

## APPENDIX F

### HOW TO MEDITATE ON THE STAGES OF THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT:

A Teaching with Special Emphasis on  
the Methods of an Experiential Instruction,  
Expressed Openly and in Plain Words  
as if Pointing with a Finger to  
Each Element of Practice

*In response to a written request from Dragom Choktrul Rinpoche of the Shodo Monastery in Kham, the incomparably beneficent, glorious and kind-hearted one, the Supreme Savior Dorjechang Pabongkapa Dechen Nyingpo, composed the following work unexpectedly and at a time when he was extremely busy and faced with many responsibilities.*

#### PART ONE: INSTRUCTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ANALYTIC MEDITATION AND ON THE KEY ELEMENTS OF HOW TO PRACTICE IT

I pray that my mind and those of all lineage disciples  
Become steeped in dharma through the power and blessings  
Of the father, Lama Losang Tubwang Dorjechang,  
And those of his lineage of spiritual sons.

Having found a form that is valuable and hard to find,  
And having perceived the eight worldly dharmas<sup>1</sup>  
as a diversion for fools,  
Those friends who strive single-mindedly in their pursuit  
Of an ultimate goal are marvelous indeed!

When we are proud of our wide learning, our efforts at teaching  
and studying,  
And we are even sure that we could explain a hundred scriptures,  
Though our minds have not improved the least bit spiritually,  
It is because we lack the analytic meditation that combines  
understanding with experience.

<sup>1</sup>For a description, see Day Ten, pp. 105–106.

A mere semblance of listening, study, and understanding can generate  
 Both strong faith and listening wisdom<sup>2</sup> about the topics  
 of leisure and fortune,  
 Impermanence, aversion,<sup>3</sup> and so on; but they have not arisen  
 through analytic meditation.  
 Such wisdom is nothing more than right judgment,<sup>4</sup> and so eventually  
 it fades away.

You run a risk by failing to generate soon after this wisdom  
 The genuine experience that comes from reflection.  
 Many persons become insensitive to dharma<sup>5</sup> when they allow  
 The former awareness to fade away before they can generate the  
 latter.<sup>6</sup>

Once you are overcome by insensitivity to dharma, your mindstream  
 Becomes ruined and you are incapable of being tamed,  
 Even by the Lamrim or the blessed words of your guru.  
 So apply yourself to the profound method for avoiding insensitivity  
 to dharma.

And that's achieved through the blessings of your guru's speech  
 Together with your own efforts to listen to dharma properly;  
 But it's vital as well that any understanding gained through  
 hearing dharma  
 Be followed soon after with development of the understanding  
 gained through reflection.

<sup>2</sup>This is a reference to the first of three levels of wisdom (S: *śrutamayīprajñā*, T: *thos byung gi shes rab*). The other two are wisdom derived from reflection and wisdom derived from meditation. Wisdom derived from listening only represents correct judgment; therefore, it is not knowledge (S: *pramāṇam*, T: *tsad ma*) in the epistemological sense. Moreover, as the text notes later on in this section, the main purpose of analytic meditation is precisely to generate the second type of wisdom, that which is born of reflection, because this does represent knowledge—more specifically, inferential knowledge (S: *anumānam*, T: *rjes su dpag pa*).

<sup>3</sup>That is, aversion for the defects of samsaric existence.

<sup>4</sup>S: *manaḥparīkṣā*, T: *yiḍ dpyod*. Traditional Buddhist epistemology defines seven types of cognitive awareness. Only two of these—inference and direct perception—have the capacity to represent knowledge. The other five, including right judgment, do not.

<sup>5</sup>T: *chos dred*. This is a condition which occurs when a person gains some learning of the dharma but fails to put it into practice. As a result, his mind becomes hardened to the dharma and he fails to achieve any spiritual self-discipline. See also Part One, Day Three, pp. 97–98.

<sup>6</sup>The “former awareness” is the wisdom which derives from listening; the “latter” is the wisdom which derives from reflection.

How, then, do you generate the understanding that comes from reflection?

Analytic meditation is the exercise of eliciting experiential realizations  
By contemplating a particular meditation topic from every standpoint  
And in every way, using scriptural citations and sharp reasoning.

For instance, if you set forth as the object to be established that your  
guru is a Buddha,  
Advance again and again those cogent arguments that will prove  
he is a Buddha;  
For this is the means of eliciting the conviction that he is a Buddha.  
Practicing this strenuously and repeatedly is what we refer to as  
analytic meditation.

Indeed, the primary aim for all the meditation topics—such as leisure  
and fortune,  
Impermanence, renunciation, generating enlightenment mind,  
and correct view—  
Is to elicit sure understandings of them by engaging in sharp analytic  
meditation.

