

# 365

DAILY TEACHINGS

Volume II



365

DAILY TEACHINGS

VOLUME 2

SELECTED TALKS AND TEACHINGS  
FROM THE VERY VENERABLE  
KHENCHEN THRANGU RINPOCHE



Edited by Acharya Dechen Phuntsok

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### Foreword

Acharya Dechen Phuntsok from Namo Buddha has compiled and edited 365 short teachings by the Very Venerable Kyabje Yongdzin Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, creating a collection that will bring profound benefit to all readers.

The wisdom of Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, a highly realized master and great scholar, is very precious. His unique ability to present complex teachings in an accessible way allows practitioners at all levels to connect with the Dharma. Each word he shares carries the blessings of the Buddha Dharma lineage, which he honors with the utmost reverence for tradition and samaya.

I offer my heartfelt prayers that this collection of teachings by the Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche serves as a source of inspiration and benefit for everyone who encounters it on their path to enlightenment.

Kenting Tai Situpa  
The Supreme Head of the Palpung Institution of Buddhism  
Palpung Sherabling Monastic Seat  
Himachal Pradesh, India

PALPUNG SHERABLING MONASTIC SEAT

P.O. Upper Bhattu Via Baijnath-176125, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, India  
[www.palpong.org](http://www.palpong.org)



Dharma Chakra Centre  
Seat of H. H. The Gyalwang Karmapa  
P.O. Rumtek - 737 135  
East Sikkim, India



## The XII<sup>th</sup> Goshri Gyaltsabpa

Densa Palchen Chosling  
Seat of The XII<sup>th</sup> Goshri Gyaltsabpa  
P.O. Ralang - 737 139  
South Sikkim, India

H.H. the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje often praised Kyabje Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche as the great Khenpo who is like the sun. Rinpoche's profound impact on the dissemination of Buddha's teachings and his unwavering dedication to benefiting sentient beings during his life has continued even after his passing into parinirvana.

Through the diligent efforts of Rinpoche's devoted disciples, his teachings have been meticulously transcribed and translated into numerous languages. One such endeavor is the publication of "365 Selected Talks and Teachings," a compilation of Rinpoche's essential advice by Thrangu Dharmakara Publication. To this task, I rejoice and pray that this testament to Rinpoche's wisdom and compassion will serve as a beacon of guidance for those seeking the path to liberation and enlightenment.

Thus, prayed by the 12th Drung Goshri Gyaltsab on the 10th of May 2024 in Borobudur, Indonesia.



## Editor's Foreword

In today's fast-paced world, people are extremely busy and often face numerous challenges. True relief from this suffering can be found through dharma practice. To practice the dharma effectively, authentic guidance is essential. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche was one of the most distinguished and wise scholars of our time. He taught in over 25 countries and was highly regarded as a master of mahamudra meditation. His compassionate presence, immense knowledge, and ability to make even the most complex teachings accessible have profoundly impacted students worldwide. He served as the personal teacher to the four principal Karma Kagyu Rinpoches: His Eminence (H.E.) Shamar Rinpoche, H.E. Situ Rinpoche, H.E. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, and H.E. Gyaltsab Rinpoche. Due to his vast dharma knowledge, Rinpoche was appointed by His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama as the personal tutor to His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa and was honored with the title Yongdzin (an honorific title for the tutor of His Holiness).

Last year, I had the privilege of presenting *365 Daily Teachings by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche*. Many readers found it useful for integrating dharma practice into their daily lives, and some requested more books of a similar nature. Editing that book was a personally enriching experience, allowing me to explore Rinpoche's extensive work and improve my understanding of both English and the dharma. I gained a deep appreciation for Rinpoche's teaching experiences, wisdom, kindness, and guidance. Motivated by this experience, I decided to publish more of his teachings. This year, I am fortunate and blessed to offer you another compilation of 365 short teachings by Kyabje Yongdzin Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche.

The goal of this book is to convey the essence of buddhism, offering practical wisdom for our daily lives through the words of the Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche. His inspirational teachings are simple, meaningful, and easy to understand, helping us to improve our state of mind and discover inner peace. Through these concise teachings, we can benefit from Rinpoche's wisdom while engaged in our daily activities.

These teachings are meant to be contemplated and practiced frequently, bringing joy through diligence. I hope that

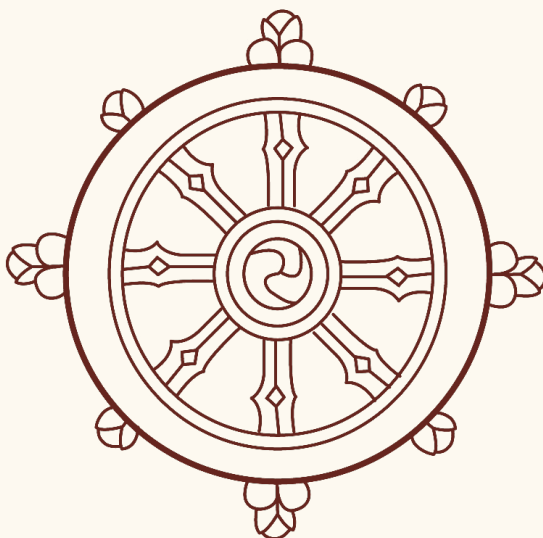
they will lead you to ultimate happiness and wisdom, fulfilling all your wishes.

I seek your forgiveness for any mistakes made in assembling this edition.

— Acharya Dechen Phuntsok  
Namo Buddha, 23rd of August 2024

# January

FAITH AND DEVOTION



## January 1

The guru is the most important part of one's life. In the vajrayana teachings he is known as the origin of all blessings. Whether one is able to receive the blessings or develop powers depends on one's relationship with the guru.



From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 101

## January 2

There are two kinds of gurus: the root guru and the transmission guru. The transmission guru includes all those who hold the unbroken transmission up to the present time. The root guru, in addition to holding the unbroken transmission, is the particular guru to whom we are very strongly connected in this lifetime and to whom we are very open. For this reason, it is said that the root guru is the embodiment of the essence of all the buddhas of the ten directions, of the thousand kalpas, and of the three times.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 102*



## January 3

The mind of the guru is completely realized, the dharmadhatu, therefore there is no difference between the absolute and the relative guru. Although the guru has departed physically, his compassionate attitude, his buddha activity and the transmissions have all been left with us. He left us with the trust that we will carry them on to future generations. Therefore, if we complete the practices then we can make them available to others. That is the fulfilment of the samayas of the body, speech, and mind of the guru.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 106*

## January 4

In this age there are many dharma books and many people read them and meditate according to what they have read. This leads to various difficulties such as finding their bodies shaking or working very hard without getting any signs of accomplishment from their meditation. One really needs to depend on a special and learned teacher because a book cannot adapt the instruction to one's own nature and capabilities. Therefore, one needs to rely on a special being who is able to teach in accordance with one's specific abilities.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 65–66*

## January 5

There are different kinds of teachers. Some are very scholarly and give thorough explanations based on the commentaries on various texts. Others may not be very scholarly but give instructions based on a great deal of personal experience of meditation so he or she can explain what will happen in meditation. There is also what is called the old lady's pointing instruction. This is like an instruction from an old lady who really doesn't know very much, but is able to point out the key things to look for. The commentaries on meditation do not give points on the direct experience of meditation or these "pointing out" instructions. It is therefore important for meditators to receive direct instruction from an experienced teacher.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 66*

## January 6

In my life, I have experienced many joys and sorrows, just as any ordinary person. Moreover, because of the kindness of my gurus and my special deity, I have had a connection to the true dharma in general and that of the practice lineage of the Karma Kamtsang in particular. I have also travelled to many different places.

*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 3*

## January 7

If you understand that the only real point of a human life is to help others, to benefit others, and to improve the world, then you must understand that the basis of not harming others, but benefiting others, is having the intention not to harm others and the intention to benefit others.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 10*

## January 8

Devotion means devotion to the dharma. It is based upon experience of the genuine recognition that the dharma is extraordinarily beneficial. In particular, devotion in our Kagyu tradition is devotion to mahamudra practice because mahamudra practice is workable, convenient, and brings great results and benefits. So, devotion here is the appreciation that the dharma student has for the dharma in general, and in particular, the appreciation of mahamudra practice.

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 45*

## January 9

If you have no trust in the lama who transmits mahamudra to you, how can you have any trust in what he or she has taught you? So, in the beginning, it is necessary for students to examine the teacher and then, on the basis of doing that, establish a ground of trust between themselves and the teacher. It is only by doing this that there will be a positive result to their practice. Without establishing that ground of trust and the ensuing appreciation of the teacher, there's no possibility of any kind of achievement of realization.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 45



## January 10

Devotion, however, has to be cultivated through practice, and it is for this reason that we have the four uncommon preliminaries. The purpose of these four ngondro practices is to lead to a cultivated and stabilized devotion.



From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 45

## January 11

Devotion, of course, is a state of mind. So, the practice must be done essentially with your mind, but your body and speech can greatly support and augment this practice. For this reason, in the first ngondro practice, we recite the refuge vow with our speech and perform prostrations with our body.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 47

## January 12

How can a lama transmit this power of realization to others with speech? It is because the lama possesses very great qualities him or herself. The lama has the qualities of great compassion, diligence, courage, and determination. It is because of these qualities that the lama has that miraculous power to transfer realization to others.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 6*

## January 13

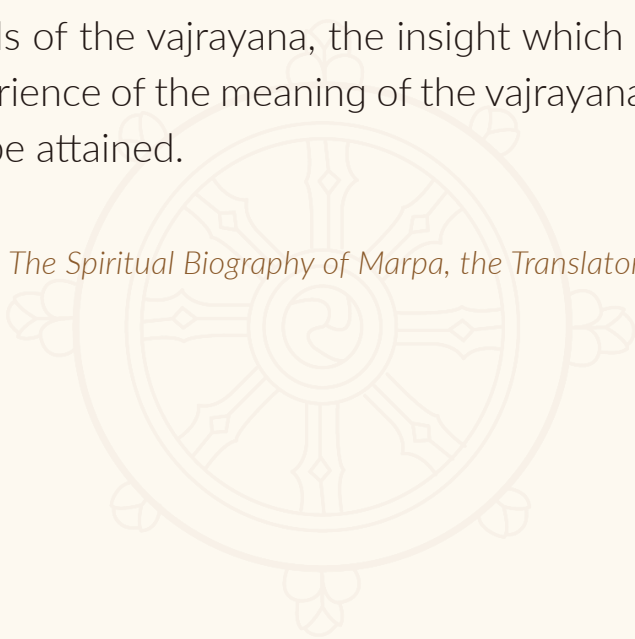
The root of all practice is faith and this faith must be very firm and stable. If this faith is not strong, then everything else which comes out of the practice will not be good either. So, faith is the root of practice. To use an analogy: if the root of a tree is weak, then the trunk and branches and leaves will not be strong. It is said that the root of the understanding of emptiness (Skt. *shunya-ta*) or the understanding of non-dual nature is faith. If our faith is not strong, we cannot begin to understand the true nature of emptiness.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 23*

## January 14

The point is that without firm faith in the three jewels of the vajrayana, the insight which is the experience of the meaning of the vajrayana cannot be attained.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator*, p. 24



## January 15

We should rely on our jetsun which is our root guru. Without reliance on a guru, it is impossible to discover the true aspects of spiritual accomplishment. This means, in the short term, we will not be able to achieve ordinary spiritual accomplishments and, in the long term, we will not be able to achieve final realization.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator*, p. 25

## January 16

It is impossible to achieve realization without the help of a guru is that while practicing on the path, we have all sorts of experiences and impressions. Without someone explaining what is happening and how to react to these different things going on in the mind, we can easily go down an incorrect path. We can't expect to find spiritual guidance from books or from other ordinary persons.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, pp. 25–26



## January 17

We have to have a guru who has enough realization and insight to guide us through all these experiences so that we stay on the right path. With the help of a proper guru, we will be able to achieve all the aspects of spiritual accomplishment.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, p. 26*

## January 18

We can attain the result of practice only if we rely on a qualified teacher and receive the appropriate instruction and put these instructions into practice. We cannot attain anything by simply practicing under our own power. Nor can we practice effectively based on information obtained from books. Even if the book is absolutely correct, it is still likely that we will misunderstand what the book says or develop doubt or confusion about its meaning.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, p. 26*

## January 19

It is necessary to pray to our guru and all the great masters to receive their blessings so that we can integrate these blessings within our being. If we do not receive these blessings, then we will not be able to develop all their qualities and integrate these qualities within us. To develop all these qualities, we must pray with full concentration to our guru and to the lamas of our lineage, praying that all their qualities can arise within us.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, p. 31*

## January 20

When we are receiving instructions, it is important that we have faith and devotion, and the most important thing for that is to be really excited. We need to realize how fortunate we are to be able to do this. If we really see how fortunate we are, this will be really wonderful and extremely beneficial for us.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 26

## January 21

We need to be joyful and excited, because if we feel enthusiasm for our practice, we will be more and more diligent. Then our practice will just get better and better. On the other hand, if we are not excited about our practice and do not have any joy for it, it will not really go anywhere.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 26

## January 22

What is most important thing when we practice meditation? Devotion is most important. It is crucial for our meditation to have devotion. If our devotion is strong, our meditation will also be strong. If our devotion is not so strong, our meditation will not be strong either. If we have one hundred percent devotion, our meditation will also be one hundred percent. Similarly, if we have fifty percent devotion, we will have only fifty percent meditation, and if we only have one percent devotion, then we will only have one percent meditation. This is why devotion is so important for our practice.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 113

## January 23

You might think that the importance of devotion is taught for people of lesser capabilities who are not very smart. You might think it is blind faith. But that is not the case. If we have strong devotion and conviction in the dharma, we will be diligent about our dharma practice and be able to do it. Without faith or devotion, we will not really be able to practice or to be diligent.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 113*



## January 24

The reason to have devotion to the lama is the dharma that they teach. That is the thing that can bring us to the ultimate results of liberation and omniscience. That is what we really need. Because of devotion to dharma, we will naturally be able to benefit ourselves and others spontaneously. This is what is most important, and this is why we must have devotion.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 114*

## January 25

We should not look for a lama who has absolutely no faults and is replete with good qualities—we will never find anyone like that. We do need to have strong devotion, but the devotion is for the dharma, not the lama's human character.

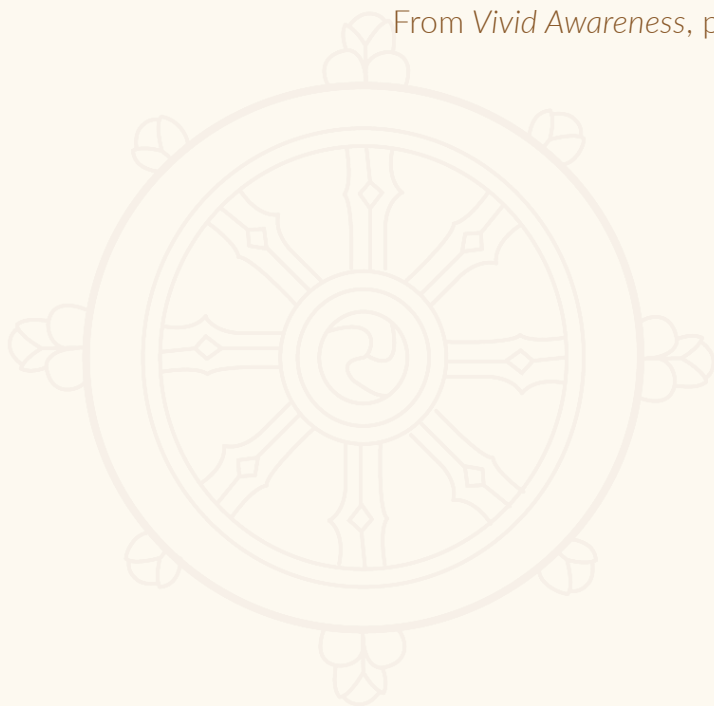
From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 115

## January 26

Even though the dharma has spread to many lands, not everyone is able to enter the gate of the Dharma and practice it. Not everyone is able to believe the Dharma. Even many who have started to learn about the Dharma and begun to believe it are unable to practice it. But you who are reading this are not like that: you have fortune to be able to practice the Dharma. Over the course of many eons, you have gathered a tremendous amount of merit, due to which you have had the good fortune to be born in a precious human body, encounter the Dharma, and recognize how valuable it is. You have seen how the Dharma will be beneficial for your life and have developed faith in it. Not only do you have faith, but you actually have the wish to practice the Dharma. Such an intention is actually very

difficult to come by. This is a wonderful, great fortune, so it is important that you be diligent in your Dharma practice.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 25



**January 27**

I would like to encourage you to supplicate the masters of the lineage to receive their blessing and to find the strength to exert yourself to your utmost.

*From Crystal Clear: Practical Advice for  
Mahamudra Meditators, p. 14*

## January 28

If all we do is think about it conceptually, then it is perhaps a bit difficult to see the essence of the mind as it is. But if you have strong faith and devotion as well as renunciation and weariness with the world, then it is possible for you to realize the nature of mind. If your faith and devotion are not all that strong, then even if you put a lot of effort into it, it will be somewhat difficult.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 15

## January 29

With great faith and devotion to our lama, we say this prayer: “I prostrate to the Great Compassionate One whose form is the compassion of the Buddha and his offspring. You are the incomparable lord of dharma with whom any relationship is meaningful. My root guru, you embody the life-breath of this lineage. I pray to you from the depths of my heart. Bless me with the full development of love, compassion, bodhichitta, And the ability to dismiss and dispel all obstacles.” After this prayer, we visualize the lama coming down through the top of our head and entering our heart where they reside.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 25*

## January 30

Some people think that blessings are some sort of strange power something that makes you shake all over or that makes you levitate or that gives you some extraordinary feeling like being high or drunk. But that's not blessings at all! What are blessings? Perhaps at first you don't know anything and you don't know that dharma is good. But then you think, "Maybe the dharma is OK." You think, "I should give dharma practice a try. If I meditate it will probably help me. " The dharma has this sort of power, so that when you know the reasons, you develop some faith and devotion. This is what we mean by blessings.

*From On Guru & Devotion*



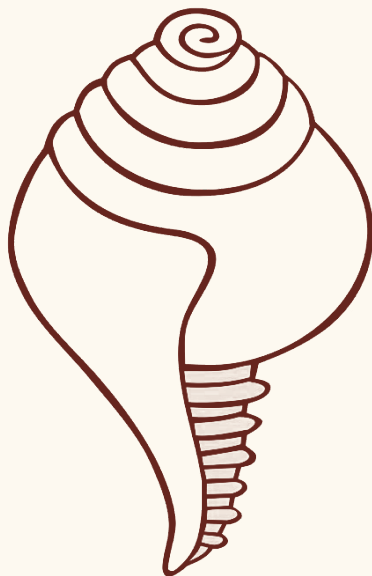
## January 31

It was necessary to spread the dharma in the western countries. When I taught western students, it was not like when we teach from texts. In general, the dharma was taught as if in a conversation, and the students found delight in it. Those who had previously not had faith in the dharma gained faith in the dharma, and those who already had faith in the dharma but had not been able to practice it became able to practice it.

*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 80*

# February

DAILY TEACHINGS



## February 1

To maintain mindfulness and awareness, one has to be careful that one is not indulging in the obscurations of attachment, aggression, pride, and so forth. As a sign of commitment, whenever one talks to someone, one must be mindful of what one is talking about and how one is behaving physically. One has to be mindful of all actions.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 73

## February 2

To benefit sentient beings, mindfulness, awareness and carefulness are further ways of making one's actions beneficial. Mindfulness means that when one is trying to benefit others, one must be mindful that one is acting in accordance with bodhichitta. Awareness means that one examines oneself again and again, as many times as is possible, to see how strongly one is rooted in bodhichitta. Carefulness means that one is very careful and cautious not to go against bodhichitta. By means of these three, one becomes very skillful in actually providing whatever is necessary to benefit sentient beings.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, pp. 87–88

## February 3

When gross thoughts arise in meditation, one forgets that one is meditating and loses one's mindfulness and awareness. These gross thoughts are actual distraction. The way to prevent these gross thoughts is to retain mindfulness and awareness.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 30*

## February 4

Mindfulness has three characteristics. First, one has a sharpness and clearness of mind in which the instructions are not forgotten. Second, although the mind is very sharp and focused, there are not many thoughts arising because meditation is nonconceptual, so there are not many thoughts arising and the mind is naturally focused one-pointedly on an object. Third, because one has trust and faith and has the suppleness or flexibility of having become well-trained, meditation becomes pleasant with a sense of comfort and pleasure.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 44*

## February 5

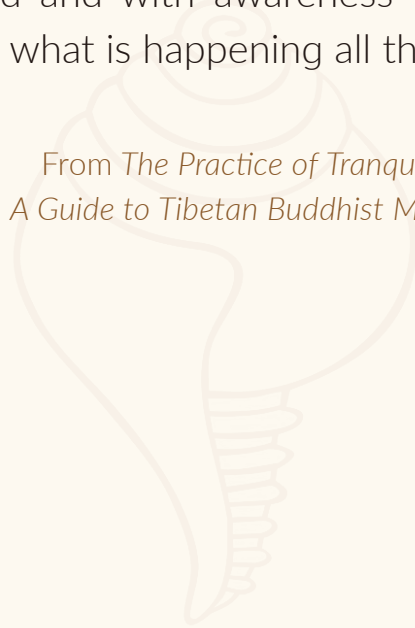
If a meditator has mindfulness and awareness, then he won't lose his meditation or practice of good actions. But, if someone does not have mindfulness and awareness, then thoughts and kleshas will arrive and steal away the meditation and destroy the practice of good actions. The remedy that prevents the attack of mind poisons and thoughts is having mindfulness and awareness.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 49*

## February 6

With mindfulness we don't forget the condition of our mind and with awareness we are very clear about what is happening all the time.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 50*





## February 7

It's very important for us to read dharma books, but when we read them, we must remember that these are actually not all that easy to get. They are very difficult to translate. The people who translate them have gone to a lot of effort to do it. They have done it out of a good motivation, they have put in a lot of study, and they have learned how to translate.

From *Lion of Speech*, p. 13

## February 8

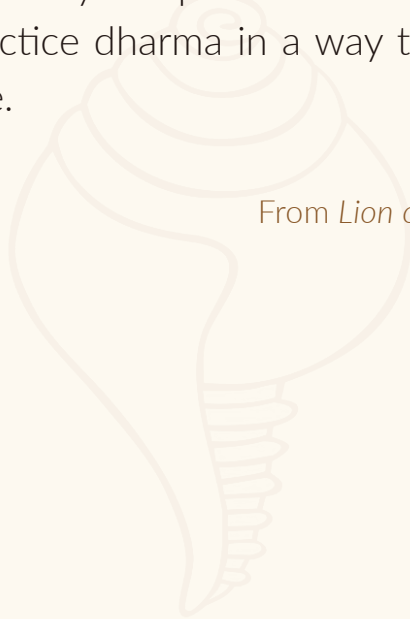
We might not be able to be terribly diligent and may be able to only do a little bit of practice. But even that tiny bit of dharma practice is still something that can give our human lives meaning. That is why it is very important to be able to practice and study.

*From Lion of Speech, p. 16*

## February 9

In this day and age in developed countries, people get very busy. People have a lot of work, but we can practice dharma in a way that fits with our lifestyle.

From *Lion of Speech*, p. 16



## February 10

Sometimes we might have to work, we might not have time, and we might not have the opportunity to practice the dharma. If that is your situation, there is absolutely no need to get discouraged or depressed. It is just such a wonderful fortune to have even entered the gate of the dharma! Just that is the seed for your future enlightenment.

From *Lion of Speech*, p. 17

## February 11

To convey the real meaning of the teachings to others, one has to speak to them so they can understand. The Buddha said that he was unable to wash away the defilements of others with water. To help sentient beings, one has to show them the right path by explaining the teachings to them. The only way the Buddha could pass on his inner wisdom to others was to talk to them. In a similar manner we also teach others the path by means of speech.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 44

## February 12

Discussion clears away any doubts or misunderstandings that may arise when the dharma is being explained. The Buddha said that if one wants to buy gold from a shop, before one actually purchases it, one should examine it to see if it is real or fake. Then, if one finds that it is real gold, one should test it to see if it is of good or poor quality by putting it in the fire, cutting it, or rubbing it. By doing so, one finds out if it is pure gold or not. In the same way, the teachings of the Buddha should be carefully examined and analyzed rather than simply accepted. To explain the teachings clearly to others, one should be free of doubt and misunderstanding oneself and this is the function of debate and discussion.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 45*

## February 13

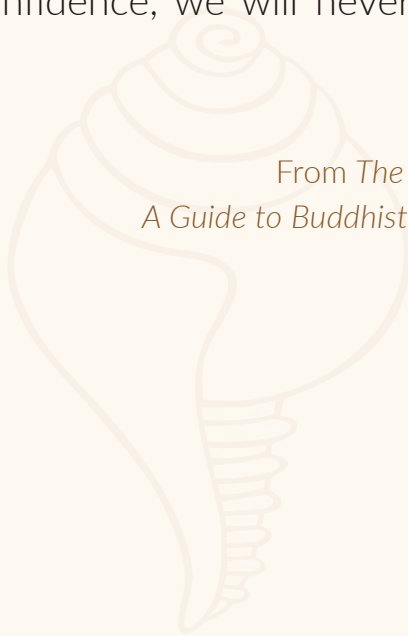
We should not become discouraged by thinking that we cannot understand or cannot realize the essence of the teachings. We should continue to work with our knowledge and level of practice and put all our effort into practicing with patience.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 51

## February 14

The most important thing is confidence. If we have no confidence, we will never accomplish our goal.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 60





## February 15

The main point is that one should not be involved in or attached to the thoughts. If one is not attached to the thoughts, it will be easy to get rid of them. But if one is attached to these thoughts, it will be very difficult to get rid of them.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 30*

## February 16

One makes offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas not because offerings make them happy and once happy, they will help us. One makes offerings because the dharma is very important and the practice of dharma is special. The Buddha is the one who taught the dharma and the bodhisattvas are special beings who have been able to practice the dharma without obstacles. Making offerings to these special beings increases one's own motivation to practice the dharma and to meditate.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 128*

## February 17

It is important to continue steadily with our meditation practice rather than have intense periods of diligence and then give it up because there is no result. This kind of diligence is called unchanging, permanent diligence that enables us to maintain the continuity of our practice. We need this kind of diligence. It is important both to have this diligence and not to have any attachment to meditation experiences.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 141*

## February 18

Whether we are practicing the dharma of the vajrayana or listening to dharma or teaching it, we need to possess a pure motivation for doing so.



