

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SEVEN POINT MIND TRAINING (LOJONG)

ACCORDING TO THE TEXT BY CHEKAWA YESHE DORJE (1101–1175)

COMMENTARY BY JAMGON KONGTRUL (1813–1899)

The original root text by Geshe Chekawa comprises of a set of 59 aphorisms divided into seven sections. There is an initial homage and two concluding verses.

1. The Preliminaries: (one aphorism)

- a. The Practice of Guru Yoga
- b. The Practice of the Four Contemplations: the precious human life, Death and impermanence, karma, the sufferings of Samsara.

2. The Actual Practice: Training in Bodhicitta (9 aphorisms)

(To be applied both inside and outside formal meditation)

- a. The Practice of Mindfulness (Anapanasati)
- b. The Practice of Loving-kindness (Metta bhavana)
- c. The Practice of Receiving and Sending (Tonglen)

3. The Transformation of Adverse Conditions into the Path of Awakening

(6 aphorisms)

- a. Give up blame and be grateful to everyone
- b. Recognize the Emptiness of appearances
- c. Practice skilful action to accumulate merit and purify unskilful karma.

4. The Utilization of the Practice in One's Whole Life (2 aphorisms)

Both during one's life and at the time of death train in the five forces: Commitment, mindful application, skilful action, unselfish altruism, and prayers of aspiration.

5. The Extent of Proficiency in Mind Training (4 aphorisms)

Selflessness is the single criterion that Dharma practice is measured by.

You are proficient when you are joyful in the face of adversity and you automatically take adverse conditions as an aid to mind training.

6. The Commitments to Mind Training (16 aphorisms)

16 commitments are given in the text.

7. Guidelines to Mind training (21 aphorisms)

21 guidelines are given in the text.

THE PRACTICE OF AWAKENING THE BODHICITTA - TONGLEN

Practice mindfulness for a while. The quality of spaciousness expands into the clear blue sky – out of which the Yidam manifests. They sit above your head on a lotus and moon mat. They embody your Dharma teachers.

Then recite the prayer to the Yidam asking for blessing: *'I pray to you with great faith and devotion. May you bless me so that the precious Bodhicitta awakens within my heart, wisdom and compassion arises, and I am able to benefit all sentient beings.'*

Then the Yidam dissolves into nectar light and descends through the crown of your head and blesses you. Your body, speech and mind are purified and you are filled with the great bliss of Emptiness. They take their seat within the lotus of your heart.

Begin with self-Tonglen.

1 Turn towards your experience of body, heart and mind with a kindly awareness. Open to whatever arises.

2 Turn towards whatever is unpleasant in your experience with a spacious awareness. Open to whatever arises. Reflect: *'I have been born and am subject to old age, sickness and death.'* Open to whatever arises. Breathe in the dark smoke of suffering.

3 Turn towards whatever is pleasant in your experience with a spacious awareness. Open to whatever arises. Reflect: *'I have a precious human body and the potential for realization.'* Open to whatever arises. Breathe out the pure white moonlight of joy.

4 Turn towards your experience of body, heart and mind and assimilate your experience. Open to whatever arises. Relax into spacious awareness.

Then perform Tonglen for another person.

1 Imagine another person vividly and empathize with them. Turn towards them with a kindly awareness. Open to whatever arises.

2 Turn towards whatever is unpleasant in their experience with a spacious awareness. Open to whatever arises. Reflect: *'They have been born and are subject to old age, sickness and death.'* Open to whatever arises. Breathe in the dark smoke of suffering.

3 Turn towards whatever is pleasant in their experience with a spacious awareness. Open to whatever arises. Reflect: *'They have a precious human body and the potential for realization.'* Open to whatever arises. Breathe out the pure white moonlight of joy.

4 Turn towards your experience of body, heart and mind and assimilate your experience. Open to whatever arises. Relax into spacious awareness.

Repeat several rounds of these four stages and give each stage roughly equal time. Follow these stages for yourself, another person, a group of people and for everyone, everywhere. Be open to whatever arises at each stage and take your actual experience as the path. Finish the session by resting in the spaciousness of awareness. Then conclude with the dedication: *'I dedicate this merit to the Awakening of all sentient beings and especially to..... May they and all beings realize complete Enlightenment.'*

NECTAR OF THE HEART:

A PRAYER OF THE SEVEN POINT MIND TRAINING

BY JAMYANG KHYENTSE WANGPO (1820–1892)

A. The Introduction of Praise that is Meritorious at the Beginning

By the gracious Guru's blessings,
May my mind be purified by the three kinds of faith.
I bow to my Kalyana Mitras in the Mahayana
The source of everything good in Samsara and Nirvana.

B. The Main Subject of the Text that is Meritorious in the Middle:

1. The Preliminaries, Foundations of the Teachings

By the gracious Guru's blessings,
May I know that this precious human life is hard to obtain and easily destroyed.
In all my actions, may I do what is right and avoid what is wrong,
And develop a genuine determination to be free from Samsara,

2. The Main Practice, Training in Bodhicitta

By the gracious Guru's blessings,
May I purify dualistic appearance into the space of Emptiness,
And practice the profound exchange of my own and other's happiness and suffering;
Meditating continually on the two aspects of Bodhicitta.

3. Turning Adverse Circumstances into the Path of Bodhicitta

By the Gracious Guru's blessings,
May I recognize whatever adverse advents and sufferings befall me,
As manifestations of my own selfishness,
And use them as the path of Bodhicitta.

4. Applying This Practice Throughout One's Life

By the gracious Guru's blessings,
May I condense my lifetime's practice into a single essence,
By applying throughout my life the five powers of: commitment, mindful application,
Virtuous seeds, reproach and the power of aspirations.

THE FOUR PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS

1. The Rarity of Human Life

This free and well favoured human body
Is extremely difficult to obtain.
Endowed with the Eight Freedoms and the Ten Endowments
I can achieve the full realisation of a Bodhisattva or a Buddha.
But if I do not make good use of this opportunity to practice the Dharma
I will not obtain such a precious body again.

2. The Transitoriness of Mundane Existence

The Three Worlds are as transitory as an Autumn cloud.
Sentient beings are born and die like actors on a stage.
The duration of my life is rushing by
Like a torrent down a steep mountain.
My life will come quickly and abruptly to an end.
Like a lightning flash in the sky.

3. The Law of Karma

When its time has come, even a King has to die,
And neither his family or friends
Nor his wealth and possessions can accompany him.
Whether I stay or go, live or die,
The karmic consequences of my actions
Will follow me as inseparably as a shadow.

4. The Sufferings of Samsara

Owing to greed, hatred and delusion,
Sentient beings revolve in the realms
Of humans, gods, animals, ghosts, and hell-beings,
Just like the turning of a potter's wheel.
In the Three Worlds, beings are for a long time on fire
With the suffering of old age and disease.

There is no one to rescue them from that misery.
What is the cause of so much suffering?
It is because transmigrating beings
Do not understand conditioned existence.
They revolve just like a bee buzzing round and round a pot!
This is the immaculate utterance of the Supreme Buddha.

Repeating this several times, one should reflect deeply upon the meaning.
In this way one will become devoted to the Dharma.