



# A LITTLE BUDDHIST WISDOM

by Gelek Rimpoche

Jewel Heart  
TIBETAN BUDDHIST LEARNING CENTER

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# A Little Buddhist Wisdom

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*Excerpts from Gelek Rimpoche's teachings*



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# 1



## About Gelek Rimpoche



Photo by John Bussiéneau

A Little Buddhist Wisdom

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Born in Lhasa, Tibet, in 1939, Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche was recognized as an incarnate lama at the age of four. Carefully tutored from an early age by some of Tibet's greatest living masters, Rimpoche gained renown for his powers of memory, intellectual judgment and penetrating insight. As a small child living in a monk's cell in a country with no electricity or running water and little news of the outside world, he had scoured the pictures of torn copies of Life Magazine for anything he could gather about America.

Among the last generation of lamas educated in Drepung Monastery before the Communist Chinese invasion of Tibet, Gelek Rimpoche was forced to flee to India in 1959. He later edited and printed over 170 volumes of rare Tibetan manuscripts that would have otherwise been lost to humanity. Rimpoche was also instrumental in forming organizations that would share the great wisdom of Tibet with the outside world. In this and other ways, he played a crucial role in the survival of Tibetan Buddhism.

He was director of Tibet House in Delhi, India and a radio host at All India Radio. He conducted over 1000 interviews in compiling an oral history of the fall of Tibet to the Communist Chinese. In the late 1970's Rimpoche was directed to teach Western students by his teachers, the Senior and Junior Masters to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since that time, he taught Buddhist practitioners around the world.

Rimpoche was particularly distinguished for his thorough familiarity with modern culture, and special effectiveness as a teacher of Western practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. Recognizing the unique opportunity for the interface of spiritual and material concerns in today's world, Rimpoche also opened a dialogue with science, psychology, medicine, metaphysics, politics, and the arts.

In 1988 Rimpoche founded Jewel Heart, a Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center. His Collected Works now include over 51 transcripts of his teachings, numerous articles as well as the national bestseller *Good Life, Good Death* (Riverhead Books 2001) and *The Tara Box: Rituals for Protection and Healing from the Female Buddha* (New World Library 2004). Rimpoche received US citizenship in 1994 and lived in Michigan. He passed away on February 15, 2017.



“What I like about Gelek Rimpoche is that he has consistently shown resiliency and flexibility of character. I have also seen in him signs of sound understanding of selflessness, the hallmark Buddhist teaching. He can be an elegant lama in a formal setting, a truly worthy representative of his illustrious lineage. He can be a wise advisor in another setting, placing responsibility for growth wherever it belongs: on the individual. He can be a loyal and creative colleague, in the endless work of seeing to the long duration and continuing usefulness of the Dharma. Throughout it all, he remains a cherished and jolly person, a good friend.”

– Robert A.F. Thurman

“Probably the best available teacher of Tibetan Buddhism in the West. He combines a complete grasp of the teachings of this tradition with an openness and kindness that has endeared him to all those fortunate enough to have come to know him”

– Philip Glass

“Gelek Rimpoche is a heartfelt, tender teacher with a vast analytic mind”

– Allen Ginsberg





# 2

Compassion for Oneself

## **Introduction**

I am very happy you have an interest in spiritual development and are trying to make yourself a better person. I am always happy to meet people who are trying to develop in a better way. That is the great quality of human beings; that we have a great opportunity with this life, a great gift we can use well.

So how do we lead a spiritual life? In fact, what is spiritual? Before we can know how to live or how to develop spiritually, it is important to know what we think when we use the word "spiritual".

For me, to answer this, I turn to the teachings of the Buddha because that is my training. And I would like to first share something very important with you about Buddha and his teachings.

Buddha's teachings are based on his own personal experience. Whether they are written by him or recorded by someone afterwards doesn't matter. The real value is in understanding that what he shared, what he really contributed, was the spiritual development he obtained based on his own experience. That is a very important point to keep in mind. That is what I consider when I say 'teachings of the Buddha'; it is his personal experience that he shared with people.

## **The Four Noble Truths**

The first teaching Buddha shared is called *The Four Noble Truths*. Why are they noble? Because it refers to people who have high spiritual development and see and perceive truth differently from what ordinary people see and perceive. When you hear people talk about dualistic mind, that is our way of perceiving truth, as opposed to how highly developed spiritual people perceive it. In a way we perceive, see and look at the same thing, but what we perceive is slightly different than what highly developed people

perceive and, I believe, what they perceive is called a noble truth. As ordinary people, we do not perceive the truth straightaway, because our mind has some kind of limit. On one hand, human beings are really a completely extraordinary kind of being. On the other hand, we also have tremendous limits; we have problems and delusions within us too. Although we do perceive something, we perceive in a limited way.



Buddha obtained Buddhahood - he became a Buddha. The funny or fortunate thing is that Buddha was an ordinary person when he was born. He was not born as extraordinary; he was just an ordinary human being like you and me. By chance he had opportunity, he was able to think, able to meditate, and able to look in and perceive the true nature of reality, and became a Buddha. We on the other hand are still stuck. This – I very often say – is unfortunate. It is unfortunate. Why has Buddha become a Buddha and we are left here? This is something to think about.

So Buddha shared his experience and said he saw two different levels of being. One level is what we refer to as samsara or the circle of existence. That is the life we find ourselves in today. And the other level has gone beyond - gone beyond whatever this life we have, the other side. Now this is funny. When I say 'this side' and 'the other side' you may think you'll get out from here and be transplanted over there. You may get that picture. But I don't believe so. There is no such a thing where you have to go from here and reach over there. All things happen within the individual person, inside. When you talk about it, you may talk about levels but when you really work it out I don't think there is something you take out from here and transplant to the other side. No. I think it works within the individual.

Buddha is very famous for talking about sufferings and pains; that is what Buddha talks most about. Why? Well, it is sort of our nature; it is somehow the nature of beings, human beings, to have pains and sufferings. We don't recognize these pains and problems properly. We experience them. Each one of us definitely

experiences pain, definitely experiences sufferings. Some people may think, "I don't experience pain at all. I am happy, I am really great." Okay, wonderful; however there is pain. Some people simply refuse to acknowledge it. Some people over-acknowledge it and get buried under it. They also have not properly acknowledged it.

