

Eight Verses for Training the Mind

*Word by word transcript of teachings given by the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje in London, UK, May 20-21, 2017.
Translation Tyler Dewar.*

Part 1/4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkSIHWj2O9c>

To begin with I would like to express my great delight at this opportunity that has come to pass for me to visit London, the capital of United Kingdom for the first time. Especially I would like to extend my warmest greetings to all you friends who are gathered here. I have been waiting for a long time to visit the United Kingdom and now that opportunity has finally arisen, and I'm so happy about this.

Even though it's my first visit, still the time allowed to this visit is very short. However, I consider this to be merely the beginning. I think of this opportunity of this short initial visit as a gateway, so that I will be able to come again and again in the future.

Lama Yeshe in his introduction mentioned the activities of the great Akong Rinpoche, and in accordance with what he said, for the longest time while I was waiting and hoping to be able to visit London, I always thought to myself: when I get to London, I will see Akong Rinpoche there. But of course, now that I have had the opportunity to come here, I wasn't able to meet with him when I arrived. There is certainly sadness to this, but nevertheless Lama Yeshe and others are continuing to faithfully uphold the vision and enlightened activities of Akong Rinpoche. And this is very heartening. Furthermore, I am confident that in the future I will be able to visit the very important seat; that is Samye Ling.

The topic of discussion for our program is the teachings of what in Tibetan are called the Lojong teachings or the teachings on Mind Training, training the mind. I think that from among those gathered here, my rough sense is that the vast majority of you are already Buddhist practitioners, who have quite some degree of familiarity with the Buddhist teachings, have been studying for some time and so on. And therefore, even though in general Lojong is considered a serious topic or a difficult topic, since most of you have been studying quite a bit of Buddhism already, I don't think you will find it to be very difficult to follow along. On the other hand, if there are some of you in the audience who are completely new to Buddhism, then you might find the material slightly challenging, but nevertheless, this is the topic that has been arranged.

From among all of the Lojong texts and teachings – and there are a great many of them – we will be focusing our discussion on a text by the Lojong master Geshe Langri Tangpa, a text called The Eight verses for Training the Mind.

HH Karmapa in English: "I found this stage is shaky, because when Lama Yeshe was introducing me, this stage was shaking. I didn't know why. Then later I found Lama Yeshe is shaking! That's why this stage is shaking, I'm sorry."

First some words of introduction about the composer, the author of the text called Eight Verses for Training the Mind, Geshe Langri Tangpa. He was a master of the Kadampa tradition of Buddhism, and was born in the year 1054 of the Common Era. He passed away in the year 1123 at the age of 69.

HHK in English: "His actual name is Dorje Senge, but everybody was calling him Langri Tangpa, because he founded a monastery at a place called Langtang. That's why he is called Langri Tangpa."

And Geshe Langri Tangpa had a nickname, he was called the grim-faced Tangpa or somber Langri Tangpa, because he wasn't known to smile or laugh very much. He always wore a very serious or dire expression on his face. So he was called grim-faced or somber.

HHK: "Lots of people think I'm also very serious. Never smiling or laughing. But that is not true. Sometimes."

And actually due to this reputation of Geshe Langri Tangpa for being so somber and serious, some Tibetans these days have pointed to this and said that this is evidence that if one practices the Dharma and focuses one's life around Buddhism, then that is not good, because we can see from examples, such as that of Langri Tangpa that practicing Buddhism just makes you suffer more. It makes you so that you never smile or laugh. It makes it so that you won't be able to enjoy your life, they say.

HHK: "Misinterpretation."

But these criticisms are misinterpretation of Geshe Langri Tangpa's somber demeanor. What his seriousness is really a sign of, is that he cared so deeply about the joys and sufferings and overall welfare of sentient beings that that's the only thing he thought about. So, rather than a sign of him being morose or unnecessarily low in spirit, his serious expression was instead a sign of his intensity and his completely pure hearted concern for others.

When we look at Geshe Langri Tangpa's demeanor from the outside, it may appear somewhat coarse or rough. But when we look at his heart of loving-kindness from the inside, it is very soft. His heart was filled with loving-kindness and compassion, and he was completely immersed in the practices of loving-kindness and compassion, and therefore utterly willing to bear witness to and take upon himself the sufferings of others. That was his whole-hearted focus. So, even though from the outside his demeanor seemed rough, on the inside his essential character was soft. And I think that this is the essential quality that Geshe Langri Tangpa possessed.

The Lojong or Mind Training teachings are more or less the primary focus or certainly one of the primary focuses of the Kadampa tradition. They are a very important body of teachings to that tradition. And in terms of that tradition's most famous texts you could say that the most famous one is the text called The Seven Points of Mind Training composed by a master named Chekawa Yeshe Dorje. This master, Chekawa Yeshe Dorje has a very interesting connection to Geshe Langri Tangpa. When Chekawa Yeshe Dorje was small he began to hear about this text called the Eight Verses of Mind Training. He overheard others chanting the text and so forth, and due to making this connection he began to develop an interest in the Kadampa tradition, he developed faith towards the Kadampa tradition and a desire to enter into its

teachings. So I think it is very clear that the author of the Seven Points of Mind Training, Chekawa Yeshe Dorje, was strongly influenced by Geshe Langri Tangpa and his Eight Verses for Training the Mind.

So, if we look at the term Lojong itself, *lo* could be translated as "mind". And one way of understanding what that means here, in this context, is to understand it as a reference to the enlightened mind or the awakened mind called bodhicitta.

HHK: "When we say mind, it primarily means bodhicitta. Then the Mind Training really means the training of bodhicitta."

If one wishes to be a bodhisattva, then the quality that one must train in is bodhicitta, *bodhi* meaning awakening, *citta* meaning heart or mind. And bodhicitta is the main indispensable practice for all bodhisattvas. Therefore Mind Training means training one's mind in the awakened heart of bodhicitta. The reason why the heart is called citta is because it is like the life force or the essential spirit for all bodhisattvas training on the path, and therefore bodhicitta is the main focus of all of the Mind Training instructions and practices. And through the Mind Training instructions we can train in developing bodhicitta in a step by step gradual manner.

