



The Buddha Project

IDMT Year 3 -Term 1

22 November 2025

Seven-Point Mind Training – continued



*This is an AI generated transcript and contains inaccuracies.
© Ven. Losang Gendun and The Buddha Project.*



Content

About the meditation	3
Transforming Adversity into the Path	5
Applying the practice	7
The Measure of Mind Training	10
The Commitments of Mind Training	11
Your library.....	14
Prayers.....	14
Closure	15



About the meditation

The basic idea of the meditation we just did is quite straightforward: to experience what it means to exchange *self* with *others*. It is a reflection on the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the advantages of other-cherishing. The text highlights, for example, the *self* is merely imputed from mind and body experiences, extending through different moments of time, and based on the aggregates.

When we talk about exchanging self with others, we should be clear we talk about a non-existing form of self, talk about an imputed image. We obviously exist, but not in the way we believe we exist: being separate, unchanging, and independent, this makes no sense at all.

We train to forget this image of self because it is harmful. But on a conventional basis, this compassionate practice allows us, in a very easy way, to alleviate ourselves of this burden of the false conception of self, by drawing attention to others as they do exist. So, this practice involves the non-existing self and others who do exist.

It is a paradox:

- The *self* in self-cherishing does not exist, is a result of ignorance – not-knowing.
- The *other* in other-cherishing is the person we can connect to. This *other* is an object of our wisdom.

This can be difficult, but is very important to understand, we need to think true what it means in daily lives. For example, let us look at a toothache. Exchanging self with others is not an invitation to ignore the toothache. The problem is self-cherishing makes the toothache much, much worse. We then experience both physical and mental suffering. The Buddha often highlights mental suffering outweighs everything a hundredfold. When I have a toothache, I am suffering physically. The Buddha invites us to bring our attention to someone else realizing I am a bodhisattva (*to be*); I know there are many other people suffering from toothache as well and I can practice to take their suffering upon me.

The suffering I experience in this moment is the consequence of self-cherishing. The physical suffering is the consequence of self-cherishing in the past. The mental suffering is caused by the self-cherishing in the present. So rather than seeing self-cherishing as a problem, I use it as an occasion to free myself, a door to freedom. This suffering provides an opportunity to practice the attitude of a Buddha: to care for others and see them as part of who I am.

We cannot expect to behave like Buddhas immediately, that is unrealistic. But we can follow Shantideva's guidance, provided in *Entering The Way of the Bodhisattva*, where he instructs us to get accustomed to practicing by doing little bits at a time: look for opportunities to extend applications of wisdom and compassion, even in very small

ways, as often as possible. Do not force by taking too big steps, you might end up harming the person you are, where we aim to destroy the *false image of self*.

We slowly build our practice, step by step.

By cherishing others in moments of difficulty, we are taking care of ourselves. The moment I turn my gaze towards someone else out of concern for their suffering, I alleviate my mental suffering. In so doing, I purify past karma and generate positive karma.

Shantideva invites us to take a step further in the third chapter:

I dedicated my being to the welfare of all living beings; I consecrated my body and mind to the Buddha. As we dedicated our lives to help others, and having a toothache, I need to go to the dentist in order to be able to help others better! Only then I am able to help them. Now I have everything: I took care of others, and I have taken care of the body and the mind. That is the magnificence of other-cherishing.

Shantideva offers a holistic behavioural model: take care of body and mind and take care for all living beings.

Taking care of other beings does not require ignoring oneself, e.g. by neglecting your health. It is a Western miscomprehension altruism involves ignoring oneself; altruism requires we see who we really are and to refrain from harmful actions, including harmful actions to ourselves.

I'd like to share one of my mottos with you: *when you seek yourself, what you find is others*; to be empty of self is to be full of others. Or, in other words *to see a morning dewdrop on a leaf is to see the entire universe*.

Both sayings capture the effervescence of the self, which is momentarily there before transforming into something else. And if you look deeply within, you find everything. To truly meditate with all living beings, is the most powerful way to motivate oneself and to generate enthusiasm. The path of awakening will unfold in an very natural way and you know what effortless meditation is.

When you ever feel lonely, contemplate this deeply. Even if you wanted to, there is no way to be completely alone. When you deeply understand that, take that into your meditation. Love is truly sufficient unto itself.

But again, make sure to do it one step at a time. Get used to it by little bits and pieces. This is not an invitation to a burden you cannot carry, so keep playing with it. We have a long and beautiful journey ahead of us and time to get accustomed to it.