Even though this analysis only brings you the first elements  
Of the experiential awareness that derives from reflection,  
You will never be overcome by insensitivity to dharma  
And you will have firmly planted the roots of your spiritual experience.  
So train yourself skillfully in the ways of analytic meditation.

Moreover, analytic meditation is a unique quality of our system.  
It is not recognized even partially in any tradition that stands  
Outside the range of our Jamgön Lama's<sup>7</sup> enlightened speech.

The need for analytic meditation, how to practice it, and so on,  
Are taught in the *Great Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*.  
By careful study and reflection on these points you'll realize  
That they represent an extraordinary quality of our teaching system.

<sup>7</sup>Je Tsongkapa.

To merely review a series of topics in your mind is reflective  
meditation;<sup>8</sup>

This is not what we call cultivating analytic meditation.  
Neither is it analytic meditation to memorize the words of a teaching  
And then rehearse their meaning in your mind.

To memorize the essence of every one of the path's stages, as well as  
their order, number, and so on,  
And then to recall each essence, order, and number individually  
Is also just reflective meditation, not analytic meditation.

Therefore, as I said earlier, analytic meditation consists of  
Setting forth a single topic as the object to be established,  
And then repeatedly analyzing it with scripture and profound reasoning  
As the means of generating a sure understanding.

For instance, when we reflect again and again on the reasons  
Why we think that a particular object is attractive,  
We develop strong desire. This is "analytic meditation" toward  
An object of attachment, and it increases our active desire.

Likewise, when we recall again and again how a terrible enemy  
Has harmed us, our hatred greatly increases.  
This represents analysis toward an object of hatred,  
And it ignites our "experiential awareness" of hatred.

Let's shift now to the spiritual domain, where the aim is to increase  
An experiential awareness of different virtuous minds by repeatedly  
contemplating  
The various reasons that will elicit them, as I just described with desire  
and hatred.

What you must do here is contemplate over and over again  
The most penetrating of scriptural citations and arguments,  
And in particular those arguments which are the most effective  
For eliciting a spiritual transformation within your mind.

<sup>8</sup>T: *shar sgom* or sometimes *bshar sgom*. While reflective meditation represents a valid form of practice, it is important to distinguish it from analytic meditation. (For a brief description of reflective meditation see Part One, Day Six, note 92.) The point being made here is that only analytic meditation represents the true method for generating uncontrived experiential realizations.

If repeated contemplation of just a single argument  
 Seems to pierce your mind with an ever-growing sharpness  
 Like you would feel on hearing that your mother has died,  
 This is a sign that you are succeeding; so continue striving.

But if repeated contemplation of a single argument grows stale  
 And your mind remains unmoved, this means your practice  
 is not succeeding.  
 It's also a forewarning of becoming insensitive to dharma.  
 So combine supplications to your guru with fervent acts  
 that accumulate merit  
 And remove obstacles.<sup>9</sup> Then try again to cultivate the meditation  
 topics effectively.

Some persons at this point<sup>10</sup> develop sudden and powerful feelings  
 of faith,  
 Impermanence, renunciation, and so on, even without having practiced  
 meditation.  
 They become joyously enthusiastic, thinking these are true spiritual  
 realizations.  
 But soon after, when the intensity of such feelings completely  
 disappears,  
 We see that they become saddened at the loss of these sentiments.  
 However, these are nothing but limited sensations that arise  
 on the basis  
 Of transitory perceptions; they aren't true spiritual realizations.  
 There is no need whatsoever for you to become proud  
 When such feelings arise or become dejected when they fade.  
 Still, because they are a sign that you have received blessings  
 From your guru and tutelary deity, you should strive  
 to make them firm.

True realizations are the experiential awarenesses of faith,  
 impermanence, and so on,  
 Which come forth in succession after meditating continuously  
 with wisdom's discerning power.

<sup>9</sup>Examples of acts that accumulate merit are making offerings, rejoicing at one's own virtue and that of others, and so forth. Two practices that remove obstacles are confession and making prostrations. See also Part One, Days Five and Six.

<sup>10</sup>That is, after having listened to Lamrim teachings and studied related texts, but without having practiced analytic meditation.

These represent inferential knowledge and, unlike the feelings mentioned earlier, they never fade away.

Moreover, you must learn the skillful technique for eliciting realizations.

Begin by meditating on all the points contained in the individual topics, From serving a spiritual teacher to generating enlightenment mind.

Do so just long enough to become proficient in each of them.

Then meditate again on serving a spiritual teacher up through generating enlightenment mind,

In order to elicit contrived experiential realizations.

Then do the same again, in order to elicit uncontrived experiential realizations.