From *Teachings on the Practice of Meditation*, p. 17

## February 19

The main thing in meditation is the mind and not the body, because it is the mind that actually performs the meditation. But at the same time our minds inhabit or rely upon our bodies, so therefore, physical posture is extremely important.



From *Teachings on the Practice of Meditation*, p. 23

## February 20

Mindfulness is therefore the faculty of recollecting that you are engaged in the act of meditation and are not going to follow your thoughts. Mindfulness is a mental formation, and as long as this mindfulness is present, then your mind can remain at rest. Mindfulness also will bring out the natural clarity or lucidity of your mind and will produce a state of mental stability. As long as this mindfulness is present, then you will also possess awareness as well.

*From Teachings on the  
Practice of Meditation, p. 33*

## February 21

We shouldn't let ourselves be dominated by disturbing emotions whenever they crop up. We must remember that these disturbing emotions are marked by emptiness and we should not allow them to take over, always keeping them in check. If we find that a negative emotion is getting very strong, we should try to remember very clearly the instructions of our guru.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 30

## February 22

We now have a great opportunity. It's as if all the jewels are in front of us and all we have to do is to make effort to remember and to use them. This is our chance. If we think "Well, maybe I'll do it later," there might not be such an opportunity. So, we should use the opportunity now without being careless or inattentive, because this is our great chance.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 69



## February 23

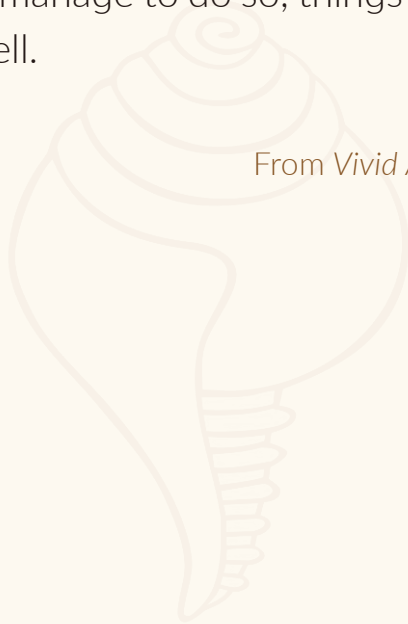
Laziness is the enemy. It is like the deep sleep of a corpse which is of no benefit at all. Laziness makes us think that it might be very nice to let ourself not do anything which seems like a very pleasant course of action. However, it is very short-sighted because in the long term, this attitude can hurt us and make things more difficult.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator*, p. 70

## February 24

It is important for us to keep control over our mind. If we manage to do so, things will turn out for us as well.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 5



## February 25

If we do not have control over our minds, we will naturally feel attachment or anger wherever we go. No matter how far away we go, we will feel attachment or anger. They will well up automatically.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 65

## February 26

We experience many different joys and sorrows. When we do, we have a lot of thoughts. This produces a lot of afflictions, and many feelings arise. So, we need to make sure that joy and sorrow do not harm us. In fact, we can even use them as a way to develop our experience, realization, and samadhi meditation. If we can take joy and sorrow as the path, this life will be peaceful and happy.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 175

## February 27

We are able to successfully take rebirth in the pure realm [of Sukhavati] when we acquire the four causes. The first of the four causes are to visualize the pure realm. We should always visualize the realm of Sukhavati, according to the depiction from either a thangka or a picture. In this way, when we are dying, we will be able to bring the pure realm to mind and take rebirth there. The second cause is to accumulate merit. Some people like to support dharma centers or monasteries, but if we do not have connections with one, we can also choose to help the poor and schools by providing financial or educational assistance. The third cause is to generate bodhichitta, which is the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering and attain ulti-

mate Buddhahood. The fourth cause is to make aspirations. We pray for all sentient beings, including ourselves, to be able to take rebirth in Sukhavati and not to fall into the lower realms.

From *A Life of Happiness:  
A Practice Guide for Older Practitioners*, p. 70



## February 28

When we are looking after the sick, whether as family or as caregivers, we should contemplate that every person goes through the processes of birth, aging, sickness, and death. It is a fact of nature, so we should not feel excessively sad about it. If the caregiver himself is overwhelmed with sadness, then the person being looked after also feels miserable as a result. It would be terrible if the caregivers were to become heartbroken and inconsolable once the sick person had passed away. Therefore, as family, we should focus our efforts on taking care of our parents. It is best if we can generate a sense of gratitude towards being able to be by their side and look after them. Caregivers should also cultivate the same attitude and regard the sick as their own family members.

*From A Life of Happiness:  
A Practice Guide for Older Practitioners, p. 73*

## February 29

We need to apply ourselves diligently now to practice the dharma without distraction. The benefit is that when we come to the point of our death, we will have a good path that we can go along without any difficulty.

From *Advice from a Yogi*, p. 38



# March

BODHICHITTA AND COMPASSION



## March 1

Noble beings who work for the benefit of other sentient beings have nine different ways in which they help others: three which are for their own benefit, three which are for the benefit of other sentient beings, and the three last which are both for their own and others' benefit. The three ways of working for one's own benefit are hearing, contemplating, and meditating. The three ways of benefiting other beings are speech, debate, and composition. Finally, there are three ways in which noble beings accomplish the benefit of themselves and others. These are: being learned, being well-disciplined, and being kind or compassionate.

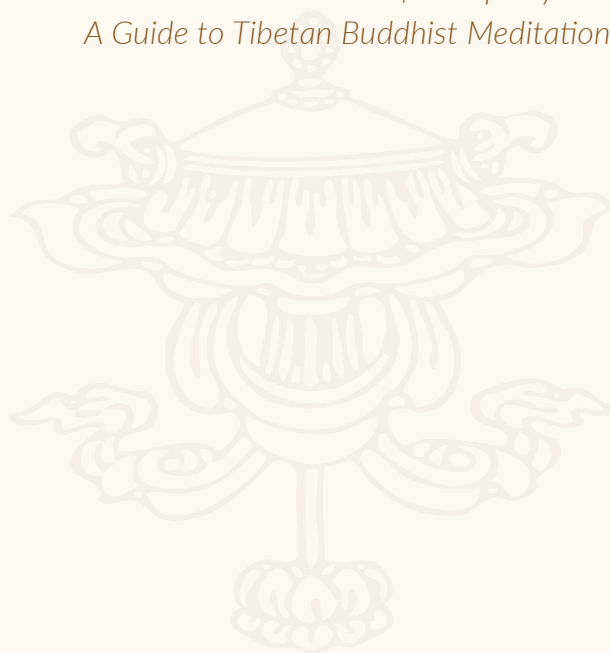
*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, pp. 43–45*

## March 2

The method for developing love and compassion is to first meditate on the sameness of oneself and others. One thinks that everything one experiences that is pleasurable is what other beings also like. If one experiences things, one does not like, it is the same for other beings. In this way one contemplates and realizes the sameness of oneself and others. Next one meditates on cherishing others more than oneself. There are actions one does for oneself. If one does this for other beings instead of acting just for oneself, it is of much greater benefit. So, others are seen as more important than oneself. Finally, there is the practice of exchanging oneself for others, known as sending and taking (Tib. *tonglen*). Through this practice one's mind poi-

sons become less and one's love and compassion for others increase, and the stability of one's mind increases.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 130



## March 3

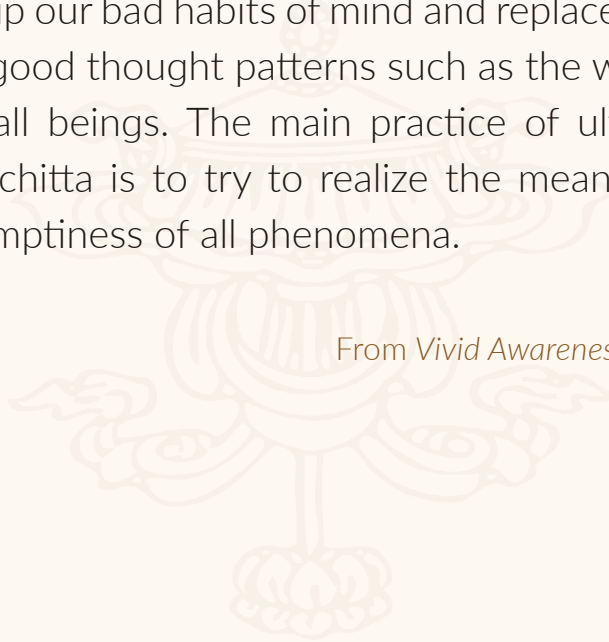
We should have the motivation to bring benefit to all of our former mothers and to all the sentient beings of all six realms of samsara who are as limitless as space. It is for their benefit that we practice the dharma. It is for their benefit that we need to study the dharma, so please read these teachings with the pure motivation of bodhichitta. This is the best reason to practice the dharma.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 2

## March 4

The main practices of relative bodhichitta are to give up our bad habits of mind and replace them with good thought patterns such as the wish to help all beings. The main practice of ultimate bodhichitta is to try to realize the meaning of the emptiness of all phenomena.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 31



## March 5

At the beginning of dharma studies, traditionally the masters of the past would encourage students to engender bodhichitta. This is not merely a custom. Requesting and receiving teachings with this attitude of a bodhisattva will definitely cause our training to become true dharma practice. Without bodhichitta, our practice may, of course, still be spiritual, but it will not be nearly as effective as it could be. Therefore, please motivate yourself with the proper enlightened attitude.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 3*

## March 6

The attitude of bodhichitta encompasses both compassion and discriminating knowledge. It involves forming the determination to attain supreme enlightenment for the benefit of all beings.

From *Naropa's Wisdom*, p. 3



## March 7

Ordinary beings in samsara have one single predominant thought, “What is best for me?” The attitude of wanting to help others is neither well-developed nor vast. We as individuals are not unique in being selfish. Virtually all sentient beings are self-seeking. We have wandered about in samsaric existence for such a long time that we have a deeply ingrained habit of treating ourselves as the most significant person in the world and we are not really that concerned about the welfare of others.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 4*

## March 8

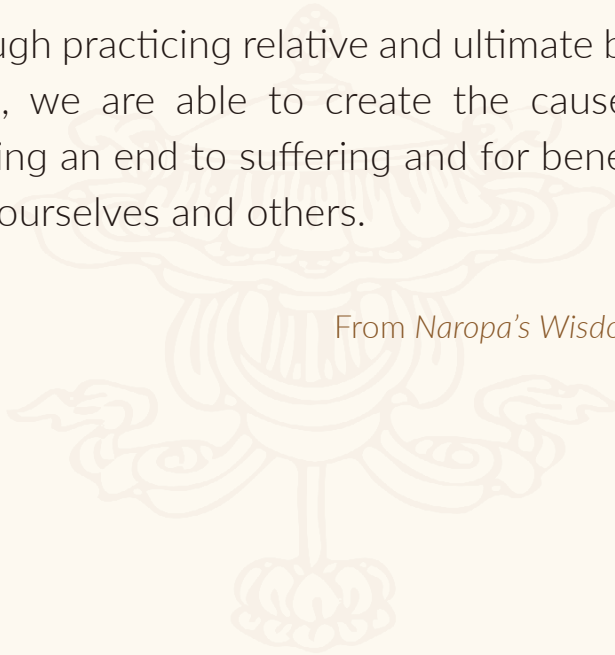
The habit of thinking only about ourselves gives rise to all sorts of disturbing emotions (Skt. *kle-shas*). We feel attached, angry, dull, proud, jealous—the list is endless. All these negative emotions disturb our state of mind. They are expressed in actions that hurt others and make it even more difficult for ourselves. It's all so unpleasant.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 4*

## March 9

Through practicing relative and ultimate bodhi-chitta, we are able to create the causes for bringing an end to suffering and for benefiting both ourselves and others.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 5*



## March 10

Every day we should try our best to resolve to move toward supreme enlightenment. Instead of continuing the tendency to think selfishly, we should endeavor to bring benefit to all beings. All the different Buddhist practices that we do begin with taking refuge and generating bodhi-chitta. There's a reason for this, because every time we apply a practice, we gradually shift our attitude. By doing this again and again, we will eventually transform our nature into that of a bodhisattva.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 5*

## March 11

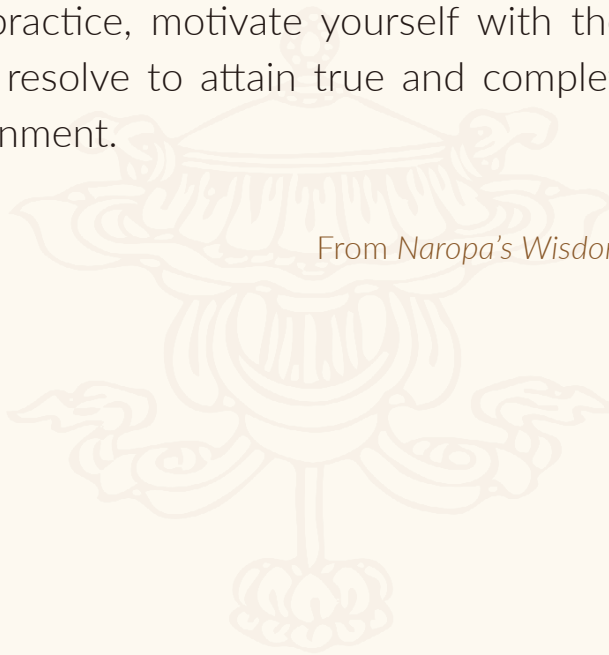
We should understand that ultimate bodhichitta is not a temporary shift in attitude. It is not an artificial fabrication of a frame of mind but a permanent change. Ultimate bodhichitta also cuts the disturbing emotions at their very root, so we need to train in ultimate as well as relative bodhichitta. Ultimate bodhichitta is the very heart, the essence, of Buddhist practice. By beginning with relative bodhichitta, we are able to improve our mind and uplift our attitudes. Through ultimate bodhichitta, we are able to thoroughly eliminate our disturbing emotions.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 5*

## March 12

When either studying or putting the teachings into practice, motivate yourself with the precious resolve to attain true and complete enlightenment.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 67*



## March 13

Generally speaking, there is no method to eliminate death. However, if we develop bodhichitta, we will ultimately attain buddhahood, which means we have attained the state of selflessness. Therefore, bodhichitta is said to be the nectar which overcomes death.

From: *A Commentary on Shantideva's  
A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, pp. 42–43

## March 14

Generally, there are two kinds of bodhichitta: relative bodhichitta and ultimate bodhichitta. We begin mind training teachings with ultimate bodhichitta followed by relative bodhichitta. The reason Chekawa Yeshe Dorje decided on this order is because relative bodhichitta is the desire that forms the noble intention to proceed with developing ultimate bodhichitta. The dualistic mind is not very stable, and to work with something that is so unstable is very difficult to do. Wouldn't it be better to train in absolute bodhichitta first and later train in relative bodhichitta based on the stability achieved? Then relative bodhichitta will be more will be more lucid, clear, and steady so that progress is more likely.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, pp. 33–34*



## March 15

In the mind training teachings, relative bodhi-chitta is emphasized more than ultimate bodhi-chitta, because relative bodhichitta is of immediate importance for the practitioner. It is what occurs in our daily life. We train in meditation to realize the emptiness of external phenomena and the emptiness of internal phenomena. However, in the case of mind training, we act as if there is a personal identity, and as if other persons are also real, so relative bodhichitta is practicing with the belief that there are a self and others.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 43*

## March 16

In meditation on ultimate bodhichitta, the instruction is to look without any conceptualization at the nature of mind. This buddha nature is complete simplicity; it is the union of emptiness and luminosity. It is luminous because it has the characteristic of wisdom, and yet it is not an object or thing. The true nature of this luminous clarity emptiness. So, this is the practical application of the meditation on ultimate bodhichitta: we just look at the nature of mind, at this unity of clarity and emptiness. We find that there is nothing at all we have to think about or fabricate. We do not have to think that something that exists does not exist; nor that something that does not exist, does exist. We just look at the nature of mind.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 41*

## March 17

When anger arises in us, there is a danger that we will be mistaken in the moment. We might start to fight, or we might say something harsh or unpleasant that we will regret in the future. Thus, it is important that we take control of our minds. If we reduce the intensity of the afflictions, it is extremely helpful, and in the future, we will be able to think, “Things actually worked out back then.”

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 4*

## March 18

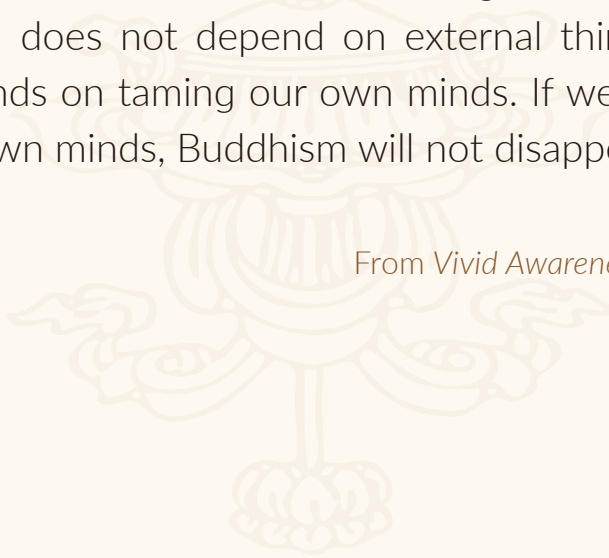
It is important for us to develop this vast intention of bodhichitta. If we have a limited motivation, the results that we achieve will also be limited. But if we have a vast motivation, the results that we attain will be vast. That is why when we embark upon the path, it is important to develop the bodhichitta that raises you above the inferior path.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 36*

## March 19

The dharma is not something outside of ourselves. It is inside us, so practicing within ourselves is the most beneficial thing to do. Buddhism does not depend on external things; it depends on taming our own minds. If we tame our own minds, Buddhism will not disappear.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 7*



## March 20

Pursuit of the practice of meditation and the study of vajrayana are extremely beneficial and useful. This is because all of the goodness of the human life and all of the ability within the context of the human life to actually benefit others and affect others in a positive way come from a cultivation of dharma in general, and from the practice of meditation in particular.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 1*

## March 21

If we love ourselves and consider ourselves important, then aggression will arise because we will have the notion that somebody is harming us, or even that someone such as our parents or friends are helping our enemies. So, this aggression arises based on valuing ego. But if we change our attitude and are concerned for the welfare of other sentient beings, then the delusions are naturally transformed because we no longer hold ourself as most important.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 38*

## March 22

In general, the iconography of the wrathful deities points out the innate power of wisdom and that of the peaceful deities exemplifies the qualities of loving-kindness and compassion. Also, there are male deities and female deities. The male deities embody the method or compassion and the female deities embody intelligence or wisdom.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 6*



## March 23

The importance of love and compassion is not an idea that is particular to Buddhism. Everyone throughout the world talks about the importance of love and compassion. There's no one who says love and compassion are bad and we should try and get rid of them.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 10*

## March 24

Compassion is widely regarded by almost all religions in the world to be extremely important. But this does not mean that each of the different kinds of compassion is valid or correct. For example, compassion without wisdom not only prevents us from helping others, it might even bring trouble and harm to both self and others. Therefore, the compassion that Buddhism describes is one that is equipped with the wisdom that realizes the nature of all phenomena. This compassion endowed with wisdom is called bodhichitta.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 38*

## March 25

We should develop compassion. If we have not developed compassion at the time of the ultimate fruition of buddhahood, there will be no spontaneous manifestation of the two form kayas (the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya) to benefit other beings. So, we should develop strong compassion without any partiality or bias.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator*, p. 24

## March 26

The source of enlightened activity is compassion. The cause for buddhahood is the two form bodies created by the compassion which has been generated by the Buddha during his training. In this case, the two form bodies are the supreme nirmanakaya and the sambhogakaya. The nirmanakaya helps beings with impure perception and the sambhogakaya helps beings with pure perception.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 24*

## March 27

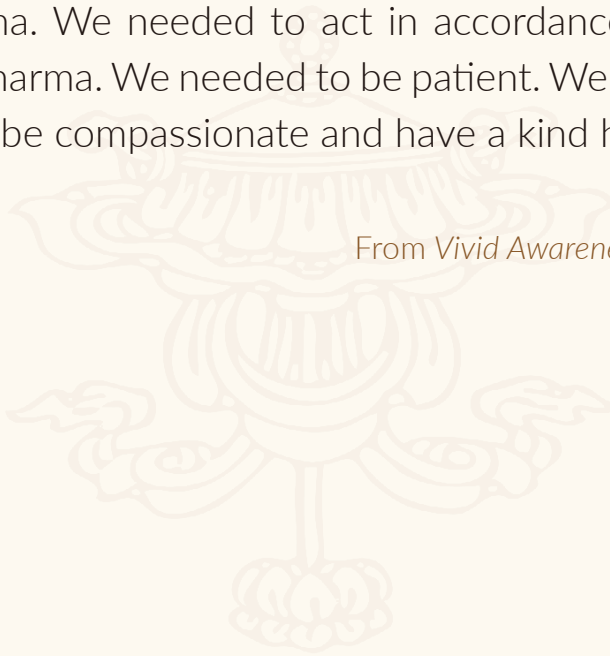
As ordinary practitioners we have impure perception and must engage in activity that is beneficial for others, rather than the extraordinary compassion that is totally without the biases of “I” and “others.” Compassion without bias is practiced with beings with pure perception and compassion based on the recognition everyone without distinction wishes to be happy and to avoid suffering. Therefore, everyone is equally fit to be an object of compassion.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 24*

**March 28**

Taming our own minds alone is the genuine dharma. We needed to act in accordance with the dharma. We needed to be patient. We needed to be compassionate and have a kind heart.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 7*



## March 29

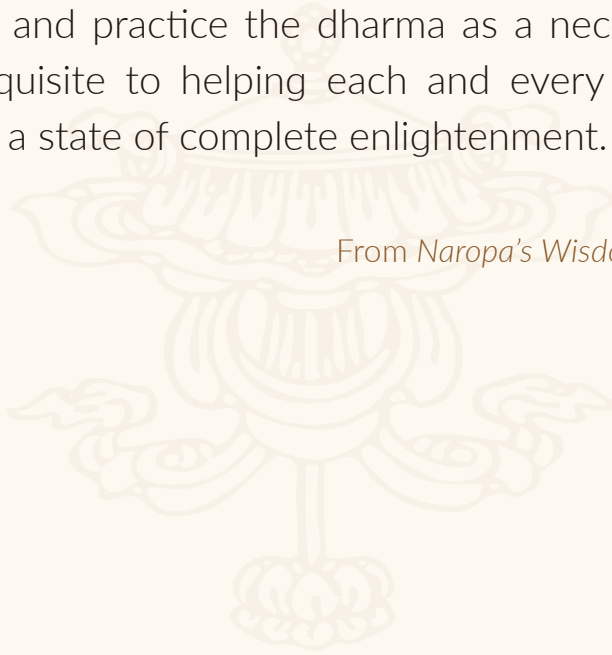
At present, being ordinary sentient beings ourselves, we don't have the ability to eradicate the suffering of others. We are not able to give them protection or refuge and we are unable to ensure their happiness. To remedy that, we should first study and reflect upon the sacred dharma, then put it into practice so that we will be able to eventually bring immense benefit to all sentient beings.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 4*

## March 30

Compassion is the attitude of wanting to understand and practice the dharma as a necessary prerequisite to helping each and every being reach a state of complete enlightenment.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 4*





## March 31

When we look at the depictions of the dharma protectors, they often have wrathful, fierce, and even frightening appearances. This is actually a sign of the compassionate power of their minds. Out of great compassion, they made the aspiration to free all sentient beings from suffering and bring them to happiness. Seeing that sentient beings have been overcome by the afflictions, the dharma protectors are unable to bear it, so they have this wrathful appearance. Fundamentally, however, it is not anger but a sign of the strength of their compassion. When you look at a painting of Mahakala, at first glance he looks very wrathful and threatening, but if you look carefully, Mahakala is laughing.