So the Mind Training texts summarize the main points of bodhicitta. They are like handbooks for training our minds in bodhicitta. They are designed to be accessed readily by our minds, to be easily ascertained by our minds and even to be memorized. So the distinct feature of the Lojong texts is that they are usually short in words but pithy in their meaning.

Furthermore the main emphasis in terms of how we are to relate to the Lojong texts is that we are encouraged to put them into practice directly. So when it comes to studying and learning about Mind Training, the main quality emphasized isn't the mere acquisition of knowledge. So it's not really an intellectual project at all, but it's more about direct practice and direct training in our own personal experience.

So what the Lojong teachings aim to do is to provide us with a wide array of methods for us to make our hearts and minds bigger, for us to make our hearts and minds more vast, more encompassing. And in order to achieve this, the Lojong teachings look at things from various different angles and provide us with a wide array of different contemplations. And through engaging in contemplation in this way we endeavor to make our minds more open and more spacious, and we also endeavor to learn what the adverse conditions for developing loving-kindness and compassion are. And what the harmonious conditions for developing loving-kindness and compassion are. Having learned that we then try to reduce the obstacles or adverse conditions to developing loving-kindness and compassion and increase the favorable conditions.

In terms of the Eight Verses themselves, the verses are eight in number and going along with those eight verses there are also eight different practices that are taught. So there are eight verses, which teach eight different practices.

The practice taught by the first verse is the practice of developing an attitude of always cherishing all sentient beings. Always cherishing and deeply valuing all sentient beings is what is taught by the first verse.

The first verse of Geshe Langri Tangpa's text *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* says:

*I will rely on all sentient beings,
who surpass a wish-fulfilling jewel
to accomplish the supreme aim.
With this attitude may I always cherish beings.*

I will re-read the English translation as it appears on page 6 of the official commemorative program.

*Thinking that all sentient beings
Surpass a wish-fulfilling jewel
For accomplishing the supreme aim,
May I always cherish beings.*

This is the verse that teaches the practice of always cherishing and deeply valuing sentient beings. The example that is used to illustrate the inherent value of sentient beings is that of a diamond buried in the earth. If we want to enjoy the brightness and so forth, the excellent qualities of a diamond, then it's not going to be the case that the diamond is perfectly clean and shining from the very outset. It's going to be covered in mud, soil and so forth. Nevertheless, even though the diamond may be covered by various kinds of dirt, that dirt has no effect whatsoever upon the excellent qualities of the diamond. That dirt and those rocks are not able to inflict any harm on the inherent value of the diamond. In the same way there are all kinds of sentient beings and many of them possess all kinds of flaws. Even though sentient beings may have various character defects and so forth, whatever flaws we could identify, these flaws have no effect on the inherent high value of sentient beings, the inherent cherisability, so to speak, that is the true nature of sentient beings. These flaws can inflict no harm at all on this basic nature of sentient beings, which is worthy of being cherished.

Not only are sentient beings similar in quality to a diamond in this way, but as we see in the text, sentient beings surpass a wish-fulfilling jewel. So it's not just the case that they are similar to a diamond but they are even more valuable than a diamond or a wish-fulfilling jewel. This verse teaches us that we need to develop the attitude that sees them in this way.

We can see this principle very clearly if we look at the way the world looks these days. These days we are living in the information era, and we are living in a world in which we can see the reality of interconnectedness more and more clearly all the time. We can see very clearly, more and more so every day, how we are all connected to one another, and how we all depend on one another, whether it's when considering our clothing, or our food, or our many other needs and enjoyments. We can see very clearly how all of these necessities are provided to us by other sentient beings, and in order to live our lives we need to depend upon other sentient beings, and therefore other sentient beings are even more valuable to us than a diamond.

A diamond might be something you could say in a certain way possesses a lot of value, but if you think about it, a diamond can't give us any direct benefit; we don't really get much from directly relating with a diamond. But that is not the case with sentient beings, sentient beings directly help us, and therefore they are more important than even the most valuable jewel, and we are encouraged to recognize this here, we are encouraged to develop this outlook towards sentient beings and this attitude that sees them as

extremely valuable, as extremely sacred, as an object of great gratitude. And so, here we are encouraged to train our minds again and again to see sentient beings in this way.

I think that's about all for this first session of the day and we have one more session coming up today.

Conclusion prayers.

Part 2/4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKNtuNDnlx8>

To everyone who has come back I extend my greetings of good afternoon. As I shared this morning, our text is the Eight Verses for Training the Mind and in the same way that it has eight verses, it also teaches eight points or eight branches of practice. And as we heard this morning, the first branch of practice that is taught by the first verse is to develop an attitude that sees all sentient beings in general as being similar to a wish-fulfilling jewel, training in developing an attitude that cherishes and deeply values sentient beings sees them as important, and similar in quality to a wish-fulfilling jewel. We train our minds until this outlook develops in us.

The second verse of the text says:

*Wherever I am, whomever I'm with,
May I regard myself as lower than all others,
And from the depths of my heart,
May I hold them as supreme and cherish them.*

The practice that this verse teaches is to always be respectful toward others. So, whatever place we are at, whatever company we find ourselves in, no matter who may be around us in any direction, we train in regarding ourselves as lower than the others with whom we are sharing company. And we try to develop this attitude from the depths of our heart and the marrow of our bones. Regarding ourselves as lower than any other being with whom we may be associating we train our minds in respecting others.

HHK in English: "It's about being humble."

The main quality this verse is highlighting is being humble. So, we regard ourselves as lower and others as higher or superior or supreme, because we have this quality of pride that exists in our stream of being, and we must apply some type of antidote to remedy that pride. To remedy this pride we engage in this practice which is taught by the second verse. The reason we need to pay careful attention to our pride is that when endeavoring to benefit others we will come into relationships and connections with all kinds of different sentient beings. Sometimes we meet with people who are loaned, sometimes we meet with people who are wealthy, sometimes we meet with people who aren't educated or who are poor. We make connections and relationships with all kinds of sentient beings, and since that is the case, we need to be ready in our minds. We need to make our minds so that they are ready to be free of pride in any of these circumstances. So, preparing our minds exercising vigilance toward pride is very important.