Please, test and explore these ideas in your day-to-day life.

Transforming Adversity into the Path

2.3.3 Transforming Adversity into the Path of Enlightenment

*When all the world is filled with negativity,
transform adversity into the path of enlightenment.
Drive all blames into one.
Meditate on the great kindness of all.*

*By meditating on illusions as the four buddha bodies,
Emptiness is protection unsurpassed.
The fourfold practice is the best of methods.
Whatever you encounter, apply the practice.*

(Page 32 of the reader)

I want to come back to the valid explanation I gave on this text last week and to highlight something from the commentary I work with .

You are familiar with the first two of the Four Applications:

1. Purification

This purification should never be something abstract. Purification means, the mind often uses unskillful strategies – e.g. anger. And using anger as an unskillful strategy reinforces the habit to use anger, etc. etc. Our aim is to diminish unskillful patterns. The common practice of purification is '[the four opponent powers](#)', when you are not familiar with them, please look them up! The Lamrim gives an excellent description of this practice. Briefly, the four opponent powers are: the power of dependence, the power of regret, the power of the remedy, and the power of resolve.

2. The accumulation of merit

One could say that accumulating merit is the exact opposite of the four opponent powers.

The accumulation of merit is beneficial because the more we use skillful practices, the more likely we are to see opportunities to expand those skillful practices. The more we use loving kindness, for example, the more we understand that loving kindness is wholesome. The more we have a direct experience of loving kindness, the more the mind starts to rely on loving kindness as a better way to deal with the world.

This is true for many other specific practices, like making offerings, guru devotion, and practicing the four immeasurable thoughts. Both in daily live and in meditation

it is very wholesome way to practice. As the mind is a causal phenomenon, it tends to follow habitual patterns, both skillful and unskillful patterns. A meditator uses that dynamic to their advantage.

3 The offerings to harmful beings

You can explore this in a mystical way or in a relatively practical way.

The mystical way

Many living beings are not seen by us directly: most of us have never seen bacteria live. We have seen photos of microorganisms, but unless you have access to a good microscope, this is not life that you normally perceive. According to many Asian traditions, there are other life forms that are not accessible to direct, human perception.

There are other humans who do not encourage our better nature, we do have some unskillful relationships with others; e.g. we smoke and are friends with other smokers who keep us smoking: that is an unhealthy relationship. Or we are into football and after the match join in destructive behaviour. We can see the destructive influences in these situations when a particular social situation fosters unskillful actions.

This practice is about making offerings to those who have an unskillful effect on our behaviour.

Ven. Gendun shares what he encountered in an apartment where he lived.

Whether or not you want to believe there are beings that we normally do not perceive, I do not care. In my last apartment, I actually had a spirit in my house and a visible one at that. The first time it scared the living daylight out of me, but then I got used to it. The interesting aspect is that by practicing kindness to this spirit, it becomes neutralized in a way. So the second time I saw this spirit, I said, welcome to my house. Be at ease. May you be happy. Whether or not you believe that these things can harm you does not really matter.

This third practice helps in adopting that simple attitude of bodhicitta and being clear that it extends towards all beings, even ones who might be harmful to you and ones you do not perceive.

4. Next we turn to relationships that are wholesome.

We have fellow spiritual practitioners, inspiring friends and colleagues, a teacher we appreciate. In the fourth practice, we make offerings to those who can help us. Like the previous practice, this also has a mystical element. In this case, beings that we cannot normally see, like Dharma protectors, but who can protect our path. Belief in



these types of mystical beings may be slightly outside of our comfort zone. If so, we can think about them in terms of those humans around us who inspire us or guide us to better behaviour.

Another way of looking at these mystical creatures we have been discussing is most of these ghosts and protectors are present in our mind. When I look inside, we are filled with life itself. There are all kinds of creatures in the mind, and some of them behave unruly and some are quite inspiring from time to time. That is another way to look at this practice.

The next and final sentence of the text on page 32 says:

Whatever you encounter, apply the practice.

That is an invitation to constant practice: I often hear students say they do not have time to meditate. But when you take this practice seriously, you never lack time to meditate because every occasion is an occasion to meditate. Remember, meditation has nothing to do with cushions. Meditation has everything to do with familiarizing the mind with a new way of looking at the world.

That is the importance of this practice, to use any circumstance that you encounter to transform the mind into something more awesome.

Applying the practice

(reader, page 33)

2.3.4 Applying the Practice throughout the Whole of Life

*The essence of the instruction, briefly stated,
is to apply yourself to the five strengths.*

As Mahayana's transference method is

The five powers alone, their practice is vital.

