

*Practicing the  
Five Powers  
Near the Time of Death*



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## *Practicing the Five Powers Near the Time of Death*

### *Introduction*

Here is a technique for making your life always happy, but not the usual kind of hallucinated happiness which is excited with desire, pride, and so on. As soon as you investigate the nature of this kind of hallucinated happiness, you discover that it is only suffering. Here we are talking about real inner peace and happiness, which bring satisfaction and fulfillment, and make your life meaningful.

The technique for achieving this is the five powers – integrating the practice of the five powers into one lifetime. When you live in this practice of the five powers twenty-four hours a day, every single thing you do, whatever it may be, is only for the sake of other sentient beings, who are numberless and who want happiness and do not want suffering, just as you do. Sentient beings need your help and don't want you to harm them. Like you, they only want others to benefit and help them and don't want even the slightest harm.

When you practice the five powers, every single thing you do is only for numberless sentient beings and therefore, everything you do only becomes the cause for achieving the peerless happiness of full enlightenment. This is the greatest profit that can be achieved with this life and therefore, this practice is the most beneficial for achieving peerless happiness. It means that every single action you do, whether it is meditation and prayers or doing your job, be-

comes the cause of happiness for all sentient beings. Since it is the best thing for all sentient beings, naturally it is also the best thing for you. This means that you will have the best, happiest life now and also the best, happiest life in the future – like the sun shining in this world and eliminating all darkness.

Practicing this integration of the five powers into one lifetime is also the best preparation for the happiest death. It makes even the end of your life the happiest. When death comes it will be the happiest death because you have done this practice during your lifetime, and also you will find it so easy to practice the five powers near the time of death. This is the best psychology of all and the best, deepest meditation.

There are five powers to be applied during this life and also five powers to be applied at the time of death.<sup>1</sup> The five powers at the time of death are a mind-training transference practice for directing your mind to its new rebirth. It is mentioned in the seven point thought transformation practice:

The Mahayana instruction for transferring consciousness  
is only the five powers.

Therefore, cherish this conduct!

Also, the great Tibetan enlightened holy being Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyältsen, who composed the Guru Puja,<sup>2</sup> mentioned in the verses at the end of the Prayer of the Common Graduated Path,<sup>3</sup> which deal with the graduated completion stage of the path of highest yoga tantra:

I seek your blessings to actualize in this life the path of unity  
Of clear light and the illusory body that arises  
From placing your feet, my Savior, in the eight petals of  
my heart  
At the very center of my central channel.

Should I not have completed the points of the path at the  
time of death,  
I seek your blessings that I may be led to a pure land

Either through the instructions of applying the five forces  
Or by the forceful means to enlightenment, the Guru's  
transference of mind.<sup>4</sup>

These verses are advising that if one does not become enlightened in this life, if one is unable to actualize the completion stage of the highest yoga tantra path, the clear light and illusory body,<sup>5</sup> then at the time of death one should practice phowa to transfer the consciousness.

So here is the practice of the transference of consciousness (*phowa*) from the thought transformation (*lojong*) teachings. As the great enlightened being, the Tibetan lama Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo mentioned:

The mind-training transference technique does not employ the sounds of HIK and PHAT but it is more profound than any other method of transference of consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

### *The First Power: the Power of the White Seed*

It is explained that when you are dying you should die with the six paramitas:<sup>7</sup>

When you are dying, divide your belongings into three parts: Offer the first part to the Guru Triple Gem to collect merit, use one part to make charity to sentient beings, and use one part for a party<sup>8</sup> and so forth.<sup>9</sup> To do any of these is charity.

For morality, you should confess and abstain from the downfalls of individual liberation for oneself, generate the wishing bodhichitta and entering bodhichitta, and engage in the vows. This is morality.

Patience: If you have a grudge from the past, offer forgiveness. If the person is not next to you, dedicate one part of your material possessions and tell the person, "I have just this much; please forgive me." If the other person is unable

to accept, be patient and let there be no unhappiness in your mind.

Regarding perseverance, whatever you do, do it with joy.

The other two, concentration and wisdom, are contained in these practices.<sup>10</sup>

### *Letting Go of Material Possessions*

It is extremely urgent to let go of your material possessions, including those that you have the strongest attachment towards, and also to let go of people such as your children, family members, and loved ones. It is urgent to let go of these things, to cut your clinging and attachment; in other words, to let go of desire.

In the case of material possessions, you can either let go of the objects by offering to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha who are the field of merit, or by making charity to sentient beings. This means that you either give the objects away now, or you at least completely dedicate them by making a clear decision to offer them to the field of merit or as charity to others, even though they will physically be given later. You can do this by writing it down in a will. But even if you make a will, at least in your heart make the offering now to the Guru, Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Dedicate your possessions to holy objects or give them away, making charity for specific causes and in various ways that can benefit sentient beings.

Make the total dedication right now in your heart and mind, because death can come any day or minute. The moment you think this, the painful mind of attachment goes away from your heart so your mind is total peace and happiness. It is like an apple a day keeping the doctor away!

It is easy to understand offering to the Guru. When offering to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you can just offer from your heart. The main thing here, the very point of the practice, is to let go so that you don't torture yourself with attachment.

This way you give yourself satisfaction, total peace, and happiness. There are no regrets and there is no worry caused by attachment. This brings peace so that your mind is free and able to do various meditation techniques at the time of death. You can do the practices you know such as phowa. By making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, you are not only letting go but also creating inconceivable merit. Why? Because all three of these objects are very powerful. Even if there is nobody around to hear you, from your heart just think, “I am offering these things to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,” and then you stop the clinging. Having offered them, think it belongs to them; then there is no more clinging.

There are infinite ideas how to make your money, belongings, and property most satisfactory, meaningful, and beneficial, so that you are not just benefiting yourself but also benefiting sentient beings by making charity to them.

Even though material possessions, the samsaric perfections, are essenceless, still you can take essence from them. It all depends on how much your heart is open, rather than being closed by wrong views. It depends on how well you understand the law of cause and effect (karma). Understanding and faith in karma opens up skies of opportunity to be most beneficial. Most beneficial for whom? Most beneficial for other sentient beings! And if something is most beneficial for others, it is naturally also most beneficial for you.

For example, you could dedicate money, property, or whatever you have towards preserving and spreading the teachings of the Buddha. Why is dedicating resources for the teachings of the Buddha most beneficial? Because whether sentient beings are one or numberless, what they all need is happiness.

