

DHARMA ESSENTIALS, COURSE XIV
LOJONG: DEVELOPING THE GOOD HEART

Course Readings

Class One: *Eight Verses for Developing the Good Heart*

Root text by the Diamond Lion, Dorje Senge of Langri Tang (1054-1123), with a commentary by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101-1175), selected from *A Compendium of Texts on Developing the Good Heart (Blo-sbyong brgya-rtza)*, compiled by the great bodhisattva Muchen Konchok Gyeltsen (14th century), pp. 206-217

Classes Two and Three: *Seven Points for Developing a Good Heart*

Root text written down by the Kadampa Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101-1175), with a commentary, selected from the *Compendium of Texts on Developing the Good Heart*, pp. 51-95

Class Four: *The Crown of Knives*

Text presented to Lord Atisha (982-1052) by the Indian master Dharma Rakshita; selected from the *Compendium of Texts on Developing the Good Heart*, pp. 96-110, and corrected from an edition found in the PL480 publishing of the *gDams-ngag mdzod, bKa' gdams skor*

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Reading One

READING ONE: Eight Verses

*Eight Verses for Developing the Good Heart,
written by the Kadampa Geshe named Diamond Lion,
from the Plains of Langri*

(1)

May I think of every living being
As more precious than a wish-giving gem
For reaching the ultimate goal,
And so always hold them dear.

(2)

When I'm with another, wherever we are,
May I see myself as the lowest.
May I hold the other as highest,
From the bottom of my heart.

(3)

As I go through the day may I watch my mind,
To see if a negative thought has come;
If it does may I stop it right there, with force,
Since it hurts myself and others.

(4)

At times I will meet bad people,
Tormented by strong bad deeds and pain.
They are hard to find, like a mine of gold;
And so may I hold them dear.

(5)

Some jealous person might do me wrong,
Insult me, or something of the like;
May I learn to take the loss myself,
And offer them all the gain.

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(6)

There may be times when I turn to someone
With every hope they'll help me,
And instead they do me great wrong;
May I see them as my holy guide.

(7)

In brief may I give all help and joy
To my mothers, directly or some other way;
May I take all the hurt and pain of my mothers
In secret upon myself.

(8)

May none of this ever be made impure
By the eight ideas of things;
May I see all things are illusion, and free
Myself from the chains of attachment.

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Reading Two

READING TWO: The Seven-Step Practice

*Herein Lies the Root Text of
“The Seven-Step Practice for Developing a Good Heart,”
Advices for Training Oneself in the Greater Way*

*Part One:
Instructions on the Foundation Dharma,
The Preliminary Practices*

The first of these is expressed in the following line of the root text:

Train yourself first in the preliminaries.

These preliminaries come in three parts: meditating on your spiritual opportunities and fortunes, and considering how difficult it is to obtain them; meditating upon your own death, the fact that you are impermanent; and meditation upon the problems of this vicious circle of suffering.

*Part Two:
The Actual Practice for Developing The Wish for Enlightenment (Bodhichitta)*

The second part, on the actual practice for developing the Wish for Enlightenment, has two steps of its own: developing the ultimate Wish, and developing the apparent Wish. There are three sections within the first of these steps: the preparation, the actual practice, and the conclusion. For the preparation, you should do the following: bring to mind thoughts of taking refuge; make supplications; offer the various steps of the seven-part practice; take your mediation position with your body carefully straightened up; and then count your breaths up to 21, without losing track at all.

The second step, the actual practice, is found in the following lines of the root text:

**Learn to see all things as a dream;
Examine the nature of the mind, unborn.
The antidote itself is gone to is;
Let it go in the essence, source of all things.**

The third step, the conclusion, is expressed in the next line of the root text:

In between sessions, be a figment of the imagination.