The chapter starts in a very practical way: understanding the five aggregates are not self. You might have noticed you cannot control the mind: the mind has a life of its own.

You sit down with the intention to meditate, while the mind decides to worry about tomorrow. We need to guide the intent as there is no absolute control over the mind. Through practice however, the mind can be guided in the right direction.

When you seek absolute control of the mind, you have not deeply understood emptiness and this sense of absolute control will lead to unnecessary frustration.

The text highlights five subsequent practices:

1) Identify a motivation that drives your intent.

Something that you find very moving will act as a driving force. A motivation that sets your imagination on fire. Something that gives you a sense of *wow*. It is magnificent to deeply know that you practice to serve everyone else's needs as well as yours. This is what we set out to do.

Do not expect to be able to immediately practice this from the beginning. This is something that must be repeated over and over. It takes time to become familiar with these ideas.

The mind has been lost in ignorance since beginningless time and we cannot compensate this with a few weeks or even a few years of practice; it takes lots of time. Therefore, it is important to set a motivation that is not only wholesome but also deeply matters to you.

I recommend reading the book, [Sacred Reading](#), by Michael Casey, where he explains sacred reading is a dialogue with the text to understand what it says and to make it your own. You study the text to be able to restate important points in ways that speak to you. It is not a blind belief. For your freedom you need to take a great text and make it your own, that is sacred reading.

When you read Shantideva, for example, you are invited to retell it in your own world to keep it alive.

It is the same with parenthood: parents do not want to create copies of themselves. Parents want to raise a child so it has the means to engage in a different world than the one their parents were born in. That is what sacred reading does as well. In our practice, we give rebirth to the Dharma, interpreting it in ways that matter today.

2) The power of familiarity (or acquaintance)

The more we practice, the easier it will come to us.

3) The third practice is to realize that seeds do not produce plants on their own.

A single seed, merely put on a table, will not grow a plant. There were seeds in the tomb of Tutankhamun, lying there for three and a half thousand years. They did not produce plants as some things were missing.

Similarly, in our practice, intent alone is not enough: you need more. This practiced is about what you do in-between meditations, to engage in all kinds of virtuous activities in support of your motivation. You might be motivated by care for all living beings that are your mothers. In support of this motivation, you practise generosity, you practise patience, hospitality, empathy, and so on. You give the seed of care all it needs. Keep the seed in the middle of your awareness and make every

aspect of your life a practice to nurture that seed.

- 4) The fourth is to be aware of everything that diminishes your motivation. When you want to plant a seed, you need to recognize what causes and conditions it needs to flourish. When a plant needs light, do not plant it in a shaded area, or in sand, etc. This practice is to find wholesome circumstances and obviously, self-grasping and self-cherishing are defeating. Just as greed, jealousy, etc. are. It is a long, long list.
- 5) The fifth practice is to know – for as long as we are samsaric beings – our motivation is fragile. We can use the power of prayer to enforce our motivation. A prayer in Buddhism is not asking for favours to the universe or to God. I did, but it never got me a Mercedes-Benz. If you want a Mercedes-Benz, get a job. 😊 Prayer means you know what you do not have yet, while knowing how important it is to get there is aspiration. For example, pray your motivation becomes stronger. It is not perfect today, as I still am a limited human being. But it would be great if my motivation one day becomes perfect. May that be tomorrow (tomorrow is better than the day after). But if it is not tomorrow, then may it be the day after and not in three days. Aspiration is to deeply know how important these goals are and to foster a sense of urgency.

Then the verse makes a turnaround where it says *the Method of Transference*. This sentence is mentioned here because it advises to use the same five strengths at the moment of death. When we talk about applying the practice *throughout life*, it includes practicing when *you are dying*: set a deep motivation at the moment the death-process starts and continue your practice: accept death is now happening.

The greatest risk is to pass away while self-cherishing and self-grasping. The text invites us to practice generosity at the time of death. To give away everything we have to our mother-sentient beings, to the community of mendicants, to our gurus and the three jewels. We relinquish everything we have because ownership hinders a safe passing. If you really want, you can even relinquish your body: all kinds of creatures are very happily waiting for your body (*especially mine, because it is big, so there is a lot to eat*). Formulate a deep prayer, generate that motivation.

Pray like: may my next life be a precious human, may I meet my teachers again, may I complete the path in the next life, etc.; you can imagine yourself.



