

## LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE'S ADVICE FOR LAM-RIM

### LAM-RIM MEDITATIONS

The most important and best way to benefit others is to develop your heart and mind on the path to enlightenment. When you complete the path to enlightenment you will be fully qualified to liberate numberless sentient beings from oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to full enlightenment. This is what sentient beings need and this is what is most beneficial for them. There is no greater success than this. This depends upon your actualizing the path to enlightenment by meditating on the lam-rim.

Base all your lam-rim meditations on guru devotion and meditate every day for whatever length of time you can—15, 20, 30 minutes or an hour—until you receive stable realizations.

To gain a background understanding of and for detailed information on the lam-rim and how to meditate on it, read *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, *The Middle Length Lam-rim*,<sup>1</sup> by Lama Tsongkhapa or the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, with commentary by Geshe Sopa, from beginning to end. Some parts might be difficult to understand without a teacher, especially those on emptiness, but you can still read it; that will leave a positive imprint on your mind and will help for future understanding. Make a note of things you don't understand and when you meet a geshe or senior student you can ask your questions.

For everyday use I recommend Geshe Rabten's *Essential Nectar*, which provides instruction on daily lam-rim meditation and also contains the root text by Yeshe Tsondu.

The other way to meditate is to follow the outlines from the *Great Treatise*, the *Middle Length Lam-rim* or *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*.<sup>2</sup> It is very beneficial to memorize the lam-rim outlines, which is what most serious Tibetan lam-rim meditators do, and use them as the basis of your meditations.

### HOW TO DO DAILY LAM-RIM MEDITATION SESSION

You can base your lam-rim meditation on a guru yoga practice such as the *Six-Session Guru Yoga*, *Guru Puja* or *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, or on a lam-rim prayer such as *The Foundation of all Good Qualities*, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, *Calling the Guru from Afar*, *Hymns of Experience* etc. When you reach the verse in the prayer that accords to where you are in your lam-rim meditations, this is where you stop and do the meditation. You can also do the meditation before the guru absorbs into you.

### HOW TO MEDITATE ACCORDING TO THE TIME PERIOD

First go through the outlines on the subject you're going to meditate on and divide them up according to the time you will spend on that subject. If you don't finish one day, next time pick up from where you left off.

According to the number of months or weeks that you have received on each lam-rim topic, this is what you mainly focus on for that length of time, but this does not mean that you meditate only on that subject. It just means that this is your main focus.

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<sup>1</sup> Study materials for the *Middle Length Lam-rim* as well as the root text can be found here:

[http://www.fpmt.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=244&Itemid=1505#\\_Stages\\_of\\_the\\_Path](http://www.fpmt.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=244&Itemid=1505#_Stages_of_the_Path)

<sup>2</sup> You can get the lam-rim outlines from [materials@fpmt.org](mailto:materials@fpmt.org).

The length of your meditation sessions is up to you. You can meditate daily for fifteen minutes, half an hour or an hour or two according to your situation. If you have more time during the day or are in retreat, you can do two, three or four sessions a day. The most important thing is continuity; this really helps. If you meditate a lot one day then take a few days off, your mind won't develop continuously.

Regardless where you are up to in the lam-rim, you should still do *one meditation on guru devotion* and *one meditation on emptiness* every day, using any unmistakable text, such as the *Heart Sutra* or any authentic Mahamudra teaching.

When you have finished on cycle, start from the beginning again. Continue in this way until you have gained stable realizations.

#### LAM-RIM REALIZATIONS

Meditate on guru devotion for as many months or years as it takes for you see the one guru as all the buddhas and one buddha as all your gurus—complete oneness; no separation. You must realize this from the bottom of your heart and it has to last for not just a few days, but for weeks, months and years, however long it takes for you to gain the stable realization. After that, you don't have to spend as much time meditating on it but you still need to continue meditating on guru devotion to stabilize it.

Then meditate on the lower graduated path, from the precious human rebirth up to karma, focusing mainly on impermanence and death, which is the most important meditation because it helps you gain realization of all the others.

When you are meditating on the perfect human rebirth try to achieve the various realizations within the perfect human rebirth one by one, no matter how long it takes, however many weeks, months or years it takes for you to gain a stable realization.

