

The Smooth Path Leading to the Omniscient State,

Graphic Teachings on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment

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(pan chen blo bzang chos rgyan 1567-1662)

I constantly bow down at the feet of the venerable and holy Lama who is inseparable from Buddha Vajradhara! Please take care of me with great love!

With regards to the stages of the path to Enlightenment – the profound method that leads fortunate beings to Buddhahood - it is divided into two: “**How to practice Guru Devotion -the root of the path**” and “**How to train one’s mind after one has generated devotion**”. The first outline has two subdivisions: “**How to practice during the formal meditation session**” and “**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**”.

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**". The preparation consists of sitting on a comfortable seat in a pleasant place and assuming the bodily position in eight points or any other comfortable position. After having examined your mental state, within a particular virtuous mind, imagine a vast and high throne lifted by eight big snow lions in the space in front of you.

Upon it is a variegated lotus, moon and sun disks seat, and upon it is seated your kind root Guru, in the form of Buddha Shakyamuni. He is of a luminescent gold hue; his head is adorned with the crown protrusion; his right hand touches the earth and the left is in the meditation posture holding a begging bowl filled with nectar. He is clad in the three saffron robes. He is adorned with the major and minor noble marks of a Buddha and he is in the nature of radiant light. He is sitting in the cross-legged position in a halo of bright light coming from his body. He is surrounded by the lineage and root Gurus, Yidams, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dakas, Dakinis, and the supramundane Dharma protectors. In front of each of them, sits a beautiful table

and on it luminous texts whose essence is their respective specialty teaching -the scriptural Dharma¹.

Imagine that all the figures of the merit field are looking at you with benevolence. Likewise you gaze at them with great admiration remembering their good qualities and kindness.

Contemplate that although yourself and all mother sentient beings have already undergone - from beginning less time until now - various and countless sufferings; the general samsaric sufferings and in particular the three types of unfortunate rebirths' sufferings. On top of that, we still have to experience many more sufferings that are difficult to bear and are endless! Therefore, at this time when I have obtain a special rebirth, that is so difficult to find and so meaningful when it is obtained, if I don't use it to accomplish the supreme liberation from all samsaric sufferings - the state of Guru-Buddha - I will have to undergo many other various types of sufferings - the general samsaric sufferings and in particular the three types of unfortunate rebirths' sufferings. Since the Guru-Three Jewels residing in front of me have the ability to protect from these sufferings, I go for refuge from the depth of my heart to the Guru-Three Jewels because I have to accomplish the precious Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings in every way possible.

Upon completing the practice of refuge, Bodhicitta and the 'Four Immeasurable Thoughts' contemplate the following passage while reciting it seven or twenty-one times:

"For the sake of all mother beings, I have to attain in every way possible the precious perfect and complete Enlightenment quickly, and even more quickly. Therefore I will undertake, through the profound path of Guru-Yoga, the meditation of the stages of the path to Enlightenment".

Then [contemplate again the merit field] from: "In the space in front of you, a vast and high throne lifted by eight big snow lions. Upon it is a variegated lotus, moon and sun disks seat

¹ Vasubhandu's famous stanza states: "There are two aspects in the Holy Dharma; that which is in the nature of scriptures (scriptural Dharma) and that which is in the nature of realizations (Dharma of realization). The only way to uphold it is to explain it and practice it."

and upon it is seated your kind root Guru, in the form of Buddha Shakyamuni. He is of a luminescent gold hue”....till: “He is sitting in the cross-legged position.” [then continue:]

In the space above and behind the main figure, on a seat of variegated lotus, moon and disk sun seats Buddha-Vajradhara surrounded by lineage Masters of the 'Blessed Practices'. At the right [of the main figure] is the venerable Maitreya, surrounded by the lineage Masters of the 'Vast Conduct' and at the left is the venerable Manjushri, surrounded by the lineage Masters of the 'Profound View'. In the front [of the main figure] is the kind root Guru surrounded by all the Masters from whom we have received teachings directly. They are surrounded by Yidams, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Dakas, Dakinis, and the supramundane Dharma protectors. In front of each of them, sits a beautiful table and on it are luminous texts whose essence is their respective specialty teaching -the scriptural Dharma. To the farther side of all of them, in the ten directions, there are inconceivable emanations displayed by the main figure and by his entourage in order to tame beings. At the crown of the main figure and of all the figures of the entourage, is a white syllable ‘OM’, at the throat a red syllable ‘AH’, at the heart a blue syllable “‘HUM’, at the navel a yellow syllable ‘SVA’, and at the secret place a green syllable ‘HA’. Five rays of light are radiated from these. Light from the syllable ‘HUM’ at the heart of the Guru-Buddha is radiated in the ten directions. This invites the wisdom beings from their natural abodes².

Once they have absorbed into the ‘samaya beings’ (*the beings visualized by the practitioner*) imagine that they have become the embodiment of all objects of refuge. After offering the 'Seven-Limbs Prayer' and the 'Mandala', make supplications and - as (*it is explained*)

² Natural here means 'primordial' or 'initial' and it refers to the places where some Bodhisattvas have attained Buddhahood originally or at the beginning. There are two types of natural abode: those which serve as abodes for the Buddhas' Enjoyment Bodies and those that serve as abodes for their Truth Bodies that are primordially pure. Furthermore, the great 19th century scholar Ja-Drel Ghyal-Rong Ge-sce Zul-Trim Nyi-ma (Bya Bral rGyal Rong dGe bShe Tshul Thrin Nyi Ma), in his commentary on the Guru-Puja explains: "...while the Guru-Buddha's holy mind - the exalted wisdom of great bliss of the Dharmakaya - is absorbed uninterruptedly in the sphere of reality, his natural abode, the Guru-Buddha appears in the form of the deities wished for by the disciples, like water [poured] in other water, so that these two [the Guru-Buddha and the deity] are inseparable, of the same taste.

in the instructions - make sure that your mind is infused with them.³

The kind root Guru merges into Buddha Shakyamuni (*the main figure*) and this, in turn, merges into the root Lama who abides on the top of our head. Due to this, the root Guru transforms in the one whose essence is our kind root Lama and who appears with the aspect of Buddha Shakyamuni, he is seated upon a variegated lotus, moon and sun disks seat [mentally review the visualization of the merit field as described above from this point till] "He is sitting in the cross-legged position in a halo of bright light coming from His body." After having offered briefly the 'Seven-Limbs Prayer' and the 'Mandala', imagine that yourself together with all the mother sentient beings who are all around you, in a single voice, are making supplications [with the following words]:

“I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, embodiment of the ‘four kayas’;

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, embodiment of the Dharmakaya (*Truth Body*) which is free from obscurations!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, embodiment of the Sambhogakaya (*Enjoyment Body*) of great bliss!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, embodiment of the Nirmanakaya (*Emanation Body*) of manifold (*forms*)!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all Gurus!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all yidams!

³ According to ‘*The Swift Path to Enlightenment*’ by Panchen Losang Yeshe, (pan chen blo bzang ye shes) 1663-1737, which is sort of a commentary to this ‘*Simple Path*’, supplications refers to make supplications, with strong aspiration, for the three important purposes: that all flawed states of mind - beginning with not respecting the Lama and ending with conceiving signs of true existence in the two kinds or ‘self’ - may quickly cease; that all flawless states of mind - beginning with respecting the Lama and so on - may arise easily; that all inner and outer obstacles may vanish.

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all Buddhas!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all the sublime Dharma!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all the Sangha!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all dakas and dakinis!

I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all Dharma protectors !

In particular [beseech him with the following words :]

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" [and continue:]

"Myself and all mother sentient beings have undergone intense sufferings for a very long time - since our birth in samsara - the reason for that lies in not practicing correctly Guru devotion mentally and through actions. Therefore supreme Guru-Yidam, I beseech you to bless us so that myself and all mother sentient beings may have the ability to practice correctly mental and actual Guru devotion!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginningless time (*during all the countless lives before this present one*). In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that prevent us from being able to practice correctly devotion to the Guru in thoughts and through actions. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that the special realization which enables us to practice correctly devotion to the Guru in thoughts and through actions is generated in all of our minds.

The 'Actual practice' consists of two: “**The manner to practice Guru Devotion in thought.**” and “**The manner to practice Guru Devotion through action.**” The first has two subdivisions: “**Cultivate faith, the root**” and “**Cultivate respect remembering the kindness.**”

With regards to the first point:

From the heart of the Guru-Buddha are emanated - in the space in front of yourself - the Lamas from whom you have received teachings directly. Having visualized them residing in the space in front of you contemplate:

“These spiritual teachers of mine are true Buddhas. The perfect and complete Buddha himself proclaimed in the precious Tantric texts that during the degenerated times, Buddha Vajradhara will manifest in the form of spiritual teachers to accomplish the beings’ benefit. Also these spiritual teachers of mine, except for simply showing an external different form, are indeed manifestations of Buddha Vajradhara, who assumes the form of spiritual teachers in order to take care of those of us who are not fortunate to see Buddhas directly. So please, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless me and all mother sentient beings so that we see all these spiritual teachers as true Buddha Vajradhara!”

