



THE PRECIOUS TREASURY OF
PITH INSTRUCTIONS

Longchen Rabjam

THE SEVEN TREASURES SERIES

This series consists of the volumes written by Longchen Rabjam that, as a group, have come to be known as *The Seven Treasures*. Although Longchenpa did not intend them to be a series, scholars traditionally treat them as such because of their interrelated themes.

Published Volumes

The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding

*The Precious Treasury of the Basic Space
of Phenomena*

A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission

The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions

Longchen Rabjam

Translated by Richard Barron
(Lama Chökyi Nyima)



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Foreword

His Eminence Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

The publication of Longchen Rabjam's *Seven Treasuries* should be a cause for rejoicing among deeply committed English-speaking Buddhists who aspire to realize the Dzogchen, or Great Perfection, teachings of Vajrayana Buddhism. Though there are many spiritual traditions in this world, Buddhism offers the deepest examination of what constitutes the root of samsara, and of how to deal with all levels of obscuration and attain liberation. Among Buddhist teachings, none are more profound, more capable of freeing the mind from its most subtle obscurations, than those of the Great Perfection.

Yet, because Great Perfection transmission leads to wisdom beyond words and concepts, the translation of Dzogchen texts presents tremendous difficulties. Some lamas have said that it is not even worth the attempt, that too much distortion results. I respect their opinion, but feel that those of us with the supreme fortune to have received authentic transmission from great Dzogchen masters have a responsibility to maintain the oral lineage, including the translation of texts, as well as the mind-to-mind lineage of realization. If we eschew this work, the precious Great Perfection teachings will remain inaccessible to some excellent Western practitioners who have potential as meditators but who

do not know Tibetan. An avenue for the flourishing of the transmission will be cut off.

I am also gravely concerned about the translations of Great Perfection texts produced by Westerners who know Tibetan but who rely solely on scholarly knowledge, without recourse to teachers. Intellectual understanding alone, without the ripening process that takes place under the direction of qualified Dzogchen teachers, will certainly result in misguided translations, perpetuated in misguided meditation by those who base their spiritual practice on such translations. But again, if qualified Dzogchen masters refrain from working on translations because they fear imperfect results, can they lament when even more erroneous translations are published?

The translator of these texts, Richard Barron (Lama Chökyi Nyima), has truly mastered both literary and spoken Tibetan, but his deeper understanding is based on an extended retreat under the guidance of His Eminence Kalu Rinpoche, on a number of six-week Dzogchen retreats, and on listening to and translating the teachings of many eminent lamas. He has translated other Great Perfection texts and sadhanas, notably Dudjom Lingpa's *Buddhahood Without Meditation*, under my direction. He thus brings more capability to his work than mere theoretical and intellectual competence.

While we have not necessarily produced flawless translations, we have confidence in this groundbreaking attempt. It should be understood that works of this kind are not casually read and easily comprehended. In fact, for most people, the texts are quite difficult to fathom; their meaning unfolds according to the depth of the reader's spiritual preparation. However, simply having these books in one's home is more valuable than having statues or stupas, for they are truly relics of the dharmakaya. Such holy works carry powerful blessings and are worthy objects of faith and devotion.

The project of translating Longchen Rabjam's *Seven Treasuries* is ongoing. We encourage anyone with knowledge and experience of the Great Perfection to contact us with suggestions, clarifications, or corrections, which we will consider for incorporation into future editions. May these precious texts illuminate the minds of all who read and venerate them.

Introduction

Venerable Tulku Thondup Rinpoche

The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions is one of the foremost masterpieces of Dzogchen (or Dzogpa Chenpo) composed by the Omniscient Longchen Rabjam (1308–1363), the greatest master of the Dzogchen lineage. This is the shortest volume among his *Seven Treasuries* (*mDzod bdun*), also known as *The Vast Treatises of Scholarly Works* (*rGya che ba pandita'i chos skor*).

Longchen Rabjam was born with extraordinary intellectual capability and enlightened qualities. He studied at Sangpu Monastic University (the Harvard of Tibet in those days), where Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339), Jé Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), and many other eminent minds of Tibet also trained. Longchen Rabjam's root teacher was Rigdzin Kumaradza.

Dzogchen is the pinnacle and heart essence of Vajrayana Buddhism. Longchen Rabjam synthesized and expounded on its philosophical views, meditation methods, and goals. It is because of his efforts that the Dzogchen teachings were preserved and not only have thrived in Tibet, but also have become an inspiring path for many Buddhists in both the East and West today.

Longchen Rabjam lived as a hermit in the caves of the Gang-ri Tökar Mountains, where he composed most of his great works and taught many students. He passed away on the slopes of the Chimpu Mountains, where five centuries earlier Guru Padma-

sambhava had entrusted the Dzogchen teachings to Longchenpa's previous incarnation as Princess Pemasal. Longchen Rabjam left us vast treatises on Dzogchen, which are regarded as profound relics of the dharmakaya. Enshrined and put into practice in Tibet for centuries, they are now reaching students in many parts of the world.

Longchen Rabjam declined to establish monastic or bureaucratic institutions. He encouraged others to do the same, explaining:

To assemble numerous associates by various means,
To have a monastery with comfortable accommodations,
If I try, it will come about for a while, but it distracts the mind.
So my advice from the heart is to remain alone.

Longchen Rabjam is known for having written more than two hundred treatises, many of which survived and became invaluable references and manuals on Dzogchen meditation. They include *The Seven Treasuries* (mostly on Dzogchen), *The Four Higher Collections of the Heart Drop* (sNying thig ya bzhi; Dzogchen), *The Three Cycles of Being at Ease* (Ngal gso skor gsum; on Dzogchen), *The Three Cycles of Natural Freedom* (Rang grol skor gsum; on Dzogchen), and *The Three Cycles of Dispelling Darkness* (Mun sel skor gsum; on tantra).

The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions (Man ngag rin po che'i mdzod) is a volume of beautiful poems. The stanzas have differing numbers of lines, but every stanza makes six points, replete with wise advice on daily spiritual life, as well as instructions on the philosophies and meditation techniques of common (sutra), esoteric (tantra), and Dzogchen teachings. For example, the six vajra verses on Dzogpa Chenpo instruct:

The Dzogchen of the basis is to determine the nature of the mind.
The Dzogchen of the path is to strike the target of freedom from the extremes.

The Dzogchen of the result is to send hopes and doubts into extinction.

The Dzogchen of the object is to let appearances go free by not grasping at them.

The Dzogchen of the mind is to let thoughts arise as friends.

The Dzogchen of the meaning is to let flickering thoughts dissolve naturally.

Whoever realizes these points is a great king of yogis.*

Exhorting all to study *The Treasury of Pith Instructions*, Paltrul Rinpoche says of this text:

It embodies the essence of all the instructions.

Every single stanza with its "six points" is a treasure trove of all the holy teachings.

Such an excellent path, even were you to meet the Buddha—
Wouldn't it be hard to come across?

The publication of this volume is an offering to and a fulfillment of the sublime aspirations of our late great Dzogchen master, Chagdud Rinpoche. Because of his aspirations, three of the precious *Seven Treasuries* of Longchen Rabjam are now available in English. We are grateful to him and pray that the remaining books will soon follow.

On behalf of the golden lineage of Dzogchen, I express my appreciation to Chökyi Nyima and all who have dedicated their time and energy to the translation and publication of these precious works, as well as to the sponsors whose generosity has made the birth of these precious teachings in English possible.

May the compassionate blessings of the Dzogchen lineage, the Omniscient Master, and the protectors be with all whose minds are open to this teaching.

* The translation of this verse in the present volume can be found on p. 110.

Translator's Preface

Longchen Rabjam (1308–1363) is renowned as the greatest thinker and writer in the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. Among his surviving works, perhaps the most widely known and respected are *The Seven Treasuries* (*mDzod bDun*). Synthesizing a vast amount of source literature, they give an extensive treatment of the Buddhist teachings, particularly those of Dzogchen. They are for the most part prose works (although several consist of source verses with accompanying prose commentaries). *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions*, however, is unique among the seven in that it is written entirely in verse. It is also the shortest.

We know that Longchenpa composed the bulk of his texts in mountain retreats in central Tibet, but unfortunately we have no record of the order in which he wrote them or the circumstances under which he did so. In *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions*, the most personal of the *Treasuries*, Longchenpa writes as a spiritual mentor giving advice to his students. One can imagine him sitting at ease in front of his cave during a break between meditation sessions, taking pen to paper to set down another of the poetic instructions that arose out of his insight and realization. His uncompromising tone reflects his commitment to the highest realization and to the welfare of those inspired by his message. That this text was probably composed over a long period of

time, with each section standing alone, is suggested by the fact that it does not follow a strict developmental progression. Toward the end of the book, Longchenpa places greater emphasis on the Dzogchen approach, but throughout, introductory teachings and advice are interspersed with profound instructions on the nature of being itself and the ultimate level of truth.

In this work, Longchenpa distills the principles underlying the entire range of Buddhist practice in more than four hundred sections. Although most of the sections consist of six principles or pieces of advice, as Longchenpa intended, some appear to comprise fewer than six, and some contain seven. Several sections correspond to traditional groupings (for example, the six paramitas of the Mahayana path), but for the most part the themes are Longchenpa's own inspired choices.

In the Tibetan schools of Buddhism, the ideal approach is one that integrates intellectual mastery of the teachings with an intuitive appreciation of their validity; theory is never meant to remain separate from lived experience. *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions* could be seen as a bridge between Longchenpa's scholarly expositions in the rest of the *Seven Treasuries* and his more experience-based compositions in *The Four Higher Collections of the Heart Drop* (*sNying thig ya bzhi*). The latter provide a profound treatment of Dzogchen from the perspective of a yogic practitioner, whereas the *Treasuries* are an extensive treatment from the perspective of a scholar.

The text of *The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions* poses distinctive challenges to a translator. Longchenpa does not use a great deal of technical terminology in this work, but rather adopts a colloquial style that includes a number of archaic words and expressions that do not have strictly defined meanings, but are instead suggestive of profound spiritual experiences. I have tried to capture some of the flavor of the original verses, and to that end my approach has been more interpretive than literal. But I have made no attempt to versify the English; I have no talent for

poetry, and the conciseness of the original Tibetan would have been difficult to capture in equally concise English. Because of the conventions of traditional Tibetan composition, there is no break in the entire text, with each stanza directly following another. To break up the text visually, I have introduced section titles, but it should be emphasized that they are merely my interpolations.

As with the two previous translations in this series, I consulted three Tibetan editions of the text. Two of these were printed from wood blocks carved at Adzom Chögar in eastern Tibet, which were reputedly edited by the great Ju Mipam Rinpoche, Namgyal Gyatso (1846–1912). One of these two editions was published as a photo offset reproduction in Gangtok, Sikkim, by H.H. Dodrup Chen Rinpoche; the other was printed decades later from the actual blocks, which had been recited in the interim. The third edition is a photo offset of blocks carved at the printery of Dergé in eastern Tibet, published by Sherab Gyaltzen and Khentse Labrang. Aside from occasional minor variations in spelling or obvious errors introduced in the carving of the wood blocks, these three editions show a remarkable consistency.

During my preparation of the translation, I had the great fortune to consult Yongé Mingyur Rinpoche and Khentrul Lodrö Tayé, who were enormously helpful in answering questions about some of the verses, which because of the restrictions imposed by the meter and idiosyncratic language were somewhat cryptic. My heartfelt thanks go to Tulku Thondup Rinpoche for writing the Introduction. I also wish to express my gratitude to the sponsors of Chagdud Gonpa Foundation for supporting the translation of *The Seven Treasuries*, as well as to the Tsadra Foundation for its generous support during portions of the final phase of the present project. The initial draft was reviewed by Susanne Fairclough, who compared it with the original Tibetan text and made suggestions and corrections that improved the accuracy and consistency of the translation; I am indebted to her for her painstaking

efforts. Mary Racine performed her invaluable task as editor with her usual thoroughness and expertise. I also thank Gina Phelan for her help with the editing and Anna Smith for proof-reading, as well as Linda Baer for her care and attention in type-setting the book.

This book is part of a continuing series envisioned by His Eminence the late Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche that will include English translations of all of Longchenpa's *Seven Treasuries*. It remains my honor to contribute to the realization of that vision.

THE PRECIOUS TREASURY
OF PITH INSTRUCTIONS

In the language of India, [1b] the title of this treatise would be *Upadesha ratna kosha nama*. In the language of Tibet, it is *Man ngag rin po che'i mdzod ces bya ba* (*The Precious Treasury of Pith Instructions*).

HOMAGE

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

I pay homage to the victorious ones and their spiritual heirs,
wish-granting guides who attained the very highest level of
realization,
having reached the far shore of the ocean of the three worlds
on the great ship of timeless awareness—the sublime and innate
responsiveness of being.

Those of most excellent fortune wish to attain liberation.
For them I have distilled the very essence of the sutras, tantras,
and pith instructions,
revealing their most profound key points, leaving nothing out.
Listen with respect as I present these points in groups of six.

INTRODUCTORY PRINCIPLES

In this regard, [2a] six principles are to be observed:
Uphold the three higher trainings,¹ which are the foundation of
the spiritual path.
Listen to and contemplate a variety of teachings without bias.
Calm yourself physically, verbally, and mentally, and gain control
over your own experience.

Refrain from harmful actions and nurture your goodness.
Cultivate self-respect, decorum, and faith.
Rely on spiritual mentors and good companions.
These are absolutely crucial principles for beginners.

PREPARATION FOR SOLITUDE

Next, if you wish to abide in solitude, six things are essential for your preparation:
Make sure that, separated from your guru, you can be self-sufficient.
Resolve any questions you have regarding how to dispel doubts or hindrances.
Ensure that your body is not afflicted by illness, negative forces, or obstacles.
Break free of the constraints of ordinary human affairs.
Receive thorough advice on accomplishing the two kinds of benefit.
Be decisive regarding the intent that constitutes the view.

SOLITUDE

Next, [2b] six points pertain to staying in a place of solitude:
The location should be secluded, with all the right conditions.
The place should be one that was frequented in the past by accomplished practitioners.
No impairment of samaya should have occurred there, so that oath-bound guardians will gather.
There should be no circumstances to distract or divert you.
Supportive conditions should be ensured and supplies easy to find.
There should be no threat from humans or nonhuman spirits.

SUPPORTIVE CONDITIONS

Next, there are six ways to ensure supportive conditions:
Do not fall into either of two extremes regarding food, drink, and necessities.
Gather the offerings and practice materials that you will need.
Have with you all the texts of profound advice.
Assemble supportive articles that establish the auspicious conditions necessary to avert obstacles.
Secure all other provisions that you will require. [3a]
Free yourself from the burden of having many possessions.

HARMONIOUS COMPANIONS

Next, there are six ways to characterize harmonious and noble companions:
They have good character and a gentle disposition.
They have great faith, diligence, and wisdom.
Their practice is in harmony with your own, and they are congenial.
They have little pride and can restrain their need for sensory stimulation.
Their samaya is immaculate, and they have pure view that is vast in scope.
They have much love for you and can maintain secrecy about profound matters.
Associate with people like this.

CONSUMMATING YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Six sacred principles concern bringing your spiritual practice to consummation:
Receive supportive oral transmissions.
Use reasoning to come to a definitive understanding.

Focus on the key points of pith instructions.
Follow the progression of the spiritual paths and levels to completion.
Instruct all, be they high or low.
Be free of fixation on any extreme.

PERSEVERANCE

There are six ways to apply consummate perseverance to spiritual practice:
Even at the cost of your life, do not turn your mind away from the sacred dharma.
Even if you fall ill, do not give rise to erroneous views.²
Do not allow your commitments to be undermined by social pressures or obstacles.
Develop the ability to blend your experience of meditative equipoise with postmeditation activity.
Do not relinquish your diligence until you have accomplished your goal.
Develop the ability to appreciate the equal taste of whatever you encounter, whether it is to be eliminated or relied on.

PROGRESSIVE TOPICS OF CONTEMPLATION

Next, there are six topics to contemplate:
Contemplate the fact that all blame lies with you;
that all of your suffering results from previous actions;
that those previous actions were determined by circumstances in the moment;
that such negative circumstances arose from your unstable thought patterns;
that these, moreover, were the result of your misguided pursuit of external sense objects;
and that the path to liberation is thereby obscured.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

There are six considerations that pertain to taking responsibility for all of your shortcomings: [3b]
The suffering of this world of birth and death lies within you.
There is suffering in seeking what you cannot find by searching.
There is suffering in protecting your interests—suffering that you bring on yourself through your need.
There is suffering in encountering enemies and parting from friends,
which is created by your fixations of attachment to friends and aversion to enemies.
There is the intense suffering of rebirth in the three lower realms.
All of this is created by your own karma, and nothing else.

CONFUSION

Six points relate to the state of confusion, with its faulty perceptions and negative thoughts:
There is no end to the harm created when your own mind is not tamed.
The appearance of harmful things is the result of your own impure perception.
You make arbitrary value judgments about sounds, though they are but audible emptiness.
You react to your mind, which is naturally expansive, by suppressing or indulging in thoughts.
You assume that what is pleasurable or painful is always so, when it is not.
Your mind is inflamed by rage and spite.

COUNTERACTING CONFUSION

There are six ways to undertake the great task of counteracting your confused perceptions:

Be tolerant of and arouse compassion for those who harm you.
Have no fear of demons, but rather understand them to be your
parents or gods.
Train yourself to see that your confused fixations have no validity.
Cut through to the very root of mind, for therein lies the basis of
your confusion.
Whatever circumstances manifest, bring them to your spiritual
path.
Do not be distracted by ordinary attitudes, but rely on antidotes.

THE DRAWBACKS OF SAMBARA

The way you experience samsara has six drawbacks:
Your mind and body are never free of suffering and find no real
happiness.
Though you seek it, there is no point at which you will find
freedom from the suffering of this life.
There can be no meaningful happiness, for you have no control
over your own body.
There is no chance that your youth will endure and bring you
happiness.
The suffering of samsara lasts until karma is exhausted.

CONTEMPLATING WHAT IS USELESS

There are six approaches to contemplating what is useless under
any circumstances: [4a]
Contemplate the fact that anything you do is useless if you have
not embarked on the spiritual path;
that everything is useless if you do not accomplish something
positive;
that a long life is useless if you do not pursue spiritual practice;
that benefiting others is useless if you do so in ways that are at
odds with the dharma;

that possessions are useless if they do not contribute to your
twofold development;³
and that everything is useless unless it contributes to
enlightenment.

GURUS

Gurus who act as guides on the path to liberation have six
qualifications:
They light the lamp of timeless awareness for those who wander
in darkness.
They bring those who wander along the brink of the abyss back
to the authentic path.
They rescue those foundering in the river with the ferry of
supreme bliss.
They lead those who have been imprisoned to a place of complete
freedom.
They pull those mired in the swamp of suffering onto the dry
land of liberation.
They sever the bonds of dualistic fixation with the sword of
timeless awareness.
Therefore, think of gurus as true buddhas.

IMPERMANENCE

There are six things to contemplate about transience, the
impermanence of whatever is composite:
Contemplate the fact that transience is ensured by the coming
together of causes and conditions;
that you are destined to perish, since everyone who has been
born, without exception, has died;
that the universe itself is certain to perish, since it is impermanent
and subject to change;
that your life span is uncertain and death will claim you;

that there is transience in the passing of the seconds, day and night;
and that there is transience because death is definitely the end
of life.

BENEFITING FROM SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS

Next, there are six ways to benefit from exposure to spiritual
teachings:

Have a strong interest in them.

Listen to them.

Rejoice in them.

Extol them.

Apply them.

Practice them even a little.

All of this will put an end to samsara and plant the seeds of
liberation.

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

There are six ways in which you will benefit from putting spiritual
teachings into practice in the proper way:

You will be respected by all.

You will be praised by all.

You will be protected by gods.

You will have much happiness in this life.

After your death, you will pass on to a higher realm. [4b]

Eventually you will attain perfect enlightenment.

THE FLAWS OF SOMEONE LACKING A SPIRITUAL LIFE

Without a spiritual life, you will have six flaws:

You will be like a blind old woman, clouded by your
nonrecognition of awareness.

You will be like a whore, clever at luring others into conditioned
existence.

You will be like a spectator at a fair, distracted by meaningless
pursuits.

You will be like a baby entertained by a caregiver, your mind
beguiled by the insidious influence of what you perceive.

You will be like a child at play, self-absorbed.

You will be like a fish caught in a net, your confused perceptions
difficult to cut through.

Thus, you will waste your human life on actions that have little
purpose.

THE DRAWBACKS OF DEGENERATING SPIRITUALITY

Letting your spiritual life degenerate has six drawbacks:

You will become contemptuous of those beneath you.

Your bad reputation will spread throughout the realms of gods
and humans.

Like a soiled container, you will be avoided by holy people.

You will be deserted by protective gods and so will face many
obstacles.

You will not succeed in fulfilling your ambitions, and your merit
and personal power will diminish.

In future lifetimes, you will experience the suffering of rebirth in
lower realms.

THE DRAWBACKS OF PLACING HOPE IN THE FUTURE

Placing hope in the future has six drawbacks:

Having attained this state of freedom and opportunity,⁴ if you do
not follow a spiritual path
you will waste your life on the path of distractions.

Death, unpredictable as it is, will strike you down like lightning.
Once you have died, you will fall into a lower realm of samsara.
Your mind and body will undergo intense suffering.
Your memories will bring regret, causing you great pain.
You will languish indefinitely, with no chance of liberation.

FEAR OF SAMBARA

Six considerations lead to fear of the realms of samsara:
How depressing it is to contemplate the suffering of humans.
How hair-raising it is to contemplate the suffering of demigods.
How dreadful it is to contemplate the suffering of gods.
How distressing it is to contemplate the suffering of animals.
How shocking it is to contemplate the suffering of pretas [5a].
How heart-wrenching it is to contemplate the suffering of hell beings.
How timely it is, therefore, to flee from these six realms;
still, though it is time to do so, you simply procrastinate.

LIBERATION

There are six ways to liberate yourself from these realms:
Rid yourself of the view that things are permanent, and so eliminate procrastination and laziness.
Forgo making plans for the years ahead, and instead devote whatever resources you have to your spiritual practice.
Give up ordinary behavior and follow the way of the teachings.
Purify yourself of negative karma and the effects of harmful actions, using the four powers as antidotes.
Pursue your twofold development as much as you can, using the ten kinds of spiritual practice.⁵
Bring everything to the spiritual path, whether you are initially

undertaking an action, actually carrying it out, or bringing it to completion.
All of this will swiftly liberate you from the realms of samsara.

ERRORS THAT OBSTRUCT SPIRITUALITY

Six errors obstruct spiritual life:
Great people err when they are distracted by the arrogance that their eminence and power bring.
Venerable monastics err when they engage in the activities of ordinary people.
Teachers err when they squander their lives on theory.
Tantric practitioners err when they let their minds be consumed by the five emotional poisons.
Avid meditators err when they become deluded or adopt an unethical livelihood.
Ordinary people err when they place their trust in confused perceptions.
It is crucial to avoid such errors and exert yourself in spiritual practice.

UNERRING BENEFIT

There are six unerring ways to experience benefit:
Heed the advice that your guru gives out of love for you.
Study the scriptures comprising the words of the Victorious One,⁶ for you can place your trust in them.
Day and night, between practice sessions, dedicate your virtue and take stock of your harmful actions.
Reflect on the interdependent connection of cause and effect: where will you find yourself in your next lifetime?
Let go of your attachment to and fixation on cherishing your body and possessions.

Let the tantras, explanatory commentaries, and pith instructions
impress themselves on your mind.
If you follow this advice, you will swiftly attain buddhahood. [5b]

THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

There are six ways to thoroughly investigate what is appropriate:
Find out whether worldly pursuits are truly beneficial.
Understand that when you pass away, you will leave behind the
wealth and possessions you have accumulated.
Observe how helpful gestures can be repaid with harmful ones.⁷
Note how you remain alone in the midst of so many others.
Ascertain whether dealing in profit and loss gives you any control
over your own death.
Understand that you will die, leaving fame, power, and influence
behind.
Having considered things in these ways, apply them to your inner
experience.

HAVING NO REGRETS

There are six great, authentic endeavors that you should never
regret:
Though you may die undergoing hardship for the sake of
spiritual teachings, have no regret.
Though you may keep a low profile and make yourself amenable,
have no regret.
Though you may leave your homeland, becoming someone of no
consequence, have no regret.
Though you may give up your wealth and go hungry for the sake
of the dharma, have no regret.
Though, having abandoned harmful actions, you may go to
lower realms, have no regret.⁸

UNSUITABLE RECIPIENTS OF THE DHARMA

Six kinds of people are poor recipients, far from the dharma:
Those who are like pigs, consuming whatever comes their way,
cannot practice.
Those who are like peacocks, preening themselves, do not know
how to get along with others.
Those who are like boulders, stuck in one place, miss opportunities
that arise.
Those who are like grass that bends in the wind, trying to please
everyone, cannot uphold their samaya.
Those who are like snakes, steeped in viciousness and malice,
cannot tame their minds.
Those who are like monkeys, unable to sit still, cannot stay
focused on their practice.
Those who are like oxen, their intellects dull, cannot understand
the dharma.
It is thus vital to avoid being like any of these people and to practice!

NOBLE RECIPIENTS OF THE TEACHINGS

There are six ways to ensure that you will not turn out to be a
poor recipient of the teachings:
Avoid the doorway that leads to the ruin of a mind obsessed with
this life.
Be enthusiastic about whatever is positive and make it your long-
term goal, for such enthusiasm is glorious.
Banish the vile demons of pride and self-importance.
Adopt a low profile, for this will usher in spiritual attainment. [6a]
Rid yourself of the hordes of maras and your fixation on
antidotes as being ultimate in themselves.
Experience your thoughts arising as allies, and bad omens
transforming into ones auguring prosperity.
These things will make you a most noble recipient of the dharma.

BRINGING YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE TO CONSUMMATION

There are six ways to focus your attention in order to bring your spiritual practice to consummation:
Feel the same apprehension toward the Lord of Death as you would toward a killer pursuing you.
Feel the same disenchantment with samsara as a wife would with a bad husband.
Feel the same revulsion for your confused perceptions as someone nauseated would upon seeing food.
Feel the same distaste for ordinary human affairs as you would for a lover who had betrayed you.
Feel the same indifference to worldly vocations as you would to a poor field blighted by frost.
Feel the same cessation of your naive affection for friends and relations as you would for children who had become your enemies.
If you have these attitudes, you can consummate your practice of the sacred dharma.

PEOPLE WHO LACK SUCH ATTITUDES

People who lack such attitudes end up acting in six ways:
Though they may hear spiritual teachings, they engage in bandying words about.
Though they may explain the teachings, they train out of competitiveness.
Though they may meditate, their minds are attracted to ordinary concepts.
Though they may contemplate, they seek rewards of food and riches.
Though they may remain in solitude, they are preoccupied with their thoughts and emotions.

Though they may observe the rules and uphold their ordinations, they only reinforce their negative emotions.
Identify those who end up acting in any of these six ways and stay away from them.

SELF-EXAMINATION

There are six things to investigate in yourself:
Look to see whether you have severed your ties with the state of samsara.
Look to see whether you harbor attachment to friends and aversion to enemies.
Look to see whether your deportment is that of a good practitioner.
When you meditate, look to see whether the signs of successful practice have reached full expression.
Look to see whether your confidence wanes in the wake of trying to benefit others.⁹
When you die, look to see whether you experience pure visions arising.
If you look for such things, you will have taken the most excellent advice. [6b]

KEEPING THE DHARMA AT A DISTANCE

You keep the dharma at a distance as a result of six flaws:
as a result of your failure to accomplish anything of great purpose and to be mindful of your mortality;
as a result of your failure to understand how seductive it is to strive for status and power;
as a result of your failure to realize that you must eventually part from beloved friends and relations;
as a result of your failure to recognize the many drawbacks of craving sense pleasures;

as a result of your failure to comprehend that the wealth you
amass will be lost;
and as a result of your laziness¹⁰ in meditation and practice and
your failure to consider impermanence.
Please avoid any such flaws that might arise.

BLENDING YOUR MIND WITH THE DHARMA

There are six ways to blend your mind with the dharma:
Let your fixations subside naturally, as you would dispose of a
corpse's shroud in a ravine.
Saturate your mind with compassion, feeling as a mother does
toward her only child.
Let positive qualities arise as a matter of course, the way things
grow in the soil of summer.
Sustain your diligence for a long time, like a wheel of sharp
weapons turning.¹¹
Let your confused perceptions dissipate naturally, like the
undoing of a knot into which a snake has tied itself.
Arrive at the way of abiding quite naturally, like a hero returning
to his home country.
Those who have such qualities in full measure are truly superior
spiritual practitioners.

CONFUSION, THE ANTITHESIS OF THE DHARMA

Six points deal with confusion as the antithesis of the dharma:
It is so difficult to rid yourself of a mind fixated on samsara.
It is so easy to be sidetracked from awareness when you have not
gained some level of realization.
The seduction of the six avenues of your consciousness by their
objects is so insidious.
The meaningless pursuits of samsara proliferate so smoothly.
Your life plays itself out, day and night, so swiftly.

You spend your life doing so many things that have so little purpose.
Ah! Please contemplate these points and put the sacred dharma
into practice!

WHAT IS MEANINGFUL

There are six ways to motivate yourself to seek what is truly
meaningful:
Ask yourself, "At what point will I be beguiled by attachment
and aversion, which are certain to seduce me?"
"When will my mind and body part ways, as they are destined
to do?"
"When will I assume the loan of the four elements again,¹² as I
certainly will?" [7a]
"When will my perceptions of this life fall away, as they are
certain to do?"
"When will I relinquish my illusory riches and possessions, as I
certainly will?"
"When will the Lord of Death come to crush me, as he certainly
will?"
Pay wholehearted attention to these matters, contemplating them
day and night.

INTEGRATING YOUR MIND AND THE DHARMA

There are six ways to integrate your mind and the dharma:
If you wish to put an end to your desires, rely on a contented state
of mind.
If you wish to put an end to your aversion to enemies, tame the
anger within.
If you wish to benefit others, make the arousal of bodhichitta part
of your ongoing experience.
If you wish to influence the perceptions of others, kindle blessings
within you.

If you wish to train in experiencing pure realms, train in
experiencing the utter lucidity of self-knowing awareness.
If you wish to ease your suffering, let supreme bliss blaze
within you.
Auspicious circumstances within you will arise in your outer
experience.

WASTING HUMAN EXISTENCE

Although they have attained this state of freedom and
opportunity, six kinds of people make it pointless:
those who eschew the study and contemplation that are antidotes
to ignorance;
those who abandon their gurus, the foundation of blessings;
those who reject their chosen deities, the source of spiritual
attainment;
those who procrastinate in developing meditative stability, the
foundation of all that is to be accomplished;
those who are attached to their harmful actions and obscurations,
and who wish to rid themselves of illness and negative
influences;
those who try to instill faith in others when their own conduct
conflicts with the dharma.
All such people attract other wastrels the way a magnet attracts
iron.

FAULTS TO ELIMINATE

Six principles pertain to faults that individuals should eliminate:
Involvement in all kinds of things without any conviction will
not bring you success.
Sentimentality toward friends and relations will not free you
from the chains of attachment and aversion.
Gluttony will render you a slave to physical comforts.