In terms of the quality of humbleness or being free from pride, taking a lower seat, the Kadampa masters of the past have illustrated this quality using the example of the ocean. The reason why the ocean is used to illustrate the quality of humbleness is because even though the ocean occupies a great deal of the area of the planet, such a vast amount of the Earth's surface is covered by water and covered by oceans, the ocean is very vast and very deep, but nevertheless it still holds a low place. It holds the lowest place on the planet. If it weren't that way, if the ocean were to attempt to be on the highest place, then it would be impossible for the waters to descend and land in the ocean.

But since the ocean assumes the lowest location then it is able to receive the water from all rivers. And so, if we train with example of the practice of humility or holding the lowest seat, what we can do is: we ourselves we are in the process of studying how to become humble, to take an attitude that we are training in the practice of humility, and therefore anyone with whom we meet represents an opportunity to learn how to become humble. If we train in this way again and again and develop a quality of humility through that, then we will become like the ocean. Just like the ocean receives the water from all rivers we will be able to receive or obtain all virtuous qualities.

Then we can look at humbleness from the opposite perspective, which is to look at the faults of having pride, or allowing one's mind to be governed by pride. It's said that that state of arrogance is like a ball. It's like pouring water over a ball. When you pour water on a ball, it's impossible for the ball to hold any water. In the same way when our minds are governed by arrogance, there is no chance for us to see any space for improvement. We think that improvement is not necessary, something that we don't need to pursue, and because we think that way, we block any opportunity for the development for the positive qualities off.

So, having humility, holding the lowest seat is a quality that opens up a pathway for us. It opens up a pathway by which we can explore, by which we can learn more and gain more understanding. In this way seeing humility as a creator of opportunity is very important.

Sometimes we get confused about the distinction between confidence and pride. The pride that we are discussing here as something we want to swerve ourselves from, is a state of mind in which we focus on our own perceived positive qualities or our own perceived accomplishments as the reason for feeling this way, but it turns out that it's not an authentic reason. These accomplishments or positive qualities that we are focusing on when we have pride aren't what they seem to be. They are not a true basis for having that attitude. They fill up our minds with a bunch of clutter, and that prevents us from having opportunities to grow as a person. It prevents us from nourishing our positive qualities along, so that they get better and better. It blocks all of that space that would allow us to do so. But not only that, when we have this type of pride, we also engage in mentally putting down others, looking down upon others or belittling others. So whatever accomplishment or positive trait we are attributing to ourselves, we look for someone else who doesn't have that trait and we want to regard them as inferior for that reason.

So to give an example we could talk about the place where I grew up, which was in a remote area of Tibet. In the place where I was born and indeed regarding Tibet generally there is not really a high level of education, and especially in the more remote areas the access to education is very poor. There are many illiterate people and so on. But at the young age I was recognized as the Karmapa, of course, and that bumped me into many opportunities to receive an education in various ways. Even though I didn't want to

engage in study I was forced to engage in study of various kinds. Then later on I went to India and gradually I was able to visit many different places in the world.

So my insight about the world broadened, my experience of the world broadened, and because of that there have been times from time to time that I would reflect back on the ordinary types of Tibetan folks that I was surrounded by during my childhood. I would think to myself: wow, they haven't a chance to learn as much as I have, they haven't had the opportunities to have the experiences that I have, to see what I have and hear what I have, see the places in the world that I have seen and so forth. So it seems that I'm in a better spot than those folks.

This type of thinking didn't occur to me often, but it arose from time to time. But then I would meet with people from remote areas of Tibet and ordinary humble Tibetans, and of course when I meet people like this it's usually not for a long time. There is usually only a short time for us to meet, and due to that some of these people have been waiting for a long time to meet me. Some have such a strong degree of sincerity that they feel that they have been waiting all this time and this might be the only time in their lifetime that they get to have an exchange with me. So they bring this really powerful attitude of preciousness into the meeting. And of course when you feel that way, you are going to say the things that matter most to you in your heart. When I encountered these situations I was really overwhelmed by their sincerity and inspired by their humbleness. In many cases the people who came to me with such sincerity didn't have any education, they didn't have any broad experiences of the world to share and so forth, but what they did share was extremely sincere, and when I witnessed their uncontrived sincerity, then a genuine appreciation for them arose in my heart. I feel that I was then able to put them in a place above myself and assume the lower seat.

For the bodhisattvas there is no end to learning, there is no state at which the bodhisattvas arrive, at which they are told. "You've done all your training; you have received all the education one could possibly receive; there is no more you could learn after this; there is no higher state to proceed after this." The reason for that is because there is something to learn from each and every sentient being. When the bodhisattvas endeavor to benefit others, they learn something new from every sentient being they make a connection with. And sentient beings themselves are limitless. If there was only one sentient being the bodhisattvas had to help, then there wouldn't be an exhaustible source of learning for the bodhisattvas, but since sentient beings are limitless and therefore the constitutions, interests and abilities of sentient beings are limitless too, then there is no end to the bodhisattvas' learning. There is no end to the bodhisattvas' training in altruistic conduct and that's why we are encouraged by the verse two to regard ourselves as lower than all others.

We shouldn't misunderstand this point about regarding ourselves as lower than all others. We are not being encouraged to engage in self-deprecation or self-aggression, nor are we being encouraged to jettison our self-esteem thinking: "Oh, I can't do anything; I'm so bad and so forth." If we were to adopt that type of attitude, then that is what is called the laziness of self-deprecation, in other words, not trying to help others by making the excuse that you are not able. So rather than thinking in that way what regarding ourselves as lower than others here means, is that we regard others as an opportunity to learn, and we regard the sentient beings who we meet with as educators, someone who have something to teach us. Thinking in this way and with this motivation the bodhisattvas learn something everywhere they go, and their training has

no end. For as long as sentient beings have not been exhausted then the trainings of the bodhisattva are not exhausted.

HHK: "From the beginning I wanted to give this in English, but so many pages here. After I arrived in England, wow, they speak very good English, that's why I think better to forget about these things [the papers written in English in front of him]."

The third verse says:

*In all activities I will examine my mind stream.
Since mental afflictions damage myself and others,
The moment they arise,
May I energetically face and reverse them.*

Whatever activities we are engaging in, going somewhere, sitting, sleeping or what have you, we should always examine our own mind stream, and whenever a negative emotion arises, then we try to energetically or very strongly reverse them or put a stop to them the very moment that they arise. The practice that this verse is teaching, or the branch of practice, is to apply the antidote to mental afflictions or disturbing emotions, in other words to practice heedfulness and mindfulness. So we are encouraged to have constant vigilance over the state of our mind, whatever it is that we may be doing, whether it be relaxing, driving a vehicle, facebooking or any other activity that we are engaged in.