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

Well then, if you think that your spiritual teachers cannot be true Buddhas since they have such and such faults engendered by the ‘three poisons’ (*attachment, hatred and ignorance*) while Buddhas have eliminated all flaws and are endowed with all good qualities, reflect that it is due to your impure perceptions. Also in the past, due to their own impure perceptions, Lekpai Karma saw all Buddha’s deeds as hypocritical; Asanga saw Maitreya as a she-dog; Maitripa saw the great yoghi Shavaripa as a pig butcher and so on. As those ways of perceiving are improper, also your seeing faults does not entail faults being present in those spiritual teachers but rather it is due to your impure perceptions. [Again] make supplication:

“Supreme Guru-Yidam, please grant us your blessings so that the attitude of seeing faults in our spiritual teachers does not arise even for a single instant and the intense faith perceiving whatever the spiritual teachers do as positive arise easily.”

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

With regards to the second point (*Cultivate respect remembering the kindness*):

While clearly visualizing the spiritual teachers in the space in front of you, reflect:

“These spiritual teachers have been really kind to me! It’s only due to their kindness that I have comprehended the profound path granting easily the precious state of the Buddhahood, that is the supreme, perfect and complete Liberation that is free from all samsaric and unfortunate realms sufferings.”

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

The second outline (*The manner to practice actual Guru Devotion.*)

While visualizing the spiritual teachers in front of you, make supplication:

“Supreme Guru-Yidam, please grant us your blessings so that I will be able to give up without hesitation my body, my life, my possessions and so forth, for these spiritual teachers who are real Buddhas. In particular, may I please them with the offering of practicing in accord to their words.

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

As for the third outline "How to practice at the conclusion":

Make dedications - with fervent aspiration - of the roots of virtue derived from having made supplications, while visualizing the Guru-Yidam on the top of one's head, as well as from reciting mantras⁴ for the accomplishment of all the temporary and ultimate goals of oneself and others.

As for the second outline 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions'; (*This is the second subdivision of the outline 'How to practice Guru Devotion; the root of the path', the first one being 'How to practice during the formal meditation session'*) It consists of reading scriptures and commentaries explaining the way to practice Guru devotion towards the spiritual teachers; practicing how to restrain the doors of the senses with mindfulness and introspection; adopting an appropriate diet; striving to practice without sleeping at the inappropriate time, and acting correctly at the time of sleeping; as well as striving in the yoga of washing and eating.

As for the second outline: 'How to train one's mind after one has generated devotion', (*The second basic subdivision in which the profound method that leads fortunate beings to Buddhahood is divided. The first one being: "How to practice Guru Devotion; the root of the path" and it has just been completed*) it has two subdivisions: "**An exhortation to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity**" and "**How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity**". The first is divided into two: "**How to practice during the formal meditation session**" and "**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**".

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**".

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before [with the prayer ending with]:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"All countless mother sentient beings and myself, having taken rebirth in samsara, have undergone for long time, various and intense sufferings. This is due to the fault of not having

⁴ The *Swift Path* mentions that at this point one should recite Buddha Shakyamuni mantra: Om Mune Mune Maha Mune Ye Soha.

generated the special realization [which enables us to appreciate] the great meaning of a life of leisure and opportunity as well as the difficulty of attaining it. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that the special realization of the great meaning of a life of leisure and opportunity as well as the difficulty of attaining it, is generated in all sentient beings' minds as well as in mine."

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginning less time. In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that hinder the generation of the special realization of the great meaning of a life of leisure and opportunity as well as the difficulty of attaining it. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that the special realization of the great meaning of a life of leisure and opportunity as well as the difficulty of attaining it is generated in all of our minds.

The 'Actual practice' has two subdivisions:" **The great meaning of a life of leisure and opportunity.**" and "**The difficulty of attaining it.**"

While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head contemplate as follows:

"Leisure means having time to practice the holy Dharma and opportunity means having all the external and internal facilities to practice it. In brief, this life endowed with leisure and opportunity that we have got now, is extremely meaningful because - depending on it - we can practice generosity, which is the cause of gaining the body and prosperity of a fortunate rebirth; morality, patience and so forth. In particular, with this body, the three types of vows⁵ can be generated and we can even attain easily Buddhahood, in a short life of the degenerated times. Therefore I will not waste this life which is perfectly endowed with leisure and opportunity, that is difficult to be attained and that is extremely meaningful once it has been attained, but rather I will take full advantage of it. Guru-Yidam grants us your blessings so that we will be able to practice like this!"

⁵ The vows of individual liberation, the Bodhisattvas vows and the Tantric vows.

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

As for "The difficulty of attaining it"; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head contemplate as follows:

"This life of leisure and opportunity is not only very meaningful, it is also very difficult to find. Most of sentient beings, like human beings and so forth, commit the 'ten non-virtues' on a large scale and this is a hindrance to attaining a life of leisure and opportunity. Furthermore, in order to attain a perfect and complete precious human rebirth, one needs the foundation of pure morality, the assistance of generosity and so forth, and the cohesive factor of pure prayers of aspiration. But these causes are practiced on a very small scale. Thus, in relation to bad migrations like animals and so forth, a fortunate rebirth is very rare, almost impossible to come about. And even in relation to happy migrations, the attaining of a life endowed with all types of leisure and opportunity is as rare as a star during the daytime. Therefore I will not waste this life that has been attained only once and which is perfectly endowed with leisure and opportunity, is difficult to find and is extremely meaningful once it has been attained, but rather I will take full advantage of it. Furthermore, to make the most of it, I will practice the synthesis of the instructions of the supreme vehicle imparted by the Guru-Buddha while always keeping Him (*or Her*) present in my mind with devotion. I will easily attain Buddhahood in one life. Guru-Yidam grants us your blessings so that we will be able to practice like this!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', one should read the scriptures and the commentaries expounding the topic of a life of leisure and opportunity as mentioned

before.

The outline 'How to take full advantage of a life of leisure and opportunity' it has three subdivisions: "**Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity**", "**Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity**", and "**Training the mind in the stages of the path of persons of great capacity**". The first outline is again split into two: "**How to practice during the formal meditation session**" and "**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**".

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**".

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before [with the prayer ending with]:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"All countless mother sentient beings and myself, having taken rebirth in samsara, have undergone various and intense sufferings for long time. This is due to the fault of not having reflected on the uncertainty of death; not having taken refuge from the depth of one's heart in the Three Jewels because of fearing the sufferings of the three bad migrations; not having undertaken correctly the practice of adopting and discarding white and black karma respectively, after having generated faith of belief in the law of causality. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we generate mindfulness about the uncertainty of death and fear of the sufferings of the three bad migrations. Thus taking refuge from the depth of one's heart in the Three Jewels and also being able to correctly discard destructive actions and adopt constructive ones."

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginningless time. In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that hinder the generation of the special realization of the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as

merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that the special realization of the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity is generated in all of our minds.

The 'Actual practice' is again divided into four: "**Reflecting on the uncertainty of (the time of) death**", "**Reflecting on the unfortunate rebirths' sufferings**", "**Training in going for refuge**", and "**Generating the faith of belief in the law of causality**".

As for the first one: While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"This life of leisure and opportunity, which is so rare and meaningful, perishes quickly and the Lord of Death will definitely arrive. Not only that, there are no external or internal conditions that can stop it! Our lifetime constantly diminishes and there is no way to extend it. Even while we are alive there is little time for religious practice. We will die, but the time of our death is uncertain. The life span in this Southern Continent of ours is uncertain. The causes of death are very many and the causes of life are few. The time of death is uncertain because our body is fragile like a water bubble. At the time of death, nothing helps except religious practice; no matter how many relatives and friends - who surround us - we may have, we can't take any of them. No matter how many excellent possessions we have, we cannot take even the smallest. Since we will have to part even from this flesh and bones, what's the point of having attachment for the desirable things of this life? Death - this enemy of ours - will certainly arrive, but when it will arrive is uncertain. Since we could die even today, we should make preparations. To make preparations means to practice the pure Dharma right now without being attached to the desirable things of this life. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

As for the second outline (*Reflecting on the unfortunate rebirths' sufferings*): While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"This life which is perfectly endowed with leisure and opportunity, which is rare and very meaningful once it has been obtained, perishes quickly and after it finishes, it will not vanish but we will have to take another rebirth. As for taking rebirth, there are only two alternatives - fortunate and unfortunate rebirths. If we will be reborn as a unfortunate being; animal experience the suffering of being stupid, ignorant and of having to eat each other; hungry ghosts experience sufferings such as being hungry and thirsty and so forth; hell beings experience sufferings such as heat and cold and so forth. Since those types of sufferings are unbearable, this time that I have got a life perfectly endowed with leisure and opportunity, which is rare and very meaningful once it has been obtained, I will attain the state of a Guru-Buddha in which all types of unfortunate rebirths' sufferings have been eliminated. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

As for the third outline (*Training in going for refuge*):

From the holy body of the Guru-Yidam residing on the top of your head are emanated assemblies of Gurus, Yidams, Three-Jewels, Dakas, Dakinis, Dharma protectors which fill the space. Visualize clearly the refuge beings surrounding the Guru-Yidam residing on the top of your head, and while recollecting the qualities of their holy bodies, speeches, minds and enlightened activities, go for refuge to the Guru-Yidam-Three Jewels with the aspiration thinking:

"From now on, please protect all sentient beings -the mothers- as well as myself, from the general samsaric sufferings and in particular from the three types of unfortunate rebirths' sufferings!" From the Three Jewels descend a stream of nectar that dissolves in everybody, all sentient beings and me. The negative karma, the sins (*resulting from destructive acts*) and the obscurations are purified. As a result of the blessings of the Three Jewels having entered in us, our lifespan, merits, understanding of the scriptural Dharma and practice of the Dharma of realizations develop. In this way meditate for hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands and

hundreds of thousands of times the 'going for refuge'. Having understood the temporal and ultimate benefits deriving from going for refuge to the Three Jewels, train correctly in the 'precepts of refuge'.