*From Advice from a Yogi, pp. 69–70*

# April

DISCIPLINE



## April 1

The life of lay people may appear to be more enjoyable because they can sing and dance and so on, but in fact monastic life is much more peaceful and harmonious. The pleasures and enjoyment of lay life have no essence and are rooted in suffering. That is why, after being ordained, there is more opportunity and leisure to practice and meditate properly.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, pp. 15–16

## April 2

After taking the vows, one might feel imprisoned because one cannot do this or that, but actually, as one abandons what needs to be abandoned, one finds that one is more relaxed in a more simple and smooth state.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 16

## April 3

A boy driving with his girlfriend in a nice car may seem to be having a very enjoyable time, but inwardly he may be constantly worried that he might do something that would hurt the girl, that she might get sick, or that he might do something to make her unhappy. So, if they have a good relationship, it causes problems. If they don't have a good relationship, then it causes problems of another sort. But if one takes the vow not to have sexual intercourse, then from that time on one is free from this kind of suffering of constantly worrying about one's sexual relationships.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 16

## April 4

There are four main precepts that monks and nuns take. Not to steal. To refrain from sexual intercourse. Not killing sentient beings. To refrain from telling lies. With each of these four precepts there must be four factors or conditions met before the precept is actually broken. These are: foundation, motivation, action, and final results. The Buddha himself said that all four factors must be present together to constitute a misdeed. So, if the four factors are present while relating to a particular precept, then that precept is broken, but if the four factors are not present together, then the precept is unbroken.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, pp. 16–18

## April 5

When we take the pratimoksha vows, our motivation may be impure and this attitude should be abandoned. There are two types of impure motivation. First, we may have expectations of temporary happiness resulting from ordination or we have the desire to protect ourselves from temporary unfavourable conditions, such as an illness. Second, we may expect to receive respect and veneration from others or hope to be free from rules and regulations by taking ordination.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 21

## April 6

Discipline is like a wish fulfilling jewel. If we look upon discipline as a cause of temporary comfort, then the pratimoksha vows will bring about temporary relief from suffering. If we abandon the thought of temporary comfort and look upon the pratimoksha vows as the cause for eliminating suffering, then it will become the cause of freeing oneself ultimately from samsara.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 22



## April 7

In order to protect one's vows, one should constantly have mindfulness and awareness and one must constantly think of abandoning what has to be abandoned. If certain parts of the vows are transgressed, the transgression should not be left alone but should be repaired.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 23

## April 8

One should have a high regard for one's discipline, one should cherish one's discipline. Cherishing one's discipline means having continuous mindfulness and awareness and repairing the vows immediately if they are broken. To preserve the purity of the vows, one should have at least one of these two factors.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 23*

**April 9**

The precepts are important to accumulate merit. But without meditation, through the precepts alone, one cannot attain enlightenment. By meditating and abandoning all negative emotions, one can attain enlightenment. In order to abandon negative emotions, one must preserve one's discipline.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 26

## April 10

There is a difference, for example, between simply not killing and not killing after having taken the vow not to kill. If we have not taken the vow not to kill, then even if we do not kill, we will gain no merit. But if we have taken the vow, then when we do not kill, we are also gaining the virtue of not killing since we have the motivation of refraining from the act of killing. So, we obtain the virtue of not killing because of our strong motivation not to kill.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 27

## April 11

In terms of preserving the precepts, when negative karma is abandoned, then good karma can increase and the result is virtue. Karma is like a job. Our mundane life is based on what kind of job we have. If we have a good job then we can have a good life more or less, and if we don't have a good job, we may not have such a good life. So, by practicing positive karma through our body, speech, and mind, we can attain Buddhahood.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 31

## April 12

The pratimoksha is classified as outer, inner, and secret, corresponding to the hinayana path, the mahayana path and the vajrayana path respectively. But the purpose of all three pratimoksha vows is to tame the mind and free oneself from delusion.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 35

## April 13

We should practice all three levels of vows (the pratimoksha, the mahayana and the vajrayana) at the same time. We should practice the outer discipline of the pratimoksha in which we have the motivation of liberation for ourselves. Then the inner discipline of the mahayana should be practiced and the attitude of the bodhisattva should be adopted. Finally, in the discipline of the vajrayana, we still meditate on the pratimoksha and mahayana vows, but when we realize the true nature of phenomena, we then practice yidam meditation. These are the three-fold vows.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 36

## April 14

The pratimoksha precepts are currently practiced in Burma, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. In Korea and China which predominantly practice the mahayana teachings, the pratimoksha are also practiced but with an emphasis on the bodhichitta precepts. In Tibet all three levels of precepts are practiced: the pratimoksha, bodhichitta, and vajrayana precepts.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 7



## April 15

In the buddhist tradition, everything that has life has feeling. So, it doesn't make any difference whether it is small or big. The killing of a human being, however, is regarded as a particularly bad negative action, because human beings can achieve a higher goal and be helpful to other beings. But there is no difference between dog, worm, or cow.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 10

## April 16

The Buddha said that meat can be eaten if one is free from the threefold conceptualization, that (a) one does not kill animals directly for oneself, (b) one does not persuade others to kill animals for oneself to eat, and (c) that the animals are not actually killed by another person in order to feed oneself. If one is free from these three conceptualizations, then the meat can be eaten.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 10

**April 17**

The vajrayana practice emphasizes the inner mind rather than outer discipline. As Milarepa said: “Taming one’s mind is the vinaya.” In order to tame one’s mind, one should practice meditation and to have a powerful practice one should depend on mindfulness and introspection.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 41

**April 18**

Living in a monastery or abbey requires discipline. It requires right action which benefits both oneself and other sentient beings for the present and future generations and discipline which also maintains the teachings.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 42

## April 19

The vows are maintained by adjusting to the rule or the discipline. The way to adjust to the discipline is knowing the three vows. Outwardly one adjusts to the shravaka vows, inwardly to the bodhisattva vows, and secretly one maintains the vajrayana vows. It should be very clear that to maintain complete discipline, one must maintain all three vows. This is known as “the vajra-holder who keeps the three vows.”

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 64

April 20

When the Buddha was about to pass away, he told his monks that the Pratimoksha Sutra would be the sole liberator for them, meaning that if one applies the vows according to the instruction given in this sutra, it would be like a guide that can liberate one.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct* p. 66

## April 21

The outer discipline of the shravaka leading to individual liberation is the path of abandoning the defilements of body and speech. Actions of body and speech incite the disturbing emotions. When one's actions of body and speech are based on discipline, they do not arouse the disturbing emotions but remain free from them. In that sense the vows of the shravakas are the path of abandoning the kleshas. The inner discipline of the bodhisattva path consists of transforming these disturbing emotions to positive qualities. In the secret discipline of the vajrayana, the disturbing emotions themselves are regarded as the path towards experiencing wisdom. So, by working with all three techniques of abandoning the kleshas, transforming the kle-

shas, and taking the kleshas as path, one can realize the fruition of primordial wisdom.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 66





## April 22

The monastic ordinations are given in a step-by-step process with a gradually increasing numbers of precepts. First there are the ordinary ordination vows, then there are the novice vows and finally there are the full ordination vows which leads one towards liberation. The main idea of ordination is to overcome the emotional obscurations by developing mindfulness and awareness.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 72

## April 23

The Buddha taught the three superior trainings of discipline, meditative absorption, and wisdom. Discipline is the ground for both wisdom and meditative concentration. Through discipline one experiences peacefulness in addition to mindfulness and awareness. Discipline helps to bring meditative absorption from which wisdom develops. This wisdom is the realization of the egolessness of phenomena. Discipline alone is not sufficient to bring the realization of egolessness, but shila (the paramita of discipline) and samadhi (meditative absorption) together assist in the fruition of prajna (wisdom) which provides experience of egolessness or selfless nature.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 73*

## April 24

The group of practitioners who are practicing discipline is known as the sangha. The commitments of the sangha are twofold. First, the sangha tries not to show disrespect to any of the Buddha's teachings, and second, the sangha tries to act in accordance with wholesome and harmonious behaviour.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 74

## April 25

When you are receiving the full ordination, the main point to bear in mind is that you are not doing it for someone else. You are doing it to subdue your own kleshas and in order to do so, it is necessary to develop mindfulness and awareness. By cultivating mindfulness and awareness, you learn to be satisfied with what you have and aim towards the development of samadhi which brings prajna.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 76

## April 26

The precepts must be taken voluntarily with full knowledge of what they entail. We must not regard the precepts as a burden, rather we must understand that by keeping the precepts, suffering is eliminated. Therefore, the vows are a joy rather than a hardship. This is the attitude we must develop before receiving the commitments.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 77

## April 27

We talk constantly. Sometimes our ordinary conversation has meaning and purpose, but sometimes it is pointless. Such pointless talk not only wastes time, but it also gradually increases our hostility and anger, jealousy and delusion. It is a cause for increasing the afflictions, which leads us into wrong action. Thereby, we accumulate bad karma, and this harms us as well as others, so we need to give up idle, pointless talk.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 70*

## April 28

It is human nature to feel, “If I accomplish this one wish, I will feel quite satisfied.” But when that wish has been satisfied, one becomes more desirous, more ambitious. As there is no end to the desires of the mind and no way to satisfy it, the Buddha said that one must discipline one’s mind in the very beginning.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 64

**April 29**

We must learn not to fall into the two extremes: indulgence or asceticism. The extreme of indulgence means that we are so attached to name, fame, possessions, and luxury that we are never satisfied with what is acquired. We may need more and more clothes, more and more possessions, and even when we have them, we still desire more. Our minds are never satisfied. We must learn to be content with whatever clothes, wealth, or possessions we have. The extreme of asceticism means that, like some non-buddhist practitioners, we believe that by torturing the physical body with heat, cold, hunger, or thirst, we can attain realization. This is incorrect because realization can actually be experienced only by means of discipline, meditation, and wisdom.

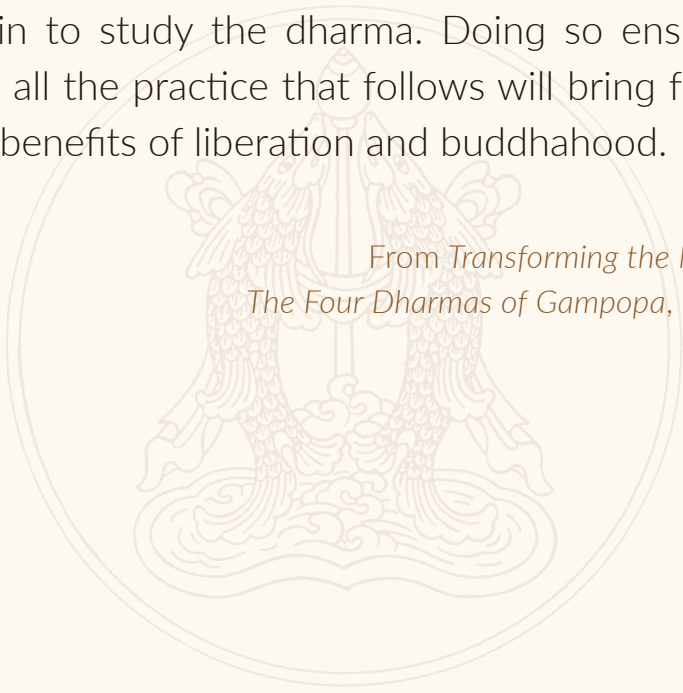
*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 75*



**April 30**

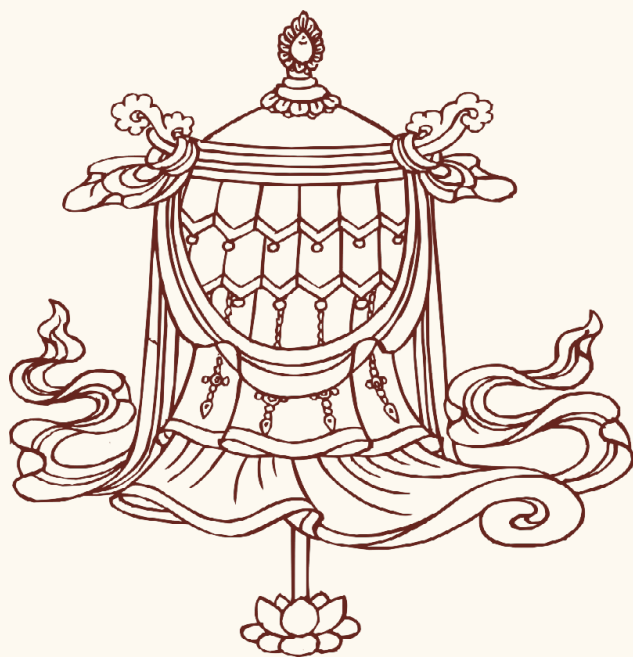
We need to be clear about our goal when we begin to study the dharma. Doing so ensures that all the practice that follows will bring forth the benefits of liberation and buddhahood.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 18*



# May

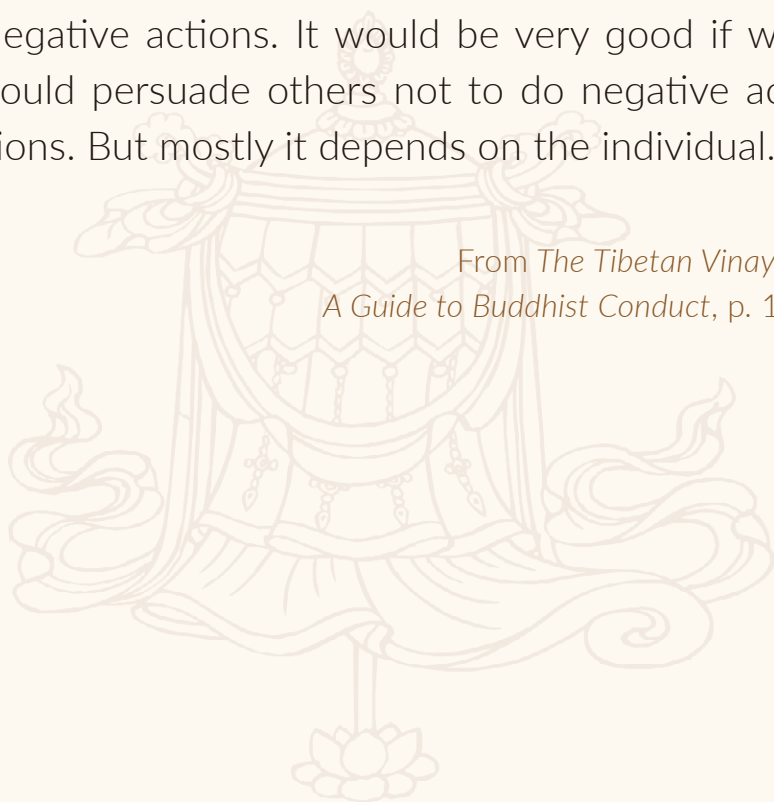
KARMA



## May 1

What is most important is preventing our own negative actions. It would be very good if we could persuade others not to do negative actions. But mostly it depends on the individual.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 11



## May 2

There are two things that have to be abandoned: evil actions and obscurations. If the actions of one's body, speech, or mind cause harm to other beings, either directly or indirectly, these actions are negative or evil deeds. These actions have nothing to do with previous karma or previous habitual tendencies, but rather they are connected with present motivation. Generating the motivation to kill or to steal depends solely on oneself. One has the power to stop oneself from carrying out these negative deeds. Obscurations, which are related to mind, also do not depend on karma, but depend on one's habitual tendencies. From beginningless time, we have all been habituated with the negative emotions:

attachment, aggression, and ignorance. These habitual tendencies are to be abandoned.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 40



**May 3**

*Question:* How did all this karma get started?

*Rinpoche:* We create karma in the frame of reference of the illusory appearances that we experience. Karma functions in this frame of reference, and we experience the results of karma within the same frame of reference. If we examine the real nature, we discover that, actually, no karma has been created nor have the results of any karma been experienced.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 30*

## May 4

In the buddhist teachings, our present life originates from a previous life. That previous life came from a life before that, and so on. During our present life, we can experience physical pain and mental suffering, or we can experience happiness and bliss. These experiences come from our actions in a previous life. They are the result of karma.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 25–26*

May 5

In general, samsara is infinite, having no beginning, so there is no beginning to any particular succession of phenomena. No matter what phenomenon we examine, we can see that it came from some cause. If we examine that cause we find that it came from another cause. No matter what we examine we find this unending series of causes and effects. There is no first cause.

• From *The Open Door to Emptiness*, p. 71



May 6

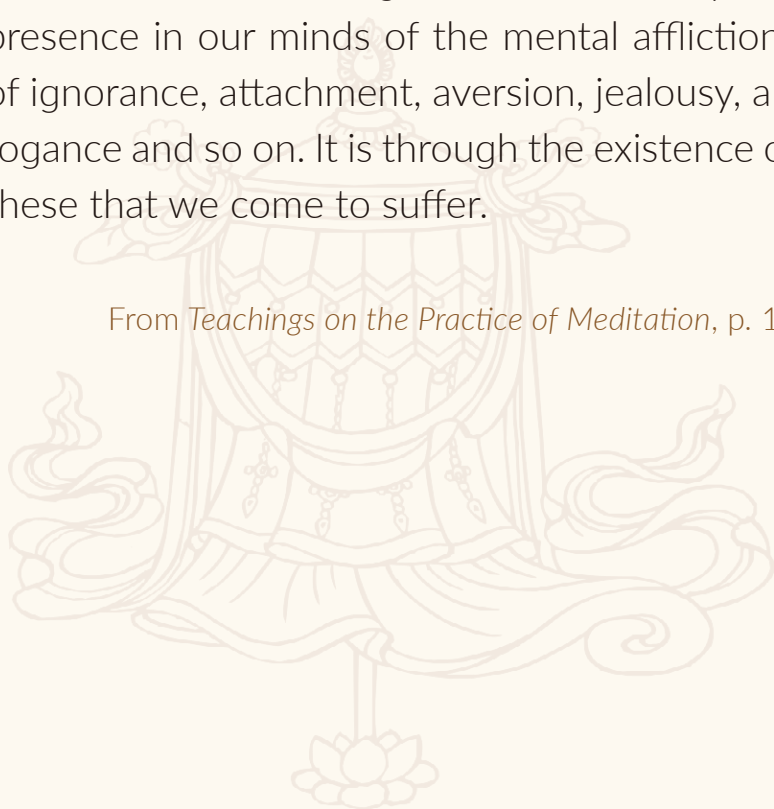
Whether or not there is an end to samsara depends on the point of view from which we consider it. If we think of ordinary experiences in samsara, the ordinary samsaric world, it is quite impossible to think of an end to samsara. For there to be an end to samsara totally, we would have to bring all sentient being to full realization, which is very difficult. But in terms of our own personal lives, there is a potential of ending samsara with the realization of Buddhahood.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 71*

**May 7**

The causes of suffering are fundamentally the presence in our minds of the mental afflictions of ignorance, attachment, aversion, jealousy, arrogance and so on. It is through the existence of these that we come to suffer.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 11*



## May 8

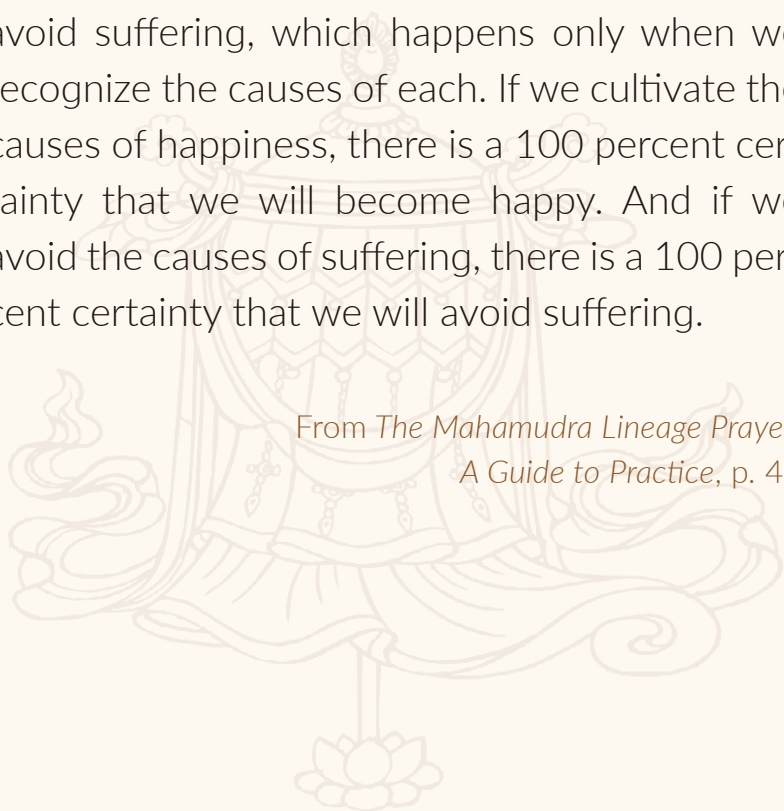
In general, human beings do not know the methods for achieving happiness and avoiding suffering. The methods, of course, are to engage in the causes of happiness and avoid the causes of suffering because we cannot simply make ourselves happy or free ourselves from suffering on the spot. However, we can embrace the causes of happiness and avoid the causes of suffering.

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 41*

## May 9

Karma is the freedom to develop happiness and avoid suffering, which happens only when we recognize the causes of each. If we cultivate the causes of happiness, there is a 100 percent certainty that we will become happy. And if we avoid the causes of suffering, there is a 100 percent certainty that we will avoid suffering.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 41



## May 10

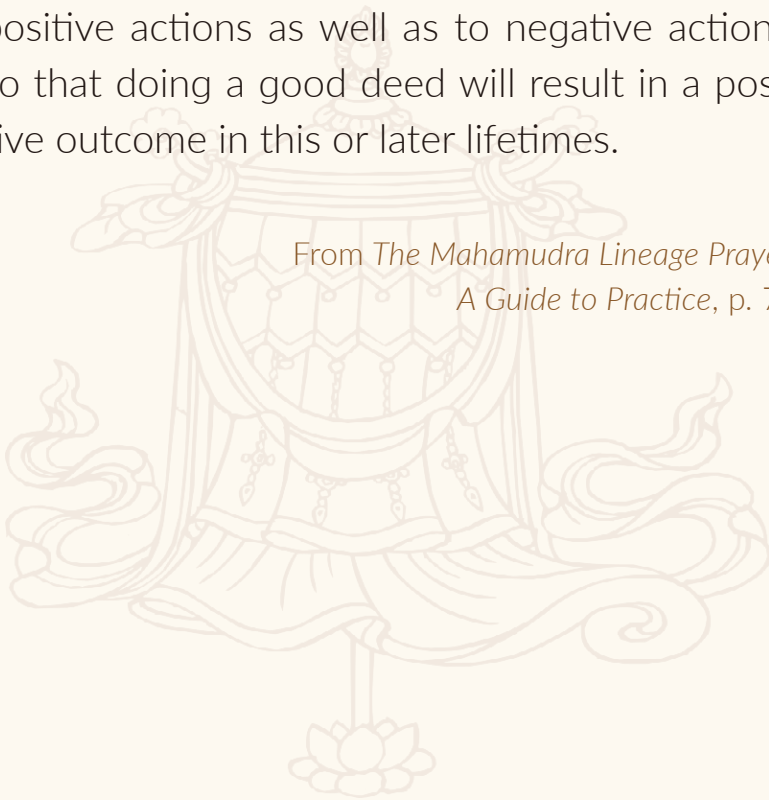
Abandoning the ten negative actions and cultivating the positive ones will improve the quality of our daily life, and it will make our life easier to live. It is important to learn and memorize these ten positive actions and to actually implement them, because they are the basis for the practice of the dharma.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 43

**May 11**

It is important to realize that karma applies to positive actions as well as to negative actions, so that doing a good deed will result in a positive outcome in this or later lifetimes.

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 77*



## May 12

We shouldn't believe that the things we do make no difference when no one is aware of them. Not only Marpa, but all the other buddhas and bodhisattvas are also aware of our behaviour. They can see everything we do and they can understand very clearly. So we should think that way. Instead, out of respect of their complete knowledge of our actions, words, and thoughts, we should try to act as properly as possible.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 87

**May 13**

When a person dies, the mind leaves the body and there are many exits from which the mind can leave. At the time of death, one has the experience of being inside a ruined house and so one thinks, “I have to get out of this place!” One can see many, many exits, some above and some below and so on. The exit that the mind takes will determine what kind of rebirth.

