

Eight Verses for Training the Mind

By Kadampa Geshe Langritangpa

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Bodhicitta is *mysterious*

- usually described using metaphors and images
- Mahayana literature full of similes, metaphors and images for Bodhicitta
 - Wish-fulfilling gem– gives everything one can desire
 - Wish-fulfilling tree – incredible tree that when touched causes everything good to come your way, or a tree that bears fruit constantly and never decays
 - The great fire that destroys the cosmos at end of aeon – so the Bodhicitta destroys and purifies all defilements

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Bodhicitta as metaphor and image

- The full-moon – calming the heat of passions, so cools & calms all suffering and pain
- The Great Hero – someone you can rely on and who protects you
- Alchemy – the quicksilver that transforms base metals into gold; the bodhicitta transmutes our ordinary form into something like a Buddha
- Blind man who finds a priceless-jewel in a refuse heap

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Bodhicitta has to be developed

- Does not occur by chance
- Arises out of intensive and continuous practice
- Not just a meditation practice, but whole life dedicated to the Dharma
- Shantideva in Bodhicaryavatara says
 - *“it is like fresh butter churned from the milk of the true Dharma”*
 - Danger of seeing the spiritual life in a consumeristic way. Too much expectation, either consciously or unconsciously from one's practice
 - Doing it primarily for yourself ultimately causes suffering
 - Practising for others leads to happiness

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Bodhicitta is extraordinary

- The arising of the Bodhicitta is extraordinary. Extraordinary that it should happen at all
- Great teachers are astonished, utterly astonished finding this incredible and mysterious thing called Bodhicitta

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Qualities of the Bodhicitta

- Atisha gives one of the most succinct descriptions of the bodhicitta
- “sunyatakarunagabha” sunyata – karuna – garbha
- sunyata = emptiness
- karuna = compassion
- garbha = essence, also seed, womb, the special or precious part of a thing
- Sunyatakarunagabha can be translated as something like “the essence of emptiness-compassion” or “the seed or womb of emptiness-compassion”

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essence of emptiness compassion

- Emptiness and compassion could be described as awareness and friendliness
- Bodhicitta often spoken of as the altruistic dimension of spiritual life
- Not ordinary 'goodness'
- Bodhicitta is the compassion, the love, the generosity of the bodhisattva and is the expression of the deepest insight into the selflessness of all phenomena

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More qualities of bodhicitta

- Bodhicitta is something that flows
- Atisha speaks of the paramitas as the ever-flowing **generosity**, the ever-flowing **morality**, the ever-flowing **vigour**, etc
- This gives us the picture of the bodhicitta as something that is flowing through all your activities
- Sangharakshita describes as a similar idea in an early poem: *"The Unseen Flower"*

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“The Unseen Flower”

Compassion is far more than emotion. It is something that springs

Up in the emptiness which is when you yourself are not there,

So that you do not know anything about it.

(If they knew it, it would not be compassion);

But they can only smell

The scent of the Unseen Flower

That blooms in the Heart of the Void

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Arises in community

- Sangharakshita in the early days of the FWBO said that he thought the bodhicitta more likely to arise in a community involved in a shared project (e.g. building of Sukhavati)
- Community is the sangha or the *gana* family of the Bodhisattva (*gana* = a number of, or a company, etc.)
- Something that animates a community
- So not your personal possession
- Better to think of it as a current or a spiritual force that we open up too

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Bodhicitta like a Vajra

- Because it cuts through all self-seeking, only wants to participate in helping others remove suffering and the maturing and ripening of beings
- needs daily practice to arise
- The Eight Verses for Training the Mind give us a means to practice, to open up to the bodhicitta
- Eight Verses originating from the teaching of Atisha

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Atisha (982-1054 CE)