When you have realized the perfect human rebirth, you feel that this life is most precious, like a wish-granting jewel. If you have a wish-granting jewel you receive whatever material object you pray for; when you realize the perfect human rebirth you understand that it is much more precious than numberless wish-granting jewels, even more precious than the whole sky filled with numberless wish-granting-jewels, and naturally feel like that all day and night.

This is the feeling you need to generate through analytical meditation; when it arises, focus on it single-pointedly with fixed meditation. Feeling deeply that this perfect human rebirth is incredibly precious, hold that feeling. It's wish fulfilling, unbelievable; through it you can achieve any happiness—that of this and future lives, liberation from samsara and enlightenment. It is most precious because you have met the Mahayana teachings, met the sutra teachings, met the tantra teachings and met the virtuous friend. It is more precious than limitless skies of diamonds, gold and wish-granting jewels. Also you have met the stainless teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa; this is even more precious than skies filled with wish-granting jewels.

This perfect human rebirth can bring you any happiness whatsoever but a wish-granting jewel cannot even prevent rebirth in the lower realms let alone help you achieve the ultimate happinesses of liberation or enlightenment. So you should have the strong feeling of how unbelievably, unbelievably precious this life is and this feeling should arise naturally for not just a few days but for weeks, months and years.

The next meditation is on the great usefulness of the perfect human rebirth. When you realize this, you can never engage in meaningless activities for even a minute or a second. Should any of your actions not become Dharma you have a feeling of incredible loss; you feel it's an incredible loss to waste even a minute of this life. Keep meditating on this until you achieve a stable realization of this topic that lasts for weeks, months and years, no matter how long it takes.

Next meditate on how difficult it will be to find a perfect human rebirth again. When you realize this, again, you can't waste even an hour, a minute or a second of this life. If minutes or seconds of this life pass without your practicing Dharma you feel as if you've lost a big sack of gold, as if you've just thrown away millions of dollars. Meditate until this feeling arises naturally and remains stable for weeks, months and years.

When you meditate on impermanence and death you realize that you can die this week, even today. Every time you leave your house, think that you might die before you get back. If you're inside, think that you might die before you get the chance to leave. Death can arrive any minute, any hour. Practice this until the realization of the imminence of death arises naturally and remains stable for weeks, months and years, not just for a day or two. In this way try to realize impermanence and death. Along with this, try not to be attached to your family, possessions or even your body. These realizations should accompany each other.

Also do the full nine-round death meditation, thinking that death is certain, its time uncertain and that nothing but Dharma can help. Therefore, you have to practice Dharma right now and practice only Dharma. But practicing Dharma doesn't mean only sitting in meditation. If it did you wouldn't be able to practice Dharma when going out, working, eating or sitting on the toilet. You can practice Dharma no matter what you're doing; it's a big mistake to think otherwise.

The next topic is refuge. Recollect the qualities of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and totally rely on them. In your mind, rely on nothing else. Take refuge only in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. After reflecting on their qualities they should become the most important object of refuge in your life and always remain in your heart. That feeling should arise naturally and remain stable for weeks, months and years.

Then try to realize karma. Even small positive karmas should be created and small negative karmas avoided. Meditate on the four outlines of karma.<sup>3</sup> Remember, you definitely have to experience the result of any karma you create—any karma created never gets lost and has to be experienced. Understanding this, you abandon even the smallest negative karmas and practice even the smallest positive ones. This is very important.

The realization of the suffering of the lower realms is that you can't stand not purifying negative karma even for even a minute or a second.

The realization of refuge is to totally rely on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. For example, if you have cancer, you look for the best medicine, the best doctor and the best support in the world. Here, in our life, we have to rely on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha strongly, all the time, and not rely on worldly or mundane beings, spirits or friends. Refuge is completely relying solely on Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, who are beyond samsara.

The realization of karma is feeling that even a small negative karma created is very heavy and must be purified without even a second's delay, as quickly as possible, and that it is important to create even a small good karma; that nothing is too small but is extremely important. You put all your energy into purifying negativities and creating good karma, with a sense of great urgency.

You have realized renunciation when you don't have even the slightest interest in the happiness of this life, no clinging at all, and seek only the happiness of future lives, liberation or the happiness of others. Then meditate on the graduated path of the middle capable being.

When you are meditating on the graduated path of the middle capable being, following the lam-rim outline, you renounce both this life's samsara and that of future lives by meditating on the different types of suffering such as the three, six and eight and on the twelve links of dependent origination.