Superficiality and vacuousness will cause what has true meaning
to slip away from you.
Failing to exert yourself when you have the intention to do so will
ruin your chance of accomplishing anything.
Failing to gain familiarity¹³ now will allow the force of karma to
take over in the after-death state.
It is vital, therefore, that people examine themselves for such
faults and eliminate them. [7b]

TAMING YOUR MIND

There are six observations to make in order to tame your mind:
If you assume that sense objects truly exist, observe the changing
of the four seasons.
If you assume that your life is permanent, observe the dew on a
blade of grass.
If you are ignorant of cause and effect, observe how seeds sprout
into seedlings.
If you don't understand that what you perceive derives from mind,
observe the dreams you have while asleep.
If you don't understand the single taste of everything, consider a
piece of sugarcane.¹⁴
If you don't understand nonduality, compare water and ice.
Each of these observations effectively remedies a particular
problem.

SPIRITUAL IDEAS

There are six ideas to incorporate into your spiritual path:
Think of your sublime guru as a physician,
of your spiritual companions as nurses,
of your practice as a regimen of healing,
of yourself as a patient,
of the dharma as medicine,

and of the fruition as a complete cure.
With ideas like these, eliminate your mistaken attitudes.

EXCELLENT CONDUCT

Excellent conduct will bring about six definite results:
Relying on a guru will definitely bring blessings.
Meditating on your chosen deity will definitely bring spiritual attainment.
Keeping samaya will definitely cause the oath-bound guardians to gather around you.
Diligently engaging in spiritual practice will definitely elicit meditative experiences and realization.
Maintaining an experience of the way things actually are will definitely remove the two kinds of obscuration.
Training without distraction will definitely bring out positive qualities.

CONSIDERATIONS THAT AROUSE CONCERN

Six considerations regarding the nature of ordinary things arouse concern:
Your mundane activities are like those of an elephant caught in quicksand.
Your loving friends and relations are like the guards of a prison cell.
Your enjoyment of things in this life is like that of an old dog gnawing on a bone.¹⁵
Your harmful behavior based on ignorance is like the groping of a blind person on the edge of a precipice.
The five emotional poisons are as dangerous to you as venomous serpents.
Your attachment to the objects of the six avenues of consciousness is like that of a bee insatiably seeking nectar.

It is crucial to arouse your concern and keep these influences at a distance. [8a]

THE DRAWBACKS OF MUNDANE LIFE

Ordinary involvement in the world has six drawbacks:
Owning a house and property is like being trapped in an iron box in a hell realm.
A spouse and children are like a forest of trees with leaves made of swords.
Jewelry and fine clothing are like blazing tongues of fire.
Craving food and drink is like eating lumps of red-hot iron.
Servants and attendants are like guards who imprison you in the hell realms.
Anger and strife are like a hailstorm of fire.
Please understand that these situations destroy whatever is noble and excellent about you.

UNDERSTANDING THE DEFECTS OF DESIRE

There are six ways to understand the defects of desire:
Desire causes you physical pain and mental anguish in this lifetime.
In future lifetimes, it will cause you to wander perpetually in lower realms of samsara.
It brings you into conflict with everyone.
It causes your negative qualities to increase as a matter of course.
It obscures your positive qualities.
Therefore, desire is disparaged by holy ones.

LUST

There are six unsavory considerations that someone bound by lust should ponder:

The body is a vessel for all that is impure.
 It is a skeleton held together by muscle and sinew.
 It is a pool of pus, lymph, vomit, feces, and urine.
 It is marred by the nine orifices.
 Its solid and hollow organs are breeding grounds for parasites.
 It is the source of all illnesses that the flesh is heir to.
 Failing to understand the body's nature as such, however, you
 are seduced by lust for another's body.

THE MEANINGLESSNESS OF THINGS

There are six ways in which things are meaningless and lack any
 real essence:
 All phenomena, which manifest in your perception as myriad
 sense objects,
 are like bubbles in water, impermanent and quickly vanishing;
 like hollow reeds, without any real pith whatsoever;
 like mirages, seen to be real by naive people in their confusion;
 like illusions, apparent in all their variety without actually
 existing;
 like dream images, manifesting through the force of habit
 patterns;
 and like lightning, changeable and ephemeral.
 Those who understand these things will pass beyond the
 limitations of conditioned existence. [8b]

LESSER PRACTITIONERS

There are six ways in which lesser practitioners engage in the
 practice of dharma:
 Seeing the suffering of samsara, they seek to begin the path.
 Understanding that whatever they have done has served no real
 purpose, they seek little profit or acclaim.
 Having little pride or desire, they take a low seat.

Associating with companions who have faith and diligence, they
 strive at their spiritual practice.
 Lacking any predisposition toward the Mahayana approach,
 they are unable to encompass it with their minds.
 Having faith in the fields of knowledge they study, they are
 motivated to apply all of them.
 Such is the doorway through which holy practitioners embark
 on the spiritual path.

INTERMEDIATE PRACTITIONERS

Intermediate practitioners have six necessary qualities:
 They do not devote themselves to the business of plowing fields
 and watering crops.
 They do not encumber themselves by trying to make a profit in
 the prime of their life.
 They do not concern themselves with saving face with, or
 mediating disputes between, relatives or friends.
 They refuse to take sides out of anger or engage in arguments.
 They avoid trying to stay in one place, planning and hoarding for
 the future.
 They do not cultivate friendships with important people, for the
 distraction of busyness has a deadening effect.
 This is a second level on which spiritual practitioners commit
 themselves.

EXCELLENT YOGINS

There are six ways in which excellent yogins frequent charnel
 grounds:¹⁶
 They do not associate with ordinary people, lest they become
 tainted by the ordinary.
 They conceal their physical, verbal, and mental conduct, so that
 people are unaware of what they are doing.

They do not try to procure food or clothing, but sustain themselves on food offered to the dead and wear burial shrouds.
 They are undaunted and so their conduct is that of dakas and dakinis.
 They nurture the experiences they attain through secret conduct and eschew common behavior.
 They abide in their true nature and realize the state of supreme bliss.
 This is regarded as a third way in which those following the path to liberation engage in practice.

YOGINS OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER

Yogins of the highest caliber, who are free of all bias, have six attributes:
 They are not attached to their home region or to any human community whatsoever.
 They are free of the dualistic extremes of naive affirmation and nihilistic denial. [9a]
 Their whereabouts are not known to anyone, whether a close relation or a distant acquaintance.
 They wander like clouds, not rooted in one place.
 They experience as allies the objects they perceive through the six avenues of their consciousness.
 They do not judge anything at all to be good or bad.
 Such is a fourth doorway for entering the noble path of total freedom.

FEARS TO ELIMINATE

Those who desire spiritual accomplishment rid themselves of six things rooted in fear:
 They give up the ingratiating behavior that is rooted in the fear of displeasing others.

They give up the hoarding of wealth and possessions that is rooted in the fear of having to do without.
 They give up the need to plan for the future that is rooted in the fear of hardship.
 They give up the search for a high position that is rooted in the fear of having to take a low one.
 They give up the acceptance of ordinary people's counsel that is rooted in the fear of being wrong.
 They give up the tendency to agitate others' minds that is rooted in the fear of being outdone.

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES FOR PRACTICE

There are six crucial boundaries to establish in spiritual practice:
 Establish an outer boundary by being free of attachment and aversion.
 Establish an inner boundary by not hoarding.
 Establish a secret boundary by being free of dualistic perceptions.
 Establish an upper boundary to guard against the naive hope for something good.
 Establish a lower boundary to guard against the fear of something bad.
 Establish a peripheral boundary to avoid being caught up in plans and actions.
 If you establish these six boundaries, obstacles cannot possibly arise.

ATTAINING BUDDHAHOOD

Attaining buddhahood depends on six factors:
 The ideal working basis for such attainment depends on a state of freedom and opportunity.
 Whether you gain accomplishment and freedom depends on whether you practice.

Your practice depends on your thorough understanding.
Your understanding depends on your first listening to teachings.
Arriving at the key points of what you have heard depends on
your contemplation. [9b]
All of this depends on your spiritual mentors.

NOBLE CHARACTERISTICS

Six characteristics make you a noble person:
Having amassed merit, you are of good family¹⁷ and gentle
character.
Having deepened your wisdom, you are skillful at discerning the
meaning of what must be known.
Having enhanced your sublime knowing, you realize that the
true nature of reality is a freedom from extremes.
Having practiced diligently, you gain meditative experiences,
realization, and other signs of success.
Having developed compassion and skillful means, you are
tireless in benefiting others.
Having assimilated the key points of spiritual instruction, you
are able to lead others along the path.
These characteristics of holy masters, the best of beings, are
laudable!

SINCERE STUDENTS

Sincere students rely on six things:
They are disenchanted with conditioned existence and
disillusioned with their confused perceptions.
They dispense with activities that are not spiritual and that are
thus useless.
They avoid commotion and distraction as they would their
enemies.
They do not place their hope in, or long for, profit or fame.

They break free of the fetters of trying to placate friends and
relations.
They cast off all attachment or aversion that involves holding
friends close or keeping enemies at a distance.
No longer interested in mundane things, they put the sacred
dharma into practice.

MAINTAINING FOCUS

Six circumstances keep you from losing your focus to extraneous
things:
You have not been born into servitude, and so need not surrender
your self-determination.
You have not chosen a householder's life, and so will not be
ensnared by a relationship.
You have not been born into prominence, and so can pursue your
spiritual practice at will.
You are not burdened by the need for permission, and so may do
what you like, whenever you like.
You do not undertake any commitment that you cannot uphold.
The armies of negative karma do not rise up against you, nor are
you inundated by suffering.
Anyone with such self-determination has reason to be happy.

SUPPORTING YOUR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

There are six ways to support your spiritual practice and
meditation:
Do not fall into either of two extremes, but have just enough for
your needs.
Eat moderately, neither starving nor gorging yourself. [10a]
Do not let your constitution be disturbed, for this produces
imbalances and illnesses.
Do not hanker after fine food.

Do not be dismayed even if something dire befalls you.
Observe the cycle of day and night, and avoid eating at improper times.
These are friends that will help make your spiritual practice truly effective.

KINDLING FAITH AND DILIGENCE

Six situations kindle your faith and diligence:
Humbled by adverse circumstances, you come to appreciate impermanence.
Understanding cause and effect, you avoid negative actions as you would poison.
Filled with devotion, you perceive your guru to be a buddha.
Confident in the teachings, you feel inspired to practice.
With faith in the sangha, you seek edification and guidance.
Wishing to attain buddhahood, you accomplish through exertion whatever you set out to do.
These are the ways of fortunate and holy ones.

TAMING YOUR MIND

There are six ways to discipline yourself when learning to tame your mind:
Do not let your mind be swayed by the values of wrongheaded or coarse people.
Remain steadfast and develop the ability to endure suffering that is hard to bear.
Cultivate disillusionment, having seen the flaws of samsara and fearing them.
To avoid being an inferior recipient of the dharma, purify your mind so that it is flawless.
Through much study and contemplation, understand the teachings of the sublime dharma.

Become worthy of receiving profound empowerments and samaya.
Recipients who discipline themselves in these ways seem rarer than the treasure chests found on the Isle of Jewels.

WORKING WITH NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

There are six things to ensure so that negative circumstances will not ruin your spiritual practice:
Ensure that you can withstand all kinds of physical suffering.
Ensure that you refrain from negative speech and meaningless gossip.
Ensure that you can handle the turmoil of the mind—joys and sorrows, good and bad.
Ensure that you can contend with the discouragement and fear of living in solitude, without human contact. [10b]
Ensure that you rely on an undistracted mind as an antidote to the busy marketplace.
Ensure that you work with negative circumstances by upholding your vows and your ethical training.
If you can ensure these things, you will easily follow the spiritual path to accomplishment.

INCORPORATING SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS

There are six kinds of spiritual teachings to incorporate in order to develop positive qualities on the path to liberation:
Incorporate the basic teachings so as to achieve enlightenment at some future point.
Incorporate the secret mantra teachings so as to forge the path of the three kayas.
Incorporate the key points of the consummate teachings so as to eliminate the pitfall of holding to extremes.
Incorporate the Mahayana teachings so that whatever you do benefits others.

Incorporate the teachings of the shravaka and pratyekabuddha approaches so as to relinquish activities that reinforce samsara. Individuals thus incorporate the dharma into their very being.

UNDERMINING FIXATIONS

There are six ways to undermine the seeming solidity of your obvious fixations:
Decide that the objects of the six senses are misleading and so add to your confusion.
Decide that ordinary plans and actions are ultimately pointless and so add to your confusion.
Decide that your obvious fixations are deceptive and so add to your confusion.
Decide that acclaim, a good reputation, praise, and honor add to your confusion.
Decide that the unpredictable nature of friends and foes adds to your confusion.
When you understand that nothing truly exists in itself, your confused perceptions and fixations will be eradicated.

THE PURPOSE OF LIFE

Six points concern what you can do to give this state of freedom and opportunity purpose:
Even if you have wealth, it is ultimately pointless and deceptive, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.
Even if you listen to teachings, you can become lost in the words, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.
Even if you have understanding, you can lose sight of the real essence, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.
Even if you contemplate, your concepts may only increase, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.
Even if you explain the teachings, they might remain theoretical, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.

Without practicing, you will never have the direct experience, so exert yourself in spiritual practice.

LETTING GO OF SAMBARA

There are six ways to train your mind in letting go of samsara:
Given that you are deceived by what is ultimately meaningless, let go of mundane preoccupations.
Given that it only perpetuates your craving, let go of your fixation on sensory stimulation.
Given that it lacks any real point, let go of bad counsel.
Given that you must give everything up anyway, let go of your fixation on wealth and possessions. [11a]
Given that meeting leads to parting, let go of your sentimental attachment to family and friends.
Given that they lie at the root of devastation and ruin, let go of your dualistic fixations of attachment and aversion.
If you let go of these things, you will bring your practice of the sacred dharma to fulfillment as a matter of course.

CERTAINTY ABOUT CAUSALITY

There are six ways to develop certainty about causality:
Listen to the teachings found in the Compilations,¹⁸ for this will lead to certainty about the principle of cause and effect.
Pursue your twofold development, recalling the example of single drops of water gradually filling a vase.
Avoid harmful actions, recalling the example of an initially small fire incinerating an entire forest.
Develop merit, for joy and sorrow are the results of your previous actions.
Train in stages, for your twofold development cannot be completed all at once.
Have the conviction that your belief in a self reinforces your karma.

MISTAKES OF THOSE RECEIVING TEACHINGS

Those receiving teachings should avoid six mistakes:
listening too soon, like a clay pot that has not been fired;
not paying attention to what is said, like a cup turned upside
down;
not memorizing what is heard, like a leaky vessel;
tainting the teachings with negative emotional bias, like a pot
lined with poison;
not following the spiritual path, like a contaminated container;
and taking pride in knowing just the words, like a broken vase.
Avoid any mistakes like these and listen to the teachings carefully,
with undivided attention.

LISTENING TO TEACHINGS CORRECTLY

Listening to teachings correctly has six marvelous effects:
You become imbued with sublime wisdom and remain sincerely
committed to truth.
You come to rely on spiritual mentors and listen to their
teachings insatiably.
You come to rely on many guides, delighting these wise teachers.
You listen to many teachings, which opens the doorway to
myriad spiritual techniques.
You listen a great deal, which reinforces your certainty.
By listening to, asking about, and investigating many teachings,
you will come to hold an oceanlike treasury of the dharma.

CORRECT CONTEMPLATION

Next, correct contemplation has six aspects:
Reflect, “What meaning do these words convey?” [11b]
“How can I analyze them?”
“How can I summarize them?”

“What are their implications?”

“In which category do they fall?”

“How can I focus on them and put them into practice?”

By contemplating well, you will unlock the door to the precious
dharma.

CORRECT MEDITATION

Next, meditating correctly has six effects:

You are no longer deluded about the way things actually are and
remain free of the extremes of naive affirmation and nihilistic
denial.

You become a true follower of the Mahayana, integrating your
awareness of emptiness with compassion.

You come to abide in the ongoing experience of the true nature
of reality, without the distractions of either mental laxity or
agitation.

You come to integrate calm abiding with profound insight, so
that your meditative experiences and realization flourish.

You are no longer subject to the constraints of hope or fear,
which are the hallmarks of dualistic consciousness.

Correct meditation serves as an antidote to the emotional
obscurations;

one who meditates thus will transcend the conditioned state of
existence.

TRANSFORMING DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

There are six ways to avoid being overwhelmed by circumstances:

Recognize that the sounds of praise and blame are like echoes.

Let others’ attachment and aversion be a lesson to you.

Ensure that your actions and conduct are not at odds with the
dharma.

Do not think of the results of generously giving things away as something to be stockpiled.
 Do not try to avoid illness or negative influences, for these can turn you toward what is beneficial.
 Let your pure outlook and devotion flow without interruption.
 In these ways, you will become a champion who can transform the most unfavorable circumstances.

INFERIOR CONCERNS

Preoccupation with six inferior concerns is a flaw to be avoided:
 seeking great renown and fame;
 trying to gain success and wealth;
 investing the objects you perceive with true existence;
 letting your physical and verbal impulses stir you up;
 striving to take care only of your needs in this life;
 and wanting liberation for yourself alone.
 These are concerns that the wise avoid, for they come through the blessings of maras.

AVOIDING DISTRACTION

There are six ways to prevent your senses from being carried away by external objects: [12a]
 Do not be poisoned by attachment or aversion to the objects of your senses.
 Do not be consumed by an insatiable yearning for sensory stimulation.
 Do not let the weapons of the eight mundane concerns pierce you.
 Do not sully your conduct with misdeeds of dissembling or deceit.
 Do not be buffeted by the winds of many time-consuming activities.
 Spend your days and nights in noble, spiritual activities.
 Thus, adopt the manner of holy masters.

FAITH

There are six ways to restore yourself with faith:
 Meditate on your guru, praying with faith born of inspiration.
 Strive to honor the Three Jewels with faith born of reverence.
 To gain accomplishment, meditate on your chosen deity with faith born of conviction.
 Apply yourself to what is ultimately meaningful, the true nature of reality, with faith born of awe.
 Transform negative circumstances into allies with faith that is indefatigable.
 Blend the dharma with your very being with faith that focuses on the ultimate goal.
 These are absolutely crucial for pursuing the path to liberation.

AVOIDING HYPOCRISY

There are six things to understand in order to observe your vows without hypocrisy:
 Understand that ethical discipline lies at the very root of the teachings;
 that harmful actions lead to rebirth in lower realms;
 that without the observance of your vows, the foundation of your spiritual life will rot;
 that ethical discipline supports all of your positive qualities;
 that it is the stairway by which you can ascend to higher realms;
 and that it is the vehicle that will convey you to liberation.
 Observe pure discipline and steadfastly hold it in high esteem.

COUNTERACTING NEGATIVE CIRCUMSTANCES

There are six ways to counteract negative circumstances with antidotes:
 According to the shravaka approach, you avoid negative circumstances as you would your enemy.

According to the paramita approach, you thoroughly refine your experience of them.
 According to the mantra approach, you use skillful means to transform them into your spiritual path.
 According to the most profound key points, you experience them as free in their natural state;
 allow them to subside naturally within the state free of extremes;
 and transcend them decisively without any deliberate attempt to do so. [12b]
 Regardless of how you meditate (depending on the kind of mind you have),
 it is essential to bring negative emotions to an end before they become your foes.

NOBLE STUDENTS

Noble students who are worthy of receiving the teachings have six characteristics:
 They are of good character, have self-respect, and are modest.
 They practice according to their teachers' instructions and are rich in devotion.
 They pursue their spiritual practice with great fortitude, without regard for their bodies or lives.
 They are loving toward their companions, their minds softened by compassion.
 They do not become discouraged or weary, but exercise forbearance while working to bring benefit and happiness.
 Calm in body, speech, and mind, they maintain their samaya and vows.
 Such people are fortunate recipients of the nectar of the dharma.

OPPORTUNITIES

There are six hard-won opportunities to contemplate:
 It is difficult to attain a human existence, so strive now to make use of it.
 It is difficult to find a guru, so profit from having done so by developing your positive qualities.
 It is difficult to encounter the dharma, so put it into practice diligently.
 It is difficult to hear about what is profoundly meaningful, so focus your practice on the very core of the oral lineage.
 It is difficult to cut through confused perceptions, so train yourself in the meaning of nonduality.
 It is difficult to find circumstances in which supportive factors have come together, so practice energetically whenever they do.
 This is advice for you to follow in order to be happy in this and future lives.

PARAMOUNT QUALITIES

Six qualities are paramount for someone engaged in spiritual practice:
 Generosity is paramount for obtaining results that carry over into future lifetimes.
 Ethical discipline is paramount for ascending the stairway to rebirth in higher realms.
 The armor and weapons of forbearance are paramount for developing fortitude.
 Diligence is paramount as the source of positive qualities.
 Meditative stability is paramount for preventing your focus from wavering.
 Sublime knowing is paramount for ensuring that your goal is spontaneously accomplished.

Practice to nurture these paramount qualities and swiftly travel the path to liberation.

A LACK OF THESE QUALITIES

It is taught that a lack of the foregoing qualities has six dire consequences:

When you fail to be generous, the preta realms lie in wait for you.

When you fail to observe ethical discipline, the animal realms lie in wait for you. [13a]

When you fail to develop forbearance, the hell realms lie in wait for you.

When you fail to exert yourself with diligence, the abyss that offers no freedom¹⁹ lies in wait for you.

When you fail to cultivate meditative stability, the hordes of the four maras lie in wait for you.

When you fail to develop sublime knowing, states of conditioned existence constantly lie in wait for you.

Once these foes lie in wait for you, you will fall under their sway.

WHAT IS UNNECESSARY

Six things are unnecessary when you apply profound teachings to your experience:

If your good qualities flourish wherever you stay, you need not remain in solitude.

If you experience the freedom of your concepts in their own ground, you need not renounce samsara.

If you can guard against heedlessness, you need not worry about appeasing others' minds.

If you realize that mind itself is uncontrived, you need not study the scriptures.

If you realize that whatever you perceive is illusory, you need not try to ward off fixation.

If you recognize that the way of abiding is your own true nature, you need not seek buddhahood.

Those for whom these things are no longer necessary are great spiritual people, truly sublime beings.

SUPPORTS

There are six things to do that are most excellent supports for your spiritual practice:

Honor your guru and the Three Jewels, for they are the most excellent objects of reverence.

Let go of the affairs of this life, for this is the most excellent form of giving.

Rely on study, contemplation, and faith, for they are the most excellent kinds of wealth.

Recognize mind itself to be your own true nature, for this is the most excellent companion.

Avoid self-centered entanglements, for this is the most excellent way to arouse bodhichitta.

See your guru as a buddha, for this is the most excellent sign of successful practice.

If you have these supports, the two kinds of benefit will be spontaneously ensured.

INAPPROPRIATE ACTIONS

There are six kinds of inappropriate action to avoid:

Do not scold or belittle others, for you do not know their true measure.

Do not disappoint the faithful by seeking gain through an unethical means of livelihood.

Do not indulge in reckless or bizarre behavior, acting like someone crazy.

Do not malign others, denigrating them because you need to feel superior.

Do not abandon the sacred dharma for the sake of food and clothing. [13b]
Do not disregard the profound interdependence of cause and effect.
If you eschew these actions, you will become a holy person.

APPROPRIATE ACTIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

There are six actions you should engage in if you are a spiritual practitioner:
Bear your guru, chosen deity, and dakini on the crown of your head.
Transform everything you do that is positive—whether physical, verbal, or mental—into your path to enlightenment.
Completely give up your belief in a self, investing things with true existence, and taking things to be permanent.
Quash all thoughts that focus solely on this lifetime.
Use antidotes to eradicate the five emotional poisons.
Enrich your mind with the wealth of listening to, contemplating, and meditating on spiritual teachings.
In such ways, you and others will come to have ever greater fortune.

IMPERATIVES FOR PRACTICE

Six things are imperative when you pursue spiritual practice:
Because you will certainly die soon, you must let go of everything that is not spiritual.
Because apathy is quick to arise, you must not give in to indolence.
Because circumstances can erode your diligence, you must apply antidotes to them.
Because faith and devotion can easily be undermined, you must not become complacent.

Because it is difficult to cut through confused perceptions, you must understand that nothing has true existence.
Because it is easy to develop bad habits, you must not associate with ordinary people.

TAKING REFUGE

There are six ways in which a Buddhist practitioner masters the taking of refuge:
by taking refuge in the three kayas of buddhahood as the goal to be realized;
by taking refuge in the three spiritual approaches as the path;
by taking refuge in shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas as one's companions;
by taking refuge in learned and accomplished gurus as one's supports;
by taking refuge in the hosts of chosen deities as the source of spiritual attainment;
and by taking refuge in the dakinis of timeless awareness as the source of blessings.
These points are vital at the outset, during the preliminary stage of spiritual practice.

WHAT TO RECOGNIZE

There are six things that people with faith recognize:
They recognize how to proceed, and so bring their self-interest in line with the dharma.
They recognize what to discard, and so rid themselves of fixation on their confused perceptions. [14a]
They recognize how to listen, and so heed the advice of their gurus.
They recognize what to eliminate, and so give up harmful physical, verbal, and mental actions.

They recognize what to undertake, and so pursue spiritual practice that focuses on profoundly meaningful teachings.
They recognize what to seek, and so focus on the significance of mind itself.
If you recognize these things, you will come close to what is truly meaningful.

FAMILIARIZATION

There are six key points with which fortunate people become familiar:
The way of abiding is such that nothing need be done, so simplicity is a key point.
Meditation is a state of utter lucidity, so nondistractedness is a key point.
Conduct is like participation in an illusion, so the fact that nothing has true existence is a key point.
The fruition is spontaneously present, so knowing your innate attributes is a key point.
Negative circumstances are naturally free, so not being fixated is a key point.
Pleasure and pain are in your own mind, so developing your spiritual training is a key point.
If you adhere to these points, you will realize all of your goals without making any deliberate attempt to do so.

COUNSELING YOURSELF

There are six ways to counsel yourself in what seems reasonable:
Life is uncertain, so it makes sense to begin exerting yourself.
It makes sense to feel disillusioned by the suffering of samsara.
It makes sense to care compassionately for the countless beings of the six classes.
It makes sense to always feel devotion for your guru.

It makes sense to put profound spiritual advice into practice.
It makes sense to remain in solitude once you have recognized your true nature.
Those who follow such reasonable counsel make the very best spiritual practitioners.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL APPROACHES

There are six things to understand about the fundamental principles of various spiritual approaches:
You must understand that negative emotions are superficial and commonplace.
You must understand that the approach of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas is to eliminate negative emotions.
You must understand that the bodhisattva approach is to make use of negative emotions.
You must understand that the secret mantra approach is to transform negative emotions.
You must understand that a thorough recognition of your true nature is the experience of naturally occurring timeless awareness. [14b]
You must understand that only by not making any deliberate effort are you free of judgment.
If you have such understanding, you will not be sullied by negative emotions.

SPIRITUAL ANALOGIES

There are six analogies on which spiritual practitioners should reflect:
Discerning the hidden flaw of samsara is like discovering the faults of a malevolent person.
The intention to flee from samsara is like that of a soldier who refuses to fight a hopeless battle.

The intention to escape without ever turning back is like that of a fox escaping from a trap.
The intention to renounce samsara is like that of a servant who refuses to serve a cruel master.
Apprehension about any more wandering is like that of someone trying to find solid footing on a rocky road.
The intention to be free of samsara is like the tendency of ice to melt back into water.

APPLYING THE DHARMA

There are six kinds of intention to adopt when you apply the dharma to your personal experience:
As you learn the dharma, your intention should be like that of a bee gathering nectar.
As you contemplate it, your intention should be like that of someone seeking gold within ore.
As you gain realization, your intention should be like that of someone actually holding the refined gold.
As you develop familiarity with it, your intention should be like that of someone polishing the gold.
As you experience your positive qualities flourishing, your intention should be like that of someone making an ornament of the gold.
As your direct experience of the dharma becomes fully evident, your intention should be like that of someone who possesses the source of all that could be wished for.

FORGING CONNECTIONS

There are six connections to rely on in the Mahayana approach:
To dissolve your fixation on things as real, rely on the connection between your view and your experience.

To do away with indolence, rely on the connection between your faith and your diligence.
To guard against lapsing into an inferior approach, rely on the connection between skillful means and sublime knowing.
To root out anger, see the connection between your own culpability and others' blamelessness.
To follow the path of those who are spiritually advanced,²⁰ rely on the connection between your inspiration and your courage.
To cut through potential points of error, rely on the connection between your study and contemplation of spiritual teachings and your actual implementation of them.
Although it seems that people rely on them very rarely, these connections are definitely necessary.

INSTRUCTIONS ON WHAT IS UNSURPASSABLE

There are six instructions on what is unsurpassable:
Understand the way of abiding, for no other study can surpass this.
Cut to the root, for no contemplation can surpass this.
Let the experience of timeless awareness awaken in you, for no common path of skillful means can surpass this. [15a]
Let the dharma tame you, for no other blessing can surpass this.
Realize the state that has no origin or cessation, for no other spiritual attainment can surpass this.
Discern that there is nothing to attain, for no other measure of indwelling confidence can surpass this.
If you apply these instructions, buddhahood will arise within you.

THINGS TO AVOID

There are six things to avoid succumbing to if you wish to consummate your spiritual practice:

Do not succumb to the influence of delightful companions.
Do not succumb to the temptation of flattery or fine food.
Do not succumb to the distractions of many duties and relationships.
Do not succumb to the powerful lure of beloved friends.
Do not succumb to the pressure of those who would teach you secular skills.
Do not succumb to the enticement of amassing wealth and possessions.
If you heed these six warnings, you will bring your spiritual path to consummation.

CHARACTER FLAWS

There are six character flaws to identify in yourself and eliminate: overtly negative emotions, which cause you to become upset and to mistreat others;
the obvious diversion of your attention in trivial and imprudent ways;
your delight in pointless projects, duties, and relationships;
stubborn resistance, which prevents you from letting the dharma tame you;
insatiable status seeking, fickleness, and procrastination;
and the perpetration of enormous injustices on others through malicious deceit and cunning.
Examine your practice of the sacred dharma for flaws as well as virtues, and eliminate the former.

FLAWED BEHAVIOR

Six kinds of ignoble behavior are flaws in those of inferior character:
being ungrateful and repaying kindness with harm;

being self-indulgent, yet demanding something of others;
being fickle and excessively disheartened by the impermanence of things;
being disingenuous and duplicitous;
failing to understand what is meaningful, yet having many opinions and taking delight in expressing them;
and harboring high expectations, yet doing nothing to realize them.
Unfortunate people thus distance themselves greatly from an unbiased appreciation of the sacred dharma.

BECOMING FREE OF FAULTS

There are six ways to free yourself entirely of faults: [15b]
Be steadfast and of virtuous character, and perform few duties.
Have great fortitude, resolve, and forbearance.
Be unassailable and undaunted by circumstances.
Be constant and true, with sincere faith and devotion.
Be of noble intent, providing much good counsel, and be skillful in the means you undertake.
Do not discuss others' faults, but expose your own hidden flaws.
Excellent people with such qualities should be your constant companions until enlightenment.