As for the fourth outline (*Generating the faith of belief in the law of causality*): While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate the following Buddha's words:

"Engaging in 'causal virtue' (*virtuous cause*) will only give rise to 'resultant happiness', and suffering will never arise. Engaging in 'causal non-virtue' (*non virtuous cause*) will only give rise to 'resultant suffering' and happiness will never arise. Furthermore, although one may have performed just a small 'causal virtue', if it does not encounter the counterproductive factors, its result will greatly increase. If the cause -either virtue or non-virtue- is not performed, the correspondent result of happiness or suffering will not be experienced. Moreover, if the virtuous or non virtuous cause has been performed, and the counterproductive factors are not met, since performed acts never get wasted, the correspondent result of happiness and suffering will definitely come about." Having generated conviction in what has been proclaimed regarding the strength of actions in terms of the recipient, the attitude, the object and the support (*the agent*); I will strive in the practice of adopting and discarding, whereby I will engage in the ten virtues and so forth, even the smallest ones, and I will refrain from actions that sullied the three doors like the ten non virtues and so forth, even the smallest ones. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

Although you may have strived in this direction, if you still get sullied by non-virtue due to the intensity of your afflictions and the weakness of the remedies, you should strive in the

practice of the confession that includes the 'Four Powers'⁶.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', as mentioned above, one should read the scriptures and the commentaries expounding the topic of the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity.

This concludes the exposition of the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity.

Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity

As for the second outline (*Training the mind in the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity*) it has two subdivisions: "**Generating the mind intent on liberation**" and "**Ascertaining the nature of the path leading to liberation**".

The first outline is again split into two: "**How to practice during the formal meditation session**" and "**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**".

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**".

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before [with the prayer ending with]:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"All countless mother sentient beings and myself, having taken rebirth in samsara, have undergone for long time, various and intense sufferings. This is due to the fault of not having cultivated a determined mind wishing for being liberated from all samsara after having understood that its nature is suffering. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that all sentient beings and myself can generate a determined mind wishing for the liberation from all samsara after having understood that its nature is suffering!"

⁶ The power of eradication or regret, the power of applying the remedies, the power of turning away from the misdeeds, the power of the basis or support.

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginning less time. In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that hinder the generation of a determined mind wishing for being liberated from all samsara, after having understood that its nature is suffering. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that a determined mind wishing for liberation from the whole samsara -after having understood that its nature is suffering- is generated in all of our minds.

The 'Actual practice' is again divided into two: "**Reflecting on the general samsaric sufferings**" and "**Reflecting on the specific sufferings**".

As for the first one: While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"Although I have attained the state of a fortunate migration's being which transcends the sufferings of unfortunate rebirths - due to having practiced correctly the morality refraining from the ten non virtuous actions - if I don't attain the liberation which transcends completely all samsaric sufferings, [I will not be safe since] this happy rebirth of mine never stops even for an instant. Take for example a criminal that is sentenced to death after one month. His (*or her*) sentence also entails that, until that day, he (*or she*) has to undergo every day the torture and the intense suffering of drops of hot pitch being dropped on his (*or her*) body as well as being beaten with a stick. Although a powerful person could intercede for him (*or her*) and succeed in sparing him (*or her*) of those tortures, since he (*or she*) knows that each day anyhow gets him (*or her*) closer to his (*or her*) death, he (*or she*) could never relax at all. In a similar way, as long as someone has not attained the liberation in which all sufferings have been completely uprooted, no matter which fortunate rebirth's state one may attain, once the good karma that has propelled the fortunate state is exhausted, one will have to fall in the three unfortunate rebirths' state and will have to experience for a long time various intense sufferings. Furthermore, as long as one has attained a rebirth in samsara due to karma and afflicted emotions, that cannot transcend the nature of suffering. Since friends can transform in enemies and enemies in friends, we cannot trust the benefit and harm they do. No matter how much happiness we enjoy, we are never

satisfied. Not only that, our attachment increases and this induces more varieties of endless suffering. Also we cannot trust the body we have obtained; no matter how good it is, because we have to discard it again and again. Having being conceived repeatedly, from beginning less time, there is no beginning to our rebirths. Furthermore we cannot trust the samsaric prosperity we have obtained -no matter how excellent it may be- because at the end, certainly we will have to abandon it. We also cannot trust friends because we will have to proceed to the next life alone, without any friends. Therefore, this time that we have attained this life endowed with leisure and opportunity that is rare and very meaningful, I will try to attain, in every way possible, the precious state of Guru-Buddha that is free from all samsaric sufferings. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

As for the second one (*Reflecting on the specific sufferings*): While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"As long as the 'appropriated aggregates'⁷ came into existence, they cannot transcend the nature of suffering. What need is there to speak about the three unfortunate rebirths; even depending upon human appropriated aggregates one experiences the suffering of hunger and thirst; of acquiring and losing wealth; of being separated from dear ones; of having to meet hated enemies; of not finding what one wished for although one looks for it; of undesired things befalling on oneself (*encountering what is unpleasant*); of birth, old age, illness, death, and so forth.

Depending on semi-gods appropriated aggregates one experiences the suffering of a distressed mind envious of the prosperity of the gods and as a result sufferings affecting the body. Depending on desire-realm-gods appropriated aggregates one experiences the sufferings of broken limbs, wounds and finally dying when fighting with semi-gods; of being hit (*having to meet*) by the 'signs of the death' although one does not wish for; of knowing that one has to

⁷ Psycho-physical aggregates produced by karma and afflictions and producer of new karma and afflictions.

undergo the sufferings of the unfortunate rebirths after being separated from the riches of gods. Even from the appropriated aggregates of the two upper realms (*Form and Formless Realms*), since one has no control over (*one's*) abiding, there is the suffering of falling in the three lower realms due to the exhaustion of the propelling previous good karma. In brief the appropriated aggregates are the basis for birth, old age, illness and death in this life. Not only that, they induce the suffering of suffering (*of pain*) and the suffering of change in this life as well as in future lives. Moreover, from the moment the appropriated aggregates come into existence, they exist in the nature of 'the pervasive suffering of conditioning' - the state of being dominated by karma and afflicted emotions. Therefore I will try to attain, in every way possible, the precious state of Guru-Buddha which is free from samsara, the appropriated aggregates. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', as mentioned above, one should study commentaries explaining how samsara is in the nature of suffering (*is suffering*).

As for the second outline 'Ascertaining the nature of the path leading to liberation', it is divided into two: "**How to practice during the formal meditation session**" and "**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**".

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**".

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"All countless mother sentient beings and myself, having taken rebirth in samsara, have undergone for long time, various and intense sufferings. This is due to the fault of not having

trained correctly in the path - the Three Superior Trainings- after having cultivated the mind wishing for attaining liberation from the whole samsara. Therefore I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that all sentient beings and myself can trained correctly in the path - the Three Superior Trainings- after having cultivated the mind wishing for attaining liberation from the whole samsara!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginning less time. In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that hinder the correct training in the path - the Three Superior Trainings- after having cultivated the mind wishing for attaining liberation from the whole samsara. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that the special realization of training correctly in the Three Superior Trainings -after having cultivated the mind wishing for attaining liberation from the whole samsara- is generated in all of our minds.