Consciousness doesn't just cease at the time of death. It is not like a lamp that goes out when the fuel is finished or a candle flame that goes out when the candle has come to an end. The body and mind are totally separate; they are two different phenomena. The body is substantial and therefore has color and form. The mind is

non-substantial and has no color or shape. Formless phenomena are something quite different from the body. Some people might think that the mind is something like brain waves, but the mind is not an external object that can be perceived by the eye sense. The mind is also not an object that can be perceived by the ear sense, nor is it an object that can be perceived by the nose sense, nor is it an object that can be perceived by the tongue sense, nor is it an object that can be perceived by the body sense. The mind is not an object of the five sense consciousnesses of ordinary beings like us.<sup>11</sup>

The mind can be an object of the sixth consciousness, the consciousness of the mind. For example, when somebody is angry, that anger can be expressed through their facial expression, which becomes tense, not peaceful, without any softness or smiles – only wrath. By seeing that form, you judge the person to be angry. Also, when a person becomes angry, their actions may become violent and their way of speaking rude or insulting; by seeing this, your mind also understands that the person is angry.

You can only tell that the person's mind is angry by these external wrathful expressions and actions, but there are times when a person doesn't show they are angry. Their mind is angry, but because it is not revealed by taking a particular form, such as violent actions, and there is no external sign of change, unless you have clairvoyance or omniscient mind you can't tell that the person is angry.

It is the same with attachment. If one person loves somebody else but the other person cannot see any change in their face or in the actions of their body or speech, then even though in reality there is attachment and love, the other person might believe that he or she doesn't love them. Normally you see that the other person "loves me," "is angry with me" or "is attached to me" by looking at the external form and whatever change of action is manifested.

The mind is an object of the sixth consciousness either by omniscience or ordinary beings' clairvoyance. Even before buddhahood, when a great yogi has achieved the path of unification in

highest tantra, the atoms of the body can function as mind and mind can function as the body. For example, the mind can manifest into form.

The teachings mention the six perfections to ripen one's own mental continuum and five types of clairvoyance to ripen that of others.

Clairvoyance of miracle power: You display miraculous powers to sentient beings by manifesting in various forms or transformations. In this way you take care of sentient beings and lead them into the Dharma.

Clairvoyance of divine eye: The ability to foresee the death, transference of consciousness, and future rebirths of yourself and others. By explaining this to the object to be subdued, sentient beings, you liberate them from nihilism.

Clairvoyance of divine ear: The ability to hear the sound of extensive profound Dharma taught by the victorious ones and their spiritual sons, the bodhisattvas, in the various pure fields of the buddhas. You explain these teachings to the object to be subdued, the sentient beings.

Clairvoyance of remembering the past: With this ability to see your and others' karmic connections in the past, you explain Dharma according to the elements, their mind, and their way of thinking. (This type of clairvoyance is common in Buddhism and other religions, such as Hinduism.)

Clairvoyance of having ceased faults: This is a quality only of arya (exalted) beings who have removed their delusions. (Delusions are called faults because they cause you to fall to the lower realms.) This is the really special clairvoyance. Of course, the clairvoyance of having ceased all delusions refers only to buddhas.

There are also the psychic powers known as the five eyes:

Flesh eye: The eye that can see not only gross but also extremely subtle form. For instance, after achieving *shiné* (calm abiding), and maybe subtle generation, you can see and even count the atoms of a mountain.

Heavenly eye: You can see death, transference, and the past lives of yourself and others.

Eye of phenomena (dharma eye): Wisdom eye that can discriminate the level of realization of the arya (exalted) beings.

Wisdom eye: Transcendental wisdom directly seeing selflessness. (This could be the wisdom that is symbolized by the “third eye.”)

Buddha eye: The Buddha eye is the most perfect of the five eyes. It shines everywhere, illuminating all.

This phenomenon called mind has no form and its nature is clear and able to perceive objects.

If the mind is trained in compassion, there is no question that a person can bring much peace and happiness into their own life. They can also bring much peace and happiness to their family, neighbors, the area and country where they live, to the whole world and to numberless beings in other universes. They can bring happiness to numberless suras or worldly gods, numberless asuras, numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals. When one person’s mind is trained in compassion, it can cause all these numberless beings to have happiness in all their future lives, and to have the ultimate, everlasting happiness of liberation, free forever from the entire ocean of suffering of samsara – from the oceans of suffering of the hell beings, from the oceans of suffering of the hungry ghosts, from the oceans of suffering of animals, from the oceans of suffering of human beings, from the oceans of suffering of sura beings, from the oceans of suffering of the asuras, and

from the oceans of suffering of the intermediate state beings. Not only that, it can also cause peerless happiness, full enlightenment, and complete bliss for each and every single one of the numberless sentient beings.

If the mind is in the habit of transforming into negative states such as anger and self-cherishing, and the person is in a position of power and influence, they can destroy not only their family members but also the people and animals in the area or country where they live, and on this earth. Historically it has been shown that when the mind of one person with influence and power becomes negative, so many millions of people in the world can be killed. This has happened quite a number of times throughout history.

Even when the body has totally disintegrated and is completely destroyed, still the sixth consciousness, the consciousness of the mind, continues from this life to the next. This is what takes birth, either through being conceived in the mother's womb, in an egg, by heat and moisture, or spontaneously born. (This last one, "spontaneously born" I call "entering" birth; examples of this are being born on a lotus in a pure land, or the consciousness taking birth inside fruit or even a rock.) The reincarnated consciousness takes birth as one of the six types of transmigratory beings.

Because of the continuity of consciousness, the mind becomes habituated to negative self-cherishing thoughts such as anger and then it harms other beings, not only in this present life but also in future lives. This is how the mind can harm all living beings. It has been harming living beings since beginningless rebirths because it has been under the control of the self-cherishing thoughts of anger, ignorance, and attachment. As long as we don't change our mind, sentient beings will receive harm from this negative mind, from ourselves, without end.

On the other hand, if the mind becomes positive and pure, unstained by self-cherishing thoughts, unstained by anger, ignorance or attachment, and developed in compassion and wisdom, then this mind can cause the peerless, everlasting happiness of full enlightenment for every single sentient being. Such a compassionate

mind becomes wish-fulfilling to all sentient beings; it brings complete happiness to every sentient being.

The cause for other sentient beings to have happiness in every future life, to receive the body of a happy transmigratory being and to experience every kind of happiness must come from their own minds. It cannot come from outside. How does it come? By their minds creating the cause of happiness, which is virtue. They have to create the virtuous action of practicing morality so that in the future they will receive the body of a happy transmigratory being. They have to create the virtuous action of practicing charity so that in the future they will have wealth. They have to create the virtuous action of practicing patience so that in the future they will have a beautiful body and be surrounded by people who perfectly support them.

By living in the morality of abstaining from gossip, for example, in future lives especially, your speech will have much power and people will pay attention to whatever you say. By gossiping, on the other hand, in future lives your speech will have no power. Even if you request other people to help you they won't listen or comply; your speech will have no power to influence or persuade others. If you engage in the non-virtuous action of telling lies, in this and so many future lives even when you try to tell the truth, people will think that you are telling lies. These are some examples.