When you have become familiar with these topics to the point of feeling sure

That you know how to meditate on them and that you are able To generate the realizations, we call this becoming proficient.

A spiritual awareness that arises after continuous reflection

On many scriptural citations and reasonings, but which fails to arise

Without such reflection, is called a contrived experiential realization.

An uncontrived experiential realization is one which arises distinctly,

As soon as you bring a subject to mind and irrespective of

Any prolonged reflection, like the desire for sense objects

That arises in your mind without any need of prolonged contemplation.

When understanding and experience combine thus in your mind,

This marks the first dawning of spiritual realization.

Moreover, for some meditation topics the realizations arise easily;

They can be generated even after practicing for only seven days or so.

For other topics, the realizations arise after several days or weeks.

For still others, they are difficult to generate even after a year or more.

For instance, it's easy to realize the certainty of death;

But the uncertainty of the time of death is very hard to realize.

It's extremely easy to realize how nothing except dharma can help

At the time of death. Such differences hold true for the other topics as well.

Therefore, don't continue meditating obstinately on those topics  
 For which realizations come easily; instead, move on to the next point.  
 Likewise, don't think that the topics which are difficult to realize  
 Are taking too long. No matter how long they take, even months  
 or years,  
 Continue meditating until you generate the appropriate realizations.

Finally, you need only practice reflective meditation toward  
 Those earlier topics which you have already mastered  
 And those later ones for which you have yet to gain realizations.  
 So focus single-mindedly as you analyze and contemplate the one topic  
 you are currently practicing.

PART TWO: INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO DEVELOP THE SPIRITUAL REALIZATIONS  
 ASSOCIATED WITH PROPERLY SERVING A SPIRITUAL TEACHER

Now that I've instructed you on how to carry out properly  
 The key elements involved in practicing analytic meditation,  
 What is the first topic to which you should apply analytic meditation  
 And how should you apply analytic meditation to it?

Analytic meditation need not be applied to the three introductory  
 topics,<sup>11</sup>  
 The preliminary practices,<sup>12</sup> and so on. Therefore, the practice  
 Of analytic meditation should begin with the topic of how to serve  
 a spiritual teacher.

If you contemplate skillfully for about seven days the benefits  
 Of serving a teacher and for about seven days also the faults  
 Of failing to serve a teacher, you will produce a mental  
 transformation.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>These are the first three divisions of the Lamrim teaching: (1) the greatness of the originator of the dharma teaching, (2) the greatness of the dharma teaching itself, and (3) the correct method of listening to, and teaching, the dharma. See Part One, Day One through Day Three.

<sup>12</sup>The six preliminary practices are discussed in Part One, Day Four through Day Six.

<sup>13</sup>T: *yid 'gyur skye ba*. This phrase is equivalent in meaning to "eliciting an experiential realization" (T: *myong ba thon pa*).

The next topic is the root practice of cultivating faith,  
 Which is extremely important but also difficult to realize.  
 Yet no matter how many months or years it takes to complete,  
 Don't think that it's taking too long. Practice it one-pointedly  
 Until you succeed in eliciting a mental transformation.

Moreover, if you contemplate too many points during a single period,  
 Your practice will become reflective meditation, not analytic  
 meditation.

Therefore, during each period contemplate just one topic.  
 For instance, make the topic "Vajradhara affirmed that our guru  
 is a Buddha"—

The first of the four in this section<sup>14</sup>—the only one you wish to verify.  
 Then, with scripture and sharp reasonings as proof, apply yourself  
 and contemplate  
 This very topic for the entire period until you generate a sure  
 understanding.

Just as on the first day, cultivate this topic the next day and the next  
 day after that.

Cultivate it for a month and for a second month as well.  
 Continue practicing this way until you elicit the true experiential  
 awareness.

When the experiential awareness emerges, switch to the next topic.

After you have realized a topic, contemplate it with reflective  
 meditation alone.

However, don't move on to a later topic before you have gained  
 realizations of those which precede it;

The later topics cannot be realized before the earlier ones.

Therefore, strive vigorously to elicit a realization of the initial topic.<sup>15</sup>

After eliciting an experiential realization of this topic,  
 Undertake to practice in a similar way the second one—  
 That a guru is the agent for all the Buddhas' activities.

<sup>14</sup>The section of the outline entitled "How to regard our guru as a Buddha." See Appendix D, p. 281.

<sup>15</sup>In this context, the initial topic is the one entitled "Vajradhara affirmed that our guru is a Buddha."



After gaining a realization of that topic, go to the next one—  
That even nowadays all Buddhas act on behalf of sentient beings.  
Meditate by applying the intense analysis of scripture, reasoning, and  
your guru's instruction.