As for the 'Actual practice': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"Consciousness itself is neutral. Furthermore, firstly the mind which thinks 'I' and 'mine' and which apprehends these as inherently existent arises. As a result of having apprehended these as inherently existent, mistaken minds (*wrong attitudes*) such as attachment for 'one's party'; aversion towards 'the others' party'; pride conceiving oneself as superior to others and so forth arise. Consequently doubts and mistaken views regarding the Teacher (*Buddha*) who teaches selflessness and what is taught -such as the law of causality and the Four Noble Truths- as well as denying the existence of the Three Jewels and so forth are generated. Due to that all the others afflictions increase. Because of that, karma is accumulated so that unwillingly one has to experience various types of suffering in samsara. Therefore, since the root of all these types of suffering is, in final analysis, ignorance, I will try to attain, in every way possible, the state of Guru-Buddha that is free from the root of all samsaric sufferings. For this purpose I will practice correctly the path -the precious three trainings. In particular, I will observe correctly - even at the cost of my life - any kind of morality I have vowed to, without letting it degenerate, since there is

great benefit when one protects it and great disadvantages when one does not protect it. Moreover, since the cause for transgressing the vows is lack of knowledge, as its antidote I will study and get to know the precepts. Since the lack of respect is the cause for transgressing the vows, as its antidote I will cultivate respect towards the Teacher (*Buddha*); the proscribed vows taught by Him; the companions who share those vows and who train correctly. Since the cause for transgressing the vows is lack of conscientiousness, as its antidote I will be conscientious after having generated mindfulness, introspection, shame and embarrassment. Since abundance of afflictions is the cause for transgressing the vows, I will meditate ugliness as antidote to attachment; love as antidote to aversion; and dependent origination as antidote to ignorance. Thus I will train correctly in the pure vows that are not sullied by any infractions. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', as mentioned above, one should study commentaries expounding the vows according to individual liberation.

This concludes the exposition of the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity.

Training the mind in the stages of the path of persons of great capacity

As for the third outline (*Training the mind in the stages of the path of persons of great capacity*), it has two subdivisions: "**How to generate the mind for enlightenment**" and "**How to train in the (Bodhisattva) conduct generating it**".

The first is divided into two: "**The actual way of generating the mind for enlightenment**" and "**How to adopt the mind for enlightenment through its ritual**". Again the first outline has two subdivisions: "**Generating the mind for enlightenment through of the**

Seven Cause and Effect Instruction" and "Generating the mind for enlightenment through Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others".

As for the first outline, after having achieved an impartial mind towards all sentient beings, one is meant to meditate from 'recognizing all sentient beings as one's mother' till 'the mind of bodhicitta'. To do this, there are two outlines: **“How to practice during the formal meditation session”** and **“How to practice during the intervals between sessions”**.

The first consists of the **"Preparation"**, the **"Actual practice"** and the **"Conclusion"**.

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before [with the prayer ending with]:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that the special realization of an impartial attitude, free of attachment and aversion [which makes you feel] close and distant towards all sentient beings; recognizing all sentient beings as one's mother; remembering their kindness; repaying their kindness; love; compassion, and bodhicitta can be generated in all sentient beings' mind as well as in mine!"

Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies all negativities and obscurations collected from beginning less time. In particular, it purifies all spirits, illnesses, obscurations and negativities that hinder the generation of an impartial attitude, free of attachment and aversion [which makes you feel] close and distant towards all sentient beings and so forth. Our bodies become limpid, clear, and luminous. All good qualities such as merits, life span and so forth improve and expand. In particular, imagine that an impartial attitude, free of attachment and aversion [which makes you feel] close and distant towards all sentient beings and so forth, is generated in all of our minds.

As for the 'Actual practice': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head and aiming at a neutral person who does not do any benefit or harm visualized in front of you, (*contemplate as follows*):

"Since from this (*neutral person's*) side he or she wishes for happiness and does not wish for suffering, I will practice an impartial attitude, free of attachment and aversion [which makes you feel] close and distant and devoid of the two aspects of [wishing] to harm some beings due to having considered them as 'distant' and [wishing] to benefit some other beings due to having considered them as 'close'. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Once you have gain proficiency with this [type of person] meditate with an impartial attitude aiming at a dear acquaintance visualized in front of you. Impartiality towards this [type of person] is due to attachment. Meditate stopping attraction towards this [type of person] by thinking that even in the past you are reborn in samsara due to craving.

Once you have gain proficiency with this [type of person] meditate with an impartial attitude aiming at an acquaintance you don't like and whom you visualize in front of you. Impartiality towards this [type of person] is due to the aversion developed from the mental attitude considering this [type of person] as uniquely discordant (*unpleasant*). Meditate stopping aversion towards this [type of person] by thinking that, if I don't succeed in developing an impartial attitude towards this [type of person], there is no way for bodhicitta to be generated.

Once you have gain proficiency with this [type of person] meditate aiming at an extremely dear person -like one's mother- and a person you particularly dislike - like one's enemy - visualized in front. They are similar since both, from their perspective, wish for happiness and shun suffering. From our perspective, the person we consider so dear to us now, has been countless times our main enemy, in this beginningless samsara. In a similar way, the person we consider our enemy now, has been countless times our mother, in this beginningless samsara,

and has taken care of us with love. Who is then the one we should love, and who is the one we should hate? I will develop an impartial attitude, free of attachment and aversion (*which makes you feel*) close and distant. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Once you have gain proficiency with this [type of person] meditate cultivating impartiality towards all sentient beings. To do this, reflect on how all sentient beings are similar in that, from their perspective, they all wish for happiness and shun suffering. From our perspective, since they all have been dear to us, I will not sustain the two attitudes of benefiting some of them because of considering them close and harming others because of considering them distant. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

After this, the way to meditate from [the topic of] 'recognizing all sentient beings as one's mother' till 'bodhicitta' is as follow: While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follows:

"What's the reason for [saying] that all sentient beings have been dear to us? Since samsara is beginning less, also our rebirths are beginning less. Having taken one rebirth after the other, there is no place where we have not been born. In fact we have been reborn (*in every place*) countless times. There is no rebirth we have not taken; in fact we have taken any kind of rebirth countless times. There is no being who has not been our mother; in fact [each of them] has been our mother countless times. There is no being who has not been our mother in human form; in fact each of them has been our mother in human form countless times and will be again in the future! Reflect thinking that they must be the mothers who took care of us with kindness.

(One may raise the qualm saying that) well then, since sentient beings are countless, they cannot all be our mother. *(This is not a good reason!)* This does not necessarily mean that they cannot be our mother. Like beings are countless so are our rebirths. Contemplate thinking they must be our mother. If one wonders thinking that sentient beings and ourselves don't recognize *(or know)* each other and so they cannot be our mother, *(then this is again not a good reason)* not recognizing each other does not necessarily mean that they are not our mother. Reflect thinking that even in this same life there are many [cases of] mother and children who don't recognize each other. *(Once more)* one may wonder thinking that although sentient beings may have been our mother in previous lives, that has passed and therefore [thinking that] they are our mother is not tenable. Then it also follows that yesterday's mother is not today's mother since yesterday has passed. Between yesterday's mother and today's mother there is no difference in terms of being our mother or in terms of taking care of us with kindness. Furthermore there is no difference between our previous lives' mother and this life's mother and there is no difference between the two in terms of taking care of us with kindness. Reflect thinking that all sentient beings must be our mother.

Once you have developed a *(genuine)* experience, *(proceed to)* contemplate *(the next topic)* 'remembering their kindness': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, imagine this life's mother clearly in front of you, not as a young person, but rather as an old person and contemplate:

"This mother of mine is my mother not only in this life, but has been my mother for countless times in my previous beginningless lives. In particular, in this life she has been extremely kind to me; she has looked after me with love at the beginning when I was in the womb; after my birth she has placed me on a comfortable bed; she has lifted me with her ten fingers' tips; she has kept me warm close to her body; she has welcomed me with loving smiles; she has looked at me with admiring eyes; she has removed the mucus from my nose with her mouth; she has wiped my excrement with her hands; she has considered my light discomforts as more serious than her own life threatening sufferings; she has offered to me anything she managed to obtain to the utmost of her muscles, regardless of sins, sufferings, bad reputation and even her own life; according to her ability, she has accomplished limitless happiness and benefit *(for me)* and she has protected me from limitless suffering and harm.

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate (*focusing on*) your father and then gradually to all dear ones: imagine your father clearly in front of you and reflect that he has been your mother for countless times in my previous beginning less lives and he has been extremely kind to you because whenever he has been your mother, he has taken care of you with love in the same way that this life's mother has done.

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate (*focusing on*) all the sentient beings who are strangers: imagine strangers clearly in front of you and reflect:

"Although it looks like at this time those strangers and me don't have any connection, they have been my mother for countless times in my previous beginning less lives and they have been extremely kind to me because whenever they have been my mother, they have taken care of me with love in the same way that this life's mother has done."

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate (*focusing on*) sentient beings who are enemies: imagine an enemy clearly in front of you and reflect:

"What is the reason to consider him or her as an enemy? This person has been my mother for countless times in my previous beginning less lives and whenever he or she has been my mother, she has accomplished limitless happiness and benefit (*for me*) and she has protected me from limitless suffering and harm. In particular, due to the intense love we felt, I did not bear to stay even for a short time without this person and similarly she did not bear to stay without me. Except for the negative karma that brought about the transformation in the present situation (*of being enemies*), this person is only the mother who looked after me with affection."

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate on all sentient beings' kindness.