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<sup>3</sup> Karma is definite; karma is expandable; you can't experience the results of karma you have not created; karma created is never lost.

Once you have gained spontaneous renunciation of all of samsara, dedicate your life to realizing bodhicitta by meditating on the graduated path of the highest capable being. Following the lam-rim outline, meditate on the two techniques of generating bodhicitta—the sevenfold cause and effect meditation and the technique of exchanging self and others. When you have realized bodhicitta you don't have even the slightest thought of seeking your own happiness but want only the happiness of others, feeling like this day and night.

Then meditate on emptiness, using the different techniques.

In this way, please try to use your whole life to develop the lam-rim realizations.

#### GENERAL ADVICE MEDITATING ON THE LAM-RIM

Reciting a lam-rim prayer every day is the fundamental daily practice that renders each day of your life most meaningful. When you recite a lam-rim prayer mindfully from beginning to end, your recitation becomes a direct meditation on the entire path to enlightenment and leaves imprints, or seeds, of the realizations of the path on your mental continuum. With each recitation you draw closer to enlightenment and, therefore, closer to enlightening all sentient beings, which is the main goal of your life, the purpose of being alive. This is the unbelievable benefit of doing direct meditation on the lam-rim every day of your life.

There are various lam-rim prayers that you can recite in this way, such as Lama Tsongkhapa's *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, *Foundation of All Good Qualities* and *Lines of Experience* and Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo's long version of *Calling the Guru from Afar*. You can also meditate on any other prayer that contains the essence of the entire path. If it mentions the practice of tantra at the end, that is particularly good.

The more direct meditations on the entire lam-rim you do each day the more advantages you receive. If you have received a highest yoga tantra initiation, it's also good to recite a prayer of the graduated path of tantra, such as that found at the end of the long Yamantaka and Vajrayogini sadhanas. Again, if you recite it mindfully, it plants the seeds of the entire path in your mind.

Thus there are two different direct, or glance, meditations: the one on the lam-rim, which is the foundation of the common path, and the one on the tantric path, which is the extraordinary path. Practicing these helps prepare your mind for all the realizations of the path, perhaps in this life but definitely in a future one.

When you meditate on the lam-rim, bring into your meditation whatever teachings and other information you have learned from reading authentic Buddhist texts. This makes your meditation much more effective. When meditating on guru devotion, for example, you can augment the outline with whatever you have learned from studying various teachings on guru devotion. Similarly, you can enrich your meditation on the nature of samsara, bodhicitta, emptiness and so forth by studying different teachings on these topics. This makes your meditation more effective.

However, following your guru's instructions is what makes your meditation practice most productive in bringing quick realizations.

During the break times—which means your life between sessions of sitting meditation, not breaks from Dharma practice—whether you're standing, walking, sleeping or doing anything else, try to live with the experience generated by your morning lam-rim meditation. Live with a mind transformed by your daily meditation on guru devotion, impermanence and death, the meaningfulness of this life's body, the suffering nature of samsara, bodhicitta or emptiness—whatever was the main focus of that session.

By doing so, not only do you make your life highly meaningful during your sessions but also during the rest of the time. This is mainly because your lam-rim experience gives you a positive attitude and, as a result, you avoid creating negative actions; you are always careful to practice

Dharma and avoid creating negative karma. Thus all your actions become causes of liberation and enlightenment and, therefore, the remedy to samsara.

This instruction also to practice in between formal meditation sessions is extremely important—if you follow it, your sessions will help make your life during the breaks highly meaningful and fruitful. This is specifically what Lama Tsongkhapa meant when, in the *Foundation of All Good Qualities*, he talked about taking the essence of the precious human body day and night. His Holiness the Dalai Lama also explained that this verse means that we should live in the experience generated by our morning meditation and strongly recommended that we do so.

In this way whatever actions you do, when you are not sitting in meditation, should all be done with lam-rim. With your mind in lam-rim, you connect your normal daily actions with whatever lam-rim meditation you have done in the morning.

The very bottom line is to do all your actions with bodhicitta. That is the best, most meaningful way to think during your break-time. This makes your life most beneficial. With awareness keep your attitude and thoughts in bodhicitta, the thought of benefiting others, trying to do all the activities with that mind. Then everything you do becomes the cause of happiness.

Otherwise you finish up using your most precious life to create the cause of suffering. Your whole life becomes like that—so sad, the saddest thing. While you had every opportunity to attain enlightenment, the highest success, the most beneficial thing for all sentient beings, you wasted it instead.

