

The Origin of Thought Transformation

These teachings on Thought Training have been passed on unbroken from Shakyamuni Buddha to the great Atisha. The primary student to whom Atisha passed on the entire teaching of Thought Training was Drom Tonpa. He in turn passed them on to his chief students Geshe Potowa, Geshe Sharawa, and Geshe Langri Tangpa. In those days, these teachings were orally transmitted only to a few students. The reason for this was that the message of Thought Training is to teach the student to learn to accept the sufferings of others as one's own and to be totally engaged in the interest of others. This was a message that few people were able to believe in. Many of them feared that such teachings would bring more suffering upon themselves. So the teaching was passed on only to those whom the teacher judged to be qualified.

When Geshe Langri Tangpa received these teachings on Thought Training from Drom Tonpa, he believed they were very profound and beyond the thought of ordinary people, and he felt it would be a tremendous loss if they were not preserved. So, he recorded the teaching in written form as *Eight Verses of Thought Training*. Years later, after Geshe Langri Tangpa had passed away, Geshe Chekawa found a written version of his *Eight Verses of Thought Training*. Geshe Chekawa was extraordinary in his grasp of the teachings, his practice, his power of listening, and contemplation. He was moved by one verse in the text that states, "Offer the victory to others, and accept the loss and defeat upon yourself". Determined to meet the author of this text, he started to search for him, unaware of Geshe Langri Tangpa's passing. In a small town located near Lhasa someone informed him of Geshe Langri Tangpa's passing and suggested that he meet Geshe Sharawa instead. This Geshe gave him the entire precepts of the teachings on the Thought Training and Geshe Chekawa wrote the *Seven Point Thought Training* as a commentary to *Eight Verses of Thought Training*. Afterwards, he proclaimed these teachings on Thought Training "in the market place" - that is he taught them openly and widely. This practice became very popular, especially among those with chronic diseases such as leprosy. Many people wrote about the power and

blessedness of these teachings, and the number of people who practised this method of thought training increased. In Tibet, even though many people may not know the meaning of the Thought Training teachings, they at least recognise the name of this practice.

Keys to Great Enlightenment
Geshe Tsultim Gyeltsen

Further Reading

Lam Rim Bristol has both a library and a shop available for use. There are many books suitable for reading in connection with these evenings. The following books are suitable for those interested in the Thought Transformation teachings. The first, *Advice From A Spiritual Friend*, is particularly recommended because it contains both the *Eight Verses On Thought Transformation* and *The Seven Point Thought Transformation* together with commentary.

Advice From A Spiritual Friend
Geshe Rabten & Geshe Dhargyey

Keys To Great Enlightenment
Geshe Tsultim Gyeltsen

The Union Of Bliss And Emptiness
His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

Four Essential Buddhist Commentaries
His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

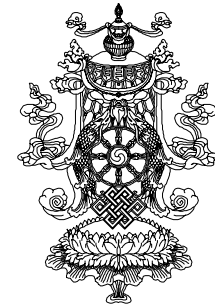
Training The Mind The Great Way
Gyalwa Gendun Druppa, The First Dalai Lama

Mind Training Like The Rays Of The Sun
Nam-Kha Pel

The Great Path of Awakening
Jamgon Kongtrul

*Where would I possibly find enough leather
With which to cover the surface of the earth?
But (wearing) leather just on the soles of my shoes
Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.*

Shantideva



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THE BASICS OF BUDDHISM

EIGHT VERSES ON THOUGHT TRANSFORMATION

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Eight Verses on Thought Transformation

I shall now read and explain briefly one of the most important texts on thought transformation, *Lojong Tsigyema* (Eight Verses on Thought Transformation). It was composed by Geshé Langri Tangba, who was a very unusual bodhisattva. I myself read it daily and received the transmission of the commentary from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche.

(i)

*With a determination to accomplish
the highest welfare for all sentient beings,
Who surpass even a wish-granting jewel,
I will learn to hold them supremely dear.*

One is requesting: May I be able to view them as a precious jewel because they are the object on whose account I can achieve omniscience; so, may I be able to hold them dear.