## The Truth of Suffering

The moment Buddha obtained enlightenment he said: "I found something nectar-like, something pure, profound, of light nature. But if I share it, there may be no one who will be able to understand it. Therefore, I choose to remain silent." So Buddha kept silent for a while.

Then everybody asked: 'What kind of nectar has Buddha found?' They waited for his reply. What he then said was *the truth of suffering*; that was his nectar. Why? Because it is our experience. From the moment we have taken birth we have been subject to pain. We are subject to change, to growth, to illness, and to death. Normally we refuse to acknowledge our pain, and we also refuse to acknowledge our own faults, our responsibility, and we choose to blame others for our pain. We say, 'So and so did this, and that is why I happen to...'. We are very good at finding the fault with others. But it is an excuse; we are not really looking in our deeper situation. So all the pains, all the sources of problems and faults are because we are born here. It is the source of faults. But don't feel bad. It is the source of happiness too.

Yes, it is the source of happiness as well as of problems. So, if you want to work spiritually, then learning how to cut out these problems and how to develop this source of happiness is what I think spirituality really is. You work within your own mind and try to develop. Putting efforts in that direction, that is spiritual.

When you work that way, where does it end? What do you want to achieve? A goal-less goal, or a huge goal? What do we really want? This is an important question to ask yourself. Buddha always chose to say: "You need the best goal. And it is possible for every human being to achieve the best goal. They can achieve it."



Buddha was a clear example of the best goal and he said, "I have achieved, so why not you too? If I was able to do it, so can you. As much as I am intelligent; you too are intelligent. As much as I was limited, you too have limit. I achieved the best goal, so why not you?" Buddha introduced Buddhahood saying "Everybody can become a Buddha." He introduced it as the highest goal, the highest aim.

Now the question rises: Why become a Buddha? What difference will it make? What is Buddhahood to us? Well, with Buddhahood there is purity, knowledge, capability and effortlessly ability to render service to others, to help others. It is full development of positivity with clarity, with all blocks or delusions totally gone. It is a tremendous stage, a stage where you will be able to see everything together at the same time. Today if anyone of us is able to read somebody's mind we consider that person quite good and if they were able to read many peoples' minds together at the same time it would be fantastic. When you become Buddha, you read all living being's minds together and you understand everything together. You may think: 'Wow, this is a terrible stage, you may go crazy', but you do not, because you'll have the capability to cope with it all. So it is a fantastic level, a total developed level of being.

## **The Truth of the Cause of Suffering**

What does spiritual development mean? As I said, we do have a lot of delusions within us; we have a lot of obstacles to

Buddhahood or total enlightenment. When you have these obstacles and delusions within and work with them with the right antidotes, then when these delusions are reduced you gain positivity. That is spiritual development. If you work with your anger for example and are able to overcome it, that is spiritual development. Or with hatred, or jealousy, and so on. These are the problems we have. We look at them as practically nothing. We say 'it is human nature' and even go to the extent of looking at them as good qualities, like anger, attachment, hatred. Some people get upset when they don't get angry, and think it is abnormal or something wrong, and suggest the person find therapy, saying: 'This fellow is not angry, do something, get him angry'. Actually these are the source of our problems, a source of our problems because they are non-virtues.

What do we mean by non-virtues? Non-virtues are anything that disturbs our peace and makes the mind rough, destroying the smooth quality of the mind, so we cannot use our mind properly. We lose control; anger takes over when a person is angry. I don't have to tell you. We all know that. When somebody is angry and everything goes wild, is it really the person or the anger that has taken charge? The person doesn't even see it and can't even think straight. It's the same with attachment, with hatred, with everything. The smoothness of the mind is destroyed, so therefore mind is not in a position to be used in a proper way. This is why they are called delusions, non-virtues. They are the source of our problems.

So spiritual work is to try to reduce and ultimately eliminate that. By doing so we can reveal the purity, the pure nature of the human being, the pure nature of the mind. Spiritual work will reveal that pure nature. Whatever efforts you put in that direction is spiritual work. And why do we do this? Because the result of these delusions will always be pain and suffering.



We sometimes have a very strange mind: 'It's okay if I am sick, the doctor will take care of it, I can go to the hospital, I have insurance, and the insurance company pays the bills'. We think that way, don't we? But that is not acknowledging it. If we think carefully a bit and imagine complications develop and that there are things that cannot be handled by the doctor, by medical science, if we just imagine that for a little while, we get a different feeling. So all these pains, they are a problem. We usually look out, not bother so much, but when we look in, when we go through it, we see how difficult it is. Changing itself, change is wonderful and beautiful, but change is also a big problem, it is full of pain. Changing from friend into enemy – a lot of your friends change into enemies – that is pain, that is a problem. Youth changes into aging, birth changes into death. Change is pain, and we don't see it.

Each of these pains is the result of delusions we have. Through the delusions, as we said earlier, we create some work - which results in those pains. Buddha's second noble truth is about the cause of pain. These pains that we bear are not without cause. They are born from a cause we created. The cause is not created by somebody else somewhere. It is me; I am the person who created this particular problem that I go through and it is me who has to work it out.

What really are the causes? They are the delusions, nothing else. We talk about karma, we say karma is great, very romantic, a very mysterious type of thing. That is the way we look at it. The word karma is not a normal English word, it is Sanskrit and we say: 'Wow' and we look at it in a romantic way. But it is not. Karma is simply our life that we go through. That is our karma, there is nothing more. And we create it.

Buddha's solution is to tell how to reverse the present situation. It cannot be reversed at the result level, it has to be done through the causal level. Buddha says: 'Change the delusions and when you change the delusions, the pain, the suffering is going to change.' That is what he understood and experienced. So Buddha gave the second noble truth as *the cause of suffering*.

## **The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering**

When you look into the truth, when you really target the truth, then by cutting delusion and negativities, you will have cessation. For instance, when you cut your anger you develop a cessation of suffering. That cessation itself is the truth. It is something we can experience. There are deeper ones of course, but I am making it simple here. This is the third truth.