These days it is not uncommon to hear presentations of Buddhism that emphasize meditation as a method of relaxation. Sometimes we might derive an understanding that the whole of Buddhism is about making our mind relaxed, and so we take an approach to Buddhism as if it were one big spiritual massage. But here in the context of the Lojong teachings it's not like that. It's more like an intensive therapy for our mind, or an intensive series of exercises for our hearts and minds. So it's not just about relaxation per se.

The reason why we could call it an intensive process is because on the path of awakening and on the path of mind training what we are trying to do is to change our habits. Some of our habits run very deep and some of those deep-running habits are negative habits. It's not necessarily going to be easy for us to change them. The process of changing those bad habits and getting into new, more constructive or healthy habits might entail some hard work and some experiences of feeling sore and so forth. So it's not all just easy going.

It's important for us to have a plan in place regarding how to care for our mind in any given situation. We shouldn't let our mind simply follow its regular habits as we go about our day. If we simply let our mind go wherever it wants to go, then that's how we become stubborn. There is a saying in Tibetan that says: "Appearances are skilled at deception and the mind is like a small child that follows along." So appearances are very good at tricking us and our mind can often be like a small child that just follows after the trick. Instead of simply letting our mind be fooled by appearances again and again, we should take care of this small child well, closely and carefully, instead of letting it do whatever it desires. This is very important, and that's why we are encouraged to always examine our mind to see what kind of a state that it is in.

The great Kadampa masters of the past would use games as skillful method for helping examining the state of the mind. We hear stories of past Kadampa masters having a group black stones and a group of white stones and using them to count the negative versus the positive thoughts that had occurred in their minds. In modern language we could refer to this as kind of mindfulness game. And we can build on that idea. It would be difficult for us to carry around a bunch of black and white stones with us all the time as a method of keeping track of our mind, but we can build on that approach of the great Kadampa masters of the past and take an attitude of creative play with us into this endeavor of continually examining our mind and watching out for disturbing emotions.

We can take this approach and then see what the win/loss ratio is for ourselves personally. How many times do we win against our negative emotions, how many times do we lose against our negative emotions? And we can simply give it our best shot and see how we are doing, what the results are, and see if we can get our mind into some more positive habits in that way. This is the way we can apply effort to continually examining the state of our mind. But it won't happen simply by making a wish: "May my mind get into better habits" or "May my negative emotions be reduced." It's not going to happen just by making this wish; we need to put effort into constantly examining our mind again and again.

The fourth verse says:

*Whenever I see beings of ill character
Weighed down by harsh misdeeds and suffering,
As if I had discovered a treasury of precious jewels,
May I cherish them as something difficult to find.*

The branch of practice indicated by this verse is the practice of cherishing sentient beings who are weighed down by harsh misdeeds and harsh forms of suffering, and I think this branch is particularly connected to the practice of compassion. Here we are encouraged to regard our encounters with sentient beings who have very negative dispositions or very difficult personalities, as well as our encounters with sentient beings who are undergoing harsh types of suffering, and sentient beings who are in the process of committing severe negative actions, making very big mistakes or engaging activity that is very harmful; we are encouraged to regard all of these instances as opportunities for training in compassion, as opportunities for furthering the quality of our compassion, improving the quality of our compassion, making our compassion more vast, and putting our compassion to use. And we do this as well when we see sentient beings who are experiencing harsh forms of suffering, such as illness.

Of course the point that is being made here is very easy to understand, but when it comes to put it into practice, that is very difficult.

We have some questions.

Question: Do you talk with the birds in this lifetime and what do they say? The 16th Karmapa spoke to the birds.

His Holiness started about by saying: "Yeah, I phone to them sometimes!" (HHK: "No, no.") He said, when I was young and recognized as the Karmapa, a bunch of people would tell be about the 16th Karmapa's

affection for birds, and they would say: “Well, you have to like birds, too, because your predecessor really liked birds.” So, people gave me all kinds of different birds: parrots and so forth. But I was always uncomfortable with keeping birds in steel cages. It never felt quite right to me, and I never felt comfortable with that situation of keeping birds in cages. To me it always made more sense to have the birds...

HHK in English: “Because I have always been encaged.”

So to me it makes sense to let the birds be in their natural environment and move in their natural environment as they wish. So, in terms of keeping birds I’ve never had... I don’t feel that I have quite been able to get into it so much.

HHK: “I tried many times when I was small in Tibet, but always failed. I’m not so capable of keeping birds and taking care of them, it’s very difficult for me. But I tried.”

The next question.

HHK: “First you have to tell me, then I decide.”

The question says: I have been practicing Dharma for 40+ years and was expecting the world to be just a little better towards the end of my life. Could you explain where I’m going wrong with the state of the present world? Thank you Karmapa.

Answer: Well, it’s difficult to make all of the world better. From a certain perspective we can reflect on this state of the world and begin to lose hope, but on the other hand sometimes we see just one person practicing compassion and that can help us to feel more encouraged, one person practicing compassion or having a good heart. So, sometimes our feeling about the world depends on whose behavior we are witnessing. We can witness individuals practicing compassion and feel good about the world, but then turn around and see others doing negative things, and start to lose hope again.

So I think at the end of the day it all depends on what we do with ourselves, and that’s the most important thing. If we can work on ourselves and make ourselves a better person, then we will definitely be helping the world, because we will be decreasing the number of confused people of ill will in the world and increasing the number of good hearted people in the world. And I think that when you really look carefully that we will be able to accept that as good news, when we work on ourselves as people and improve ourselves. Apart from that it’s very difficult to simply make the world a better place.

So, for example, I read the news quite a bit, and I read a certain version of a digital newspaper that have a section entitled “Good News”, and the other sections are simply regular newsfeeds. And the section on good news doesn’t get updated very much with new headlines, one or two new headlines every once in a while. All of the other sections of the news are constantly getting updated with new headlines that are mostly discouraging developments. But sometimes that’s just because that’s what the news is reporting. Sometimes even though there is nothing shocking happening in terms of positive developments and therefore they don’t get reported, there are still many positive developments that are happening.

