lama of the Kagyu with high status, but he always remained humble and never exhibited his status in any of his clothes or conduct. In general, it is someone with no learning or practice who has pride that they know everything; whereas a real scholar and practitioner has no pride at all. As Sakya Pandita said,

Those with little knowledge have great pride.
If they become a master, they remain humble.
A little brook always babbles noisily
But how can the ocean babble?

Thus, always being humble and acting in a noble manner is the real hallmark of a Dharma practitioner. Therefore, wherever and whomever we associate with, be humble, without pride, competitiveness, jealousy, and so on; this is my instruction here, in the form of my heartfelt advice.

**13 Whether we are jumping for joy
Or crying in pain, during all highs and lows,
Whatever illusions of happiness or sadness arise,
Use them for your spiritual path! That is my heart advice.**

The meaning of this verse is that we need to maintain our stability whether we are happy or sad. In general, as long as we have taken birth in a body of contaminated delusion we will have various changing experiences of pleasure and pain; this is the nature of samsara. The happiness of physical feelings, and so forth, that we sentient beings experience through our five senses, which we chase and favor, this temporary facsimile of happiness, is said by those who have direct insight into the nature of reality, to actually be the suffering of change. There are many types of suffering but root sufferings have three aspects: suffering of pain, suffering of change, and pervasive suffering of karmic conditioning. Sentient beings recognize suffering of pain as suffering, do not want it, and try to eliminate it by many means, medical treatment, ritual services, prayer, and so on.

I'm not saying this isn't suffering; it is. If we only think of it as suffering, however, just something unwanted, to rid ourselves of, that is a shortsighted attitude. Still, we must stop the cause from which it arises. For example, if water is powerfully pouring into a family's house through a hole in the wall and, wanting to get rid of it, they try to bail it out of the house with buckets, it would be foolish. Better than that would be to patch the hole on the outside and tightly close the opening by whatever means is best; then the water in the house will naturally stop pouring in. After that you won't have to worry about things in the house being ruined by water damage. Like that, if you can sever the root of your suffering, the many hundreds of secondary subtle sufferings will be eliminated at the same time. As said in Guide to the Bodhisattva Conduct,

If you tried to cover the whole earth with leather,
Where would you get the leather?
But just putting leather on the soles of your feet
is similar to covering the whole earth.

Usually, when we experience a temporary slight facsimile of happiness we crow with delight and jump for joy; and when we experience a temporary slight unwanted frustration, we get unhappy and cry; some even commit suicide if it is too painful. Rather than being like that, we should make our mind immutable, whatever experiences, pleasant or painful, arise. As Dza Patrul Rinpoche said,

If I'm sick, I'm sick, but it is better to be sick
Because it uses up bad karma I created before!
If I'm not sick, then it is better to not be sick:
It will increase the virtuous practice I do.

Realizing that whatever hardship and difficulty we experience arises from our own previous actions, if we think about this, it will help tremendously if our mind is not disturbed by our physical suffering. That physical problem may be the result of past karma, but our mind need not be changed by physical conditions; we must realize that it can be under our own control at all times. Therefore, whatever suffering arises, try to

experience it without it destabilizing your mind. That is my instruction here, given in the form of important heartfelt advice.

**14 One who fearlessly vowed to protect
All those who merely hear his name
Keep this Deity, Buddha Amitabha
As your eternal refuge! That is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches us to keep Buddha Amitabha as our Yidam, our meditational Deity.

There are very many Buddhas, such as the one thousand and two, who, for the sake of sentient beings, come in the past, present, and future of this fortunate world age. Some Buddhas are compassion Deities, like Avalokitesvara and Amitabha. Some Buddhas are long life and healing Buddhas like Medicine Buddha and Amitayus. Some Buddhas are wisdom Deities like Manjushri. Some Buddhas clear away obstacles like Venerable Tara, and so on; there are so many!

Buddha Amitabha is for the time of five degenerations. These five are:

- 1 Degeneration of delusions
- 2 Degeneration of lifespan
- 3 Degeneration of view
- 4 Degeneration of beings
- 5 Degeneration of times.