## **The Truth of the Path**

So, now how do we catch the cause of suffering and achieve the cessation of suffering? Buddha presented the fourth truth, *the truth of the path*, the truth of the practice. The truth of practice is the truth itself. Where do we find it? Within ourselves. Nothing outside. We have to look within. You'll find it within yourself.

## **How to Put into Practice**

The way I presented it here, it looks as if the third and fourth truth are almost the same. But that is not so. The fourth truth is working towards the cessation. How do you do the work? Through meditation; only meditation. Nothing else will do it.

What then is meditation? It is mind work. It is not physical work. It is mental work and if you do not have any stabilization of mind



you can not do much. If you cannot concentrate, you cannot use your mind. In order to use the mind you have to be able to concentrate. So concentration is important and is one half of meditation.

Can concentration alone do the work? No it cannot, definitely not. Concentration can give tremendous harmony, peace, pleasure. However, it is not enough to cut through the delusions. So you also need analytical meditation. What do you analyze? There are lots of different points, subjects, ways to develop – to look in, Why are there varieties? Because a single approach will not do.

The combination of concentrated and analytical meditation becomes the perfect meditation. To make our meditation perfect, we use our capacity to remain focused to analyze our subject and gain understanding. When we gain understanding, we then shift and concentrate on our realization. By doing this we gain development. That is what we do.

So first and foremost, what are the steps? If you do not know how to meditate, you will simply sit, with all kinds of postures. Learning is important. If you don't learn, you will not know what to do. It doesn't have to be scholarly, but you need reliable steps. Enlightenment does not happen in an instant. It is a step-by-step development with a lot of steps involved. You need to learn the steps. What are they? How do you go about it? What are the obstacles? How do you overcome them? These are important to learn.

Learning alone will not help. You need to do something. If you pick up a lot of information, read all sorts of books, hear every different lecture, but you do nothing, what good does that do? It will not help you. Instead it can even be harmful. Therefore learning has to be followed by thinking. You have to think on it, analytical thinking, analysis, organized within the individual.

Once you are able to understand something by analyzing, you then concentrate on that realization. This sort of merges with you; you and the point almost merge together, almost into oneness. When that happens, it is working, you are moving in the right direction. Until then we are simply going toward it, around it, but never really getting into it. In order for it to become a spiritual development you have to merge with it. Virtues and realizations are not to one side and you on the other. That is dry knowledge. The moment you merge with the understanding, it affects you and that is your spiritual development. I believe this how it works.

Well, I can't elaborate all the steps here. Find the information which is necessary. Then you have to do it.

Remain pure. You have to remain pure. That is very important. What is purity, how does a person remain pure? Be what you are and try to function from there. A lot of people don't want to be what they are; they try to be somebody else. We do this but you can't move anywhere unless you recognize where you are. Sit down, recognize, think, and from there you begin to work. If you do not act with your own understanding, then, when things move along on their own, it will not necessarily be favorable. Whether we act to help ourselves or not, our life will go on.

Why do we hate ourselves? If I hate myself I cannot help myself. Please, be yourself, the simple person 'me'. Acknowledge your own faults, your problems, acknowledge your own benefits and qualities, acknowledge what you are. We are not always at fault, you know. We have tremendous amount of qualities, a tremendous amount of positivity too. If you don't acknowledge that, there will be a problem. When you do not acknowledge your positive qualities, then your negative problems will take you over.

That must be the reason why a lot of emotional problems arise. You try to be somebody great and when you realize you're not, it is a problem, or you blame yourself too much. You go to the extent that, when you cannot match someone else, you hate yourself.

You know, in Tibet, we didn't see these emotional problems. Here you find a jungle of emotional problems; really a jungle. Everything is either high or low. When you try to be someone other than yourself and realize after some time it isn't working, you become so low. In concentrated meditation you may try to sit and develop and may gain tremendous harmony but misunderstand it as full enlightenment and then suddenly realize that this is not working any more: "Oh my God, even the enlightened position is also bad" and then you go terribly down.

What happens, you see, is one tries to be something else. But if you acknowledge yourself and are true to what you are, the way you really are, and look at the anger or hatred or attachment – let me call them emotional problems – you can change. You cannot cut it immediately. Nothing can be cut immediately, because we have relied on them for a long time. But it is always changeable, because it is impermanent. If it were permanent you couldn't change it. Human beings are impermanent, our problems are impermanent, and our qualities and advantages are also impermanent. So it can be changed, it is changeable. You work slowly and acknowledge, be aware what is happening, be mindful and then things can be sorted out.

Take anger. People get angry for valid and invalid reasons, sometimes for no reason. The reasons don't matter. If you say: 'Anger is bad, don't get angry' it doesn't help and will not bring results. But when you try to review, not get more upset but try to review and think about it and acknowledge your anger, your anger goes down. When some people get angry they are angry for days, some for hours. Either way, if you can acknowledge it, then the period of recognizing anger becomes shorter and shorter and shorter. At first you may think: 'Hey, how can I watch, I don't realize it when I get angry.' It doesn't matter, the moment you do, acknowledge it. You will begin to notice it sooner. The pride of your anger will also go down, down, down. Self-hatred and all emotional problems can be affected like this.

When you don't notice them, negative emotions become huge, like a mountain falling over you. You know how it is when emotions take over. It completely overtakes you and you become so small. You don't know what happened. You want to get away from it; it's not nice. When you later acknowledge it, watch it. It doesn't matter if you recognize it one or two hours later, even then it will work. If you notice it half an hour later, that is fine. If you notice it ten minutes later, good. Keep on acknowledging it. After a while, the time becomes shorter and eventually you are not overwhelmed anymore. But don't say: 'Go away'. It won't just go away, but it will reduce. You can deal with it and after some time if it rises you can say: 'Hey, how are you? I haven't seen you for a long time. Do you want a glass of juice?' That is what we can do, simply by being aware. Aware of who you are. Be who you are and acknowledge all this. Be mindful.