So it depends on what we are aware of that's happening in terms of good things happening. And sometimes it can depend on what the news is reporting as well and what is being emphasized there. So there are a lot of good things happening that we don't hear about, and I think it's important to keep that in mind, too.

Question: How does one deal with and accept discrimination?

His Holiness said that it's very important to start by acknowledging our basic commonality as human beings and start at the most basic level. This is connected to developing loving-kindness and compassion. When we can look at or toward other sentient beings with loving-kindness and compassion and remove all of our labels about others, then we see that we are the same as human beings, and there really aren't any distinctions that separate us at the deepest level. When we connect to this deepest level, that will increase the respect and love that we have for others, and it will also help us to be closer to one another, help us to move into a state of being more closely connected to one another. Conversely, if we simply follow after the labels that we apply, the projections that we apply to others, and think that those labels are real, then that brings us further and further apart.

So, in terms of working with discrimination within ourselves, it's very important to connect with this understanding who we all are basically as human beings, and develop the loving-kindness and compassion that is willing to let go all of the labels that we use. And then in terms of helping to face discrimination in the society I think that the more we connect with this loving-kindness and compassion within ourselves, the more we will be able to share that with others, and this will have a beneficial effect.

I think that is enough for today. We will conclude at this point, and when we come together again tomorrow morning, we will continue our explanation of the mind training text. And then tomorrow afternoon there will be an empowerment.

Part 3/4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILfR--eYODE>

I would like to greet all of you who have come to here this morning, good morning to all. And during this morning session we will continue our exploration of the text known as The Eight Verses for Training the Mind, which we began looking at yesterday. Specifically the place where we left our discussion yesterday was that we were discussing the fourth verse:

*Whenever I see beings of ill character
Weighed down by harsh misdeeds and suffering,
As if I had discovered a treasury of precious jewels,
May I cherish them as something difficult to find.*

HHK in English: "Here we are talking about cherishing three different types of people: people with very bad character, people who are weighed down by the severe misdeeds and people who are weighed down by severe suffering."

The practice associated with this verse entails relating to three different kinds of people as His Holiness said: people with very bad or ill character, people who are weighed down by severe misdeeds and people who are experiencing extreme forms of suffering. As to the first type of individuals, those of ill character, this refers essentially to what we would normally think of as simply horrible people. It refers to people whose minds are completely overpowered by very strong disturbing emotions and who as a result of that have no self-control whatsoever. Their minds are incapacitated by their own disturbing emotions. These types of individuals can variously be overcome by strong pride or arrogance, strong aggression, or strong jealousy and so on.

And sometimes we encounter family members who fit into this category of those who are very ill-natured. So, sometimes we witness our family members behaving in erratic ways, becoming extremely irritable, angry and so forth. Even if they are a good person most of the time, sometimes we see them in their worst states, when they are overpowered by very destructive emotions. And this can become amplified if certain conditions trigger outbursts of destructive emotions, conditions such as alcohol and so forth.

So we encounter these types of situations with various people, and sometimes we even encounter such situations with spiritual teachers. We may be aware of certain spiritual teachers who are not completely bad people, you can't say that they have no Dharma practice at all, because they clearly do, and in many ways can be an excellent teacher. But on the other hand as we get to know them, we may see that they have certain issues with their personalities that are very problematic.

To give a historical example we could look at the great master Marpa from the Kagyu lineage. He is someone who we could say had some issues with his personality. From the time he was small his father was very worried about him, because he immediately recognized that he had a very rough personality or rough character, and his father thought to himself: "This child of mine has really rough streak, and it's so bad that I'm really afraid that either he is going to end up killing someone or get killed by someone." In the same way we can see evidence of Marpa's personality traits surfacing in the life story of Milarepa. Whether it was intentional or not on the part of Marpa he certainly displayed some outward behaviors that were very rough. And I think that if we were being honest with ourselves we would have to say that we wouldn't be able to tolerate that if we were in Milarepa's shoes. In any case we do encounter beings with these various types of traits in our lives.

The second category of individuals who we are instructed and encouraged to cherish by this verse is those who have committed severe misdeeds. An example of this type of individual is one who has committed very serious crimes. It could be someone who has killed many people, perhaps even multiple thousands of people. Of course in our modern times we are aware of many different acts of violent extremism using explosives to take life in a massive scale or to cause massive destruction and so on. If we look closely at the realities of these individuals, we will see that their hearts and minds are completely filled with destructive emotions, such as anger, resentment, malicious intent and jealousy, and their minds completely overpowered by these negative emotions motivate their destructive actions. So rather than being under their own control these individuals are completely under the control of very destructive emotions, and for this reason we are encouraged to cherish them as objects of our compassion.

The final category of individuals that is raised here is those who are weighed down by extreme forms of suffering. So this can include individuals who are facing very serious and painful illnesses. Our normal

reaction to seeing the suffering of these individuals is to dissociate. Our minds want to avoid bearing witness to their suffering, because their suffering is so overwhelming to us, and because we don't know how to hold our minds in response to seeing that suffering. We don't know precisely what to think or what we should do. So, at some level of our being we make the decision to try to avoid bearing witness to that suffering. And the same reaction can even happen when a severe illness occurs in our family. On one hand we feel great compassion and closeness to the family member who is afflicted by the illness, but on the other hand we feel powerless. Because the suffering is so severe, we don't know what to think or do. And so, instead of remaining in a place of compassion our mind begins to try to avoid the situation, to avoid the awareness of that severe suffering.

So basically our instinctive reaction in many cases when witnessing or coming into connection with any three of these types of individuals is to try to avoid them or try to avoid the situation in some way or another. Therefore this verse was taught, because on the bodhisattva path when we endeavor to benefit others we will make connection with great many sentient beings, and all different types of sentient beings. From among these connections some of them will be with sentient beings who have very bad character, some connections will be with sentient beings who have performed or are performing serious negative actions, and some connections will be with sentient beings who are weighed down by severe illness.

If we don't have some type of training or habit of training already present in our minds, when we come into relationship with these beings, then it will be difficult for us to make a good connection with them and for us to truly face their situation. That's why the trainings of this fourth verse are taught here, so that we can begin to train our minds so that we will be able to face these situations properly.