If you can do this, even your working life becomes meditation. It will be unified with the Dharma and, especially, your lam-rim meditation. Your mind will always be peaceful and stable, not up and down; you will have peace, satisfaction and fulfillment in your life and will be able to benefit others more.

Of all practices, the main one is meditation on the lam-rim in order to gain lam-rim realizations. Tantric practice is secondary.

#### HOW TO SET UP YOUR PRACTICE DAY TO DAY

Start the morning by blessing your speech,<sup>4</sup> mala and other mantras.

Generate your motivation for the day by reciting different lam-rim prayers or reading the bodhisattva attitude<sup>5</sup> or bodhicitta mindfulness.<sup>6</sup>

As a daily practice you can do the *Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga*, *Guru Puja* or *Guru Shakyamuni Guru Yoga*. Within the guru yoga practice do your lam-rim meditation.

Whether you have been given a certain number of prostrations to do or not, it would be excellent if each morning you could do thirty-five or one hundred prostrations by reciting the names of the Thirty-Five Buddhas of Confession.

Before going to bed recite the long Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times or the short Vajrasattva mantra twenty-eight times with meditation on the four opponent powers. This is what makes it a perfect confession.

Then, at the end, make extensive dedication prayers using, for example, *The King of Prayers*, Lama Tsongkhapa's *Beginning, Middle and End*, the dedication chapter of Shantideva's *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the *Maitreya Buddha Prayer* or the *Blissful Realm Prayer*.

Then you can add in your different preliminary practices, as another session or in retreat and in this way gradually work through your practices.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://shop.fpmt.org/Taking-the-Essence-All-Day-and-Night\\_p\\_915.html](http://shop.fpmt.org/Taking-the-Essence-All-Day-and-Night_p_915.html).

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/advice/bodhisattva\\_attitude.php](http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/advice/bodhisattva_attitude.php).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.fpmt.org/component/content/article/51/235-bodhicitta-mindfulness.html>.

## ADDITIONAL ESSENTIAL PRACTICES THAT EVERYONE SHOULD DO

### 1) *Prostration to the Thirty-five Buddhas in the morning*

If possible, recite and prostrate to the Thirty-five Buddhas of Confession<sup>7</sup> three times every morning or whenever you can. That's 105 prostrations all together.

If you think about it you'll see how urgently we need to do this practice. Reciting these buddhas' names while bringing to mind your past negative karma purifies that karma. If you don't purify your negative karma you will not achieve a perfect human rebirth with eight freedoms and ten riches like the one you have now and will instead experience the opposite: rebirth in the suffering lower realms. Furthermore, if left unpurified, the negative karma you have created will increase exponentially within your mind (see below). Therefore it is extremely important that you purify it.

The express purpose for these thirty-five buddhas' existence is for sentient beings to purify the various different negative karmas they have created. Even reciting these buddhas' names just once purifies many eons of negative karma; it's like an atomic bomb in how extremely quickly and powerfully it destroys negative karma.

Lama Tsong Khapa did many hundreds of thousands of prostrations with this confession practice to the Thirty-five Buddhas in his cave at Olka, Tibet. Lama Atisha also did many prostrations every day, even when he was very old, as did many of the other lam-rim lineage lamas. As a result, they achieved many realizations.

Therefore the Thirty-five Buddhas practice should be an essential ingredient of your daily routine. It's the best thing you can do in order to be healthy and not have regrets in future.

### 2) *Vajrasattva recitation at night*

Before you go to bed each night, recite the Vajrasattva mantra<sup>8</sup> to prevent whatever negative karma you have created that day from multiplying. If you don't purify it in this way your negative karma will keep doubling and re-doubling day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year, up to the end of your life, and even one day's negative karma will become as huge and heavy as a mountain—in time, even one atom of unpurified negative karma can swell to the size of the earth.

Even though you may not necessarily create particularly heavy negative karmas, since unpurified negative karma increases exponentially in this way, even one small negative action can cause you to be reborn in the lower realms and experience great suffering for many eons. And because in the lower realms you continually create more and more negative karma, it is extremely difficult to be reborn back into the upper realms, which makes it almost impossible for you to practice Dharma. Therefore you *must* purify your negative karma every day.