Just as you cultivate this topic the first day, continue doing so  
The next day and the one after that—for days, months, or even years  
Until you succeed in eliciting the proper experiential realization.

You must bring forth the realization which perceives that your guru  
Is truly a Buddha. And since this very topic is much more crucial  
Than all the others, devote yourself to it with great effort.

After gaining this realization, then go to the next topic,  
The one that is called "Our perceptions are unreliable."  
Cultivate it by intensely applying the technique of analytic meditation.

When you have practiced this way and truly perceive  
That your guru embodies the actual nature of all the Buddhas,  
And when all the Buddhas and your guru appear to merge as one,  
You have generated the realization that relates to serving  
a spiritual teacher.

Once you have elicited realizations of the four points that comprise  
"The root practice of cultivating faith," then also generate successive  
realizations  
Of the four that comprise "recalling the spiritual teacher's kindness."  
You should briefly contemplate as well the topic of pleasing your guru  
through action.

PART THREE: INSTRUCTION ON AN EXTRAORDINARY MEDITATION TECHNIQUE  
THAT WILL BRING YOU GREAT PROGRESS

After properly gaining, in the manner described, the spiritual  
realizations  
That relate to generating faith and respect toward your spiritual teacher,  
You should set out to elicit in succession the realizations for the topics  
Ranging from leisure and fortune to generating precious enlightenment  
mind.

However, the realizations that relate to serving a spiritual teacher,  
 In which you cultivate a faith which perceives your guru as a Buddha,  
 Are difficult to generate without practicing for months or even years.  
 Therefore, carry out this extraordinary meditation instruction,  
 So that you can make progress quickly in gaining experiential  
 realizations.

Devote one period of each day to the subject of serving  
 a spiritual teacher.  
 Meditate on the topics in the manner that was described above.  
 Devote one period to eliciting realizations of those topics  
 beginning with  
 Leisure and fortune, by analyzing them according to  
 the established order.

First, this will further your realizations about serving a teacher.  
 Second, through gradually improving your understanding of the topics  
 That relate to persons of lesser and moderate capacity—  
 Namely, leisure and fortune, impermanence, suffering, and so on—  
 These lesser and moderate realizations will reach an advanced level  
 By the time you complete the subject of serving a spiritual teacher.

And if you also pursue the first stages of analyzing the correct view,<sup>16</sup>  
 You will make swift progress, simultaneously developing and  
 completing  
 Experiential realizations of the three principal elements of the path.<sup>17</sup>  
 For instance, if you plant walnut, peach, and grape seeds together,  
 Their trunks and branches and flowers will develop simultaneously  
 And you can enjoy the fruit of all three at the same time.

Therefore, divide each day's meditation periods into three parts.  
 During one part, meditate only on serving your spiritual teacher;  
 During one part elicit successively the realizations for the topics  
 Ranging from leisure and fortune to precious enlightenment mind;  
 And during one part apply analytic meditation to the profound view.

<sup>16</sup>This topic should be pursued in a third period of each day. See next paragraph.

<sup>17</sup>T: *lam gyi gzo bo nam gsum*. Renunciation, enlightenment mind, and the correct view.  
 See listing in Bibliography for a work of the same title by (rJe) Tzong kha pa.

PART FOUR: INSTRUCTION ON DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL REALIZATIONS  
THAT RELATE TO LEISURE AND FORTUNE

So when you divide your meditation into these three periods,  
The way to contemplate serving a spiritual teacher is as I explained  
before.  
And the way to gain the realizations starting with leisure and fortune  
Is first to identify what the essence of leisure and fortune is.

Reflect on what it would be like if you had been born into any of  
the inopportune conditions,<sup>18</sup>  
And how fortunate you are not to have been born there in this life.  
Don't consider the qualities of leisure and fortune in a shallow or  
detached manner;  
Reflect again and again, applying sharp analytic meditation  
So that you will imbue yourself with a deep awareness  
of how you currently possess them all.  
When you are overcome with joy, like a pauper who has found  
a treasure,  
Then you have generated the realization of identifying leisure  
and fortune.

Next switch to the topic of viewing leisure and fortune as having  
great value,  
And repeatedly scrutinize it with the subtle analysis of scripture  
and reasoning.  
You will have realized the great value of leisure and fortune  
When you become distressed if even an instant of time is vainly spent.

Then go on to the next meditation topic, the difficulty of finding  
Leisure and fortune, and reflect on it with powerful analytic meditation.  
When you become as upset about being idle for even an instant  
As another person would if he spilled a bag of gold dust into a river,  
Then you have realized the difficulty of finding leisure and fortune.

<sup>18</sup>The eight inopportune conditions are described in Day Nine, pp. 73–76.