As a result of creating the non-virtuous action of sexual misconduct in this life, either later in this life or in many future lives you will experience the negative suffering effect of being sexually abused by others. Not only that, but instead of the people around you – like your husband, wife or companions – being harmonious with you, they will be against you.

When the mind becomes habituated to these non-virtuous actions, not only do you have to experience negative suffering results, but also you have the habit to engage in these negative actions – killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling lies, slandering, gossiping, hurting others' minds with words, ill will, covetousness, and so forth – again in future lives. Because of your habituation

with these negative actions in the past, you are driven to engage in so much negative karma in many lifetimes. If you don't change your mind, if you don't purify past negative karmas such as the ten non-virtuous actions, and if you don't create good karma by practicing morality in this life by abstaining from these negative actions, then you will experience the suffering of samsara and particularly the suffering of the lower realms – the sufferings of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals – continuously, without end, forever.

So you can see that for each individual sentient being to experience happiness in all their future lives, to have a human rebirth and so on, all depends on the good karma they create. That means all their happiness in future lives has to come from Dharma practice, which is their own virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind. Therefore, sentient beings need to be educated. They need to learn the Dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, and they need to practice. The happiness of future lives has to come from the Dharma, from the Buddha's teachings.

Not only that, but the duration of this life is very short, whereas the need for happiness in future lives is forever – right up until one achieves liberation and enlightenment.

Sentient beings like happiness and they don't want suffering. You can understand they want the highest, longest-lasting happiness by the way they do business, looking for the greatest profit, and by the way they shop for the best quality, longest-lasting items they can afford. They may not know the four noble truths as taught by Buddha:

1. True suffering – the different types of samsaric suffering.<sup>12</sup>
2. True cause of suffering – delusions and karma.
3. True cessation – cessation of delusions and karma and their resultant sufferings.
4. True path – the method to achieve true cessation.

Even if sentient beings have no idea of these four noble truths, their wish is to achieve everlasting happiness and liberation; free-

dom forever from suffering and its causes, as reasoned above.

To achieve their wish they need to cease karma and delusions, disturbing thoughts and wrong concepts, by actualizing the five paths to liberation. First they need to see all the six realms (sura, asura, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings, which can be categorized in three: desire, form, and formless realms) as pure suffering, extremely unbearable, like being in the center of a fire, in a nest of poisonous snakes or sitting on an iron needle, then to have complete renunciation, not finding even an instant's attraction to any samsaric pleasure.

With this total renunciation, they enter the path to liberation and actualize the five paths: path of merit, preparatory path, right-seeing path, path of meditation, and path of no-more-learning. To achieve the second path, it is necessary to have the preparatory realization of the unification of *shamatha* (calm abiding) and great insight, special concentration, just as there has to be preliminary heat before wood can catch fire.

After that is the right-seeing path, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, which is like a burning flame. Due to that, from here starts the path that directly ceases the defilements, intellectual concepts and delusions. Then, actualizing the path of meditation ceases the wrong concepts, the simultaneously born delusions, so that even the seeds of delusions are ceased – that is liberation: the nature of the mind totally free from disturbing thoughts and obscurations, including the seeds of delusions, so that it is impossible for delusions to rise again and create the negative karma that results in suffering experiences.

Now you can see how the teachings of Buddha show the complete path to liberation. Without them there is no way that sentient beings can achieve everlasting happiness. Not just the temporal happiness and good things of this and future lives, but freedom for ever from the oceans of samsaric suffering.

Therefore, you can see why preserving and spreading the Dharma has very deep benefit for sentient beings and is the most important, precious thing. Sentient beings need to be educated and

actualize the path, particularly the Mahayana Paramitayana five paths and ten bhumis; then, by practicing the four classes of tantra, cease the defilements and subtle dualistic view in a short time, within one lifetime or just a few years; become liberated from the oceans of samsara and achieve full enlightenment, the unified state of Vajradhara, much more quickly.

The great enlightened being Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo said that if you give away what you are attached to:

There is nothing else – not even another person creating root merits on your behalf – that can be more helpful after your death.<sup>13</sup>

What happens if you don't let go of the desire that clings to your possessions? Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo told the following stories about the shortcomings of not letting go.<sup>14</sup>

A fully ordained monk<sup>15</sup> was attached to his begging bowl and was reborn as a snake. The Buddha chased the snake into the forest and the snake got angry. The fire of the snake's anger burnt down the forest and it was reborn in the hell realms, which means the snake's consciousness transmigrated to the hells. So what happened here is that the human body of the fully ordained monk was burned by the fire of attachment and that caused him to migrate into a snake's body. The snake's body was then burned by anger, which caused the snake to migrate to the hell realms. Then the hell body was also burned by fire, so all three bodies burned in the fire.

Another person was obsessed with some gold that was hidden under the ground. This person was reborn as a snake and was forced to offer the gold to the Buddha.

If you are attached to someone else's body, or even to your own body, this can create the cause to be reborn as a worm inside that body. In ancient times in India, there was a woman's corpse lying on the ocean shore. A worm that looked like a snake lived in the corpse and would slither constantly in and out of the mouth, nose, eyes, ears, and so on. The worm was said to be the incarnation of a

girl who had been attached to her own body and was always looking at herself in the mirror and then was born as this long worm, circling inside her own dead body.

There is another story of a simple monk who was extremely attached to some money. He died and was reborn as a frog that would spend its time clutching this money.

Some people find it very difficult to die due to attachment. The great enlightened being Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo told the story of one old monk from Amdo<sup>16</sup> who was attached to fatty foods and was having a hard time dying. Even though he knew the meditation techniques and the tantric method of transference of consciousness, he was finding it extremely difficult and was unable to transfer his consciousness to the pure land of Buddha. A great lama from Amdo called Gungtang Jampälyang saw that this monk was having a hard time to die or transfer his consciousness, so the lama used his skillful means and said, “Make a wish to go to Tushita pure land. The fatty food there will be even better than the food we get during the holy festivals in the seventh month of each year.” The monk immediately breathed his last breath.

There is some risk of these difficulties happening to us, so it is urgent and an emergency that we renounce attachment. If we don’t practice letting go of attachment, desire, and so forth now, then when the time of death comes, similar things as those explained in these stories can happen to us.

One day Shariputra, Buddha’s heart disciple who was excellent in wisdom, went for alms in the town. He went to a house where the old father always used to eat fish from the pool behind his house. The father had died and was reborn as a fish in the pool. The mother was attached to the house so she was reborn as the man’s dog. The man’s enemy had been killed for raping the man’s wife. Because the enemy was so attached to her, he was reborn as her son. The son caught his father, the fish, and killed it. While he ate its meat, the dog, his mother, ate the fish bones, and so was beaten by her son. His own little son, his former enemy, was sitting on his knee.