It is important for us to cherish beings who fit into these categories, because the trainings in compassion overall are all about shortening the distance between ourselves as generators of compassion and the sentient beings who are the objects of our compassion. When we cultivate compassion we want to avoid having an attitude that thinks that our situation is good and the situation of those for whom we are feeling compassion is bad. Rather than thinking that way we regard the one who feels compassion and the object of the compassion as not separate from each other, not different. In fact, when we engender true compassion, then that compassion is a situation where we become the object of our compassion, a situation where we actually transfer ourselves into the situation of the sentient beings for whom we feel compassion. In that way we fully accept their situation and their suffering. And that compassion is compassion of full involvement. This is a very important point to train in. If we don't train in this way, then we will always come up with excuses not to become intimately familiar with the sufferings of these three types of individuals, and we will find that most of our excuses are in some way connected with the mind of self-centeredness.

We say to ourselves "I'm uncomfortable with relating to this suffering, with relating to this individual. It makes me upset, I don't want to face it," and so forth. But I think if we really analyze those excuses well, we will see that these excuses are not authentic reasons for us to avoid dealing with those sentient beings' suffering. When we examine our mind and train in this way, it will help those types of selfish excuses diminish further and further.

That completes our discussion of the meaning of the fourth verse. Verse number five says:

*When others, out of jealousy,
Scold, insult, and treat me in other unreasonable ways,
May I take such defeat upon myself
And offer victory to others.*

The practice taught by this verse is a bit of a challenging practice. Usually, when we are scolded or insulted by others, we are not able to take the blame that they cast toward us. When it comes to assigning blame or fault, the usual habit is that others point their fingers at us, and then we begin pointing our finger at others. It's very difficult in any situation for us to accept that something is our fault or due to a problem or flaw on our side. We are not able to turn our attention inwards and direct it at ourselves, because we are so overwhelmed by the emotions of the moment. And so, instead we resort to turning our attention outward and pointing our finger outward.

Therefore, to counteract this habit we are encouraged by this verse to take defeat upon ourselves and offer victory to others. This phrase is a very important phrase that occurs in the key instructions of the Kadampa tradition over and over again: taking the defeat upon oneself, offering the victory to others.

However, sometimes since this instruction is so famous and is repeated over and over again, sometimes its meaning is lost and people focus too much on the words themselves. For example, if someone were to be sued in a court of law, and familiar with this instruction from the Kadam tradition of offering victory to others and taking defeat upon oneself, one might be tempted to just simply follow the literal meaning of that instruction and give up one's case immediately and let the other side win the lawsuit. But that type of an approach is too literal of an interpretation of this instruction.

The true intent behind the instruction or encouragement to give victory to others and take defeat upon oneself isn't just simply to follow some outward shape of one's behavior. If one were to simply allow oneself to be defeated in every situation and think that one was training in bodhicitta by doing so, then that would be a mistake. To allow others to always prevail over oneself just for the sake of allowing them to prevail, and accepting defeat for oneself just for the sake of accepting defeat, if you took that approach it's not very clear how much bodhicitta would develop within your mind stream. It would be difficult to cause bodhicitta to increase within one's mind stream just by behaving in that way.

The deeper intent behind this instruction is to direct our intention inwards whenever we are blamed for something. So even if we have done nothing wrong and are not at fault at all, and someone still blames us, we can relax and simply direct our attention inwards. Sometimes what happens is that – if we have done nothing wrong, yet someone blames us for something – we immediately become angry and want to fight back with them. But the instruction we are encouraged to adopt here is one in which we simply relax and direct our attention inward. Having relaxed and directed our attention inward we can then look carefully at our own situation on the inside and then respond from that relaxed state of mind.

I think the real intention behind the instruction to take the defeat upon ourselves and offer victory to others is to bring it all back to an essential point of relating with our own self-centeredness, our own habits of self-centricity, otherwise known as self-fixation. If we examine our minds and discover that in some ways we do have strong habits of self-fixation, then it is precisely those states of mind that we are aiming to pacify or loosen up through our mind training. So if something happens, whatever it may be, if we can take

that situation as a cause for pacifying our own self-fixation even a little bit, then I think we will be fulfilling the instruction that is given here to take defeat upon oneself. I think that we can essentially interpret this instruction to mean that we want our habits of self-fixation to be defeated. That's what we are really trying to defeat.

The sixth verse of the text says:

*Even if someone in whom I have high expectations
From helping them in the past
Were to senselessly harm me,
May I regard them as my genuine teacher.*

This is another of those verses that is very easy to understand in terms of words but very difficult to practice in terms of its meaning. So the words are very clear, the principle being illustrated is very clear, but when it comes to our direct experience in our own lives, if someone we had benefited ourselves and in relation to whom we had great hope and expectation were to harm or hurt us, that really leaves a wound in our hearts. It leaves a mark in our minds; we suffer a lot when that happens. And so this verse provides us a training to engage in, to prepare our minds for such a situation.

Generally speaking it's very difficult to get our hopes and reality to align with one another. There are many times in our lives when what is actually happening is not living up to our hopes, what we hoped would happen. And certainly I have experienced this a lot in my own life. Perhaps, if I shared an example in my own life experience, it would be beneficial.

I think most of you know the basic details of the history of my life, perhaps some of you don't. I was born in a very remote and humble area of Tibet and it is said that when I was born various auspicious signs and omens were seen. We Tibetans have a very strong habit of taking this to mean – if there are very clearly evident signs and omens present when a child is born – that that must mean that the child is the reincarnation of a previous master, what is known as a tulku in Tibetan. Tibetans have great trust in this tradition.

And so it was generally assumed in my family that I was the incarnation of some previous master, that I was some form of tulku. But my parents certainly didn't assume or even think that I could possibly be the Karmapa. They hadn't considered that possibility even in their dreams. But nevertheless, one day a search party from Tsurphu Monastery came to my village searching for the reincarnation of the Karmapa and we were all greatly shocked by this, but when we were told eventually that I was the reincarnation of the Karmapa, there was no room for us to doubt this.

So when the reality started setting in that I was going to become, so to speak, the Karmapa, I had various expectations of what it would be like. I thought that I would get even more toys to play with and more friends to play with. But when the reality of the situation set in, it didn't meet my expectations.