PART FIVE: DEVELOPING THE SPIRITUAL REALIZATIONS THAT RELATE TO IMPERMANENCE

Now shift to the meditation topics that relate to impermanence.  
 You are sure to develop mental transformations by first meditating  
 For about a week on the six disadvantages of failing to recall death  
 And then for another week or so on the six advantages of  
 recalling death.

After that, practice the three reasons that death is certain.  
 The first reason is that the Lord of Death is certain to appear  
 And cannot be turned back by any means. With great determination,  
 Apply analytic meditation to this topic no matter how many days  
 or months it takes.

After achieving that experiential awareness, the next topic to verify  
 Is that your life span does not increase and is constantly growing  
 shorter.  
 Cultivate it by practicing analytic meditation strenuously.

After achieving that experiential awareness, apply analytic meditation  
 To the next topic—that there is little opportunity  
 To practice dharma even during the time you remain alive.

But the truly extraordinary and unequalled instruction for recalling  
 death  
 Is contained in the topic called “Meditating on the nature of death.”<sup>19</sup>  
 Through it, recollection of impermanence can be generated easily.  
 In the outline that gives the order in which to present the teachings,  
 This topic is placed after the set of nine points<sup>20</sup> for meditating on  
 death.  
 But a key instruction for how to put the teachings into practice is that  
 you should meditate on it here.<sup>21</sup>

So when you’ve used the three reasons to determine that death  
 is certain,  
 Consider what the various stages in the dying process will be like.

<sup>19</sup>See Day Ten, pp. 134–139.

<sup>20</sup>The nine reasons that are included in the three root categories.

<sup>21</sup>That is, after contemplating the three reasons associated with the certainty of death.

By meditating on this, you will feel a sense of overwhelming terror.  
 When you contemplate again and again the experiences that  
 will befall you,  
 Applying analytic meditation to the meanings contained in writings  
 Like the one that I composed urging recollection of impermanence,<sup>22</sup>  
 You will be so dismayed that you cannot stay on your meditation seat.

If after meditating in this way you feel great terror,  
 As though you were experiencing your actual death now,  
 And if your reflection on the stages of death is so vivid  
 That they seem real and cause your heart to jump suddenly in fear,  
 This is the measure that you have realized the certainty of death.

After that, practice analytic meditation with total concentration,  
 Applying it to the sole topic that your life span is uncertain—  
 The first reason<sup>23</sup> in the root category called “The uncertainty  
 of the time of death.”  
 There is no certainty that your death will not come this very moment.  
 You should contemplate this fact by applying analytic meditation  
 From every standpoint and in every way.

Here is a key instruction that is both secret and profound,  
 About how to recollect that the time of death is uncertain.  
 You see and hear directly about the uncertainty of other persons’ lives.  
 Death strikes by means of many causes, suddenly and unexpectedly.  
 Some persons die while they are walking.  
 Some die while they are eating, others while talking.  
 Some persons die while laughing, others while they are running.  
 Some who are strong and agile die performing athletic feats.

One moment they are persons; the next they are corpses.  
 One moment they are alive; the next they are gone.  
 As you contemplate again and again the nature of these occurrences,  
 Analyze yourself as well, using sharp reasonings such as these:

<sup>22</sup>This poem is called the *Spoon that Extracts Essential Meanings: An Instruction Urging Both Myself and Others to Recollect Impermanence* (T: *Rang gzhan yongs la mi rtag dran bskul snying gi thur ma*); see author’s *Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 454–458.

<sup>23</sup>Like the first root category, the second is also comprised of three reasons: (1) the life span of a person in the Jambudvīpa is uncertain, (2) the factors that contribute to death are many and those that sustain life are few, and (3) our bodies are extremely fragile.

“I have exactly the same nature as these persons.”  
 “How can I be sure that I won’t die this very moment?”  
 “How can I be sure that I won’t be a corpse this very night?”  
 “How can I be sure my funeral rites won’t be performed tonight?”  
 “How can I be sure I won’t be laid to rest in a cemetery tonight?”

You will generate the proper realization by recalling  
 That you can never be sure when Yama, the Lord of Death,  
 Will grip you in his jaws and then crush you with his fangs.  
 Recall how you are locked in the throes of battle with this arch enemy  
 And that you can’t be sure he won’t kill you right now.

After that, meditate on the next topic, how the factors that bring death  
 Are many while the factors that sustain life are few.  
 After gaining this experiential awareness, go on to the next reason  
 And apply analytic meditation intensely to the topic which addresses  
 How your body and life force are as fragile as a water bubble.