Having meditated in this way on 'remembering their kindness', proceed to meditate (*on the next topic*) 'repaying their kindness': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follow:

"All the mothers who have taken care of me with affection since beginning less time are disoriented by the demon of the afflictions and they are like crazy without control over their mind. They are devoid of the eye which sees the path [leading to] fortunate rebirths and

definitive goodness. They miss a spiritual friend [who can guide them like] a guide for blinds. Due to bad habits, they are obscured and ready to fall at any moment. To repay the kindness of all sentient beings who are now near the terrifying abyss of samsara in general and in particular near the of terrifying abyss of the three lower realms, I will place them in the bliss of liberation, after I have liberated them from all samsaric sufferings because there would not be any greater shame for me than to neglect them. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

The way to meditate on (*the next topic*) 'love': imagine someone dear to you and whom you love with a constant and intense feeling, like your mother and contemplate:

"Not only this person is devoid of any uncontaminated bliss, she is also devoid of contaminated happiness. The present so called happiness she has, will transform into suffering. Wishing for happiness, she strives tenaciously but this will only act as the cause for the unfortunate rebirths' suffering in next life and in this life it will only cause a lot of pain for the hard work and the austerities (*involved*). Anyhow, that is not at all real happiness! Therefore (*contemplate*) how wonderful it would be if this being would be endowed with happiness and the cause of happiness! May she be endowed with happiness and the cause of happiness! I will endow this being with happiness and the cause of happiness!

I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate, like before, focusing on your father; all the other dear ones; all sentient beings who are strangers; the enemies and finally all sentient beings.

The way to meditate on (*the next topic*) 'compassion': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, first contemplate on suffering, miserable beings like sheep being slaughtered by a butcher. Imagine such a being clearly in front of you: its limbs are tight, the breast skin tore apart and the butcher's hand inside its body. This animal is fully aware of the impending death. It is looking with bulging eyes the butcher's face; think the miserable state it is in due to these sufferings. Therefore (*contemplate*) how wonderful it would be if this being would be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! May this being be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! I will free it from suffering and the causes of suffering! I beseech you -supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate focusing on beings like the members of the monastic community who, carelessly use the offerings made to them mistakenly; who break their vows; who abandon the Dharma⁸; who hold wrong views and who skillfully commit various destructive actions and cause harm to others. Imagine such beings clearly in front of you and (*reflect*): "Those types of behavior don't give happiness in this life and as soon as those beings die there is no doubt they will take rebirth in the lower realms. There they will have to undergo for long time various atrocious sufferings. Therefore (*contemplate*) how wonderful it would be if they would be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! I will free them from suffering and the causes of suffering! I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

⁸ This refers to make discriminations among the Buddha's teachings.

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate focusing on your mother and other dear ones: due to all the activities performed diligently in relation to this life's enemies and dear ones, these beings are affected by the suffering of suffering and the suffering of change, without any chance to enjoy happiness. Also in this life they are involved with negative activities and have not generated virtuous thoughts, therefore as soon as they die, they will take rebirth in the lower realms and they will have to undergo for long time various atrocious sufferings. Therefore (*contemplate*) how wonderful it would be if they would be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! May they be free from suffering and the causes of suffering! I will free them from suffering and the causes of suffering! I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Once you have developed a (*genuine*) experience, (*proceed to*) meditate, like before, focusing on all sentient beings who are strangers; the enemies and finally all sentient beings.

Once a (*genuine*) experience, derived from a profound mental transformation due to the meditation on love and compassion, is produced in this way, (*proceed to*) meditate (*on the next topic*) 'supreme attitude': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follow:

"I, myself will bring about freedom from suffering and the cause of suffering for all sentient beings who are tortured by suffering and are deprived of happiness! I, myself will bring about their encountering happiness and the cause of happiness! In particular, I, myself will bring about the attaining of the perfect and complete Buddhahood that is free from the two obscurations, together with their imprints, for all mother sentient beings. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

Next is how to meditate 'bodhicitta': While meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate as follow:

"Well then, do we have the ability to place all sentient being in the perfect and complete Buddhahood? At this stage we don't have the ability to place even one single being in the perfect and complete Buddhahood. Furthermore, even if we had attained the state of the two types of Arhat⁹, we could only accomplish a limited benefit for beings and we would not have the ability to place all sentient being in the perfect Buddhahood. Well then, who has this type of ability? A perfect and complete Buddha has it. He or she is adorned of the physical good qualities of the major and minor marks. He or she is endowed with the verbal good qualities of the speech spontaneously adorned with sixty characteristics so that he or she has the ability to proclaim the Dharma in one language and this is understood by all the different beings (*as though their different languages were spoken*). His holy mind is adorned with the good qualities of realizing directly any object of knowledge, both the ultimate [mode of abiding] and the varieties (*or conventional*) and of dealing with all sentient beings with an impartial compassion and the same kind of love a mother has for a single child. Therefore he or she is qualified to tame beings always at the right time. Buddha performs spontaneously and effortlessly enlightened activities and has the ability to place countless beings in the omniscient state by just one of the rays of light of his holy body, speech and mind so forth." In brief, only the perfect and complete Buddha is endowed with all good qualities and is free from all faults. Therefore if I were to accomplish the ultimate purpose for others and for myself, I would have to accomplish such a state. Therefore I will accomplish quickly¹⁰ and (*even more*) quickly¹¹, in any way possible, the perfect and complete Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!"

Due to this fervent request, from the holy body of the Guru-Yidam on the top of my head, a duplicate - like a spark separating from another spark- emerges and (*comes*) to dissolve in ourselves. Imagine that you transform into Buddha Shakyamuni; you are sitting on a variegated lotus, moon and sun disks seat on a vast and high throne lifted by eight big snow lions. You are of a luminescent gold hue; your head is adorned with the crown protrusion; your right hand

⁹ Hearer and Solitary Realizer Arhats.

¹⁰ Without depending on three eons merits accumulation.

¹¹ Without taking many lives, i.e. within a minimum of seven and a maximum of not more than sixteen lives.

touches the earth and the left is in the meditation posture holding a begging bowl filled with nectar. You are clad in the three saffron robes. You are adorned with the major and minor noble marks of a Buddha and you are in the nature of radiant light. You are sitting in the cross-legged position in a halo of bright light coming from your body. While visualizing oneself as Buddha Shakyamuni, imagine offering to all sentient beings your body, wealth and root of virtue, in the form of five colors rays of light radiated from your body¹². Imagine that, due to this, all beings obtain the excellent happiness of a fortunate rebirth and of the definitive goodness.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', as mentioned before, one should study commentaries expounding the topics of love, compassion and bodhicitta.

As for the second outline (*The first subdivision of the outline 'How to generate the mind for enlightenment' is 'The actual way of generating the mind for enlightenment' and has two parts: 'Generating the mind for enlightenment through of the Seven Cause and Effect Instruction' and 'Generating the mind for enlightenment through Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others', this is the outline explained here*) Imagine clearly around you all sentient beings after having recollected the previous topics of an impartial attitude towards all sentient beings; recognizing all sentient beings as one's mother; remembering their kindness; repaying their kindness. Now thinking of the others and yourself, if you check who you cherish and who you neglect, we will realize that the attitude of cherishing ourselves more important and neglecting the others arises automatically. When it arises contemplate:

"Cherishing myself and neglecting the others is not right because we are the same in wishing for happiness and shunning suffering. Therefore we should cherish the others as we cherish ourselves. Like we are delighted when others cherish us, so they will be delighted if we cherish them. Moreover, in this beginning less samsara, wishing for our prosperity, we have cherished ourselves but we have not accomplished our goal or that of others! Not only that, we have undergone many different types of sufferings. Therefore, since cherishing oneself is the cause for all types of harms - the samsaric sufferings and the three unfortunate rebirths'

¹² This is the description of the practice called 'taking the result as the path'; using the future result, not yet actualized, to proceed on the path now.

sufferings and so forth - I will not generate the self centered attitude if it has not yet been generated and I will abandon these type of attitudes that have been already developed. Moreover, since the altruistic attitude is the font of all good qualities, I will generate it newly if it has not yet been generated and I will improve the one that has been already generated. I beseech you, supreme

Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

In brief, Buddha has achieved the complete and perfect Enlightenment through neglecting oneself and cherishing others, i.e. through accomplishing only others' benefit. If I practice in this way, I will also attain quickly Enlightenment. Not having practiced like this, I have wondered in samsara until now! Moreover, as long as the self centered attitude remains in my heart, the altruistic attitude will not arise newly in my mind. Were it to be generated, it would not be able to remain continuously. Therefore one should not generate the mind cherishing oneself and neglecting others even for one moment. Cherishing others and neglecting oneself means taking upon myself all sufferings and sins of others¹³. Through offering to all my happiness and virtue, I will free all beings from their sufferings and I will bring about the perfect happiness for them. Anyhow now I don't have such ability! Who may have such ability? A perfect Buddha has it, so I will achieve the complete and perfect state of Buddhahood for the sake of all mother sentient beings: "I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

¹³ Experiencing others' sufferings and the results of their sins, as if these were ours, so that they don't have to undergo this type of experiences, not only now but also in the future.