The Measure of Mind Training

(reader, page 33)

2.3.5 The Measure of Mind Training

All teachings share a single purpose.

Of the two witnesses, rely upon the principal one.

Always maintain only a joyful attitude.

If this can be done even when distracted, you are proficient.

This chapter presents the measures necessary to train the mind.

The first line states *all teachings share a single purpose*: to overcome self-cherishing. Self-cherishing hinders us from becoming Buddhas, we need to overcome this single problem. All the other teachings are secondary or related to this central problem. As long as self-cherishing is there, Buddhahood is not possible.

The second line of the verse says *Of the two witnesses, rely upon the principal one*.

Most of you know these witnesses by two not very appropriate terms:

1) *Shame and consideration.*

This is about how to reflect on your actions (of body, speech, and mind); how are these actions received by those around you; what arises in them? Others serve as important witnesses, though not the most important ones.

2) *Self-respect.*

This is the more important witness: reflect upon your actions in the context of someone who practices the Mahayana and seeks to live to that standard.

The third line of this verse is very – very important, especially for people with a Protestant background: *Always maintain only a joyful attitude.*

We easily forget that without a joyful attitude, awakening is not possible.

Unfortunately, we tend to hear everything in a normative way: *'You should . . .'*, where the Buddha never spoke in a normative way. Instead, he invites you to understand. That makes Buddhist ethics very different from other ethical systems found in the world. All Western ethics formulates *'should'* arguments; *you should* because God tells you; *you should* do this to have good character; *you should* do that to maximize happiness.

Jay Garfield recently said, these normative *shoulds* are one thought too many. He joked that when you go and visit a friend who is in the hospital, telling the friend, I came here to maximize your happiness, your friend probably asks you to leave. The Buddha says those *shoulds* convince no one.



When the mind is caring and empathetic and generous, the mind will be joyful. This approach is empowering and makes life less of a burden. It tells you who you are. It gives your life purpose: please cultivate joy.

If there is anything you need to do: cultivate joy. The will to care for all living beings can only come from joy.

The last line of this verse reads:

If this can be done even when distracted, you are proficient.

A beautiful sentence. If this can be done, even when one is distracted, you are proficient, such an important sentence.

Even when many demands are made on you, in a way you cannot stay in meditation because you are confronted with many distractions in life; when even then the mind responds by sustaining a caring attitude (not reverting to self-cherishing). To always know how it feels to be generous, joyful, caring and to be able to stay in that state of minds, then you have achieved the mind of awakening.

The Commitments of Mind Training

(reader, page 33)

2.3.6. *The Commitments of Mind Training*

Train constantly in three basic principles.

Change your attitude, but remain natural.

Do not speak of the defects of others.

Don't ponder others' flaws.

Train first with the strongest destructive emotions.

Abandon any expectations of results.

Give up poisonous food.

Don't maintain inappropriate loyalty.

Don't lash out in retaliation.

Don't lie in ambush.

Don't strike a vulnerable point.

Don't transfer the ox's burden to the cow.

Do not sprint to win a race.

Don't abuse this [practice] as a rite.

Don't reduce gods to demons.

Don't seek misery as a means to happiness.



Line 1 of this verse says: *Let us train constantly in the three basic principles.*

These are:

- 1) Always act in a caring way, but never disregard karma; the laws of cause and effect. We might become deluded and mistakenly express our compassionate attitude through some unfortunate behaviour.

E.g. when I care for person X so much I kill person Y. The Buddha says this is disregarding the laws of cause and effect and harmful.

- 2) Realize we are fragile.

Our identities are social. We should constantly be aware our actions are constrained by social context. Especially in this time of increasing anger and resentment and partisanship, this is something to be aware of.

As behaviour is vulnerable to social pressure, we should try to distance ourselves from specific social groups. Still staying caring, while realizing you are vulnerable. If you want to stop smoking, do not hang around with smokers because they probably offer you a cigarette and that is difficult to handle (*this is a personal story by ven. Gendun as he was addicted to smoking*)

- 3) The four immeasurable thoughts and bodhichitta are equanimous.

The four immeasurables apply to all living beings equally; any bias *for* or *against* someone is breaking the bodhisattva aims.

We wish to become a Buddha for the welfare of all living beings. Excluding even one living being is to lose the right mind. When we act in favour or against someone, our actions become egocentric. It would mean I do not want to care for a certain person because they do not benefit me, where I might care for others because they benefit me.

That is not bodhicitta, but a self-centred social investment contrary to our practice.