Shariputra looked through the door of the house of this family and expressed:

He eats his father's flesh and beats his mother.  
The enemy he killed sits on his knee.  
A wife gnaws her husband's bones.  
I laugh at the existence of samsara.<sup>17</sup>

This story shows that even clinging to one's own home has shortcomings. This kind of thing can happen to us if we don't let go.

If we die with negative thoughts, and certainly if we die with anger, attachment, or ignorance, there is no question that we will be reborn in the lower realms – in the hells, hungry ghosts, or animals. Not only that, but these negative minds make the actual time of death so painful, and they make it very difficult for the consciousness to leave the body because there is so much fear, anger, and attachment, clinging to possessions, family members, friends, and home. Because of not wanting to be separated from these things, you can't let go, you don't want to die. You can see from this how attachment creates so much fear and worry. It tortures you and makes you suffer so much.

Attachment doesn't give you the freedom to be born in a pure land of Buddha, such as Amitabha Buddha's pure land. Once you are born in Amitabha Buddha's pure land, you will never ever be reborn in the lower realms. It is impossible. Once you are born there, you are free forever from the lower realms. And if you are able to be reborn in Heruka and Vajrayogini's Pure Land, Tharpa Kachö, you will definitely achieve enlightenment in that very life. That is a very quick way to achieve enlightenment if you are unable to be enlightened in this life, on this human body.

The negative clinging mind of attachment doesn't give you any freedom. You are like a bird whose legs are fastened to a stone by rope, tied down and unable to fly. Just like that you have no freedom.

Being unable to die with a virtuous thought, such as non-ignorance, non-anger, or non-attachment, you cannot receive even a perfect human rebirth, with the eight ripened aspects, in your next life. This kind of rebirth was highly emphasized by Lama Tsongkhapa. If you can achieve a human body with the eight ripened qualities,<sup>18</sup> you can be very successful in achieving realizations and can proceed on the path to liberation and full enlightenment. There can be great success in actualizing the path.

Also, if you die with the non-virtuous thoughts of anger, attachment, and ignorance, you cannot achieve a human body that has every opportunity to practice Dharma, such as by living in the four Mahayana Dharma wheels.<sup>19</sup> The first of these four is “abiding in a harmonious place.” This means being born and living in a country or place where the Buddhadharma is existing in the form of the Mahayana teachings and particularly as tantra, the secret mantra Vajrayana teachings. It also means being born in a perfect family who are fully devoted to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and who want to support your Dharma practice. And it means living in a place that doesn’t cause health problems and where there are no obstacles to practice. The other three are meeting a perfect virtuous friend and being able to collect merits and make prayers.

If you die with non-virtuous thoughts, you cannot even achieve a perfect human body with the seven qualities of the higher realms,<sup>20</sup> that of the happy transmigratory being. Not only that, but you cannot even achieve an ordinary deva or human rebirth, besides not meeting with the Dharma.

Clinging to the body causes endless and unimaginable suffering. So you should reflect on this and be able to let go. Make your mind strong and have the courage to let go.

It says in the great saint, the bodhisattva Shantideva’s teaching *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Bodhicharyavatara)*:<sup>21</sup>

By being attached to one’s own body  
Even things that cause little fear give rise to great fear.

So who would not have aversion to that body which  
causes fear  
As one would to an enemy?

This means that self-cherishing is the cause of all fear. Since this is true, if you don't exchange yourself for others but are attached to your own body, then even small dangerous things like snakes, scorpions, and so forth, which should cause little fear, give rise to great fear because of attachment to the body. So why would any wise person not have hatred to this body as to an enemy, instead of cherishing it?

It is also the self-cherishing thought that causes you to engage in all evil deeds. It is because of cherishing the I that:<sup>22</sup>

One desires to engage in the means of stopping the body  
from being hungry, thirsty and so forth, and also to heal  
sicknesses.

So one kills chicken, fish, deer, and wild animals,  
And lies in wait, like a cat on the path, for those who are  
passing on the road in order to deprive others of their  
possessions.

To gain profit and serve this body that is cherished  
One would even kill one's father and mother  
And steal the property of the Three Sublime Ones, the  
Triple Gem -  
Actions that will make one burn in the unbearable  
suffering hell realm.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, why would any learned person cherish the body  
And desire to protect and make offering to it?  
Why would one not regard this body as an enemy and  
object of blame?<sup>24</sup>

So stop cherishing this body at all times and in any circumstances,  
even when you are happy or suffering, or at the time of death.

It is because of having a body and being attached to physical pleasures that people engage in all forms of sexual misconduct, and why those who are ordained break their root vows. Because of attachment to physical pleasure, people steal other's possessions, kill, tell lies, commit slander, use harsh speech, and so forth. Attachment to the body gives rise to the negative karma of covetousness – wanting to use another person's body for your own physical comfort and pleasure.

When somebody harms your physical comfort it can cause ill will and even heresy to arise, due to attachment to the body. One might even give up the Guru – the root of the path to enlightenment – because the mind is so attached to one's own physical needs and sensual pleasure. Attachment to the body is what causes people to engage in the negative karma of drinking alcohol, which creates the karma to be born in the heaviest hot hells and the great hells, experiencing suffering for billions and billions of years. It also gives rise to the suffering that comes from engaging in the negative karma of beating others and being beaten by others. All of this is because of having a body.

We also waste an unbelievable amount of money due to attachment to the body. There are so many things used with attachment for the body and this makes the biggest bill in our life! It also makes us waste this precious human life because so much time is spent taking care of the body. So much of this precious human life, so much precious time, is totally wasted with attachment, working to obtain everything that is needed for this body.

So reflect on this body, on what it really is – just a skeleton plastered over with different bits of flesh and muscle. Inside there are the organs, veins, blood, and other fluids; a layer of skin covers it and it is adorned by hair, nails, and teeth. In their natural state none of these things is attractive. The body is filled with filthy and smelly substances and what comes out of the body is also unappealing. Why be so attached to this body and suffer so much?<sup>25</sup>

Think about this and then come to the conclusion: “I will never again take this bad body, which brings me so much harm!

After this life, I will never again take on a suffering body created by karma and delusion. I am going to place this mind, which has no nature, on the ultimate nature of the mind, which has no true existence – in the state of dharmakaya.”

### *The Second Power; The Power of Intention*<sup>26</sup>

With devotion totally give yourself up to the Triple Gem, completely relying on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Motivate very strongly again and again that you will never allow yourself to come under the control of the self-cherishing thought and never separate away from bodhichitta.

Think, “From now until I achieve enlightenment, especially up to the point of death, while I am dying, in the intermediate state, and in all future lives, I will never allow myself to come under the control of self-cherishing and I will never separate from bodhichitta!”

Think, “Particularly this year, this month and all twenty-four hours of today, I will never separate from bodhichitta!”