As for the second outline, (*How to adopt the mind for enlightenment through its ritual*), there are two outlines: “**How to receive the vows you have not yet received**” and “**How to protect it without letting it degenerates**”.

As for the first: although in the *Lam Rim* texts the taking of the bodhicitta of aspiration and engaging bodhicitta is presented in a successive order, Shantideva expounds the simultaneous way (*of taking both of them*) and it is easier to generate the engaging bodhicitta if one follows it. Accordingly, one first meditates the general preliminaries and in particular the topics starting from 'Guru devotion' and terminating with 'the mind of bodhicitta' as treated in the 'actual practice', until one has integrated them completely in one's mind. After that, while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, from this moment, until I have reached the essence of Enlightenment, I shall train in the great Bodhisattvas' conduct after having taking the Conqueror's sons' vows. I shall attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings! I shall maintain this thought until I attain Buddhahood"

Then imagine repeating the following words after the Guru-Buddha:

"O Buddhas and Bodhisattva, I beseech you pay attention to me! Just as the previous Tathagatas first generated the mind for enlightenment and then gradually trained in the Bodhisattvas' precepts; likewise I too, shall generate the mind of enlightenment and gradually train in the Bodhisattvas' precepts for the sentient beings' sake."

Imagine that you have received the Bodhisattvas' vows after the third repetition. Then generate delight (*reflecting on the meaning of Shantideva's verses*) with:

"Today my life has result.

Having well obtained this precious human rebirth,

I have been born in the Buddha's family,

And now I am a Buddha's child.

Thus, whatever actions I do from now on,
Must be in accord with the family.
Never shall I disgrace or pollute
This noble and unsullied race! "

As for the second outline, (*How to protect it without letting it degenerates*) while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall uphold this Bodhicitta, having thought on its' great advantages, three times in the day and three times in the night. No matter how beings will behave from their side; from my side, I shall never neglect anybody! To increase this mind, I shall strive in the two accumulations by means of making offering to the Three Jewels and so forth. I shall give up the causes for this mind to degenerate such as the 'Four Black Dharmas': I shall refrain from deceiving the Guru and so on through lies and so forth, even just for joking or making him or her laugh; I shall refrain from bringing about regret in others for the virtue they have accomplished; I shall refrain from criticizing with aversion Bodhisattvas on the Mahayana path; I shall behave honestly rather than with deceit and pretension. I shall practice all causes for this mind to improve such as the 'Four White Dharmas' and so forth. In brief, I shall protect - even at the cost of my life - until the attaining of the essence of enlightenment, the Bodhisattva's vows; [refraining from] the eighteen root misdeeds and forty-six secondary infractions, without never letting them degenerate. "I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us so that we can practice in this way!" and so forth.

As for the second (*How to train in the (Bodhisattva) conduct after generating the mind for enlightenment; which is the second outline of 'Training the mind in the stages of the path of persons of great capacity'*), it has two subdivisions:

"How to train in the Bodhisattva conduct in general" and **"How to train in the two last perfections in particular"**. The first is again split into two: **"How to practice during the formal meditation session"** and **"How to practice during the intervals between sessions"**.

The first consists of the **"Preparation"**, the **"Actual practice"** and the **"Conclusion"**.

Regarding the preparation, one is meant to make supplication as before [with the prayer ending with]:

"I make request to you, Buddha Vajradhara, the supreme Guru-Yidam, synthesis of all objects of refuge!" Then reflect:

"I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless all mother sentient beings and myself, so that we can practice correctly the great Conquerors' children conduct, the profound and the vast one" and so forth.

[Due to this fervent request, from the body of the Guru-Yidam at the crown of your head descends nectar together with five colors light which enters in you as well as in all mother sentient beings' bodies and minds. It purifies what hinder this [realization]. In particular, imagine that the special realization of these [topics] is generated in all of our minds.]

As for the "Actual practice", it consists of the **"The six perfections to ripen one's mind"** and **"The Four Ways to Gather Disciples to ripen others' minds"**.

As for the first, while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall practice correctly the three types of generosity. I shall teach -as well as I can- the holy Dharma to all beings who are deprived of it, without concern for receiving gifts, respect and fame; this is the generosity of Dharma. I shall protect all beings from the fears of the harms inflict by human beings, non-human beings and by the natural elements; this is the generosity of the lack of fear. I shall offer -without stinginess or hoping to be repaid - anything that is suitable to be offered to all poor and destitute beings; this is the generosity of material gifts. In brief, I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall offer -without any sense of regret- my body and possessions together with all my roots of virtue! I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this!" and so forth.

To increase the attitude wishing to give is the practice of generosity.

As for the practice of morality; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall abandon the flawed behaviors that go against the vows I have taken, such as the ten non-virtuous actions and so forth¹⁴. I shall produce in my mind the pure virtue of morality, of generosity and the others perfections that have not yet been produced and I will increase those which have already been produced¹⁵. I shall also place all beings on the ripening and liberating path by connecting them with the pure virtue such as the practice of morality and so forth¹⁶. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this!" and so forth.

As for the practice of patience; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall complete all the Dharmas taught by the Buddha, such generating the practice of patience and so on in the others as well as in my mind. Therefore, were all beings to transform into enemy - without generating anger even for an instant - I shall repay their harm with benefit¹⁷. Moreover when facing unwanted sufferings, such as lacking food, wealth, a bed and so forth or being sick, I shall consider these to be the result of negative karma committed in the past. By realizing that - in this way - a lot of negative karma will be purified, those sufferings will be no longer felt as unwanted¹⁸. In particular, through being able to bear the difficulties met for the sake of the Dharma, one will get closer to the path leading to the omniscient state. Thus I shall willingly accept those sufferings and I shall sever the continuity of samsaric and the three unfortunate rebirths' sufferings for the others and myself! Furthermore (*it is said that*) there are great results deriving from aspiring [to the understanding] of white and black karmas; the Three Jewels' blessings; the inconceivable abilities of the Buddhas, the Bodhisattvas and the other holy beings; the unsurpassable enlightenment; the 'twelve categories'

¹⁴ The morality of restraint (the first of the three types of morality or ethical discipline).

¹⁵ The morality of gathering virtue.

¹⁶ The morality of acting for the welfare of sentient beings.

¹⁷ The patience of disregarding harm done to you (the first of the three types of patience).

¹⁸ The patience of accepting suffering.

of the scriptures; the many areas of the Bodhisattvas' practices and so on. Therefore, to achieve enlightenment, I shall generate admiration and then I shall train correctly in all the Bodhisattvas' practices, the meaning expressed in the 'twelve categories' of the scriptures and so forth¹⁹. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this!" and so forth.

As for the practice of joyous perseverance; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, even if I were to remain for hundred of thousand of eons in the 'avici hell'²⁰, in order to achieve each of the Buddhas' dharma (*characteristic*) such as the major and minor signs and so on, and to complete each of the Bodhisattvas' dharma (*practice or quality*) such as generosity and so forth, without stopping to strive²¹ I shall develop delight²² and I shall collect in my mind all profound and extensive virtues²³. Not only that, I shall place all sentient beings on the path of virtue²⁴. I beseech you -supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this! " and so forth.

As for the practice of meditative stabilization; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall cultivate all classes of meditative stabilization of the Conquerors' children. (*They are classified*) in terms of their nature in mundane and supramundane; in terms of their orientation in 'calm abiding' and 'superior insight' and the meditative stabilization that is the union of these two; in terms of their function in meditative stabilization for the physical and mental wellbeing in this life (1); the meditative stabilization that serves as foundation of good qualities (2); the meditative stabilization that accomplishes

¹⁹ The patience of certitude about the teachings (accepting the difficulties involved in gaining conviction of the Dharma).

²⁰ The worst of all hells where there is not even a brief respite from suffering.

²¹ Armor-like joyous perseverance.

²² Joyous perseverance of gathering virtue.

²³ Virtues in relation to the profound aspect of the path, i.e. the wisdom realizing emptiness and those in relation to the method or the vast aspect of the path.

²⁴ Joyous perseverance of acting for the welfare of living beings.

beings' welfare (3). I beseech you -supreme Guru, Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this!" and so forth.

As for the practice of wisdom; while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall cultivate all classes of wisdom of the Conquerors' children such as the wisdom realizing the ultimate, the science of the mode of abiding; the wisdom realizing the conventional, the science of the 'five areas of knowledge'²⁵; and the wisdom realizing how to accomplish the beings' welfare. I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this! "and so forth.