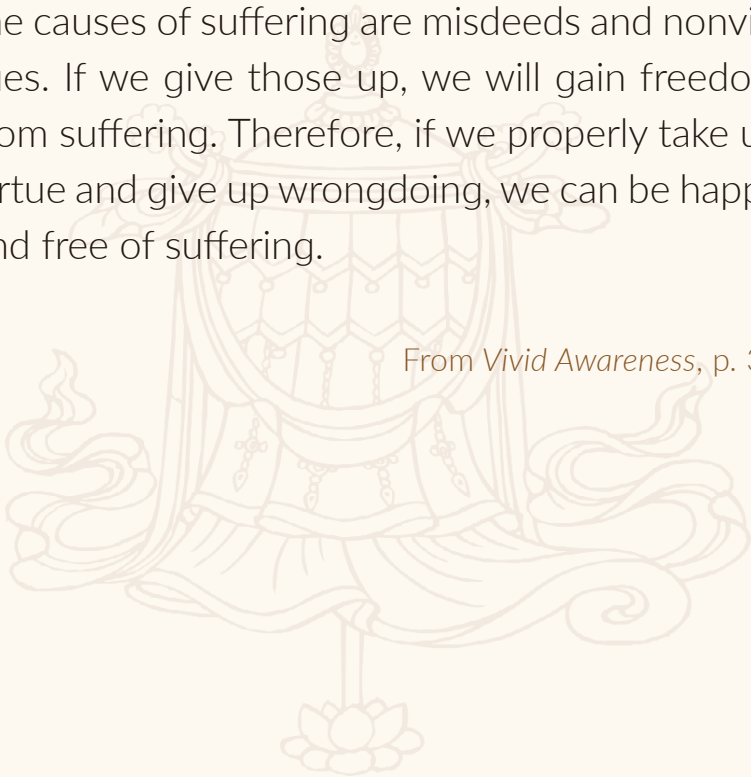
From *Rechungpa:  
A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple*, p. 96



**May 14**

Can we get rid of suffering? Yes, we can, because the causes of suffering are misdeeds and nonvirtues. If we give those up, we will gain freedom from suffering. Therefore, if we properly take up virtue and give up wrongdoing, we can be happy and free of suffering.

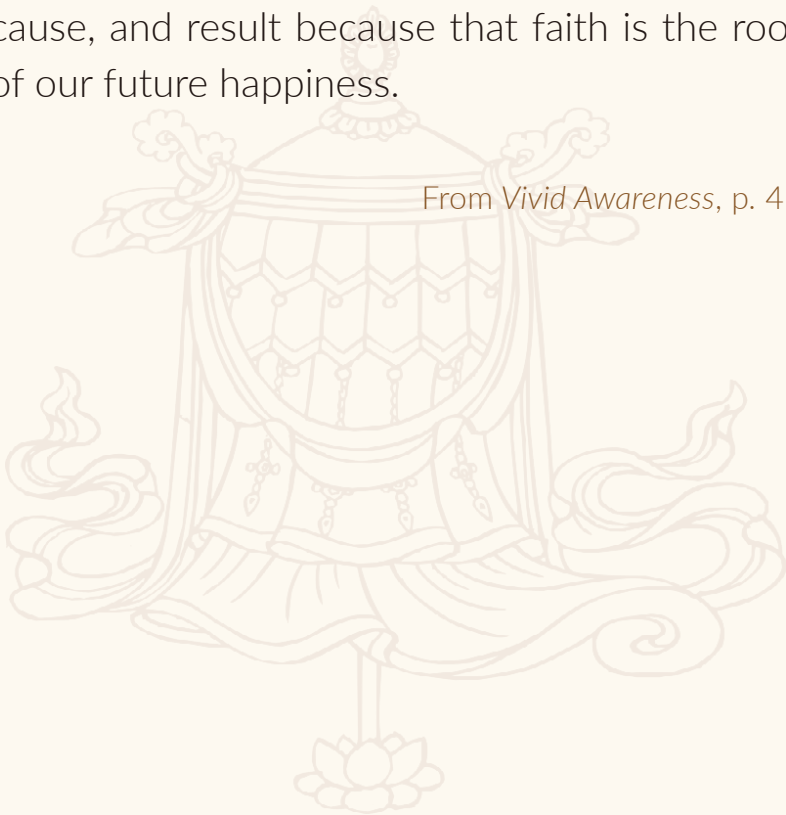
*From Vivid Awareness, p. 34*



**May 15**

It is important for us to have faith in karma, cause, and result because that faith is the root of our future happiness.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 45



**May 16**

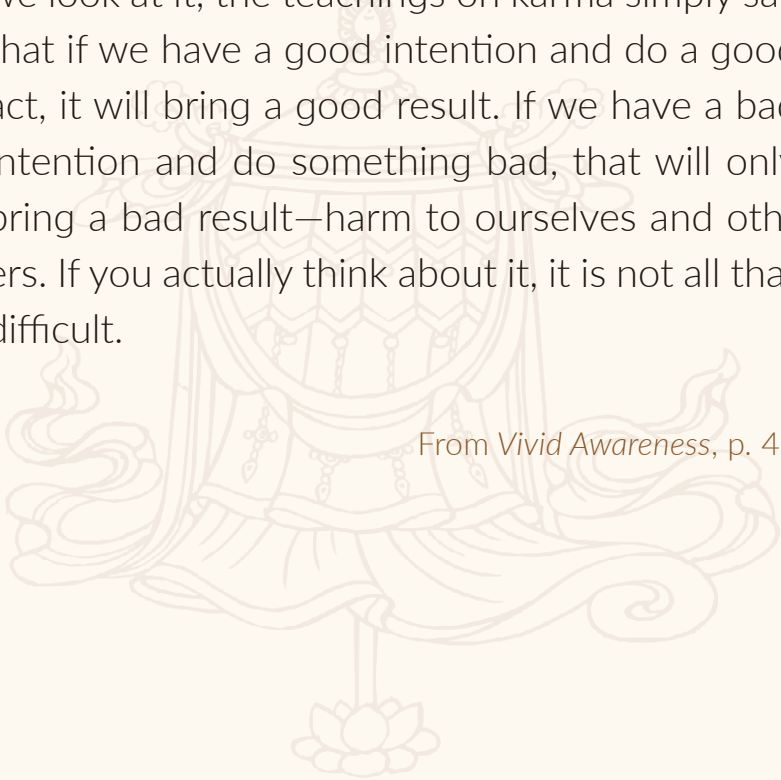
Karma, cause, and effect are extremely subtle. We develop faith in them through the words of the Buddha. We cannot see them directly, and we cannot really infer these logically. We need to develop certainty through faith and belief. This is why karma is called extremely subtle, which makes it very difficult to perceive. However, if we carefully examine the teachings on karma explained in the abhidharma, we can really develop belief in karma.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 46

**May 17**

It might seem hard to understand karma. But if we look at it, the teachings on karma simply say that if we have a good intention and do a good act, it will bring a good result. If we have a bad intention and do something bad, that will only bring a bad result—harm to ourselves and others. If you actually think about it, it is not all that difficult.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 46*



## May 18

When the Buddha taught about karma, he said that when we perform an action, it leads to a result. There are many different ways of thinking about karma. We can classify it according to when the result occurs or according to whether it propels a new rebirth or if it ripens during our lifetime. Alternatively, we can consider the manner in which the result occurs or the relationship between the intention and the action. These are a few of the different ways that karma can be categorized.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 46*

**May 19**

In general, we can say that there are four types of karma in terms of when we experience the result. The first is karma that is visibly experienced—that is, experienced in this life. The second is karma that is experienced upon birth—that is, in our next lifetime. The third is karma that is experienced in other lifetimes, and the fourth is karma that is not definitely experienced—that is, karma that may or may not be experienced in some future lifetime, depending upon circumstances. Our virtuous acts fall into these four categories, as do our misdeeds.

*From Vivid Awareness, pp. 46–47*

**May 20**

All of us want to be happy and free of suffering, but sometimes people wonder if this is possible. It is possible: we can be happy if we do good things and take up virtue. The reason for this is that virtuous actions are the cause of happiness. We also want to be free of suffering. How is it that we can be free of suffering? To be free of suffering we need to abandon its cause—misdeeds and nonvirtue. If we give those up, we can free ourselves from suffering. Karma is unfailing and for that reason it is important to know what type of acts lead to what type of results.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 52*

## May 21

What does virtue mean?

This do not mean that there is a god who has commanded that you should not do this or that. Neither the Buddha nor anyone else has said that you are not allowed to do something, so if you do it, it is wrong. Instead, it comes down to your own mind. If we act out of nongreed, non-hostility, or nondelusion, then that is virtuous. When we act with a kind heart and good motivation, without any greed or lust, without any aggression, and without any delusion, that is virtuous.

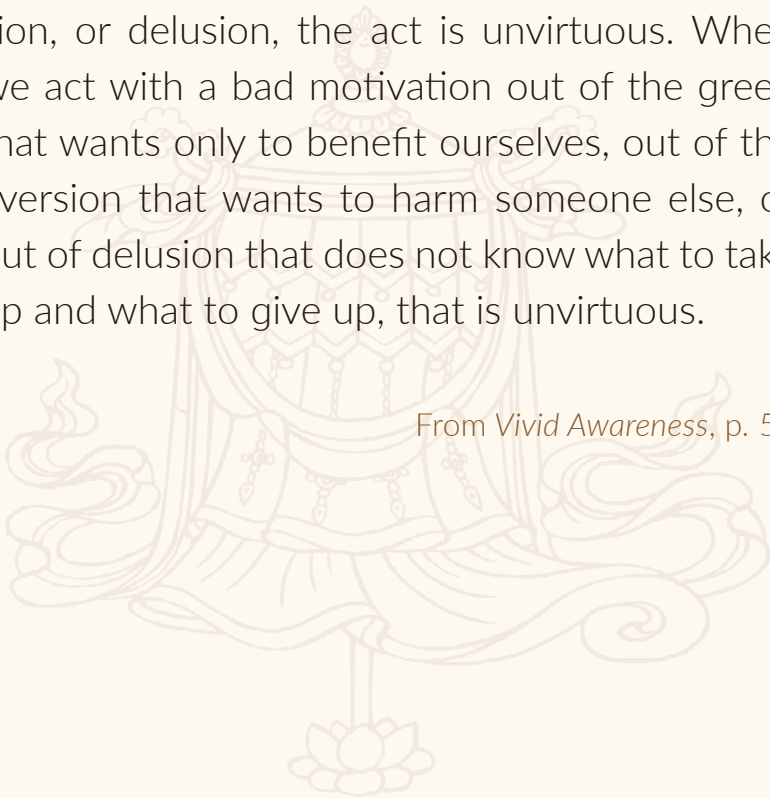
From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 53



**May 22**

What is nonvirtue? If we act out of greed, aversion, or delusion, the act is unvirtuous. When we act with a bad motivation out of the greed that wants only to benefit ourselves, out of the aversion that wants to harm someone else, or out of delusion that does not know what to take up and what to give up, that is unvirtuous.

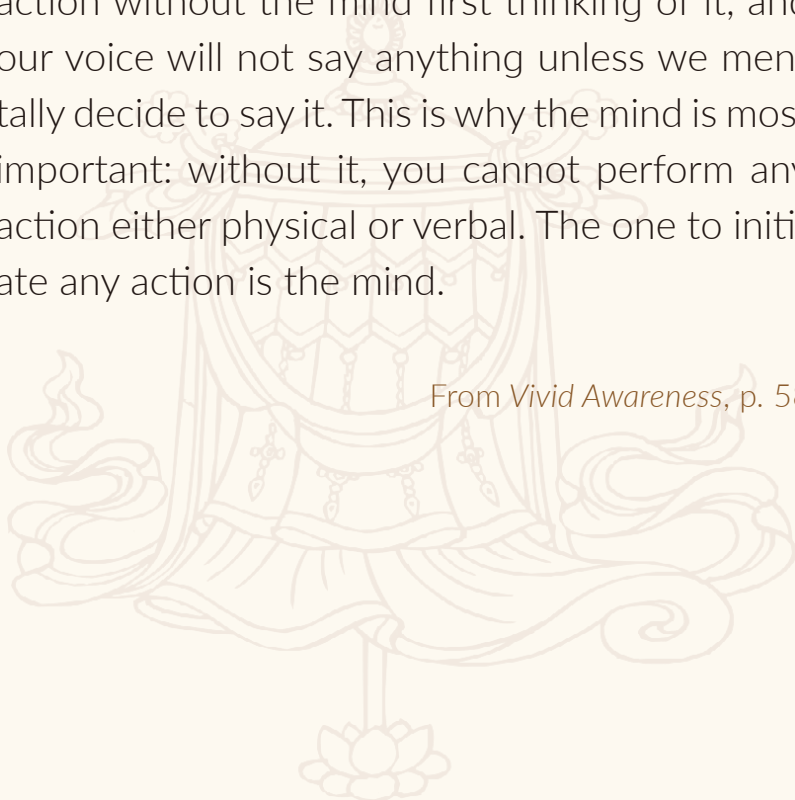
*From Vivid Awareness, p. 53*



**May 23**

Whatever we do, the body will not commit any action without the mind first thinking of it, and our voice will not say anything unless we mentally decide to say it. This is why the mind is most important: without it, you cannot perform any action either physical or verbal. The one to initiate any action is the mind.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 58*



**May 24**

Our happiness and suffering come from virtue and wrongdoing, and virtue and wrongdoing depend upon our minds. This is why the most important thing for us to do is to practice tranquillity and insight meditation. We need to develop realization in our minds. We need to transform our minds. We need to make sure that our minds do not go off in the wrong direction. We need to make sure that they go in the right direction. The wrong direction is delusion and ignorance, so if we put effort into developing our discernment, intelligence, and mental clarity, our minds will turn out well. This is why among our body, speech, and mind, the mind is most important.



*From Vivid Awareness, p. 59*

**May 25**

If you take control of your mind and have good thoughts, then your body and speech will naturally also be good. If you have bad thoughts in your mind, the body and speech will naturally go down the path of wrongdoing and harm. It is therefore important to recognize that the root of it all is our mind.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 61*



## May 26

In order to bring ourselves happiness, we need to do virtuous things, whether we want temporary or ultimate happiness. Temporary happiness means the enjoyments of this life—our food, clothing, possessions, and so forth. Ultimate happiness is the ultimate freedom from the suffering of samsara, the complete and perfect state of buddhahood. Bringing ourselves both temporary and ultimate happiness is the purpose for which we need to practice virtue and give up nonvirtue.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 62

**May 27**

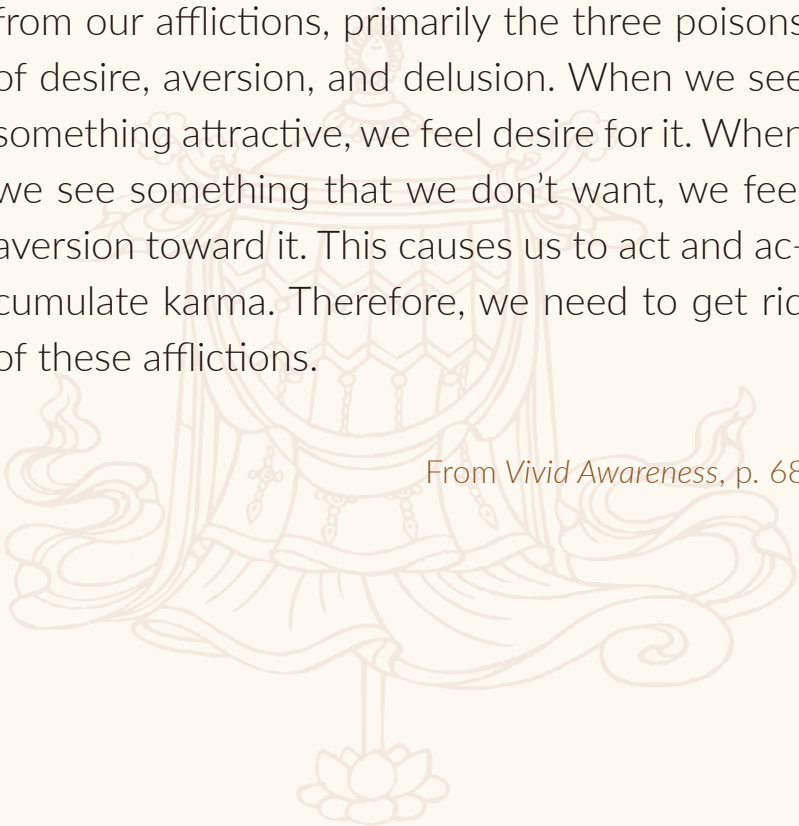
How should we practice virtue? We can do virtuous things with our body, speech, and mind. But among these three different ways of practicing virtue, the primary way is with our mind. The mind is king and the body and speech are its servants. If we take control of our minds and transform them in virtuous directions, then our body and speech will naturally also go in virtuous directions. That is why we need to make efforts to transform our minds first and foremost.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 62

## May 28

Where does karma come from? Karma results from our afflictions, primarily the three poisons of desire, aversion, and delusion. When we see something attractive, we feel desire for it. When we see something that we don't want, we feel aversion toward it. This causes us to act and accumulate karma. Therefore, we need to get rid of these afflictions.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 68*



## May 29

We all strive to find happiness and avoid suffering. In order to find happiness and avoid suffering, we need to be careful about karma, cause, and effect. Karma, cause, and effect function through our bodies, speech, and minds, but the most important of these is our mind. So, we need to know the nature of this mind thoroughly. We need to look to see where it is. We need to recognize the nature of the mind as it is, without altering it. Just resting within the nature of the mind in meditation is enough.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 107



**May 30**

When we practice dzogchen or mahamudra, there is no more karma. You might think this means that you will never be affected by the ripening of karma again, but that is not how it is. Do not get the idea that there is neither good nor evil to be experienced as past karma does ripen. Because of our realization we do not accumulate new karma, but past karma will ripen upon us. We will experience the results of the good and bad acts we have done in the past.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 170*

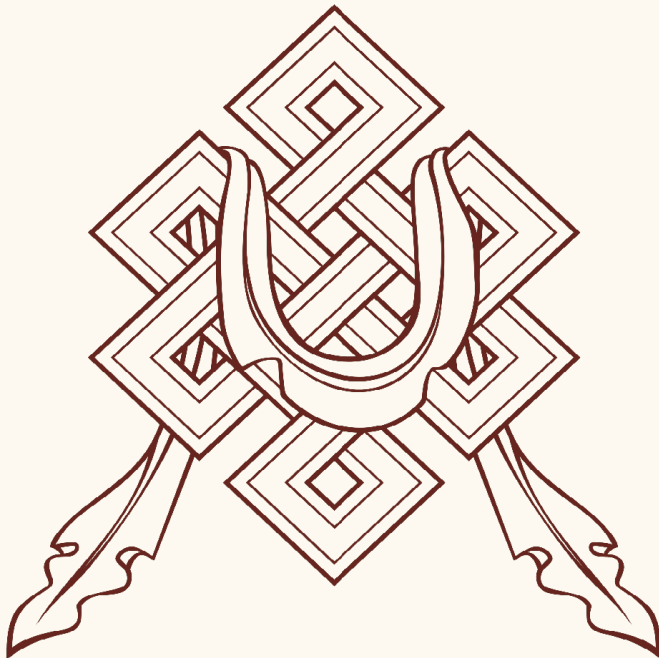
**May 31**

It is important for us to have faith in karma, cause, and result because the world is sometimes very happy and sometimes suffers terribly. Why is this? Many people wonder whether this just happens at random without any cause or whether some sort of god or deity makes it so. Neither of these is the case. Our previous actions are what cause our happiness and suffering. From doing good actions, we accumulate good karma and experience the resulting happiness. Similarly, from doing bad actions and accumulating bad karma, suffering results. This is the fundamental point of the Buddha's teachings, so it is very important for us to believe it.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 45*

# June

MIND TRAINING



## June 1

After noticing one's faults, one can apply the four powers of antidote. The first is the power of revulsion or regret, which is knowing that faults have been committed and being disgusted with them. One can then reject these negativities. The second is the power of remedial action, which is knowing the antidotes for nonvirtuous actions and then applying them diligently without interruption. The third is the power of reliance, which is relying on the three jewels of the Buddha who shows the path, the Dharma which is the path of practice, and the Sangha who are the companions on the path. The fourth is the power of resolve not to repeat the fault in the future. The most important antidotes are the power of regret and the resolve not to repeat the action.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 37

## June 2

Many among you have already started to practice the dharma. Some of you have practiced meditation a little bit, and some of you have practiced quite a lot. But whether you are new to the dharma or experienced, if you realize how fortunate you are—if you see this good fortune for the good fortune that it is and are joyous about it—that is something that will help you in your meditation practice.

*From Lion of Speech, p. 7*

## June 3

We should also be joyous in our minds. We should think to ourselves, “I am so fortunate to be able to practice! How fortunate I am!” We should be uplifted, strong, and joyous about this. If we can do so, then in the future our meditation will get better and better and better.

From *Lion of Speech*, pp. 7–8

## June 4

We are extremely fortunate to be able to practice the dharma, and that is why we should be excited about it. That is why we need to be joyful, why we need to be excited about our practice. If we are, then our practice will go better and better. That is why it is so wonderful, and also so important, to take delight in the dharma.

From *Lion of speech*, p. 8

## June 5

To enter into the path and practice dharma, we need to loosen our attachment to the things of this life. As long as we are obsessively attached to our external possessions, food, wealth, pleasure, and so on, these things will be our only concerns. And as long as they are our only concerns, we will be unable to practice and successfully meditate.

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 33*



**June 6**

The main obstacle we face to the practice of dharma is laziness.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 36



## June 7

In general, of course, the human body is an excellent thing and it possesses consummate resources and qualities. But it has the one defect of being impermanent. Human life is extremely short. The understanding of the impermanence of human life causes us to begin the practice of dharma, and if we have begun it, it causes us to be more diligent in our practice.

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 38*

## June 8

In the beginning of our spiritual practice, an understanding of impermanence is the condition that inspires the practice of dharma. In the middle of our spiritual development, impermanence is the whip that drives us to diligence. In the end, impermanence is the friend who leads us to the final fruition.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 39

June 9

Meditation on impermanence may produce a kind of sadness, but by going beyond the mere sadness and letting it go, we will discover confidence. These contemplations are designed to lead to a recognition of things as they are.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 39

**June 10**

There are six root afflictions, or kleshas. The first is anger, so one looks for where anger first appears, where it comes from, where it stays, and so on. One does the same for the second klesha, which is craving or for external objects. The third klesha is ignorance and the fourth is pride. The fifth klesha is doubt or uncertainty, which has a positive or negative form. The sixth is afflicted view, which means the belief in self, a clinging to a self.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 82–83*

## June 11

Even though we may have developed some understanding of the truths, there is a major obstacle preventing our mind from becoming the dharma, and that is laziness. According to the teachings, there are three types of laziness: the laziness of self-deprecation, the laziness of sloth, and the laziness of attachment to nonvirtues. In order for our minds to become the dharma, we need to overcome these obstacles.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 9*

## June 12

There are three types of attachment. The first is the attachment to this life, which is to cling strongly to things like fame and fortune in this lifetime. The second is the attachment to samsara. Some people might be indifferent to worldly rewards, but they have to understand that the nature of samsara is suffering. As a result, they are still attached to the various pleasures found in samsara. The third is the attachment to the joy of personal liberation. Although they are no longer attached to this life, and simultaneously understand samsara to be suffering, nevertheless, they continue to cling to the joy of personal liberation. These three types of attachment obstruct the dharma from progressing on the path.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, pp. 20–21*

June 13

Why do we develop attachment to this life, to samsara, and so forth? The reason is that we have not seen the truth clearly. If we understood the truth, we would not be tempted and give rise to attachment. What is the truth then? It is the fact that this life is impermanent, samsara is full of faults and suffering, and personal liberation is not the ultimate goal.

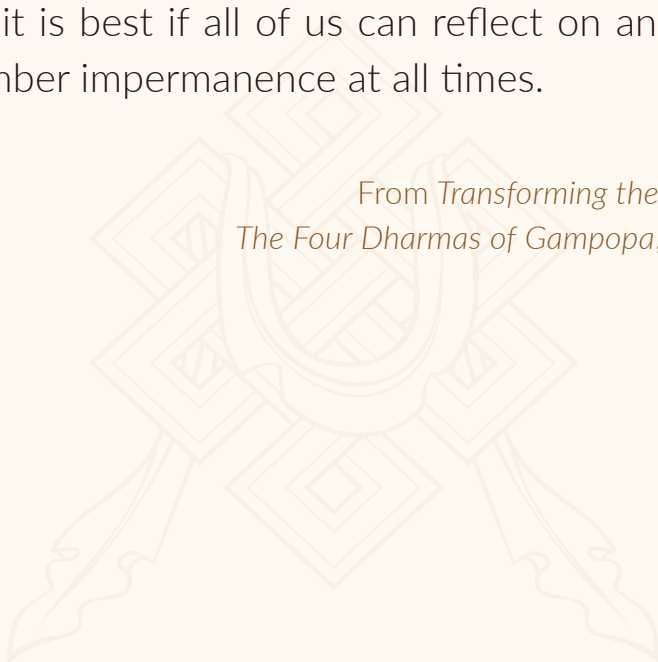
*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 21*



**June 14**

In order to help us abandon attachment to this life, it is best if all of us can reflect on and remember impermanence at all times.

From *Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, p. 24



June 15

Why do we develop an attachment samsara? The main reason is not understanding the actual way that things are. We mistake the nature of samsara to be enjoyable and delightful. In order to uncover the real nature of it, we need to reflect on its faults and the law of cause and effect.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, pp. 24-25*

**June 16**

By developing a clear understanding of the faults of samsara and the workings of karma, our mind will turn toward the dharma once again, and in particular, the dharma will progress along the path.