Purifying negative karma makes it much easier to attain liberation and actualize the path to enlightenment. It also decreases your suffering and any obstacles that might arise. Purifying negative karma means that you won't have to experience the many eons of suffering in the lower realms.

We need to purify obstacles and delusions to achieve realizations on the path to enlightenment so that we can do perfect work for sentient beings, not just to bring them temporary happiness but to bring them ultimate happiness—liberation from samsara—so they never have to experience the sufferings of samsara again, and finally to bring them to full enlightenment. Attaining enlightenment

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<sup>7</sup> Teachings: [www.lamayeshe.com/index.php?sect=article&id=324](http://www.lamayeshe.com/index.php?sect=article&id=324).

Booklet: [http://shop.fpmt.org/Preliminary-Practice-of-Prostrations\\_p\\_506.html](http://shop.fpmt.org/Preliminary-Practice-of-Prostrations_p_506.html).

<sup>8</sup> See note 4, above.

means eradicating even the subtle mistakes of the mind and completely achieving all the realizations. In doing this we by the way purify this life's problems, such as relationship and health problems, all of which come from negative karma. Even disasters of the elements (earth, water, fire and wind) come from negative karma. Since all this negative karma is purified by the way, we don't have to experience catastrophes or health problems, such as cancer, or if we do, they are relatively minor.

This all depends on how strongly, continuously and perfectly you practice purification; this is the answer to your being free from all these sufferings.

The conclusion is that, even if you have completed the preliminary of reciting 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras, you can't just stop, relax and say, "I've finished my Vajrasattva preliminary; now I don't have to recite that mantra any more." You need to keep doing the long Vajrasattva mantra at least twenty-one times or the short one at least twenty-eight times a day in order to keep purifying your negative karma and preventing it from multiplying.

### *3) Medicine Buddha mantra*

The Medicine Buddha mantra<sup>9</sup> is recited for success. Since we have many problems and want to succeed we need to recite the Medicine Buddha mantra every day. It can help us eliminate the problems, unhappiness and suffering we don't want and gain the success, happiness, inner growth and realizations of the path that we do want.

Lord Buddha told his attendant Ananda that even animals who hear the Medicine Buddha mantra will never be reborn in the lower realms. The highly attained Kyabje Chöden Rinpoche, who has completed the entire path to enlightenment, said recently that if you recite the Medicine Buddha mantra at the time of death you will be reborn in the pure land. Therefore, it is to be recited not only for healing but also to benefit people and animals all the time, whether they're living or dying.

If you recite the Medicine Buddha mantra every day you will purify your negative karma and this will help you never to be reborn in the lower realms. If you don't purify your negative karma, then when you die you will be reborn in the lower realms as a hell being, hungry ghost or animal and will have to suffer again and again without end. Therefore you need to purify your negative karma right now. If you cannot bear even the present suffering of the human realm—which is blissful joy compared to that of the lower realms—how will you be able to bear the intense suffering of the lower realms, which is unimaginably unbearable, lasts for an incredible length of time and a billion times worse than all the human sufferings put together.

Since reciting the Medicine Buddha mantra saves you from all these sufferings it is much more precious than skies of gold, diamonds, wish-fulfilling jewels and zillions and zillions of dollars. Material wealth counts for nothing because it can't purify negative karma. Even if you possessed that much wealth, simply reciting or even hearing the Medicine Buddha mantra just once would be far more precious because it would leave an imprint of the entire path to enlightenment on your mind, help you gain realizations of the path, eradicate all your gross and subtle defilements and cause you to achieve enlightenment.

The Medicine Buddha mantra can help you liberate numberless sentient beings from the vast oceans of suffering and bring them to enlightenment, so you should recite it with absolute trust in the Medicine Buddha, knowing that he will completely take care of your life and heal you in every way and that he is always with you—in your heart, on your crown and right there in front of you. There is not one second that the Medicine Buddha does not see or have compassion for you.

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<sup>9</sup> To download the complete practice, see [www.fpmt.org/education/prayers/mbpujaltrbklt.pdf](http://www.fpmt.org/education/prayers/mbpujaltrbklt.pdf); for the practice booklet, see [http://shop.fpmt.org/Medicine-Buddha--The-Wish-Fulfilling-Jewel\\_p\\_199.html](http://shop.fpmt.org/Medicine-Buddha--The-Wish-Fulfilling-Jewel_p_199.html).