Degeneration of delusions means they have become extremely gross. Degeneration of lifespan means life expectancy is diminishing. Degeneration of views means that people have mistaken views. Degeneration of beings means that they are very wild and difficult to subdue. Degeneration of times means times of conflict and violence. Before attaining enlightenment Buddha Amitabha made forty-eight prayers for the sake of beings like ourselves who are living in these times of the five degenerations, who could not be subdued by any other Buddha. These prayers can be found listed in the extensive Amitabha Sutra. One of the most important prayers among the forty-eight was a promise that any person who, at the time of death, thinks of him with faith and utters his name one time, will be actually met in the bardo by a welcoming escort, be protected from suffering of the fears of death, and be brought to the Pureland of Sukhavati. Buddha Amitabha is the embodiment of all Buddhas' love, compassion, power, and so on, the supreme transcendent Deity for our times. Since all Buddhas are essentially the same nature, by accomplishing one Deity, we accomplish all Deities. By practicing one Yidam, one Teaching, one Guru, and one visualization, all accomplishment will be guaranteed. Therefore, my disciples seeking liberation should definitely keep the unfailing refuge in Buddha Amitabha close to their heart; that is my instruction here, given in the form of heartfelt advice.

**15 Reciting the life essence mantra of Buddha Amitabha
Like a young child crying for our mother
Melodiously, throughout six periods of day and night, We receive**

Amitabha's compassionate care more quickly. That is my heart advice.

This verse teaches the purpose of reciting Buddha Amitabha's name mantra. Ritual of Buddha Amitabha comes to us through many different lineages, including the lineage of the Teachings, a 'terma' treasure lineage, and a pure vision lineage. The ritual that we recite is a profound practice that was hidden as a terma by Guru Padmasambhava in the eighth century, and found in 1645 by the treasure revealer Namchö Mingyur Dorje. The treasure revealer Namchö Mingyur Dorje was an emanation of Guru Padmasambhava. He was able to speak directly with meditational Yidam Deities such as Buddha Amitabha just like one person speaking with another. We are extremely fortunate to be in this Dharma lineage and to still be doing this practice.

There are different Buddha Amitabha name mantras, long, middling, and short. We should recite the six-syllable mantra OM AH MI DE WA HRI, which is the life-mantra. Mental recitation and soundless recitation of mantra is sometimes advised for Yidam Deities with a wrathful aspect, but for a peaceful Deity like Buddha Amitabha, mantra should be chanted with melody; and the melody should be plaintive with longing, like a child calling out for her mother. As Guru Rinpoche said,

Recite mantra like a child crying out to its mother
with the sweet tones of lutes and flutes,
making requests throughout the six periods of day and night.

Thus, we should melodiously chant as we call Amitabha's name with trust, conviction, and strong devotion. If we practice like that it will be very swift for receiving Amitabha's compassion and blessings. Ultimately, at best, we will see Buddha Amitabha, at middling, our realizations will increase, and at least, we will see Buddha Amitabha in dreams. These are common, general signs of accomplishing the Deity.

With regard to signs of actually accomplishing the Deity, the birthlessness of our own mind is the eternal, primordial Deity but, confused by dualistic concepts, we don't realize it and therefore wander in samsara. Today, in dependence upon our practice and the compassion and blessings of the symbolic Deity Amitabha, we can meet the actual Deity which has always existed within us, like a child reuniting with its mother. If we directly recognize our own pure awareness, uncontrived clarity and emptiness without grasping, that is Buddha Amitabha. As I wrote in my Excellent Path of Freedom, the Jewel Ornament in Brief,

Even though the child of good family is home, because of severed lineage,
He has been separated from his Mother for a long time.
Once he encounters his virtuous Mother,
From then on, his realized qualities will be perfected.
If you become certain about this family of eternal happiness,
That is also an ornament of Liberation.

As said, the actual ultimate Deity must be realized on the basis of the uncontrived, actual mode of being of our own mind. If you grasp for a Deity to be realized separate from your own mind, you can be certain that is a mistake. As said in the Song of the Dzogchen View,

Primordially pure, unfabricated, your own mind manifesting,
Buddha is nowhere else, settle right where you are.
Not seeking elsewhere, settle in the natural state
Without meditation, spontaneously accomplished, enlightenment is attained.

As said, your own mind, free from all fabrication, without altering whatever appears, has the complete nature of Buddha Amitabha. Settling in meditative equipoise on the basis of the appearing factor which is empty of entity, clarity in nature, non-real illusion, you should firmly decide, I am Buddha. This I impart as important heart advice.