From *Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, p. 27

## June 17

Most people in the modern world continuously seek happiness outside themselves. They think that happiness can be obtained from external phenomena, so they create numerous innovative technologies to achieve this goal. Material things do provide us with temporary comfort, but our experience is that the more things we own, the more we suffer and the emptier we are inside. This is because we have not addressed the root of suffering. Buddhist meditation is founded on an integral understanding that all problems originate from the mind. Only by turning inward to understand our mind can we uproot afflictions and suffering.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 71*

**June 18**

All of us want to eliminate afflictions, but simply thinking about thinking in our minds is not sufficient. We need to get rid of the afflictions through various methods. The foundation vehicle's approach is to understand what causes afflictions to arise and what the causes of suffering are. By removing the causes, afflictions and the suffering that results from them can be eliminated. In brief, the foundation vehicle eliminates afflictions through the cause.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, pp. 75–76*

**June 19**

The Buddha held that the cause of all suffering is the accumulation of non-virtues, which stems from the afflictions of attachment, anger, and ignorance. These three poisons arise due to ego-clinging. Therefore, if ego-clinging is eliminated, the afflictions, nonvirtuous karma, and all suffering can be gradually eliminated. This is the method of the foundation vehicle.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 76*

June 20

In general, we should avoid having excessive attachment or involvement with outer objects or inner experiences of meditation. The way to deal with the feeling of attachment when it arises is not to stop the thought forcibly, nor to follow it either. Rather we should remain immersed in non-conceptualization. That means not creating any particular thoughts about it.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, p. 28*

## June 21

When any negative emotion arises, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be overpowered or carried away by them. Instead, we should remain in a state of meditation without distraction. The way to deal with these kleshas is to look directly at their essence. If we can look straight at the essence of the negative emotions, they will automatically disappear. So, we shouldn't be distracted or carried away by negativity.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 28



June 22

When practitioners engage in the practice of extraordinarily profound dharma, they become capable of gradually decreasing the power of the kleshas and gradually removing ignorance. But while that process is occurring, the emotional obscurations or kleshas will still arise through force of habit which has been accruing over beginningless time. Sometimes the practitioner will be able to cope with the kleshas and sometimes not. When the practitioner cannot abandon the kleshas, one of two things can happen. He or she will either experience tremendous anxiety or fear about the presence of the klesha or he or she might simply dive in and follow the obscuration wherever it leads.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, pp. 28–29*

## June 23

Throughout all our activities we should take care not to be lazy and careless. Whether we are receiving teachings or meditating or reciting mantras or making prayers, we should do activities as carefully and as properly as we can without thinking, “I can just take it easy. It’s not very important.” What we must do is try to really focus very clearly on what we are doing and try to direct our minds, our bodies, and our speech in the direction of dharma. We do this in order to put our whole self into our practice, thinking that we want to do this now, right now. And if we do this, then, of course, we will obtain the results of our diligent efforts.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, pp. 69–70*

## June 24

Although we meet and receive extraordinary instructions from great gurus, nevertheless we encounter obstacles and extremely adverse conditions. At this point we may find ourselves thinking: “Why is this happening to me? I’m a practitioner, this shouldn’t be happening,” and we start to blame ourselves. We begin to think that something is wrong with the way we are practicing. This can happen to an individual and it can happen to a whole spiritual community. What’s important to understand is that the arising of obstacles is not contradictory to the path of dharma. According to the dharma one can overcome obstacles and overcoming them means being trained to the point where obstacles neither harms you in your practice nor in your worldly affairs.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 75*

## June 25

Generally, we are involved with both dharma practice and worldly affairs. Normally, if we have to choose between these two, we choose worldly activity. We get distracted by all kinds of worldly affairs and are not able to really engage in dharma practice. But if we meditate on impermanence and truly see how we are impermanent, we'll develop world-weariness and renunciation that will lead us to think, "I really have to practice dharma." Meditating on impermanence is the condition that encourages us to practice the dharma. As Milarepa said: "First, I went to the mountains due to a fear of death, but now I've seized the stronghold of deathlessness."

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 31*

## June 26

If we sit and think about death and impermanence, we are bound to become a little sad. Most people think it is not a good idea to sit around and think about something which will upset us. Actually it is a good idea, because if we do not think now about death and impermanence, one day they will definitely arrive and then we will not be prepared. Not knowing what to do and what will come next, we will experience great suffering.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 27*

**June 27**

Spending some time reflecting upon the four thoughts that change the mind—the precious human body, impermanence, karma, and suffering—is not like training in shamatha and vipashyana, but more of a reflection in which we think about how things are. Are they permanent or impermanent? We spend time working with these four topics in our mind. They will bring inspiration, and we will begin to feel that it is not difficult to practice.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 29*

## June 28

The second slogan of mind training is *Regard all phenomena as dreams*. The Tibetan word *chos* (Skt. *dharma*), here translated as phenomena, is used in many different contexts. Sometimes it refers to teachings and sometimes to a particular practice or a specific quality that we try to cultivate in our practice. But in this particular context, the word dharma doesn't mean the teachings, but rather any perceivable object or entity, such as an external sight, sound, smell, taste or body sensation. All of these are not as they seem: they are visible or perceivable but not truly existing, just like dreams. Therefore, we must first understand that all phenomena are dream-like and then train in regarding them as being so.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 34*

## June 29

In the slogans of mind training, we find, sending and taking should be practiced alternately. These two should ride the breath.

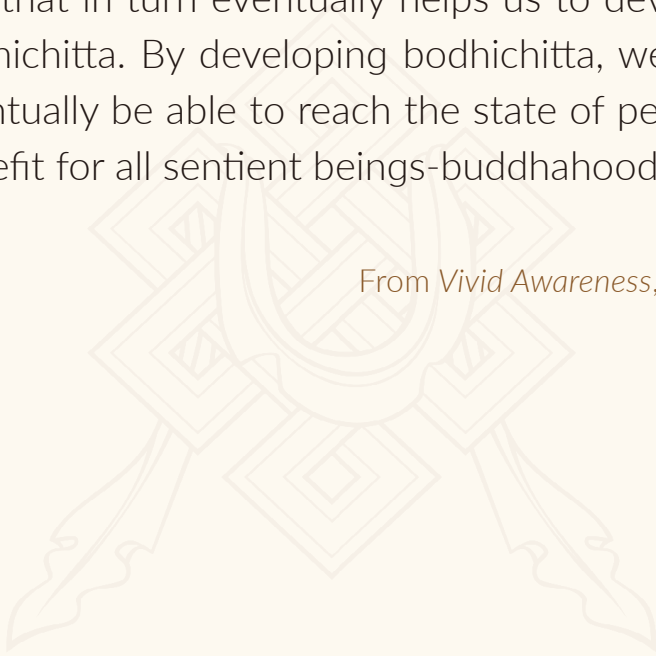
In the visualization of sending and taking, we imagine we are giving away all our happiness and goodness. If we are actually able to give away food, clothing, money, and other material things, that is great. But if we cannot, we keep in mind the motivation to give our possessions and our happiness away. We imagine giving our happiness to others, and at the same time, we visualize taking their suffering away from them and upon ourselves. We generate strong love and compassion, and think to ourselves, “I’m taking their suffering away.” We meditate upon giving our happiness away and taking on others’ suffer-



ing. Our meditation follows our breath, giving away our happiness during the exhalation and taking on others' suffering during the inhalation.

This method helps us to develop a kind heart, and that in turn eventually helps us to develop bodhichitta. By developing bodhichitta, we will eventually be able to reach the state of perfect benefit for all sentient beings-buddhahood.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 64*



## June 30

Among the mind training slogans, we find: Even the antidote is released in its ground. To gain some certainty about how things actually are, we need to look both at external things to see how they are and to look within to see how our minds are. We look at the remedies for the usual beliefs about outer and inner phenomena.

Gradually, as we follow this practice and reach a deeper conviction, all we can see is direct experience.

*From The Seven Points of Mind Training, p. 39*

# July

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE



## July 1

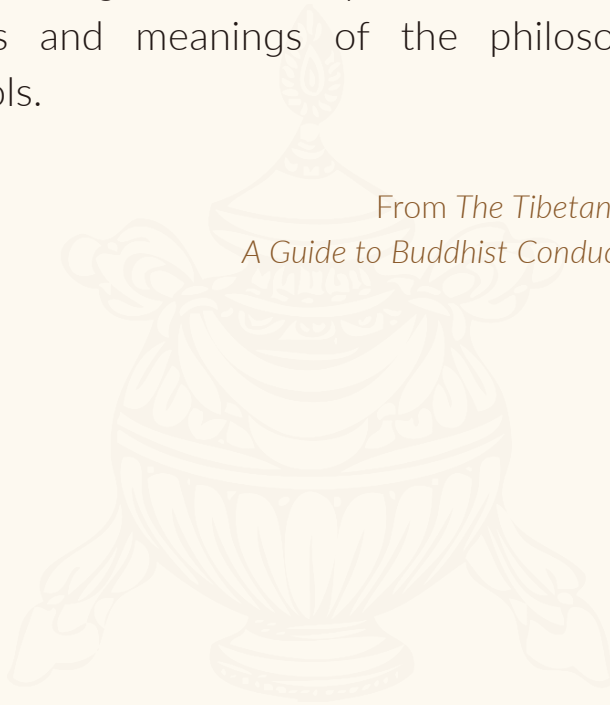
Buddha gave three main sets of teachings. The first teachings were the teachings on the four noble truths which were given at Sarnath, India and became the foundation for the Theravadin school. The second set of teachings were the teachings on emptiness and these were given at Rajagriha and became the foundation of the Mahayana school of Buddhism. The third set of teachings were the vajrayana teachings and were given in many different places.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 7

## July 2

By debating, one develops confidence in the words and meanings of the philosophical schools.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:*  
*A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 48



## July 3

There are four major schools of buddhism in Tibet: The Sakyapa, Nyingmapa, Kagyupa, and Gelugpa. They all practice the vajrayana. Tibetan buddhism, however, is an integration of all three vehicles: the outer vows of individual liberation, the inner bodhisattva vow of the development of bodhichitta and the samaya vows of the vajrayana.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 93

## July 4

A lot of people think that buddhism is an unpleasant practice that makes us unhappy. Buddhism teaches the nature of suffering, the absence of self, and impermanence. We may think that to meditate on these can make us uncomfortable, and make us lose our feeling of confidence and so on. Buddhism does teach these, but it is taught because we need this information to attain liberation from suffering. Once we understand the nature of suffering, we can be liberated from it. Through this understanding of the nature of suffering, our wisdom will also increase and develop.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 74*

## July 5

Though there were difficulties in developing the monastic sangha in western countries because of the culture of those lands, due to their true faith in the dharma, they were very successful. Therefore, the people in western countries truly need the dharma and have great aspiration for it, and if they were not taught the dharma, they would not have had the opportunity to obtain it.

*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 80*



## July 6

It was necessary to spread the dharma in western countries. They didn't just attend dharma teachings, they truly put the dharma into practice. I thought and felt that as they had a great aspiration for the dharma, if I could practice the generosity of truly giving them the dharma, there would be a great benefit. Therefore, I taught them the dharma.

*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 8*

## July 7

I have given dharma teachings everywhere from the northernmost regions of the world—Norway, Sweden, and Iceland—throughout many parts of the world and down to many places in the southern hemisphere, such as Australia, New Zealand, Chile, and so on.

When I taught the dharma, I saw how they took notes, analyzed the teaching, and practiced it. I thought that there truly was benefit in teaching them the dharma and that they practiced it well.

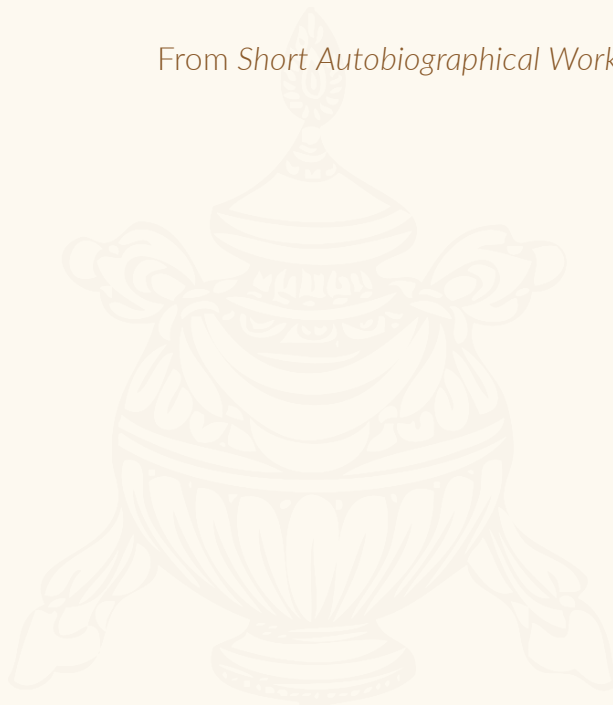
*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 80*

## July 8

Many other high lamas were establishing monasteries, and several people said to me that I shouldn't let Thrangu Monastery become merely a name. So, I established a little something in Nepal and in India. At first there was no land, no building, and no monastic community. All this had to be started from nothing, and that was a little difficult. Other great holders of the teachings did not have such great difficulty, but for me it was very difficult. Nevertheless, though difficult, I worked hard to accomplish each of my goals, and now there is the college in Varanasi in India and the retreat center in Namobuddha in Nepal. At the retreat center, several three-year retreats have been completed, and the retreatants have been able to practice well.

At the college, there have been several graduating classes, and now there are some khenpos who can teach the texts. Some have even written books.

*From Short Autobiographical Works, p. 81*



## July 9

A mental consciousness can itself create the immediately preceding condition for another mental consciousness. Thus, one thinks about something, and that thought gives rise to another thought, and that thought gives rise to another thought, and so on. That's all it takes to give rise to another thought in the mental consciousness. So, any of the six consciousnesses (visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, kinaesthetic, and mental) can serve as an immediately preceding condition for the mental consciousness.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 89

## July 10

All sentient beings, no matter who they are, can attain buddhahood. We are all able to become liberated and enlightened in the future. This is because we are endowed with the cause for enlightenment—buddha nature (Skt. *tathagatagarbha*). For example, no matter if we are male or female, rich or poor, old or young, knowledgeable or not, because we have buddha nature, it is certain that we are able to attain buddhahood. Since we are equipped with a certain cause, there is no reason to not achieve its result if we exert ourselves earnestly.

From *Transforming the Mind:*  
*The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, p. 10

## July 11

Generally, there are four buddhist schools of thought in India—the great exposition (vaibhashika), sutra (sautrantika), mind only (chittamatra), and middle way (madhyamika) schools. Since this teaching is mainly concerned with actual meditation, from the perspective of practice, simultaneously utilizing both the views of mind only and middle way schools is preferred. This is speaking in terms of the mahayana standpoint. For the foundation vehicle, practice should be based on both the views of the great exposition and sutra schools. It would be rather foolish to compare the superiority of one school over the other.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 85*

## July 12

What is the difference between pure and impure consciousnesses? Generally, the nature of mind is clarity. However, it becomes impure when there is attachment. If the mind is able to not fall into attachment and abides in the correct realization of the nature of mind, then the eight consciousnesses will become pure.

From *Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, p. 87



## July 13

There are three forefathers of the Kagyu lineage: Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa. Marpa (1012–1097 C.E.) was very important to the lineage because he actually brought the teachings from India to Tibet. Marpa had tremendous courage and determination and he didn't consider any of the risks or difficulties involved in going to India to obtain the Buddhist teachings. He also didn't do it to become rich or famous or to achieve happiness. He did it to establish the pure buddhist teachings in Tibet.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*  
the Translator, p. 3

## July 14

There are, of course, many different kinds of knowledge. For example, some are very knowledgeable in ways of harming others such as hunting and there are individuals who are very knowledgeable in the mundane sciences such as geology but this is not what is meant by three prajnas. It means the type of knowledge that is of endless benefit for ourself and others, that is, the knowledge to help sentient beings achieve liberation. This is the prajna or supreme knowledge of the dharma.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 25

## July 15

We might feel unwell, have some great problem, or feel extremely negative. When this happens, we should either use our yidam or our guru yoga practice and take the four empowerments (Skt. *abhishekas*). The first empowerment of body is called the vase empowerment. The second empowerment of speech is called the secret empowerment. The third empowerment of mind is called the wisdom empowerment. The fourth empowerment is called the understanding of the true nature of phenomena. So, whenever we feel we are at a dead end and everything is very difficult, we should take these four empowerments and then we will feel our mind and the pure mind of the guru or yidam have become completely mixed and inseparably in us. Doing

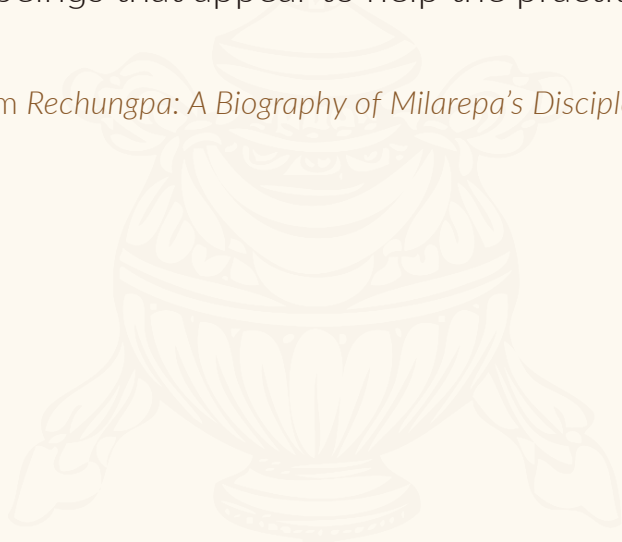
this, we will find that these difficulties can be solved and they gradually disappear.

From *The Spiritual Biography of Marpa*,  
the Translator, p. 29

July 16

There are two kinds of dakinis—human and non-human. The human dakinis are realized female practitioners and the nonhuman dakinis are wisdom beings that appear to help the practitioner.

*From Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple, p. 95*



## July 17

The phowa practice is designed so that the consciousness will exit from the body through this opening at the top of the head leading to a good rebirth. On the ultimate level of reality wherever one looks, inside or outside, one cannot find the mind. On the relative level of reality there is a mind and so this mind dwells in the body.

*From Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple, p. 96*

## July 18

There are two kinds of phowa. The first is where one practices and then at the time of death through the power of one's practice one actually sends the consciousness out of a particular opening in the body. Second is when a teacher who is accomplished in meditation and visualization helps someone who dies. He does the visualization and through love and compassion he helps the dead person's consciousness leave through the crown of the head.

*From Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple, p. 96*

## July 19

The practice of phowa is conducted after the person dies. A series of rituals spanning forty-nine days are conducted to liberate the deceased by helping them to remove non-virtuous karma and obstacles, allowing them to be re-born in a better place.

From *A Life of Happiness:  
A Practice Guide for Older Practitioners*, p. 75



## July 20

The Buddha gave several different types of teachings because he taught the dharma that was right for each individual student and met their needs. There are in general three different types of teachings: the vehicle for listeners, the vehicle for bodhisattvas, and the vehicle of the secret mantra vajrayana.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 22

## July 21

What is the body?

In our buddhist view, we call the body everything from the crown of our heads to the soles of our feet the body, with all the flesh, blood, bones, organs, and everything in between. Sometimes we feel pleasure, sometimes we feel happiness, and sometimes we feel like we have been helped in some way. Sometimes we suffer, sometimes we feel hurt or sickness. The support for the experience of pleasure or pain, the physical body made of flesh and blood, is what we mean by the body.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 55*

## July 22

What is speech?

Speech is the making of sounds and talking. Using the body, we can make vocal sounds. We are able to say kind or unkind words. We can have conversations with people and make other people understand our meaning. That is what we call speech.

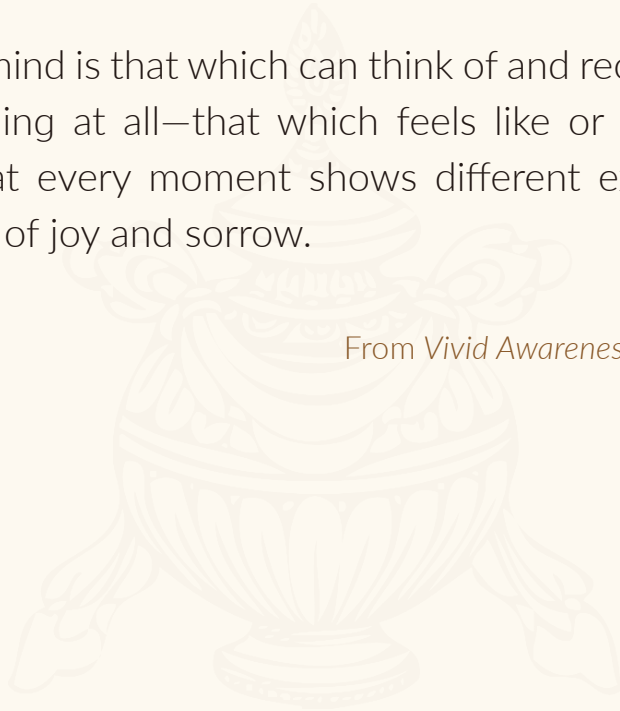
From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 55

July 23

What is mind?

The mind is that which can think of and recollect anything at all—that which feels like or dislike and at every moment shows different expressions of joy and sorrow.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 55



## July 24

The root of both the body and speech comes down to the clear awareness that we call mind. We often have many different types of thoughts that occur in our minds. The mind is that which can generate any of these. Our minds are always changing—in one instant we might suddenly feel joyous and in another we might feel unhappy. Because of having so many different thoughts and perceptions in our minds, we feel many instances of joy and displeasure, which we then express in many ways through our body or our speech. All of these are what we call mind.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 57*

## July 25

What is death?

During this life we have both a body and a mind, and these two are connected. Our body is a composite, a material aggregate of all our flesh, blood, and bones, but our mind is clear awareness. During this life, they coexist. The mind thinks of the body as its own. It resides within the body, supported by the body. But at some point, the body and mind will separate. It is like a person inside a house: while inside, the person is supported by the house, but eventually one goes outside. Similarly, the internal mind resides within the external body, but the mind must leave the body at some point. That point when the mind and body separate is what we call death.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 199*

## July 26

The Buddha taught the dharma in a way that was adapted to the mental capacity of his listeners. He taught beginners how to practice in a gradual fashion so that they could start at whatever level they happened to be and progress step by step. This is similar to when the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma of the first set of teachings that focus on the four noble truths. The first noble truth is the truth of suffering, which is fairly easy to understand. The second noble truth is that this suffering has a cause, which is karmic actions and the disturbing emotions. The third noble truth is that there is a way that suffering can be brought to an end. The fourth noble truth describes the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, pp. 87–88*

July 27

To study Tibetan in hopes of gaining financial profit is rather pointless. It would be best if we could have a correct motivation behind our study of Tibetan. What I mean here is that learning Tibetan for the sake of dharma is extremely meaningful!

From *A Life of Happiness:  
A Practice Guide for Older Practitioners*, p. 28



July 28

*Question:* Why can't gods, sages, and Brahmin reach enlightenment?

*Answer:* The gods, sages, and Brahmin are only concerned with their own welfare. They practice to attain buddhahood only to eliminate their personal suffering. Therefore, they have never even dreamt of an attitude of awakening mind, being concerned only with their own welfare.

*From A Commentary on Shantideva's  
Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, p. 16*

July 29

There are times when the buddhist teachings spread and times when they decline and disappear. Now is a time when the Buddha's teachings have spread—the sun is shining through a break in the clouds. The Buddha's teachings are here just for now. We have encountered the dharma, entered the gate of the dharma, and developed confidence and courage that we can practice it. Now when we have this chance, if we practice the dharma 100 percent, that is really wonderful. Even if we do only a little study and practice to generate a little bit of faith and belief, we are extraordinarily fortunate to have this opportunity.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 111*

July 30

The dharma should be presented to beings in accordance with their individual dispositions or inclinations. Some beings are inclined towards the profound teachings, some towards the vast teachings, and some towards the lesser teachings. Some beings may have the inclination to practice the vast and profound teachings, but because of lack of opportunity, they have to practice the lesser teachings. Therefore, Shantideva has said that “the vast and profound teachings should not be given to those who do not have the capacity to practice them, and that the lesser teachings should not be given to those who have the ability to practice the vast and profound teachings. Beings should be given teachings in accordance with their ability and capacity.”