Motivate very strongly in this way and then you won’t be separated from bodhichitta. Set the intention and make a strong dedication to be really careful for however many seconds there are from now up to the time of death. Put your full effort into this, just as someone crossing over a dangerous bridge would have to pay full attention to make sure not to fall off. This is very, very important, because no matter how many negative karmas you have created in this life, if you are able to practice at the time of death it has great benefit.

To be able to recognize the signs at the time of death and immediately and easily apply meditations – such as the tantric methods for the time of death or the thought transformation practice of the five powers – depends on having practiced every day, and especially so when you are sick. Otherwise, even if you can explain these practices with your mouth, if you have not actually attempted to do them; it won’t benefit. It can’t benefit at all.<sup>27</sup>

So think, “I will never give self-grasping, delusions, and the nearing delusions<sup>28</sup> any chance to arise. I will never allow my conduct of body, speech, and mind to be under the control of these obscuring, disturbing emotional thoughts.

“I will not allow myself to come under the control of self-cherishing until I achieve enlightenment, from now on until I die, and especially today. And I will never separate from bodhichitta from now until I achieve enlightenment, from now until I die, and especially today.”

### *The Third Power; the Power of Blaming the Ego<sup>29</sup>*

As the great bodhisattva Shantideva said in *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*:

As long as you don't drop the fire,  
The burning won't stop.  
In the same way, as long as you don't let go of the I,  
Suffering can't be abandoned.

Therefore, to pacify your own sufferings  
And the sufferings of others,  
Give yourself up for others  
And cherish others as yourself.<sup>30</sup>

And:

If the self is not exchanged for others,  
Enlightenment cannot be achieved;  
There is no happiness even in samsara.  
Leave aside happiness in the life beyond this one;  
Even the works of this life cannot be achieved.<sup>31</sup>

All the problems we experience in this life, including sickness, relationship problems, and all the other problems, come from cherishing the self. All of these problems are a commentary to the teaching on the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. Every one

of these problems comes from the self-cherishing thought; therefore, put all the blame for these on the self-cherishing thought. Self-cherishing is the root of all problems. It is the cause of all obstacles and of every other undesirable thing we experience. As it is mentioned in the teachings:<sup>32</sup>

However much happiness there is in the world,  
All comes from cherishing others.  
However much suffering there is  
All comes from cherishing the self.

What more is there to say?  
The childish work for themselves  
And the Mighty One (Buddha) works for others...<sup>33</sup>

Even Buddha was once the same as us, having all the same delusions and problems. But because Buddha gave up the self and cherished others, he was able to complete the path of method and wisdom, and not only achieve liberation from all the oceans of samsaric sufferings, but also cease all the gross and subtle defilements and achieve the two kayas – *dharmakaya* and *rupakaya*. Not only that, but Buddha has shown numberless sentient beings the path to liberation and enlightenment and, through this, numberless sentient beings in this world have been liberated from all their sufferings and achieved enlightenment.

In a similar way, Buddha has also liberated numberless sentient beings in many other universes from the oceans of samsaric suffering and brought them to enlightenment. In every second, Buddha is enlightening numberless beings; effortlessly and spontaneously working for sentient beings until every one of them is brought to enlightenment. All of this is because Buddha simply changed his attitude and instead of cherishing “I,” cherished others.

Think, “Because I have always been a child and never changed my attitude but only cherished myself since beginningless rebirth, I have not achieved full enlightenment, nor have I achieved liberation from samsara. Instead, I have been experiencing the oceans

of general samsaric sufferings and particularly, the oceans of hell beings' sufferings, the oceans of preta beings' sufferings, the oceans of animal sufferings, the oceans of human sufferings, the oceans of sura sufferings, the oceans of asura sufferings, and the oceans of intermediate beings' sufferings numberless times since beginningless rebirth.

“It is most terrifying to think that the self-cherishing thought has made me suffer from time without beginning. It hasn't allowed me to achieve the gradual path common to the lower capable being, the gradual path common to the middle capable being, or the gradual path common to the higher capable being.<sup>34</sup> It hasn't allowed me to achieve any realizations, not even the realizations of guru devotion and perfect human rebirth.<sup>35</sup> Nor has it allowed me to achieve the realizations of the very beginning stages of the path to enlightenment (lam-rim), of death and impermanence, or karma. My mental continuum has been totally empty of attainments from beginningless rebirth.

“This self-cherishing thought is what causes me the greatest harm. It is more harmful than anything else! Not only that, but as long as the self-cherishing thought abides in my heart I will never achieve enlightenment; I will not even achieve liberation from samsara. I won't achieve any realizations of the stages of the path and instead, will experience the general sufferings of samsara and particularly the oceans of sufferings of the hell realm, the oceans of sufferings of the preta realm, the oceans of sufferings of the animal realm, the oceans of sufferings of the human realm, the oceans of sufferings of the sura realm, the oceans of sufferings of the asura realm and the oceans of sufferings of the intermediate state, over and over again without end.”

There is no worse, more harmful, more frightening, or more dangerous thought than the self-cherishing thought, considering all the harm it has done in the past and all the harm it will cause in the future, without end. It is the self-cherishing thought that brings every difficulty to all the people in the world – from the beggar up to the king, prime minister, or billionaire. It brings a bad reputation,

whether you are high or low. It is due to self-cherishing thought that attachment, anger, all kinds of ignorance, and other delusions arise. Then you engage in actions that harm others because your only goal is to achieve happiness for yourself. You take advantage of others by harming, cheating or deceiving them, giving them hardships and difficulties, and making them experience undesirable situations.

If you constantly follow the self-cherishing thought, as well as attachment and anger, then whatever actions you do towards others is never positive but only negative. You cause others to suffer and, as a result, receive every kind of bad reputation; you have to go to prison, you are fined, you go through court cases, you are sued and lose so much money.

Take the example of alcoholics. They waste their whole life. They are not able to practice meditation, to live righteously, or even to lead a normal person's life. They can't do their job: they harm their body and they harm their family. When their minds are out of control they start fighting and beat the family. They go crazy and even kill others and endanger their own lives. Their whole life becomes like this; very sad, very hallucinated.

It is similar with people who steal, doing it over and over again because of following the self-cherishing thought instead of practicing renunciation and contentment. They constantly make problems for themselves. Again and again they get into trouble with the police and earn a bad reputation.

Even though you don't want to suffer all these different kinds of punishment, you have to experience them again and again. Even though you don't want all these difficulties to happen, again and again you have to face them. Even if nobody else kills you, you end up killing yourself by committing suicide. When emotional problems come and you can't handle them, the easiest, immediate conclusion is to kill yourself. There is no space in your mind to think of another solution. When non-virtuous and immoral actions have been done and negative karma has been collected, then emotional problems come. At that time your luck is low,

your good karma is weak and your negative karma is heavy, so it is easy to receive harm from spirits who influence your mind, to kill or think of suicide. It makes people think about jumping to their death and doing all sorts of things that normally they would never think of. It is the same with attachment and anger – when you follow the self-cherishing thought you can't control these negative minds. These are some of the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought.