**16 Not throwing away the long-held samaya
Between Guru and disciple at difficult times,
Perceiving it as more valuable than life, never forget:
Keep this commitment in your heart. That is my heart advice.**

This verse explains the need for a close bond between the guru and disciple. There are many kinds of binding relationships between people: guru and disciple, parents and children, husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend. In all of these relationships it is very important to take care of the bond and relationship. In particular, the relationship between guru and disciple is for the holy Dharma, and it is important to preserve it in both this and future lives. Therefore, gurus and disciples who have, for a long time, taught Dharma, conferred initiations, given transmissions, who have deep connection in the sacred path of the Dharma, must keep this in mind and never forget it in all times and situations.

Some people, if they have the misfortune of members of their family getting sick or dying, cry for the lama and place their hopes in the lama for protection; but when they are free from difficulties, or when their circumstances take a little swing for the better, they completely forget about the lama and don't even come, like a tourist, to visit the lama and Dharma center. Leave aside such conduct being that of a Buddhist guru-disciple relationship, it would be shameful, disgraceful conduct in any relationship among people.

We must prevent this. When someone has been helpful to us, whether in a spiritual or worldly relationship, it is most honorable to return their kindness however we can, and to never forget it. I am not saying that you have to do whatever I advise because I am a fully qualified Guru. Regardless of my level as a Guru, as a result of karma, I have already become your Guru. To teach you whatever I know is my responsibility as a teacher. Having heard what I say, it is up to you whether you practice it or not. If I don't explain, that is my fault but if you don't practice it, that is your fault. Therefore, with both the guru and disciple cherishing their mutual bond even more than

life, praying that the connection between them remain inseparable in this and all future lifetimes; and always keeping in mind what the guru has taught, never forgetting it, put it into practice. This I give as another very important heartfelt piece of advice.

**17 You are grateful to me for Dharma kindness,
I am grateful to you for your kind material support.
Helping one another in this way
Is sacred Dharma work. This is my heart advice.**

This verse explains the need for knowing and thinking about the mutual kindness between guru and disciples. In general, the guru's responsibility is to turn the disciples minds towards Dharma, for the Dharma to become the path, for the path to be free of obstacles, and finally, for deceptive appearances to arise as transcendent wisdom. The guru guides the disciples on a perfect path from bliss to bliss.

A humble guru like myself does not have the blessings and power of a guru who can compassionately use forceful means to guide disciples onto the perfect path, but it is the procedure in Buddha's teachings for the guru to teach whatever they know from experience, and for disciples to put those very teachings into practice. As Buddha said,

I have taught you the path to Liberation,
But know that Liberation depends on you.

That is how it is. That is why, for many years now, although lacking experience or realized qualities, with a pure intention I have taught, and have sometimes invited other teachers from different traditions, wishing to bring some benefit to the minds of the people of this area.

Since it is very important that we take care of our environment I have also performed ocean blessings and have given blessings for the butterfly grove, as well as blessings for private homes and lands; and I have visited those sick or dying in hospital. Doing all I can with body, speech, and mind to serve others, in these ways as well, I have bestowed Dharma kindness to you.

You, as well, since I have arrived here, have served me in many ways, great and small. Especially you who, for many years, gave me a place to live, a bed; financial support, avoided no exertion, and finally helped me succeed in getting refugee status; and the anonymous very generous donor who sponsors the purchase of my present Dharma center; all of your material kindness to me is, indeed, extremely great.

In short, your help assists in the accomplishment of powerful Dharma work that benefits others. I am a Dharma teacher; so if we do Dharma work together with a compassionate, altruistic intention for the rest of our lives, that will be a meaningful life. We will create roots of virtue and meritorious energy equally. If we can plant a few seeds of mental peace and happiness for the people of this country, that will be good. There is no one who does not want peace of mind. If you need perfect peace and happiness, there is no other path than the sacred Dharma. It is my firm promise to practice these teachings for the rest of my life and to teach the path to others, so if we

all work together, it will be more powerful and the benefit will be greater. We will create merit together. Milarepa said,

The great meditator in the mountains
and the patron who supports them
have an auspicious connection to attain enlightenment together.
The essence of the connection is their dedication.