*From The Tibetan Vinaya: A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 50*

## July 31

Many individuals whom I have met in my extensive travels in Europe and North America have told me their private problems—mental problems, physical problems, and unhappiness with their possessions or their work. The answer to this multitude of problems is always the same: to make one's mind peaceful and calm and develop understanding and wisdom. So ordinary worldly happiness comes down to practicing shamatha and vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 6*

# August

TRANQUILITY AND INSIGHT MEDITATION



## August 1

Simply keeping the mind one-pointed is not shamatha meditation because in true shamatha, the object one focuses on should be something positive. A negative object would be something that causes attachment, aggression, or ignorance to arise in the mind, making it unable to rest calmly on something. Resting on something genuinely positive allows the mind to rest in peace. Shamatha is practiced to prevent the arising of so many thoughts.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 7*

## August 2

One might think that shamatha is a state of non-thought, perhaps like that of a stone. This is incorrect because in shamatha meditation the mind is very calm and stable and also very clear so that it can distinguish and discriminate between all phenomena and see everything as very distinct. This clarity is called vipashyana, or insight, and is developed through shamatha.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 7*

## August 3

With shamatha and vipashyana one has a genuine state of meditation with the mind resting in mind and being able to distinguish all phenomena. Without shamatha and vipashyana one does not have a genuine samadhi or meditation state.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 8*



## August 4

One might think that it is possible to practice shamatha alone or practice vipashyana without doing any shamatha. But in fact, whatever buddhist practices one does, one must practice both shamatha and vipashyana meditation together.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 12*

## August 5

If you practice vipashyana without shamatha, you will not be able to eliminate whatever negativity needs to be eliminated, because vipashyana without shamatha is unstable. So even if you have the understanding of vipashyana, your mind will be agitated. Therefore, you need to have both shamatha and vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 13*

## August 6

Does one start with shamatha, or with vipashyana, or with both at the same time? The answer is that one starts with shamatha and then does vipashyana practice because shamatha is the basis of meditation and vipashyana is based upon shamatha.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 13*

## August 7

If one has a great deal of ignorance, the remedy in terms of shamatha meditation is contemplation on the twelve links of dependent origination. One contemplates how all things arise and depend on something else. For example, by being accustomed to doing good actions and having good thoughts, the power of habit will cause good thoughts and actions to occur. Similarly, when the mind is accustomed to negativity and bad things, through the power of that habit negative thoughts and actions occur. So, all things are interdependent and contemplation on dependent origination is the remedy for ignorance.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 28*

## August 8

The remedy for having too many thoughts is to meditate on one's breath. By meditating on the breath, which is quite subtle and changing all the time with in-and-out movements, one's thoughts become less and less strong. So, this is the remedy for too many thoughts.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 28*

## August 9

The ultimate form of shamatha is having thoughts disappear into the ground consciousness with the mind becoming stable and very relaxed. In other words, one has a great number of thoughts coming out of this ground consciousness and in meditation there is increased effort to absorb these thoughts back into the unceasing and unchanging clarity of ground consciousness. In such a way, one will have a relaxed and still mind.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 37

## August 10

In the sutras and the tantras it is said that shamatha is the basis for all meditation. All meditative states, including vipashyana, come from and depend on the development of shamatha.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 61*

## August 11

If one has good shamatha, then one can easily develop clairvoyant and miraculous powers, vipashyana, and wisdom. Good shamatha meditation will also diminish all the negativities of the mind by creating a state of peace. Then no matter what physical pain, hardships, or mental obstacles and confusion occur, the suffering does not harm one because all these things are suppressed and diminished by mental stability.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 61–62*



## August 12

When one has developed shamatha meditation, many different kinds of thoughts and images from internal and external events appear in the mind. These are called unexamined images. This means that they are not actual external images, but are just the appearance of things, images that arise in the mind. In vipashyana meditation one takes these images and analyzes them to develop the conviction that they have no true existence of their own.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 96*

## August 13

One need discriminating knowledge in meditation because one needs to be able to focus on particular objects in meditation. Nothing becomes mixed or overlapping, so things do not turn out to be vague, indistinct, or unclear.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 96

## August 14

One can't achieve enlightenment with just shamatha meditation. One also can't achieve enlightenment with just vipashyana meditation. No one achieves wisdom of buddhahood with just vipashyana meditation. What is necessary is to study shamatha by itself, then study vipashyana by itself, and then practice the union of shamatha and vipashyana to reach final enlightenment.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 111*

## August 15

The union of the stability of mind (shamatha) and of insight (vipashyana) occurs when the mind is at rest and still, not in the ordinary way, but at rest in the wisdom of the dharmadhatu.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 111*

## August 16

Correct shamatha occurs when the defect of dullness is removed so that there is a state of calm and stability and also a state of clarity.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 117

## August 17

To develop shamatha and vipashyana you have to have diligence and apply yourself to meditation without going from one method to another. But diligence alone is not enough without having the actual practice and essential instructions such as in guru yoga.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 118*

## August 18

The primary cause for the development of shamatha and vipashyana is your own diligence and the necessary conditions are the preliminary practices. Having both of these enables you to develop the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 119*

## August 19

Buddhahood isn't the act of going to a pure realm, but rather being in the ordinary world with the achievement of the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 126



## August 20

If one meditates just on inhalation and exhalation, it is possible to become distracted and forget one's meditation. If one's meditation is on inhalation, holding the breath, and exhalation, then if one loses one's mindfulness one will forget to hold the breath and it will be obvious that one has lost one's awareness. So doing breathing in three stages is more beneficial to develop stability of mind than just meditating on the in-and-out-breath.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 131*

## August 21

There are six obstacles that are the principal obstacles to shamatha meditation. These are dullness, agitation, aggression, regret, uncertainty, and attachment. One has to recognize each of these obstacles individually. In meditation one can investigate each of these.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 131–132*

## August 22

The visualization practice is a special method for developing a stability of mind that is not too tight or too loose. One just rest in the natural state of the mind. In general, the visualization (Tib. *kye rim*) stage of the practices act as methods for developing shamatha meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 133*

## August 23

What is developed by all the practices of shamatha is stability of mind. With this stability one can develop vipashyana. If the mind is stable and resting in its natural state, one can use sharp understanding to analyze and investigate the texts or understand the meaning of the words of the texts. So, with stability of mind, one can examine and understand whatever one focuses one's mind on, so that one's shamatha practice becomes vipashyana practice.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 135*

## August 24

As long as we are controlled by our thoughts and as long as our thoughts make us agitated, we lack fundamental judgment. So, for these reasons, the practice of shamatha is extremely important.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 59

## August 25

You might wonder what the difference between tranquility and insight meditation. Tranquility meditation is just resting stably. There is not necessarily any intelligence present, whether the intelligence born of listening, contemplating, or wisdom. We do not really recognize the mind. We just rest peacefully free of thoughts within the empty aspect of the mind. That is tranquility or shamatha meditation. But when we know the nature of the mind clearly and thoroughly, then it is insight meditation. Insight has clarity.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 117*

## August 26

There are two fundamental kinds of meditation in the middle way. These are tranquillity meditation and insight meditation. Tranquillity meditation is making the mind remain in a state of tranquillity without allowing it to fall prey to thoughts and negative factors that could disturb it. Insight meditation is seeing very clearly and very vividly the ultimate nature of phenomena. Tranquillity meditation and insight meditation are practiced at all levels of meditation from the beginner up to achieving buddhahood itself.

*From The Middle Way Meditation Instructions:  
Developing Compassion through Wisdom, p. 63*

## August 27

Through the practice of tranquility meditation, we bring our minds to rest. Bringing the mind to rest means to attain a state of freedom or control over the arising of thoughts in our mind. This freedom is important because as long as we have not attained it, even if we wish to practice virtue, we may be unable to do so. Even though we wish to cultivate various states of meditative absorption, we may be unable to do so.

*From Cultivating True Compassion,  
Namo Buddha Publications, p. 35*



## August 28

The Sanskrit word *samadhi* is translated into Tibetan as *ting nge dzin*, which literally means ‘deep holding.’ The mind is held firmly and deeply so the meditation becomes very stable. Samadhi can refer to either tranquility meditation or insight meditation. By doing this deep meditation, we experience the flavour of samadhi—the exquisite taste of meditation.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p.76*

## August 29

First, we experience feelings, but then they disappear. When they disappear, like a drawing on water, they reveal that they have no essence and are not anything at all. Since they disappear, they are confused appearances. We should not think that that we need one feeling and do not need another. We do not need to fear them, cling to them, or fixate on them. Feelings will just naturally disappear.

From *The Essentials of Mahamudra*, p. 64

## August 30

In general, shamatha mediation is when the mind is placed somewhere and rests there. But when we practice shamatha, we also investigate to see how the meditation is going while being mindful of the shamatha itself. “Is it going well? Is it not going well? Which antidote needs to be applied?” This checking of our mind as we are practicing is analysis.

From *The Essentials of Mahamudra*, p. 64

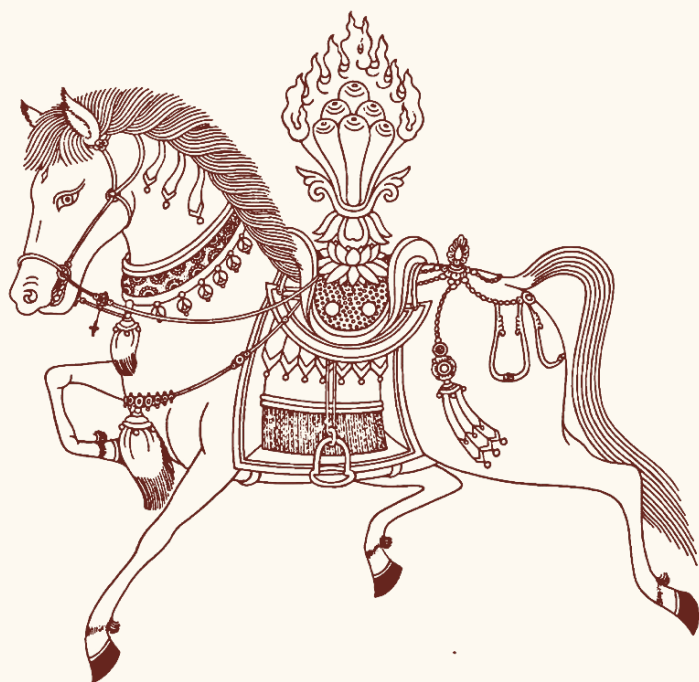
## August 31

Correct viewpoint is the principal causal condition for vipashyana. These three aspects of depending on a teacher, receiving the teachings, and analyzing them develop the correct view of vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 67*

# September

MEDITATION



## September 1

If a practitioner tries to meditate without having listened to the teachings, he or she cannot meditate because there is nothing to meditate on. It is like a man without hands who tries to climb a mountain. Listening to the teachings without meditating is also not beneficial. It is like a rich man who is a miser and does not buy good food or clothes. Listening to the dharma and meditating are like a bird with two wings who can fly in the sky.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 44

## September 2

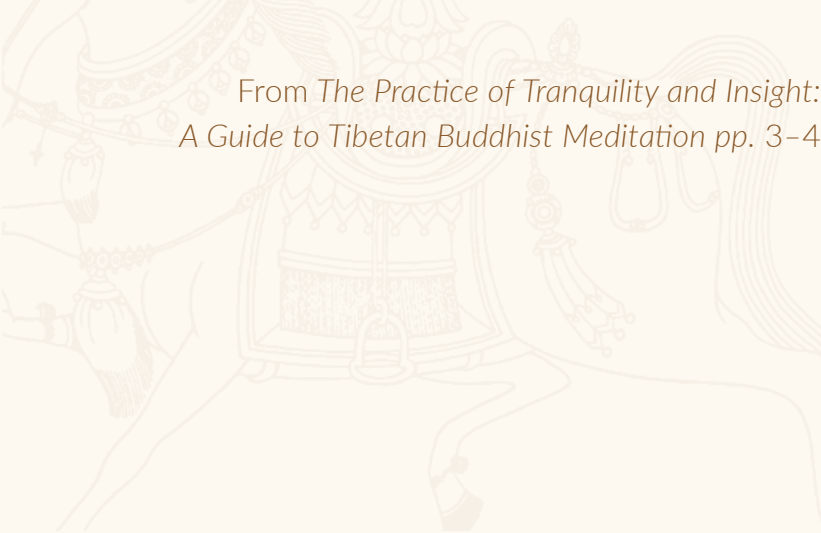
The essential nature of the mind is free from all obscurations. One must develop familiarity with that nature. Having become familiar with that, one then must maintain that awareness all the time. Whether one is doing the generation stage meditation or whether one is practicing tonglen, one must maintain that awareness of the nature of the mind. That's very important.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 99

## September 3

During meditation the mind does not fall under the influence of thoughts, obscurations, or mental negativity (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyon mong*). Instead, it is completely stable and unwavering.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation* pp. 3–4





## September 4

*Samadhi* is translated as *gom* in Tibetan. This word is very close to *kom*, which means ‘to become accustomed to doing something,’ so that becomes a part of oneself. Meditation is very similar to familiarization because one continues meditating even it sometimes doesn’t go well. Obstacles and problem often arise, but one continues and habituates oneself to meditating until it becomes easy and natural. So, through habituation one is able to remain in the state of meditation.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 3–4

## September 5

Samadhi includes tranquility meditation, or shamatha, and insight meditation, or vipashyana. After receiving the teachings for these two types of meditation, one needs to analyze them with one's intelligence in order to gain a definite understanding of them. After gaining an understanding of these two, it is necessary to practice and meditate so that what one has learned becomes absorbed by the mind.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 4*

## September 6

Even if one knows a great deal about dharma, it will be of no help if one does not understand shamatha and vipashyana meditation. Therefore, one must practice meditation so that what is conceptually learned becomes a part of oneself. Thus, we must examine meditation first.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 4*

## September 7

There are several levels of understanding. From hearing the buddhist teachings, one develops the understanding of listening. From thinking about these teachings, one develops the understanding of contemplation. These two are not enough to develop full understanding because one must turn one's mind inward to gain the understanding that comes from meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 4*

## September 8

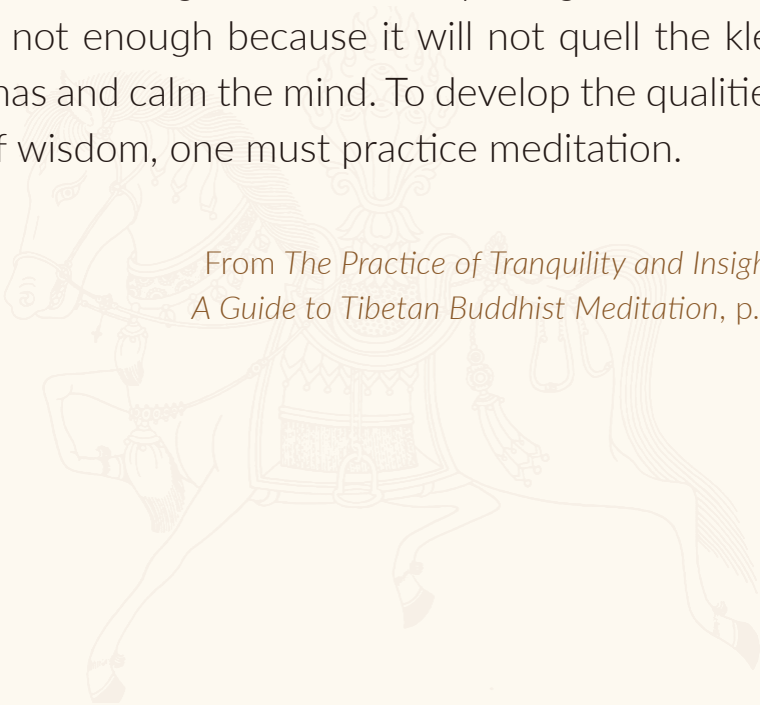
Instead of focusing the mind externally by listening to the teachings, one focuses one's attention internally on the mind itself to develop understanding of meditation. One cannot benefit much from focusing on external phenomena because the mind is bound up by the kleshas, and the only way to free oneself bondage of kleshas is to turn inward through meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p.4*

## September 9

Just listening to and contemplating the dharma is not enough because it will not quell the kle-shas and calm the mind. To develop the qualities of wisdom, one must practice meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 5*



## September 10

To practice meditation means to habituate oneself to meditation. If one's mind is peaceful and happy in ordinary life, all external things appear pleasant and attractive. If one's mind is disturbed and unhappy, all these external things seem unpleasant and not right. One needs to make the mind peaceful and happy to develop inner wisdom, and this is done by meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 5*

## September 11

There are, in fact, a great number of meditation techniques, but they can all be included in these two categories [shamatha and vipashyana]. Having understood that all meditation comes from shamatha and vipashyana, one should prepare oneself to do these meditations. One should also seek out specific instructions to practice them.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 5–6*



## September 12

If we have strong desire and attachment to our own body or to external things, we can practice meditation on ugliness. We normally see our body as solid, lasting and important, but the Buddha taught that we have a precious human existence, which allows us to practice the dharma and benefit other beings. It is a precious human existence, but the body itself is not precious.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 26–27*

## September 13

The remedy for pride is to meditate on the components that make up our being. With pride one thinks of oneself as superior or special. The remedy is to meditate on the five aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*).

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 28

## September 14

There are four kinds of thoughts that cause obstacles to one's meditation. These are malicious thoughts, which are the wish to harm someone, thoughts of jealousy, thoughts of doubt and uncertainty, and thoughts of attachment and craving.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 29–30*

## September 15

When one is meditating, the mind or the general mental consciousness is being absorbed into the ground consciousness. For example, if one thinks of waves as thoughts and ground consciousness as the ocean, then the waves originate from the ocean and then merge or disappear into the ocean. In the same way, thoughts arise from the unceasing, unimpaired clarity of ground consciousness and then merge and disappear into ground consciousness.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 36*

## September 16

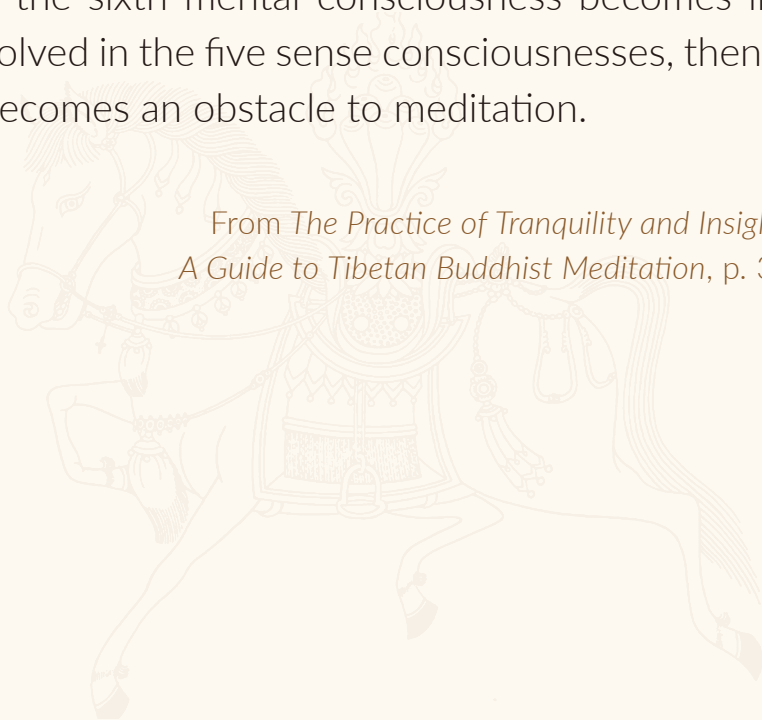
In meditation one needs the sixth consciousness to become still and calm without any thoughts arising. The ground consciousness in itself does not create an obstacle to meditation. But the seventh or afflicted consciousness is characterized by ego-clinging. It is always there. It does not create an obstacle to meditation but it does create an obstacle to liberation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 37*

## September 17

If the sixth mental consciousness becomes involved in the five sense consciousnesses, then it becomes an obstacle to meditation.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 37



## September 18

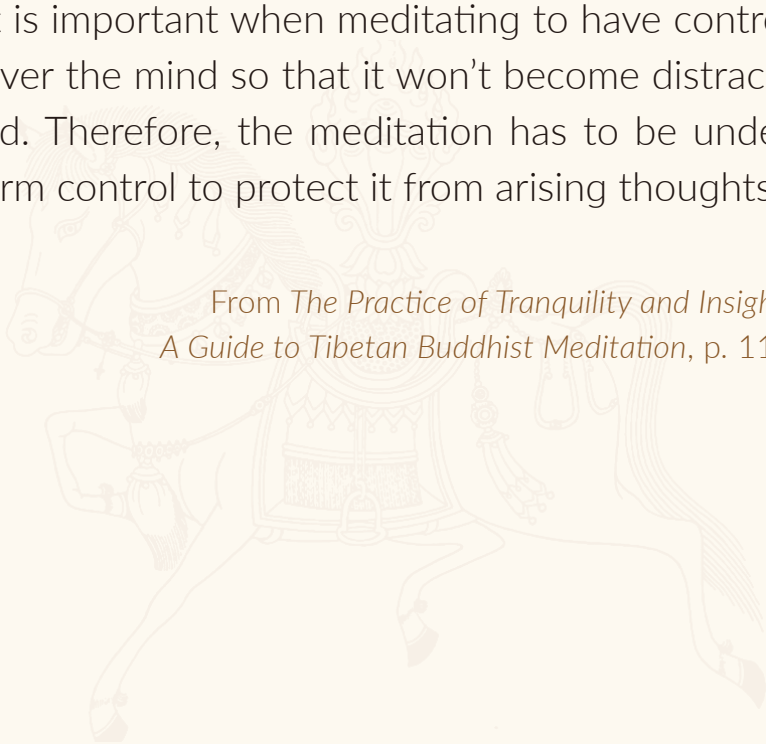
One must increase the power of one's samadhi so that one's mind becomes more stable. The mental event of prajna is also present in all persons, but it must be developed and increased with samadhi so that one can develop a clear and definite understanding. One needs to have both of these to develop vipashyana, with samadhi giving the stability and prajna giving the ability to analyze the details of everything and develop a thorough understanding of them.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 97*

## September 19

It is important when meditating to have control over the mind so that it won't become distracted. Therefore, the meditation has to be under firm control to protect it from arising thoughts.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 115*





## September 20

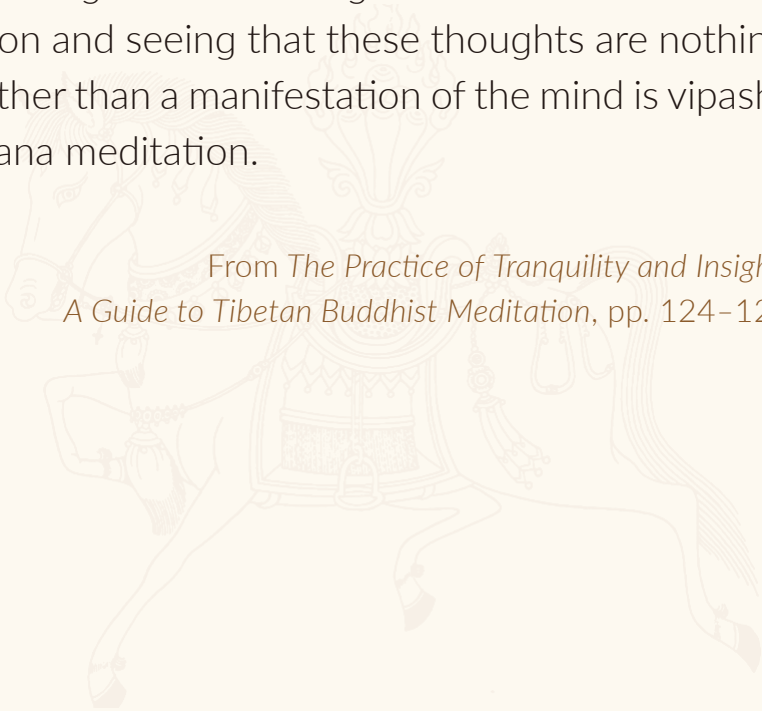
When one is able to see the actual nature of meditation and phenomena and be free from the defects of agitation and dullness, etc., and when one can rest effortlessly in meditation free from any deliberate action, then one has achieved the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 121*

## September 21

Resting without thoughts is shamatha meditation and seeing that these thoughts are nothing other than a manifestation of the mind is vipashyana meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 124–125*



## September 22

The union of shamatha and vipashyana is greater than achieving either shamatha or vipashyana, and this result is called genuine samadhi. When one has genuine samadhi, the meditative and post-meditative periods are blended. So, one practices meditation, then one arises from the meditation session and through familiarization with meditation, one can continue one's daily activities while resting in this state of meditation. So, this blending of meditation and post-meditation is genuine samadhi the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 125*

## September 23

There is also the vairayana practice of breathing used within the Kagyu tradition called gentle breathing in three phases. First there is the in-breath, then the breath is held at the abdomen for a while, and then there is the out-breath, making three different stages.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, pp. 130–131*

## September 24

Sometimes analytical meditation is done by itself and sometimes non-analytic meditation is done alone. Sometimes they are done alternately. If done correctly, either method can lead to the development of shamatha and vipashyana. In terms of a goal, they are the same. In terms of a path, however, there is a difference between them.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 135*

## September 25

The short-term benefits of meditation are more than merely peace of mind, because our physical health as well depends to a great extent upon our state of mind. Therefore, if you cultivate this state of mental contentment and peace, then you will tend not to become ill, and you will as well tend to heal easily if and when you do become ill.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 3*

## September 26

If you practice meditation, then as your mind settles down the channels and the energies moving through the channels return to their rightful function. As a result of this you tend not to become ill and you are able to heal any illnesses you already have.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 3*

## September 27

The ultimate or long-term benefit of the practice of meditation is becoming free of all suffering, which means no longer having to experience the sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. Now this attainment of freedom is called buddhahood in the common language of all buddhist traditions and supreme siddhi in the particular terminology of the vajrayana.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 4*