#### 4) *Chenrezig practice and recitation of the Chenrezig mantra*

All students, old and new, should practice Chenrezig, the Compassionate-Eye Looking One. Doing his recitation-meditation brings all happiness, temporary—the happiness of this and all future lives—and ultimate—the happiness of liberation and enlightenment—to the numberless sentient beings, yourself included. Reciting the Chenrezig mantra brings skies of benefit, especially if you do it with bodhicitta.

The practice and realization of bodhicitta is the most important thing in life because it fulfils not only your own wishes for happiness but also those of all other sentient beings—each and every one.

With bodhicitta you can completely dry up the ocean of samsaric suffering and its cause and achieve liberation and enlightenment because it helps you gain the wisdom directly realizing emptiness, which eradicates both gross and subtle defilements.

Bodhicitta is what allows *arya* bodhisattvas to abandon the sufferings of samsara, including rebirth, old age, sickness and death, just by achieving the right-seeing path. Even though arhats of the lesser vehicle path have the wisdom directly realizing emptiness and many other inconceivable qualities, they still have the remainder of the suffering aggregates.

Bodhicitta is the door to the Mahayana path to enlightenment and the root of the limitless qualities of the Buddha's holy body, speech and mind. The courageous bodhisattvas are able to bear all the hardships of working for sentient beings, no matter how great they are, even if it costs them their life. Since bodhisattvas see how beneficial it is to bear hardship in order to work for others in this way they are not only able to bear it but experience limitless joy as well. For bodhisattvas, even dying as a result of working for others is like drinking nectar; doing so, they experience the delight of a swan plunging into a cool pond on a hot day.

Bodhisattvas abandon the thought of achieving their own liberation from the ocean of samsaric suffering and its cause—delusion and karma—as one discards used toilet paper, having not an atom of interest in it. They have only aversion to gaining the ultimate happiness of nirvana for themselves alone.

Bodhicitta allows bodhisattvas to complete the accumulation of the two types of merit—transcendent wisdom and virtue—and is the cause of their achieving the two holy bodies: *rupakaya*—the holy body of form—and *dharmakaya*—the holy body of mind—which is the ultimate goal. The sole purpose of achieving these two holy bodies is to be able to do perfect work for all sentient beings. Even though there are numberless sentient beings and it can take three countless great eons to complete the accumulations to bring every single one to enlightenment, what gives bodhisattvas the determination to do so is bodhicitta.

No matter how many eons it takes to have one sentient being generate a single virtuous thought, the bodhisattva will try to make it happen without being discouraged. In the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*, Maitreya said, “In order to ripen even one virtuous thought, the bodhisattva, the child of the Victorious Ones whose mind is stabilized in supreme perseverance for highly ripening the sentient beings, does not get discouraged, even if it takes thousands of ten million eons.”

So you can see that the determination that drives bodhisattvas to bear hardship and work continuously for sentient beings comes from bodhicitta, which itself comes from the root of great compassion. This root, compassion, fuels the skies of benefit that derive from bodhicitta, like rocket fuel powers a spaceship or electricity generated by a power station lights up an entire city.

It is also great compassion that has already brought numberless sentient beings to enlightenment in the past, brings numberless sentient beings to enlightenment at present and will bring numberless sentient beings to enlightenment in future; great compassion is what makes numberless buddhas do perfect, unmistakable work for numberless sentient beings until they achieve enlightenment; and great



compassion is what causes all buddhas to have the omniscient mind and perfect power, which is what they need to benefit all sentient beings.

Similarly, your own great compassion will become the source of peace and happiness of numberless sentient beings—the source of all their temporary and ultimate happiness—including the beings in this world and the country where you live, and your own family: parents, companion, children and, lastly, yourself.

Without compassion in your heart all you have is ego, which both directly and indirectly harms all sentient beings, including those in this world and your country, and your own family: parents, companion, children and yourself. The more you can practice compassion, the greater will be the peace and happiness in your heart and in your life.

Your compassion is the source of happiness of even the people and animals you encounter in everyday life. Without compassion there are personality ego-clashes and many other problems—anger, jealousy and the like. Without compassion your life is overwhelmed by problems, like a mouse trapped in a cage and killed, an elephant stuck in the mud and suffocated, a fly caught in a spider’s web and eaten, or a moth attracted by a flame and drowned in hot candle wax. Your life is enmeshed in problems and continues in that way until you die like a moth in a flame. That’s why you need to practice compassion; compassion is the most important Dharma practice you can do, the most important meditation for you to practice.