As for the second; 'The practice of the Four Ways to Gather Disciples to ripen others' minds': while meditating on the Guru-Yidam on the top of your head, contemplate:

"I shall quickly attain the complete and perfect Buddhahood for the sake of the mother sentient beings! For this purpose, I shall draw all sentient beings through generosity (1); then with eloquent speaking (2) I shall refute [with logic their flawed views] and I shall take care of them; furthermore I shall encourage them to practice what I teach (3) and finally I shall practice consistently what I teach to others (4). I shall set all sentient beings on the path that ripens and liberates in dependence upon this virtuous method which accomplishes the beings' welfare! I beseech you, supreme Guru-Yidam, bless us, so that we can practice like this!" and so forth.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', as mentioned above, one should study commentaries expounding the great profound and vast conduct of the Conquerors' children.

As for the second outline (*How to train in the two last perfections in particular*), it is divided into two: "**How to train in 'calm abiding', the essence of concentration**" and "**How to train in 'superior insight', the essence of wisdom**".

²⁵ Art, medicine, grammar, logic and Buddhism.

The first is again split into two: “**How to practice during the formal meditation session**” and “**How to practice during the intervals between sessions**”.

The first consists of the "**Preparation**", the "**Actual practice**" and the "**Conclusion**".

The preparation consists of the 'common preliminaries' and in particular in training in the [contemplations pertaining to] the persons of small and medium capacity. At the outset, rely on the preconditions for cultivating calm abiding: living in an isolated and pleasant place that is healthy and close to good companions; maintaining pure morality; abandon all gross thoughts of desire and wishing for the company of many people; practicing having little desire and being content. Then sit crossed-legged on a comfortable cushion, straighten up your body, place your hands in the meditation posture, maintain your breathing calm and so forth.

As for the actual practice: although many objects of meditation are mentioned for cultivating calm abiding, using the deity's holy body is excellent since it serves many purposes, such as perfecting mindfulness of the Buddha and making the yogi a suitable vessel for the 'deity-yoga' of the Mantrayana. Proceed imagining that, from the heart of the Guru-Yidam abiding at the crown of your head, light is radiated, like a spider web thread. At its extremity, upon it is a variegated lotus a moon disk, sits Buddha Shakyamuni. (*Then continue the initial visualization from here till*) "He is sitting in the cross-legged position in a halo of bright light coming from His body". One should meditate focusing on this figure, visualized in the space in front of oneself at the navel height, and as big as a 'Chinese lentil'. As an alternative, one can imagine that a duplicate - like a spark separating from another spark - is radiated from the Guru-Yidam residing at the top of one's head and dissolve into oneself. One should meditate focusing on oneself visualized as Buddha Shakyamuni, like a rainbow in the sky, appearing although lacking inherent existence and of a luminescent gold hue, and so on till "sitting in the cross-legged position in a halo of bright light coming from my body".

While meditating, if the figure appears as red, although we have decided it to be yellow; or if it appears standing, although we want it to be sitting; or if it appears as many figures, although we want it to be a single figure, one should not follow these transformations but rather one should stick to the original figure chosen at the outset and meditate focusing on it.

Although the figure does not appear that clearly in the nature of limpid and clear light, one should meditate focusing on the general image of the body having just some parts of it clear. Proceed in this way in your session till this point if no laxity and excitement arise. Were laxity and excitement to arise, after having immediately recognized it and generated a strong wish to eliminate them, brings your memory back to the object of meditation again and again without forgetting it and focus on it. Sustaining the continuity of this mind is the best method for beginners who wish to cultivate calm abiding. In brief, to cultivate a correct concentration one should do it by way of the eight antidotes which eliminate the five faults, as it is said (*in Maitreya's "Distinguishing the Middle from the Extremes"*): "[Calm abiding] derives from the cause of applying the eight antidotes to the five faults".

1. At the initial stage, laziness is a fault (*or an obstacle*); therefore there are four remedies to that: faith which sees the good qualities of concentration; aspiration which strives for it; effort which endeavors to attain it; and pliancy which is the result of striving.

2. While cultivating concentration, forgetting the instructions is an obstacle; therefore mindfulness is the remedy to it. Memory that just let us remember the object of meditation is not sufficient, the mind has to focus on its object vividly and intensely so that an ascertained or convinced knowledge of it is induced.

3. While absorbed in equipoise, laxity and excitement are obstacles; therefore introspection is the remedy to these. Introspection checks carefully whether laxity and excitement have arisen or not. If these have arisen, the highest caliber type of practitioner will recognize them as soon as they start to come up and will be able to eliminate them; the medium type of practitioner will be able to eliminate them just after they have occurred; the inferior type of practitioner will also recognize them after a short while and will be able to eliminate them.

Well then, what is the difference between lethargy and laxity-excitement? Lethargy is sort of a clouded mental state (*accompanied by*) heaviness of body and mind that makes the object of meditation to be not clear. Gross laxity is a mental state in which, although the mind does not stray away from its object of meditation, it lacks clarity and limpidity and memory is quite weak. Subtle laxity is a mental state in which, although clarity and limpidity are present, the vivid and firm ascertaining consciousness which ascertains the object has slightly weakened. As

a remedy, reflect on the good qualities of the Three Jewels, apply the instructions on "mixing energy (*wind, prana*), mind and space" and imagine a bright light. Subtle excitement is the mental state in which the mind does not remain immovable on its object and is slightly distracted. The remedy to it is meditating with mindfulness and introspection. Gross excitement is the mental state in which, although one relies on mindfulness and introspection, the mind does not remain immovable and is distracted towards objects of attachment. As a remedy meditate on impermanence, the unfortunate rebirths, and samsaric sufferings, as well as apply the instructions on blocking excitement with coercive methods.

4. When laxity and excitement have arisen, not applying the antidotes is an obstacle; therefore the remedy is to realize their presence as soon as they occur and to apply their antidotes. Furthermore, although clarity is present - due to the vivid mind apprehending the object in a tight way - it's difficult to find stability due to the strong excitement. If one relaxes the tightness, although stability will be present, it will be difficult to find clarity due to strong laxity. Therefore, according to one's personality, one will realize which level of tightness produces excitement and then tune one's mind to a slightly inferior level. Moreover, realizing that from one given level of relaxation onward laxity occurs, one will have to tune one's mind at a slightly higher level of tightness and in this way one will find the level fitting oneself. At this point one will have to look for the stability which is free from distraction and excitement. Once you have found it, being cautious about laxity, one shall produce the clarity of a vivid mind. Don't trust the mere factor of limpidity which lacks the clarity induced by a vivid and firm way of apprehending the object of the ascertaining consciousness but rather sustaining alternatively the two (*clarity and stability*), produce a flawless concentration.

5. When one is free even of the subtle laxity and excitement and the mind is absorbed with continuity in concentration, applying the antidote is an obstacle and therefore as a remedy focus your mind having relaxed in a state of equanimity without applying the antidotes to laxity and excitement. Sustaining the meditation flawlessly in this way, one will gradually achieve the nine mental stages²⁶ and then will achieve the calm abiding endowed with physical and mental pliancy.

²⁶ Setting the mind; Continuous setting; Re-setting; Close setting; Disciplining; Pacifying; Through pacifying; Making one-pointed; Setting in equipoise.

The way to practice the conclusion is as before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', like mentioned above, one should study commentaries expounding [the practice of] calm abiding.

As for the second, How to train in 'superior insight' which is the essence of wisdom." is split into two: **“How to practice during the formal meditation session”** and **“How to practice during the intervals between sessions”**.

The first consists of the **"Preparation"**, the **"Actual practice"** and the **"Conclusion"**.

The preparation is as explained in the context of calm abiding. In particular one should combine together the three; receiving the instructions on 'superior insight' from a qualified Master, having correctly relied on him or her (1); making fervent requests having regarded him or her and the deity as indivisible (2); and striving in purification and accumulation and so forth. These are the indispensable preliminaries to realize the vision.

As for the actual practice it is divided into two: **"How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of person"** and **"How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of phenomena"**. As for the first one, although (*Buddha*) proclaimed many types of reasoning in order to determine the selflessness, for beginners, the reasoning of the 'four essential points' is the easiest to comprehend.

We all have, even during deep sleep, a tenacious mind - at the deep of one's heart - thinking "I", "I"; this is the innate self-grasping (*innate belief in a inherent existent self*). For example, when somebody accused us of this or that fault while we did not commit it, since (*at this time*) the way the innate self-grasping mind conceives the "I" is very clear, examine how the mind thinking: "I am accused of this or that fault which I have not committed" conceives it. At this time investigate with a small part (*a corner*) of your mind what is it referring to when thinking "I" and how it conceives it. Moreover, if the latter one (*the investigating mind*) is too strong, the previous one (*the mind that conceives and believes the 'I', the innate self-grasping mind*) will disappear and, beside a mere empty, nothing else will appear. Therefore generate all the other minds as the mind thinking "I", "I" (*i.e. try to reinforce the sense of I also through other thoughts*). Then examine it with a corner of your mind. What is the innate self-grasping

mind refers to when thinking "I"? It does not refer to something which is distinct from the five psychophysical aggregates or body and mind; nor does it refer to a single aggregate or to only the mind or only the body; and not to the mere imputation made by thoughts on the whole of the five aggregates or the combination of body and mind! The innate self-grasping mind refers to an "I" who is self-sufficient from the beginning and this is how this mind conceives it. Since the "I" that is what is conceived in this way is the object of negation to be refuted, one should really ascertain it in a naked way (*absolutely clearly*) with one's mind rather than just because you heard other people saying or just like repeating empty words. This is the first "essential point" of ascertaining the way the object of negation appears.