Line 2 of the verse says *Change your attitude, but remain natural.*

I think everyone who gets ordained suffers from the illusion you became holy at the of the ceremony. To wake up as a new monk with the fact that you are not holy at all, that your clothes have changed, your hair has changed, but everything else is as it was the day before, is difficult. Learning how to adopt my behaviour, given all the expectations, was difficult in the beginning.

Then I encountered some lines by Shantideva. It is beautiful: *protect your virtue* and the best way to protect your virtue is to tell no one what you do, it is none of their business. Your virtue is between yourself and your teacher, behave as you always did.

You are a monastic now, but when you go to a place where people play computer-games, then play computer-games with them. Protect the mind, as these games are not

very wholesome to the mind. You do not have to argue about protecting the mind, your mind training is your business; play computer games out of compassion for those you are with, while they play for entertainment.

Others need not see the difference, it is enough you know. No need to wear signs to signal to others you are a Mahayana-practitioner.

Monastics need to do so as members of an institution. This has a function in and of itself. That has nothing to do with me as an individual.

All practitioners should behave as relaxed and normal as always within the constraints of not committing non-virtue. No one has to know your practice. People will benefit from the fruits of your practice, no matter if they do or do not know.

It often turns out pretty ugly when people start to act sanctimoniously.

Line 3 of the verse says *do not speak of the defects of others*.

Doing so would be a proof of bad attitude. Of course there are situations where you need to discuss difficult topics, but with a constructive purpose. Most of the time we tend to talk negatively about others to lift ourselves up – a very poor motivation, pretty nasty.

Line 4 of the verse says *Don't ponder others' flaws*.

Again, there are times when critically people others, but always for constructive purposes.

In day to day life we often like to complain about others to make us feel superior. Do not act like that, it is very self-defeating. When we talk and think negatively of others, we come up with an identity-story and label *this person as bad*. This labelling very quickly can lead to abandoning someone from your mind of awakening.

When you perceive someone as inherently knowable, independently and unchangeably bad, you cannot liberate that person. It is not possible and this is very unwholesome (almost dangerous) to you!

Line 5 of this verse says *Train first with the strongest destructive emotions*.

These are the emotions you suffer most from. We all prefer to look at our minor flaws and mistakes, but that is not the advice here: start with the big ones, the embarrassing ones. Those that are harmful to your self-respect. Work hard to overcome them.

Line 6 of this verse says *Abandon any expectations of results*.

One could say this is meditating without constantly checking if you already established enlightenment or any other progress 😊. Practice with trust in the process.



A big part of you is not accessible for introspection: you cannot see karma or how strong your habits are. If you sit to experience result, you will quickly stop practicing, this expectation of result becomes a hindrance in and of itself: get out of your own way. That is why we study, to develop confidence and conviction. You will understand how the process works, for now: forget about the process. This is the only way we will find ultimate happiness and serve those on whose existence we depend.

Line 7 of this verse says *Give up poisonous food*

This is for a minor part about pizza, but moreover it relates to the hygiene of mind. We have intent, but our intent is (*still*) conditioned. It is unrealistic to hold a wholesome motivation while spending days on Facebook and reading poisonous media.

The perception of the world is constructed and we need another narrative to get a sense what reality truly is. Watch revenge-movies, looking at negative media distort this new perception of the world and our sense of grounding will gradually drift, and we need to prevent this.

Your library

I like to suggest two relevant commentaries.

1) *Mind Training: The Great Collection*,

A collection of several seminal works on mind training, translated by Thupten Jinpa.

2) *Enlightened Courage: An Explanation of the Seven-Point Mind Training*.

A very good commentary on the seven-point mind training I like a lot – by the great Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

We can easily spend four years on this training and the commentary.

Prayers

Let us do some aspirational prayers, they align with the five practices we looked at. Your motivation might be fragile initially, your concentration maybe unstable. You want to liberate all living beings, but trying to follow the breath shows you the mind has other priorities.

Prayers help guide the mind so tomorrow our motivation may be stronger. And the day after tomorrow, even stronger. Until at one point we manage to obtain an all-encompassing motivation that protects us under all circumstances. Then we are truly refugees unto ourselves.



Closure

It is wonderful that you have come here today and are considering becoming a Buddha for the benefit of all living beings— a truly great intention of mind. May it flourish. So may whatever virtue we have collected benefit the teachings and all transmigratory beings and may it especially cause the essence of perfect pure bodhisattva's teachings to shine forever.