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The second more general step, meditating on the apparent Wish for Enlightenment, has two sections: deep meditation, and the period after this. Here is the first:

**Practice giving and taking, alternately;
Let the two ride on the wind.**

And here is the second:

**Three objects, three poisons, three stores of virtue.
Practice throughout the day, in words.
The order of taking's to start with yourself.**

*Part Three:
Learning to Use Problems as a Path to Enlightenment*

The third main part, learning to use problems as a path to Enlightenment, is found in the following lines of the root text:

**When the world and those in it are full of bad deeds,
Learn to use problems as a path to Enlightenment.**

Here there are two different steps: how to think, and how to act. The first has two sections of its own: the apparent and the ultimate. Here is the first:

**The blame all belongs to only one person.
Practice seeing them all full of kindness.**

Here is the second:

**See the deception as being four bodies;
Emptiness is the matchless protector.**

Next is the step on how to practice in your actions:

**The four acts are the supreme method.
On the spot, turn all that happens to practice.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: These four are accumulating masses of good karma; cleaning oneself of bad karma; making offerings to harmful spirits; and making offerings to protectors of the dharma.

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Part Four:

A Summary of an Entire Lifetime's Practice

**The brief essentials of the instruction
Are combined within five powers.
In the great way these same five are the advices
For sending your mind; cherish the act.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: The five powers are those of resolutions for the future; of accustoming yourself; of pure white seeds; of destruction; and of prayer.

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Reading Three

READING THREE: The Seven Step Practice (continued)

Part Five:
The Point at Which One can Say
That He or She Has Successfully Developed the Good Heart

**All Dharma comes down to a single point.
There are two judges; keep the main one.
Be joy alone, in an unbroken stream.
It's there when you can keep it unthinking.**

Note by the Tibetan Commentator: The two judges here are yourself and others.

Part Six:
Pledges to Keep for Developing the Good Heart

**Keep to the three laws.
Change your mind and stay the same.
Speak not of what was broken.
Never worry about what they're doing.
Rid yourself of the biggest affliction first.
Never hope for any reward.
Stop eating poison food.
Don't let the stream flow smooth.
Forget repaying criticism.
Give up laying ambushes.
No going for the jugular.
Load your own truck, no passing the buck.
Don't get fixed on speed.
Don't feed the wrong face.
Don't turn the sweet angel to a devil.
Don't look for crap to make yourself happy.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: The three laws are never acting in a way that contradicts what you have committed yourself to; never placing yourself in a dangerous situation; and never falling into the habit of discriminating between others.

Part Seven:
Certain Advices on Developing the Good Heart

**Do all the practice with but one.
Let all the mistakes be made by one.**

Do two at the beginning and end.

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**Bear with whichever comes of the two.
Keep the two at the cost of your life.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: The “two” in the second line are being well off and being poor. The “two” in the third line are your general spiritual pledges and the pledges of the instructions on developing a good heart.

**Train yourself in the three kinds of hardship.
Take to yourself the three main causes.
Live in three ways that never get weaker.
Keep the three that should never be lost.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: The “three hardships” are learning to detect the start of a mental affliction; to stop it; and to stop the habit. The “three main causes” are finding a Lama, practicing the Dharma, and having all the support you need to practice the Dharma come together. The “three ways” are feeling devotion [for your Lama], joy [for practicing the *Lojong* or instructions for developing a good heart], and keeping your various vows and commitments [through strong awareness and recollection]. The “three that should never be lost” are virtuous actions in your actions, your words and your thoughts.

**Act towards each one free of bias;
Spread your love, and make it deep.
Constantly think of the special ones;
Don’t let it depend on circumstances.**

**Act now, do the most important thing.
Don’t get it backwards.
Don’t be on and off.
Make up your mind and stick to it.
Figure out both and free yourself.
Stop thinking all the time about how wonderful you are.
Don’t let little things get to you.
Don’t change from moment to moment.
Don’t expect any thanks.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: When you have trained yourself well in these, then you will be able to do the following:

**Turn these five signs of the days of darkness
Around us into a path to enlightenment.
These words of advice are the essence of nectar;
They were passed down through Serlingpa.**

Note by the Tibetan Commentator: The five signs are transformed into learning to endure without anger; feeling inspired to practice; a feeling of sweetness; thoughts of compassion; and

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great aspiration – and so the mind itself becomes the path. [The five signs of the days of darkness, which are said to be going on now, are: the darkness of the times, marked by strife; the darkness of lifespans, which have dropped to less than a hundred; the darkness of worldviews, very mistaken and difficult to change in people; the darkness of mental afflictions, strong and protracted; and the darkness of beings themselves, with minds and senses that are out of control.] The last two lines are meant to indicate that this instruction is one with an authoritative voice.