ENVOIOUS PRACTITIONERS

Spiritual practitioners who are envious have six failings:
They want more gain, wealth, and opportunity than others.
They want larger retinues and more students.
No matter how much merit they have, they want to gather more.
They want the banner of their renown to be raised throughout the land.
They want to be unique and unquestionably superior to everyone else.

They do not want others to have even a single thing that they do not have.
Such practitioners have been pierced by the flowered arrows of Kamadeva.²¹

INDICATIONS OF FAILINGS

There are six early indications that practitioners are inclined toward the foregoing failings:
They aspire to perform meritorious acts, but in an ostentatious way.
They discuss the faults of elder practitioners.
They feel a burning resentment when they see others succeed.
They malign those who are loving and concerned about the welfare of others.
They disparage those whose meditation and practice have brought them spiritual attainment.
They favor those who are ignorant and hold erroneous views.

FAULTY RELIANCE

Associating with such practitioners of inferior character has six drawbacks:
Simply seeing them erodes your own renunciation and faith.
Simply hearing them propels you far from the path to liberation.
Simply thinking of them sows the seeds of samsara.
Simply having contact with them causes blessings and spiritual attainment to fade.
Simply talking with them diminishes your pure outlook and devotion. [16a]
They contaminate all of your spiritual connections with the blessings of maras.
After their death, they fall into a hellish state of constant torment.
Therefore, avoid such unfortunate practitioners.

SIGNS OF INFERIOR PRACTITIONERS

There are six indications of the character of such inferior practitioners:
Far from being spiritual, they are baser than ordinary people.
Far from following the teachings, they are baser than the most dishonorable people.
Far from being Mahayana practitioners, they are baser than those who hold extreme views.
Far from being practitioners of the secret mantra approach, they are baser than those with depraved appetites.
Far from being real practitioners, they are baser than people who commit harmful actions.
Far from cultivating view and meditation, they are as distant from the dharma as the earth is from the heavens.
They are thieves of the teachings, only pretending to be practitioners of the dharma.
Avoid them, for they take people with faith down the wrong path, one that leads to lower realms.

BEING INCONSISTENT

Six ways of being inconsistent stand in the way of spiritual accomplishment:
If you have aroused bodhichitta but make no aspirations, you will not even begin to purify yourself of the obscurations that prevent the attainment of the rupakayas.
If you have compassion but have not eliminated your self-centeredness, you have not joined the ranks of Mahayana practitioners, who act to ensure benefit for others.
If your actions are harmonious but you do not act when the time is right, you will not accomplish anything of benefit for others, but will undermine your own efforts.

If you abide in a mountain retreat but do not turn your attention inward,
 you will find it difficult to extricate yourself from the entanglements of social relations based on attachment and aversion.
 If you offer a thousand prayers but do so without faith and devotion,
 not a single drop of the rain of blessings that prayer naturally elicits will fall on you.
 If you have great knowledge but are not free of conceptual elaborations,
 you will not be able to distinguish between samsara and nirvana, and will be caught in the snare of sophistry.
 Therefore, it is crucial to integrate pith instructions into your practice.

NECESSITIES FOR PRACTITIONERS

There are six necessities for practitioners of the dharma:
 They must have a fear of samsara, feeling the way someone does when fleeing from a murderer. [16b]
 They must pursue what is good and beneficial, the way someone strives at a career.
 They must turn to antidotes, the way a patient relies on medicine.
 They must strive to benefit others, the way someone cares for an infant.
 They must be skilled in shaping their own experience, the way someone is adept at curing leather.
 They must slay the enemy of self-centeredness, the way someone commits murder out of revenge.
 Adhering to these points is necessary, so keep them in mind always.

DISCIPLINING YOUR MIND

There are six ideals to embrace in disciplining your mind:
 Embrace the prisoner's ideal, which is to give up attachment and aversion.
 Embrace the business person's ideal, which is to invest effort in positive actions.
 Embrace the ideal of placing trust in what is worthy, holding to your realization of the way of abiding.
 Embrace the ideal of protection that is afforded by putting aside self-centeredness and possessiveness.
 Embrace the ideal of victory over a foe that is won by conquering your own five emotional poisons.
 Embrace the ideal of spiritual practice that consists of maintaining undistracted mindfulness.
 By holding to such ideals, you will satisfy all your wants and needs just as you wish.

DANGERS FOR PRACTITIONERS

There are six dangers to which you, as practitioners of the dharma, can succumb:
 If you have faith but do not give up fame and fortune, the danger is that you will eventually fall into living a very ordinary life, so beware!
 If you dwell in a hermitage but have no resolve, the danger is that you will eventually fall into distraction, so beware!
 If you show signs of spiritual accomplishment but do not give up your pride in them, the danger is that you will eventually be carried away by maras, so beware!
 If you attract oath-bound guardians but lack compassion,

the danger is that you will eventually commit some unpardonable act,²² so beware!
 If your intention is lofty but you do not do away with your fixations,
 the danger is that you will eventually become impervious to the dharma, so beware!
 If you endeavor to benefit beings but remain entangled in self-centeredness,
 the danger is that you will eventually become a fraud, so beware!

OBSCURATIONS TO ELIMINATE

There are six obscurations to eliminate: [17a]
 Not upholding the sacred dharma, but rejecting it, is an obscuration.
 Not knowing what is the influence of maras is an obscuration.
 Not having devotion for your guru is an obscuration.
 Not regarding your spiritual companions purely is an obscuration.
 Belittling those who follow the sublime spiritual approach is an obscuration.
 Committing harmful actions and deceiving others in thought, word, or deed is an obscuration.
 On the path to liberation, it is essential to rid yourself of these obscurations and to practice.

FREEDOM FROM OBSCURATIONS

There are six infinitely precious ways to be free of obscurations:
 Be generous, without bias or hope for a reward.
 Observe impeccable discipline, without the goal of seeking a better rebirth in ordinary existence.
 Arouse love and compassion, never forsaking beings.
 Strive relentlessly to understand the sacred dharma.

Teach the dharma well to other beings, without seeking honor.
 Have goodwill toward everyone, without prejudice.
 Such thoroughly positive conduct is truly holy.

POSITIVE QUALITIES IN THE MAHAYANA

Six positive qualities are taught in the Mahayana approach:
 steadfast reliance on spiritual mentors;
 unwavering determination to act for the benefit of beings;
 a lack of pride, even if you have realized the way of abiding;
 a refusal to seek gain that serves no higher purpose;
 fearlessness in the face of the profound implications of the teachings;
 and passion for spiritual practice, which reinforces your noble attributes.

VANQUISHING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Six points concern vanquishing your great foes, the negative emotions:
 In that a few days of spiritual practice will not rid you of your negative emotions,
 it is imperative not to lose heart, but to continue pursuing your practice.
 In that negative emotions, which are beginningless, are extremely difficult to control,
 it is imperative to rely on antidotes, using the extremely profound means that they afford.
 In that self-cherishing is difficult to eradicate and dualistic consciousness has such powerful momentum, [17b]
 it is imperative to strive for whatever is positive, investing energy in your twofold development.
 In that it is difficult to be cured of the chronic, debilitating sickness of samsara,

it is imperative to always rely on your guru as you would a physician.
 In that it is difficult to extinguish the blaze of the five emotional poisons,
 it is imperative to arouse bodhichitta on a vast scale.
 In that it is easiest to follow the descending path of reinforcing negative karma,
 it is imperative to continue upward, climbing the stairway to liberation.

THE THREE LEVELS OF TRAINING

The Three Compilations and the trainings associated with them have six special features:
 The compiled teachings of the shravaka approach follow the words spoken by the Teacher.²³
 The realization specific to the pratyekabuddha approach is an awareness of interdependence dawning within.
 The teachings of the bodhisattva approach speak of oneself and others as endowed with unbounded timeless awareness.
 The training of shravakas involves a rudimentary focus on one's own mind.
 That of pratyekabuddhas takes place on an intermediate level, in which one still pursues one's own self-interest.
 That of bodhisattvas is concerned with compassion and the will to free all beings from samsara.

THE SHORTCOMINGS OF AN ORDINARY LIFE

There are six ways of seeing the shortcomings of an ordinary life in the world:
 Fame is like a clap of thunder, so give up any delight in it.
 Affluence blows through like clouds, so give up any fixation on it.

Attendants and members of a retinue are like the children of aged people,²⁴ so give up any hope in them.
 Your home and homeland are like way stations, so remain in mountain retreats.
 Joy and happiness are like dreams, so do not invest them with any true existence.
 Give up everything and strike out on your own, letting go of your attachments and fixations.
 If you act thus, you will only become happier and happier.

NECESSARY ACTIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Six actions are necessary if you are a practitioner of the dharma:
 It is necessary to achieve something beneficial for others, regardless of the circumstances of your birth, so train in establishing your motivation and making aspirations on a vast scale.
 If you are happy, it is necessary to understand that this is a result of the blessings of the dharma, so reflect on its benefits and advantages, and strive constantly to put it into practice. [18a]
 If you are unhappy, it is necessary to understand that this is because of your previous actions, so contemplate cause and effect and make mental training the very core of your practice.
 If you are sick, it is necessary to understand that illness is a form of spiritual training, so prepare yourself by focusing your mind when you are not ill.
 If you are elderly, it is necessary to maintain a state of contentment, so strive to develop and purify yourself while you are young.
 If you are dying, it is necessary to feel that you have completed your tasks,

so resolve all issues before you die.
I see these actions as forms of training to be taken to heart.

ADVICE THAT STRIKES HOME

Six pieces of advice strike home:
Your spending time with your family is like travelers gathering
by the wayside—
you have no idea when you will have to part; so train in what is
ultimately meaningful.
Your spending time with friends is like small birds huddling
together in a wicker cage—
you have no idea when you will have to leave them; so extricate
yourself from your sentimental entanglements.
Your life and life force are impermanent, like morning dew on a
blade of grass;
so dedicate yourself intently to the dharma, to meditation and
spiritual practice.
Excessive talk only incites your enemy, confusion, and makes
you like a parrot;
so avoid speaking idly and wasting time, and instead observe
silence.
Putting the dharma into practice is like retrieving gems from the
Isle of Jewels;
so do not share the advice of the oral lineages with fools.
If you become too familiar with a buddha over time, you might
see flaws even in that buddha;
so do not share your quarters with other people.²⁵
These words are my best heartfelt advice; listen to them with the
respect they deserve.

OPPORTUNE MOMENTS

There are six opportune moments for you as practitioners of the
dharma:

When you meet an authentic guru,
that is the time to cut through speculation, so ask questions
about what is unclear.
When your mind encounters negative circumstances in the
world,
that is the time to incorporate them into your spiritual practice,
so keep training.
When you receive the pith instructions of the profound oral
lineages, [18b]
that is the time to eliminate confusion, so apply them immediately.
When you pursue your spiritual practice with utmost diligence,
that is the time that you will encounter obstacles, so watch out
for maras.
When you bring your practice to consummation and attain
siddhis,
obstacles caused by maras may arise, so be extremely careful.
When you train in the view, focusing on the significance of the
way of abiding,
that is the time that errors and obscurations may manifest, so
rely on your guru.
These are profound key points; keep them in mind.

APPROPRIATE ACTION

To practice appropriately, it is necessary to act in six ways:
Avoid associating with people who are sullied by undesirable
behavior.
Rely on mentors who exemplify what it means to undergo the
difficult training in noble conduct.
Do not be distracted by sense objects, which influence your
perceptions so insidiously.
Do not let your experience of awareness become feeble, so that
your confusion is projected outwardly.
Do not be biased, reacting rigidly with attachment or aversion.

Sever your fixations and attachments, which all too easily ensnare you in confused perceptions.

HAVING NO REGRET ABOUT DEATH

If you are a lesser practitioner, there are six reasons that you need not feel regret:

If you have self-respect, and are modest and careful, although you will die you need not feel regret.

If you no longer commit negative, harmful actions, although you will die you need not feel regret.

If you have given away your food and wealth in the service of the dharma, although you will die you need not feel regret.

If you have observed the three higher trainings purely, although you will die you need not feel regret.

If you have exerted yourself uninterruptedly in whatever is positive, although you will die you need not feel regret.

If you no longer err, so that your mind is free of remorse, although you will die you need not feel regret.

It is vital that your behavior be like this.

TAKING DELIGHT

There are six things in which intermediate practitioners delight: Relying on the Three Jewels, they delight in being protected from samsara.

Pursuing their twofold development, they delight in the happiness this brings.

Having observed their samaya, they delight in being escorted by dakas and dakinis.

Upon encountering their chosen deities in the after-death state, they delight in being led along the spiritual path. [19a]

Having met sublime gurus, they delight in their unity with them,

without the ordinary circumstances of coming together and separating.

Having become familiar with mind itself, they delight in this experience as a state of utter lucidity.

This is profound advice for meeting the hour of death with delight.

DEATHLESSNESS

There are six reasons that yogins of the highest caliber are not subject to death:

The enlightened intent of self-knowing awareness can never die.

Naturally occurring timeless awareness can never die.

Utter lucidity, the true nature of reality, can never die.

Awareness, free of belief in a self, can never die.

The timeless freedom underlying cause and effect, as well as value judgments, can never die.

The space free of the duality of hope and fear can never die.

If you have such realization, you have parted ways with the mara of the Lord of Death.

TAKING THINGS TO BE REAL

Taking things to be real because of a lack of realization has six shortcomings:

You ignore what you already have within you, and so seek it elsewhere.

As a potentially great meditator, you fail to understand the way things actually are and so remain caught up in their ordinary characteristics.

You do not understand that the objects you perceive are deceiving, and so believe that they truly exist.

You do not realize that the way of abiding constitutes a single

basic space, and so believe that things are separate and distinct.
 You do not understand that self-knowing awareness is the essence of your being, and so move from lower to higher stages of the path.²⁶
 You fail to cut through your obsessions, and so are seduced by maras.
 Watch for the shortcomings that result from being misled by a lack of realization and rid yourself of them.

NOT REVERTING TO AN ORDINARY FRAME OF MIND

Six pieces of advice concern not reverting to an ordinary frame of mind:
 If you rely on gurus, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
 If you contemplate the flaw of investing sensory experiences with truth, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
 If you contemplate happiness and suffering, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
 If you contemplate the imperfections of this world, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
 If you confront your confusion, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
 If you contemplate the morass of suffering, you will not revert to an ordinary frame of mind. [19b]
 If you heed this advice, you will free yourself from mundane considerations.

ANTIDOTES

There are six ways to depend on antidotes as vigilant sentinels that surround you:

Day and night, you are robbed of your longevity, so depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.
 Your mind is inflamed with the five emotional poisons, so depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.
 Getting what you desire does not satisfy you, so depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.
 When engaging in wrathful activity, depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.²⁷
 When caught up in useless activity, depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.
 In your conduct—whether physical, verbal, or mental—depend on antidotes as you would vigilant sentinels.
 With such vigilance, the enemies and thieves that are your negative emotions will find no opportunity to harm you.

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

Six kinds of people are unable to pursue spiritual practice because of the opportunities they waste:
 Those individuals who have little sense of purpose waste this human life in meaningless pursuits.
 Those who want fame waste this human life in pursuit of acclaim.
 Those who are obsessed with food waste their resources and starve as a result of their greed.
 Those who are wealthy but unscrupulous waste their profit and gain from business.
 Those who study and contemplate without faith waste their time, merely becoming jaded and opinionated about the dharma.
 Those who practice a fool's meditation, without a foundation in learning, end up on the wrong path.
 It is absolutely crucial not to stray into these six kinds of wastefulness.

ELIMINATING FAULTS

There are six ways to eliminate faults that may arise:
If your devotion wanes, reflect on how difficult it is to develop enlightened qualities.²⁸
If you are carried away by distracting thoughts, make those thoughts your allies.
If you make no progress even though you meditate, remedy this through various means.
If you experience imbalances, understand that these illnesses are the results of causes and conditions.
If your material support dwindles, make an effort to offer ganachakras and tormas.
If your altruistic motivation falters, renew it by employing antidotes.
These are means of dispelling hindrances that may occur.

KEY POINTS TO APPLY

There are six key points to apply to your inner experience and your experience of the external world:
Inwardly, the key point is to extricate yourself from the entanglements of believing in a self. [20a]
Outwardly, the key point is to maintain your awareness that the objects you perceive are manifestations of dharmakaya.
In between, the key point is to transform reifying thought patterns into your allies.
Upwardly,²⁹ the key point is to bring view and intent to a final resolution.
Downwardly, the key point is to carry out your spiritual activities in accordance with scriptural sources.
In between, the key point is to remain undistracted and alert.
If these key points come together, you will swiftly traverse the path to liberation.

AWAKENING TO BUDDHAHOOD

Six points are essential if you wish to awaken to buddhahood:
Although you may realize that the process of cause and effect is illusory, it is essential to respect it.
Although you may have gained a state of certainty, it is essential not to become cynical.
Although you may experience circumstances arising as your allies, it is essential to remain in solitude.
Although you may understand “nonmeditation,” it is essential to tame your thoughts.
Although you may experience no difference between meditative equipoise and postmeditation activity, it is essential not to revert to an ordinary frame of mind.
Although you may have realized the way of abiding, it is essential to use your scriptural knowledge and powers of reasoning.
Although you may have reached a lofty level of realization, it is essential never to be without these six points.

THE BONDAGE OF ABSOLUTES

It is taught that there are six ways that thinking in terms of absolutes can be a cause of bondage:
If you are attached to them, even your chosen deities can be causes of bondage.
If you adhere to it rigidly, even an exalted philosophy can be a cause of bondage.
If you cling to it, even compassion can be a cause of bondage.
If you are arrogant about it, even a profound intent can be a cause of bondage.
If you are fixated on them, even your meditative experiences and realization can be causes of bondage.
If you are fascinated by your experience, even though it may be one of nonduality, it can be a cause of bondage.

It goes without saying that this applies to more ordinary things, such as your self-absorption and your wealth and possessions.
Therefore, it is imperative not to be fixated on or attached to anything whatsoever.

CUTTING THROUGH FETTERS

Six pith instructions pertain to fetters that bind you and must be cut through:
Because of your obsession with wealth and possessions, you are bound by the fetters of your attempts to increase and protect them.
Because of your obsession with your family line, you are bound by the fetters of chasing after success and fame.
Because of your fixation on and attachment to distractions, you are bound by the fetters of busyness.
Because of your fixation on the literal interpretation of conventional terms, you are bound by the fetters of pride. [20b]
Because of your obsession with meditative experiences and realization, you are bound by the fetters of conceit.
Because of your obsession with your spiritual practices, you are bound by the fetters of antidotes.
It would seem difficult to be a practitioner who is free of these fetters.

RESULTS OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Six things will happen if you are a spiritual practitioner:
You will flee from situations that provoke your attachment or aversion,
and your spiritual practice and commitment to whatever is positive will flourish as a matter of course.

You will not hold on to resentments that stand in the way of reconciliation,
and your tolerance for companions will increase, just as the likelihood of quarreling with them will decrease.
You will respectfully follow the holy advice of your gurus, and being much in their thoughts, you will receive blessings and attain siddhis.
You will not hand over the reins of your life to others, and with great happiness, you will bring your spiritual practice to completion.
You will give up crude behavior, and remaining calm and controlled, you will be well liked by and at peace with everyone.
You will give up prejudice and maintain a noble heart and, being considered a model, will be praised by all.

IGNOBLE EXPECTATIONS

There are six ignoble expectations to avoid:
the expectation of reward without having done anything to deserve it;
the expectation of happiness without having undergone any difficulty;
the expectation of spiritual attainment without having done any practice;
the expectation of a spiritual life without having given up your ordinary pursuits;
the expectation of benefiting others with a rote explanation of teachings that you yourself have not put into practice;
and the expectation of respect from others without having practiced more than a little.
These expectations are as far from the path to liberation as the ocean's eastern shore is from its western shore.

IGNOBLE BEHAVIOR

Six kinds of behavior are inherently ignoble:
 being greedy for food and drink, which naturally makes you want more;
 wanting success only for yourself when you engage in business;
 wanting the warmest and softest only for yourself when you choose clothing;
 holding on to the best for yourself, giving only the worst to others; [21a]
 insisting that you be provided with every comfort, even when you are staying somewhere for only a day;
 and holding friends and relations dearer than the dharma and your gurus.
 For anyone who behaves like this, the seedling of liberation will wither.

FOLLOWING THE PATH

There are six ways to follow the spiritual path unerringly:
 Remain in a solitary place and don't hold on to "I" and "mine."
 Take care of your needs, but don't hold on to "I" and "mine."
 Hold to the ways of the wise and venerable, but not to having a high position.
 Eliminate faithlessness and don't try to save face with others.
 Benefit others out of compassion, without hoarding a householder's wealth.
 Be generous without bias toward the recipient of your generosity and without expecting reward.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY

There are six ways in which you will become self-sufficient in your spiritual practice:

by observing ethical discipline without hypocrisy, so that you are able to contend with negative circumstances;
 by thoroughly comprehending spiritual instructions, so that you know how to practice under any circumstances;
 by dispelling obstacles and hindrances, so that you become skillful at ridding yourself of illnesses and negative influences;
 by resolving your doubts entirely through study and contemplation, so that you eliminate the need to ask anything of others;
 by putting an end to errors and obscurations, so that you understand the distinction between higher and lower spiritual approaches,
 and by donning the armor that makes you invulnerable to maras.

SHAMEFUL CONDUCT

There are six kinds of shameful conduct that you are advised to abandon:
 To hoard wealth and possessions is shameful.
 To put too much stock in elegant clothing and other accoutrements is shameful.
 To beautify yourself with ornaments and other finery is shameful.
 To practice while distracted by material concerns is shameful.
 To be involved in numerous activities that are not in keeping with the dharma is shameful.
 To be full of self-importance, pride, or arrogance is shameful.
 From my heart, I ask that those who engage in spiritual practice avoid such conduct.

SPIRITUAL MODELS

There are six things on which masters who lived exemplary lives relied:

Spurring themselves on by recalling impermanence and death,
they remained undistracted. [21b]
Knowing it to cause pain, they turned their backs on samsara.
They cast off political power and wealth as though they were
spittle.
With utterly pure faith and diligence, they entered the doorway
of the teachings.
They sought out spiritual mentors and cut through speculation
with study and contemplation.
Willingly undertaking great hardship, they directed their body
and life force toward the goal.
Through such deeds, they achieved spiritual attainment;
taking them as your models, exert yourself in practice.

BENEFITING OTHERS

There are six ways in which such attainment contributes to your
ability to benefit others:
Having trained in compassion, you love everyone without
bias.
With consummate realization, you dissolve the confusion of
believing that things have independent identity.
Familiar with the mental capacity of beings, you become skilled
in the means to create auspicious circumstances.
You experience everything you perceive as an ally, free in its true
nature.
Imbued with blessings, you are able to transform the perceptions
of others.
When the time is right for you to guide others, those with faith
will gather around you.
Thus, all auspicious circumstances, both external and internal,
will come together.

A LACK OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

The failure to pursue whatever is positive has six drawbacks:
If you have no spiritual practice, despite your knowledge you will
wander in samsara.
You will stand in front of a target, but shoot your arrow far off in
some other direction.
You will ride toward the western range on the trail of a bandit
who has fled toward the eastern range.
You will look for footprints in sand dunes when the thief has fled
into the forest.
You will cast about on dry land seeking what was carried away in
a flood.
You may know to recite the propitiatory offering, but not where
to place the effigy.³⁰
Individuals in similar circumstances are far from the state of
supreme bliss.

SHORTCOMINGS THAT CREATE DIFFICULTIES

Six shortcomings are shown to create difficulties whenever they
arise:
When you are committed to samsara, it is difficult to have
authentic faith.
Without conscientiousness and restraint, it is difficult to observe
the three higher trainings.
Without meeting a qualified teacher, it is difficult to enter the
path to liberation. [22a]
Without training in the path of skillful means, it is difficult to
experience the dawning of timeless awareness.
Without freeing yourself from a belief in absolutes, it is difficult
to realize the view.

Without experiencing sublime states of perception, it is difficult to benefit others.
Because it is difficult to achieve these things, it is rare for anyone to do so.

WITHSTANDING DISTRACTION

There are six ways to become adept at withstanding what distracts you from your spiritual practice:
By recalling the freedom and opportunity of this life, you will give up meaningless activities.
By remaining in nonconceptual awareness without wavering, you will rid yourself of your enemy, laziness.
Upon attaining siddhis, you will persevere with unceasing diligence.
With the flourishing of meditative experiences and realization, you will feel enthusiasm for meditation and spiritual practice.
By gaining mastery through pure awareness, you will experience the true nature of distracting conditions.
You will integrate the teachings of the sutras and tantras with your own experience.

WHAT TO RELY ON

There are six things to rely on until you consummate your spiritual practice:
Leaving family and friends behind, rely on noble companions who embrace the dharma.
Avoiding evil companions, rely on learned and venerable gurus.
Ignoring ordinary counsel, rely on the dharma for advice on lasting happiness.
Listening to and contemplating teachings, become as familiar with them as you can.
Avoiding towns and cities, remain in solitude on mountainsides.

Seeking out spiritual instructions, diligently put them into practice.

If you do these things, you will swiftly attain siddhis.

MIXED RESULTS

Six actions are characterized by a mixture of benefit and harm: relying on a guru without developing any positive qualities; accepting students without guiding them in a systematic way; undertaking spiritual practice without disengaging yourself from the eight mundane concerns; acting for the benefit of others while seeking gain by means of an unethical livelihood; taking vows and precepts without having any intention of keeping them; and engaging in tantric practice without having a clear understanding of right and wrong.
In that these result in a mixture of benefit and harm, they are mere imitations of spirituality. [22b]

WHAT TO SUPPRESS

Six key points concern the suppression of negativity, which is comparable to the use of a spike in certain rituals:³¹
Conquering loathsome enemies who seek to harm you only means you will make more later on, so the key point in suppressing negativity is to tame your harmful belief in a self.
Indulging in sense pleasures only increases your fixation, so the key point in suppressing negativity is to cut through your fixation forcefully.
Speaking idly in groups only means you will talk more and more, so the key point in suppressing negativity is to observe silence and remain solitary.

Reacting dualistically to what others think only means you will react more and more,
so the key point in suppressing negativity is to entrust whatever happens to its true nature.
Holding your mind tightly only means it will become more and more rigid,
so the key point in suppressing negativity is to settle naturally and rest in that state.
Engaging in a plethora of activities and duties only means you have more and more to do,
so the key point in suppressing negativity is to let yourself settle naturally, in an imperturbable state of rest.
If you adhere to these points, you will undermine your dualistic fixation on hope and fear.

SIGNS OF APPLICATION

There are six signs that you have applied the dharma to your experience:
Knowing that sense pleasures have a deadening effect is a sign that you have undermined your fixation on samsara.
That everything you do contributes to your spiritual path is a sign that you have received blessings.
Achieving mastery through pure awareness is a sign that you have attained the sublime siddhi.
Being undeterred by others is a sign that your enlightened view and intent are developing.
Feeling delight upon meeting gurus is a sign that you are moved by devotion.
Mentally letting go of the things of this life is a sign that the dharma is benefiting you.
Whoever exhibits these six important signs is a holy being.

FEARLESSNESS

It is taught that you need not have fear under six circumstances:
When you focus your spiritual practice on what is profoundly meaningful, you need not fear negative thoughts as enemies.
When you are aware of the significance of mind itself, you need not fear the eight mundane concerns as enemies.
When you refine your experience of dharmakaya, you need not fear dualistic consciousness as an enemy. [23a]
When you follow a path that has no fixed basis, you need not fear the two levels of obsuration as enemies.
When you focus your spiritual practice on supreme bliss, you need not fear suffering as an enemy.
When the focus of your practice is free of bias, you need not fear expectation and apprehension as enemies.
Do what you can to be fearless in these ways, and you will have accomplished something great.

CHALLENGES FACING PRACTITIONERS

Six challenges face those who follow the dharma:
If you do not remain alert, your conduct will not be in keeping with the dharma.
If you do not give up trying to please others, your spiritual practice will not be effective.
If you do not apply the key points of practice, the warmth³² of meditative experiences and realization will not arise in you.
If you do not act when the time is right, you will be of no benefit to others.
If you do not cultivate real power and capability, you will not remove obstructive conditions.
If you do not experience the state of primordial unity, you will not awaken to buddhahood in this very lifetime.

Therefore, it is vital to ensure that you get to the very heart of spiritual practice.

WRONG ATTITUDES

Six attitudes are wrong and should be avoided:
It is wrong not to regard your gurus well, for their blessings will be lost.
It is wrong to perceive your spiritual companions as enemies, for this violates your samaya.
It is wrong to indulge in great self-importance, for then you are far from the path of the dharma.
It is wrong to treat spiritual instruction as a commodity, for then you are involved in an unethical livelihood.
It is wrong to regard meditation on your chosen deity as a convenient way to solve problems, for then you will lose the spiritual path.
It is wrong to think of spiritual activities as a way of pursuing wealth, for then you will lose the path to liberation.
It is thus absolutely crucial to practice without these wrong attitudes.

A LACK OF MINDFULNESS

There are six circumstances in which you are not mindful of the nature of the path to liberation:
If you are distracted by sense objects, you are not mindful of devotion.
If you chase after things like a starving beggar after food, you are not mindful of the Three Jewels.
If you are of ignoble character and impulsive, you are not mindful of your samaya.
If you shut your eyes and close your heart, you are not mindful of suffering. [23b]

If you crave possessions and seek gain, you are not mindful of what is positive.
If you harbor anger and malice, you are not mindful of your altruistic motivation.
If you get caught up in meaningless concerns, you are not mindful of lower realms of rebirth.
It is because of these six failings that you have wandered for so long.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Six considerations will provide encouragement:
The yogic practice of holy masters is their legacy to you; please do not be indolent or dilatory in your spiritual practice.
Meditation on the arising of thoughts provides fuel for your sublime knowing;
please do not consider concentration on some fixed point to be the best way.
Suffering and other negative conditions are inducements to undertake positive action;
please neither indulge in whining and moaning, nor try to rid yourself of negative circumstances.
The manifestation of the five emotional poisons is the secret path to timeless awareness;
please do not think of them as wrong, as you would a horde of enemies.
Obstacles in all their variety are intimations of spiritual attainment;
please do not react to them with apprehension, superstition, or aversion.
What you perceive as samsara is the pure realm of the victorious ones;
please do not place your trust in the seeming truth of your confused dualistic perceptions.

STRAYING FROM THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY

Six kinds of distortion can cause you to stray from the true nature of reality:

The way of abiding is unfettered and not subject to extremes, but the thoughts that arise in your opinionated mind create distortion.

The true nature of reality is beyond description, imagination, or expression, but the misinterpretation involved in holding to absolutes of existence and nonexistence creates distortion.

Mind itself is nondual, unborn, and unceasing, but the ideas you entertain, conceiving of it as something that is born and dies, create distortion.

The objects you perceive manifest in the empty mirror of mind itself, but the influence of your fixation on their seeming truth, as you perceive them dualistically with attachment and aversion, creates distortion. [24a]

The ultimate nature of reality is devoid of the characteristics of conceptual elaboration, but your doubt about what is ultimate, your fixation on it as some truly existent thing, creates distortion.

Interdependent connection unfolds within the unbiased basis of all experience—the way of abiding—but the overlay of the habit patterns of dualistic confusion creates distortion.