When you have forcefully applied these techniques for contemplating  
 The three reasons that relate to the uncertainty of the time of death,  
 You’ll think, “I can’t be sure I won’t die this very minute.”  
 As you lie down, you’ll wonder, “Will I wake up tomorrow morning?”  
 When you get up, you’ll wonder, “Will I go to bed tonight?”  
 While going somewhere, you’ll wonder, “Will I come home again?”  
 As you return, you’ll wonder, “Will I ever go back there again?”

You’ll wonder, “Which will come first, tomorrow or my next life?”  
 “Will death arrive before I can finish eating my bag of *tsamba*<sup>24</sup>?”  
 “Which will come first, the end of this pot of tea or death?”  
 You’ll think, “There’s no certainty I won’t depart this very moment.”  
 When you develop an impatience which thinks, “I have no time,  
     I have no time,”  
 Then you’ve generated the realization of the uncertainty of death.

Realization of the certainty of death comes with relative ease.  
 However, it’s more difficult to realize the uncertainty of the time  
     of death.  
 So don’t think to yourself that the latter topic is taking too long.

<sup>24</sup>See Day Nine, note 74.

Continue with your practice for days, months, or even years.  
Meditate with single-minded resolve until you produce a mental transformation.

After generating this realization, go on to the next topic—  
That nothing except holy dharma can benefit you at the time of death.  
For as many days and months as are needed, contemplate  
these three reasons:  
That neither friends, nor wealth, nor body are of any help.

But once you perceive that nothing except dharma benefits you  
at death,  
No further practice is needed; for this very understanding is the  
measure of realization.  
Because this topic is easy to realize and need not be practiced long,  
A key point is to go on to the next subject after you have gained  
the proper awareness.

PART SIX: HOW TO DEVELOP THE SPIRITUAL REALIZATIONS THAT RELATE TO  
THE SUFFERING OF THE LOWER STATES

Although the topic of meditating on the suffering of the lower states  
Is taught separately from how to perform the act of taking refuge,  
The ideal way in which to practice them is to take refuge  
Right after reflecting on each aspect of the lower states.

Still, a powerful and effective instruction for the novice practitioner  
Is to meditate initially on the suffering of the lower states alone,  
Separately from the act of taking refuge. Then, after gaining  
the first stages  
Of experiential realization, you should cultivate the two practices  
jointly.

Among the areas of the three lower states, begin by meditating on  
The suffering of Revivals, which is the first of the hot hells.  
After generating the perception that you have actually taken birth there,  
Contemplate its sufferings as though you are really experiencing them.

You may think, “It would be agonizing to take birth in such a place;  
But I am only imagining this. It is not a real experience.”  
Though it is just your imagination and not a real experience,

Your mind contains the seeds of accumulated and undiminished karma  
That have the power to hurl you into the Revivals hell.

So have no doubt; when these seeds are activated and rendered potent  
In the limb called “existence,”<sup>25</sup> you will definitely fall into that place.  
If it frightens you now merely to contemplate such a place,  
What will you do when you are actually born there?  
Consider whether you could bear that kind of suffering  
And whether you could endure such a life span for that long.

So meditate alternately and with conviction on these two ideas:  
That you have actually been born there and that you are certain  
to be born there.

When you develop an intense desire to seek immediately  
A means of liberation and a refuge that can save you from this peril,  
And this brings on such great apprehension that you even  
Lose your appetite for food, this is the measure of having generated  
An experiential awareness of the suffering in the lower states.

Likewise, strive to meditate in the manner that was just described,  
Intensely and with single-minded determination, until you generate  
The realizations that relate to the individual sufferings experienced  
In Black Lines, Compression, Screams, Great Screams,  
Conflagration, Great Conflagration, and Unrelenting Torment.<sup>26</sup>

After that, apply this same method of contemplation  
To the four great adjacent hell regions and the eight cold hells.  
Don’t reflect as though you were watching some remote spectacle.  
Reflect instead that you have actually been born in these places  
And that you are certain to be born there. After meditating intensely  
On what you experience there and how you will have to undergo  
terrible  
And intense suffering for a very long time, an unbearably strong pain  
Will penetrate your heart as before, and cause you to lose  
all contentment.

<sup>25</sup>S: *bhavah*, T: *srid pa*. This is the tenth limb of the twelve-part teaching on dependent origination. See Part Three, Day Fifteen, p. 77.

<sup>26</sup>These are the seven remaining hot hells.



When you develop an intense desire to seek a means of liberation  
and a refuge  
That can save you, this is the mark that you have generated  
the proper realization.