**Karmic seeds from following this practice in my past lives
Were awakened, and the urge to teach this to others came to me
On many occasions. And so I have finished it, these words
Of instruction for beating the tendency of seeing things
As having some nature of their own, and I have ignored
All kinds of trouble and the derision of others to do so.
Now I can die,
Without a shred of regret.**

Note by the Tibetan commentator: In these words, that king of all deep practitioners, Chekawa, expresses the greatness of the instruction, for he has succeeded in applying it to his own heart.

Incidentally, there are many different versions of this root text: some are longer or shorter, and in others the lines come in different order. I've set this one down here following the version found in the book of instruction by the bodhisattva Tokme.

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Reading Four

READING FOUR: The Wheel of Knives

Herein Lie the Instructions on Developing the Good Heart Entitled “The Wheel of Knives”

I bow down to the Three Precious Jewels.

I bow down to the Angry One, the Lord of Death

1. Peacocks wander in the midst
Of a forest of poison trees;
A garden of healing herbs and plants
May be something lovely,
But peacocks have no love for them –
They live off poison itself.

2. Bodhisattva warriors are the same:
A garden of comfort and pleasures
May be something lovely,
But the warriors have no attachment for them –
They live off a forest of pain.

3. The kings of cowardice who pursue
Comfort and pleasure find themselves
Transported instead to pain.
Those mighty warriors who pursue
Pain for others find themselves
Forever surrounded by bliss,
By the power of their courage.

4. Now in this place desire is like
A forest of poison trees;
Bodhisattva warriors, like peacocks,
Are strong enough to take it.
Cowards though are like the crow,
For these same leaves are death to it –
How could those who only think
Of what they want themselves
Ever have the strength to eat
This poison?

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5. The same is true with all the other
Mental afflictions there are;
These are enough to threaten the life
Of nirvana for those like crows.
The peacock bodhisattvas though
Turn the poison forest of
Their mental afflictions into opportunities,
And food to keep them strong.
They leap then into the forest
Of this vicious circle of life;
They make it an opportunity,
And thus destroy the poison.

6. Realize now that grasping for yourself
Is the henchman of the devil
And keeps you here in this vicious circle,
Helpless to help yourself.
Run now far from the state of mind
That only wants what's good for me,
That only wants what feels good,
And happily take upon yourself
Any hardship for others' sake.

7. The mass of living beings are just like me:
Driven on against their will by karma,
Minds forever filled with negative thoughts.
Let me take now all their pain
And throw it down in heaps
Upon the head of the part of me
That wants only me to be happy.

8. Whenever I feel myself being carried
Away by what I want,
May I stop myself and give away
My own happiness to others.
Whenever those who've pledged to help me
Instead do something very wrong,
May I say to myself, "It's because I failed
To keep my mind on goodness,"
And thus put my heart at ease.

10. Whenever I feel any pain
Inside my own thoughts,

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It's because the wheel of knives
Has turned on me again:
Beyond a doubt it's the karma
Of upsetting other people.
From now on then I'll take on myself
The hurt that others feel.

14. Any time a single thing
Strikes me as something unpleasant,
Is because the wheel of knives
Has turned on me again:
The karma of constantly seeing my world
As something less than totally pure.
From now on then I'll devote myself
To seeing things only as purity

44. To put it in a nutshell,
Anything that ever falls
Upon us that we never wanted
Is just the same as a blacksmith
Who accidentally kills himself
Forging a sword for someone.
It's all because the wheel of knives
Has turned on us again;
Decide then that from now on
You'll be careful not to commit
A single negative act.

47. Since this is the way things are,
I've finally realized
Just who my enemy is.
I've caught the thief who lay in wait
And deceived me with his trap.
He's a masquerader fooling others,
And fooling himself as well.
I see it now!
He's the habit I have
Of grasping to myself,
And of this there can be no doubt.