UNETHICAL LIFESTYLES

Six lifestyles are unethical and should be abandoned:

Profiting through misrepresentation and cheating is an unethical lifestyle.

Profiting through sweet-talking and deceit is an unethical lifestyle.

Flattering others to serve your own ends is an unethical lifestyle.

Swindling others is an unethical lifestyle.

Seeking gain through study and contemplation is an unethical lifestyle.

Being preoccupied with enjoying ordinary wealth and possessions is an unethical lifestyle.

For those who wish to pursue spiritual practice correctly, it would be best to abandon these lifestyles.

GENERAL SPIRITUAL ADVICE

Six pieces of advice are given as general spiritual principles:

You are advised to maintain impeccable conduct so that you continually improve.

You are advised to train in the four immeasurable attitudes in order to arouse bodhichitta.

You are advised to apply the principle of integration³³ in your spiritual practice under all circumstances.

You are advised to discern the profound key points of the spiritual paths and levels.

You are advised to let your view be that of mind itself, free of any extreme.

You are advised to listen to and contemplate teachings without sectarian bias.

HOPELESS SITUATIONS

Six instructions pertain to hopeless situations:

There is no hope that an unconscientious person will maintain vows.

There is no hope that a fainthearted person will undertake spiritual practice.

There is no hope that a person without faith or devotion will receive blessings.

There is no hope that a person without wisdom will gain realization.
There is no hope that an indolent person will show signs of spiritual attainment.
There is no hope that a person with ignoble attitudes will be altruistic. [24b]

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAINING

It is taught that spiritual training comprises six developmental stages:
At the outset, one trains in reading and writing, grammar, and correct reasoning.
In the second stage, one observes ethical discipline, and studies and contemplates the Compilations.
In the third stage, one embarks on the actual path, relying on holy gurus.
In the fourth stage, one delights one's gurus by listening to the teachings of the sacred oral lineages.
In the fifth stage, one undertakes what is to be accomplished, persevering until the end.
In the sixth stage, one unflaggingly ensures benefit for others.
To follow these stages is the way of holy ones.

NURTURING STUDENTS

There are six ways to nurture fortunate students:
Know how to care for those with faith in any way they wish.
Know how to direct those who are diligent toward the spiritual path rather than toward ordinary activities.
Do not let their study and contemplation entangle them in a profusion of words, but point them toward practice.
Do not teach them to be proficient in pursuing gain, but urge them to pursue whatever is positive.

Do not instruct them in seeking success and amassing wealth, but educate them in contentment.
Do not advise them on things of this life, but make them self-sufficient in the dharma.
These skillful means are the ways of good mentors.

MINDFULNESS

There are six ways to appoint your mindfulness as a sentry:
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you are immersed in things of this life.
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you are distracted by laziness.
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you are making a mistake or coming up against an obscuration.
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you are lost in confused thoughts.
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you have strayed into idle gossip.
Appoint your mindfulness as a sentry to observe whether you are caught up in being ordinary.

WHAT A PRACTITIONER SHOULD DO

There are six things to do if you are a practitioner of the dharma:
There is no time to waste in this life, so make plans to move on swiftly.³⁴
The implications of karmic causality can be very subtle, so choose to carry out positive actions and avoid harmful ones.
It is difficult to ensure benefit for others, so do not lose sight of your own welfare.³⁵ [25a]
There is no end to the things that can be known, so do not get lost in a profusion of words.

Meditation without understanding is a fool's errand, so do not fall into such delusion.
A yearning for erudition, venerability, or nobility is simply pride, so do not succumb to it.

BEING REALISTIC

Six points should be thoroughly contemplated by those who wish to pursue spiritual practice:
You cannot abandon your homeland unless you divest yourself of this life's concerns.
Any attempt to live in solitude will be futile unless you eradicate your desires and fixations.
Your mind is bound by the dharma if you do not free yourself of your belief systems.
There is no point in remaining on your cushion if you have not developed true meditative stability.
Without antidotes, it is impossible to meet the challenge of distracting circumstances.
To hold on to personal rules of deportment as absolute principles is to turn these remedies into poison.
It is thus crucial for you to contemplate these matters thoroughly.

INNER AND OUTER SIGNS

Six kinds of people exhibit inner and outer signs of excellence:
Exemplary people with discernment complete whatever they undertake.
Exemplary people with realization speak words that bear repeating.
Intelligent people can understand anything at all.
People with certainty are capable of practicing austerities.
People who integrate the dharma into their experience have self-control.

Wise people are not satisfied with simply listening to teachings.
For such people, inner signs are expressed outwardly.

UNDOING KNOTS

There are six ways to undo the knots of dualistic consciousness:
When attachment or aversion arises, find freedom by looking into the mind.
When the five emotional poisons arise, find freedom by looking into their essence.
When pain occurs, find freedom by cultivating supreme bliss in meditation.
When your thoughts are scattered, find freedom by determining their true nature.
When you feel fatigued, find freedom by relaxing and experiencing real ease.
When you feel dull and lethargic, find freedom by honing the precision and clarity of your awareness. [25b]

PRINCIPLES OF THE DHARMA

The dharma you practice must be based on six principles:
Profound instructions should be based on having received direct introduction.
Direct introduction should be based on the practical methods of past masters.
Practical methods, moreover, should be based on personal meditative experiences.
Personal meditative experiences should entail a true measure of meditative warmth and its attendant signs.
The signs of such warmth should be based on the fruition to be attained.
The fruition should be based on ensuring benefit for others.
A path that diverges from these principles will cause you to err.

CRITICAL ADVICE

Six pieces of advice are given on what is critical:

It is critical not to abandon a formal practice schedule, regardless of what spiritual practice you engage in.

It is critical to integrate the oral instructions and teachings you receive into your own experience.

It is critical to apply meditative stability in meeting circumstances, so that your mind is undisturbed.

It is critical that your view be free of limitations, without adherence to any bias.

It is critical to experience unity with the true nature of reality, which is beyond union and separation.

It is critical to relate skillfully to anything you perceive and to awaken to timeless awareness.

AUTHENTIC DHARMA

There are six tasks to take on in light of authentic spiritual teachings:

See the shortcomings of samsara and act to eliminate your fixation on it.

Refine your awareness that things lack true existence and understand that they are illusory.

Arouse bodhichitta and be unstinting in your altruism.

Embrace the enlightened intent that surpasses ordinary consciousness and distinguish between samsara and nirvana.

Experience whatever thought arises as a naturally free expression of timeless awareness.

Let blessings blaze naturally and transform the perceptions of others.

ELIMINATING PITFALLS

There are six ways to eliminate pitfalls in meditation:

Do not succumb to proliferating thoughts or mental agitation, but rest in the true state free of conceptual elaboration.

Do not let your meditation stagnate, but hone the precision and clarity of your awareness.

Do not let it become unfocused, but apply the tonic of mindfulness.

Do not let it become vacant, but imbue it with experiences of bliss and clarity. [26a]

Do not fall into hope and fear, but maintain the utterly lucid state of spontaneous presence.

Do not let your focus become narrow, but cultivate an expansive and inspired state of mind.

To meditate in these ways is the most excellent and unerring path.

NOT STRAYING

If you have embarked on the spiritual path, there are six directions in which you should never stray:

Your unchanging faith should not stray into dualistic consciousness.

Your disenchantment with samsara should not stray into personal suffering.

The scope of your wisdom in studying and contemplating the teachings should not stray into pedantry.

Your fortitude in practice should not stray into a mere desire for happiness.

The altruism you cultivate should not stray into fixation on ordinary characteristics.

Your lofty view should not stray into an attitude of arrogance.

It is absolutely crucial to limit such straying so that it occurs to the smallest possible degree.

PROFOUND POINTS

Six directives pertain to what is deeply profound:
Do away with the belief in a self, which always and only undermines your own best interests.
Never entertain feelings of superiority because of your supposed generosity.
Put an end to your opinions, abandoning idle and distracting chatter.
Look at the natural state of mind itself, perceiving everything free of conceptual elaboration.
Sever your dualistic mind's connection with the six kinds of objects it follows after.
To eliminate complexity, maintain a constant focus on the significance of the true nature of reality.
If you follow these directives, you will swiftly satisfy your own best interests.

WHAT IS THE CASE

It can be shown convincingly that six things are indeed the case:
If you trust in your gurus' counsel as definitive, you will never be confused.
If you do not put off your spiritual practice until tomorrow, when you die you will have no regret.
If you do not treat people with partiality—as friends or enemies—you will be in harmony with everyone.
If you repay the kindness of those who treat you well, you will meet kindness everywhere.
If you give up envy and malice, your mind will be tamed.

If you take holy masters as your models, you will accomplish whatever you wish. [26b]

FREEING YOUR MIND

There are six exceedingly profound ways to free your mind:
Given that the view is that of mind itself, recognize your own true nature.
Given that meditation is the state of utter lucidity, put your mind in touch with that inherently limpid state.
Given that conduct is like a magical illusion, incorporate everything you perceive into your spiritual path.
Given that meditative experiences are expressions of the true nature of reality, thoroughly investigate how you hold on to your fixations.
Given that the fruition is an inherent attribute of being, give up your reactions based on hope and fear.
Given that enlightened activity takes place for the sake of others, guide beings with compassion.

WHAT COMES NATURALLY

Six things will come naturally to you as spiritual practitioners:
If you have aroused the altruistic motivation of bodhichitta, others will be loving toward you;
however, some might feel aversion, so you should know that they are your allies in developing forbearance.
If you are unstinting with your love, a retinue will assemble around you;
however, you should know that the lack of a retinue is an ally in furthering your spiritual practice.
If you have realization, oath-bound guardians will gather like clouds;

however, if they do not gather, you should know that this is a sign of impaired samaya.
 If you experience heartfelt disenchantment, you will accumulate wealth and possessions;
 however, if it happens that you do not, you should know that this is because of your past actions.
 When you are about to attain siddhis, all kinds of obstacles can occur;
 if they do not, you should know that this is because of your masters' blessings.
 Maras attack diligent spiritual practitioners;
 if they don't, you should know that your practice has gone to the very heart.
 If you do not know these things, you greatly risk developing erroneous views.

CONSUMMATE ADVICE

Six pieces of consummate advice relate to what is ultimate:
 If you wish to realize the view, search for the one who realizes;
 you will find no such thing, and so are free of the trap of the four conceptual extremes.
 If you wish to cultivate meditative absorption, search for the meditator;
 you will find no such thing, and so contemplate the fact that mental stirring has no substantial nature. [27a]
 If you wish to engage in a mode of conduct, search for the one who engages in conduct;
 you will find no such thing, and so are free in your natural, undifferentiated state.
 If you wish to realize the fruition, search for the one who realizes;
 you will find no such thing, for the three kayas are perfect within you.

If you wish to accomplish enlightened activity, search for the one who accomplishes;
 you will find no such thing, for activity is spontaneously accomplished without having to be deliberately carried out.
 If you wish to traverse the spiritual paths and levels, search for the one who makes the journey;
 you will find no such thing, so direct yourself to your natural state, the way of abiding.
 This is my advice concerning the consummate heart essence:
 please understand that everything is the miraculous display of awareness!

TAMING YOUR MIND

There are six ways to tame your mind in the best possible way:
 Let the mountain of your pride and conceit crumble.
 Let your chosen deity carry the burden of your envy of others.
 Sever your attachment to and fixation on the welfare of others with the weapon of sublime knowing.
 Counteract your disregard for the principle of cause and effect by making the crucial distinction between positive and harmful actions.
 Counteract your speculative value judgments by relying on heedfulness, equanimity, and discipline.
 Consider the upset you feel over the faults of others to be your own impure perception.
 If you act thus, you will integrate the dharma with your own experience.

CRUCIAL DISTINCTIONS

Six crucial distinctions are made through direct introduction:
 Lucid awareness is free, transcending all belief systems:

this is the direct introduction to the view; come to that final
 decision!
 The naturally pristine state is supremely blissful, free of dualistic
 reference points:
 this is the direct introduction to meditation; maintain that as an
 ongoing experience!
 The integration of skillful means and sublime knowing is taken
 as the path to enlightenment:
 this is the direct introduction to conduct; train in experiencing
 the illusoriness of things!
 The world of appearances and possibilities³⁶ is a pure realm in
 which thoughts and fixations cease:
 this is the direct introduction to samaya; keep it totally pure!
 Whatever manifests in your perception is the blissful state of
 naturally occurring timeless awareness: [27b]
 this is direct introduction through the four levels of
 empowerment; traverse all spiritual paths and levels!
 Whoever acts accordingly is a great yogin of the secret mantra
 approach.

IDEAL CONDUCT

There are six ways in which your conduct is ideal and in keeping
 with the dharma:
 Your generosity is ideal when you have no attachments or
 fixations.
 Your ethical discipline is ideal when your mind is flawless.
 Your forbearance is ideal when your mind is undisturbed by anger.
 Your diligence is ideal when you feel disenchantment with
 samsara and have the will to be free from it.
 Your meditative stability is ideal when you abide in the state of
 enlightened intent.
 Your sublime knowing is ideal when you realize the significance
 of mind itself.

GENERAL MAHAYANA PRINCIPLES

Six instructions are based on general principles of the Mahayana
 approach:
 Think constantly about death and spur yourself on with
 diligence.
 Because you do primarily what you are accustomed to doing,
 train in the dharma.
 Undertake spiritual practices over and over again, and nurture
 positive qualities while purifying yourself of negative ones.³⁷
 Make offerings to the holy Three Jewels and strive at your
 twofold development.
 Methodically pursue whatever is positive, and you will transform
 all of your perceptions into spiritual ones.
 Do whatever you do for others' sake, but with the knowledge
 that no true self exists.
 Whoever acts in these ways will be immersed in the very heart of
 this sublime spiritual approach.

THE DANGERS OF SEPARATION

Six kinds of separation lead to danger and should be avoided:
 You should never be separate from the authentic gurus on whom
 you rely,
 for if you are, you will not stay on the path to liberation.
 Your mind should never be separate from a stable faith,
 for if it is, you will not reach the realm of the true nature of
 reality.
 You should never be separate from the profound instructions on
 spiritual practice,
 for if you are, you will lack the seedlings of enlightenment.
 You should never be separate from sublime knowing when
 working with the concepts involved in listening to and
 contemplating teachings,

for if you are, you will never be free of the fetters of doubt.
 You should never be separate from a place of solitude, a
 mountainside on which to dwell, [28a]
 for if you are, you will be carried away by distraction and busyness.
 You should never be separate from the diligence that comes from
 courageous resolve,
 for if you are, you will have no chance of developing enlightened
 qualities.
 It is thus vital that you never experience these kinds of separation.

BANISHING MARAS

There are six conditions to rely on, and remain inseparable from,
 in order to banish maras:
 When you rely on your gurus, the mara of intellectual arrogance
 cannot affect you.
 When you rely on the Three Jewels, the mara of cynicism cannot
 affect you.
 When you retreat to a hermitage, the mara of apathy cannot
 affect you.
 When you are involved in listening to and contemplating spiritual
 teachings, the mara of becoming inured to them will not
 affect you.
 When you develop meditative stability, the mara of stagnation
 will not affect you.
 When you engage in altruism, the mara of distraction will not
 affect you.
 These would seem to be necessary conditions, yet they are as rare
 as daytime stars.

GOOD COMPANY

It is taught that six parameters define the company you keep in
 your spiritual training:

Unless you keep company with the sublime view that brings a
 final sense of decisiveness,
 you won't be able to soar to the heights of the true nature of
 reality.
 Unless you keep company with the foundation of the three higher
 trainings and immaculate samaya,
 you won't be able to attain the siddhis you desire.
 Unless you keep company with the best kind of conduct,
 understanding what is appropriate in each circumstance,
 you won't be able to cross to the far shore beyond samsara.
 Unless you keep company in your spiritual practice with an
 indwelling confidence in naturally occurring timeless
 awareness,
 you won't be able to cut through the seeming solidity of your
 dualistic perceptions and negative emotions.
 Unless you keep company with the process of increasing,
 enriching, and enhancing your meditative experiences,
 you won't be able to turn back the armies of your emotions.
 Unless you keep company with all profound pith instructions
 without sectarian bias,
 you won't realize the goal that grants all you could wish for.
 Therefore, train by focusing on the goal, the authentic heart
 essence of being.

WHAT IS PRIMARY

Six pieces of advice point to what should be primary: [28b]
 A solitary mountainside should be your primary residence;
 any other, more populated place will cause you to suffer.
 Seeing your guru as a buddha should be your primary path;
 with any other approach, the signs of success and auspicious
 circumstances on the path will be subverted.
 It is essential that applying the principle of integration be your
 primary samaya;

with any other approach, you will not achieve your goal, but will be diverted from it.
 The transformation of thoughts into timeless awareness should be your primary meditative experience and realization;
 with any other approach, you won't be capable of conquering the hordes of factors to be eliminated.
 Eroding your fixation on samsara should be your primary strategy;
 with any other approach, you will be pulled by concerns for this life.
 Your primary view should be that the mind that realizes is free in its own true nature;
 with any other view, you will not be free of the extremes of naive affirmation and nihilistic denial.
 This is a treasury of critical advice, so treat it with respect.

A MATTER OF COURSE

It is taught that six things are ensured as a matter of course:
 If you give up ordinary activities, your spiritual practice will be ensured as a matter of course.
 If you engage purely in the three higher trainings, guardians bound by oaths will gather around you as a matter of course.
 If you develop compassion, benefit for beings will result as a matter of course.
 If you carry out the phases of approach and accomplishment,³⁸ enlightened activity will be ensured as a matter of course.
 If you rest with complete ease, you will behold the true nature of reality as a matter of course.
 If you practice to accomplish the most sublime goal, the more common siddhis will be yours as a matter of course.

AVOIDING EXCESS

There are six ways to avoid excess:
 Eliminate your fixations, or you will continue to make many errors.
 Realize what is truly to be known, or for many lifetimes you will die being still quite ordinary.
 Rely on antidotes, or you will violate the three higher trainings in numerous ways.
 Listen to and contemplate spiritual teachings, or your meditation will go astray in many ways.
 Do not ignore cause and effect, or you will fall countless times into lower realms.
 Do not come under the influence of the mara of dissipating busyness, or you will be repeatedly lured away from your practice. [29a]
 May you never fall into the throes of such excess!

VICTORY OVER MARAS

Six points pertain to ensuring victory over maras:
 True inspiration is unwavering; do not succumb to the mara of laziness.
 Mental training involves caring about others; do not succumb to the mara of selfishness.
 Realization of the way of abiding entails decisiveness; do not succumb to the mara of doubt.
 Authentic spiritual practice is free of extremes; do not succumb to the mara of bias.
 Spiritual accomplishment entails focusing on the key points; do not succumb to the mara of dissipation.
 Enlightened intent is free of extremes; do not succumb to the mara of holding to belief systems.

AUTHENTIC MEASURES

Six kinds of authentic measure should be thoroughly ascertained:
To observe the principle of cause and effect precisely is the measure of great faith.
To shy from idle talk is the measure of great modesty and conscientiousness.
To take on positive qualities is the measure of having noble companions.
To experience mind itself, free of sense objects, is the measure of meditation.
To be unmoved by faults or virtues is the measure of having perfected your spiritual practice.
To truly take the three kayas as your spiritual path is the measure of having reached the state of final resolution.
A person who has realized these authentic measures is of the very highest caliber.

WHAT TO AVOID

It is taught that there are six ways to avoid making errors:
Having taken ordination on the three levels,³⁹
do not carry the burden of having committed actions that break or impair your vows.
Do not cast aside the significance of the heart essence in your pursuit of the words.
Do not be driven by the eight mundane concerns and thus fail to strive for enlightenment.
Having attained this human existence, do not let it come to nothing.
Having discovered what is profoundly meaningful, do not settle for anything less.
Though you may be skillful at explaining the scriptures, do not fail to put them into practice.

FLAWS IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

There are six ways to reflect on flaws in your spiritual practice:
If you encounter many obstacles, tear down the wall of conforming to accepted conventions.
Do not let your resolve weaken, but rely on the sense that there is no time to waste. [29b]
If you cannot awaken compassion, begin by extending compassion to yourself.
If blessings fade, arouse devotion and diligence.
If you encounter numerous sources of harm, thoroughly investigate your circumstances.
If you wish to benefit others, give rise to bodhichitta and recite prayers of aspiration.
If you act accordingly, you will be free of the harm that such flaws cause.

AUTHENTIC STANDARDS

The sacred dharma that you put into practice involves six authentic standards:
The authentic standard of the Buddha's words lies in the authoritative scriptures of the sutras and tantras.
The authentic standard of spiritual instructions lies in an unbroken lineage.
The authentic standard of blessings lies in the absence of schism resulting from broken samaya.
The authentic standard of genuine teachings lies in the absence of internal contradiction.
The authentic standard of meditative experiences lies in their validation in your own mind.
The authentic standard of reasoning lies in direct perception and correct deduction.
It is absolutely essential to rely on these six authentic standards.

ERADICATING YOUR FAULTS

There are six ways to eradicate your hidden faults:
Do not fool yourself with discipline founded on deceit.
Do not bring ruin on yourself through the harmful effects of negative actions.
Do not succumb to your personal demon of all-consuming fixation.
Do not disturb your mind with angry thoughts.
Do not deceive yourself by thinking that distractions and busyness are in your best interest.
Do not throw yourself into the abyss of samsara.
If you heed this advice, you will find it to be the best way to proceed.

ORIENTATION

There are six ways to orient yourself:
Upwardly, honor gurus, chosen deities, and dakinis.
Downwardly, cut your ties to the pleasures of the world.
In between, train in experiencing the ultimate, primordial unity of manifestation and emptiness in everything around you.
Outwardly, dedicate the virtue of whatever you do to the benefit of beings.
Inwardly, apply the enlightened qualities of the Three Jewels to your own experience.
In between, maintain awareness without fixed attitudes regarding yourself, others, and your spiritual practice. [30a]
Thus, you will gain realization through the sacred dharma that lies at the very heart of the profound path.

OUTRAGEOUS BLUNDERS

Six outrageous blunders are at cross-purposes with the dharma:
It is so outrageous for one who has attained a human existence to commit harmful actions!

It is so outrageous for one who has encountered the dharma not to practice it!
It is so outrageous for one who has made a commitment to a given level of discipline to break it!
It is so outrageous for one with impaired samaya to undertake spiritual practice!
It is so outrageous for one to engage in an unethical form of livelihood, using the dharma for personal gain!
It is so outrageous to try to ensure the welfare of others while ignoring your own!
Thinking about these things saddens me, for there are so many individuals like this.

REGRESSION

It is taught that six things will cause your practice of the dharma to regress:
Relying on bad companions will cause your practice to regress.
Perceiving your guru to have shortcomings will cause your devotion to regress.
Meditating without determination will cause your meditative experiences to regress.
Following the path of distraction will cause your practice of the sacred dharma to regress.
Dwelling on the faults of others will cause your pure outlook to regress.
Letting your mind indulge in its whims will cause you to regress into confusion.
Avoid these six and pursue your practice of the sacred dharma!

FOES TO AVOID

Six pieces of advice relate to avoiding foes:
Do not surrender the freedom and opportunity of this human existence to the foe of preoccupation with food and clothing.

Do not surrender your altruistic concern for the welfare of others to the foe of pursuing a lesser spiritual approach.
 Do not surrender the true gem of mind itself to the foe of confusion.
 Do not surrender the fulfillment of your wishes, which lies in your twofold development, to the foe of caring only about this lifetime.
 Do not surrender authentic spiritual practice, which focuses on the very essence of being, to the foe of laziness.
 Do not surrender a mind that yearns with devotion to the foe of erroneous views.

THE FLAWS OF SENSUAL INDULGENCE

Heedlessly indulging in sense pleasures has six flaws:
 Forms seduce the eyes the way a flame draws a moth.
 Sounds seduce the ears the way the notes of a flute hypnotize a deer.
 Odors seduce the nose the way sandalwood attracts a bee. [30b]
 Tastes seduce the tongue the way a baited hook lures a fish.
 Tactile sensations seduce the body the way cool quicksand ensnares an elephant.
 Concepts seduce the mind the way the death of her calf causes a camel to grieve.
 Please do not let the six avenues of your consciousness heedlessly indulge in their objects.

ADVERSITY

There are six ways to take adversity as your spiritual path:
 When concerns about this life arise, uproot your fixation from within.
 When any illness or negative influence manifests, see it as sweeping away your obscurations and the effects of your harmful actions.

When you encounter adverse circumstances and obstacles, see them as goads to positive action.
 When enemies despise, harm, or thwart you, see this as an inducement to practice forbearance.
 When any thoughts whatsoever arise, see them as serving only to clarify your experience of timeless awareness.
 All such circumstances will help you on your path to enlightenment.

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

There are six ways in which you reveal a lack of understanding and a failure to heed the foregoing instructions:
 You make value judgments, accepting some qualities as positive and rejecting others as negative.
 You consider some of the six realms of beings to be higher or lower than others.
 You think that the actual presence that is awareness is subject to origination and cessation.
 You treat consciousness pure and simple as though it involved factors to be eliminated and their antidotes.
 You hold that pure awareness ultimately entails training and development.
 You believe that the fruition is something to be accomplished.
 Failing to understand the nature of what has the highest significance,
 spiritually immature people with inferior minds are caught up in superficial forms of practice.

SOURCES OF SHAME

Six things are shameful on the part of those who undertake spiritual practice:
 It is so shameful to commit harmful actions after having entered the doorway of the teachings.

It is so shameful to fixate on theory while failing to practice.
It is so shameful to make a commitment to arousing bodhichitta
and then to indulge in self-absorption.
It is so shameful to adulterate the practice of the dharma with
mundane values.
It is so shameful to engage in strife out of attachment and
aversion.
It is so shameful to disparage either the dharma or individuals.
And yet those who quite rightly avoid such shameful behavior are
extremely rare. [31a]

THE MOST AUTHENTIC PERSPECTIVE

Six pieces of advice concern the most authentic perspective:
Dissipating busyness has a deadening effect; sever its ensnaring
ties.
Merit can be an obstacle; rid yourself of any self-satisfaction you
take in it.
Status and fame have a deadening effect; adopt a low profile.
To be dogmatic is to indulge in naive affirmation or nihilistic
denial; experience the unity of everything in basic space.
To be without the key points of practice is to invite suffering; seek
out spiritual instruction.
To be without meditative experiences is to practice superficially;
practice in a way that affects your experience.
If you act thus, the very best qualities will be yours.

TIMELY CONCERNS

Six pieces of advice are based on the determination of what is
timely:
Given that you have so often wandered through this interval
between birth and death,
it is now time to adopt a firm, unchanging stance.

Given that you have so often plunged into this maelstrom of
suffering,
it is now time to reach a state of supreme bliss.
Given that you have so often taken up and discarded a physical
body, which is subject to birth and death,
it is now time to attain the unchanging state of dharmakaya.
Given that you have so often been cast into the murky darkness
of ignorance,
it is now time to light the lamp of timeless awareness.
Given that you have so often been defeated by the hordes of the
four maras,
it is now time to repel these armies of samsara.
Given that you have so often played the servant to your desires,
it is now time to ensure your success forever.
In light of their timeliness, think about how all of these things
make perfect sense.

AUTHENTIC CONCLUSIONS

Six authentic conclusions can be reached through examination:
If you do not understand that the true nature of suffering is bliss,
you will remain gravely ill, suffering even though you want
happiness.
If you do not understand the equalness of attachment and
aversion in the light of self-knowing awareness,
you will remain gravely ill, indulging in value judgments based
on acceptance or rejection.
*If you do not understand that negative circumstances are by
nature your allies, [31b]*
you will remain caught in the great trap of having to adopt some
other method.
If you do not know that bad omens are by nature enriching,
even siddhis can become maras or deviations from the path.
If you have not tamed your own mind through spiritual practice,

you may spout a great many words, but they will have no more significance than the chattering of a parrot.
 If, while undertaking positive actions, you are not motivated by bodhichitta,
 you will attain only the state of a shravaka or pratyekabuddha,
 or gain some nominal merit.
 It is thus crucial that the conclusions you come to are these authentic key points.

CONSEQUENCES OF PRACTICE

Six things will happen to you who put the dharma into practice:
 If you remain in solitude, your spiritual practice will flourish.
 If you extol others, they will trust you as a matter of course.
 If you tame your own mind, your goodness will grow.
 If you amass the seven spiritual riches,⁴⁰ you will alleviate your sense of impoverishment and privation.
 If you develop your positive qualities, you will inherit the legacy of the victorious ones.
 If you care for beings of the six classes, your conduct will be that of an heir of the victorious ones.
 Few people, however, act in such a way that these things come to pass.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT

There are six important points about kindling enthusiasm:
 Because it is difficult to arouse profound devotion and faith,
 it is extremely important to make an effort to improve and transform your attitude.
 Because it is difficult to experience all of your various thoughts as allies,
 it is extremely important to free whatever arises through mindfulness.

Because it is difficult to experience the universe as a pure realm,
 it is extremely important to know that it is like an illusion or a dream image.
 Because it is difficult to experience enlightened intent, in which realization and freedom are simultaneous,
 it is extremely important to assiduously cultivate the practice of meditation.
 Because it is difficult to benefit others directly,
 it is extremely important to train in developing bodhichitta as your aspiration. [32a]
 Because it is very difficult to have no attachment or fixation,
 it is extremely important to gradually subdue your desires and achieve contentment.
 By training in these ways, you will swiftly reach a sublime state.

DEPLOYING YOUR FORCES

There are six ways to deploy your forces while engaging in spiritual practice:
 To deploy your forces upwardly, come to a decision regarding the view.
 To deploy your forces downwardly, understand when spiritual conduct is appropriate.
 To deploy your forces away from you, understand that the objects you perceive are illusory.
 To deploy your forces toward you, rid yourself of dualistic fixation.
 To deploy your forces outwardly, listen to and contemplate teachings without bias.
 To deploy your forces inwardly, tame the five emotional poisons of your mind.
 If you act thus, you will repel the armies of samsara.

FALSE HOPES

Six kinds of false hope are products of negative emotions:
the hope that you can tame others' minds without taming your own;
the hope that you can realize the way of abiding by understanding it intellectually;
the hope that you can purify yourself of negative emotions by meditating within a conceptual framework;
the hope that you can traverse the path to liberation with a biased approach to the teachings;
the hope that you can attain rebirth in higher realms without performing any positive actions;
the hope that you can avoid falling to lower realms without giving up harmful actions.
People deceive themselves in thinking that such false hopes are of value.

LOSING YOUR FOCUS

You lose your focus by not paying heed to six things:
You lose your focus by failing to see that squandering your human existence on the five emotional poisons leads to rebirth in lower realms.
You lose your focus by failing to see that becoming ensnared by the bonds of family and children plunges you into an ocean of suffering.
You lose your focus by failing to see that you reinforce the karma that will drag you downward when you occupy yourself with biased reactions of attachment to friends and aversion to enemies.
You lose your focus by vainly hoping that you will be able to rest in mind itself without relinquishing the multitude of ordinary actions, words, and thoughts. [32b]

You lose your focus by vainly hoping to follow the path to liberation without abandoning the activities of your present life in this world.

You lose your focus by vainly hoping to develop signs of warmth in meditative experiences and realization when you give up all striving, yet cling to some superficial interpretation of the view of emptiness.
So many people lose their focus without realizing it.