It is like that. Therefore, lama and disciples helping each other on the path is the sacred Dharma way. Continuing without either the lama or disciple becoming discouraged, we should put on the armor of patience which is the antidote to laziness. Abandoning laziness that is attachment to bad activities, laziness of discouragement that disparages yourself, and laziness of idleness, I pray that we continually do Dharma work together, not only in this lifetime, but in future lifetimes as well. Please, keep this in mind. That is the heart advice I am giving in this verse.

**18 In brief, disciples, wherever you live,
Always remember and never forget
All the advice I have given you;
We will meet again in joy. That is my heart advice.**

This verse says to practice Dharma well, and I will soon return from India. This verse is here because I wrote this Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar just before a trip to India. I prayed that afterwards I will return as soon as possible, and that we will be able to resume spending our lives together in the study, contemplation, and meditation of Dharma. In brief, all of you who place your hopes in me, who have faith and devotion, who have connection with me in this good work, wherever you live, and whether I am with you or not, always practice Dharma as well as you can.

The object of my always insistently urging you to practice Dharma is because you want happiness and don't want suffering. I explain it with the wish for you to attain perfect happiness. If you want perfect happiness, it must be happiness in the mind. If you wish to attain happiness in the mind you must definitely transform your mind. The most extensive and profound methods for transforming the mind is found in the Buddhist scriptures. If you can hear, contemplate, and meditate on Dharma, even if you don't believe in future lives, it is like a weapon to be able to face and protect yourself amidst the many difficulties and frightening sufferings of life. Even if you just want to be happy in this life, the teachings of the Mahayana are the real medicine for the mental problems of living beings. Many people have problems these days: trouble sleeping, depression, loneliness of old age, etc. People take so many medicines for such maladies. Holy Dharma is the supreme medicine for mental suffering, completely indispensable. In any case, what I say is out of pure altruism for you. There may certainly be mistakes in what I say. But, if it helps your mind, you should make it your own. As it is said,

Master and disciple, inseparably together,

May their lives be immutable, firm and strong
May hearing, contemplation and meditation be uninterrupted,
May all be auspicious for happiness and increase of Dharma.

Here we pray that the lama and disciples never be separated from the profound path of holy Dharma and be on a path that leads from bliss to bliss. This, also, I give as heart advice of great importance.

**19 The master's rain of flowers of holy Dharma
Ripens the garden grove of disciples,
Manifesting a glorious summer of Dharma,
Always together, inseparably. This is my heart advice.**

This verse teaches the benefits of the Guru's teachings. It is the custom of Tibetan writers to use material objects as examples with many poetic devices. Here the metaphor is one of the guru being the sky; the guru's teachings being a rain of holy Dharma; disciples being gardens and flowers; and the holy Dharma being like beautiful summertime weather. The meaning is the river of nectar of holy Dharma of the lama's teachings falling on our mind which, for years and ages of time, has been arid and dried out by heat of the delusions such as attachment, aversion, and ignorance. But now the holy Dharma spoken by the Guru rains down strongly on all the flowers and trees that have been dry for so many years, making them all lush and strong. Like that, the nectar of Dharma must become the remedy for our delusions. If it becomes the antidote to our delusions, the love, compassion, view of emptiness and so forth, primordially present in our mind, all the positive qualities that exist, blossom like flowers. This is the Buddha nature, the emptiness wisdom and bodhicitta, which has forever been intrinsic to our mind. Our mind is like a land that has lacked water for many years. The present root Guru's nectar of holy Dharma is the actual condition that raises and activates the Buddha nature in our mind. Thus, the holy Dharma of the Guru is nectar which moistens our dried-out mind of delusion. We are like a land or a garden without water. When our mind finally goes towards the Dharma, by putting effort into our practice, one day like the sun, spontaneous faith, renunciation, aspiration and devotion, compassion, and so on, will dawn from within, and we will experience inexpressible happiness. As Buddha said,

Profound peace, free of projections, clear light, uncompounded,
I have found a Dharma which is like nectar.
But no one I teach it to could understand it,
So I'll stay in the forest, without speaking.

If this realization occurs, it will manifest like the glorious bliss of summer. So I also impart this as important heartfelt advice.