- Atisha a great practitioner of bodhicitta
- Famous for taking the Dharma to Tibet
- Inspired great tradition of the *Kadmapas* – ‘the school of the preceptors’
- *Kadmapas* famous for teachers who were able to take the essence of the sutras, tantras, commentaries, etc. and put them in a concise and pithy form just right for the disciple
- Atisha’s teacher in Sumatra was ‘Serlingpa’ also known as Dharmakirti. Atisha spent many years in Indonesia studying with Dharmakirti
- Whenever the two met, Dharmakirti asked Atisha “*is the bodhicitta blended with your heart?*”

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Atisha's Mind Training - *Lojong*

- Atisha's teaching transmitted orally
- Geshe Langritangpa (1054 – 1123) - disciple of a disciple of Atisha - writes the Eight Verses
- Geshe Kachawa writes commentary on Eight Verses which becomes the 'Seven Point Mind Training'
- Langritangpa – name means 'dark-faced'. Only smiled 3 times. But very compassionate and loving teacher. Said he could never smile because he is contemplating the suffering of living beings
- 8 verses to be memorised & constantly put into practise
- Forms the training principle of purifying the heart – transforming the ordinary heart into the bodhi heart
- Important to enter into the mind of the bodhisattva (Sangharakshita) to get some idea what it's like to have a purely selfless mind

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Frameworks of the Verses

- View - sunyata
- Meditation – bodhicitta practice
- Action – allowing realisation from view and meditation to flow into our lives, affecting our practice moment-by-moment
- View, meditation, action occur in reverse order in the txt
- First six verses deal with action, verse seven with meditation and last verse with view
- Prefix to the bodhicitta practice starts: 'in order to develop a new mind' – new is something completely new
- Allowing a mind to emerge that is free from ego-clinging
- And powered by compassion

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Verse One

***May I always cherish all beings
With the resolve to accomplish for them
The highest good that is more precious
Than any wish-fulfilling jewel***

- Verse evokes the basic attitude – ‘*May I always cherish all beings with the resolve to accomplish for them the highest good.*’
- ‘Cherish all beings’ – cherish is a beautiful word (not sure what the Tibetan is)

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Cherish all beings

- Cherish comes from the Latin/French root meaning ‘caring’ (French *cher*; Latin *cārus*)
- The word brings in aspects such as really looking after someone well
- paying attention to specific needs
- The importance of small acts of kindness
- It can start with the people around us
- But we start with ourselves – recognise we are self-cherishing
- We then aspire to cherish others
- Cherishing all beings is a completion of self-cherishing
- As in metta bhavana start with ourselves, then include others
- Need to cherish ourselves as well as others.

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Self-cherishing

- Self-cherishing is one of the 'sahaja' klesas, meaning innate, fundamental. They are very basis of our being and give us our predispositions to experience. They are:
 - atma-moha – ignorance
 - atma-drsti –
 - atma-mana – pride, conceit
 - atma-sneha – love of self
 - These klesas are morally neutral because do not prevent acting skilfully but are cognitively obscured, i.e. through truth is obscure from us
- This first verses deals with atma-sneha – love of self or self-cherishing

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More precious than

- Wish-fulfilling jewel
- What do people wish for?
- All seek their own benefit, whether skilful or unskilful
 - All acts based on this, whether skilful or unskilful
 - Do what we do – believing it the best thing for us
 - Our deepest desires may be unconscious, and we are unconsciously trying to fulfil them
 - What peoples needs (our needs) look at what they/we do

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Bodhisattva -knows others needs

- Could say that samara is seeking our happiness, but not knowing where it lies'
- Everyone is avoiding pain and seeking happiness (in one form or another)
 - Traditionally this is expressed in phrases like "I want to be happy"
 - I want to avoid pain
 - I want to live
 - I don't want to die
 - I want to be protected
 - I don't want to be fearful and insecure

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To cherish is to know

- To cherish others we need to know what are their deepest needs and interests
- Need to learn to see others from this perspective
- In fairy stories there is often the theme of people being given a number of wishes and squandering them away
 - Given a wish we may wish for the wrong thing!
 - We often don't know our best interest and what's good for us
- Often what we wish for if we get it doesn't give us fulfilment
- To cherish means to know, care and give full attention to the needs of others

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