Another example is the way so many people in the world suffer from relationship problems. They experience all these different problems one after another, and again it is very clear that this is due to the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. All the problems that we experience in relationships are due to self-cherishing thought. It is because of self-cherishing that attachment rises, and by following it, people kill their husband, their wife, or other people.

On a larger scale, self-cherishing is the cause of all wars. War is a very clear example of self-cherishing. Self-cherishing invades one person's mind and heart, along with pride and attachment. Then that person uses their power and wealth to harm and kill many millions of people in this world. By doing so, that person collects so much unimaginable negative karma that it is difficult to see how they could ever come back to the human realm again. It is difficult to imagine how they could ever escape the lower realms and take an ordinary human rebirth again, and it is difficult to imagine the inconceivably heavy sufferings that they will have to experience for eons and eons. Not only that, but when there is a war many millions of other human beings suffer. The number of animals that suffer is even greater.

Even when Dharma practitioners make mistakes and are unable to correctly devote to the virtuous friend, this is also due to the self-cherishing thought. If you let go of the self-cherishing thought and surrender to the virtuous friend, then you can correctly devote yourself to the virtuous friend. If you follow the self-cherishing thought instead of following the virtuous friend, then

the self-cherishing thought doesn't like to engage in practices or follow the advice of the virtuous friend. So it is following what the self-cherishing thought wants that makes you break the advice, give rise to heresy, anger, and negative thoughts to the virtuous friend and harm the virtuous friend. All the obstacles to practicing Dharma, generating realizations and quickly achieving liberation and enlightenment are due to the self-cherishing thought. Self-cherishing thought creates problems for you and due to self-cherishing thought, you are unable to practice and instead make mistakes with the virtuous friend.

From this, you can see very clearly the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought. It harms the root of the path - correctly devoting to the virtuous friend - which in turn harms all the realizations up to enlightenment. Self-cherishing harms you by preventing you from being able to liberate and enlighten numberless sentient beings. In this way, it interferes with and harms the welfare of numberless sentient beings.

There are countless other ways that self-cherishing harms our Dharma practice. For example, *shamatha* or calm abiding, the higher training of concentration, is the basis for the higher training of wisdom, great insight, and also the basis for achieving the arya path - the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, which directly ceases all the defilements, both the disturbing thoughts obscuration and the simultaneously-born obscuration. Without this wisdom directly perceiving emptiness one cannot achieve liberation, the state of everlasting happiness.

Self-cherishing thought creates obstacles for us to achieve shamatha. First of all, self-cherishing causes desire and attachment to arise towards this life. It makes us afraid of taking vows or precepts, so we have no interest in them and reject them. Then, even if we do take vows, self-cherishing doesn't allow us to live purely in them. Not being able to live purely in the vows is yet another shortcoming of self-cherishing.

Since self-cherishing interferes with our practice of pure mo-

rality, it harms our ability to achieve shamatha, calm abiding meditation. Once we have one-pointed concentration, we can concentrate as long as we wish because our minds are free from scattering thought and sinking thought, which are the two obstacles to perfect concentration. Even while we are attempting to gain calm abiding, self-cherishing doesn't allow us to be successful. It gives us many obstacles, many emotional thoughts, and then we are not able to continue or complete the meditation. These obstacles, the emotional negative thoughts and particularly attachment, are all related to self-cherishing. Not only that, but great anger can arise due to the self-cherishing thought, which then turns into *rlung* disease<sup>36</sup> and becomes harmful. So again, you can see very clearly the shortcomings of the self-cherishing thought.

When we follow the self-cherishing thought and engage in many negative actions out of attachment, particularly the attachment that clings to this life, it obscures the mind from seeing the ultimate nature, emptiness. Self-cherishing interferes with our attempts to realize emptiness, by not allowing us to meditate and causing laziness. Then we become attached to negative activities, to the deeds of this life, actions governed by attachment, pride, and so forth. We spend a lot of time and energy on these non-virtuous actions, the works of this life, and have no interest or energy to bear hardships to practice Dharma – to do the practices of listening, reflection, and meditation. Self-cherishing thought makes a lot of excuses and brings a lot of distractions. It becomes an obstacle to learn even a single subject or listen to the Buddha's profound teachings.

When we recite even just one mala of OM MANI PÄDME HUM, self-cherishing prevents us from having a virtuous motivation at the beginning. Or if we do manage to have a virtuous attitude, particularly the motivation of bodhichitta, our minds are filled with distraction during the actual body of the recitation. There is no concentration because our mind keeps going to objects of desire and so forth. All of this is due to self-cherishing thought, seeking happiness for the self. Then at the end of the recitation there is no dedication. Even if there was some concentration or

visualization during the recitation, at the end we don't dedicate, or we dedicate but we don't dedicate to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. Or even if we do dedicate that way, we don't seal the dedication with emptiness, so the action is done, but with ignorance. In the thought transformation teachings this is referred to as "abandoning poisonous food." When we seal the dedication of merits with emptiness, the practice of "abandoning poisonous food" is done. So you see how it is difficult to have a complete virtue with pure motivation, perfect concentration and perfect dedication. This is an example of trying to engage in just one virtue.

What makes our lives empty is the self-cherishing thought. When the self-cherishing thought is abiding in our heart there is no place for bodhichitta motivation, so there is no cause for enlightenment: the great success, the peerless happiness of enlightenment. Then all of our activities, including meditation and whatever else we do, even the normal activities of eating, sleeping, going to work, and so forth don't become even the cause to achieve liberation, freeing ourselves forever from the oceans of samsaric suffering. Our lives become totally empty and meaningless because everything is done with self-cherishing thought, which is an obstacle to achieving enlightenment.

Self-cherishing causes us to have attachment to seeking future lives' samsaric happiness, and because of that, there is no renunciation to this life's samsara. This means all the activities we do, including listening, reflection, meditation, and ordinary daily activities such as eating, sleeping, and going to work, don't become even the cause to achieve liberation for ourselves, freeing ourselves forever from the oceans of samsaric suffering. So life becomes totally empty and meaningless.

Everything we do becomes the cause of samsara. Listening, reflection, meditation, eating, walking, sleeping, going to work, whatever we do, it all becomes the cause of samsara. This means it all becomes the cause to die and be reborn and suffer all over again in one of the six realms. We have already experienced this numberless times in the past.

If you really think about this carefully, you won't be able to stand it at all. You won't be able to stand the fact that in this life you are unable to stop the continuity of reincarnation. This makes your life even more empty and meaningless.