Also, if somebody makes you angry, then the thought of anger is still your own, even though somebody else was the cause or what I prefer to call, the temporary instigator. They have been kind enough to be a temporary instigator to instigate anger, but actually it is your own anger and no one else's. We are good at blaming others. Number one, we don't want to blame ourselves, that is our nature. Straightaway we blame A, B, and C and only if you cannot find someone else we blame ourselves; otherwise we look everywhere else. That is not how to do it. Acknowledge it as your own. And again it goes back to: Be what you are. Acknowledge 'My own thoughts are mine.' and acknowledge: 'It is my own problem.' You can work with this rather than saying it is somebody else's, though someone might have helped the situation. Do you know what I mean?

Also, somebody might have thrown some garbage on you, may have jumped on you, but the moment he/she did it, it becomes my problem. She or he have to solve their own problem, but when negative emotions rise in me, I have to solve what has become my problem. Blaming others won't help me. Harmony begins within me, the individual. First I have to be in harmony with myself, then



I can be in harmony with others and then it goes on. Similarly whenever somebody dumps garbage on you, you still have to work out your negative emotions. It becomes “my problem”. Only I can do this. How to do it? Instead of blaming the other one for throwing – which she or he did, I will not deny – simultaneously I need to acknowledge that my negativity is my problem. From there I can work it out. There is nothing that cannot be worked out, nothing. When we talk about becoming a Buddha, how can we not work out a tiny little problem like that? Definitely it can be worked out. Easily. You have to know how to handle it.





# 3

Compassion for Others

I mention very often that our main job is to free ourselves from the misery of neuroses such as anger, hatred, and jealousy. When you realize how difficult this is, and how much you suffer because of it, then it is important to switch your focus away from yourself alone and realize that everyone else has this problem. The people you share your home with, your parents, your co-workers, and everyone else you meet all have the same difficulties. It is vital to recognize this because the way out of your own misery is by caring for others. Rather than wondering "How can I do something for myself?" think of others and what you can do for them. This is the bodhisattva's way.

Don't withdraw into yourself under the pretense of meditation and saying mantras. On the outside you may look like a great spiritual practitioner but in reality this can simply be another cocoon to hide in while you keep thinking to yourself "How can I develop?" or "What can I do for me?" Instead, the moment you have difficulties and wish to be free of them, think of all the others who have these difficulties and also wish to be free. Then try to be helpful.

Rather than making things more complicated and more confused by adding your own neuroses, which is a usual pattern for us, try to rely on whatever compassion you have, whatever wisdom you have, whatever caring mind you can get and then try to help. Begin with the people closest to you. They are all in the same boat. Think, "As much as I have this difficulty, they have the same difficulty." Begin with one person at a time, rather than with all sentient beings. It has tremendous benefit, thinking of all sentient beings, no doubt. But it is a long shot to solve each and every person's problems. And also when we are sitting on our cushion thinking of all sentient beings it is easy to imagine nameless faceless dots who do whatever we want, instead of real people who can really irritate us badly sometimes. So whatever we can do for those who are right in front of our own nose, try to help them. This is a way to keep your practice grounded. Even if it is only a small problem you will feel quite happy if you are able to help. This is the bodhisattva's way of building happiness—by serving others.



Relieving someone of any problem, even a simple headache, with the motivation of compassion has tremendous benefit. Not because you happen to be a doctor who has given the right drug and gotten rid of a headache. Prescribing the right drug for a particular illness is not what brings this great benefit. The benefit comes from the motivation to relieve the suffering others are experiencing, which you recognize is not different than your own suffering. It also becomes very important that the sincere desire to help is not contaminated by a personal agenda. The moment you think "I will be the instrument to relieve this person's suffering," or "I will be given the credit for this," you are acting with a personal agenda. If you act with a personal agenda, even if you have a desire to help, it becomes faulty. We usually have some half and half mixture, so we need to recognize this and work towards being able to help without personal agenda.

These days people's lives are getting busier and busier. There are bills to pay and most people are under a great deal of stress just to make a living. You have to make use of what is right in front of you. You have to make the teachings practical and down to earth and relevant to the life you have. Even if you don't have the ultimate love and compassion which is called *bodhimind*, and what you do have seems artificial, continue to pray that you may develop the actual *bodhimind*. Simply praying and wishing to develop *bodhimind* is incredibly powerful. Don't ever underestimate the difference your aspiration can make. Such a mind will influence everything you do in a positive direction. Doing your laundry, ironing your clothes, shopping for groceries, standing in line, driving down the highway. Each one of these will become worthwhile because of your motivation. Slowly you will build a solid foundation for helping yourself and others.

With this in mind, our spiritual goal is to meet with the joy that has never known suffering, to get out of the pain, the suffering nature, and reach a stage where we are no longer tortured. How do we accomplish this?

In the west you say, charity begins at home. So, first help yourself, then extend that to your loved ones at home. Before you go to thinking about compassion for all beings begin with your family. Compassion is not to nameless, faceless dots that you can order to do this and that. In fact, if we do that, when the nameless, faceless dots answer back "no" we are shocked! Expanding the scope of your compassion is the way to help ourselves and to uplift ourselves towards becoming enlightened in order to help all beings. So the way to help ourselves is actually by serving others.

Begin with appreciating that others have the same preciousness of their life, exactly as you do, with the capacity, quality, opportunity, the pain, the changes. Also that is so fragile, so impermanent. It is the exact same condition, except that I have "me" as an object and you have "you". These divisions give us trouble. We make unnecessary divisions – between black and white, Christians and Jews, between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, Lebanon and Israel, between you and me. And then of course we don't get along so well, so we kill each other. We have the division between "my life, I am more important than others" and everybody else. All our problems are created because, "I am superior, the king of kings, god of gods."

So hit the hammer on the head of the ego – once, twice, three times. We have held that division of ego from birth until now. When that division goes down a little, then we can touch our heart with others. The wall in between serves only to protect "Me". This wall does not allow the touch of heart to heart.

So ask instead, "Who are you?" To change our view begins here. It is important to develop compassion within the family. Many of us sit above it all. We think, "I am the great compassionate, spiritual person", but that is not even compassion for ourselves, forget about expanding the scope to others.

If we have compassion for ourselves, the way we help ourselves is through serving and helping others. After working with this for a

while, then you can even move on to the mother-in-law and it will be easier! But always move gradually with a real face, with all the disagreements and stubbornness.



Within meeting stubbornness, try to develop care, concern, respect, love, compassion and commitment. And don't forget to maintain care and compassion for yourself. You don't want to be like a lopsided donkey load, imbalanced and forgetting your own compassion for yourself as the base to build upon for others. Compassion is not a sacrifice.

Gradually develop the expansion further and further until you are able to develop the ultimate view, care for ALL beings – the same care that you have for yourself. It is an important task that is almost impossible. Yet your mind is capable of it. That is the beauty of the human mind.

The struggle is right in front of you. When you can do it, then move on – but do not be a doormat and lose self-respect. You need to maintain your balance of self-respect, otherwise, you will not only make no difference but you will burn out. When you are not a doormat, you maintain your own balance and hold the purpose of both. You just have to know how. It is possible and many have done it. Buddha maintained the purpose of both, his own welfare and that of all beings.

So expanding compassion means to extend what you realize for yourself to others, and that is appreciation, care, respect, love and compassion. Compassion is the result of love. Love brings compassion and compassion brings enlightenment.

Then, from the point of view of the Greater Vehicle to enlightenment, Mahayana, if you are looking for the way out of the cycle of suffering existence, the best thing to do is generate love and compassion to the ultimate degree. This is what we call *bodhimind*, the awakening mind of ultimate compassion. It does not matter how weak a person you may be. You may be

completely tied down in suffering; you may be at the bottom of the pit of cyclic existence. You may feel like the most hopeless person that ever lived, but if you grow the *bodhimind* within yourself you will get out. The Buddha, in a previous life, first generated *bodhimind* in the hell realm. He had tremendous compassion for the companion with whom he had to pull a horse cart. The future Buddha wished that he could manage to pull it by himself so his companion would not have to suffer. The administrator of that hell knew what he was thinking and hit him on the head with a hammer for having these forbidden thoughts. He hit him so hard that the Buddha died as a hell being and was reborn as a human being. This is how the Buddha first generated the very strong compassion that later became *bodhimind*, the wish to become fully enlightened to be able to free all beings from suffering.

Likewise, this is the key for us. No matter how immature our state might be, if we can grow the *bodhimind* we have the solution. This is a mind that cares for others, and that seeks enlightenment in order to serve others. If you want to benefit yourself through saying mantras you have to do millions and millions of them to gain some benefit. But if you try to do whatever you can to benefit others, then even if you say a single mantra it is more powerful than reciting zillions of mantras without this motivation. Even if you make constant offerings to all the enlightened beings and the whole environment is filled with jewels, a single moment of *bodhimind* generated with folded hands is far more effective. There is no comparison! So the trick or the method lies in the *bodhimind*. This mind makes the total difference in everything you do. This is the best way to help yourself overcome negativity. This is how you can push yourself through from the contaminated samsaric existence to uncontaminated total liberation.

# 4

Meditation on Compassion

# Meditation on Compassion

Do kindly relax.

Strongly breathe unwanted energies or unwanted air out of your body.

Relax totally.

Visualize a divine being on your crown and concentrate on it for a little while. This can be Buddha, Tara or any other divine being.

In light-form bring it down from your crown, through your head straight to your heart level.

It blesses your heart.

Your heart becomes full of love, compassion.

And the light starts radiating from the center of the heart. It is in the nature of love and in the form of light. It completely fills up your body from crown to toe. While the light fills up your body you are also filled with compassion and joy.

The light goes out from your body, fills up the room, not ordinary light, but light of love compassion.

It fills up the town, the country, multiplies, fills the whole universe, goes beyond this universe, and fills up the multi-galaxies.



The moment the light touches all these areas it purifies all the faults of the universes and the moment it reaches the inhabitants, the living beings, it purifies all their non-virtues, solves their problems, sufferings and pains and all become happy and joyful. Every sentient being everywhere has been touched by the light coming from my heart and just by the touch of the light all their bad karmas are purified, their bodies are filled with joy, their minds become pure. They remain in great equanimity. All remain in happiness. All living beings are without any pains and miseries, all are happy.

This light has completed its work. Now the light gradually dissolves back from all universes to this universe, to this country, this area, and house. Finally it dissolves to your body and then from all parts of the body into the heart-level. In your heart, in your pure nature of mind, your Buddha-nature, pure, nature of love, nature of compassion, the light remains. This light at your heart level not only remains there, but remains as a cause of Buddhahood, as cause of spiritual development, of happiness. And *it always remains*.





# 5

Wisdom

If we don't have wisdom, although we may have great compassion for ourselves and for others, what can we do? We'll keep wondering what is the right thing to do. We are at that level. That is lack of wisdom. The tool that makes compassion work is wisdom. At the same time, what is right on one level may not necessarily be right on all levels. The traditional Tibetan masters often give the example of traditional Tibetan medical treatment.

When a traditional Tibetan doctor treats a patient they may tell them, 'Don't eat meat at all'. This is not because of the non-virtues of killing or causing suffering but because of the heat that is produced in the body by eating meat, which can cause problems. Another time the same doctor may tell you: 'Now you have to eat meat'; at that time you need a lot of heat in the body. In old Tibet you chose your own doctor for each and every individual problem; you didn't have a family doctor, like here. You would go to a lama and ask him: 'Please, check which doctor is suitable to me at this moment for this illness.'

Like in this example there is no blanket solution for what to do in general. Sometimes something is good for you, sometimes the same thing is not good for you. That depends on the wisdom of the individual. When we don't have wisdom, we don't know. So we have to put in all our efforts to gain wisdom.

The most important wisdom is the wisdom that knows the nature of existence. As long as we do not have clarity about the nature of existence, the mystery of life will continue with us. If we see the nature of reality, there is no more mystery in life. But the mystery of life is hard to figure out. You can try to solve it in the scientific way, and to a certain extent that is possible, but I don't know whether you can completely solve it that way. The philosophers try to do the same thing and the spiritual people try to do the same too.

Let us talk from the spiritual point of view. Buddha talks here about emptiness. That is the famous Buddhist emptiness. Emptiness is not nothingness. The use of the term *emptiness* can be a problem.



Buddha never said 'empty' and the Tibetan texts don't either. The word in Tibetan is *tong nyi* or *tong pa nyi*. It is not *tong pa* alone, because that alone would really mean 'empty'. *Tong pa nyi* becomes 'suchness'. In English also it is called 'emptiness' and not 'empty'.

However, the usual American understanding of what is empty does not fit with the meaning of emptiness. I saw the kids' movie 'The Never-Ending Story' on television. I sat there and watched it and through that I got the message of the normal American understanding of what is empty. They think that when emptiness comes, everything is dismantling, everything disappears and that little kid is almost going too, but it manages to hold on to a tree. I don't know why the tree does not disappear, actually. And then that dragon comes and lifts him up. So no wonder there is a problem here. That type of emptiness is not what we are aiming at.

If emptiness were nothingness then there would be no basis for the fundamental basis of good and bad, which is known as karma. If there were no base for the karmic system to function, it would become unreliable. Yet, if there were a solid base, it would have to be an independent base. Then, if the base is independent, there is no possibility of change. So we have to balance between the lack of solid independent existence and the lack of nothingness. Now what are we left with? We are left with collective existence.

There is no solid base to function, yet there is something functioning. In one way we say there is karma and so forth, in another way we talk about emptiness. "As long as you see a big separation between these two, you do not understand Buddha's wisdom", says the great master Je Tsongkhapa.

We say that everything is empty, like a reflection in the mirror. Let us say I look at my face in the mirror; I know I can see myself in there, but I am not actually in there. In order to acknowledge that, it looks like I have to get in the mirror and look out and get out of the mirror and look in. But I don't have to do that. What is happening? It is a reflection. How is it possible for there to be a

reflection? It is possible because I am here and the mirror has the capability of reflecting. Based on that combination the reflection can function. If one of the pieces is missing, it cannot function. If I am not there, the mirror can't provide my reflection. If the mirror has a big hole it won't be able to reflect my face. So the reflection exists based on the combination of me being here and the mirror having that capability. And it serves the purpose. I can put on make-up, and I can draw my eyebrows. The reflection serves the purpose. But the moment I move, the reflection is gone, because the combination is gone. This is something we can see, we can know.

The problem comes when I think about how I exist. I exist, again, only based on a combination of factors: the combination of my body, my soul and my name. There are a lot of things; because of a lot of things combined together I am here today. My existence is dependent. If I don't have a body, I can't be here; if I don't have a consciousness there is a dead body here, so you see that is a combination. Since I exist depending on parts and parcels, I don't exist independently. If I existed independently I would not depend on the parts and parcels. This is the principle of dependent arising. That is what Buddha meant by emptiness.

I appreciate Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, based on points of reference. If you don't have points of reference, you are gone. If there is no point of reference there is no existence. Everything exists relatively, collectively, because of points of reference. In New York someone asked me, 'Do you think Einstein understood emptiness?' I don't know whether he did or not, but I know he really understood the point which is the basis on which you can begin to think about emptiness.

The theory of relativity gives you Buddha's idea of emptiness. The essence of emptiness is the interdependent nature or dependent arising of things. The essence of emptiness is not empty, but dependent existence. That is why there is no beginning. At least you can never measure the beginning. There is no limit where you go with your points of reference.



Buddha was asked about whether there was a beginning and an end. He chose to keep silent on that question. The Indian professors make a big deal out of that now: 'Buddha kept silent...' The point is that there is no beginning. I was told Stephen Hawking also thinks that there is no beginning. On the other hand he believes there is an end to the search for the final Russian doll. I hope he is not on a wild goose chase. I think in that case also there is no beginning and no end. There may be an end to samsara, the cycle of suffering existence, as Buddha has said. We can overcome suffering once and for all. But there won't be an end of the individual stream of consciousness. That is wisdom. The solidity of our perception is shaken. The points of reference can be moved from one point to another, one life to another, one area to another. There is no end. That does not mean that there is no continuation of 'me'. There is no beginning of 'me' and no end of 'me', therefore I will continue. But am I everlasting, permanent and solid? Certainly not.

When you separate whatever exists, like the karmic system, cause and effect, and so forth, from emptiness, you do not understand Buddha's thoughts. When you no longer see them turn by turn, but are able to see the oneness of them, when you see that dependent arising is not-independent existence, when you see these together, you are getting very good wisdom. Je Tsongkhapa said,

*Further, appearance eliminates the extreme of existence.*

*Emptiness eliminates non-existence.*

*Emptiness itself is cause and effect.*

*Understanding this protects from these extremes.*

If we start by searching for emptiness we are not going to find emptiness. If we search for zero, we will find zero, nothing, what else? Instead of that, it is more effective to search for how we exist. Then we will see we exist dependently, as parts and parcels, and



therefore not independently. For example, if you count from one to ten, you will have to add a zero to make it ten; that is how you begin to see it.

With every little step of learning we are building wisdom. With continuous practice and effort there will be a time when we will solve the mystery of life and go beyond – gate gate parasamgate.



# 6

Jewel Heart Prayers



## REFUGE

I take refuge in the Guru  
I take refuge in the Buddha  
I take refuge in the Dharma  
I take refuge in the Sangha

## INVOCATION

You who destroy all evil forces  
And who know all things perfectly,  
For the sake of all beings,  
Please come to me.

## SEVEN PRACTICES

I bow down in body, speech and mind.  
I offer the best I have to give  
both real and imagined  
to fill the space between us.  
I regret and purify all transgressions.  
I rejoice in all virtues.  
I request you to remain until total enlightenment.  
I request wise and compassionate guidance.  
I dedicate my merit for the sake of all beings.

OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNI YE SOHA

OM MANI PADME HUM

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

## **GENERATING LOVE AND COMPASSION**



May all beings have happiness,  
May they be free from suffering,  
May they find the joy that has never known suffering,  
May they be free from attachment and hatred.

## **DEDICATION**

By this merit  
may I quickly attain the state of enlightenment  
and take with me  
every being without exception.



by Marian van der Horst



# 7

A Short Daily Practice

Here is a simple little practice everybody can do, something to hold on to. If you get up in the morning before you go to work or do whatever, meditate for a short period.

## 1. Refuge

The first step is to seek protection from Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, generating the great thought that one would like to benefit all sentient beings and to accomplish that one would like to seek the highest stage ever possible, becoming enlightened. You take refuge with the words:

*I take refuge in the Guru*

*I take refuge in the Buddha*

*I take refuge in the Dharma*

*I take refuge in the Sangha*

The Guru here can be Buddha. He is the main teacher for all Buddhists. Buddha is not necessarily only Sakyamuni, the historical buddha; there are many different buddhas or enlightened beings, like the buddhas of the ten directions, the medicine buddha, the long-life buddha etc. In particular it is important to link up your own future buddha, the beauty nature or buddha nature within the individual, with the external buddha.

Link up your own dharma, which is your own spiritual development, your own positivity, with the external dharma of the attainments of the enlightened beings. We have introduced the negatives. If you reduce your anger, then by cutting the anger, by separating yourself from the anger, you gain positivity. That very positivity becomes your own dharma. Likewise for all other delusions; if you separate yourself from delusions, the positivity gained by removing them from you, by not letting yourself be run under their control, is the first step of spiritual development within the individual. That is your own dharma. You take refuge in it, and try to build up



your own dharma here. Then you strengthen it by contacting the dharma within the fully enlightened beings.

Also we take refuge in the sangha, the special persons who have definitely clearly seen the true reality. Each one of us will become our own future sangha. You sort of wake that up.

## 2. The Seven Limbs or Seven Practices

*I bow down in body, speech and mind.*

*I offer the best I have to give both real and imagined to fill the space between us.*

*I regret and purify all transgressions.*

*I rejoice in all virtues.*

*I request you to remain until total enlightenment.*

*I request wise and compassionate guidance.*

*I dedicate my merit for the sake of all beings.*

Let me tell you a little bit about this. This practice was part of the Buddhist system even before Buddhism came from India to Tibet around 1200 years ago. The Indians taught the Tibetans how to pray. This kind of prayer is not just simply wishing. Normally, we may ask the enlightened beings to help us achieve certain things. But here it is different, there are a few things we can do as well.

We can make offerings to them. Offerings are not limited to physical giving. It includes mentally created offerings, which are even more important than the physical giving. If you have given \$10, think you have given \$100 000 and that you are happy to give this and that you are willing to share. You mentally fabricate greater offerings and that makes your generosity a little more powerful.

We can also purify all our wrong doings, all our negativities and non-virtuous actions. We can purify whatever mistakes we make. We can make ourselves pure and perfect. Having made a mistake is not the

end of everything. You can correct it and make things pure. It is not hopeless. You can do it. There are many ways to do this. In our prayer we just have one line: *I regret and purify all transgressions*. If I talk about purification in detail we can go on for weeks. On the other hand you can summarize all in one sentence.

Another part of the Seven Limbs is to rejoice. We rejoice in the good works we ourselves and others did. That helps tremendously. Our problem is jealousy. If somebody is doing something good, we really get jealous. If, instead of being jealous, rejoice and we ourselves will receive more benefit.

At the end of the prayers we dedicate our prayers and efforts for the sake of all beings reaching the goal of the joy that has never known suffering.

Briefly, that is the basic framework for our prayers. The most important thing for spiritual practice is the state of our mind. So, in the beginning, we should try to have a good motivation in the sense of thinking, 'I would like to help myself and others, my family, my fellow country men, the people in the world, particularly this year, this week and especially today. With such a mind, if you say prayers, the result will be different.

### **3. Mantras**

Then you say mantras:

Next is Buddha Sakyamuni's mantra:

OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNI YE SOHA

This mantra links you to Buddha, who has not only overcome the rough delusions but also selfish interest and the subtle delusions; he has overcome all of them. The body, mind and speech of all Buddhas and our personal body, mind and speech get linked



together with this mantra. Soha means: May the foundation of your qualities of body, speech, and mind be laid within our body, mind and speech.

### OM MANI PADME HUM

Again Om represents body, mind and speech. Mani represents method love compassion oriented helping of others, being totally dedicated, being less selfish, according to whatever your level may be. All of those love-compassion oriented practices are represented by the word *mani* which means jewel. *Padme* is lotus, which is the wisdom, the clarity and understanding. So the mantra is about trying to grow our own personal love-compassion by linking it to the Buddha of love and compassion, trying to almost make it oneness. Likewise we try to link up our wisdom with the fully enlightened beings' wisdom, which has no limit to clarity and knowledge. We try to link up the very little wisdom we have to theirs, to make it to that level. *Hum* is the union, the union of that level of enlightened beings and me, bringing it up to that level.

### OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

*Tare*: One who has the proper method and the love to take us away from the circle of suffering existence, *samsara*. Our delusions and karma compel us to take rebirth in one life after another. *Tara* will be able to lead us out of that. With *Tare* you name her. *Tuttare*: One who protects us from the eight fears of the spiritual practitioner. *Ture*: She who gives healing from all the illnesses that we have. We have two kinds of illnesses: physical illnesses and mental illnesses which bring emotional illnesses. The mental illnesses are all our delusions. Physical illness is whatever sickness you have. Anything. If you have an addiction, you can concentrate on *Tara* asking, 'Help me to get out of it!' Focus on these things when you say *Ture*. *Soha*, again, is to lay the foundation.



## 4. Dedication

Then you can have a little dedication:

*By this merit, may I quickly  
attain the state of enlightenment  
and take with me every being  
without exception.*

Dedication is very important to safeguard the positive energy from our practice and direct it to the greatest possible purpose. The greatest purpose is for all living beings to become free from suffering and fully enlightened. By dedicating our efforts in this way, until that goal is achieved, the positive energy from our practice will not be exhausted. It is also protected from being destroyed by negativities, especially anger or hatred. Once you ear-marked your positive merit to go towards enlightenment for all, nothing can interfere with it.



# 8

Historical Development of Buddhism

## Brief historical development of Buddhism

Buddhism began in India, about 2600 years ago with Buddha Shakyamuni. He was an Indian prince who renounced his kingdom, after he realized that even as king he did not have the power to effectively eradicate suffering. He became a spiritual practitioner himself and went through intensive study and meditation. Through his own spiritual efforts he eventually found not only freedom from suffering for himself but total enlightenment and then he shared his spiritual development with the people, travelling and teaching throughout India for over 45 years. He taught anybody who came to him by his personal experience. He passed away in Northern India at the age of 81.

His teachings were continued by his numerous disciples and eventually written down as the Tripitaka of the Pali Canon and in Sanskrit in what came to be known later in Tibet as the Kangyur. These teachings came from his personal experience, from what he shared with the people, from the spiritual development he obtained. The Southern School of Buddhism known as Theravada, later went into South-East Asian countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and so on. The Northern School the Mahayana, extended to Tibet, China, Korea, Japan, and so on.

Buddhism was completely wiped out in India by Muslim invaders in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century, but survived in Tibet in its most complete form. Many Indian saints and great masters went to Tibet and a tremendous amount of Sanskrit texts were translated into the Tibetan language over three or four hundred years. The great Indian mahasiddha Padmasambhava visited Tibet in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and the great master Atisha from Vikramalashila monastery came to Tibet in the 10<sup>th</sup> century and established a pure form of Indian-Tibetan Buddhism known as Kadampa.



Many great masters from the famous Nalanda monastery in India came to Tibet as well and gradually four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism formed that all practice a combination of sutra, the common practice, and tantra or vajrayana. The most recent , the Gelugpa, or New Kadampa, was founded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by Je Tsongkhapa, a great yogi, teacher and scholar who, though he closely followed the system of the Kadampa, learned from teachers of all the other schools. But still he was not satisfied. He first thought of going to India to learn more but finally decided to stay in Tibet and through extensive practices of purification and accumulation of merit he was able to directly communicate with Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom. After that his realizations became very powerful and he became one of the greatest spiritual masters in Tibetan history. Je Tsongkhapa's system of practice became the most popular tradition, producing many great spiritual masters, including the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas and many others up to the present day.

By the time of the Communist Chinese invasion in the 1950s, Tibet was a predominantly spiritual society, with 30% of the male population monks, the Dalai Lama as the spiritual and political leader of the country and the monasteries the great centers of education.

The Communist Chinese invasion and then the Cultural Revolution put an end to this, killed millions of people in Tibet, destroyed 6000 monasteries and forced many who wanted to seriously continue their spiritual practice into exile. The 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, and with him many of the great masters of all four Tibetan traditions. They were followed by a hundred thousand Tibetan refugees. I myself became a refugee in 1959 and went to India after His Holiness and with my own spiritual teachers.

In India, the original home of Buddhism, the Tibetan lineages started to revive and expand again, first in the Tibetan refugee communities and eventually they also became known to a growing number of westerners. Travelers from many countries became close to the Tibetan lamas in India and Nepal in the 1960s and 1970s, and after returning to their home countries, invited those lamas to visit them and teach them more. Since the 1970s, Tibetan teachers have visited Europe, America, Australia, South East Asia, Russia, Japan, Taiwan and other countries around the world and established centers of study and learning.

In the late 1970s and early 80s, I myself also, with strong encouragement from my own masters, Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang and Kyabje Ling Dorje Chang, the junior and senior tutors of His Holiness the Dalai Lama began to give teachings to western students in India, especially in Dehli and Dharmasala and then, when they went back to their countries, they invited me to come over and teach them there. So I began traveling to the US, the Netherlands , Malaysia and Singapore. Then after a few years, I settled down in the United States, where I became a citizen. We founded Jewel Heart as a Tibetan Buddhist Center and we now have quite a few chapters and study groups and quite a number of people who are practicing this. We are trying to bring the essence of Tibetan Buddhism to the west because Buddha's message of wisdom and compassion is very much needed here and it is still as relevant to us today as it was 2600 years ago, when the Buddha first discovered it and shared it with the people of his time.



# 9

About Jewel Heart

## JEWEL HEART PROGRAMS

Jewel Heart programs are based upon Buddha's path, blazed into the present day based on the work of Gelek Rimpoche. Rimpoche's teachings address current questions of identity and purpose as well as bridging the dilemma of having both spiritual and material aspirations. Jewel Heart provides courses, workshops and special events both online and on-site at its various chapters throughout the year. Jewel Heart also sponsors teachings, lectures, and workshops by a wide range of Tibetan and Western teachers and scholars, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### JEWEL HEART STUDY PROGRAM

Jewel Heart's graduated program of study and practice is based on the teachings of Gelek Rimpoche and facilitated by Jewel Heart instructors. These courses, available throughout Jewel Heart chapters and study groups, are open to all and range from questioning the need for spiritual development, to serious and engaged study of the Tibetan Buddhist path. Taking a creative approach to learning, Jewel Heart programs engage the arts, the sciences and multiple media platforms to maximize the ability to absorb knowledge to a level that changes the way we think and live. The complete program provides a foundation for entering the Vajrayana path, transformative practices designed to quickly unlock the mystery of life and end all forms of suffering.

#### **Jewel Heart Programs and Events**

Jewel Heart offers Buddhist-inspired Sunday talks, meditation sessions, film and discussion evenings, and a variety of workshops with diverse levels for participation serving the Jewel Heart sangha and surrounding local communities.



## **Retreats**

Numerous retreats are offered throughout each year in the US, Netherlands, Malaysia and Singapore. In the US, Jewel Heart holds summer and winter retreats. The week-long summer retreat is open to all with an opportunity for both new and experienced practitioners to deepen their understanding of spiritual practice. The winter retreats are open to Vajrayana students and those who are qualified to receive Highest Yoga tantra initiation.

## **Transcripts and Audio/Video Archives**

Audio and video recordings of teachings by Gelek Rimpoche dating from 1984 have been digitized, serving as a resource for development of programs and transcripts. An extensive library of Gelek Rimpoche's Collected Works is available in audio, video and transcript formats via the Jewel Heart website. Transcripts continue to be produced in support of Jewel Heart courses and are accessible to anyone seeking spiritual development.

## **JEWEL HEART STORE**

The Jewel Heart Store provides resources and materials from Tibetan culture, history and Buddhism. In addition to books, silver and ritual items, handmade Tibetan carpets, crafts and other goods for sale, the Jewel Heart Store has a comfortable reading and exhibition space, where those who are interested may learn more about spiritual practice, Tibet, its languages and endangered culture.

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