NECESSARY UNDERTAKINGS

There are six things to undertake that are equally necessary for you and for others:
Contemplate the suffering of samsara, for this will inspire you to put the dharma into practice.
Continually cultivate faith and devotion, for this will tame your mind.
Strive to renew and restore your vows, for this will purify you and others of obscuration.
Arouse the noble motivation of bodhichitta, for this will ensure benefit for both you and others.
Receive the transmissions that mature and free you, for then you can devote yourself to positive actions and encourage others to do the same.
Exert yourself in spiritual practice, for you will do away with your own and others' confusion.

ESSENTIAL POINTS

Six essential points are to be made:
It is essential not to accept bad counsel regarding this and future lifetimes.

It is essential not to let your conduct become indistinguishable from that of ordinary people.
 It is essential to remain attentive to the details of cause and effect, because it is so obvious that your actions have consequences.
 It is essential to integrate sublime knowing and compassion.
 It is essential to skillfully incorporate sensory experiences into your spiritual path.
 It is essential to take a firm stance by realizing the undifferentiated state.
 Whoever adheres to these essential points is a yogin of the very highest caliber.

STAYING FOCUSED

Six points concern pursuing the spiritual path without distraction:
 Beginning practitioners should focus their attention without becoming distracted.
 Those still training to integrate formal practice with postmeditation activity should not be distracted from their focus on the true nature of reality.
 Those who have developed some familiarity should not allow their ordinary consciousness and perceptions to distract them from their experience of timeless awareness.
 For those who have gained complete realization, there is no distraction, since there is no one to become distracted.
 Those with consummate stability are certain about the true nature of anything that could otherwise cause distraction.
 Those who have experienced phenomena resolving in their true nature are beyond any context that could be illustrated or described. [33a]
 I beg you to bring your practice to such an authentic degree of success.

MISINTERPRETATIONS

There are six instances in which it can be determined that one thing is mistaken for another:
 The discouragement that negative circumstances elicit can be mistaken for the poignancy that devotion and disenchantment evoke.
 Upon mere cursory scrutiny, contrived faith born of superficiality can be mistaken for the immeasurable devotion that arises from deep within.
 An indifferent, apathetic mind devoid of love can be mistaken for a mind that has extricated itself from entanglements with friends and relations.
 The obstructive machinations of maras can be mistaken for the conferral of the sublime siddhi by your chosen deity.
 Shallow attempts to benefit others based on the eight mundane concerns can be mistaken for the innate compassion that guides all beings without exception.
 A lapse into a trancelike state of blankness can be mistaken for immersion in the utterly lucid nature of reality.

EXAMINING MISINTERPRETATIONS

Six considerations can be examined to get to the crux of these misinterpretations:
 Poignancy arising from disenchantment vanishes when the mind focuses on a sublime object, while negative circumstances never elicit joy.
 Devotion from deep within effects physical and mental transformation, while contrived faith born of superficiality does not move you.
 Extrication from entanglements leads to the feeling that you do not need anything at all,

while an indifferent mind only leads to unstable relationships.
 The conferral of the sublime siddhi brings delight and palpable
 blessings,
 while the obstacles caused by maras produce a sense of dread.
 True guidance of all beings is not complicated by selfish
 interests,
 while efforts to benefit others based on the eight mundane
 concerns are motivated by a selfish desire for honor and gain.
 Immersion in the true nature of reality lends a pristine clarity to
 your faculties,
 while falling into a trancelike state of blankness is like being
 plunged into darkness. [33b]
 It is thus vital to understand these differences and make no
 mistakes.

WHAT IS ENTIRELY SUFFICIENT

Six pieces of advice are given on what is entirely sufficient:
 One lifetime is entirely sufficient—make that decision here and
 now.
 One means of spiritual development is entirely sufficient—treat
 your guru as a buddha.
 One activity is entirely sufficient—practice focusing on your
 guru as a buddha.
 One kind of training is entirely sufficient—give up activities that
 are not spiritual.
 One means of direct introduction is entirely sufficient—receive
 introduction to the true nature of mental activity.
 One practical method is entirely sufficient—maintain an ongoing
 awareness of suchness itself.
 If you heed this advice, supreme bliss will swiftly be yours.

PROFOUND KEY POINTS

Six pieces of advice pertain to profound key points:
 If you want the dharma to be useful, rely on whatever actually
 helps your mind.
 If you want to tame your own mind, heed your own counsel.
 If you want to attain dharmakaya, identify mental stirring on the
 spot.
 If you want to nurture meditative experiences, eliminate what
 distracts you from mind itself and look within.
 If you want to halt the momentum of thoughts, do not concentrate
 on mind and subtle energy.
 If you want to reach the consummate goal, rest in an uncontrived,
 genuine way.
 These are my most profound words of essential advice.

INDICATIONS

Six pith instructions touch on how inner experiences are
 connected with outer indications:
 An indication that faith has awakened in you is that you have let
 go of mundane preoccupations.
 An indication that you have received blessings is that you have
 developed humility.
 An indication that your motivation is altruistic is that everything
 you do benefits others.
 An indication that your obvious fixations have been undermined
 is that you are indifferent to the eight mundane concerns.
 An indication that you have glimpsed ultimate reality is that your
 dualistic perceptions have decreased as a matter of course.
 An indication that you have accepted your own counsel is that
 you constantly strive at whatever is positive.

Anyone for whom these indications arise will transcend
conditioned existence.

VAJRA VERSES

There are six vajra verses about the great perfection:
The great perfection of the ground of being lies in reaching a
definitive understanding of mind itself. [34a]
The great perfection of the path lies in focusing intently on the
state free of limits.
The great perfection of the fruition lies in reaching the point at
which hope and fear fall away.
The great perfection of sense objects lies in perceptions being free,
without reification.
The great perfection of ordinary mind lies in experiencing
thoughts as allies.
The great perfection of ultimate reality lies in mental stirring
vanishing, fading away naturally.
Anyone with such understanding is a great, majestic yogin.

INDWELLING CONFIDENCE

There are six indications that you have gained deep indwelling
confidence:
You experience the after-death state as naturally peaceful, as
though you were being led by an excellent guide.
You are naturally purified of obscurations, like a gem that gives
off a natural luster.
Your meditative experiences well forth naturally, like bubbles
rising from fermented grain in the brewing of beer.
You experience supreme bliss intensifying naturally, as if you had
drunk strong liquor.
Your experience of mind itself is natural, like a bee's attraction to
the nectar of a flower.

You experience blessings coming to you of their own accord, like
the natural maturing of a fine crop.
When you have such experiences, you are a great yogin.

COMING NO CLOSER

There are six ways in which you as practitioners come no closer
to the dharma:
You come no closer to pursuing your twofold development by
becoming too familiar with those you revere.
You come no closer to spiritual attainment by being too casual in
your practice.
You come no closer to buddhahood when you use your practice
merely to solve temporary problems.
You come no closer to spiritual power and ability when you mix
idle talk with your recitation and mantra repetition.
You come no closer to the way of abiding by becoming proud
about your positive qualities.
You come no closer to the sacred dharma when everything you
do is based on mundane concerns.
Indeed, it is absolutely crucial that you not distance yourself in
such ways.

TAKING ENORMOUS RISKS

There are six points regarding potential rewards and enormous
risks:
Developing close relationships with unprincipled people,
letting the worst aspects of your character taint your spiritual
practice,
pursuing spiritual training and taking ordination without
recourse to using antidotes,
attempting to meditate without listening to and contemplating
teachings, [34b]

practicing the secret mantra approach despite impaired samaya,
and leading a seagoing expedition to recover gems:
it is essential to examine these situations, for the potential
rewards involve enormous risks.

IMPLEMENTING THE TEACHINGS

Six pieces of advice pertain to implementing the teachings:
Whatever you perceive, accept it as naturally pristine in essence.
Whatever pure awareness is aware of, rest in a naturally
occurring and naturally pure state.
Whatever stirs in the mind, maintain an awareness of how, like a
bird in flight, it leaves no trace.
Allow yourself to experience the undifferentiated state, free of
limitations, as unfettered and timelessly free.
Having looked for what is free, look at the empty cave of
samsara and nirvana.
The collapse of dualistic perception leads you to the ground of
being, the way of abiding.
If you understand these things, you have grasped the significance
of the most sublime spiritual approach.

MAKING DISTINCTIONS

Six distinctions can be made regarding things that are not what
they seem:
One who desires merit and fame is not a worthy guru.
One who is attached to wealth and possessions is not a worthy
practitioner of the dharma.
One who is involved primarily in lay activities is not a worthy
monastic.
One who is sectarian and believes that things have true identity is
not a worthy yogin.

One who takes eons to traverse the stages of the path is not a
worthy practitioner of the secret mantra approach.
Anything that is subject to restrictions or extremes is not the
noble great perfection.
I beg you, understand the supreme spaciousness in which
everything is equal!

THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY

Six points have to do with resting in a meaningful experience of
the true nature of reality:
Do not use your five senses to fixate on the objects you perceive.
Do not use your perceiving mind to create thoughts that come
and go.
Do not perpetuate thoughts, but experience the unity of bliss and
lucidity without fixation.
Do not overlay the naturally occurring state of relaxation with
conceptual elaborations.
The unfettered nature of reality cannot be bound by the chains of
mental concentration.
The open mind of spacious freedom cannot be confined within
the cage of ideas.
Whoever understands these things is nearing the meaningful
experience of authentic being. [35a]

MISUNDERSTANDING THE MAHAYANA

There are six ways to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana:
Because all beings are truly heirs of the victorious ones,
to treat them with condescension or contempt is to
misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Because all who ask for your help are being kind to you,
encouraging you to undertake positive actions,

to be tight-fisted out of avarice is to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Because enemies and demons who cause you harm are most excellent objects of your forbearance,
to be angry or resentful is to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Because criticism of your faults and failings is spiritual instruction that dispels these flaws,
to react defensively or lose your temper is to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Because gain, honor, and fame are the servants of the demon of ruin,
to be driven by the eight mundane concerns and conceit is to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Because blessings and spiritual powers can usher in maras,
to react to them with pride and self-importance is to misunderstand the spirit of the Mahayana.
Many with such misunderstanding wander in samsara.

WHAT TO AVOID AND WHERE TO REMAIN

Six points concern what to avoid and where to remain:
Avoid places of diversion and distraction; remain in solitude.
Avoid the biases of rival factions; remain free of such associations.
Avoid the entanglements of mundane business; remain content.
Avoid crowds; remain on your own in solitude.
Avoid engaging in many projects and activities; remain in solitude.
Avoid committing negative or neutral actions; remain intent on carrying out positive ones.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

There are six things you can do when remaining thus:
Recognize that awareness in all its nakedness is your true nature.

Come to a definitive conclusion regarding the way mind truly abides.
Free yourself from the influence of ordinary consciousness, which produces concepts.
Do not fixate on the seeming reality of things. [35b]
Cut through your compulsive desire for something.
Bring the “doer” to the point at which it resolves into its essence.

MEDITATIVE STABILITY

Six qualities apply to awareness at rest in meditative stability:
The way things manifest in your perception is not blocked; they are vibrant in all their immediacy.
Your consciousness is not dull, but brilliantly clear.
It is not disturbed by the proliferation of thoughts or mental agitation, but is naturally limpid and transparent.
It does not succumb to proliferation or agitation, but remains steadfast in a state of evenness.
It is not dull or torpid, but fully present in its natural state.
It does not waver toward any of the four extremes, but rests evenly in a state of natural rest.
When your meditation is endowed with these six attributes, there is no danger of going astray.

IMPLEMENTING VIEW AND MEDITATION

Six points pertain to implementing view and meditation:
By understanding everything you perceive from the perspective of the view, you are freed from the constraints of philosophical beliefs.
By understanding that any and all mental activity is meditation, you are freed from arbitrary divisions between formal sessions and postmeditation activity.
By conducting yourself spiritually in whatever you do, without

reifying concepts, you are freed from the fixations that reinforce these concepts.
 By experiencing all that you perceive as enlightened intent, you are freed from an ordinary state of experience.
 By decisively knowing that whatever you traverse is the true nature of reality,
 you traverse the spiritual paths and levels in an authentic way.
 By being certain that what you achieve is the innate accomplishment of the five kayas, you are freed from fixation on a goal.
 Such genuine experience is like open space.

SOME FAILINGS TO ELIMINATE

There are six failings to discern in yourself and eliminate:
 Though you may have faith and diligence, if you leave your guru too early
 you will be like a chick separated from its mother and will not consummate your spiritual path.
 Though you may have an understanding of cause and effect, if you have not done away with your desirous mind
 you will fall under the sway of circumstances, like someone tricked by a charlatan.
 Though you may have great wisdom, if you do not apply it to your spiritual practice
 it will let you down when you need it most, and you will be like someone who loses a weapon on the field of battle.
 Though you may have been directly introduced to your true nature, if you have not become familiar with it
 you will be swept away by the enemy, your own thoughts, like a little child on a battleground. [36a]
 Though you may have meditated for a long time, if you have not undermined your fixated mind
 your efforts will have been in vain, like those of someone rich and famous who has no heir.

Though you may understand what is or is not so, if you do not give up your biases
 your negative emotions will repeatedly rear their ugly heads, and you will be like someone with a chronically infected arrow wound.
 Therefore, it is absolutely essential not to succumb to these failings.

WHAT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY

Six things are no longer necessary once you have realized the way of abiding:
 Once your body is the mountain on which your immaculate mind abides,
 you need no longer remain in a hermitage on a lonely mountainside.
 Once you do not stray from the context of the true nature of reality, regardless of what happens,
 you need no longer endure the hardship of a retreat with a strict schedule.
 Once you experience what you see and hear as the display of timeless awareness,
 you need no longer meditate with rigid divisions between practice sessions and breaks.
 Once the ordinary characteristics of things, by which you decide what to renounce or acquire, naturally resolve within the ground of being,
 you need no longer think about continuing your spiritual development, or even about perceiving things as they are ordinarily characterized.
 Once you experience everything that you perceive arising as the pure realm of the three kayas,
 you need no longer base your practice of meditation on the use of antidotes to relate to the objects you perceive.

Once you experience enlightened intent, unfettered and
unrestricted,
you need no longer entertain ideas based on hope or fear.
Whoever is in such a position encounters the ultimate reality of
timeless awareness.

CONSEQUENCES

Six pith instructions that pertain to consequences are given:
One who can forsake harmful actions becomes a warrior.
One who can eradicate the five emotional poisons within
becomes someone powerful.
One who has no rigid frames of reference becomes a genuine
practitioner.
One who is alert and heedful becomes skillful and astute.
One who refrains from inflicting injury becomes armored and
armed. [36b]
One whom the oath-bound guardians surround comes to have a
retinue and attendants.
My very best advice is that you do whatever it takes to ensure
these consequences.

MISLEADING SITUATIONS

Six situations are misleading and should be avoided:
In failing to focus on self-knowing awareness, you can be misled
by an ordinary awareness of something “other.”
You can be misled by a stagnant state of calm abiding, which is
not the state of utter lucidity.
You can be misled by a diffuse state of apathy, which is not the
singularly decisive state.
You can be misled by the self-reinforcing confusion of thoughts,
which is not the experience of their inherent purity.

You can be misled by some vague sense that nothing need be
done, which is not the state of primordial unity.
You can be misled by your mind’s one-pointed concentration,
which is not the natural state of abiding.
Because you can be misled by such similarities between two
alternatives, do not succumb to doing something pointless!

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Six situations can be shown to have natural consequences:
When you fail to realize the nature of nonreferential awareness,
you become bound to the ten kinds of positive action.
When you fail to become disillusioned by your fixations, you
experience the state of simplicity as something subject to
value judgments.
When you fail to appreciate that basic space transcends ordinary
phenomena, meditation remains an intellectual exercise.
When you fail to recognize your true essence upon directly
encountering it, meditation remains contrived.
When you do not know that the way of abiding is naturally
pristine, meditation remains conceptual.
When you do not know that timeless freedom entails no reifying
concepts, meditation remains involved with ordinary
characteristics.
It is imperative to turn away from such situations and their
consequences.

INSTRUCTIONS ON KILLING

Spiritual instructions are given on six things to be killed:
If you wish to quell demons and negative forces, kill your
cherishing of body and life.

If you wish to get along with others, kill your pride and self-importance.
 If you wish to ease suffering, kill all that characterizes your dualistic perceptions.
 If you wish to experience enlightened intent—the way of abiding—kill your fixation on antidotes as absolute principles in themselves.
 If you wish to experience nondual timeless awareness, kill the antidote of meditation based on ordinary mind. [37a]
 If you wish to attain enlightenment in a single lifetime, kill your procrastination and laziness.
 Those who kill these things will be victorious over their enemies, the four maras.

NONE OTHER

There are six situations that by nature are “none other”:
 If you do whatever makes beings truly happy, that is none other than honoring the victorious ones.
 If you accept responsibility for benefiting others, that is none other than following the path to liberation.
 If you realize nonduality, indivisible and nonexclusive, that is none other than realizing equalness.
 If you realize the nonduality of mind and the objects it perceives, that is none other than realizing the true nature of reality.
 Knowing that samsara has no true existence is none other than knowing nirvana.
 If you let go of the sense that the one attaining spiritual realization has any finite essence, there are no more errors or obscurations to be removed.
 For those who have such realization, dharmakaya is evident as a natural attribute.

CHALLENGES

It is taught that six things are by nature challenging:
 As challenging as it is to begin practicing the dharma, it is more challenging to reach the point where there can be no turning back.
 As challenging as it is to understand the scriptures, it is more challenging to apply them to your experience.
 As challenging as it is to accept samaya, it is more challenging to uphold it well.
 As challenging as it is to encounter profoundly meaningful teachings, it is more challenging to put them into practice.
 As challenging as it is to give rise to enlightened intent, it is more challenging to sustain it.
 As challenging as it is to act for the welfare of others, it is more challenging to bear the sadness this entails.
 If you wish to attain buddhahood, however, please undertake these things, challenging though they be.

WHAT IS TRULY MARVELOUS

Six instructions concern what is truly marvelous:
 If you have faith and diligence, there is something specific for you to engage in,
 which is sharing the dharma—how truly marvelous!
 If you have devotion, there are instructions to receive from your guru, who is a buddha—how truly marvelous!
 If you apply profound skillful means, the pleasures of the five senses
 can bring freedom when enjoyed without having to be renounced—how truly marvelous! [37b]
 If they apply themselves diligently to spiritual practice, ordinary beings

can awaken to buddhahood in a single lifetime—how truly marvelous!

If you cultivate your ongoing realization without distraction, the true nature of reality, profoundly lucid, will become evident—how truly marvelous!

If you constantly familiarize yourself with the threefold mandala,⁴¹ you will experience timeless awareness as the three kayas—how truly marvelous!

BEINGS' SHORTCOMINGS

Practitioners of the dharma are taught that beings have six shortcomings:

Unaware of the distinctions to be made, beings are deprived of the eye of the view.

Plagued by constant wants and needs, they are deprived of the ally of spiritual practice.

They have no mentor, a guide for the blind, who can lead them to liberation.

The staff of listening to and contemplating teachings, which would support them, is broken.

They are possessed by the unwanted demons of negative emotions and dualistic perceptions.

Their karma keeps them in conditioned existence without any chance of liberation, as they teeter on the edge of the abyss of lower realms.

Because of your compassion, you may find it difficult to bear the fact that all beings are subject to these six shortcomings, and you may shed tears for them, but until their own negative karma is exhausted, there is no way for them to be guided.

HOW TO AVOID GOING ASTRAY

There are six pieces of advice on how to avoid going astray:

Even if you cannot honor the Three Jewels, at least do not commit harmful actions; consider the fearsome possibility of taking rebirth in lower realms.

Even if you have no devotion for sublime gurus, at least do not disparage them; consider the problems caused by holding erroneous views.

Even if you feel no love or concern for your spiritual siblings, at least do not indulge in jealousy; consider the problems caused by impairing samaya.

Even if you cannot live up to your spiritual heritage as the scriptures intend, at least do not disparage those who do engage in practice; consider the problems caused by creating negative karma.

Even if you cannot do away with your fixation on the seeming truth and reality of your confused perceptions, at least do not assume that things are permanent; consider the change within you and without. [38a]

Even if you cannot benefit others directly, at least do them no harm; consider interdependence and the effects of karma.

WHAT MAKES SENSE

Six pieces of advice point to what makes sense when you think about it:

Think about how you suffer when even the slightest thing you do is disrupted;

it would make far more sense to suffer were your pursuit of goodness disrupted.

Think about how you suffer when your transient pleasure in things is cut short;

it would make far more sense to suffer were the development of your meditative experience cut short.
 Think about how you suffer when your food and drink are withheld for a day;
 it would make far more sense to suffer were your schedule of four daily practice sessions suspended.
 Think about how you suffer when you cannot defeat your worst enemies in this life;
 it would make far more sense to suffer were you to succumb to your real worst enemies, your negative emotions.
 Think about how you would suffer if your spouse in this present state of confusion died;
 it would make far more sense to suffer were you deprived of your constant companion, the dharma.
 Think about how you suffer when one of your minor projects is interrupted;
 it would make far more sense to suffer were your spiritual practice in this state of freedom and opportunity interrupted.
 It is excellent to think about what makes sense.

THINGS TO FORSAKE

There are six things to forsake in order to put the dharma into practice as is intended:
 Forsake mundane activity, which is the morass of samsara.
 Forsake marriage and children, which are a rope pulling you into misfortune.
 Forsake fixation on the seeming truth of your confused perceptions, which are childish amusements.
 Forsake enjoyment of sense pleasures, which is deceptive and seductive.
 Forsake being someone honored by others, for adulation is the lasso of maras.

Forsake ignorance and dualistic perception, which are the disastrous legacy of your forbears.
 If you forsake these things, you will be liberated from the state of samsara.

IMPORTANT THEMES

Six topics can be shown to be important spiritual themes:
 Unless you know the freedom of everything you encounter directly, you will not overcome the concepts that your perceptions engender. [38b]
 Unless you know naked perception and naked freedom, you will not sever the root of dualistic perception.
 Unless you know the profoundly lucid quality of meditative experiences, you will lapse into a static state of nonconceptual awareness.
 Unless you know that dualistic perception is confusion, you will not extricate yourself from the entanglements of fixation and attachment.
 Unless you understand that life affords no leisure, your spiritual practice will lapse into stagnation and laxity.
 Unless you refine your mastery of the dynamic expression of awareness, you will not leap over the abyss of the six classes of beings.
 It is crucial to train thoroughly in these key points.

DETERMINING THE OUTCOME

There are six ways to discern key points by determining the outcome:
 Eschew being a leader of others, because otherwise the outcome would be unhappiness.
 Put an end to your projects, because the outcome will be happiness.

Avoid negative actions, because otherwise the outcome would be your ruin.
 Engage in positive actions, because the outcome will be your edification.
 Turn your back on mundane concerns, because the outcome will be a noble one.
 Do not turn away from the dharma, because otherwise the outcome would be an ignoble one.
 If you follow this advice, you will be foremost among holy beings of the highest caliber.

THINGS TO ELIMINATE

There are six things to eliminate in taming your mind:
 Be done with your craving for food, for in the end food is nothing but impure urine and feces.
 Eliminate preoccupation with renown in this world, for fame is only an echo.
 Ignore the force of your attachment and aversion, for your confused perceptions turn on you as enemies.
 Eliminate the “I” and “me” of dualistic consciousness, lest you be wounded by the weapons of the five emotional poisons.
 Avoid trying to emulate important people, for the great and powerful lose touch with the sacred dharma.
 Give up hoarding wealth and possessions, for they lead to even more harmful actions and interfere with spiritual practice.
 If you act accordingly, you will further your spiritual attainment.

ENCOUNTERING REALITY

There are six ways to encounter the true nature of reality:
 You recognize what you perceive in all its nakedness.
 Meditative experiences awaken from deep within. [39a]

Any fixation on meditative experiences dissipates naturally.
 In that they are pristine, perceptions leave no trace.
 You are free of mundane concepts.
 Timeless awareness arises without obstruction.
 Anyone who has these experiences has encountered the true nature of reality.

USEFUL IDEAS

Six instructions on useful ideas are given:
 Cultivate the idea of impermanence throughout the threefold division of time.
 Cultivate the idea that your friends and relations are temporary guests.
 Cultivate the idea that any residence you occupy is a guesthouse.
 Cultivate the idea that food, possessions, and wealth are amusements.
 Cultivate the idea that any activity you carry out is dreamlike.
 Cultivate the idea that any journey you undertake, however short or long, is the way to your death.
 Keeping these ideas in mind, you can be liberated from the state of samsara.

WHAT IS VITAL

Six instructions are given regarding what is vital:
 Realization that is experiential is vital for discerning the significance of mind itself.
 Sublime knowing born of understanding is vital for thoroughly comprehending spiritual instructions.
 Insight into the meaning of philosophical systems is vital for uncovering the obscure key points of the teachings.
 Impeccable discipline is vital for armoring yourself effectively.

Flawless sublime knowing is vital for cutting through confusion.
Conduct with no fixed reference point is vital for freeing yourself
from rigid adherence to rules.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

There are six general principles to incorporate into your spiritual
path:⁴²
To stem the downward flow of water, respect the process of cause
and effect on the subtlest level.
To find the source in the uplands above, set your sight on the very
highest peak.
To follow the narrow track between, carry out your spiritual
activities authentically.
As the preparatory phase, develop bodhichitta, which will
prevent you from becoming involved in a lesser spiritual
approach.
As the main part of practice, understand that things have no
independent nature, which will arrest your fixation on their
seeming truth.
As the conclusion, dedicate in the context of threefold purity,
which will transform your practice into the path. [39b]
If you apply these principles, your spiritual practice will be
successful.

EXPANDING YOUR SCOPE

There are six ways of greatly expanding your scope to arrive at
the deeper meaning:
A mind with a narrow scope will not do; you must know how to
arrive at the deeper meaning of the scriptures.
A general understanding of the scriptures will not do; you
must know how to arrive at the deeper meaning of spiritual
instructions.

A fear of profound implications will not do; you must know how
to arrive at the deeper meaning of the tantras of the various
classes.

Preoccupation with the words will not do; you must know how to
arrive at the deeper meaning of putting them into practice.

Adherence to a biased belief system will not do; you must know
how to arrive at the deeper meaning of any topic.

Indecision and doubt will not do; you must know how to arrive at
the deeper meaning with certainty.

Whoever has such knowledge can see all of the dharma as a whole.

AUTHENTIC MEANING

Six principles pertain to what is truly meaningful:

Apply whatever you learn to ensuring the welfare of others.

Apply your compassion to your own experiences of suffering.

Use whatever riches you amass to further your spiritual
development.

Uphold the three levels of ordination and your samaya purely.

Do not divorce your conduct from the pure nature of reality.

Pray with fervent devotion.

These are principles that holy masters uphold, so follow their
example.

ILLNESS AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

There are six reasons to carry illness onto your spiritual path:

Illness can bring an end to the negative karma that perpetuates
samsara.

Illness can cleanse you of the sullyng effects of your negative
emotions.

Illness can heighten your yearning and devotion.

Illness can motivate you to pursue your spiritual practice diligently.

Illness can introduce you to the path to liberation.

Illness can intensify and enrich your training.
Therefore, the wise incorporate illness into their spiritual path.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Six pieces of advice relate to what you should know:
You should know that the enemies and demons that injure you
are actually gods that help you; [40a]
that your fondness for those close to you causes harm and holds
you back;
that your own negative emotions are actually loathsome enemies
who stab you with thorns;
that your belief in “I,” which you protect and defend, is actually
a demon that hurts you;
that counterproductive or negative circumstances actually
enhance your path to liberation;
and that fame and praise are actually the worst kinds of
problems.
These six pieces of advice on what you should know are
absolutely crucial.

THE VERY ESSENCE OF BEING

Six pieces of advice pertain to the very essence of being—the
definitive meaning of the teachings:
In experiencing the unborn nature of reality, recognize the
ground that underlies confusion;
then, when thoughts ceaselessly arise, sever confusion at its root.
Turn back the tide of samsara by realizing the nondual nature of
things;
then, experience your seemingly substantial mind as naturally
free, dispelling the impediments of the four extremes.
Come to a final decision through view and expose the inner
workings of samsara and nirvana;

then, through conduct, free yourself of constraints, and all of
your activity will become your spiritual path.
These pieces of advice concern the ultimate point, the very
essence of being that is the profound meaning of the
teachings.

HITTING UPON KEY POINTS

There are six ways to act that hit upon key points:
When your character is stable, you never turn away from the
dharma.
When your mind does not vacillate, you never let yourself be
intimidated by others.
When your faith and devotion are unfailing, you never let
yourself become fickle.
When you honor the three higher trainings, you never let yourself
be tainted by any fault or failing.
When you think always of death, you never let yourself become
complacent.
When you use antidotes as you come up against a negative
emotion, you experience its natural freedom.
If you act in these six ways, all of your needs will be met.

TIMELESS AWARENESS

Six points concern the intensification of your experience of
timeless awareness:
There is a vibrancy to your perceptions in the state that entails no
reifying concepts.
There is a steadfast evenness in the context of nonduality.
There is a naturally limpid and transparent quality in the context
of lucidity and purity.
There is a brilliant clarity that is naturally evident in the context
of utter lucidity. [40b]

There is unconstrained delight in the context of the true nature of reality.
There is an open quality of spaciousness in basic space beyond ordinary consciousness.
This is ensured within the natural, uncontrived great perfection.

BLENDING YOUR TRUE NATURE WITH PRACTICE

Six principles involve blending your true nature with the key points of spiritual practice:
Genuine timeless awareness is self-knowing awareness beyond ordinary consciousness.
In light of that, meditation entails the mind settling into its natural state, that of supreme utter lucidity.
You are firm yet not tight, relaxed yet not loose.
You do not slip into an unfocused state, but are sustained by undistracted mindfulness.
Meditation is a single state of equalness, with no distinction between mind at rest and thoughts proliferating.
Your true nature, omnipresent like space,
is spontaneously present as mahamudra, the supreme seal of dharmakaya.

WHAT IS NOT FIXED YET NEVER CHANGES

Six qualities pertain to the state that is not fixed yet is without transition or change:
Awareness, empty yet lucid, is free of conceptual elaboration.
This being so, it is not corrupted by the distortions of hope and fear in dualistic perception.
This innate state, fresh in all its nakedness, is one of natural settling.
Without having to be contemplated, engaged in, meditated on, or analyzed,

it is vibrant, limpid, steadfast, and immediately apparent.
Utterly ordinary awareness, with no distinction between the arising and the freeing of a thought,
causes all conceptual elaboration, which entails suffering, to subside without exception.

SUPREME EQUALNESS

Six qualities pertain to supreme equalness, the true nature of reality:
Awareness, free of limitations, is like space.
This being so, there is no distinction between samsara and nirvana, and the conventions of acceptance versus rejection do not apply.
Dharmakaya, about which nothing need be done, is the view—freedom within the ground of being.
It involves no thought process whatsoever, and no fixed frame of reference.
This is the way of abiding, your true nature as the transcendent perfection of sublime knowing.
It is free of the posturing of ordinary mind and cuts through the entanglements of fixation.
This is the spontaneously present province of all victorious ones.