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48. Now let's see the wheel of knives,
Of karma, cut his skull!
O Angel of Wrath,
Now cut his skull, cut thrice!
Stand like a god on widespread legs,
A knowledge of two truths;
Stare in hatred with two eyes,
Of method, and of wisdom;
Open your jaws and show your fangs,
Four powers of confession,
Sink them deep within the flesh
Of this, my hated foe.

49. I call on the King of the secret knowledge
And secret words that work
To torture all these enemies.
There is no freedom here in the woods
Of the vicious circle of life.
Take up in your hands the wheel of knives,
Take up the wheel of karma,
Speed to the side of my foe,
The cruel one, evil demon that he is,
This grasping to myself,
Broken vows and promises,
Waster of my life and others,
Go and fetch him here.

50. Fetch him, bring him,
Lord of Anger, Lord of Death;
Strike, strike now,
Strike this highest foe in his heart;
With the roar of hell
Smash now the skull
Of my misperceptions,
The ones who have wasted my life;
Bring your death
To the heart of this butcher,
My greatest enemy.

52. Come to me, Angel of Wrath, Lord of Death;
Take this pitiful sack filled with five poisons,
Mired by the force of karma and afflictions

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In this filth of the vicious circle of life;
Come, I beg you, come right now,
And rip this bag to shreds.

53. He would escort me
To the terrors of the three lower realms;
I don't know enough to be afraid of him,
I run to the things that would take me there.
With the roar of hell
Smash now the skull
Of my misperceptions,
The ones who have wasted my life;
Bring your death
To the heart of this butcher,
My greatest enemy.

89. Come now
You of mystic might,
Lord of the body of emptiness,
Being of bliss who shatters
This hateful evil demon
Of grasping to some "self."
With the roar of hell
Smash now the skull
Of my misperceptions,
The ones who have wasted my life;
Bring your death
To the heart of this butcher,
My greatest enemy.

90. Come with mighty wrath
And make blood sacrifice of my foe.
Come with mighty wisdom
And destroy my wrong ideas.
Come with mighty compassion
And shelter me from my karma.
Come I beg you, obliterate
With finality this "self."

91. Take all the pain of the entire world
And lay it at the doorstep
Of the one whose fault
That all of it really is:

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This tendency that I have
Of grasping to my self.
And lay upon his doorstep too
Every single mental affliction
Every single one of those five
Poisons of the mind
That any single living being
Has within their heart.

94. So now may I take upon myself
All the bad karma committed by others
In the past, and now, and in the future,
In their thoughts or words or deeds.
Help me be a peacock
With all those exquisite designs
The colors that come from poison,
Woven into her feathers;
Let me turn my mental afflictions
Into opportunities
For reaching Buddhahood.

95. By giving away the store of goodness
Within me to others like this,
May all of them be cured,
Like crows that have eaten poison
But taken then medicine herbs.
May I thus save the life
Of their freedom for every being,
And may they quickly reach
The state of a being of bliss,
The enlightenment of a Buddha.

96. And for whatever time remains
In the days before myself
And those who are my parents
Have reached our enlightenment
In the Heaven Below No Other,
May all of us as we wander together,
Driven by our karma through six worlds,
Love and cherish one another,
Love and cherish each other as one.

97. And in those days as well may I find

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The strength to dwell alone
Within the three realms of misery
If this would be of service
To a single other being.
May I find the strength
To never give up
This bodhisattva behavior,
May I draw into my being
The suffering all those feel
In the three lower realms of pain.

100. And in this moment too
May every single being
Within the three higher realms
Begin to meditate
On the emptiness of a self
Just as I do, my-self.
May they never feel the slightest urge
For the extremes of this vicious circle
Or a lower, personal peace.
May they be with me, and may we together
Perfect our meditation.
May they be with me, and may we together
Find our real nature.

101. If you and I can do this together,
The foe will be defeated.
If you and I can do this together,
Our misconceptions will be destroyed.
And we will meditate together
On the wisdom that sees no self;
And we will both together attain
What brings us the body of voidness.