Due to self-cherishing thought and attachment clinging to this life, which is a non-virtuous thought, whatever actions we do – whether it is listening, reflection, meditation, or the normal activities of eating, walking, sitting, and going to work – all become non-virtuous actions and bring the result of suffering. Even if there is some temporary, very short-term pleasure in this life, it is just the result of previous good karma. The condition for that pleasure to ripen in this life is an action done with attachment clinging to this life and therefore, it is non-virtuous. For example, if you steal someone else's money and use that to buy food, a house, and a car, you may receive some pleasure, but the method of attaining this is non-virtuous because of the motivation and so the future result will only be suffering. Like this, since even in one day your mind is completely preoccupied with the self-cherishing thought abiding in your heart, this precious human life becomes totally empty. It is completely empty and much more meaningless than the previous example. For weeks, months, and years your whole life becomes empty and meaningless. This is the greatest loss, the saddest thing. Then, when death suddenly comes and you look back over your life, you feel that it has been totally empty and meaningless, filled only with negative karma.

You had the most precious human life and could have achieved anything, any happiness that you wished for, any of the great meanings.<sup>37</sup> After this life you could have been born in a pure land of Buddha, where you can become enlightened, or at least as a bodhisattva in one of the lower realms, able to do extensive works for the benefit of sentient beings. You could have received a perfect human rebirth qualified by the eight freedoms and ten richnesses and again had the opportunity to meet the Buddhadharmas – the Lesser Vehicle teachings, the Mahayana paramita teachings, and the Mahayana tantric teachings, which are so rich

and incredible. You could have had the opportunity to meet all of these teachings, study them, generate all the realizations and achieve enlightenment quickly, without taking too much time. You could have received a precious human body with the seven qualities or a human body endowed with the four Mahayana Dharma wheels, not just in the next life, but for many lifetimes to come until enlightenment is achieved.

Especially, you could have received a precious human body endowed with the eight ripening qualities, a powerful body and mind, like Milarepa and those many other great yogis who achieved enlightenment in one brief lifetime. With such a powerful body and mind, one can bear hardships to practice Dharma and from that one can really have great development on the path to enlightenment. Not only that, but in future lives, as one achieves higher and higher paths, one is able to offer deeper and deeper and more extensive benefits to sentient beings. So you had the potential for all of this, but you didn't take the opportunity to use it. You didn't use it. You missed out. And all of this is due to the self-cherishing thought.

Now you can see how your whole life has become totally meaningless and empty. Not only that, but filled with negative karma. Your life has only been used to create the cause to continuously experience the general sufferings of samsara and particularly the sufferings of the lower realms.

Therefore, you should decide not to allow yourself to come under the control of the self-cherishing thought, but to kick it out immediately, cast it off, and renounce from the heart the great demon of self-cherishing.

As it is mentioned by Nagarjuna:

When a fire spark jumps on one's head or clothing, immediately one shakes it off and throws it away, not allowing it to remain there for a second. Like that, engage in the practice of immediately abandoning the self-cherishing thought the moment it arises.

In *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds*, the great bodhisattva Shantideva says:

It is easy; even if I am burned, killed, or my head is cut off,  
I will never surrender, whatever the circumstances,  
To the enemy, the disturbing thought.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Fourth Power; the Power of Prayer*

The great enlightened being Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo explained that the fourth power, the power of prayer, doesn't mean praying to be born in a pure land of Buddha; rather it means praying to take upon yourself all the sufferings, different defilements, and negative karmas of all sentient beings, and also praying to generate bodhichitta.<sup>39</sup>

Make strong prayers to never fall under the control of the delusions and the self-cherishing thought. Pray: "In all circumstances - happy or suffering, good or bad - and at all times - at death, in the intermediate state and in all future lives - I will never allow myself to fall under the control of the delusions, self-grasping and the self-cherishing thought. I will never under any circumstance separate myself from bodhichitta."

Pray also: "May I be able to remember bodhichitta my whole life, at the time of death, in the intermediate state and in all future lives. May I be able to practice in order to meet again the Guru who reveals the teachings on thought transformation and bodhichitta."

You can die while meditating fully on bodhichitta or while meditating on emptiness. If you are meditating on emptiness, in emptiness there is no such thing as birth and death, so try to die with the mind in that state of emptiness. You can think that: "Death appears to be real and existing from its own side and I believe it to exist in this way, but actually this is hallucination. There is no such thing. It is totally empty."

Just keep the mind in that state.

### *The Fifth Power; the Power of Training*

The great enlightened Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo explained that in normal life you should keep training your mind in bodhichitta. When your mind is thoroughly habituated to bodhichitta, then at the time of death, due to the force of this mind-training you meditate on bodhichitta while trying to transfer your consciousness. Pabongkha Rinpoche explains that this is the power of training and there is nothing more than this, nothing extra.<sup>40</sup>

The way to transfer the consciousness by the power of the conduct of the body is to lie down in the lion position, while recollecting that the Buddha passed away to the sorrowless state in this position. It is very helpful to remember the Buddha because it plants the seed of enlightenment and immediately protects you from being born in the lower realms. Recollecting the Buddha also makes it easy not to be controlled by delusion and easy to give rise to virtuous thoughts.

Lie with your head towards the north and on your right side while resting your right cheek on your right hand. Block your right nostril with the small finger of your right hand so no breath can go through. Place your left hand over your left thigh and breathe in and out through your left nostril while doing tonglen.<sup>41</sup>

Even just adopting this conduct of lying down on the bed on your right side in the position of the lion, as the Buddha did when passing away, can make a big difference to the way you die. It makes it much easier for you to be reborn in a pure land of Buddha.

If you wonder how it is possible to be born in a pure land of Buddha by meditating on bodhichitta, the proof is in the story of Kadampa Geshe Chekawa.<sup>42</sup> Kadampa Geshe Chekawa was always praying to be born in the hell realms for sentient beings, but when he was about to pass away he asked his attendant to make offerings on the altar and said, “Today I have not been successful. I have always prayed to be born in the hell realms for sentient beings but today that is not happening. Instead the pure lands are appearing!” There is a similar story about Geshe Potowa.

There are more stories, too. In the past, a mother and her daughter were swept away by a river. They both generated a good heart and were reborn in Tushita pure land.

In the south of Tibet, in Lokha, where Milarepa built the nine-story tower and where the Kadampa geshe established hermitages and monasteries, a boat made of animal skin was overloaded and about to sink. A messenger on that boat generated a good heart and jumped into the water to save the others. He didn't die and a rainbow came from his body.

So there is no doubt that if you generate bodhichitta – even just a created bodhichitta<sup>43</sup> and not the actual one – you will be reborn in the best place. Kadampa Geshe Chekawa said:

There are so many famous instructions given for transferring the consciousness but none of these is greater or more wonderful than this technique.<sup>44</sup>

There is no more wonderful technique than this, because even if you pray to be born in the hell realms you will be born in a pure land of Buddha. So whenever experiencing dangers such as death and sickness, or whatever undesirable things happen in this life, such as having a bad reputation, receiving criticism and so forth, you must always remember to apply the thought transformation practice of taking and giving.