AWARENESS AS THE ABIDING NATURE

There are six criteria for assessing whether you experience awareness as the abiding nature of reality: [41a]
With respect to your faith, there is a feeling of being rejuvenated and refreshed.
With respect to the way of abiding, there is a sense of fullness and magnificent presence.
With respect to meditative stability, there is a sense of dignity.
With respect to meditative experiences, there is a vivid sense of splendor.

With respect to the true nature of phenomena, there is an unmistakable sense of pristine limpidity.
With respect to self-knowing awareness, there is a sense of focused precision.
When you meditate in this way, you experience the expanse of pure, timeless awareness.

FORTUNATE RECIPIENTS

Fortunate recipients of the teachings have six qualities:
Their devotion is firmly established, and so regardless of what happens their faith is not undermined.
They have confidence in the dharma, and so are heedful of positive and negative causes and effects.
Their samaya is pure, and so they have great love and affection for their spiritual siblings.
They are immersed in the dharma, and so hold spiritual practice in high esteem.
They have recourse to a wealth of antidotes, and so experience the freedom of any negative circumstance in its own ground.
They have discovered joy, and so meditate and practice diligently.
These people are said to be the most excellent recipients of the precious, holy dharma.

INFERIOR RECIPIENTS

Inferior recipients of the teachings, who accomplish little that is meaningful, are said to exhibit six characteristics:
They meditate for a long time yet do not free their minds, so even remaining in solitude serves little purpose, no more than it does a wild animal.
They understand the scriptures yet do not use them as remedies, so even receiving many teachings serves little purpose, no more than does a parrot's repetition of what it hears.

They rely on gurus yet do not heed their advice, so they miss the point, like someone dying of thirst on the shore of a vast lake.
They receive spiritual advice yet do not apply it to their own experience, so their glibness serves little purpose, no more than does the mechanical prescription of medical remedies.
They attain signs of meditative warmth yet do not realize the nature of mind itself, so meditation serves little purpose, no more than following a path based on extreme views.
They practice many austerities yet do not give rise to enlightened qualities, so their efforts serve little purpose, no more than those of marmots hibernating in their burrows.
Therefore, it is absolutely essential to truly arrive at the key points. [41b]

EXCELLENT GURUS

Six things are taught to be indications of excellent gurus:
If those who rely on gurus are inspired and turn toward the dharma, this is an indication that, through spiritual accomplishment, these gurus have amassed clouds of blessings.
If gurus encourage students to practice and their students in turn display many positive qualities, this is an indication that these are gurus who transmit the great instructions of the profound oral lineages.
If gurus are not jealous of others to whom they might lose their retinues or possessions, this is an indication that mundane attitudes of ownership and personal ambition have fallen away from them.

If gurus know how to involve anyone at any level of understanding on the spiritual path, this is an indication that they have innate compassion and skill in benefiting beings.

If gurus are able to greatly benefit those who suffer, this is an indication that they have trained in compassion and developed immeasurable bodhichitta.

If gurus have spacious and contented minds and are free of ordinary concerns, this is an indication that they have indwelling confidence that comes from realizing the way things actually are.

Seek out and rely on such qualified gurus.

WHAT TO ELIMINATE

There are six signs of what practitioners of the dharma should eliminate:

Being too invested in petty prejudices and concerns is a sign of attachment and aversion.

Reacting with aversion in everything you do is a sign of holding to an erroneous view.

Taking confused perceptions too seriously is a sign of weak spiritual practice.

Placing too much store in one's homeland is a sign of veering from the dharma.

Being driven by the goals of this lifetime is a sign of obstruction by maras.

A lack of certainty about the dharma is a sign of straying from the path to liberation.

MISTAKES

There are six mistakes that by their nature must be eliminated:

It is a great mistake to look after those close to you, who merely make you happy,

and not to honor your guru, who is your source of refuge in this and future lives.

It is a great mistake to spend your time in idle chatter, talking endlessly, rather than in recitation and mantra repetition, which are sources of spiritual attainment.

It is a great mistake to amass material wealth, which is a source of suffering, rather than the seven spiritual riches—faith and the rest. [42a]

It is a mistake to strive at distracting and dissipating activities, rather than to cultivate an experience of mind itself, the ultimate way of abiding.

It is a mistake to be arrogant and self-promoting, seeking profit and acclaim, rather than to tame your belief in a self, which is the source of all your flaws.

It is a mistake to meditate in an uninformed and benighted way, following your hunches, rather than to engage in listening to and contemplating spiritual teachings in order to dispel the darkness of your ignorance.

If you eliminate these mistakes, you will come closer to the path to liberation.

FOCUSING ON KEY POINTS

Six pieces of advice concern focusing on key points:

Rely on learned gurus; a river cannot flow into a canal that is not connected to it.

Give up degrading and ignoble actions; they are the basis for greater confusion.

Do not associate with ordinary people; you will only be tainted by others' negative behavior.

Do not argue over conventional issues; these are thorns that will distract you from your meditative stability.

Give up self-perpetuating plans and projects; there will never be a time when you will cease to be occupied.
Do not switch from one meditation deity to another; this will postpone your spiritual attainment.
Make do with whatever comes to you as sustenance; hankering after food and drink will only increase your craving.
If you act thus, all of your activities will cause your goodness to flourish.

POOR TEACHERS

There are six ways in which students are contaminated by the faults of poor teachers:
Students who rely on poor mentors are tainted by fixation on the extremes of naive affirmation and nihilistic denial because of their teachers' dubious belief systems.
They are led to commit harmful, negative actions because of their teachers' improper conduct.
They become increasingly quarrelsome and mean-spirited because of their teachers' signs of inferior spiritual attainment.
They indulge in their confused perceptions and habit patterns because of the poor meditation they are taught.
They are obsessed with mundane affairs because of the questionable spiritual methods in which they train.
They fall into lower realms of samsara because of the inferior goals they are taught to seek.
Therefore, for those who have faith and seek the path to liberation, a poor teacher is the greatest obstacle caused by maras. [42b]
So identify such teachers and avoid them at all costs.

INFERIOR COMPANIONS

There are six ways in which you are marred by the behavior of inferior companions:

If you associate with thoughtless fools, you are marred by their trivial concerns.
If you associate with immature youths, you are marred by their undisciplined frivolity.
If you associate with householders, you are marred by seeking profit and a good reputation in mundane affairs.
If you associate with merchants, you are marred by seeking gain and striving to accumulate wealth.
If you associate with angry people, you are marred by their cruel and harsh behavior.
If you associate with and look after friends and relations, you are marred by the domestic concerns of acquiring food and clothing.
Therefore, avoid inferior companions and rely instead on noble spiritual companions.

FLAWS OF HOUSEHOLDERS

The following are six flaws of the unfortunate life of householders:
Though an awareness of impermanence may dawn in them, their spiritual practice falls prey to their laziness.
Though they may embody both faith and intelligence, they find no opportunities to make use of these qualities.
Though they may understand that this lifetime is not all-important, they cannot dismiss things of this world from their minds.
Though they may receive profound advice, spiritual practice remains just an aspiration.
Though they may achieve great understanding by listening to and contemplating teachings, it is of no real benefit to them or others.
Though they may understand the view—the way of abiding—they nevertheless die in a very ordinary way.
You should take great care not to succumb to these flaws.

SEDUCTION BY MARAS

Six kinds of people are shown to be vulnerable to seduction by maras:

Those who covet wealth are seduced by the mara of material things.

Those with great learning are seduced by the mara of erudition.

Those of high-born families are seduced by the mara of privilege.

Those who have material comforts are seduced by the mara of merit.

Those who have negative karma are seduced by the mara of difficult circumstances.

Those who yearn for fame are seduced by the mara of talk. [43a]

There are many such people, so do not fall under their influence.

BECOMING JADED

Those who have become jaded have six flaws that impair their spiritual training:

They adopt ordinary attitudes and engage in much idle activity and chatter.

Their behavior, based on confusion, causes harm, as one negative act follows another.

Their view is a belief in an individual self, which causes them to react with attachment and aversion.

Their meditation consists of an uninterrupted stream of negative attitudes and erroneous views.

Their conduct is that of indulgence in a multitude of negative activities that are antithetical to the spiritual path.

Their minds are impervious to the dharma, and they are carried away by the preoccupations of this life.

Such are those who are jaded and stray from the path to liberation.

Because they will undermine your spiritual training and greatly reinforce your ignoble tendencies, stay far away from them.

POSITIVE SITUATIONS WITH NEGATIVE OUTCOMES

There are six ways to avoid seemingly positive situations that have negative outcomes:

Do not rely on spiritual teachers if by doing so you cause your attachment and aversion to increase, for this provides no nourishment.

Do not accept students if they look only for faults and failings, for they are not proper recipients of the teachings.

Do not engage in seemingly positive actions that reinforce your negative or harmful tendencies.

Do not be generous in the hope of gaining recognition and honor.

Do not make offerings simply to ensure that your personal needs and loved ones will be taken care of.

Do not explain the dharma if you do so only to seek gain, like a charlatan.

If you follow this advice, you will be in harmony with the dharma.

PRETENSE

There are six ways in which your pretense belies what is authentic:

You can pretend to practice the dharma without ever relinquishing your ordinary mind.

You can pretend to rely on a guru without ever having faith, devotion, or respect.

You can pretend to be an excellent teacher without ever applying the dharma to your own mind.

You can pretend to be in solitude without giving up dissipating busyness or idleness.

You can pretend to cultivate meditative stability without developing positive qualities.

You can pretend to act for others' benefit without ever focusing on the key points of spiritual practice. [43b]

These six kinds of pretense only bring turmoil, so the wise keep a great distance from them.

DECEPTIONS

There are six ways in which you can be deceived by what is spurious:

Your mind can be deceived by a spurious view, a superficial notion of freedom from elaboration that is not grounded in deep, indwelling confidence.

Your mind can be deceived by spurious meditation, a fool's speculative meditation that does not focus on the key points of practice.

Your mind can be deceived by spurious conduct, crazy behavior that is crude and lacks vigilance.

Your mind can be deceived by spurious samaya, a hypocritical commitment that does not truly guard against flaws and failings.

Your mind can be deceived by spurious study and contemplation of the teachings, a search for the renown of erudition rather than the wish to attain buddhahood.

Your mind can be deceived by a spurious goal, an aspiration involving something in the future without the realization of mind itself.

It is critical not to be deceived in such ways.

UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

There are six ways to avoid unacceptable behavior:

Do not be a charlatan, for this will bring shame on your family.

Do not quarrel with your spiritual siblings, for this is like inciting open conflict among kin.

Do not act in ways that are at odds with the dharma for fear that you will break worldly rules.

Do not discuss others' faults, for this is like spewing poison.

Do not be too frivolous, for this may lead you to criticize individuals or the dharma.

Do not feel responsible for mundane matters that are none of your concern.

Instead, attain buddhahood by means of the dharma, for this is your responsibility and within your power.

THE DRAWBACKS OF SOCIAL INTERACTION

For you who have embarked on an authentic practice of the dharma,

frequenting towns and cities has six drawbacks:

Moral failings and defilements affect you, causing your meditative experiences and blessings to wane.

Your negative emotions flare up, causing your observance of vows and the three higher trainings to lapse.

You fail to uphold your commitments, causing many difficult circumstances and obstacles to arise. [44a]

Your perceptions are clouded by confusion, causing you to lose touch with view, meditation, and the dynamic expression of awareness.⁴³

You are tainted by ordinary concerns, causing your mind to slip away from the dharma.

Through the force of your negative karma, you become an ordinary householder.

Therefore, do not frequent towns and cities, but remain in solitude.

Even though the path you travel is well worn, think of it as you would a prison

and be very careful not to let your senses be distracted by their objects.

A UNIFYING THEME FOR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Six guidelines concerning spiritual accomplishment can be embraced within a unifying theme:
Let the view—the way of abiding—lead you into the enlightened intent of buddhahood.
Focus your spiritual practice intently on the key points through the skillful means of pith instructions.
Use lines of correct reasoning to discern the implications of your experience of pure, timeless awareness.
Experience the freedom found in the direct encounter with all you perceive, for this fulfills the key points of developing spiritual practice.
Bring everything together within the unchanging context of mind itself.
Embrace phenomena within the unifying theme of the great perfection.
Focusing on these key points will ensure enlightenment in this lifetime.

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

Six principles are taught with regard to laying foundations:
Applying yourself to spiritual teachings, both listening to and contemplating them, lays the foundation for sublime knowing.
Training in the arousal of bodhichitta lays the foundation for the Mahayana approach.
Having a noble lineage lays the foundation for blessings.
Realizing mind itself lays the foundation for all realization.
Integrating faith and diligence lays the foundation for enlightened qualities.
Renouncing samsara lays the foundation for genuine happiness and well-being.

Train thus by following the examples set by holy masters with their actions.

AMASSING WEALTH

Amassing wealth and possessions entails six shortcomings:
It reinforces the five emotional poisons, inflaming the corrupting influences of attachment and aversion.
It ensnares you in the trap of avarice, creating the negative karma for rebirth as a preta. [44b]
It thrusts you into mundane concerns, diverting you from the path to enlightenment.
It compels you to create, increase, manage, and protect your riches, so that you spend your life dissatisfied.
It is at cross-purposes with the dharma and your spiritual practice, so that you incur the censure of gods and humans.
It is the mara of obstacles, pernicious and potentially life-threatening.
Those who practice the sacred dharma should thus maintain their distance from all amassing, creating, and increasing of wealth.

SEEKING THE BEST FAMILY

There are six ways to seek the best family:
Seek your true father in the unchanging basic space of phenomena.
Seek your true mother in naturally occurring timeless awareness.
Seek your true child in the naturally occurring infant.⁴⁴
Seek your true companion in the nondual state, that of primordial unity.
Seek true wealth in the gem of mind itself.
Seek your true dwelling in the pure realms of the three kayas.

If these come together, the abiding state of pure awareness will be yours.

ESTABLISHING SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

There are six ways to establish spiritual practice:

Rely on the practice of taking refuge as your guide through samsara.

Engage in spiritual activities as your livelihood.

Put the path of skillful means into practice as your swift mount.

Put your twofold development into practice as your prized wealth.

Put your positive qualities into practice as a way to increase your fortune.

Put spiritual advice into practice as your healthy diet.

Anyone who acts in these ways upholds the lineage of past masters.

THE PATH OF AWARENESS

Six pieces of advice have to do with following the path of awareness:

From time to time, examine the supportive conditions that you experience;

through your understanding that they are, in fact, awareness's own manifestations, they will become allies of your meditative experience.

From time to time, reflect on the harmful conditions that you perceive;

this is a primary key point in undermining your fixation on a state of confusion.

From time to time, scrutinize your companions and others' gurus; [45a]

discerning both good and bad in them is an inducement to continue your spiritual practice.

From time to time, observe the magical display of the four elements that takes place in space; understand how effort and striving collapse in the context of mind itself.

From time to time, consider your homeland, dwelling, and wealth;

through your understanding that they are illusory, undermine your fixation on confused perceptions.

From time to time, look at the assets and possessions of others; by regarding others with compassion, you will rid yourself of your attraction to samsara.

In brief, by examining the nature of the phenomena you perceive in all their variety, you will destroy the confusion of investing them with true existence.

SEEING CLEARLY

There are six ways to look at things in order to see clearly:

Look at the changing of the four seasons as you perceive the outer world;

you will become aware of impermanence, experience disenchantment, and develop mental focus.

Look at situations in which help is repaid with harm; you will have an extraordinary, heartfelt sense that your fixations are being undermined.

Look at others' pointless reactions of attachment and aversion; with an intense determination to find release from samsara, you will feel no need for anything whatsoever.

Look at the lack of gratitude that pampered children show toward their parents;

you will feel less optimistic about placing your trust in others.
 Look at the fact that when they die, even the affluent go forth
 naked and alone;
 you will notice your fixations on your possessions and family
 corroding.
 Look at the kindness of your gurus, your guides on the path to
 liberation;
 you will feel such heartfelt devotion that tears will flow.
 Thoroughly contemplate the conditions of your state of
 confusion, both pleasant and painful, in these ways;
 this will arouse disenchantment and the conviction that you must
 gain freedom.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

There are six things to thoroughly consider from time to time:
 From time to time, consider your own and others' physical
 actions; [45b]
 you will feel that they have no true existence, seeing them as you
 would those of dancers giving a performance.
 From time to time, consider the sounds we utter when we speak;
 you will find them ineffable, the unity of sound and emptiness,
 and so perceive them as you would an echo.
 From time to time, consider whatever arises in your mind,
 whether pleasant or painful;
 you will see it as the display of awareness, and so experience the
 way things actually are.
 From time to time, consider the very essence of thought, of what
 stirs and is recalled in the mind;
 you will experience the natural dissolution of ordinary
 consciousness and perceive dharmakaya in all its immediacy.
 From time to time, consider the unwavering state of mind itself;
 you will experience enlightened intent, in which everything

resolves, and so perceive that there is no proliferation and
 subsiding of thought.
 From time to time, consider the imperturbable state of rest, free of
 any conscious striving;
 you will see that nothing need be done, and so a sense of ease will
 permeate your being.
 Whoever has such understanding has grasped the profound
 meaning of the teachings.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTEMPLATE

Six instructions naturally lend themselves to thorough
 contemplation:
 Be vigilant in your struggle with birth, aging, illness, and death.
 Here and now, wipe out the karmic debts you incurred in the past.
 Here and now, flee from the narrow and terrifying defile of
 dualistic consciousness.
 Leave behind the burdensome consequences of harmful actions.
 Pursue enlightenment by following the path to liberation
 throughout this short life, which is certain to end.
 Think of how you will traverse the great passage of death.
 If you act thus, you will find the dry land of liberation.⁴⁵

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

There are six ways in which the sacred dharma encourages you to
 take responsibility:
 By contemplating the nauseating state of samsara, you take
 responsibility for becoming free of it.
 By relying on diligence, you take responsibility for your spiritual
 practice.
 By praying with devotion, you take responsibility for practice that
 focuses on your gurus.

By upholding samaya and engaging in the phases of approach and accomplishment, you take responsibility for practice that focuses on your chosen deities.
 By offering tormas and ganachakras, you take responsibility for practice that focuses on the dakinis. [46a]
 By receiving extremely profound spiritual advice, you take responsibility for your view and meditation.
 Whoever acts in these ways will swiftly attain siddhis.

EQUAL TREATMENT

There are six situations in which it can be shown that equal treatment is necessary:
 Having come to understand that the beings of the six classes have been your parents, you should treat your enemies and your children equally.
 Having come to understand that wealth and possessions are perceptions based on your confusion, you should treat gold and dross equally.
 Having come to understand that the results of karma have nothing to do with your fundamentally unconditioned nature, you should regard positive and negative actions equally.
 Having come to understand the true nature of the six avenues of consciousness, you should discern no real separation between formal meditation and postmeditation activity.
 Having come to clearly see that negative emotions are expressions of timeless awareness, you should know that they are to be neither indulged in nor rejected.
 Since the way of abiding is primordially pure, you should understand the equalness of samsara and nirvana.
 You will thus be a yogin with a supreme understanding of equalness.

KEEPING YOUR MIND FROM STRAYING

Six pieces of advice are given on what will keep you from straying:
 Once you realize that nothing you perceive has true existence, your mind will not stray into confused perception.
 Once you realize that anything you do is meaningless, your mind will not stray into mundane thinking.
 Once you realize that your self-centeredness is a pitfall, your mind will not stray into the Hinayana approach.
 Once you realize that things are unborn within the ground of being, your mind will not stray into concepts about origination or cessation.
 Once you realize that mind itself has no fixed frame of reference, your mind will not stray into fixation on ordinary characteristics.
 Once you realize that the true nature of reality does not require that anything be done, your mind will not stray into attempts to achieve anything.
 As an indication that you have realized the way of abiding, you will experience these things as a matter of course.

WHAT NOT TO SUCCUMB TO

Six pieces of advice are given on what not to succumb to:
 Do not succumb to practicing postmeditation techniques haphazardly; vanquish all thoughts, coarse or subtle.
 Do not succumb to progressing haphazardly on the spiritual paths and levels; eliminate the two kinds of obscuration.
 Do not succumb to observing the principle of cause and effect haphazardly; make moral choices based on what is to be accepted or rejected. [46b]
 Do not succumb to meditating haphazardly; experience natural lucidity without ordinary concepts.

Do not succumb to conducting yourself haphazardly; make all your plans and activities spiritual ones.
Do not succumb to acting haphazardly; follow the examples of holy masters.
Whoever heeds this advice will get to the very core of the sacred dharma.

FLAWS TO ELIMINATE

Six pieces of advice concern flaws to eliminate:
When, as you are poised to realize the view, it seems that there is nothing to be done,
you must identify the flaw of losing focus in your practice.
When you still strive to rest in a naturally lucid state of meditative stability,
you must identify the flaw of becoming ambitious in meditation.
When you fail to discern the pristine lucidity of mind, and are merely steeped in mental laxity and drowsiness,
you must identify the flaw of straying from the focus of your attention.
When you perceive even one thing as solid, regardless of whether you have experienced signs of meditative warmth,
you must identify the flaw of being bound, if only slightly.
When you try to focus on one thing, but find that extraneous thoughts crowd in,
you must identify the flaw of being robbed by your thoughts.
You may suppress the five emotional poisons when resting in meditative equipoise,
but the flaw lies in not having severed their root, for you still experience them strongly in postmeditation;
you must recognize that you have not yet realized mind itself.
Once you identify these flaws, it is crucial to free yourself from them using antidotes.

DECISIVE EXPERIENCES

Coming to a decisive experience of six principles will liberate you from samsara:
The way of abiding is, by nature, beyond the scope of the rational mind,
although at the outset it tends to be misconstrued as a mental construct.
Fixations and concepts that reify your meditative experiences are what make up samsara;
while on the path, you need not pay attention to such experiences.
The domain of total purity is the nonduality of samsara and nirvana;
in the context of the fruition, benefit for beings does not involve deliberate action.
Self-knowing awareness, untainted by the rational mind, is the way of abiding, the ground of being;
because it is not an object that can be known, it is free of elaboration. [47a]
In general, the authentic path lies in not conceptualizing or reifying;
it is free of all frames of reference involving the complexity of thought.
The consummate and most sublime fruition does not entail focusing on ordinary characteristics;
it is natural lucidity pure and simple, unobscured and free of bias.
Whoever understands all of this is a great yogin of spaciousness.

MODES OF REALIZATION

It is taught that there are six modes of realization:
There is realization that arises as a result of someone's words—the guru's pith instructions.

There is realization with respect to the objects you perceive—
like illusions, they have no true existence.
There is realization with respect to the mind that perceives
them—like space, it has no fixed basis.
There is realization with respect to the essence of awareness—
it is unobscured and utterly naked.
There is realization with respect to the significance of what is
seen—it is beyond the limits of the rational mind.
There is realization of the indwelling confidence born of
meditation—it is the point at which everything resolves
within the ground of being.
For whoever has such realization, the spacious expanse of
enlightened intent
is the timeless and spontaneously present state of utter relaxation,
with no deliberate design or action.

OBSTACLES OF MARAS

Six situations are caused by maras and become obstacles:
forsaking your guru and relying on undesirable companions;
forsaking enlightenment and following the path of samsara;
forsaking what is in your own best interest and merely going
through the motions of working for the benefit of others;
forsaking the intention to relinquish your own desires and
pursuing the eight mundane concerns;
forsaking solitude and engaging in busyness and distractions;
and forsaking nonduality and becoming caught up in speculation
about the ordinary characteristics of things.
A person in such circumstances has been blessed by the maras,
and so has mistakenly followed counsel that will bring endless
suffering.

BEING VIGILANT

Six points concern the need to be vigilant and undistracted:
Your behavior is naturally like that of an elephant on the loose;
you must be vigilant so that you do not blunder into a swamp of
misery. [47b]
View is by nature the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness;
you must be vigilant so that you are not carried off by the demon
of belief in a self.
Utter lucidity, the innate clarity of awareness, is like a small
child;
you must be vigilant so that it does not wander into a state of
confusion.
Devotion, the root of blessings, is like a crop to be harvested;
you must be vigilant so that it is not blighted by the frost of
erroneous views.
Enlightenment is like a lamp guiding you along the path to
liberation;
you must be vigilant so that it does not seem to flicker in the wind
of your desires.
The nectar of immortality lies in the instructions of your gurus;
you must be vigilant so that it is not tainted by the poison of
doubts.
It is thus essential to be vigilant and undistracted.

ORDINARY MIND

There are six ways in which you fail to realize the meaning of
reality:
Your ordinary mind, conceiving in terms of origination, cannot
realize what is without origination, because that transcends
the ordinary mind.

Your ordinary mind, conceiving of things as substantial, cannot realize emptiness, because that transcends there being an object.

Your ordinary mind, conceiving of something to be done, cannot realize what requires that nothing be done, because that is freedom from anything ever needing to be done.

Your ordinary discursive mind cannot comprehend nonduality, because that transcends thought.

Your ordinary fixating mind cannot fathom freedom from extremes, because that is freedom from bias.

Your ordinary mind, concerned with conduct, cannot realize true simplicity, because that transcends all elaboration.

So do not fixate on the ordinary characteristics of things, for the significance of the way of abiding is such that it cannot be imagined, but is utterly simple, free of all concepts and frames of reference.

DISCERNING THE WAY OF ABIDING

Six points pertain to discerning the very essence of the way of abiding:

Self-knowing awareness pure and simple, uncontrived and unadulterated,

is not ordinary; it is the very opposite of a neutral state.

It is not a state of all-consuming thought patterns, for it is free of the duality

of something perceived and someone who perceives.

It is not the mind that applies antidotes, for it is altogether beyond the process of eliminating things with antidotes.

It is your own self-knowing awareness, not seen by anything other than itself;

but it shouldn't be thought of as a "self," for it transcends all experiences that involve a reference point. [48a]

It is ever-present, yet this secret is difficult to understand;

it is all-pervasive and completely transcends any question of realization or the lack thereof.

Whoever understands this truly grasps the significance of the way of abiding.

YOUR TRUE NATURE

Your true nature is evidenced in six ways:

There is a pristine quality to its natural lucidity when you recognize your true nature.

There is an immediacy to its unhindered expression even when you do not recognize it.

There is a vividness to its natural clarity when you perceive anything.

There is a clarity to its all-illuminating expression even when you are conscious of things in a dualistic way.

There is a pristine quality to its freedom from any limitation when you rest in meditative equipoise.

There is a direct sense of its seamlessness that is experienced whether the mind is active or at rest.

If you understand these key points, you have reached the highest stage of a yogin.

WHAT TO DISMISS

There are six things to dismiss in pursuing spiritual practice:

You must dismiss fatigue, hunger, thirst, and other hardships.

You must dismiss your social and business connections.

You must dismiss your attachment to friends, aversion to enemies, and concern for profit and fame.

You must dismiss your fascination with the objects of your five senses.

You must dismiss your desire to seek praise and avoid blame.

You must dismiss the use of antidotes to eliminate thoughts, and let them vanish of their own accord.
If you dismiss these things, the path of liberation will surely lead to enlightenment.

THE SIX PARAMITAS

The way to practice is never to be without the six paramitas:
Do not let your generosity be assailed by its foe, avarice.
Do not let your discipline be overcome by the bandits of self-indulgence.
Do not let your patience be wounded by the weapon of anger.
Do not let your diligence be bound by the chains of laziness.
Do not let your meditative stability be contaminated by the poison of distraction.
Do not let your sublime knowing be obscured by the darkness of delusion. [48b]
In this way, practice by eliminating these six antithetical influences.

THOSE WHO LACK KARMIC POTENTIAL

Six kinds of people are said to naturally lack a certain karmic potential:
People who think of their suffering as an adornment to their lives lack the karmic potential to attain liberation.
People whose conduct is dictated by others' opinions lack the karmic potential to overcome confusion.
People who study and contemplate for profit or acclaim lack the karmic potential to undertake spiritual practice.
People who commit negative, harmful actions lack the karmic potential to take rebirth in higher realms.
People who are uninspired and lazy lack the karmic potential to cultivate meditative experiences.

People who believe in a self and react out of attachment and aversion lack the karmic potential to attain spiritual realization.
It is vital that you yourself not fall under the sway of people who lack such potential.

OBSERVING THE MIND

There are six ways to observe the mind during meditation:
At times, observe the mind while it is at rest and stable;
for those who understand that mind is free of the three factors of origination, cessation, and location,
the key point is to gain familiarization that brings mastery of mind itself.
At times, look at the very essence of your meditative experience in the moment;
for those who understand that mind is not confined by specific limits and that no object of attachment exists,
the key point is to realize the natural, unborn manifestation of pure joy.
At times, notice how your enlightened qualities have increased;
for those who understand that these are naturally free, an unceasing magical display,
the key point is to adopt the conduct that reveals unborn enlightened qualities.
At times, while resting in meditative equipoise, examine the significance of the true nature of reality;
for those who understand that it is naturally occurring, supremely blissful, and timelessly pure,
the key point is to incorporate an awareness of the equalness of all phenomena into the spiritual path.
At times, look at pure awareness, naturally at rest whether directed inwardly or outwardly;

for those who understand that samsara is, in fact, free of dualistic perception, the key point is to thoroughly investigate the unique state of ultimate reality. [49a]

At times, look at pure awareness, naturally at rest without being cultivated in meditation;

for those who understand that view and meditation in themselves do not require that anything be done, the key point is to be introduced directly to the naked perception of dharmakaya as their very essence.

Fortunate yogins who adhere to these six key points will be overjoyed when ordinary consciousness falls away in the state in which all phenomena resolve within their true nature.

WHAT IS IGNOBLE BY NATURE

Six points concern what is ignoble by nature and should be eliminated:

People who are avaricious and feel impoverished will not accumulate what is necessary to take rebirth as a human being.

People who lack faith and do not rely on gurus will not amass a wealth of spiritual advice.

People who do not strive to put into practice whatever they understand will not find the path to enlightenment.

People who are attached to loved ones, to friends and relations, will not find an ally in the after-death state.

People who believe in a self will not turn back the hordes of the four maras.

People who are slaves to their desires will not achieve anything lasting.

Such people limit themselves by reinforcing these six negative tendencies.

Therefore, it is crucial to undertake noble actions.

WHAT IS NECESSARY BY NATURE

Six steps are explained to be necessary by nature:

Initially you should feel disenchantment with samsara and have the will to be free of it;

to this end, you must focus on the dharma and not get caught up in sense objects.

Then, you should learn to let your mind find repose;

to this end, you must know how to relax within the enlightened form, speech, and mind of the victorious ones.

Then, you should greatly inspire your mind;

to this end, you must not be timid, but rely on the indwelling confidence born of realization.

Then, you should achieve the most sublime state of mind, that of supreme bliss;

to this end, you must have an actual experience of original purity.

Then, you should cause such bliss to increase in others;

to this end, you must guide beings by means of the four kinds of enlightened activity. [49b]

Then, you should dwell on the level from which there is no turning back;

to this end, you must have an actual experience of all-embracing spontaneous presence.