20 May the power of truth of the Three Precious Jewels

**And the blessings of Buddhas Amitabha and Amitayus
Protect you inseparably until attaining
The essence of enlightenment! That is my heart prayer.**

This verse entrusts my followers to the Three Jewels for protection until the attainment of Buddhahood.

There is important meaning to prayer. We can practice making prayers like the great Arya beings, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who accomplished the practice of prayer and words of truth. For example, someone who has reached even the 'heat' stage of the path of preparation, second of the five paths, by reciting words of truth and praying, 'May rain fall from the sky right now!' can bring immediate rainfall. Or by saying a prayer they can instantly heal someone who is sick. Such power is rare unless a person has high inner realizations. With mutual relationships, however, such as between a guru and disciple, family members, friends, relatives, and so forth, if you have such a relationship with someone, it is definitely beneficial if you pray for them.

Therefore, at the conclusion of the commentary I have also made a prayer. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the Three Jewels, are the actual refuges of we Buddhists. Going for refuge to Buddha as the one who teaches the path, Dharma as the path; and Sangha as companions, if we take the path we will discover the ultimate refuge in our own mind. This is like what Buddha, himself, said: 'You are your own Protector.' Therefore, I, likewise, call on the truth of the Three Jewels.

Furthermore, Buddha Amitabha, as Dharmakaya, and Buddha Amitayus, as Sambhogakaya, apart from having different names according to the way they appear to trainees, are actually the same Deity. Amitayus is a long-life Deity and Amitabha is mainly for the future life, but they are actually the same Deity appearing in two different aspects to train different disciples. In any case, in dependence upon the power of the host of Deities of Buddha Amitabha's mandala and my prayers, respectfully, for all sentient beings who have good or bad karmic connections with me, and especially you Tantric disciples and relations with whom I have sacred bonds of Dharma, in this life and all lifetimes up to the attainment of Buddhahood, like a body and its shadow, may you never be separated from the profound light of Dharma; and may the Three Jewels and Buddha Amitabha protect you. I make this prayer with the words of truth as another important part of my heartfelt advice.

**21 Thus, with sound mind, I have said what I feel
To encourage some disciples who mistake fool's gold for gold.
It is the heart advice of this homeless wanderer
With the title of a Dharma teacher.**

With this verse I conclude the commentary with humility. I wrote these twenty-one verses of Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar like a parrot mimicking human language, without the slightest experience of their meaning. It was in 2012 that my disciple with immense faith and aspiration, Ama Kunzang Wangmo, Susan Schek asked, What

'homework' practice should I do while you are away in India? In response to her request, and hoping to benefit all of my brother and sister Dharma friends, I must humbly say that I am like fool's gold or an ordinary rock that people think is actual gold. I am a homeless one who has been separated against his will from his homeland for two decades wandering all over the earth, who is actually bereft of the study, contemplation, and meditation of Buddhist philosophy and practice that would be the accumulated causes for becoming a khenpo — an abbot — of a monastery, yet merely holds the nice-sounding title of an abbot, who everyone calls 'Khenpo Karten', wrote this commentary to each of the verses in order to make my root text of Heartfelt Advice of Dharma Nectar more easily understandable, on the 26th of August, 2018.

Further Prayers:

Before first knowing where I am going,
To be instructing others is a joke.
Yet when a drum is struck with a beater
It makes its sound. Like that, I have written this.

Moistening the untilled, dry, hard field
With a rain of nectar of holy Dharma,
May leaves of emptiness and compassion grow
And fruits of glorious happiness ripen.

For one with bad karma, wandering in the swamp of samsara,
Who wishes to climb from bliss to bliss
To the mansion of liberation and everlasting happiness,
This small book is a first step.

Not polluted by blind faith in a creator,
Nor asserting liberation through physical austerity,
The Buddhist system is that Liberation is found
By way of you training your own mind.

Identifying enemy delusions as the target,
And shooting the arrow of emptiness and compassion,
Self-grasping ignorance is completely beheaded;
One who defeats delusion is the true hero.

In short, may the disciples connected with me
Be cared for by glorious, qualified Gurus.
May your three doors be inseparable from holy Dharma
and may your body and mind be sustained by oceanic bliss.

SARVA MANGALAM
May all be auspicious.

Translation by Jampa Tharchin, January 2019