To enhance your practice when meditating on the suffering of the hells,  
Read their descriptions in the *Sutra on Well-Composed Recollection*<sup>27</sup>  
And examine carefully the specific sufferings of these regions  
As they are depicted in drawings. After doing this, reflect:  
“As soon as I cast off this physical form, I, too, will become  
A victim of these very same conditions. What shall I do then?”  
Recalling this again and again is the best way to improve your practice.

After that, generate a state of awareness in which you imagine  
That you have actually become each type of hungry ghost and animal.  
Though at this time you haven’t really become these beings,  
Your mind is a storehouse filled with myriad forms of projecting karma  
That will surely cause you to be born there before very long.

So reflect: “When that happens, these are the experiences  
I will undergo.”  
Then ponder all the activities you will engage in—both while walking  
and at rest—  
When you actually take birth as different types of hungry ghosts  
Or as a dog, a donkey, a worm, a bird, a deer, and so forth.  
Also ask yourself: “How will I be able to endure all this?”  
To enhance this practice, read as well about the suffering  
of hungry ghosts and animals  
As described in the *Sutra on Well-Composed Recollection*.

Meditate this way until you think, “I wish I could close the door  
to the lower states this very moment,”  
Or “How wonderful it would be to find a means of closing it  
right now.”  
When you also take up, ever so quickly, strenuous forms of practice,  
These are the signs that you have generated the appropriate realization,  
As the scriptures describe in the story of Ananda’s two nephews.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>In Bibliography, see (*Phags pa*) *Dam pa’i chos dran pa nye bar bzhag pa*.

<sup>28</sup>See Day Eleven, p. 178.

## PART SEVEN: TRAINING YOURSELF IN THE PRACTICE OF TAKING REFUGE

After generating, as described, the realizations that relate to the  
suffering in the three lower states,  
You will also develop the desire to find a refuge that can save you  
from this plight.  
When this occurs, you are ready to contemplate how the Triple Gem  
Is the only true refuge and to reflect on their various qualities.

You will elicit a mental transformation by reflecting  
for about seven days  
On the four reasons that explain why they are a worthy object  
of refuge.  
After that, meditate on a Buddha's physical, verbal, and mental qualities,  
and on the qualities of his activities.  
Do this in accord with your intellectual powers, either in brief  
By following the explanations that appear in the Lamrim writings  
Or in detail by following those presented in major philosophical  
treatises,  
Such as the two *Ornaments*, the *Higher Science*,<sup>29</sup> and the like.  
The measure for having generated the proper experiential realization  
Is to develop an intense faith that cannot be reversed.

Meditate similarly on the qualities of the dharma and the sangha—  
Either in brief as taught in the Lamrim or in detail as taught  
In the major treatises. The measure for having generated this  
realization  
Is again to develop a strong faith which cannot be overcome,  
Through having recognized the qualities of this system's Triple Gem—  
That is, our teacher, his teaching, and those who practice the teaching.

After eliciting a realization of this topic, do the same for each of those  
In the section called "learning the distinctions." The measure for  
having generated  
This realization is to be able to apprehend clearly the distinctions  
Associated with each aspect of the Triple Gem.

<sup>29</sup>The two *Ornaments* are the *Ornament of Realizations* (S: *Abhisamayālaṅkāraḥ*) and the *Ornament of Mahayana Sutras* (S: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāraḥ*). The *Higher Science* is the *Treatise on the Higher Science of the Mahayana* (S: *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstram*). In Bibliography, see listings for all three under *Maitreya Nātha*.

After eliciting that realization, go to the next topic, which addresses  
 How to take refuge by professing faith in the Triple Gem.  
 Reflect: “I accept my guru and the Buddha as the ones who teach me  
 how to find refuge;  
 I accept the holy dharma gem as the actual refuge;  
 And I accept the sangha as the companions who help me to find  
 refuge.”  
 The measure of this experiential realization is to gain the conviction  
 That you could accept only the Triple Gem with such strong faith,  
 Because no other teacher, refuge, or followers are their equal.

After generating this experiential realization, the next topic  
 Is to take refuge by disavowing faith in any other tradition.  
 Reflect carefully how our teacher, the Buddha, and his teaching  
 Are the sole point of entry for those who seek liberation,  
 And how they are superior by virtue of possessing six distinctions.<sup>30</sup>  
 Reflect as well how other teachers and their teachings—  
 Such as the doctrines of Bön, the *tirthikas*,<sup>31</sup> great worldly gods,  
 And all those teachings and teachers different from this dharma—  
 Are inferior in that they possess six opposite distinctions.  
 Through reflecting thus, bring forth a heartfelt conviction of how  
 Our supreme teacher, his teaching, and those who follow it  
 are the sole refuge,  
 And how no other tradition whatsoever is a true refuge.

The measure of realization is reached when this keeps you from  
 generating  
 Even the slightest thought of wanting to take refuge in someone else.