It is crucial to reach the consummate state by taking these six necessary steps.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

There are six instances in which you can incorporate something into your spiritual practice rather than reject it:

Look at the very essence of your various thoughts and memories when you are not meditating;

recognition of the very essence of anything you experience, in its own ground,

will certainly free whatever you perceive within the realm in which everything is unborn.
 Look at your state of mind when you engage in meditation; recognition of the equalness of pleasure and pain and their respective causes
 will certainly bring freedom in the state in which they are indivisible, in which what you ordinarily accept and reject are equal.
 During the main part of your practice, examine your unborn and incorruptible nature;
 the recognition that mind itself naturally ensures the manifestation of everything
 will certainly lead to the gradual immersion of your mind in its unborn nature.
 When you rise from meditative equipoise, look at the essence of your subsequent awareness;
 the recognition that it merges with the ultimate nature of mind itself, such that there is no duality,
 will certainly immerse you in the state in which meditation and postmeditation are indivisible.
 Then, look at the very essence of all the thoughts stirring in your mind;
 the recognition that any negative emotions that arise subside in and of themselves
 will certainly unite consciousness and what it perceives within the original ground of being.
 Notice the unity of three phases: the preparation, the main part of practice, and the conclusion;
 the recognition that all three are like the flight of a bird, which leaves no trace,
 will certainly bring realization of the single key point concerning the nature of the three times.
 With such recognition, you will continue to experience the true nature of reality following periods of formal practice.

COMPLETE PRACTICE

It is taught that there are six ways to make your practice complete:
 Seek refuge as a result of your fear of the suffering of samsara.
 Tame your mind with faith, following the examples of the victorious ones. [50a]
 Aware of the great merit involved, be generous without reservation and strive at your twofold development.
 With self-respect and modesty, devote yourself to a spiritual life.
 With wisdom, investigate what is meaningful, experiencing the true nature of mind and what it perceives.
 Those whose practice is thus complete will reach the far shore of samsara.

UNDERTAKING WHAT IS ESSENTIAL

There are six essential things to undertake in spiritual practice:
 Abandon the filthy swamp of the affairs of this life.
 Do whatever it takes to erect the throne and parasol⁴⁶ of timeless awareness, free of limitations.
 Do whatever it takes to dispel the pitch-dark gloom of ignorance.
 Do whatever it takes to nurture the seedlings of meditative experiences and realization, temporary though they be.
 Do whatever it takes to wake up from the dream of perceptions based on the confusion of dualistic consciousness.
 Do whatever it takes to acquire the treasure that is the fruition of the three kayas.
 These are the instructions of holy masters; keep them in your heart!

TRAINING IN WHAT IS EXCELLENT

There are six ways to train in what is by nature excellent:
 by eliminating physical actions that are based on confusion;
 by eliminating meaningless talk;

by eliminating the thoughts proliferating and dissolving in your mind;
 by eliminating your impulsive fascination with sense pleasures;
 by eliminating associations that cause distraction and dissipating busyness;
 by eliminating attempts to win over others' minds.
 Whoever trains in these ways will put the sacred dharma into practice as is intended.

THE TRAP OF BELIEFS

There are six ways to be trapped by the beliefs you hold:
 by believing that there is some “thing” that is free of the ordinary mind and its conceptual elaborations;
 by believing that there is some “thing” that is a state of primordial unity, the indivisibility of bliss and emptiness;
 by believing that there is some “thing” that is totally pure, like space, with no frame of reference;
 by believing that there is some “thing” that is emptiness imbued with the heart of timeless awareness;
 by believing that there is some “thing” that is awareness contained within an environment of light;⁴⁷ [50b]
 and by believing that there is some “thing” that is naturally occurring timeless awareness, primordially and timelessly free.
 Having only a partial grasp of what is ultimately so is like trying to describe an elephant;⁴⁸
 you remain fixated on the way you characterize things, naively believing in their identity.
 Therefore, free yourself from the trap of such biases and belief in identity,
 and come to a decisive experience of the supremely spacious state free of limitations—
 self-knowing awareness, which is free of any bias, any sense of “is” or “is not.”

NATURAL CESSATION

Six things naturally cease through spiritual practice:
 Outwardly, consciousness that reifies things naturally ceases.
 Inwardly, consciousness that reifies itself and conceptualizes naturally ceases.
 On the secret level, any frame of reference that involves the essence of what you perceive naturally ceases.
 Any speculative ideas about suchness naturally cease.
 In the final analysis, the very essence of meditative experiences is such that they naturally cease.
 In the context of awareness, the seeming discrepancy between formal meditation and postmeditation naturally ceases.
 These six processes bring you to the consummate point at which everything resolves within enlightened intent.

WAYS NOT TO WAVER

In your pursuit of spiritual practice, there are six ways in which you should never waver:
 You should never waver from experiencing your body as the mandala of victorious ones.
 You should never waver from experiencing your speech as enlightened speech that benefits beings.
 You should never waver from experiencing your mind as the enlightened intent of dharmakaya.
 You should never waver from experiencing food and drink as offerings of nectar.
 You should never waver from experiencing sitting and moving around as enlightened activities that are like a magical illusion.
 Your spiritual practice should never waver from the ultimate nature of reality.
 Those who have trained in these six points enjoy the treasury of the most majestic of sublime secrets.

ANALOGIES THAT ILLUSTRATE SAMBARA

Six analogies illustrate the nature of sambara:
Like someone who appears in a magical illusion, none of sambara has true existence.
Moreover, like myriad dream images, your perceptions are based on confusion.
Like the moon's reflection in water, nothing that manifests has an independent nature. [51a]
Like clouds, pleasure and pain, good and bad all change.
Like dew, things are impermanent, sometimes perceptible and sometimes not.
Like bubbles in water, things occur naturally and disappear naturally.
It is crucial to meditate on these analogies and apply them to your own experience.

ANALOGIES THAT ILLUSTRATE NIRVANA

Six analogies illustrate the nature of nirvana:
Like the sun's rays subsumed within the sun, things in all their variety are subsumed within mind itself.
Like a lotus growing out of the mud, mind itself is unsullied by flaws.
Like the properties of a wish-granting gem, enlightened qualities are spontaneously present.
Like the sun or moon unobscured by clouds, natural lucidity is unobscured by thoughts.
Like clear open space, the all-pervasive state is not subject to limitations.
Like a great ocean, relative reality is a constant presence.
Whoever understands these analogies will gain freedom in the nonduality of sambara and nirvana.

ENCOURAGING YOURSELF

There are six ways to encourage yourself by considering what is crucial:
It is crucial to become involved in the dharma, so make up your mind.
It is crucial to inspire yourself to engage in spiritual practice, so motivate yourself.
It is crucial to rely on antidotes, so be your own best counsel.
It is crucial to meet challenges, so take responsibility for your own actions.
It is crucial to pursue your spiritual practice to the furthest limit, so ensure your own success.
It is crucial to liberate beings of the six classes, so take care of your own companions.
This is advice for everyone, so take it to heart!

BLENDING PRACTICE WITH YOUR EXPERIENCE

There are six ways to blend spiritual practice with your experience:
Examine again and again what you have done, positive or negative.
Rein in your entrenched concepts.
Always pray undistractedly and with devotion.
Act conscientiously in accordance with the words of the Buddha and the commentaries. [51b]
Relate to the natural manifestations of your awareness with the indwelling confidence born of realization.
Make enlightened intent, free of bias, the basis of any action you perform.
If you follow this advice, the path of liberation is sure to lead to enlightenment.

WHAT YIELDS NO RESULTS

Six circumstances yield no results for those who follow the dharma:

If they lack the fertile field of faith, they will not experience the blissful fruition.

If they do not rely on learned and venerable gurus, they will not dispel the darkness that obscures awareness.

If they do not actually practice the sacred dharma that leads to happiness and well-being, they will be inundated by suffering.

If they do not take the ten kinds of positive action as guidelines on their spiritual path, they will lose the very root of the dharma.

If they do not move beyond their present circumstances, they will be bound by the shackles of indolence.

If they do not have the eye of sublime knowing, they will fall into the abyss of samsara.

These circumstances yield no results, so it is essential to pursue spiritual practice vigorously.

MISGUIDED HOPES

Six kinds of hope are by nature misguided:

the hope that you will not experience the suffering of lower realms even though you commit harmful actions;

the hope that you will experience the happiness of higher realms even though you do not undertake positive actions;

the hope that confusion will dissipate even though you have not eliminated your negative emotions;

the hope that you will attain buddhahood even though you do not strive at your twofold development;

the hope that you will be happy in future lifetimes even though whatever you do is intended solely for this lifetime;

and the hope that you will not wander in samsara even though you don't undertake spiritual practice, the path to liberation. You may hold out such hopes, but they are doomed from the start.

REBIRTH IN HIGHER REALMS

Six factors are necessary for attaining the fortunate circumstance of rebirth in a higher realm:

You have the appropriate karmic predisposition as a result of having been thoroughly involved in your twofold development in former lifetimes.

In this present life, you maintain a straightforward and honest approach in thought, word, and deed.

You do not harm beings of any kind in any way.

You are certain about the effects of karma, making precise distinctions between positive and negative actions.

You aspire to a noble view, the definitive meaning of truth.

You have faith and devotion, and diligently put the dharma into practice. [52a]

The joy and happiness of rebirth in a higher realm will be in the palm of your hand.

REBIRTH IN LOWER REALMS

Six things can contribute to rebirth in lower realms:

You indulge in anger, which makes your disposition harsh.

You disparage positive actions and applaud harmful ones.

Being devious and cunning, you use clever means to mislead others.

You are envious upon seeing others' success.

You are avaricious, obsessed with wealth, and devoid of generosity.

You belittle others and have great pride and self-importance.
Anyone who has such traits can be sure of rebirth in a lower realm,
with immeasurable suffering and no chance of liberation.

THE PATH TO LIBERATION

There are six ways to put the sacred dharma into practice on the
path to liberation:
By relying on learned gurus with intense devotion,
you will get to the very root of what results from extensive study
and contemplation.
Without a protector or source of refuge to grant you blessings,
you will be seduced by obstructive maras in the after-death state,
so keep the Three Jewels with you.
Without being dismayed by your biased reactions to enemies and
friends,
you will not escape from the swamp of negative emotions, so free
yourself from the maras of attachment and aversion.
Without employing the sentry of alertness,
you will fall into the abyss of lower realms of rebirth, so always be
heedful.
Without the reinforcements of your spiritual activities,
you cannot win the battle against samsara, so exert yourself in
activities to renew and refine your commitments to practice.
If you have no appreciation of the nonreferential state,
you will not attain enlightenment through conventional positive
actions, so base your actions on wisdom.
If you strive in these ways, you will swiftly attain enlightenment.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

There are six ways to work on something positive—your spiritual
development:

Showing respect for your spiritual superiors holds enormous
potential for development, [52b]
so make offerings to gurus, chosen deities, and dakinis—this is
essential.

Benefiting those under you holds enormous potential for
development,
so with immeasurable compassion, care for those who are
suffering or in need—this is essential.

Viewing the sacred dharma inwardly without sectarian bias
holds enormous potential for development,
so exert yourself in listening to, contemplating, and meditating
on spiritual teachings.

Benefiting those around you holds enormous potential for
development,
so arouse your altruistic motivation, explain the dharma, and act
as a protector, a refuge, an ally, and a friend.

Not basing your frame of reference on ordinary characteristics
holds enormous potential for development,
so avoid self-importance, arrogance, and fixation on such
characteristics.

Experiencing the way of abiding in all situations holds enormous
potential for development,
so realize the ultimate significance of the Three Jewels in your
practice.

If you act in these ways, you will swiftly attain buddhahood.

BRINGING RUIN ON YOURSELF

There are six ways to bring ruin on yourself:
Not to heed advice given out of love
is to bring ruin on yourself, like the tortoise that let go of a stick
grasped in its jaws.⁴⁹
To commit negative actions and still hope for happiness

is to bring ruin on yourself, like someone swallowing poison and hoping to enjoy the experience.
 To abandon your guru and rely instead on harmful companions is to bring ruin on yourself, like someone eluding a bodyguard and walking into the midst of enemies.
 To relinquish spiritual values and embrace worldly ones is to bring ruin on yourself, like someone renouncing a kingdom and ending up a simple herdsman.
 It is critical not to succumb to these influences.

ADVICE TO YOURSELF

You can advise yourself not to follow six pursuits:
 Do not frequent towns; rather, remain in solitary retreat.
 Do not adopt rigid values; rather, be peaceful and gentle in thought, word, and deed.
 Do not let your mind become wild; rather, focus your attention on the dharma.
 Do not become irresponsible; rather, fulfill your pledges and commitments. [53a]
 Do not flout your samaya; rather, honor your gurus and spiritual siblings.
 Do not feel impoverished; rather, be spacious and open-minded.
 It is absolutely crucial that you sleep in the bed of a happy mind.

LOSS

There are six ways to suffer loss, which you should consider carefully:
 Your gracious gurus are kind old fathers;
 you would lose by forgetting them, so honor and pray to them.
 Beings of the six classes are kind old mothers;
 you would lose by leaving them to suffer, so lead them onto the path to bliss.

You have a body, speech, and a mind that are endowed with freedom and opportunity;
 you would lose by taking them for granted, so undertake positive actions for the sake of others.
 You have excellent companions and, to grant you siddhis, chosen deities;
 you would lose by being separated from them, so always keep them close by honoring them.
 You have an excellent child, the lovely youth of naturally occurring awareness;
 you would lose by giving it over to confusion, so adopt a firm stance in experiencing the true nature of reality.
 You have received an inheritance, the precious gem of mind itself, from your ancestors;
 you would lose by squandering it, so cherish it without distraction.
 These six points are vital if you are to attain an ongoing state of authentic being.

INCOMPLETE PRACTICE

Not completing your spiritual practice has six drawbacks:
 Despite your wish not to suffer by taking rebirth in conditioned existence,
 this will come to pass, like spring water gushing up through the earth.
 Despite your wish not to suffer by growing old and decrepit,
 this will come to pass, like a flower withering from a frost.
 Despite your wish not to suffer acutely from illness,
 this will come to pass, like a fish writhing on hot sand.
 Despite your wish not to suffer in your relationships,
 this will come to pass, like a camel grieving for her lost calf.
 Despite your wish not to suffer on account of enemies and demons, [53b]

this will come to pass, like a small bird being pursued by a hawk.
 Despite your wish not to die, with the intense suffering death
 entails,
 this will come to pass, like a flame being extinguished by the wind.
 Please contemplate these points and make an effort to put the
 dharma into practice.

UNREQUITED WISHES

Six cautionary observations concern what will not happen despite
 your wishes:
 Although you may wish to be with your spouse and loved ones
 now and forever,
 and never be separate from them, you will surely have to part.
 Although you may wish to live in your grand house and sleep in
 your fine bed now and forever,
 and never be apart from them, you will surely leave them.
 Although you may wish to enjoy wealth and happiness now and
 forever,
 and never be dispossessed of them, you will surely have to let
 them go.
 Although you may wish to maintain this excellent human
 existence, with its freedom and opportunity, now and forever,
 and never lose it, you will surely die.
 Although you may wish to receive teachings from noble gurus now
 and forever,
 and never be deprived of them, you will surely part from them.
 Although you may wish to associate with holy companions now
 and forever,
 and never be separate from them, you will surely have to leave them.
 From today onward, don the armor of diligence;
 it is time to journey to the land of supreme bliss, from which you
 will never depart.

Out of the depths of my dissatisfaction, I—a beggar devoid of the
 dharma—
 implore my friends with these words.

WHAT COMES UNBIDDEN

Six things will come to you as a matter of course, unbidden:
 There is no need for the things of samsara, so turn your back on
 them
 and the bliss of nirvana will come to you as a matter of course,
 unbidden.
 Because of your unbiased faith and unremitting diligence in
 pursuing all that is positive,
 the bliss and happiness that the sacred dharma brings will come
 to you as a matter of course, unbidden.
 In whatever you do, practice according to the instructions of
 your holy gurus [54a]
 and profound advice will come to you as a matter of course,
 unbidden.
 Train your mind in the four immeasurable attitudes
 and benefit for others—benefit for all beings—will come as a
 matter of course, unbidden.
 Give up your desire for things, instead devoting everything you
 have to your spiritual development,
 and riches and opportunity will come to you as a matter of
 course, unbidden.
 Cultivate the enlightened intent of buddhahood, which cannot
 be gained or lost,
 and your confused perceptions and fixation on self will vanish as
 a matter of course, unbidden.
 If you practice according to the scriptures, such results are
 certain to come about.

THINGS TO CONTEMPLATE

Six essential considerations warrant your thorough contemplation:
To feel disgust for your confused perceptions in samsara,
you need the kind of revulsion you would experience upon seeing
a swamp of rotting corpses.
To avoid negative, harmful actions,
you need the kind of conscientiousness you would have if your
prospective spouse had just arrived.
To feel regret for actions that are antithetical to the dharma,
you need the kind of mindfulness of resultant suffering that you
would upon ingesting poison.
To be capable of overpowering your negative emotions, which
must be eliminated,
you need antidotes that are like the lion, the king of beasts.
To be capable of allowing any thought that arises to be free in its
own ground,
you need to meet it directly, like a drop of water dissolving salt on
contact.
To understand how to delineate precisely what is spiritual and
what is not,
you need sublime knowing, as capable of differentiation as the bill
of a swan.⁵⁰
If you have these six things, you will be in harmony with the entire
sacred dharma.

WHAT IS REQUIRED OF THE GREATEST YOGINS

Six things are required of the greatest yogins:
Their view must be as majestic as a monarch, so that they can
attain the levels of realization.
Their conduct must be like a monarch's minister, so that they
know how to act in a timely way.
Their observance of commitments must be like a vigilant

gatekeeper, so that they are capable of dealing with
circumstances.

Their sublime knowing must be like a good servant, whose
presence is felt everywhere. [54b]
Their thoughts must be like clouds, which vanish naturally.
Their enlightened qualities must be like a royal treasure house,
so that they have whatever is needed.
If they fulfill these six requirements, the spontaneous
accomplishment of the two kinds of benefit will be ensured.

NOBLE GOALS

In the sacred dharma, there are six ways to ensure the
accomplishment of noble goals:
If you wish to be a ruler among leaders, encourage yourself to put
the dharma into practice.
If you wish to be a ruler among champions, vanquish the hordes
of your negative emotions.
If you wish to be a ruler among elders, take the oral transmission
of the Buddha's words as your counsel.
If you wish to be a ruler among the powerful, tame the demon of
believing in a self.
If you wish to be a ruler among the affluent, consolidate the
wealth of your twofold development.
If you wish to be a ruler among healers, cure yourself of the
chronic disease caused by your own faults.
If you understand these points, you will be foremost among gods
and humans.

FOES

You should be on the lookout for foes under six circumstances:
When the dharma gives you faith and the will to be free of
samsara,

the love and counsel of your family and friends rise up as your foes.
 When you renounce the activities that perpetuate samsara, the entanglements of attachment and fixation rise up as your foes.
 When you are engaged in spiritual activity and generously give away your food and wealth, an attitude of self-importance, reinforced by others' reactions, rises up as your foe.
 When you are putting profound spiritual instructions into practice, indecisiveness, doubt, and hesitation rise up as your foes.
 When warmth and other signs of the flourishing of your meditative experiences arise, ebullient, obsessive, and conceptual reactions to them rise up as your foes.
 When the doorway to experiencing myriad enlightened qualities opens for you, pride and self-centeredness rise up as your foes.
 It is crucial to be on the lookout for such foes rising up against you. [55a]
 As you cultivate forbearance, a loving attitude is the best armor.

DESIGNATIONS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Six designations are given to those who undertake spiritual practice:
 If they are self-reliant in their practice of the dharma, they are called warriors.
 If they devote themselves to positive thoughts, words, and deeds, they are called the faithful.
 If they are not deceitful or treacherous, they are called noble ones.
 If they recognize an incorrect path as incorrect, they are called intelligent ones.

If they incorporate everything in their lives into the dharma, they are called successes.
 If they have great altruism and compassion, they are called Mahayana practitioners.
 You should train in the conduct of these holy people.

LIBERATION FROM SUFFERING

There are six ways in which you are liberated from the snare of suffering:
 Having attained a human existence marked by freedom and opportunity, you encounter the dharma.
 Having met authentic gurus, you develop devotion.
 Having abandoned the activities of samsara, you are not involved in dissipating busyness.
 Having heeded profound spiritual advice, you are no longer subject to error or obscuration.
 Having devoted your time to positive conduct, you are not complacent.
 Supreme bliss is spontaneously present, so it is free of any fixed frame of reference.
 With these six things in place, the pain of existence cannot defeat you.

WHAT CAN BE CONCLUDED

Six guidelines concern what can be concluded:
 If you do not remain alone and secluded out of a sense of dissatisfaction with the world, you can conclude that you have no real spiritual practice, be it focusing the mind or anything else.
 If you do not know how to interact with many kinds of people,

you can conclude that you have no skillful means and that you are disagreeable.

If you rely on gurus but fail to give up what is not spiritual, you can conclude that their blessings and good qualities have made no impression on you.

If you are full of yourself, undisciplined, and exceedingly proud, you can conclude that you do not value spiritual practice and have not realized the way of abiding.

If you have sought little spiritual instruction and are very lazy, you can conclude that you are not following the path to liberation, but are wandering in samsara.

If you consider your own welfare to be paramount and lack compassion, [55b]

you can conclude that you are not on the Mahayana path and have not developed bodhichitta.

I ask that you assess your inner motives by relying on these outer signs

and avoid making such mistakes, which are antithetical to the dharma.

WASTED OPPORTUNITIES

There are six ways to waste opportunities:

To be complacent about rebirth in lower realms and to reinforce negative, harmful behavior—

what a waste of your human existence, with its freedom and opportunity that are so difficult to find!

To enter the doorway of the dharma only to indulge in sectarianism—

what a waste of your faith in what is ultimately meaningful!

To be burdened with pride in what you have studied and contemplated—

what a waste of the sublime knowing that can bring realization of the way of abiding!

To give up your practice of the profound approach of secret mantra

and instead take on pointless endeavors—

what a waste of your ability to meet challenges!

To forsake sublime, nondual timeless awareness, the state of primordial unity,

and fixate on some limited idea of the union of form and emptiness—

what a waste of your meditation!

To abandon solitary places on mountainsides where you can practice the dharma

and to frequent monasteries and towns—

what a waste of your potential for attaining siddhis!

It is thus vital not to get sidetracked in these ways.

EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW

Past masters set six examples that you should follow:

If you wish to bring an end to habit patterns, obscurations, and the effects of harmful actions,

look to mind itself, which is by nature free of any fixed basis or foundation.

If you wish to find the wish-fulfilling gem that satisfies all wants and desires,

always strive to follow the profound spiritual path.

If you wish to realize the ultimate nature of reality, the way of abiding,

rest in and observe the nature that cannot be found through searching.

If you wish to put spiritual advice into practice, applying it to your own mind,

first tame your mind and then pursue practice. [56a]

If you wish, with all your heart, to practice the sacred dharma correctly,

cast off thoughts of this life and cut the ties of your fixations.
If you wish to swiftly follow in the wake of past masters,
consider their actions and behavior and take them as the core of
your practice.
These examples lie at the very heart of the pith instructions on
key points.

CONTRADICTING SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

Six actions contradict general spiritual principles:
To behave selfishly, feathering your own nest with everything
you desire,
and to expect that this will please others—this is not the way of
someone spiritual.
To make your own bed with dishonesty, guile, and deceit
and to expect that this will delight the Three Jewels—this is not
the way of someone spiritual.
To retreat to a place of solitude without practicing diligently
and then to blame the dharma for dashing your hopes—this is
not the way of someone spiritual.
To talk of compassion while acting out of self-interest
and to assume that this will ensure benefit for others—this is not
the way of someone spiritual.
To have a mind that believes in a self but lips that speak of
emptiness
and to hope that you are following the path to liberation—this is
not the way of someone spiritual.
To have self-interest at heart while speaking of freedom from
extremes
and yet to expect that you will realize the way of abiding—this is
not the way of someone spiritual.
Thus, avoid these shortcomings that undermine general spiritual
principles.

WHAT IS MOST POSITIVE AND EXCELLENT

Six things are most positive and excellent:
Now, while the teachings endure and you have attained a state of
freedom and opportunity,
it is time to swiftly flee from the pit of samsara.
Now, while you are putting into practice the essence of what you
have studied and contemplated,
it is time to merge your mind with the dharma, infusing yourself
with its meaning.
Now, while you are encountering so many kinds of suffering and
adverse conditions,
it is time to practice with fortitude.
Now, while their respective sense objects are manifesting
through the six avenues of consciousness, [56b]
it is time to experience the freedom of your dualistic perceptions
in their own ground.
Now, while familiarizing yourself with the meaning of view,
meditation, and conduct,
it is time to refine your experience of the dynamic quality of pure
awareness without bias.
Now, while pursuing what will serve you in the final analysis,
it is time to devote yourself to implementing the spiritual
instructions given to you out of love.
If you do not take stock of yourself and apply such timely
remedies,
you will be helpless at the time of your death, and the Lord of
Death will have the last laugh.

CONTRADICTIONS

There are six contradictions that will never lead to success:
It is a contradiction to want to determine what is in others'
interests

if you yourself have not achieved self-determination.
 It is a contradiction to want to benefit others
 if you have not ensured your own benefit and therefore cannot
 help them.
 It is a contradiction to want to be a teacher
 if you yourself do not yet have the qualifications of a student.
 It is a contradiction to want to tame others' minds
 if you have not tamed yourself, remaining like a stiff old piece of
 leather.
 It is a contradiction to want to teach others to meditate
 if you have not yet gained the confidence that your realization is
 sufficient for your own present needs.
 It is a contradiction to want to bring others to the dharma
 if you have not yet renounced your own ordinary behavior.
 It is vital not to be sullied by such inherently flawed
 contradictions.

EXCELLENT INCENTIVES

Six things are excellent incentives for putting the sacred dharma
 into practice:
 Should you wish to give up meaningless, mundane plans,
 let go of your compulsion for planning whenever you are moved
 to faith;
 if you indulge in planning, it will never end, like the relentless rise
 and fall of waves on the ocean.
 Should you wish to retire to some isolated place and pursue your
 spiritual practice,
 go whenever you think of doing so, without losing sight of your
 intention; [57a]
 if you don't do it then, adverse conditions will divert you in
 innumerable ways.
 When relying on a guru, you should heed the guru's instructions;

there is no chance that you will touch the guru's heart by being
 opinionated.
 When looking at mind itself, you should rest naturally, without
 contrivance;
 there is no chance that you will experience your true nature by
 trying to do so instead of by resting.
 When seeking to develop positive qualities, you should maintain
 genuine diligence;
 there is no chance that you will perfect those qualities by being
 half-hearted or inconsistent.
 When you are ushered into the ultimate state of resolution, this
 necessarily entails remaining true to the way of abiding;
 there is no chance that you will discover this state by seeking it
 elsewhere.

WAYS TO REALIZE THE WAY OF ABIDING

There are six ways to facilitate your realization of the way of
 abiding:
 Do not aspire to a position too high or noble; rather, keep a low
 profile.
 Do not attempt to be a leader of many; rather, serve those who
 are noble.
 Do not yearn for excellence or strive for fame; rather, tear down
 the mountain of your self-importance.
 Do not anticipate fulfilling your own selfish needs and achieving
 petty victories; rather, be content and accept defeat.
 Do not weigh others' positive or negative qualities; rather,
 examine whether your own character is good or bad.
 Do not be distracted by the objects of the six avenues of
 consciousness; rather, focus on the true nature of mind.
 The spiritual practice of someone who can apply such remedies
 will hit the mark.

SIX KINDS OF CERTAINTY

Six kinds of certainty are delineated in the pith instructions:
If you can summon up yearning devotion when you pray,
it is certain that you will realize mind itself, your true nature,
and receive blessings.
If you know how to relax with ease in a naturally settled state,
with nothing more to do,
it is certain that you will experience timeless awareness clearly,
just as it is—nondual self-knowing awareness.
If you know how to examine the true nature of dualistic
consciousness and your concepts about the ordinary
characteristics of things, [57b]
it is certain that you will gain freedom in your natural state,
in the immediacy of that nature, without any contrivance or
distortion.
If you know how to let your confused perceptions and concepts
based on dualistic consciousness settle in their own ground,
it is certain that you will experience the innate clarity of mind,
which is by nature nonconceptual timeless awareness.
If you focus intently on pure awareness through skillful means,
it is certain that you will experience the way of abiding,
the spontaneous presence of the primordial ground of being,
unwavering and free of elaboration.
If you continuously and diligently exert yourself, without
complacency or laziness,
it is certain that you will find within you the qualities and signs
of meditative warmth on the spiritual paths and levels.

WHAT IS ACTUALLY SO

There are six examples of what is actually so:
To deceive others with cunning is actually to deceive yourself.

To give the spoils of victory to others is actually to give them to
yourself.
To harm others out of malice is actually to bring injury on yourself.
The extent to which you benefit others is actually the extent to
which you benefit yourself.
To revile others out of envy is actually to revile yourself.
The extent to which you engage in twofold development for the
sake of others is actually the extent to which you improve
yourself.
It is rare to have such understanding, and rarer still to apply it to
your personal experience,
so train your mind to think about the significance of such things.

WHEN NO CHANCE PRESENTS ITSELF

There are six kinds of people to whom no chance presents itself:
People without faith or devotion have no chance of feeling cared
for by enlightened and compassionate beings.
People with no wisdom have no chance of being affected by the
teachings they have heard and contemplated.
People who do not uphold samaya have no chance of attaining
siddhis.
People who do not listen to teachings, even though they are given,
have no chance of being influenced by spiritual training.
People of ignoble character have no chance of being moved by the
dharma.
People who are ungrateful have no chance of being influenced by
the benefits they receive.

RESISTING THE DHARMA

There are six ways in which you might resist the dharma: [58a]
If you do not see the negative emotions within you as enemies,

you might resist your guru's advice, which comes from outside of you.
 If you do not turn your back on the mundane activities of this life, you might resist the opportunity to pursue spiritual practice.
 If you do not give up the insecurity that makes you plan for your old age, you might resist practicing the sacred dharma with heartfelt diligence.
 If you do not give rise to certainty within yourself, you might resist devotion for the dharma and the guru.
 If you do not give up negative, harmful actions, which perpetuate samsara, you might resist the compassionate guidance of those who are spiritually advanced.
 If you do not rid yourself of your obsession with things having to be a certain way, you might resist spiritual advice, which has no such bias.

ABSURDITIES

Six situations are so absurd they make you want to burst out laughing:
 Given that you have no way of determining how long you will live, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of planning as though your life will go on forever.
 Given that you have no way of determining whether you will be able to enjoy it, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of amassing wealth.
 Given that you have no way of determining whether you will ever wear them, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of making a great effort to acquire clothes.

Given that you have no way of determining whether you will eat it, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of being obsessed with food.
 Given that you have no way of determining whether you will spend time with them, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of going to a lot of trouble to make friends.
 Given that you have no way of determining whether you will get along with them, you want to burst out laughing at the absurdity of being attached to your children.
 Once you see how mundane and confused your behavior is, there are so many situations in which you want to burst out laughing at its absurdity.

NECESSITIES

It is taught that six things are necessary:
 Regardless of the circumstances, you must let go of everything you do in this world, [58b] so that, come what may, you will dispel the darkness of ignorance.
 Regardless of the circumstances, you must topple the stronghold of dualistic consciousness, so that, come what may, your meditative experiences, realization, and enlightened qualities will flourish.
 Regardless of the circumstances, you must experience timeless awareness, the state of primordial unity, so that, come what may, you will receive the wealth of the three kayas.