The search party led me to Tsurphu Monastery, which is 72 km from the city of Lhasa. But the roads are very poor and so the beginning part was done by automobile, but in the end to accord with tradition my transportation was provided by horse. So I was riding on horseback into the grounds of Tsurphu Monastery.

And that's when I started to get very nervous, because as I was arriving into the grounds of Tsurphu Monastery, they began banging on drums and clanging the cymbals together, playing the ceremonial music. And this made me very nervous, because it wasn't what I had pictured in terms of what being the Karmapa would be like. When I was little I would play games with my friends where I would pretend I was the lama and they would pretend they were the students, and I thought that being the Karmapa would pretty much look like that, like the games that we had played. But when the horns and cymbals and drums started sounding, that's when I became really nervous and started to realize that it wasn't going to be like that at all.

HHK: "People looked at me with very serious eyes. That's why I was nervous, I think."

Then, when I was 14 years old I left Tibet, and came to India. And it has been 17 years since I have moved to India. Of course when I came to India I had certain expectations of what that would be like. I have been asked again and again: why did I leave Tibet, why did I come to India. And it gets a little tiring of explaining the reasons over and over again. It seems that some people think that there is some great shocking secret that is the reason why I left Tibet and came to India, but really it's not anything shocking or any type of secret at all. It is that I wanted to travel freely to other countries of the world. That was my main hope in coming to India, but it didn't turn out that way for quite some time.

This very visit to United Kingdom is a perfect example of that. Many, many Tibetans are aware of the UK and actually the Tibetan region and the UK are areas that have a very strong connection with each other. And so, I have been hoping for a very long time to be able to visit the United Kingdom. And if things had gone according to my hopes and expectations, this present visit would not be my first visit, but it would be one that had been preceded by several previous visits. But in terms of what has really happened it's my first visit. So, we encounter all kinds of situations, in which our hopes and expectations aren't the way things happen in reality. And whenever this happens it's a challenge for our minds to deal with it.

These days I do not have many expectations. The main way I try to think now is to simply hold to the attitude of wishing to benefit others, and hold to the attitude of loving other sentient beings. I think that that is the best way for all of us to do it. Then, even if we are not able to accomplish benefit in a grand scale, according to specific plans that we might have, if we still have this heart and attitude that wishes to help others and that is filled with love for others, then that itself will be enough. For me personally I feel that it is enough to hold this love of others and wish to be helpful to others. And if the only result that comes from that is a few people in the world knowing there is someone who cares for me, there is someone who wishes me well, then that will be enough, that will fulfill my purpose in life. And that's the attitude that enables me to continue taking steps forward. It's just this simple attitude of wishing to be helpful to others and wanting to share love with others. I feel that that is all that is needed. We don't need to necessarily fulfill grand plans in terms of what some type of vast benefit for others might look like.

Next is verse seven:

*"In sum, whether directly or indirectly
May I offer all benefit and joy to my mothers.
When my mothers are harmed or suffer,
May I secretly take these harms upon myself."*

Since we are running short on time, I think that the best way would be for us to explore verses seven and eight as part of the session of the empowerment this afternoon. So, together with the empowerment we can also explore the verses seven and eight of the text.

This afternoon's empowerment will be the empowerment of Avalokiteshvara, Chenrezig. Chenrezig is a special deity in connection with the Kadampa tradition. The Kadampa tradition has four special deities that are associated with it in an uncommon way. So Chenrezig is one of these special deities associated with the Kadampa tradition. And more than that, the essential, indispensable quality for us to train in, if we are to develop bodhicitta, is great compassion. And Chenrezig is a deity that symbolized great compassion. Chenrezig is considered to be the condensed single embodiment of all of the compassion of all Buddhas arisen in a form of a deity.

Part 4/4

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwQE_k4FXME

Continuing from this morning's presentation I will now discuss the seventh and eight verses from the text called The Eight Verses for Training the Mind.

The seventh verse says:

*"In sum, whether directly or indirectly
May I offer all benefit and joy to my mothers.
When my mothers are harmed or suffer,
May I secretly take these harms upon myself."*

The main practice taught by this verse, I think, is the practice of tonglen, sending and taking. I think that the word "secretly" that appears in this verse can be interpreted to hold two meanings. The first meaning of secrecy here refers to the fact that traditionally in the Kadampa Lineage the practices for exchanging self and other, including tonglen or sending and taking meditation, were held to be secret practices that were not taught to everyone generally. So this was the way in which these instructions were held originally in the tradition of Atisha. The instructions were only given to certain individuals who had done the proper preparations and were taught to be held back from individuals who were not suitable vessels for those instructions.

Another meaning of secrecy that applies here is that the meaning of tonglen practice, or sending and taking meditation, is that we take upon ourselves the harms and sufferings of other sentient beings and we send to them all of our own benefit and happiness. In this way we come to regard the benefit of others as more important than the benefit of ourselves, and in fact we come to regard accomplishing the benefit of others as the supreme way to accomplish our own benefit. When we go about doing this, we must be free from hope for reciprocation of the benefit that we give to others. We shouldn't hope for anything in return for our beneficial actions and so to avoid fixation on such hope it's taught that we should benefit others secretly, in other words in a way in which they won't even know we were the ones who helped them. If we benefit beings in a way in which we make them know that it is us who are assisting them, then that can become an attitude that involves hope and expectation for some kind of reward.

The practice of tonglen meditation, sending and taking, involves sending sentient beings all of one's own happiness and taking upon oneself all of the sufferings of beings. But it's very difficult to affect that type of transference in a physical way. There have been given a few examples throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism of masters who were literally able to physically take on the sufferings of others onto themselves, but those examples are extremely rare. However, not only are there said to be living persons who are capable of this. There are also legends of certain statues that were said to be capable of taking on sufferings of other sentient beings. There are stories of a statue that was stationary in a particular monastery and sometimes that monastery was attacked by a vicious disease. One of the symptoms was that painful bumps or lumps arose on the skin of the people. It is said that the statue began to develop lumps on its skin and was thus taking on the sufferings of others. So there are stories of this nature.

There is this type of belief in certain instances of tonglen being very literal and physical. But aside from that it would be very hard for us to physically take on the sufferings of sentient beings upon ourselves. Moreover it would be extremely difficult for us to bear the suffering of all the sentient beings in our own single body.