Living and working with compassion is the best thing you can do. Then, when you experience problems, you can experience them for others, use them to develop compassion for others. Thus you use your problems to achieve enlightenment—your problems become the path to enlightenment.

Similarly, when you are sick from cancer or AIDS, for example, you can experience your illness with compassion, for the sake of other sentient beings—to bring them all happiness up to and including enlightenment. Thus your sickness becomes the path to enlightenment.

Therefore, all problems—failed relationships, illness, business failure, unemployment—become very important and useful, a special, heroic practice. Before, such experiences were something that you disliked and were to be abandoned but now, with your practice of compassion, they become something highly desirable and of the utmost need for the development of your mind in the path—very powerful and special.

Also, when your life ends, the best way to die is with compassion. His Holiness the Dalai Lama often says that dying with bodhicitta is “self-supporting.” You don’t need anybody else around to help you because you can guide yourself. You’re the leader; you can lead yourself to the happiness of future lives.

In order to develop great compassion you need to understand the Buddha’s teachings on how to develop it. But even if you can recite the teachings on compassion by heart and know how to meditate on them, that alone is not enough for you to realize them. To do this you need the support of the blessings of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion. In order to receive these blessings you need to practice his meditation-recitation.

For more on the benefits of this practice, please see *Teachings from the Mani Retreat*.<sup>10</sup>

5) *Reciting the Golden Light Sutra for world peace*

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[http://www.lamayeshe.com/zencart/index.php?main\\_page=product\\_info&cPath=27&products\\_id=120&zenid=52be7c951d148bd86c4a2c53c512da46](http://www.lamayeshe.com/zencart/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=27&products_id=120&zenid=52be7c951d148bd86c4a2c53c512da46).

Those who want world peace should read the *Golden Light Sutra*<sup>11</sup> (*Ser-ö dam-päi do wang-gyi gyäl-po*). This is a very important practice to stop violence and wars in the world. The *Golden Light Sutra* is one of the most beneficial ways to bring peace. This is something that anybody can do no matter how busy they are. Even if you can read only one page or just a few lines a day, if you do so continually you eventually finish reading the entire *Golden Light Sutra*.

The holy *Golden Light Sutra* is the king of the sutras. It is extremely powerful, fulfills all your wishes, and brings peace and all happiness up to enlightenment to all sentient beings as well. It is also extremely powerful in promoting world peace and protecting you, your country and the world. It also has great power to heal a country's people.

For those who desire peace for themselves and others, this is the spiritual, or Dharma, way to bring about peace in a way that does not require you to harm, criticize or even to demonstrate against others. Just reading it can still bring peace. Also, you don't have to be Buddhist in order to read this *Sutra* to bring peace. Even non-Buddhists who desire peace can read it to good effect.

The *Golden Light Sutra* also protects individuals and countries from so-called natural disasters—disturbances of the wind, fire, earth and water elements—such as earthquakes, floods, cyclones, fires, tornadoes and so forth. Actually, such events are not natural because they derive from the appropriate causes and conditions—people's past inner negative thoughts and actions meeting certain external conditions.

Thus the benefits of reading this *Sutra* are immeasurable. It is said that you create more merit by reciting a few lines of the *Golden Light Sutra* than by offering infinite buddhas precious jewels equal in number to the atoms of sand in the Pacific Ocean.

Reciting this *Sutra* directs your life toward enlightenment—it's an unbelievable purification, it creates enormous merit, everything gets taken care of, your life becomes very easy, you receive whatever you wish for—and you also liberate numberless sentient beings from oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

So here, with my two palms pressed together, I request you to please recite the *Golden Light Sutra* for world peace as much as you can.

*Dictated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Vens. Tsenla, Brian and Holly in 1999, with extensive additions dictated to Holly Ansett in 2010 and 2011. Edited by Nicholas Ribush, 2005 and 2011.*

*For further information on how to do the preliminary practices and to obtain commentaries on them please contact your local FPMT center or the FPMT International Office, [www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org). See the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive for a large collection of teachings by Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other great lamas, [www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com)*

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<sup>11</sup> To download the *Sutra of Golden Light*, see [www.fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/advice/goldenlight.asp](http://www.fpmt.org/teachers/zopa/advice/goldenlight.asp).