(ii)

*Whenever I associate with others, I will learn
to think of myself as the lowest among all,
And respectfully hold others as being supreme,
From the depth of my heart.*

“Respectfully hold others as being supreme” means not regarding them as some object of pity that you look down on, but rather taking them as higher objects. Take, for example, insects: They are inferior to ourselves because they do not know the proper things to adopt and discard - whereas we do know because we see the destructive nature of the defilements. Such is the case, but we can look at the facts from another viewpoint as well. Although we are aware of the destructive nature of the defilements, we nevertheless let ourselves be under their influence, and in that sense we are inferior to insects.

(iii)

*In all actions, I will learn to search into my own mind,
And as soon as an afflictive emotion arises,
Endangering myself and others,
I will firmly face and avert it.*

When one is engaged in a practice of this kind, the only thing which causes obstacles is the defilements within

one's own mental continuum; on the other hand, spirits and so forth do not cause any obstacles. So, you should not have an attitude of idleness and passivity towards the inner enemy; but rather, you should be alert and forthcoming, countering the defilements immediately.

(iv)

*I will cherish beings of bad nature,
And those oppressed by strong negativities and sufferings,
As if I had found a precious treasure
Very difficult to find.*

These lines emphasise the transformation of those thoughts focused on sentient beings who have very strong negativities; generally speaking, it is more difficult to have compassion towards persons afflicted by sufferings and so forth, when they have a very bad nature and personality. Actually, such people should be regarded as the most supreme objects of one's compassion. Your attitude, when you encounter such persons, should be as though you had found a treasure.

(v)

*When others, out of jealousy, treat me badly
With abuse, slander and so on,
I will learn to take all loss
And offer the victory to them.*

Generally speaking, if others have done you wrong without any justification, it is - in worldly terms - lawful to retaliate; but the practitioner of thought transformation techniques should always give the victory to others.

(vi)

*When one whom I have benefited with great hope
Unreasonably hurts me very badly,
I will learn to view that person
As an excellent spiritual guide.*

Then, regarding sentient beings for whom you have done a lot, normally you expect them to repay your kindness and thus you place hope in them. But instead, you should think: If such a person harms me instead of repaying my kindness, may I not retaliate against him, but rather reflect upon his kindness and be able to see him as a special guide.

(vii)

*In short, I will learn to offer to everyone without exception
All help and happiness directly and indirectly,
And secretly take upon myself
All the harms and suffering of my mothers.*

It says, “In short, may I be able to offer all the good qualities that I have to all the sentient beings,” - this is the practice of giving - and, “May I be able secretly to take all their harms and sufferings of this and future lifetimes.” This refers to the process of inhalation and exhalation.

Up to here, the verses have dealt with the practice of the conventional bodhicitta. The techniques for cultivating the conventional bodhicitta should not be influenced by attitudes such as: If I undertake the practice of giving and taking I will have better health, and so forth, which would indicate the influence of worldly considerations. You should not have the attitude: If I do such a practice people will respect me and regard me as a good practitioner. In short, your practice of these techniques should not be influenced by any worldly motives.

(viii)

*I will learn to keep all these practices
Undeiled by the stains of the eight worldly conceptions,
And, by understanding all phenomena to be like illusions,
I will be released from the bondage of attachment.*

These lines speak about the practice of ultimate bodhicitta. When we talk of the antidotes to the eight worldly attitudes, there are many levels. The actual antidote for overcoming the influence of such worldly attitudes is to understand the non-inherent nature of phenomena. All phenomena are not inherently existent - they are like illusions. Although they appear as truly existent they have no reality. “Having understood their relative nature, may I be freed from the binding knot of the self-grasping attitude.”

You should read *Lojong Tsigyema* every day to enhance your practice of the bodhisattva ideal.

from *THE UNION OF BLISS AND EMPTINESS*

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama