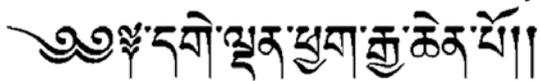


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# Mahamudra: The Great Seal of Voidness



Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

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Sitting in a relaxed posture, and withdrawing our minds from all distractions, we focus our mind on receiving the teachings with the following motivation: 'In order to benefit all sentient beings by relieving them from all suffering, I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teachings and put them into practice well'.

## PREPARATION

### Four instructions on preliminary practices

#### TAKING REFUGE AND GENERATING BODHICHITTA (CONT.)

We have come to the point in the auto-commentary that reads:

This confirms that bodhichitta serves as the central pillar of the Mahayana vehicle.

Thus amongst all the various traditions of the Land of Snow, whatever profound teaching may be presented, when it comes to the practice of meditation, there are no contradictions in the need for it be preceded by the preliminary practices. These are presented as the four instructions, which are: taking refuge and generating bodhichitta, offering world mandalas, doing Vajrasattva practice, and engaging in guru yoga practice.

This was explained earlier.

#### THE PRELIMINARY PRACTICES OF MILAREPA

The auto-commentary further explains:

In particular the foremost disciple of highest yoga tantra, the great adept and yogi Milarepa...

When the auto-commentary refers to Milarepa as *the foremost disciple of highest yoga tantra*, we have to understand that this specifically indicates that Milarepa is a disciple who, through the practice of highest yoga tantra, obtained enlightenment in one lifetime. As we seem to need to go through many lifetimes to achieve enlightenment, we are not considered foremost disciples - we are more like the least of the intelligent disciples!

The auto-commentary continues:

...the great adept and yogi Milarepa, engaged in the preliminary practices of developing love, compassion and bodhichitta, and meditating on renunciation, karma and its effects, as well as death and impermanence.

Here the auto-commentary explains the preliminary practices of the great yogi Milarepa. In order to develop love and compassion and bodhichitta, one must first meditate on renunciation. So bodhichitta is based on first having developed renunciation. And in order to develop renunciation, one has to first contemplate karma and its effects, and for a sound understanding on karma and its effects, one needs to first contemplate death and impermanence. The practices that are described here are exactly as presented in the lam rim teachings, and the sequence can be understood in the reverse order – in order to develop the later realisations one needs to first engage in and develop the former practices.

The auto-commentary continues:

Thus he said:

Having repeatedly feared the eight unfavourable circumstances,  
I meditated on impermanence and the faults of samsara  
I was diligent in observing the laws of karma and its effects,  
And entrusted myself whole heartedly to the Three Jewels,

In the first line, Milarepa says that he initially developed the fear of *the eight unfavourable circumstances*, which refers to the eight unfavourable circumstances of cyclic existence. *Having repeatedly feared* these eight unfavourable circumstances, he *meditated on impermanence and the faults of samsara*. Milarepa further asserts that he diligently observed the *laws of karma and its effects*, which means abiding by the law of karma and effect. Then he *entrusted* himself *whole-heartedly to the Three Jewels*, which indicates that he had taken refuge in the Three Jewels.

It is good to reflect on Milarepa's own words, in which he explains what he practiced, and the manner in which he practised. The great yogi Milarepa is renowned as having achieved enlightenment in one lifetime. But we can see that it is not as though Milarepa suddenly became a buddha. Rather it was on the basis of his preliminary practices that he started moving upwards along the path. It is good for us to reflect upon that. We often say 'yes, it would be good to achieve enlightenment', but if we don't pay attention to actually engaging in the practices, there is no way that we can proceed along the path.

As Milarepa mentions, the way to observe the law of karma and its effects is by entrusting oneself in the Three Jewels. In the next verse he states:

I trained my mind in cultivating bodhichitta – the method,  
I severed the continuity of the imprints of obscurations,  
And I perceived all appearances, as illusory.  
Now, I have no fear for the three lower rebirths!

From this we must understand that even though Milarepa was a renowned adept at tantra, it is not as though Milarepa practised tantra right from the beginning. Rather, he initially engaged in the preliminary practices, and as he mentions here, *I trained my mind in cultivating bodhichitta*, which is the actual method.

When he says, *I severed the continuity of the imprints of obscurations, and I perceived all appearances, as illusory*, what this indicates is the practice of gaining the realisation of emptiness. This line includes the basis, which is the two truths, and the path, which is method and wisdom. Within method and wisdom, *seeing all appearances as illusory* refers to the wisdom realising emptiness. This then serves as the cause to achieve the two results, which are the form body and the primordial wisdom body of an enlightened being.

In the last line he says, [Having practised in this way] *Now, I have no fear for the three lower rebirths!* Here Milarepa confirms that having practised in the way he described earlier; he has now reached the stage where he has no fear of being reborn in the three lower rebirths. It is good to reflect upon this.

As the auto-commentary then reads:

He also said:

In relation to virtuous and non-virtuous karma,

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If you don't contemplate the certainty of its effects,  
You will surely experience the unbearable suffering  
of the lower rebirths;  
Therefore, fearing the ripened effects of the subtlest  
of actions,  
Seek to develop a conscientious mind, imbued with  
mindfulness.

This again is a very profound instruction. Milarepa explains that by contemplating the certainty of the effects of both virtuous and non-virtuous karma, one will realise that, without applying this knowledge one *will surely experience the unbearable suffering of the lower rebirths*, and *therefore* the fear of *the ripened effects of the subtlest of actions* will develop. This refers particularly to one of the four characteristics of karma — that karma will multiply greatly, which is the case for even the subtlest of actions.

Even the subtlest non-virtuous karma, if left unattended or not rectified, will become a cause to experience the great sufferings of a lower rebirth in a future lifetime, because of the increasing nature of karma. Likewise, even the subtlest virtuous karma is not to be neglected by thinking, 'Oh, this is a very insignificant good deed'. Again because the characteristic of karma is that it increases, one must adopt even the smallest virtuous karma, as that will become a cause for good results in the future.

We can see how these few lines relate to the extensive explanations of karma found in the lam rim teachings. The first two lines explain the certainty of karma, which is the first characteristic of karma, and the second characteristic, which as mentioned previously, is the increasing nature of karma i.e. it multiplies greatly. We can immediately relate these few lines to the more extensive explanations in the lam rim. By virtue of having studied the lam rim and having reflected upon it periodically, the meaning of even these few lines becomes evident and very powerful.

If we can reflect upon and relate to these few words they really jump out as the essential points of what is explained extensively in the lam rim. It is really good for us to see how meaningful these explanations are for us. The essential point being explained here is that one must observe karma. If you don't abide by the law of cause and effect, or karma, the result will definitely be an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. So the main point being explained here is the need to abide by the law of cause and effect, or karma.

What does abiding by the law of karma mean? As explained in our last session, it means really cultivating the Dharma within one's own mind, by accumulating virtue and avoiding non-virtue. The way to protect ourselves from a lower rebirth is to adopt the ten virtuous actions and avoid the ten non-virtuous actions. As explained in our last session, the actual protector is the Dharma and that is developed within our own mind. When we contemplate on how the objects of refuge protect us, it becomes clear that cultivating the Dharma refuge within our own mind, is the most essential practice.

The ultimate Dharma refuge, as explained previously, is the true path and true cessation, and that of course is only found within the continuum of the arya beings. However at our level, the level of Dharma that we have within our mind now is the virtues that we adopt and the non-virtues that we avoid, so securing that will protect us. Observing the law of karma by adopting the virtues and avoiding the non-virtues is the means to protect ourselves from an unfortunate rebirth in the next lifetime. When we think about it in this way, and

really go over the meaning of these lines, then we can really taste the flavour of the practice.

The auto-commentary continues with more of Milarepa's advice:

And again:

By not seeing the faults of the sensory pleasures,  
If you don't cultivate a deep sense of disgust within,  
You will not be freed from the prison of samsara,  
Thus, by perceiving all existence as an illusion,  
Seek the antidote to sever the origination of suffering.

Here again, Milarepa clearly explains that if one does not see the faults of sensory pleasures, which are the pleasures of samsara, and cultivate a deep sense of disgust of samsara, then there will be no freedom from the prison of samsara. *Perceiving all existence as an illusion* indicates the actual antidote, which is the realisation of emptiness. Existence is referred to as an illusion, because even though things appear to be inherently or truly existent, they do not exist in that way. Things are void of true existence, or inherent existence, and thus they are like an illusion.

With that understanding Milarepa mentions that one should *seek the antidote to sever the origination of suffering*. Here, 'the origination of suffering' refers to the second of the four noble truths. The origination of suffering means the cause of suffering, and if one does not see samsara itself as having faults arising from attachment to the sensory pleasures, then one will never be free from the truth of suffering. Thus, the way to overcome the truth of suffering is to apply the antidote to the origin of suffering, which as explained here is done by perceiving all existence as an illusion, meaning developing the realisation of emptiness.

These lines by Milarepa relate to the teachings of the four noble truths. The first two lines refer to the pleasures of samsara as a truth of suffering. The third line refers to the cessation of suffering, which in this case is the cessation of all cyclic existence. The fourth line refers to the path, and the last line refers to the truth of origination.

In this way we can derive the meaning of these lines with the understanding gained from studying texts such as the lam rim. We can derive the actual meaning of these lines as a result of our earlier studies, and in this way see how essential it is to have done extensive study.

Then the auto-commentary continues:

He further said:

If one doesn't repay the kindness,  
Of all mother and father sentient beings in the six  
realms,  
One will incur the fault of straying towards the lower  
vehicle;  
Thus, seek to cultivate and practice great compassion,  
Followed by the development of bodhichitta.

Here, Milarepa explains that having recognised the kindness of all beings by seeing them as fathers and mothers, one needs to repay that kindness to all sentient beings. If one does not do so then *one will incur the fault of straying towards the lower vehicle*, meaning that one's practice will only be a practice of the lower vehicle. So in order to not incur that fault one must seek to cultivate and practise great compassion, followed by the development of bodhichitta.

The auto-commentary concludes that:

In this manner, Milarepa imparted the instructions according to the lam rim teachings.

Then the auto-commentary says:

The foremost follower of Lord Milarepa, Dagpo Rinpoche (the founder of the Kagyu lineage) also proclaimed the renowned Four Dharmas of Dagpo.

Make sure that your mind turns into Dharma,  
And that the Dharma is taken as the path,  
And that the path clarifies mistakes,  
And that the mistakes appear as primordial wisdom.

These points are to be taken as explained extensively in the mind-training texts of the Kadampas.

#### THE FOUR CLINGINGS

The auto-commentary states:

The Great Vajra Holder—Dargpa Gyaltsan has likewise said in his mind training text called *Parting from the Four Clings*.

Dargpa Gyaltsan is one of the masters of the Sakya tradition. Those who are familiar with the Heruka and Vajrayogini practices will have recognised the name as one of the lineage masters.

As quoted in the auto-commentary Dargpa Gyaltsan advised:

If you have attachment to this life, you are not a religious practitioner,  
If you have attachment to cyclic existence, you don't have renunciation,  
If you are attached to your own welfare, you don't have bodhichitta,  
And if you have grasping, you don't have the correct view.

These are called the four clings, which are also described by Lama Tsongkapa in the *Three Principles of the Path*.

##### 1. Attachment to this life

The auto-commentary further explains:

Thus through the elimination of the four erroneous states, the four correct practices are established. These are:

1. The antidotes for overcoming attachment to this life are the practices common with the small scope, such as meditating on the precious human life, on death and impermanence and the sufferings of the lower realms.

As explained in the first line you need to understand that if you are attached to this life, you are not a religious practitioner. As explained in the auto-commentary, in order to overcome attachment to this life one must overcome clinging to this life. Clinging to this life is overcome by the practices that are presented in the small scope, which are meditating on the precious human rebirth, then on death and impermanence, followed by the suffering of the lower realms. By contemplating these topics one will start to overcome focussing entirely on this life, and develop an interest in the next life. Thereby the focus on our welfare in future lifetimes will become stronger. Then our practice is said to become an authentic Dharma practice.

Dargpa Gyaltsan's first line literally says, *if you have attachment to this life, you are not a religious practitioner*. What this indicates is that if you don't have an interest or regard for your future life, then whatever you do is not an authentic Dharma practice. What we need to understand here is that according to the Buddhist teachings, for any Dharma practice to be an authentic Dharma practice, it has to be accompanied with an interest, at the very least, in the benefiting a future life. However, we do have to accept that even without an interest in a future lifetime, practices such

as generosity and being kind to others are Dharma practices because they are virtuous. However it is not an authentic Dharma practice if it is not accompanied with an interest in a future life.

When we relate to these explanations further, we can understand that clinging to this life is actually a big obstacle to our practice. One could say that all the problems we face in this life come about as a result of clinging to this life. Do you find that to be true? Does being preoccupied with the concerns of this life bring about a lot of problems or not?

*Students: Yes!*

If you accept that the strong clinging to this life is actually a cause for a lot of problems, then that is a good start! In fact, from our own experience, we can see that a lot of the things that we identify as being problems relate to this life, such as attachment, or strong clinging to the outcome of our career, one's job, studies, family, relationships, or the welfare of our children. If we look into it, everything that we consider to be a problem actually concerns this life. We don't seem to have much concern for our future life, but rather are totally immersed in the welfare of this life.

If we actually start to develop a sense of not giving such importance to the mere welfare for this life and actually start to focus on the future, then the big problems will actually start to decrease. So reversing clinging to the welfare of this life will actually begin to bring immediate benefit in this life, because the problems that appear to be so big and solid will actually start to subside. Thus we can see that overcoming clinging to this life does have a practical benefit in this life, doesn't it?

One must not misinterpret these teachings to mean that one must neglect the welfare of this life. That's not what is being indicated. In fact, as mentioned previously, the practice of reducing clinging to this life actually benefits this life. One must understand that in focussing on a future life by way of reducing clinging to this life, one indirectly benefits in this life. So there is no need to focus entirely on this life, as we will indirectly derive the benefit by focusing on the future life. That is the great advantage of practising in this way.

If a practice is stained with mere interest of this life then it will not be a cause for a better future life. The lam rim teachings explain that with the practices of generosity and ethics, one must make stainless prayers in order for them to become a cause to obtain a precious human rebirth in the next lifetime. It is, of course, clear that practices like generosity and ethics are virtuous. However observing ethics in order, for example, to merely become renowned as a very ethical, good person would be an instance of practising ethics with a mere interest for this life. Practising generosity is, in itself, a virtue, but if one practises generosity with the intention that others will be appreciative or that one would be renowned and liked by others, then again that practice is soiled with the stains of concern for this life.

It is said that such practice of generosity and ethics is not a cause to obtain a precious human rebirth in the next lifetime. But when the practice of ethics is combined with stainless prayers, then it becomes the cause to obtain a sound body with all the sense faculties intact, which can become the cause to practise Dharma in the next life. When generosity is practised with stainless prayers, then it becomes the cause to obtain wealth, meaning sufficient resources, in a future lifetime, which will also enable one to practise the Dharma with sufficient resources. Without stainless prayers these

results will not be obtained in a future lifetime. Motivating and dedicating one's practices for a good rebirth is what 'stainless prayers' means, in accordance with practices common to the small scope.

## 2. Attachment to cyclic existence

The auto-commentary reads:

2. The antidote for overcoming attachment to cyclic existence is to engage in the practices of the three trainings, with the understanding that the nature of cyclic existence, is suffering.

Again, this is very much in accord with the explanation given in the lam rim teachings - without understanding that the nature of cyclic existence is in the nature of suffering, the wish to overcome cyclic existence will not occur. Then attachment to cyclic existence will not be reversed, and so one cannot develop renunciation. In order to develop renunciation one must reverse attachment to cyclic existence, and in order to reverse attachment to cyclic existence, one must meditate and contemplate the sufferings of cyclic existence.

## 3. The wish for personal liberation

The third of the four clings is that if you are attached to your own welfare, you don't have bodhichitta.

3. The antidote for overcoming the wish for personal liberation is meditating on love, compassion and bodhichitta.

As explained here, if one has an attachment to one's own welfare then one cannot develop bodhichitta. Thus to develop bodhichitta, one must overcome the wish for personal liberation.

## 4. Self-grasping

In relation to the fourth clinging, if you have grasping, you don't have a correct view the auto-commentary reads:

4. The antidote for overcoming self-grasping, the root of cyclic existence: is meditating on the selflessness of persons and phenomena.

Panchen Lozang chokyi-gyeltsen then adds his own advice:

In this manner all learned scholars and accomplished practitioners of India and Tibet have praised these practices in their genuine treatises on sutra and tantra. Thus even though these practices have been explained as preliminary practices, you must not think that these are merely preliminary [but practise them in conjunction with the actual meditation practice.]

## PURIFICATION

The fourth verse of the root text reads:

4. *As the realisation of the void nature of the mind is completely dependent upon your collection of merit and elimination of obstacles, you should despatch ahead of you as many prostrations as possible, made while reciting The Declaration Before the Thirty-five Buddhas, as well as hundreds of thousands of repetitions of the one hundred syllable mantra of Vajrasattva.*

The auto-commentary states:

In general, the ability to perceive the ultimate nature of mind directly is dependent on having accumulated extensive merit and purified negative karmas, therefore one must strive in accumulation and purification practices at all time during the breaks from meditation sessions.

What is the ultimate nature of the mind? Is it emptiness?

*Students: Yes*

What does 'to perceive the ultimate nature of mind directly' mean? What are the criteria for realising the ultimate nature of the mind directly?

*Student: It is to directly perceive the emptiness of mind, with a non-conceptual and non-dual awareness that is within an arya being who is in meditative equipoise.*

So what does non-conceptual and non-dual mean?

*Student: Non-conceptual means to perceive the object – emptiness - without the generic image being in the way, as if the subject (the wisdom realising emptiness) and object (emptiness) become one and indistinguishable, like water mixed with water.*

That is correct. Directly perceiving the ultimate nature of the mind is realising the emptiness of mind without perceiving it through a generic image, but just as it is. Perceiving emptiness directly means seeing it as it is, without any other factor obscuring it.

So, who has the direct perception of the ultimate nature of the mind?

*Students: An arya being who in the state of meditative equipoise.*

If your answer is specifically an arya being who is in meditative equipoise, then that would seem to imply that an arya being who is in post-meditative equipoise does not perceive emptiness directly. So in a debate you would lose a point, because all arya beings are said to have the direct perception of emptiness. So, when you answer the question you must be clever not to lose a point in debate. Therefore, 'arya beings' would be the correct answer. An arya being who is engaged in the activity of teaching is not in meditative equipoise on emptiness, but nevertheless they have already obtained the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

Why is an arya being who is engaged in the activity of teaching not in meditative equipoise on emptiness?

*Students: Because they have the perception of conventional phenomena.*

But an arya being who is in meditative equipoise, also has the perception of conventional phenomena too, doesn't he? Doesn't an arya being in meditative equipoise have the realisation of impermanence, bodhichitta and so forth?

So to be specific, one needs to first understand that the wisdom of meditative equipoise and wisdom of the post-meditative state of a sentient being are distinct and separate. You cannot be in meditative equipoise and the post-meditative state simultaneously. The only exception is for an enlightened being, a buddha, who is simultaneously in meditative equipoise and post-meditative state. An arya being, who is in meditative equipoise cannot engage in the activity of teaching and so forth, as that activity is reserved for arya beings who are in the post-meditative state. While you're engaged in meditative equipoise, there can be no activity other than focussing single-pointedly on emptiness. So for a sentient being, the activity of teaching and so forth can be undertaken only after coming out of meditative equipoise.

When an arya being engages in meditative equipoise they have a set time in mind. If they were to remain in that state for eternity then of course they would never be able to teach again. So when an arya being goes into meditative equipoise, they do so with the intention of staying in meditative equipoise for a set time, which is determined prior to going into meditative equipoise.

When that period of time is reached, the arya being will come out of meditative equipoise and engage in other activities, such as teaching and helping beings in various different ways. Whereas enlightened beings are in a constant state of meditative equipoise, for eternity. However while in the state of meditative equipoise on emptiness, an enlightened being can benefit sentient beings by teaching and so forth. So therefore there is a big difference in the virtuous activities of enlightened beings and that of arya beings.

Certain buddhas are depicted with the teaching mudra to symbolise their great achievement. The mudra of placing the hand on the lap indicates being in meditative equipoise, and the mudra of the index finger and the thumb touching is the mudra of preaching the Dharma. That particular mudra is an indication of an enlightened being, as only an enlightened being has the ability to simultaneously be in meditative equipoise while also teaching the Dharma.

For us sentient beings, leaving aside meditation on emptiness, we are not even able to maintain a single-pointed focus on our breath when we start talking to someone else. Far from being able to talk while we are meditating, the sound of others talking disturbs us, and we might even get angry.

What the auto-commentary indicates is that in order to gain the direct perception of the ultimate nature of mind, which is emptiness, one must accumulate extensive merit. Without the accumulation of extensive merit, one will not be able to gain that realisation. That is the main point that is being presented.

As mentioned previously, when the auto-commentary refers to perceiving the ultimate nature of mind, it is referring specifically to the emptiness of the mind. However according to other references in the text, it is necessary to first perceive the actual nature of the mind, which is its clarity. The teaching further explains that one must first develop single-pointed concentration followed by calm abiding on the basic nature of the mind, which is its clarity. Using that as a focus, one can then gain the realisation of the ultimate nature of the mind, which is emptiness. To be more specific, perceiving the ultimate nature of the mind begins at a basic level, which is to focus on the clarity of the mind. Gaining calm abiding on that, one then uses that clarity for gaining the realisation of the ultimate nature of the mind, which is its emptiness. This will be explained in more detail further on.

The auto-commentary explains that perceiving the ultimate nature of the mind depends on the *accumulation and purification practices at all time during the breaks from meditation sessions*. The next part of the auto-commentary explains the benefits of engaging the practices of the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva.