As for the second "essential point"; ascertaining the pervasion: if the "I" that is conceived by the mind which, at the bottom of one's heart tenaciously thinks "I" existed in the five aggregates, would that "I" be identical (*the same/one*) or different (*separate/many*) from them? Besides these two ways of existing, another third option is completely impossible. Any given phenomenon is either identical or different²⁷. One has to reach the conviction that, besides these two ways of existing, a third way cannot exist at all.

As for the third "essential point"; ascertaining that phenomena lack being truly identical: if one thinks that the "I" conceived in such a way (*as described in the first essential point*) is identical to the five aggregates, it would entail the following faults (*or contradictions*): in the same way that a person has five aggregates, there should be five different "I". Or vice versa, in the same way that the "I" is only one, the five aggregates should be a whole or an indivisible aggregate. Therefore one concludes that the conceived "I" is not identical to the five aggregates. Not only that, if that "I" was identical to the five aggregates, then since the aggregates arise and perish, also the "I" that is conceived as self-sufficient should arise and perish. Well then, all the instances of "I" which arises and perishes, the preceding and the following ones, are they identical or different? If these were identical, then the "I" of the previous, the future and the present life would be a whole or an indivisible "I". If it was different, in general being 'simply' different, does not mean necessarily 'completely' different or without any kind of relation; but being 'inherently or truly' different must be understood as being 'inherently or truly' different in the sense of lacking any kind of connection. So therefore, the "I" of the previous, future and

²⁷ The designated phenomenon and its basis of designation are either the same thing or two different things.

present lives would be different and completely unrelated and this would contradict the general characteristics or principles of karma, i.e. if one has not performed one karma, one will not experience its result and once a karma has been performed, it will never get wasted. Therefore reflect how the preceding and following instances of that "I" are not different and also not identical. Moreover, if that "I" is identical to the aggregates, since it should be 'truly or inherently' identical, that "I" should be identical to the aggregates in every respect and this would again entail many inconsistencies; the "I" is generally conceived as the one who appropriates (*owns*) the aggregates and the aggregates are in turn conceived as what is appropriated by the "I" or the "self". Reflect on how the conceived "I" is not identical to the five aggregates.

As for the fourth "essential point"; ascertaining that phenomena lack being truly different; then if one thinks that although the conceived "I" is not (*does not exist as*) identical to the five aggregates it may be (*exist as*) different, reflect how, after having mentally isolated each of the aggregates, like the aggregate of form and so forth, one can identify separately the aggregate of consciousness. In the same way after having put on a side the aggregate of form and so forth, one should be able to identify the conceived "I" as different (*or separate*) and say: "This is the conceived "I" ", but this is not the case. Therefore think (*conclude*) that the conceived "I" does not exist as different from the five aggregates.

Once we come to ascertaining (*be convinced*) that the "I" does not exist as conceived by the innate self-grasping mind, depending on the examination conducted through the "four essential points"; we should sustain this firm understanding meditating one-pointedly without laxity and agitation.

When the intensity of this understanding grows weaker, beginners should make it stronger again through the 'four essential points' analysis and produce a firm understanding (*conviction*) of the lack of true existence. As for advanced practitioners, depending on having investigated whether phenomena exist the way they appear to the self-grasping mind or not, should produce, as it's done through the 'four essential points' analysis, a firm understanding of the lack of true existence.

At this point, the ascertainment factor [comes to] the firm conviction which has ascertained the lack of inherent existence of the "I", and the appearing factor [perceives] a pure

or utter empty, the mere rejection of the object of negation, i.e. true existence.

Meditating by way of maintaining these two factors one-pointedly is [called] 'the way to sustain the space-like meditative equipoise'.

During the post-meditation periods meditate the all phenomena as a manifesting play like illusions.

Due to intensity of the firm understanding of the lack of true existence (*produced*) during the meditative equipoise, during the post-meditation periods, one realizes that, although phenomena are perceived, these lack true existence and are deceiving like the appearance of an illusion. You should train in this way.

As for the second outline, 'How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of phenomena', it has two parts: "**How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of conditioned phenomena**" and "**How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of unconditioned phenomena**". The first outline describes phenomena like matter, consciousness and non-associated compositional phenomena.

As for matter, let's take the body as an example. To all of us unquestionably appear a body whose existence, instead of being merely imputed by thought on the basis of the collection of the five limbs made of flesh, bones and so on, exist as independent and self-sufficient. This is the way the object of negation appears. If such a body exists on (*or as an integral part of*) the collection of the five limbs made of flesh, bones and so on, would it be identical or different from that collection (*the same thing or something else*)? Were it to be identical, since this body that is the collection of the five limbs made of flesh, bones and so on has been produced by the father's sperm and the mother' blood, then even a single drop of our parents' sperm and blood, which is the base on which the consciousness penetrates, should be the body that is the collection of the five limbs made of flesh, bones and so on. Moreover, since there are five limbs, it (*the body*) should also be (*turn into*) 'five bodies' that are the collection of five limbs! If that body is instead different (*from the collection of the five limbs made up of flesh, bones and so on*), after having mentally isolated each of the limbs like the head and so on, one should be able to show (*something*) and say: "This is that body", but instead this is not the case (*but instead it's not like*

this). After having induced a firm understanding that such a body does not exist at all, sustain it.

As for the consciousness, let's take today's consciousness as an example. If today's consciousness, instead of being merely imputed by thought on the basis of this morning's consciousness and this evening's consciousness, would exist as 'today's consciousness existing from its own side', would it be identical or different from 'this morning's consciousness and this evening's consciousness'? If it were identical, then it would follow that 'this evening's consciousness' would be integral part of 'this morning's consciousness'; if it were different, then after having mentally isolated 'this morning's consciousness' and 'this evening's consciousness' we should be able to show (*something*) and say: "This is that today's consciousness" but instead it's not like this. As before, meditate after having induced a firm understanding (*conviction*) that such a consciousness does not exist at all.

As for the non-associated compositional phenomena; take for example time, say a year. If a year, instead of being merely imputed by thought on the basis of the 'base of designation' constituted by the twelve months, would exist from its own side; would it be identical or different from the twelve months? If it would be identical, since there are twelve months, it (*one year*) should also be (*turn into*) 'twelve years'! If it would be different, then after having mentally isolated each one of the twelve months, one should be able to show (*something*) and say; "This is that year" but it's not like this.

"How to meditate after having determined the selflessness of unconditioned phenomena"; take space for example. Since space has many principal and secondary (*intermediate*) directions, after having examined whether it is identical or different from them, meditate after having induced, as before, a firm understanding that such a space (*independent from its main and secondary or intermediate directions*) does not exist.

In brief, the "I", the aggregates, the mountains, the houses and so forth, all phenomena of samsara and nirvana except for being merely imputed by thought, totally lack existing from their own side. To sustain the firm understanding which ascertains it, is called the 'space-like meditative equipoise'. During the post-meditation, the understanding that any appearing object arises depending on the collection of causes and conditions, is not true and is deceiving in the nature, is called 'the post-meditation similar to illusion'. Engage in the qualified 'special insight'

that is a meditative equipoise infused by the physical and mental pliancy of the bliss induced by the power of the investigation based on of having correctly sustain these two yogas (*the space-like meditative equipoise and the post-meditation similar to illusion*).

The way to practice the 'conclusion' is done like before.

Regarding 'How to practice during the intervals between sessions', like mentioned above, one should study commentaries expounding (*the practice of*) special insight.

Having trained one's mind in this way through the 'common path', one should certainly enter the 'vajra vehicle' and due to that, without having to depend on three countless eons (*practice*), one will easily complete the two accumulations. In brief, one should practice all the topics in an experiential way starting from 'guru devotion' and ending with 'calm abiding' and 'special insight' in four, or at least one, daily sessions. Producing authentic transformative experiences of all the stages of the path is the best way to take the essence of a human rebirth endowed with leisure and opportunities.

Colophon:

The meaning of the unequalled Iksvaku (*The sugarcane descendent, an epithet of Buddha*)'s intent,

Which has been clarified by Atisha Dipamkara and his spiritual son (*Dromtonpa*)

And by the conqueror Lozang (*Lama Tsong Khapa*),

Has been compiled briefly in the stages of the path,

As a favorable factor for the fortunate ones' traveling to liberation,

by Chö Kyi Gyal-Tshan (*Chos kyi rGyal Tshan, pan chen blo bzang chos rgyan*).

Due to this virtue, may all of us, all migratory beings and myself, complete the practice of the three types of persons.

*Translated from Tibetan by Teresa Bianca and Sherab Dhargye in Dharamsala.
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