After that, you will elicit a mental transformation by meditating  
 For about seven days on the benefits of taking refuge and also for  
 about a week  
 On the precepts to be observed. So exert yourself with heartfelt  
 conviction.

<sup>30</sup>The six are: (1) a Buddha is without faults and has fulfilled all virtuous qualities; (2) a Buddha’s teaching bestows the fruit of happiness through a path that is easy to traverse; (3) the teaching enables you to move against the flow of samsara’s current; (4) the teaching removes the mental afflictions; (5) the teaching does not deceive those who seek liberation; and (6) the teaching is singularly virtuous and enables you to eliminate faults. See *Great Stages of the Path* (T: *Lam rim chen mo*), pp. 218–219 (ff. 93b–94a).

<sup>31</sup>See Day Twelve, note 75.

Because it does not take very long to generate realizations  
 Of the meditation topics associated with taking refuge,  
 Study and reflect on the explanations found in the major scriptures.  
 Learn as well to meditate on them with single-minded determination;  
 For the virtuous qualities of the Triple Gem are as vast as space,  
 As numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges, and as deep  
 as the ocean.  
 Moreover, the three realms are too small to hold the merit that is gained  
 By recognizing and developing faith toward even a portion of them.  
 So devote yourself to this practice earnestly and vigorously.

PART EIGHT: HOW TO COMBINE THE ELEMENTS OF TAKING REFUGE AND  
 REFLECTING ON THE SUFFERING OF THE LOWER STATES IN ORDER TO  
 MEDITATE ON THEM JOINTLY

After properly eliciting separate realizations as described above,  
 For the topics of reflecting on the suffering in the lower states  
 And recalling extensively the virtuous qualities of the Triple Gem,  
 You should practice taking refuge in a way that combines  
 the two subjects.

The two causes which form the basis for the act of taking refuge  
 Are the fear of being tormented by the suffering in the lower states  
 And the faith which believes that the Triple Gem alone have the power  
 to save you.

The actual essence of taking refuge is the mental act in which,  
 Based on these causes, you entrust yourself from your heart  
 To the Triple Gem as the object which can save and protect you.

If you were to fall into the lower states, you would not be able  
 To find a refuge, nor would you even know how to take refuge.  
 Thus, it's crucial that you begin right now to practice taking refuge.  
 You should do this by reflecting carefully on the words  
 Composed by the Lord Shantideva, which begin at the phrase  
 "With eyes that peer about in terror" and continue up to  
 The line "Please free me quickly from this source of fear."<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup>*Engaging in Bodhisattva Activities (S: Bodhicaryāvatāraḥ)*, ch. 2, vv. 45–53.

Furthermore, the way of devoting yourself fully to these points  
And meditating on them extensively is to carry out the following  
practice.

First emanate from the heart of the guru on the crown of your head  
A complete object of refuge, which becomes seated in front of you.  
Then visualize all sentient beings of the six classes surrounding you.  
After that, begin by meditating on the suffering of Revivals.

Imagine you are actually there, so vividly that it fills you with terror.  
Then reflect that you need not be afraid, because the saving refuge  
Of the Guru and Triple Gem—who are sitting in the space before  
you—

Possess the power that can save you from this plight.  
Finally, hold in your mind the thought that you beseech this object  
of refuge

From the bottom of your heart to save you and all sentient beings  
Right now from this suffering of Revivals, as you put forth effort  
To recite the refuge formula aloud many times over.

Do the same for the other hot hells—Black Lines, Compression,  
Screams, and the rest—

As well as for the four adjacent hell regions,  
The eight cold hells, the hungry ghosts, animals, and so on.  
Meditate on all their various sufferings, taking each one separately.  
Then recite the refuge formula aloud, after you have contemplated  
each topic.

These key points make for a practice that is truly wonderful.

Nowadays, many persons recite the refuge formula a prescribed  
number of times.

But they repeat the formula without having gained any knowledge  
Of the topics just described, such as the causes and essence  
of taking refuge,

Its virtuous qualities, distinctions, or the professing of faith  
and disavowal of other religions.

Such practice is mere verbal striving, mere words, mere counting.  
How could this ever represent a genuine form of taking refuge?

What can you accomplish by a refuge practice which fails to enter  
the door

To the inner faith of Buddhism and which is performed as though  
it were a form of punishment?

So if you want to undertake a prescribed number of refuge recitations, Perform them here,<sup>33</sup> while reflecting extensively on the various topics;  
This will ensure that your efforts are carried out most effectively.

<sup>33</sup>That is, the appropriate occasion for carrying out such a practice is when you have reached this stage in the Lamrim teachings.