## September 28

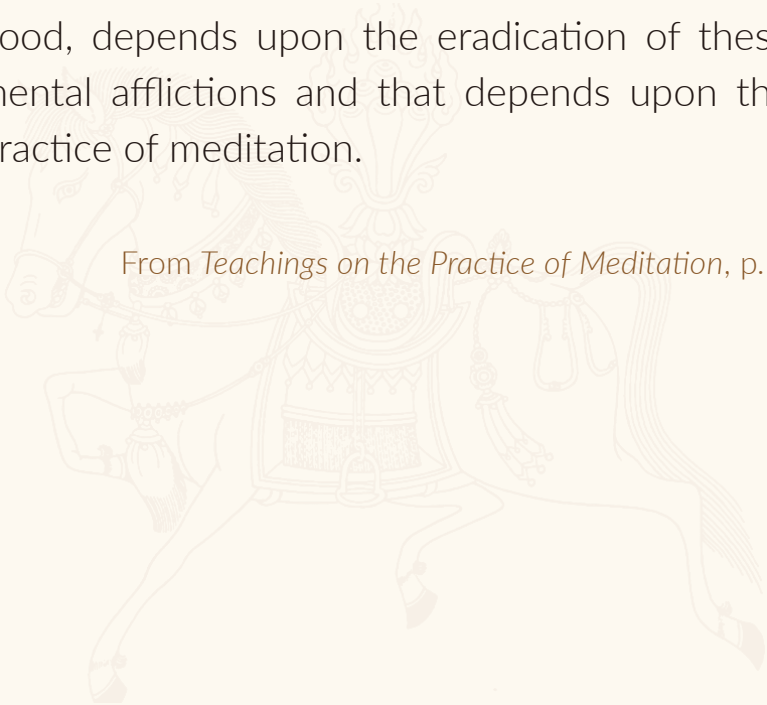
When you begin to practice the basic meditation of tranquillity meditation, you may find that your mind won't stay still for a moment. But this is not permanent. This will change as you practice and you will eventually be able to place your mind at rest at will, at which point you have successfully alleviated the manifest disturbance of these mental afflictions or kleshas.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 4*

## September 29

The freedom or result, which is called buddha-hood, depends upon the eradication of these mental afflictions and that depends upon the practice of meditation.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 6*



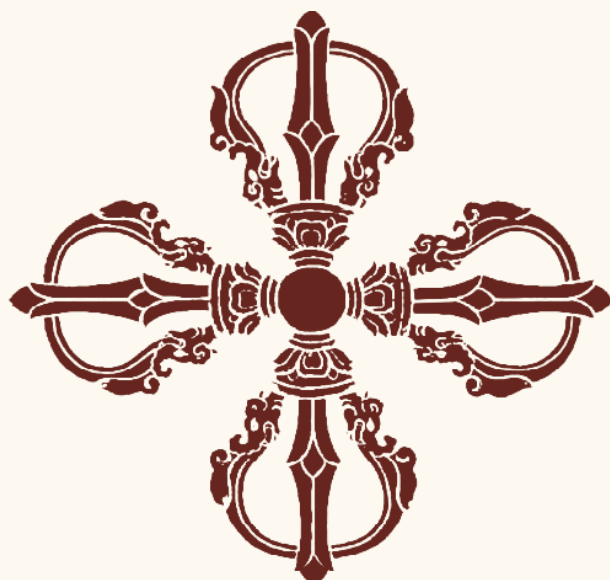
## September 30

There are obviously a lot of things that can go wrong with meditation, but basically all of them are included within the two types of defects: torpor and excitement. There are three things you can do in general to get rid of either of these defects. The three things are what we could call external changes, visualization and using motivation.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 39*

# October

PRACTICES



## October 1

It is important to understand the teachings to help all sentient beings. Being learned in the teachings alone is not enough. One should also bring one's learning into the practice. One should also put the pratimoksha, the bodhisattva, and the vajrayana vows into practice in order to help other sentient beings. If one brings one's knowledge into the practice, one's example will convince others to practice as well. If one does not practice personally, others will not believe one.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 45

## October 2

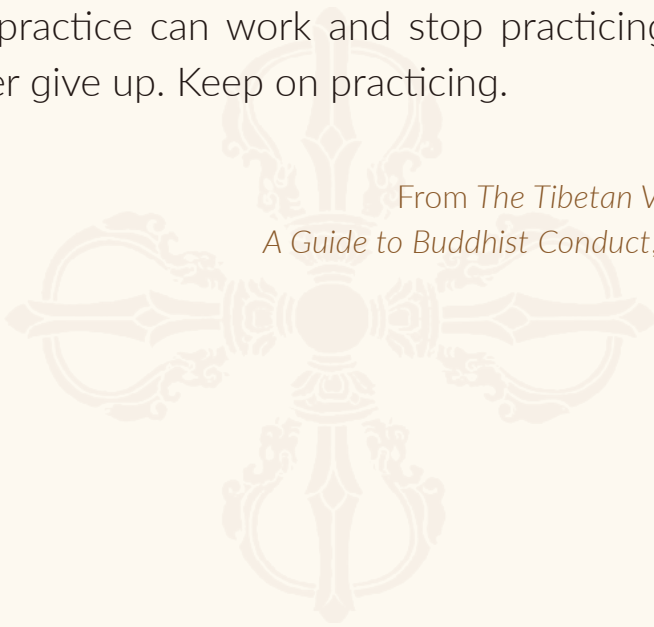
One doesn't have to practice all three yanas in detail. By practicing vajrayana, one is practicing all three yanas because the hinayana precepts are included in the mahayana, and the mahayana precepts are included in the vajrayana. By realizing the three yanas, when one teaches, one can give teachings appropriate to different individuals. The Buddha gave 84,000 different teachings, but that doesn't mean that one has to go through all 84,000 of them. If one practices fully one of them, that serves the purpose of practicing all the rest of them.

*From The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct, p. 59*

## October 3

The most important thing is never to give up. The worst thing that one can do is to doubt that the practice can work and stop practicing. So never give up. Keep on practicing.

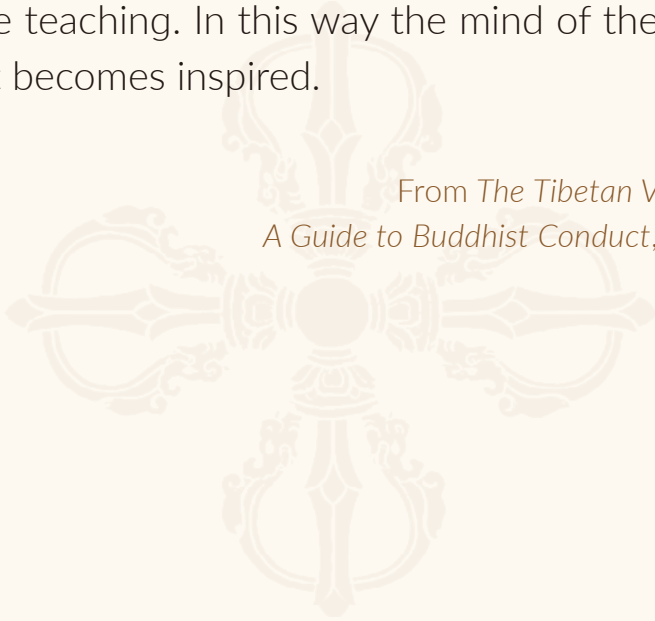
From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 78



## October 4

Whatever one teaches the student, one must show that one practices or has practiced that same teaching. In this way the mind of the student becomes inspired.

From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 85

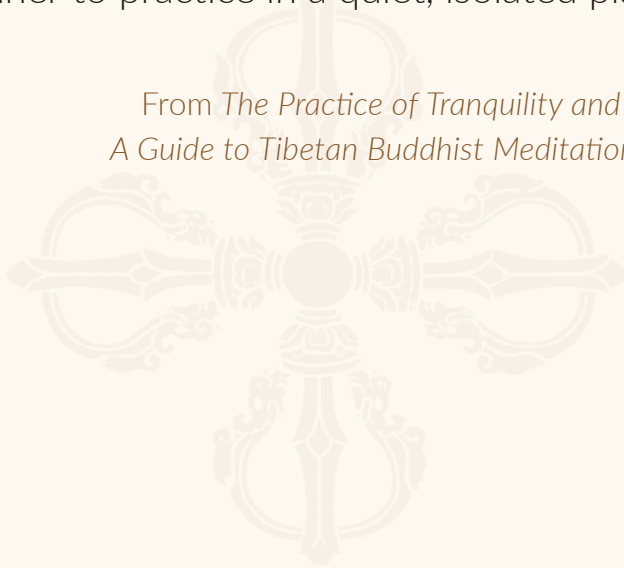




October 5

Since the ordinary mind is habituated to involvement with sense perceptions, it is better for the beginner to practice in a quiet, isolated place.

From *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation*, p. 38



## October 6

In Tibetan there are two words for attachment: *chagpa*, which is negative attachment usually translated as 'attachment', and *mopa*, which is positive attachment usually translated as 'aspiration.' If someone likes stealing, then they are attached to stealing and this is *chagpa*, negative attachment. If someone wants to help someone else or wants to practice the dharma and they are attached to that, then this is *mopa* because it is beneficial to oneself and others.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 43*

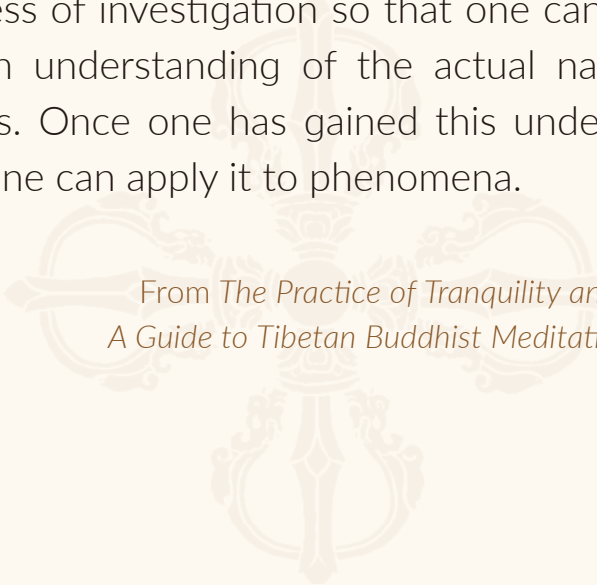
## October 7

In general, buddhist practice involves the correct view, meditation, and proper conduct. With the correct view we are able to meditate and through meditation we develop proper conduct. Therefore, the root of these is the view. To develop the correct view, we don't just receive these teachings, but rather we must analyze and examine them continuously.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 67*

## October 8

The Buddha said that his teachings should not be taken on trust, but one should engage in the process of investigation so that one can develop an understanding of the actual nature of things. Once one has gained this understanding, one can apply it to phenomena.



*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 88*

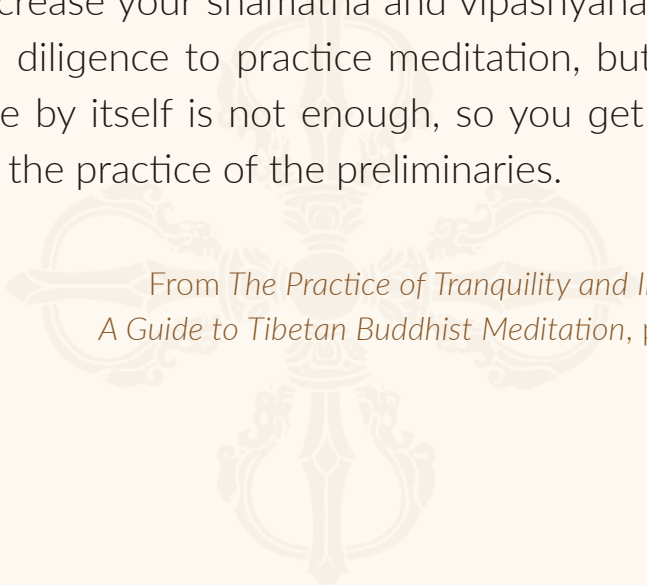
## October 9

If one wishes to attain perfect happiness, one must be able to find the correct cause of this happiness. To stop suffering, which is the result of causes, one must stop the causes of suffering. Therefore, one can find out how to eliminate suffering and attain happiness in the Buddha's teachings, which is done through the two kinds of reasoning: the reasoning of a cause having an effect, and the reasoning of an effect being dependent on a cause. This means that whatever exists will create a result.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 89*

## October 10

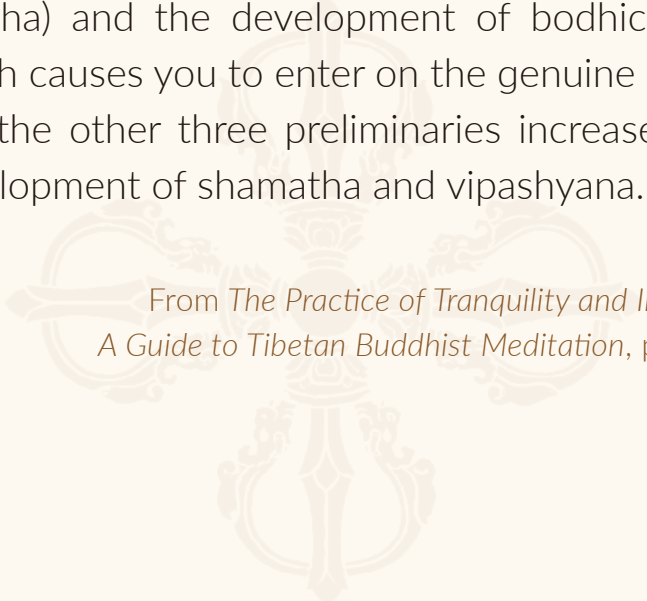
The four preliminary practices are very important and the purpose of doing these practices is to increase your shamatha and vipashyana. You need diligence to practice meditation, but diligence by itself is not enough, so you get help from the practice of the preliminaries.



*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 119*

## October 11

The first preliminary, prostrations, is taking refuge in the three jewels (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) and the development of bodhichitta, which causes you to enter on the genuine path, and the other three preliminaries increase the development of shamatha and vipashyana.



*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 119*

## October 12

When obscurations are removed, all the positive qualities such as wisdom, clairvoyance, and miraculous powers naturally appear. This is similar to when the clouds move away from in front of the sun so that the sun shines in its full brilliance without anything new having to be created. In the same way, clearing away all the obscurations allows all the positive qualities to shine in their brilliance.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 127*



## October 13

The result of practicing meditation is realization and experience. Meditation experiences are temporary and come rather quickly. Realization, however, is attained through the gradual process of meditation and is lasting.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 136*

## October 14

When one is practicing the dharma and there are no great obstacles, it is easy to develop internal obstacles to one's practice. This occurs because one begins to think that one has a great practice and feels very proud. This pride itself is a great obstacle to one's dharma practice and meditation.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 137*

## October 15

The correct implementation of the main practice depends on the correct implementation of the preliminaries, which is to say, if the preliminaries have been properly practiced, then the main practice will go very well. If the preliminaries have not been done well, the main practice will be subverted by laziness and procrastination.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, pp. 35–36

## October 16

There are two kinds of preliminaries—the common and uncommon preliminaries—and it is these four common preliminaries that determine whether or not our practice of dharma becomes a path to enlightenment. Because of the importance of these four common preliminaries, the stanza in the lineage supplication says, “Detachment is the foot of meditation.”

*From The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice, p. 36*

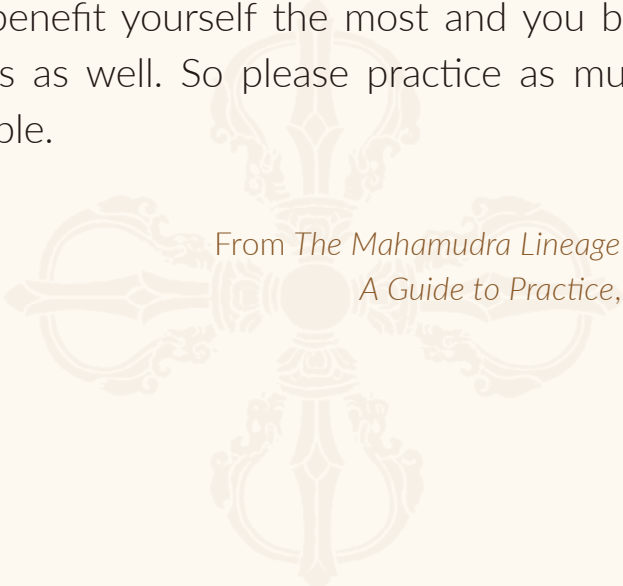
## October 17

When we begin to practice, we will have different kinds of experiences. So, when you have a positive experience, don't be too delighted. And when you have a negative experience, don't be too disappointed because neither is going to last. However, the fundamental nature of mind at which we are looking never changes at all. We simply look at our mind again and again and again.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 82

## October 18

Since dharma practice is the medicine for suffering, both for yourself and others, by practicing, you benefit yourself the most and you benefit others as well. So please practice as much as possible.



From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 101

October 19

Generally, in a worldly context, if someone devotes themselves wholly in pursuit of an activity of any kind, we deem them to be diligent. But this is not necessarily the case if we view it from a dharma perspective. Someone who indulges enthusiastically in unwholesome deeds, such as actions harmful to both self and others, is actually considered a lazy person.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 15*

## October 20

While practicing the dharma, we need an experienced and diligent spiritual teacher to show us the right path. With such a teacher at our side, none of our practice and efforts would go to waste. This is because we are able to clearly understand what is to be adopted and abandoned. We will know precisely each step of the practice. Therefore, relying on a spiritual teacher is extremely important.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 17*



## October 21

There are many beginning practitioners who feel that the dharma teachings make sense, so they generate interest and devotion toward the dharma. However, they tend to make a mistake here: A clear goal is not established. Why do we need one? Is it not enough to simply like the dharma? First, we must understand that dharma practice needs to be directed toward attaining buddhahood and liberation from samsara. Buddhahood and liberation are our goal, and the dharma is the means to achieve it. Without this goal in mind, even the most sublime dharma teachings cannot help us to become liberated.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p.18*

## October 22

When we establish the correct views regarding liberation and buddhahood, our goal for studying and practicing the dharma will become clearer. With a precise purpose, practice becomes more efficient.



From *Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa*, p.19

**October 23**

We must clearly and firmly establish our goal for studying the dharma. Then we put it into action and begin our practice.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p.20*



October 24

We need to transform our minds, and generally there are two basic ways we can do this: transforming our minds through relative methods and through ultimate methods. If we want to use the relative methods, we need to rid our minds of ill will and develop our good-will. In order to do this, we often train in relative bodhichitta, and in particular, the instructions on the lojong mind training. These instructions will help us develop goodwill and a kind heart toward others. We can use these methods to eliminate our ill will toward others. The main method is to practice the tonglen sending and taking meditation.

From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 64

## October 25

Sickness and pain are feelings that take the form of suffering. When we do not have any instructions, sickness can be unbearable. We are overwhelmed by the sickness and oppressed by suffering. We need a method to make sure that the pain and illness cannot harm us, but that alone is not enough. We also need a way to make pain and illness companions and helpers in our practice. This is the practice of taking illness as the path.

*From Vivid Awareness, p. 179*

October 26

Vajrasattva practice definitely brings benefit, no matter whether the problems you face are external or psychological in nature, so I would encourage you to take up this practice on a regular basis.

From *Crystal Clear:  
Practical Advice for Mahamudra Meditators*, p. 145

## October 27

This practice of the Medicine Buddha is a combination of what the Buddha taught about the Medicine Buddha in the sutras of the Medicine Buddha and in various tantras. Because it is connected with vajrayana, it is most appropriate to receive the empowerment to enhance the practice. But because it is also connected with the sutras, it is acceptable to do the practice without the empowerment as well.

*From Medicine Buddha Teachings, p. 11*

October 28

Taking inferential valid cognition as the path is making use of logical reasoning in order to determine the actual nature of things. It is using your intelligence, using your capacity to reason clearly, with guidance, in order to correctly determine that things are not what they appear to be. The practice basically consists of thinking very, very carefully.

*From Journey of the Mind: Putting the Teachings  
on the Bardo into Effective Practice, p. 56*



## October 29

All yidam practices include two stages: the generation stage and the completion stage. The visualization of the forms of the deities, the presentation of offerings and so on, the repetition of the mantra with the accompanying visualizations are all aspects of the practice of the generation stage. When, subsequent to the dissolution of the visualization, you rest your mind in emptiness, this is the practice of the completion stage.

*From Medicine Buddha Teachings, p. 63*

## October 30

The main practice in vajrayana consists of the generation stage, cultivating the practice of regarding oneself as a deity. From an ordinary point of view, we might regard this as useless. We might say, “Well, I am not a deity. What use is there in my pretending to be one?” But in fact, the root of samsara is the habit of impure perception. By regarding oneself as a deity, one gradually purifies, weakens, and removes that habit and replaces it with the positive habit of pure perception. It is for this reason that the meditation upon oneself as a deity is considered so important.

*From Medicine Buddha Teachings, p. 7*

## October 31

Not everyone has the opportunity to practice in such a way as Milarepa, who practiced intensely and austerely. However, no one says that you cannot practice the dharma and achieve results if you do not practice exactly like Milarepa. Whatever lifestyle you lead, you can still practice dharma.

Marpa the Translator, for example, led an entirely different life. He had a wife and children, wealth and possessions. He enjoyed these but at the same time he was diligent about his dharma practice. He first studied and contemplated the dharma and then practiced it. Through his practice, he achieved the great accomplishments of the dharma and became the deep spring from which all our Kagyu teachings flow. Like Marpa

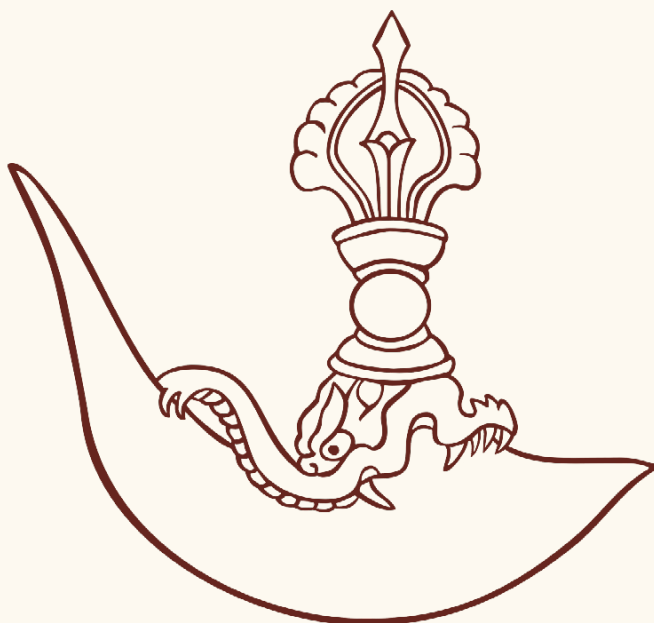
the Translator, you probably live in a household, but you can still practice the dharma. If you can practice like Marpa and attain such a high degree of realization, that is extremely fortunate. Even if you cannot attain such a high degree of realization, any amount of dharma practice you do will still be beneficial. Whether you take Marpa, Milarepa, or Gampopa as your example, you can practice the dharma.



From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 155

# November

EMPTINESS



## November 1

Emptiness is the essence of the dharma teachings because it is the way we eliminate all the mind poisons and faults. So, selflessness and emptiness are very important. Emptiness can become an obstacle to our understanding of karma and our practice of good actions because we may think, “Everything is emptiness, nothing exists, so I don’t have to practice dharma.” So, there is danger involved in this teaching on emptiness.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 95*

## November 2

If we have a good understanding of emptiness, it helps to develop our meditation, but if we have a mistaken idea of emptiness and think there is no need to do good actions, we are in danger of developing an obstacle to our dharma practice.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 95*

## November 3

To develop the correct viewpoint, we must not rely on the provisional meaning, but on the definitive meaning. Provisional meanings are teachings given by the Buddha to persons of lesser capabilities who were not able to believe or grasp the actual teachings. The definitive meanings are those that describe things as they actually are. To have a genuine view one must depend on the definitive meaning. One has to recognize directly the true meaning of phenomena and distinguish it from the provisional meaning.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 67*



## November 4

First one discovers that phenomena are empty, then one analyzes the mind and finds that it is also empty. With analysis it is easy to understand the emptiness of mind. What is difficult is to familiarize oneself with and habituate oneself to that understanding. Just analyzing the mind to see that its nature is empty is not very beneficial.

*From The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:  
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, p. 82*

## November 5

The actual meaning of madhyamaka is this direct, straightforward view which does not fall into any extremes, a view which is at first very difficult to attain. Because we do not initially have this view, the commentary on madhyamaka, or the middle way, is taught. The instructions on the right view were first taught by Shakyamuni Buddha and were later commented upon by various enlightened teachers. The treatises of these commentators are referred to as ‘the shastras on madhyamaka.’ This discussion will concern the commentaries on madhyamaka. The teaching is given so that students may come to understand the fundamental nature of reality, enter the practice path to realization, and attain freedom from suffering.

From *The Open Door to Emptiness*, p. 9

## November 6

In the first turning of the wheel of dharma, the Buddha did not specifically teach emptiness, though he did indirectly suggest it. The lack of ego that he taught in this turning was not the lack of self in an ultimate sense, but in the simpler sense that there is no permanent, solid individual ego or self-nature.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 10*

## November 7

Later, in Rajagriha in northern India, Shakyamuni Buddha taught the second turning of the wheel of dharma—the teachings on the lack of fundamental characteristics. He taught the sixteen modes of emptiness: outer appearances are empty, the inner world of thoughts is empty, both outer and inner things taken together are empty, and so on. In doing so he demonstrated that not only in the ordinary sense is there no ego, but no inherent reality can ever be found in anything, no matter where we look.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 10*

## November 8

The distinction between the second and third turning is that, in the teachings at Rajagriha, the Buddha taught emptiness as being a function of appearance, that is, the highest quality of appearance its lack of true existence. Whereas in Shravasti he taught emptiness as a foundation upon which everything is based.