The main point then of tonglen practice isn't to try to do it physically, but to engage in tonglen as a method of training our mind. To take it as a mental action in order to adjust our attitude mentally and to increase the strength of our heart, so that when we witness the suffering of other sentient beings, rather than shying away from it or wanting to avoid it, it increases the strength of our heart, it increases the strength of our compassion. It makes our heart and mind more vast and more broad, we become more and more willing to go out and meet the sufferings of sentient beings. By engaging in the mental practice of tonglen we develop more and more patience and strength of heart, and cause these qualities to flourish further and further.

Then the eight verse says:

*"All the while may I be uncorrupted
By thoughts of the eight worldly concerns.
With a mind that knows all things to be illusions
Free of clinging, may I be liberated from the fetters."*

This verse is connected to the view of emptiness. Free from the reification of the eight worldly concerns we train our mind in the illusion like outlook that sees that things are not real.

There are all kinds of ways in which the term "emptiness" can be explained or interpreted. Sometimes emptiness is explained to be what is called a non-implicative negation. Sometimes it is explained in a manner of implicative negation, or in simpler language we could say that sometimes emptiness is explained to mean "no", and sometimes emptiness is explained to mean "not". Emptiness is not nothingness. The basic meaning of emptiness is the basic space that is the source of everything. It is the source of all new opportunities. It is the opposite of our usual habit of fixation, which prevents freshness from arising.

Our usual habit is to follow after the projections of our thoughts. Our confused thoughts are busy all of the time making projections on top of what is actually happening. Through emptiness we let go of all of those

confused projections and return to our original state. So all of that confused projecting that our thoughts usually do is returned to zero by understanding emptiness. When we return to our zero in that way, then there is fresh space for new ideas to arise. If we don't return to zero in this way through connecting with emptiness, then we just follow after our old ideas, our old confusion, our old habits, and in this state it is very difficult for fresh intelligence to take birth. Therefore understanding emptiness helps us to let go of our clinging, let go of our reification and return to freshness, return to the very basics of who we are.

I think we can allow what has been said thus far to suffice as an explanation of the Eight Verses for Training the Mind. As was said previously, the Lojong teachings are designed to be short in terms of their words, but pithy in terms of their meaning. So I feel that these instructions that we have explored together can become valuable support to your practice, since the Lojong teachings contain all of the essential points for how to practice. Furthermore I feel that it would be very valuable and helpful if you were to memorize the words of this text. Doing that will provide a support of having a further reminder in your day-to-day lives to practice the meaning of the Lojong teachings. So in this way I am confident that these teachings will be beneficial.

Chenrezig Empowerment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4znOTMvaTHM>, starting approximately at 48:00

So now we will proceed into the empowerment of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig. The initial stages involve the master of the empowerment performing various stages of the empowerment that do not require commentary.

As was explained to you before, Chenrezig or Avalokiteshvara is a very important bodhisattva of the Mahayana. Mainly Avalokiteshvara symbolizes compassion. So traditionally the main deity symbolizing wisdom or prajna is Manjushri and the main deity symbolizing compassion is Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig.

I think that it's particularly fitting for us to have this Chenrezig empowerment in the context of this weekend program that has focused, as it has, on the Lojong, or Mind Training teachings. Other than that I don't have much to say. We will proceed the subsequent stages of the empowerment, and some of these stages involve repeating words after the vajramaster.

This completes the empowerment of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, and next I will offer the scriptural transmission of the sadhana of Avalokiteshvara, All-Pervading Benefit of Beings, as well as a scriptural transmission for a ngondro text, or text of recitation for the preliminary practices that was compiled by myself.

This completes the two scriptural transmissions. At this time I'd like to express my great delight that this occasion has come to pass of my first visit to the country of the United Kingdom and its capital city, London. This time around I wasn't able to visit other regions of the United Kingdom, such as Scotland and Wales,

and it's not good to discuss the reasons behind this in public. However I would simply like to say that I very much hope that in the near future I will be able to return and at that time visit all these other regions.

I would especially like to acknowledge the presence, and acknowledge my gratitude for Lama Chime, Ato Rinpoche and Lama Yeshe, all of whom were the disciples of the 16th Karmapa. They are all advanced in years and have waited a long time for me to visit England. They have waited for a long time and requested me to come for a long time, and I am so happy that I have finally had to chance to fulfil their request and come to meet them in person here in England. And as I said previously, I always had it in my mind that when I finally came to England, I would see Akong Rinpoche here. And that wasn't able to happen, which makes me sad. But nevertheless I have been able to come and meet personally with these senior representatives of my lineage. This makes me very happy.

I'm also happy to be with the sangha. There are many representatives and members here from Samye Ling, and it's very special to be together with them. There are also many members of sanghas from other countries, from all over. It's very special to be with them as well, many representatives of sanghas that I don't get to spend a lot of time with. And then of course there are friends and acquaintances whom I know from before, and therefore to have all of us together here is like a family gathering. All of you have come and generously given your time to be here. This gives me great joy and I would like to thank everyone for this.

Several of Akong Rinpoche's students and representatives have been requesting me to help recognize the incarnation of Akong Rinpoche, and this is a situation that might require some further explanation and context. Generally speaking, there are fewer reincarnations that are recognized in India, and even in China the number of recognized incarnations is decreasing these days, because the Chinese government has exercised more...

When I was in Tibet I recognized somewhere in the neighborhood of 30 or 40 tulkus altogether, reincarnated lamas. But since I have come to India, the number of tulkus I have recognized has certainly gone down. However, nonetheless I have been able to recognize the reincarnation of Kyabje Bokar Rinpoche and as well I was able to recognize the reincarnation of Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche. So, at this pace it has been, roughly speaking, one could say, about one recognition per year. But the fact that I have made these recognitions makes some other people more and more pushy towards me. They say: "Hey, you've recognized these other lamas, reincarnations, how come you are not recognizing ours? You must help us and recognize our lama's reincarnation!"

So my response to that is: let's take it slow and we will see. I think the main point in regard to Akong Rinpoche is that his disciples should continue fulfilling his wishes, continue propagating his enlightened activity, and if they do that, then I feel that the enlightened intention of their guru will be fulfilled, and that's all.

Next we will recite a prayer. After that Chloe (Roberts) will give a speech and I look forward to hearing it.