Furthermore, the great enlightened Pabongkha Dechen Nyinpo explained that even though we think that phowa, the special tantric technique of transferring consciousness to a pure land, is a great thing, and that to recite the mantras HIK and PHAT and have the signs of having achieved phowa is very important, actually if we train ourselves by reciting HIK many times without any visualization, we may still have the sign of transferring the consciousness at the crown, but that is due to the action of the wind and nothing to aspire to. The lojong technique of transferring the consciousness by thought transformation doesn't use the mantras HIK and PHAT, but transferring the consciousness using thought

transformation, is the most profound of all the tantric techniques of consciousness transference.<sup>45</sup>

Even if you practice other phowa techniques you may still doubt whether it will close the door to the lower realms at the time of death, but if you practice transferring the consciousness with these five powers it is definite that you will never be reborn in a bad birth place – that is, in the lower realms.

So here, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama always mentions, the best way of dying is with bodhichitta. Dying with bodhichitta is a self-supporting death. That is the conclusion.

### *Afterword*

This advice is for Buddhists. On the basis of this, other guidance can be put together for non-Buddhists, non-believers, or those who have never heard of Buddhism or studied it. When you are helping others who are not Buddhist, you can use this advice as a basis for explaining what to do, then choose and select from it what will be most helpful and fit that person. This is how the five powers can help.

The reason why I have elaborated on the five powers here, even though they are not elaborated upon in the teachings, is because in this advice I am only dealing with the five powers at the time of death. In the teachings, the explanation of the five powers at the time of death is preceded by the teaching on the five powers to be applied during one's lifetime. This preliminary teaching contains the subjects of bodhichitta meditation, exchanging self for others, the shortcomings of cherishing the self, and how to integrate the five powers into one's life. So if you are already familiar with these subjects there is no need to give much explanation about them here, you can just focus on the very essential points. This is why I have elaborated on the five powers here, but how people use this depends on the individual. Even though there are long explanations for some of the powers, still one has to come to the point, to the conclusion.

## Notes

1. Editor: a short teaching on both of these can be found in Pabongkha Rinpoche, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, pp. 560-563. The whole graduated path to enlightenment (*lam-rim*) is the preliminary teaching to these five powers.
2. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The title of this text Guru Puja literally means “Pleasing the Guru.” It is a practice of the most secret highest yoga tantra, which brings enlightenment in one brief lifetime of this degenerate time or even within a certain number of years.
3. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: i.e. the Paramita path.
4. Guru Puja, vv.111-112.
5. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: The clear light is the direct cause of the dharma-kaya and the illusory body is the direct cause of the rupakaya.
6. *Liberation*, p. 560.
7. Lama Zopa Rinpoche translates this as the “six gone beyond.” Also known as the six perfections, they are: giving, ethics, patience, perseverance, concentration, and wisdom.
8. Tib. *kye kyang*. This is an obscure word, but Lama Zopa Rinpoche thinks it means holding a party and inviting people to come, then giving things away to them.
9. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: If one is going to give things to the family it should be something that does not cause them to quarrel.
10. From the “Collection of One Hundred Teachings of Thought Transformation of the Kadampa Geshe.”
11. According to Buddhist philosophy, there are five sense consciousnesses which take place on the basis of the five sense organs, those of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. They are not the same as the sense organs but dependent upon them. The sixth consciousness is that of the mind.
12. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: the suffering of pain, suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering, which is the “aggregates having fault” (Tibetan: *sag che kyi püng po*), contaminated by the seed of

delusions. From this seed or imprint delusions arise, creating negative karma that makes beings reincarnate in the hell realms etc. The continuity of the “aggregates having fault” takes rebirth in samsara, circling from life to life.

13. *Liberation*, p. 561-2.
14. *Liberation*, pp. 562-3.
15. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: gelong, which means “virtue-beggar.”
16. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: “a part of Tibet.”
17. *Liberation*, p. 432.
18. The eight ripened qualities are: a long life, a handsome body, birth in a high family, great wealth, trustworthy speech, great power and fame, being born male, and being strong in mind and body.
19. These four are: living in a harmonious place, relying upon holy beings, being able to collect merit and make prayers.
20. These seven are: better family lineage, attractive physical features, long life, good health, good fortune, wealth and good wisdom.
21. Chapter VIII, v121.
22. *Ibid*, vv.122-124.
23. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: the eighth hot hell.
24. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: i.e. one should blame it.
25. This section is expanded by the editor at the suggestion of Kyabje Zopa Rinpoche, the main point being to contemplate the faults of the body in detail.
26. Lama Zopa Rinpoche also suggests the alternative use of “dedication” or “motivation” instead of “intention” for the name of this power.
27. These last two paragraphs are the translation of a note written in Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s text. Rinpoche’s comment is that it could have been an explanation given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.
28. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: i.e. the main delusions and twenty secondary delusions.
29. Lama Zopa Rinpoche: or “remorse.”
30. Chapter VIII, vv.135-6
31. *Ibid*, vv. 131-2
32. *Ibid*, vv.129-30.
33. Stephen Batchelor’s translation of Shantideva’s *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds (Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life)* concludes this verse with the line “look at the difference between them!”

34. i.e. the “three scopes” of the graduated path to enlightenment or lam-rim.
35. i.e. the very first realizations that are preliminaries to these three “scopes.”
36. Tib. *rlung*: wind or air. *rlung* disease refers to an imbalance of the energy winds in the body.
37. The great meanings are the goals of the three scopes, i.e. a good rebirth, liberation, enlightenment.
38. Chapter VII, v.62. The meaning is indicating that it would be better to experience any of these terrible circumstances than to allow oneself to come under the control of the disturbing thoughts.
39. See *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p. 615.
40. *Liberation*, p. 561.
41. i.e. the practice of “taking and giving,” see *Ultimate Healing*, Chapter 14.
42. This and the following stories are told by Pabongkha Rinpoche, *Liberation*, p. 563.
43. A created bodhichitta is one generated through deliberate effort; actual bodhichitta is an effortless mind-generation.
44. i.e. of the five powers.
45. This and the following paragraph cited in *Liberation*, p. 563.

*References:*

Pabongkha Rinpoche; *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand* (edited by Trijang Rinpoche and translated by Michael Richards); Wisdom Publications, Boston; 1991, 1993, 1997, 2006.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche; *Ultimate Healing*; Wisdom Publications, Boston: 2001.

*Colophon:*

Extracted from *Heart Advice for Death & Dying*, an FPMT Education Publication, 2010 edition.

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