As mentioned particularly in the text *The Essential Ornaments*.

To engage in the 100-syllable mantra,  
With each twenty one recitations,  
The downfalls will not increase;  
Through the blessing of the mantra  
If a hundred thousand were recited,  
A complete purification takes place.  
This is proclaimed by the supreme practitioners.  
Thus practice this during the breaks.

If the 100-syllable Vajrasattva mantra is recited twenty-one times, it stops the increase of any downfalls, which refers to breaking the commitments that we have made. When we

take vows and initiations, we make certain commitments. If we break a commitment today and then don't purify it, then by tomorrow the negativity of that broken commitment will increase. And if we don't purify it tomorrow, then by the next day it will increase even further. It's like placing money in the bank: the more you leave it there the more interest you will receive. Here, it is as if we are getting interest on our downfalls; if we don't purify them, the negative karma will just increase further and further.

It is explained here that if we recite the 100-syllable mantra twenty-one times, then that actually stops the downfalls from increasing. Thus in the practices in the *sadana* you will find that the minimum recitation of the Vajrasattva mantra, is twenty-one times.

In relation to the analogy of interest, I've heard of someone who borrowed about \$5.00 some years previously and had to pay back \$15,000, because they were unable to repay it earlier. Similarly it is worthwhile to be mindful of any commitments that we have failed to meet. At the very moment that we engage in some non-virtue in relation to our commitments, it is good to immediately feel a sense of regret which will help to minimise the intensity of the negativity. Then at an appropriate time it is worthwhile to recite the Vajrasattva mantra twenty-one times to stop that negativity from increasing. The mantra will purify any immediate negative karma, and also stop that negative karma from increasing. A further means to purify the negativities of broken commitments is to repeatedly take the bodhisattva vows, and in relation to tantric initiations, to do self-initiations. That would be really worthwhile.

When the verse says, 'If a hundred thousand are recited, a complete purification takes place', that refers to the fact that even root infractions can be purified with one hundred thousand recitations of the Vajrasattva mantra.

Just as it has been explained, if this mantra is recited twenty one times daily, it stops the increasing of the downfalls. If recited a hundred thousand times, even a root infraction is completely purified. Thus with the four opponent powers intact, engaging in the practice of Vajrasattva through meditation and recitation, and likewise engaging in the practice of prostrations to the thirty five buddhas, must be taken to heart.

Following our normal schedule, the next session will be a discussion session, and it is good to prepare for this by reading not only the transcripts, but also the book on mahamudra by His Holiness. Those who don't have sufficient funds might find difficult to purchase this book, but if you can afford to purchase the book then that would be good.

You should read that book to see how my explanation relates to it. If you read that book well, you can check out whether my explanations have been consistent with the text, and whether there are any faults in my teaching! I don't know if you will be able to see any qualities, but its okay if you see the faults! Actually it will benefit me if you bring to my notice any points that may be inconsistent.

The test follows discussion week, and it is also good for you to do take the test conscientiously.

When we come to the explanation of calm abiding in the text, then I will begin the sessions with some meditation as well. That will be a way for many to gain the attainment of calm abiding. It is possible.

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## Addendum to teaching of 2 September 2008

This material was not translated on the night.

In the technique of 'equalising and exchanging oneself with others', first one meditates and develops equanimity towards all living beings, then by using various reasons, one meditates on the disadvantages of cherishing oneself, then again using various reasons, one meditates on the advantages of cherishing other beings, in this way the perception for all beings to be appealing is developed. So, even though both techniques of developing bodhichitta are based on first developing equanimity as a means to perceive all beings to be appealing, the actual manner of developing equanimity is quite different.

In the 'seven cause and effect technique', equanimity is developed based on perceiving all living beings equal, by virtue of having overcome attachment towards some and feeling hatred towards others. Based on that, one cultivates the recognition of all beings kindness as one's mother and the wish to repay their kindness, which is followed by great love and compassion towards all living beings. In the 'equalising and exchanging oneself with others' technique however, the equanimity is developed based on developing the understanding that all beings are equal in wishing for happiness and not wishing to experience any suffering just like oneself. Then based on that, one develops the understanding that all beings are kind to us not only when they have been our mother but at all times, which is developed with the recognition that every type of happiness that we have now comes from the kindness of other sentient beings. Thus by meditating on the disadvantages of cherishing just oneself, and the great advantages of cherishing others one develops great love and compassion towards all living beings which becomes the cause to then develop bodhichitta within our mental continuum.

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