From *The Open Door to Emptiness*, p. 11

## November 9

The reason for the creation of all this karma which brings about our existential situation is that we have been continually acting out of defiled impulses of aggression, desire, pride, jealousy, and so on. We have been impulsively acting out of these defilements because we have been clinging to a belief of self. This false assumption of a self or an ego has been forcing us from one condition to another, driving us into conditions of suffering. We can only be freed from this continuous compulsive situation by recognizing and understanding the nature of emptiness, the fundamental nature of reality, in which there is no belief in the existence of an ego.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 13*

## November 10

It is extremely important to understand emptiness because not understanding emptiness prevents us from realizing the true nature of reality which is hidden from us by the two obscurations. These are the emotional obscurations of the disturbing emotions such as anger, desire, and ignorance and the cognitive obscurations such as dualistic thinking of 'I' and 'other.' To purify or eliminate these two kinds of obscurations and to recognize the two truths (the conventional truth and the ultimate truth), we must begin by recognizing the egolessness of person and the egolessness of phenomena.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 15*

## November 11

Generally, we all have the experience that there is some kind of agent behind our actions, someone who is causing whatever we perceive ourselves to be doing. Similarly, we tend to feel that there is a subject of our experience, someone who is experiencing it. But, when we examine our experience with analytic insight, we discover that there is actually no such subject or agent at all.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 17*



## November 12

In practicing meditation, we must always meditate on the ultimate truth, because the conventional truth is composed of illusory manifestations. The ultimate truth is the fundamental nature. In order to meditate on the fundamental nature, we study the teachings on ‘not-self.’

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 24*

## November 13

*Question:* If there is no self, who is this one who is doing all these things?

*Rinpoche:* The idea of an agent, that someone is doing all this, is a result of some basic idea of a self. If we do not have the basic idea of a self, then we cannot have an idea of anyone doing anything. The basic idea of a self comes from attributing reality to something or other. We can see its absurdity by analysis.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 25*

## November 14

The teachings on non-self are a discussion on the level of the ultimate truth. The purpose of approaching this is to develop the appropriate meditation on the fundamental nature of reality. It is meaningless to meditate on anything other than the ultimate nature of reality.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 27*

## November 15

In general, most religious and spiritual traditions believe in a self. It is a characteristic feature of buddhism that it does not believe in the validity of any notion of a self. This means that, in trying to isolate or discover this supposed self, we can never find any such thing. There is no such thing as the self. The purpose behind such an exercise is to demonstrate that all of our projections, all our defilements, come from an erroneous notion of a self to which we are continually grasping. If we can get to the stage of recognizing that this notion is a fallacy, we can cut off defilements at the root and purify our own mind. If we cannot do this, the defilements will be never ending.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 27-28*

## November 16

According to madhyamaka, it is necessary to understand the conventional truth of the function of appearance and the ultimate truth of the fundamental nature. If we try to reach an understanding of the functioning of conditions only, but not of emptiness, we will still cling to a false belief of inherent reality and will not attain liberation. On the other hand, if we cling to some kind of ultimate reality of emptiness as being real and ignore the conventional truth of appearance and experience, we will fall into the nihilistic view that everything is totally meaningless and that no virtuous actions and no nonvirtuous actions exist.

*From The Open Door to Emptiness, p. 53*

## November 17

We encounter various situations in life and make all kinds of judgments, good and bad. We develop attachment toward the things we like and aversion for those that we dislike, and so forth. The arising of these afflictions creates the multitude of suffering in our lives. We cannot get rid of suffering by seeking protection in the gods or destroy them by building weapons. The only way out of suffering is to turn inward and clearly understand the actual nature of our mind.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 72*

## November 18

What is the mahayana's method of eliminating afflictions? The mahayana holds that the root cause of afflictions is the grasping at external objects as inherently existent. The reality is that external objects do not inherently exist; their nature is emptiness. As a result, there is no truly existing external object to be grasped at. Eliminating afflictions through realizing the emptiness of external objects is the way of the mahayana bodhisattva.

*From Transforming the Mind:  
The Four Dharmas of Gampopa, p. 78*

## November 19

To develop a genuine realization, it is necessary to first develop stable meditation or samadhi. To do this we have to train in the three aspects of supreme knowledge called the three prajnas. Without doing this it is impossible to give birth to genuine realization. The term prajna literally, means 'supreme' or 'full understanding.' These three prajnas are hearing, conceptualizing, and meditating.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 25*



## November 20

I believe the problem of pride is probably the same in the west as in the east. So, it's something that one has to eliminate. The way of eliminating the pride is to understand selflessness, the absence of self. If one can realize that, then pride will naturally be eliminated. Also being aware of and understanding one's own faults and shortcomings will eliminate pride.

*From Rechungpa: A Biography of Milarepa's Disciple, p. 97*

## November 21

When we meditate on the nature of the mind, we need to have both right view and right conduct. It is very important that we achieve a proper understanding of the view and that we realize the mind essence. At the same time, our conduct should be proper; it should not be mixed with misdeeds, obscurations, and nonvirtue. When our view and conduct are united, our good view enhances our conduct, and our conduct enhances the view. When we are meditating, we need to follow this unified path, but if we are not able to differentiate mind from awareness, we will turn away from the path.

From *Vivid Awareness*, pp. 161–162

## November 22

Awareness is when our mind is undistracted — when we recognize the nature of our mind as it is and realize its essence. Awareness is a very clear and stable state during meditation in which we experience radiant, blissful emptiness.

From *Vivid Awareness*, pp. 162–163

## November 23

Please remember that together with a high view, it is the responsibility of each practitioner to maintain excellent, careful conduct. Be very careful about your behaviour. Please don't profess to maintain a very high view and at the same time only pretend to have a 'high' way of behaving. You may certainly keep a high view, but be very careful about how you conduct yourselves.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 3*

## November 24

When we don't understand the correct view, we are deluded. The correct view here means knowing the actual, true nature of empty, cognizant mind. When we are deluded or confused, we give rise to all kinds of erroneous conceptions about reality.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 70*

## November 25

What is a correct view?

It is a view in harmony with the real meaning of the true nature or natural state. When the view is correct, the training and behavior will also be in harmony with the natural state. Maintaining this view will definitely result in enlightenment.

From *Naropa's Wisdom*, p. 74

## November 26

The crucial point that everything depends upon is whether or not one's view is perfect and complete. No matter how much effort one might make by training in an incorrect view, these false assumptions will never be in harmony with reality. The outcome of one's training cannot be anything other than what has been practiced. In other words, if the view is not truly and fully in accordance with the natural state of all things, the result of its practice will also be imperfect.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 76*

## November 27

The understanding that all things are empty is entirely correct. However, we might misconstrue the meaning of emptiness to mean nothingness, a complete voidness. This misunderstanding fixates on the thought that all things are a blank, nothing whatsoever, which is not correct. To remedy this, the Buddha taught that not only is the identity of all things utterly empty, it is emptiness itself. This emptiness, by nature, has the capacity to know, to experience, to cognize. That is the wakeful wisdom quality that is indivisible from emptiness itself. This is the intent of the third and final turning of the wheel of dharma.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 89*



## November 28

If phenomena had an essence or solid nature, they would remain the same forever. However, because phenomena arise in dependence on other phenomena, they are empty of an essence, and so are impermanent and changeable. This means that we can change any situation.

From *The Essentials of Mahamudra*, p. 34

## November 29

If we don't combine meditation and post meditation, meditation will be one thing and work will be something else, and they will fight with each other. We will feel that we can't work when we meditate and we can't meditate when we work. But if we bring this practice of mindfulness and no distraction of mind into all of our actions, work and meditation will go together. In fact, we will find that meditation and post meditation begin to stimulate one another: the more we practice meditation in our actions, the easier our meditation on the cushion will be.

*From Essentials of Mahamudra, p. 9*

## November 30

The purpose of understanding emptiness is to eliminate attachment. We have great attachment to external things and to our internal mind, and through that attachment we develop defilements and suffering and hardship. Therefore, it is important to be able to eliminate that attachment. The understanding that things have no true reality will eliminate this attachment, and this brings a state of peace.

From: *On Buddha Essence:  
A Commentary on Rangjung Dorje's Treatise.* pp. 42-43

# December

MAHAMUDRA



## December 1

The mahamudra teachings are not entirely sutrayana teachings nor entirely tantrayana teachings. Whatever is very profound and meaningful in the sutrayana has been taken out and put into mahamudra, and whatever is very profound and meaningful in the tantrayana has been taken out and put into mahamudra. Therefore, in essence, the mahamudra is not exactly like the sutrayana teachings and not exactly like the tantrayana teachings, but it is the essence of the entire dharma and is an integration of both.

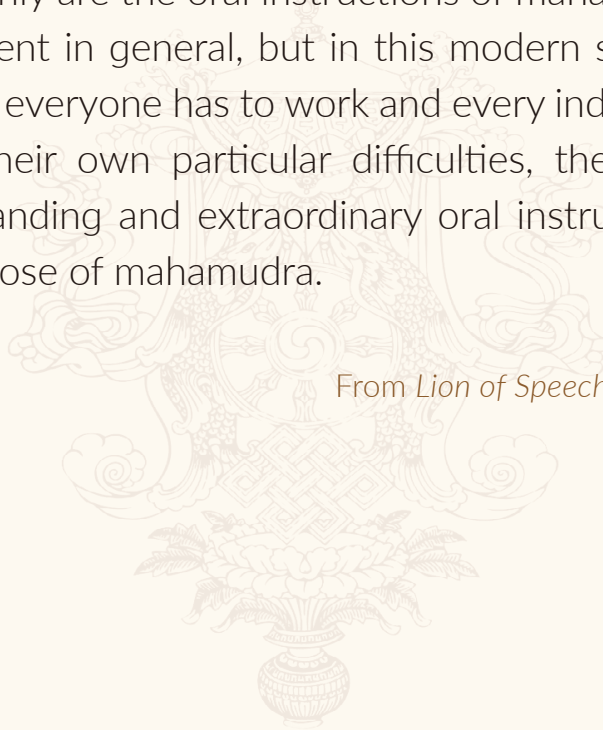


From *The Tibetan Vinaya:  
A Guide to Buddhist Conduct*, p. 97

## December 2

Not only are the oral instructions of mahamudra excellent in general, but in this modern society when everyone has to work and every individual has their own particular difficulties, the most outstanding and extraordinary oral instructions are those of mahamudra.

From *Lion of Speech*, p. 233



## December 3

The way to practice mahamudra is to receive precise instructions on this practice and then simply to practice it, usually in the mornings and evenings, before and after work, and on holidays and so forth. Then, while working and taking care of other responsibilities, do the post-meditation practice of mahamudra, which is to maintain mindfulness and alertness at all times.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 31

## December 4

In Shravasti, Shakyamuni taught the third turning of the wheel of dharma, in which he revealed that emptiness is not merely empty, but gives rise to all phenomena and is continually expressive. This third turning included teachings on buddha nature (Skt. *tathagatagarbha*), the basic teaching on which the philosophy of the chitta-matra or the mind only school, was founded.

From *The Open Door to Emptiness*, p. 10-11

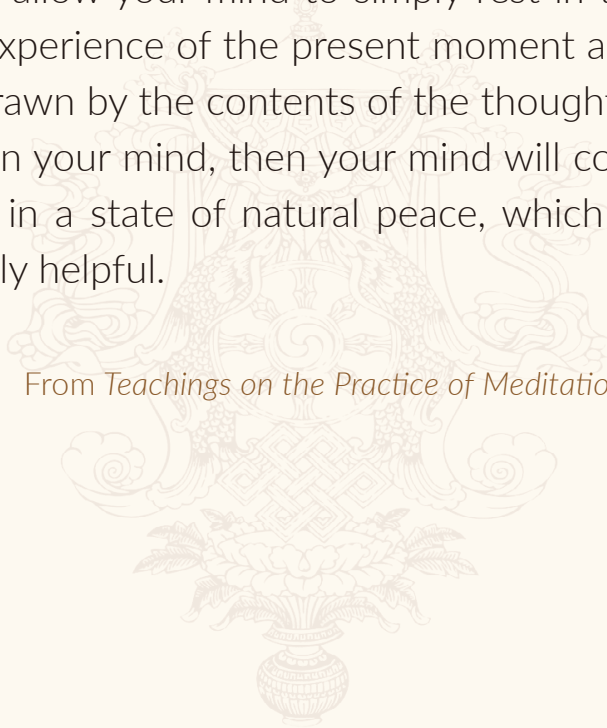




## December 5

If you allow your mind to simply rest in the direct experience of the present moment and are not drawn by the contents of the thoughts that arise in your mind, then your mind will come to abide in a state of natural peace, which is extremely helpful.

*From Teachings on the Practice of Meditation, p. 30*



## December 6

Transmission or pointing out is simply when a teacher knows exactly what to do, exactly what instructions to give, and the environment of the instructions and so on: exactly what to do to cause a particular student to recognize their mind's nature. So, the essence of transmission is appropriateness.

From *Teachings on the Practice of Meditation*, p. 60

## December 7

Even though we might have the excellent view of mahamudra meditation, we cannot ignore our daily behaviour. The highly accomplished practitioners of the past have said again and again that even though our view may be as vast and profound as all of space, nevertheless our activity, our behaviour, should be very peaceful, very well tamed, and decent. We should behave well and therefore the lineage prayer closes with a prayer expressing our wish to never be separated from the genuine guru.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 97

## December 8

When we meditate, we are not trying to develop a new mind that we didn't have before or to create a new mind with all new qualities. The purpose of meditation is not to change our old mind into a new one, or even to eliminate whatever we had before, but it is to leave mind just as it was initially. So, this 'naturalness' is the same as the innate intelligence that is within the mind. The mahamudra instructions teach us to recognize this natural state of the mind.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 19*

## December 9

What is most important in the mahamudra instructions is that they are mind instructions: they tell us how to look at our mind, see what it is like, and see where it is. The instructions on dzogchen also give mind instructions, telling us how to look at the mind and see what it is like. In both the mahamudra and dzogchen traditions, what is most important is meditating on the mind, and both explain the reasons why we should meditate on the mind and the benefits of doing so.



From *Vivid Awareness*, p. 93

## December 10

Some people may argue that it is possible for us to figure out the ultimate truth for ourselves. We can read books and ponder the meaning and thus we can gain an intellectual understanding of how to practice. That may very well be true. But the profound nature of emptiness, the true natural state, is seldom the object of our thoughts, and indeed it's not within the reach of ordinary thinking. For this reason, it is extremely important to receive proper guidance and pith instructions in mahamudra and dzogchen from a living lineage master.



*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 7*

## December 11

When beginning dharma practice, some people experience tremendous interest and devotion, to such an extent that it becomes difficult for them to continue their normal work and life. Wanting to engage in intensive practice, they may neglect their careers, and while pursuing their careers, they may neglect their practice. This can become a very frustrating situation! A teaching like mahamudra, however, is something that we can practice while we are working. The solution for the apparent dilemma is simple: “Work some, practice some.” When doing this, there will be no real contradiction between daily life and dharma practice.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 8*

## December 12

Mahamudra is often presented in four steps. The first step is showing that the perceived — what we experience — is mind. The second step is the realization that mind is empty. The third step is understanding that this emptiness is spontaneously present, and the fourth step is knowing that this spontaneous presence is self-liberated. This is called the “fourfold pointing out instruction.”

From *Naropa's Wisdom*, pp. 37–38



## December 13

*The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer*, which is known in Tibetan as *Dorje Chang Thungma*, is perhaps the most important Karma Kagyu lineage prayer. It is chanted in the sanghas of all the great monasteries and monastic seats of the Karma Kagyu tradition. It is also used by practically all Karma Kagyu practitioners in their individual practice. The reason this particular liturgy is so prominent is that it holds great blessings and has a very profound meaning.



From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 7

## December 14

We find statements by the Buddha that say that to obtain buddhahood, we must cultivate and progress along the path of buddhism for a period of innumerable aeons. We also find statements by the Buddha that say we can attain buddhahood in one lifetime. We may wonder whether the Buddha was contradicting himself. In fact, he was not. When the Buddha said that it required a period of innumerable aeons to attain buddhahood, he was describing the cultivation of a path that was based upon the very gradual accumulation of merit and wisdom. But if we possess the extraordinary instructions of the great seal (Skt. *mahamudra*) or the great perfection (Tib. *dzogchen*) and we diligently practice these instructions, we can attain buddhahood in this very lifetime.

From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, pp. 10–11

## December 15

The overall presentation of this (*Dorje Chang Thungma*) lineage supplication covers three topics. The first is the history of the lineage, the second is how practice dharma, and the third is how we, through practicing the dharma, can traverse the stages of the path.

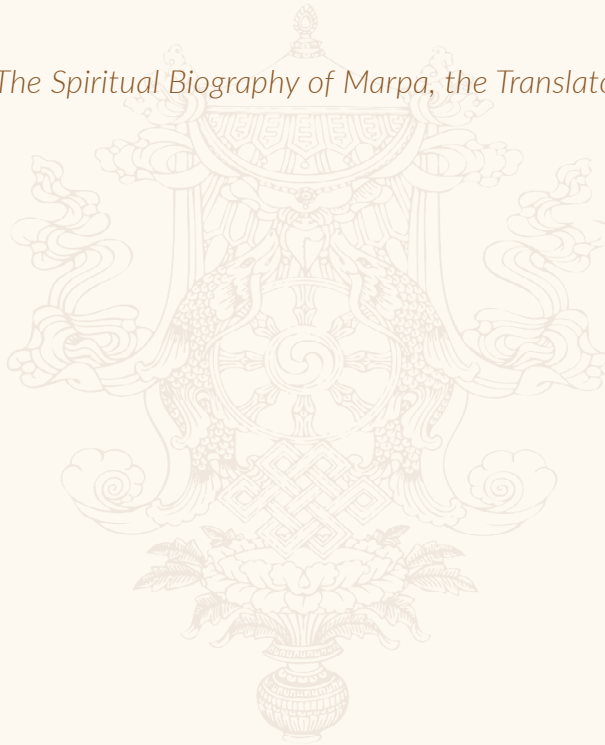
From *The Mahamudra Lineage Prayer:  
A Guide to Practice*, p. 12

## December 16

It is important to have some understanding of exactly who Saraha is in the context of the mahamudra lineage. The extraordinary lineage of mahamudra has both a short and a long lineage. The short lineage is the passing of the mahamudra teachings from Vajradhara directly to Tilopa and then from Tilopa on to Naropa to Marpa to Milarepa to Gampopa and so on to present day. The long lineage is the transmitting of the mahamudra teachings from Vajradhara to the bodhisattva Ratnamati, who transmitted them to Saraha, who transmitted them to Nagarjuna, to Shavari, to Maitripa who then transmitted them on to Marpa. So, Saraha is extremely important for the mahamudra lineage. Of course, it was impossible for Marpa to have met Saraha physically because he had lived much earlier

(9th century C.E.). This encounter was not a dream which we might have, but Mara was able to come face-to-face with the timeless wisdom body of Saraha.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 41*



## December 17

It seems that our negative emotions are so deeply ingrained in our mind, that it seems almost hopeless. But with the very special instructions that have been transmitted from Marpa and through his lineage, it is actually possible to eliminate our negative emotions.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa,  
the Translator, pp. 81–82*

## December 18

When a view is correct, the practice with that view will be correct as well. And our conduct that acts upon that view will also be correct. When we train in the correct view of mahamudra, the disturbing emotions and other flaws present within our stream of being will gradually subside. In addition, the good qualities that are present—the intrinsic qualities of original wakefulness like loving-kindness and compassion—will spontaneously increase. All this is possible only when the training is correct, and, in turn, correct training is possible only when the view is correct.



From *Naropa's Wisdom*, p. 74

## December 19

It is, of course, very beneficial to be interested in mahamudra. It is an extremely great blessing to be able to receive the instructions and to practice them. There are indeed extraordinary results and signs on the path, but when we experience small indications of progress, it doesn't mean that we should stop there and feel satisfied with ourselves. On the contrary, we should understand that they are just signs. We should remind ourselves: "The instructions are profound and effective, but I will persevere with fortitude until reaching complete and true enlightenment. Not only will I meditate in mahamudra, but I will also develop devotion and compassion. The time has not arrived to stop the practice. I shouldn't feel proud."

*From Naropa's Wisdom, pp. 77–78*



## December 20

The view of mahamudra is a high one, and there is always the danger that we may neglect the importance of appropriate behaviour and act in a crude way. While training in a high view, please conduct yourself in accordance with the dharma, gathering the accumulations and purifying the obscurations.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 79*

## December 21

We should not think that by practicing mahamudra there is a transformation taking place, that through meditation our nature will somehow become something other than what it already is. Our basic state is and always was the unity of emptiness and luminous clarity. Mahamudra practice is simply a matter of recognizing how it is. By growing accustomed to this through practicing, it becomes an actuality. That is what is meant by realization. Thus, the mahamudra of meditation does not involve correcting, contriving, or transforming anything.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 108*

## December 22

The most important aspect about mahamudra teachings is not simply to have received them. The real importance lies in applying them — in practicing and training in them. When applied, these teachings will be of immense benefit not only for yourselves but also for all others. When you have practiced further and become stable in the practice of mahamudra, you can undertake the task of helping others to also understand.

*From Naropa's Wisdom, p. 166*

## December 23

The middle way can be divided into two views or schools: the rangtong view and the shentong view. The rangtong view makes a clear distinction between the sutra and tantra traditions. In the rangtong tradition one develops an understanding of emptiness by a careful analysis of phenomena. In the shentong tradition a definite understanding of the nature of the mind is gained through understanding buddha nature.

*From On Buddha Essence:  
A Commentary on Rangjung Dorje's Treatise, pp. 16–17*

## December 24

The nature of the mind is the basis of everything, as is taught in the songs of the great masters, such as Saraha, Naropa, and Tilopa, so we need to see this nature of the mind. Whether we are talking about the appearances of samsara or strong afflictions, we can see that there is no change or fluctuation in the nature of mind itself. If we try to meditate on this, we can. And we can see that the nature of everything is essentially unchanging.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 74*

## December 25

When we recognize the nature of mind through a pointing-out instruction, in terms of view, meditation, and conduct, this is the view. It is a view that comes not from inference and reasoning but from direct perception. This is excellent, but it is not complete. It is just a view and it needs to be nurtured in meditation. Fostering this view in our meditation is what is meant by using the finest treasure, the mind's own nature. We should meditate on this.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 75*

## December 26

The nature of the mind is naturally present, and the obscurations and afflictions are just adventitious. When we use an antidote against the afflictions, sometimes we will be able to suppress the afflictions, but sometimes we won't. Even though it's not possible this time, if we gradually keep trying, eventually we accustom ourselves to doing it. Since the afflictions are not present in the real nature, we can suppress and decrease them. Since they are not established as anything, we can eliminate them. They will naturally disappear through practice.

*From Advice from a Yogi, p. 105*

## December 27

In the quintessential instructions on mahamudra, we talk about the mind either being too tight or too loose, too focused or too relaxed. The advice given is that if the mind is not luminous, clear, and vivid, we need to tighten or concentrate it more. And if it is too bright, vivid, luminous, and clear, we need to relax it somewhat.

From *The Essentials of Mahamudra*, p. 109



## December 28

When we speak about luminous clarity, we are not really talking about light or rays of light. We are not really talking about anything terribly profound. It just means the ability to know and understand that whatever there is can appear and can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and understood. This quality of luminous clarity refers to the ability for things to appear and to be known. It's not something that is a long way off. If you start looking for this knower, this luminous and clear entity, you don't find anything. But, it's not a long way off. It's very close. It's directly right there. It can be meditated on in that way.

*From Maitreya's Distinguishing Dharma  
from Dharmata, p. 130*

## December 29

Sometimes the factor of clarity becomes excessive, sparking many different discursive thoughts, and we can't get back to shamatha. At this point it is necessary to relax. As Saraha said: "When the mind is very active in discursive thought and we try to bind it, it will just scatter to the ten directions." If we continue to try and tighten it, it just explodes. At that point, Saraha said, we need to relax by letting our mind proceed as a camel does, in a very steady and relaxed way.

From *The Essentials of Mahamudra*, p. 110

## December 30

It's quite easy to think that the resting mind and the moving mind have completely different natures, and that when the mind is moving, the stillness has been lost. Some students think that they must clear away the movement before the mind can be at rest. They believe that there is a contradiction between the mind at rest and the mind in motion. In fact, both the resting mind and the moving mind are the union of emptiness and luminosity. We perceive differences due to our confusion. Stillness does not obstruct motion and motion does not obstruct stillness. They are simply one inseparable entity.

From *Essentials of Mahamudra:  
Looking Directly at the Mind*, p. 141

## December 31

Marpa had already received the mahamudra instructions from Naropa So, why he wanted to receive them a second time from Maitripa? He did this because Naropa and Maitripa represented two different streams of transmission of the mahamudra teachings. Naropa had what is called the 'short transmission' because he received these teachings directly from Tilopa who received them directly from Vajradhara. Maitripa had what were called the 'long transmission' because he received these teachings from Nagarjuna who received them from the mahasiddha Saraha. So Marpa received these two streams of transmission: the short or near one and the longer one.

*From The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the Translator, p. 17*

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May all your wishes come true, and may you attain buddhahood soon to help all beings.

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