ALARMING SITUATIONS

It can be shown that six situations are causes for alarm:
 It is alarming when you do not know what is permitted or proscribed by the vows you uphold,

despite the many years that have passed since you took monastic ordination.
 It is alarming when you still need to learn what is virtuous or harmful,
 despite the many years that have passed since you entered the doorway of the dharma.
 It is alarming when you are no closer to training in the development of bodhichitta,
 despite the many years that have passed since you began practicing the Mahayana.
 It is alarming when you have no inclination to put the teachings into practice,
 despite the many years that have passed since you began listening to and contemplating them.
 It is alarming when you have not experienced signs of meditative warmth or given rise to enlightened qualities,
 despite the many years that have passed in your pursuit of meditation.
 It is alarming when you have not overcome your obvious fixations and confusion,
 despite the many years that have passed since you supposedly came to understand the view.
 Such circumstances, which can be likened to laying a foundation and erecting walls
 after the castle has already been built, are quite astounding.
 Once you become aware of them, you might want to laugh out loud, but on further reflection you will be saddened,
 so rely on holy masters and strive to listen to, contemplate, and meditate on spiritual teachings.

INNATE ATTRIBUTES

Six key points relate to the innate attributes of the true nature of reality:

Your true nature is seen by itself, without the need for examination or investigation.
 Samsara is originally pure, without having to be purified or thought of as pure.
 Your perceptions of the ordinary characteristics of things are freed in their own ground, without having to be eliminated or removed.
 The five kayas are spontaneously present, without having to be sought or accomplished.
 The true nature of reality transcends limitations, without faults having to be rejected or positive qualities adopted.
 Enlightened activity is spontaneously accomplished, without the need for deliberate action or exertion.
 Whoever is aware of this is learned in the essential key points.

SKILLFUL MENTORS

There are six ways in which mentors are skillful at giving spiritual instruction:
 They are skillful at evoking faith in those who lack faith. [59a]
 They are skillful at training others in the ethical discernment of what to adopt or avoid.
 They are skillful at ensuring that spiritual practice focuses on the key points.
 They are skillful at protecting others from obstacles and hindrances.
 They are skillful at presenting the oral lineage of teachings on primordial unity.
 They are skillful at transforming negative circumstances into the spiritual path.

REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS

Six conclusions can be shown to be reasonable by nature:
 Given that you need to rely on doctors to cure you of ordinary diseases,

it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus to cure you of the disease of samsara.
 Given that you need to rely on escorts to guide you through dangerous areas,
 it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus to protect you in the after-death state.
 Given that you need to rely on elders for good counsel,
 it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus for counsel with far-reaching implications.
 Given that you need to rely on more powerful people when you cannot do something alone,
 it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus to alleviate negative circumstances.
 Given that you need to rely on capable helmsmen when traveling by ship,
 it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus when crossing the ocean of suffering.
 Given that merchants need to rely on captains of oceangoing vessels,
 it is entirely reasonable to rely on gurus to ensure your attainment of enlightenment.

REFERENCE POINTS

Six alternative reference points are taught:
 Taking as your reference point the pain and suffering of illnesses that you endure now,
 consider whether you could withstand the suffering of the three lower realms.
 Taking as your reference point the lengths to which prisoners go to escape their confinement,
 consider whether you are wasting your life in the prison of samsara.

Taking as your reference point the effort you make to obtain food and clothing in this life,
 consider whether at present you are ignoring endeavors that will serve you forever.
 Taking as your reference point the problems posed by irritating companions you have known for only a short time,
 consider whether you can put up with more challenging companions—all beings, who are difficult to tolerate.
 Taking as your reference point the caution you exercise near an ordinary precipice, [59b]
 consider the suffering of falling into the abyss of lower realms.
 Taking as your reference point the sorrow of having a spouse die in this life,
 consider what it would be like to lose the dharma, your constant companion.
 Having contemplated these things, you will journey to the far shore of conditioned existence.

PITH INSTRUCTIONS TO PUT INTO PRACTICE

There are six pith instructions to put into practice:
 In that the sun illuminates the space around you,
 it is similar to naturally occurring timeless awareness, the unity of lucidity and emptiness; focus on that as the key point.
 You can view all the surrounding peaks from the summit of the highest mountain;
 likewise, you reach the pinnacle of enlightened intent when you behold the ultimate nature of mind itself.
 Someone who has reached the Isle of Gold cannot find any clumps of ordinary earth;
 similarly, you can observe that the sense objects that used to distract you now point directly to your own nature, the true nature of reality.

A freely moving breeze clears the sky of dust;
 similarly, you can let your concepts and perceptions of the
 ordinary characteristics of things dissolve in their own
 ground.
 The rain of weapons hurled at the Buddha was transformed into
 a shower of blossoms;
 likewise, you can transform everything you perceive into the
 path of dharmakaya.
 A lion has three majestic qualities that are innate and perfect;⁵¹
 similarly, the splendid state of equalness overwhelms ordinary
 reactions of hope and fear.
 Whoever understands these instructions has grasped the most
 profound key points.

INCORPORATING CIRCUMSTANCES INTO THE PATH

Six points summarize what is to be incorporated into your
 spiritual path:
 Once you have been directly introduced to the fact that
 your perceptions of the universe are based on confusion,
 incorporate pure perception into your path.
 Once you have been directly introduced to the fact that samsara
 is painful, incorporate compassion into your path.
 Once you have been directly introduced to the fact that the
 beings of the six classes have been your parents, incorporate
 your love for them into your path.
 Once you have been directly introduced to the principles of cause
 and effect and interdependent connection, incorporate the
 three levels of commitment into your path.
 Once you have been directly introduced to the nature of the four
 levels of empowerment and that of your body, speech, and
 mind, incorporate the stages of development and completion
 into your path.

Once you have been directly introduced to the fact that what you
 see and hear is actually mind itself, incorporate an awareness
 of the true nature of reality into your path.
 If you incorporate these things, you will not be vulnerable to
 potential error or obscuration.

PUTTING THINGS OFF

Six key points concern how to avoid succumbing to laziness: [60a]
 Wanting to find an ideal place for solitary retreat can be a way of
 putting things off;
 the key point is to keep your mind in solitude, far from dualistic
 consciousness.
 Wishing to find spiritual advice in mere words can be a way of
 putting things off;
 the key point is to undertake profound practice on the path of
 skillful means.
 Spending your life amassing riches can be a way of putting things
 off;
 the key point is to train in living contentedly with whatever you
 have.
 Making an ostentatious display of enthusiastically meditating
 and practicing can be a way of putting things off;
 the key point is to let go of the relentless exertion involved in all
 plans and activities.
 Simply investing effort in your spiritual development and
 purification, as well as the meditative experiences and
 realization these bring, can be a way of putting things off;
 the key point is to develop a direct and powerful means of
 focusing on the very heart of profound practice.
 Exerting yourself on the spiritual paths and levels step by step
 can be a way of putting things off;
 the key point is to develop a stable familiarity with mind itself as
 the three kayas.

If you put these points into practice, the enlightenment of buddhahood will be yours.

KEY POINTS OF PRACTICE

There are six key points in which it is meaningful to train:
Maintain your bodhichitta so that it never falters.
Continually engage in your practice of the paramitas and diligently pursue your twofold development.
Take part in spiritual discussions in order to refine your wisdom.
Remain in solitary hermitages in order to develop meditative stability.
Stay focused on the real meaning of your training in order to rid yourself of ordinary habits.
Honor your gurus in order to attain the most sublime level of realization.
Whoever trains in these ways has entered the great path of the most sublime spiritual approach.

SPIRITUAL PATHS

It is taught that six spiritual paths are excellent if you settle into them:
The path of the hermitage is that of eliminating physical and mental restlessness.
The path of complete practice is that of relieving yourself and others of hardship.
The path of excellence is that of having no regret and experiencing your true nature.
The path of settling in the authentic state is that of ensuring enlightened qualities. [60b]
The path of spiritual attainment is that of completing what you have begun.

The path of spontaneous presence is that of relying on the thorough training that you have already undergone.
Whoever settles into these paths, finding rest therein, will enjoy happiness and well-being.

OUTCOMES FOR MAHAYANA PRACTITIONERS

There are six outcomes for those who follow the Mahayana approach:
Their desire for the dharma leads to a natural experience of the true nature of reality.
Their desire to benefit beings inspires them to present the teachings in whatever way is appropriate.
Their desire to realize the true nature of mind inspires them to eliminate the three emotional poisons.
Their desire for sublime knowing leads them to an ongoing involvement with the dharma.
The fact that there are beings to be guided will influence them in all lifetimes.
Their desire to follow the path to liberation inspires them to rely on gurus.
Whoever is inspired in these ways will train in the dharma.

REMAINING FOCUSED

There are six things on which your mind should remain focused:
Your mind should remain focused on establishing a foundation of positive qualities.
It should remain focused on actively seeking the dharma.
It should remain focused on the intention to attain unsurpassable enlightenment.
It should remain focused on bodhichitta, with its concern for the welfare of others.

It should remain focused, day and night, on the ultimate nature of reality.
It should remain focused on cultivating disenchantment with the world and the will to be free of it.
Whoever focuses in these ways has entered the noble path of heirs of the victorious ones.

EXCELLENT USE OF SPEECH

It is taught that there are six ways in which speech can be put to excellent use:
Speech can make known the inexhaustible activity undertaken on behalf of beings.
Speech can thoroughly present the extensive range of spiritual practices.
Speech can extol the enlightened qualities of buddhahood.
Speech can fully reveal the infinite scope of the Mahayana.
Speech can fill space in the ten directions with the sound of the dharma.
Speech can destroy samsara and point to nirvana.
Anyone who uses speech in these ways is a great heir of the victorious ones. [61a]

EXCELLENT USE OF THE BODY

It is taught that there are six ways in which physical embodiment is put to excellent use:
There is embodiment as a human in order to bring human beings to spiritual maturity.
There is embodiment as a nonhuman in order to guide beings in lower realms.
There is embodiment in order to bring gods and demigods to spiritual maturity.

There is embodiment as a shravaka or pratyekabuddha in order to guide those of lesser capacity.
There is embodiment as a bodhisattva in order to bring beings to the Mahayana.
There is sambhogakaya embodiment that comes from a perfect mastery of the teachings.
Such modes of embodiment are accomplished spontaneously by those who have achieved genuine control and power.

HOW BODHISATTVAS USE THEIR HEADS

It can be shown that there are six ways in which heirs of the victorious ones use their heads:
They bow their heads to their gurus, who are endowed with sublime enlightened qualities,
in order to exert influence over our world and that of the gods.
They use their heads to bring back those who have abandoned the ways of the sugatas
and thus to ensure the uninterrupted heritage of the Three Jewels.
They use their heads to fulfill their aspirations regarding the profound state of total purity
and thus to become masters of the three-thousand-fold universe.
They use their heads to lead all beings to complete spiritual maturity
and thus to bring them onto the path of enlightenment.
They use their heads to abide in the transcendent perfection of sublime knowing
and thus to ensure that they completely attain the unsurpassable state.
They use their heads to devote their fundamentally positive qualities to the good of all
and thus are honored by beings in all three realms.
Those who use their heads in such ways will attain the mandala of the sublime spiritual levels.

HOW BODHISATTVAS USE THEIR EARS

There are six ways in which heirs of the victorious ones use their ears:
They do not react with fascination if what they hear is pleasant or with aversion if it is unpleasant.
They do not listen to others in order to take part in gossip or criticism.
They delight in listening to discussions of how beings become bodhisattvas.
When they hear of those born in realms devoid of the freedom to practice the dharma, they don the armor of compassion. [61b]
Because they love to hear buddhahood being extolled, they enthusiastically seek teachings.
They understand that all sounds in the worlds of the ten directions are echoes.
Use your ears to listen in these six ways.

HOW BODHISATTVAS USE THEIR EYES

Heirs of the victorious ones see things with six kinds of eyes:
With eyes of flesh, they see the forms of things in the world.
With the eyes of the gods, they see the various kinds of beings.
With the eyes of sublime knowing, they see the acumen of beings.
With the eyes of the dharma, they see phenomena just as they are.
With the eyes of those free of attachment, they do away with obscurations.
With the eyes of omniscience, they see the basic space of phenomena.
With such eyes, they completely ensure the welfare of beings.

HOW BODHISATTVAS USE THEIR HANDS

There are six ways in which heirs of the victorious ones use their hands:

With the hands of faith, they awaken devotion for and trust in the victorious ones.
With the hands of generosity, they satisfy the wants of the needy.
With the hands of sacred study, they eliminate doubts.
With the hands that bring happiness, they lead beings out of suffering.
With the hands that are free of avarice, they give beings spiritual instructions.
With the hands of respect, they develop themselves spiritually and honor the victorious ones.
Those who have such hands reveal the vision of the dharma.

HOW BODHISATTVAS USE THEIR LEGS

There are six ways in which heirs of the victorious ones use their legs:
With the legs of discipline, they realize their aspirations.
With the legs of diligence, they bring together all the factors that contribute to enlightenment.
With the legs of personal resolve, they finish what they have begun.
With the legs of harmony, they carry out their gurus' instructions.
With the legs of sublime knowing, they go beyond being content with simply listening to teachings.
With the legs of perseverance, they conduct themselves in a most excellent way.
Spiritual beings with such legs journey to the sublime level of the victorious ones.

ARMOR

There are six kinds of armor with which you can ward off harm inflicted by maras:
With the armor of love, you can protect beings. [62a]

With the armor of aspiration, you can finish what you have started.
 With the armor of compassion, you can liberate beings.
 With the armor of sublime knowing, you can dispel ignorance.
 With the armor of forbearance, you embody the Mahayana attitude.
 With the armor of skillful means, you can truly accomplish whatever is positive.
 These are supports for heirs of the victorious ones, whose conduct leads them through the spiritual levels.

WIELDING WEAPONS

It is taught that there are six ways to wield weapons:
 With the weapon of equalness, you can cut through dualistic perceptions.
 With the weapon of sublime knowing and timeless awareness, you can bring your negative emotions to an end.
 With the weapon of ethical livelihood, you can bring an end to improper livelihood.
 With the weapon of impeccable discipline, you can halt the momentum of inappropriate behavior.
 With the weapon of generosity, you can break out of the cage of avarice.
 With the weapon of resoluteness, you can bring beings to spiritual maturity.
 Wielding these weapons, you can extricate yourself from the entanglements of conditioned existence.

EXCELLENT ADVICE

There are six pieces of excellent advice:
 Although you may well understand that all beings are timelessly buddhas,

carry out your twofold development on a vast scale to liberate those beings.
 Although you may well understand that the pure realms of buddhahood are like space,
 apply yourself with incomparable diligence to create such realms.
 While remaining utterly undaunted by the task of bringing beings to spiritual maturity,
 do not ignore the fact that ultimately they lack any independent identity.
 While causing various emanations to manifest by means of supernormal powers born of insight,
 do not waver from the basic space of phenomena.
 Do not relinquish the resolve to attain sublime enlightenment,
 for your resolution will lead you to an experience of timeless awareness as omniscience.
 While meeting everyone's needs by turning the wheel of the dharma,
 do not in any way stray from the context of the true nature of reality. [62b]
 Those who follow such advice will attain the state of a sugata.

THE INFLUENCE OF MARAS

There are six things you should avoid, knowing them to be the influence of maras:
 allowing your mind to become unsettled by being discouraged about your intention to help others;
 becoming satisfied with trivial goals and incapable of meeting greater challenges;
 rejecting the sacred dharma by entertaining doubts about it;
 wanting liberation for yourself without bringing other beings to spiritual maturity;
 forsaking majestic conduct out of selfish concern for your lot in samsara;

and failing to formulate extraordinary aspirations and wishing only to quell your negative emotions.
These are the influence of maras, so distance yourself from them.

INDICATIONS OF BLESSINGS

There are six indications that you have received blessings from masters of the past:
You have developed the sublime attitude of bodhichitta, setting your sights on unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment.
You understand, and completely renounce, the influence of maras.
You listen to the teachings of the Mahayana and assiduously put them into practice.
You are not fainthearted in your work to benefit others in samsara.
You may teach the dharma of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas, but do not consider it supreme.
You may have realized enlightened intent, but conduct yourself by pursuing spiritual practice.
Such is the behavior of heirs of the victorious ones, who follow the sublime teachings.

MARAS THAT INFLUENCE TEACHERS

There are six ways in which those who want to teach the dharma are influenced by maras:
To withhold the sacred dharma from those who have no guide is to be influenced by maras.
To ignore students who are worthy recipients of the dharma is to be influenced by maras.
To teach the dharma for the sake of material gain is to be influenced by maras.
To give profound teachings to unworthy recipients is to be influenced by maras.

To teach a lesser approach to those who are inspired by the Mahayana is to be influenced by maras.
To teach in a desultory manner rather than in a way that truly motivates people is to be influenced by maras.
It is absolutely essential not to succumb to these influences.

MARAS THAT INFLUENCE STUDENTS

There are six ways in which students fall under the pernicious influence of maras, which they should avoid:
To shun spiritual mentors and seek bad company [63a] is to be influenced by maras and deprived of guides who can demonstrate the path.
To reject the Mahayana and pay heed to a lesser approach is to be influenced by maras and to stray into an erroneous path with all its pitfalls.
To abandon the path to liberation and seek mundane knowledge is to be influenced by maras and to be duped into undertaking counterproductive plans and actions.
To find rebirth objectionable and instead to strive for nirvana for yourself alone is to be influenced by maras and to allow chinks to develop in the armor of your bodhichitta.
To disparage the sacred dharma without ever being exposed to it is to be influenced by maras and confused about what to accept or reject.
To be unaware of what is not spiritual, or of what is positive or negative, of what to accept or reject, is to be influenced by maras and engulfed in the darkness of ignorance.
It is vital that worthy recipients of the teachings avoid these influences.

DEFENSES AGAINST MARAS

There are six ways to defend yourself against the pernicious influence of maras:
Having eliminated pride, honor and respect your spiritual mentors.
Having eliminated malice, sing the praises of others.
Having eliminated indolence, strive to realize what is profoundly meaningful.
Having eliminated sectarian prejudice, seek the dharma in its entirety.
Having eliminated biased thinking, enter the path of primordial unity.
Having eliminated ordinary plans and actions, make spiritual practice your real focus.
Whoever takes these precautions can overcome the hordes of maras.

UNDERMINING MAHAYANA TRAINING

There are six ways to undermine your Mahayana training:
by rejecting the Three Jewels and trying to deceive those worthy of your respect;
by giving up your altruistic motivation and being duplicitous and deceitful;
by maligning heirs of the victorious ones;
by being resentful of others' positive actions;
by harboring anger and envy toward those who have entered the sublime Mahayana path;
by following a path that does not integrate skillful means and sublime knowing.
Always be careful to avoid these actions. [63b]

MISGUIDED DISCOURAGEMENT

When, in acting to benefit others, you merely incur envy and blame,
six considerations will convince you that any discouragement you might feel is misguided:
Such situations are the inevitable consequences of your having disparaged others.
They provide a great opportunity to bring an end to the karma caused by negative emotions.
They provide a means of training in rooting out all of your hidden flaws.
They are not an arena for reacting with an attitude of superiority or inferiority, any more than is a dog's barking.
They serve as contexts for developing forbearance, and so can create karma that enriches your positive qualities.
Once identified, they leave no trace, and so you can trust that they are magical expressions of emptiness.
Reflecting on these points, give up painful anger, aversion, and discouragement, and work for the welfare of others.

TOLERATING OTHERS' MISTAKES

There are six ways to be tolerant of those around you, despite their erroneous actions:
Regard them with even more compassion than before.
Give up having any expectations of them.
Consider that you have been connected to them in many ways for lifetimes.
Reflect on your own karma and circumstances.
Whomever you associate with, take their point of view into account.
Consider everything to be a dream or a magical illusion.

Rely on these six means to counteract your disappointment over the negativity of those around you.

WORTHY ASPIRATIONS

You should constantly make six kinds of aspiration:
“In all lifetimes, wherever I take rebirth,
may I be endowed with the seven attributes of those in higher states.”⁵²
“As soon as I am reborn, may I encounter the dharma
and come to have the personal freedom to practice it properly.”
“In each lifetime, may I serve holy gurus
and engage in spiritual practice day and night.”
“With an understanding of the dharma, may I focus my practice
on the quintessential meaning,
so that the dharma can lead me across the ocean of conditioned
existence in this lifetime.”
“May I teach the dharma of my holy masters in this world in an
excellent way
and work for the welfare of others without weariness or
discouragement.” [64a]
“Through my impartial efforts to benefit others on a vast scale,
may we all attain buddhahood together.”
Constantly make these most majestic kinds of aspiration.

THE TREASURE TROVE OF MERIT

The benefits and advantages of merit are immeasurable, like
space;
there are six pieces of advice for maintaining this treasure trove
of the dharma:
Seek the sacred dharma without deceit or insincerity.
Put the dharma into practice conscientiously and reverently.
Teach it to others and extol its qualities.

Think of those who teach the dharma as you would the Teacher.
Always show your respect by honoring and serving the teachings.
Uphold the treasure trove of the dharma without discouragement
or fatigue.
Such is the superb conduct of heirs of the victorious ones.

IMMEASURABLE ATTITUDES

There are six ways to guide beings according to the immeasurable
attitudes:
Put compassion, the wish that others be free of suffering, into
practice.
Put love, the wish that others be happy, into practice.
Put joy, the wish that they never be separate from the happiness
they find, into practice.
Put impartiality, the absence of any bias based on closeness to or
distance from others, into practice.
Put your frame of reference, the spiritual teachings you follow,
into practice.
Put the nonreferential state, the absence of any concepts
concerning the three focal points,⁵³ into practice.
These are crucial points of training that will cause your
bodhichitta to flourish.

PRINCIPLES OF THE DHARMA

The Buddha's teachings set forth six principles to thoroughly put
into practice:
Gaze on all beings with loving eyes.
Have a sound understanding of which ideas are appropriate and
which are not.
Gain realization of the timeless awareness of supreme
enlightenment, just as it is.
For the sake of beings, do not abandon samsara.

Experience the nonconceptual nature of being that is not tainted by samsara.
If you wish to attain buddhahood, seek it with diligence. [64b]
Such is the truly excellent conduct of heirs of the victorious ones.

OBSTACLES TO AVOID

There are six things to avoid that are by nature obstacles:
Avoid frequenting towns and other such places where study of the teachings is limited.
Avoid accepting honors from others when you are not upholding your vows.
Avoid looking at those you may desire when your senses are not under control.
Avoid giving in to your senses when your mind is not resting in equipoise.
Avoid those whose coarse actions and attitudes cause disharmony.
Avoid any kind of unethical livelihood that involves being hypocritical or dissembling.
If you do not avoid these things, you will be seduced by maras.

COMPANIONS TO AVOID

You are advised to avoid six kinds of undesirable companions:
Do not associate with rank materialists or others who hold extreme views.
Do not associate with ordinary people who strive to achieve short-term goals.
Do not associate with shravakas, who lack loving kindness and are self-absorbed.
Do not associate with those aspiring to be pratyekabuddhas, who lack altruistic motivation.
Do not associate with those who divert you toward material gain and profit.

Do not associate with those who desire fame, honor, or a large retinue.
If you associate with such undesirable companions, your own situation will worsen.

ESSENTIAL FACTORS

It is taught that six factors are essential:
Although you may realize that things lack true identity, it is essential to maintain compassion for beings.
Although you may be inspired by emptiness, it is essential to be certain that your actions have consequences.
If you are to abide in a state of peace, it is essential not to stay caught in conditioned existence.
Although you may give abundantly, it is essential not to anticipate the rewards that come of generosity.
Although you may be disciplined, it is essential to eliminate any sense of superiority.
Although you may dwell in solitude, it is essential to rid yourself of your belongings.
If you adhere to these six points, you can practice the sacred dharma correctly.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS

There are six requirements for those who teach the sacred dharma:
to hone their own and others' wisdom;
to resolve the doubts of those in their retinues; [65a]
to protect the teachings and learn their sacred principles;
to understand the moral implications of actions and steer people away from erroneous paths;
to understand the distinction between higher and lower teachings and so follow the most profound path;

and to understand philosophical systems and eliminate error or obscurity.

Those who teach the dharma should strive to meet these requirements.

ENCOUNTERING BUDDHAS

People encounter buddhas in six ways:

Those who observe impeccable discipline in the three higher trainings

meditate on forms of victorious ones with one-pointed absorption.

They praise and honor buddhas with devotion and strive to repeat their mantras.

They avoid distracting activities and focus on mind itself.

Although they have no negative emotions, they willingly take rebirth in conditioned existence.

They pursue all that is positive with unflagging diligence.

They make noble aspirations with sincere altruism.

If you exert yourself in the same six ways, you will be taken under the care of the victorious ones.

DEARER THAN LIFE ITSELF

There are six things you should never relinquish, even if your life depends on it:

Never relinquish bodhicitta, the motivation to attain perfect enlightenment for the sake of others.

Never relinquish the sacred dharma, the teachings of the Sage.⁵⁴

Never relinquish your concern for beings, who wander in samsara.

Never relinquish your foundation of positive qualities, for it is the quintessential means of purifying yourself of obscurity.

Never renounce the gurus and chosen deities who are your guides on the path.

Never renounce the lofty path that involves training on the levels of spiritually advanced beings.

POWERFUL ANTIDOTES

Six things act as powerful antidotes:

not to forsake your spiritual practice, no matter how unworthy you feel;

not to disparage those who are your inferiors, no matter how exalted you become;

to lead others on the path to liberation, even though there is no one making you do so;

to have no hope for personal reward, even though you create benefit;

to harbor no resentment or thoughts of revenge, even if harm is visited on you; [65b]

and to apply the remedies of mindfulness and alertness.

SKILLFUL METHODS

Six skillful methods will ensure all that is conducive to enlightenment:

Regard all beings with love and compassion.

Recognize all concepts for what they truly are.

Have no negative emotions, yet willingly take rebirth in conditioned existence.

Moreover, do not give up benefiting beings.

Aspire to the timeless awareness of buddhahood and pursue it intently.

Understand that all things are like space, with no fixed frame of reference.

The conduct of one whose methods are skillful is to dedicate everything to the attainment of enlightenment.

DEVELOPMENTAL METHODS

Six main developmental methods are taught:

The way to transform a small act of virtue into something great is to dedicate it or rejoice in it even a little.

The way to ensure great merit without undergoing much hardship is to encourage others to follow the path that will make them spiritually advanced beings.

The way to dispel the enmity and anger of others is to benefit beings through the four kinds of activity that promote harmony.⁵⁵

The way to lead quite ordinary beings to the teachings is to speak pleasantly and give them food, clothing, and other material things.

The way to bring to spiritual maturity beings who have embarked on the path is to instruct them in whatever inspires them and extol the Mahayana.

The way to ensure that those who are spiritually mature will find freedom is to instruct them well by giving vast and profound teachings that touch on the key points.

Those who employ these methods will have no difficulty benefiting others.

BRINGING THOSE WHO ARE OBSTINATE TO THE PATH

There are six means to bring those who are obstinate to the path: As a way of promoting harmony, be calm and restrained in your conduct.

Praise and commend others; they will then be appreciative and agreeable, and will accept the teachings.

As a way of attracting and persuading others, tell them, "If you behave well, [66a]

I will support you"; they will then embrace the sacred dharma.

As a way of disarming those who are obstinate, respond occasionally to them with a show of anger

or cause them some minor injury; they will then embrace the sacred dharma.

As a way of contending with those who cause harm, impress them

by admonishing them kindly; they will then enter the path in the right spirit.

As a way of responding to those who are actually inclined to accept the teachings, bring them under the wing of your kindness; they will then embrace the dharma.

With sincerity, you can express your concern for beings in any number of ways.

Heirs of the victorious ones benefit others with skillful means.

THE VAST SCOPE OF TRAINING

There are six ways to embrace the vast scope of training:

by wanting to benefit beings for as long as samsara lasts;

by having love for all beings, instead of anger or malice;

by wanting to liberate beings skillfully and without delusion;

by desiring, without a trace of envy, to bring all beings to the blissful state of equalness;

by being interested solely in the welfare of others, without pride or conceit;

and by intending to dedicate to others everything positive that you accomplish, without getting caught up in miserliness.

It is crucial to have these intentions and to train in bringing others benefit and happiness.

SEVERING THE ROOT OF SELF-CHERISHING

There are six things you can reflect on in order to sever the very root of self-cherishing:

“The victorious ones act as my protectors and my refuge,

so I in turn will do whatever I can to become their companion.”

“Hosts of heirs of the victorious ones act as my protectors and my refuge,

so I in turn will become their companion and work for the benefit for others.”

“Oath-bound guardians act as my allies,

so I in turn will become their ally in maintaining samaya.”

“The teachings of the dharma are my protectors and my refuge,

so I in turn will practice them well in order to support the dharma.”

“Those with a loving nature act as my companions,

so I in turn will be their ally and strive to do what is good.”

“My holy gurus act as my protectors, [66b]

so I in turn will become a protector of beings, acting on their behalf.”

Think in such ways and pursue your spiritual practice with devotion.

WHAT IS COMPLETELY AUTHENTIC

It is taught that six things are completely authentic by nature:

The process of listening to and contemplating spiritual teachings is completely authentic when it leads to the realization of unbiased enlightened intent.

View is completely authentic when you have grasped the ultimate significance of primordial unity.

Meditation is completely authentic when dualistic consciousness resolves in its own ground.

Conduct is completely authentic when your mind is flawless.

Meditative experiences and realization are completely authentic

when you thoroughly appreciate their dynamic quality without getting caught up in them.

Your spiritual attainment is completely authentic when you experience the expanse of the true nature of reality.

If you are endowed with these things, you have grasped the significance of the supreme spiritual approach.

HOLDING OTHERS DEARER THAN YOURSELF

There are six ways to realize that others are dearer to you than you are to yourself,

so act in the following ways, being aware of how you and others accept some things and reject others:

Treat your own suffering as unimportant, while making a determined effort to ease the suffering of others.

Treat your own happiness as unimportant, while making a determined effort to ensure the happiness of others.

Treat the thoughts generated by your five emotional poisons as unimportant,

while making a determined effort to vanquish the negative emotions of others.

Treat the development of your own experience of timeless awareness as unimportant,

while making a determined effort to help others develop such awareness.

Treat purification of the two levels of obscuration in yourself as unimportant,

while making a determined effort to help others purify themselves of obscuration.

Treat your own twofold development as unimportant, while making a determined effort to encourage such development in others.

Those who act in such ways will swiftly benefit themselves as well.

INESTIMABLE INTENT

Enlightened intent, so difficult to quantify, has six aspects:
There is the intention, “My conduct will embrace [67a]
the conduct of all heirs of the victorious ones, without exception.”
There is the intention, “Once I have attained enlightenment,
I will carry out enlightened activities on the same scale as do all
sugatas.”
There is the intention, “I will endure suffering for countless eons
for the sake of even a single being.”
There is the intention, “I will act to benefit beings in those
extremely difficult situations
in which even the heirs of the victorious ones lack the ability to
do so.”
There is the intention, “I will enact the inconceivable deeds of
buddhas
in each and every one of countless pure realms.”
There is the intention, “I will carry out these intentions completely,
for if I do not, I will have deceived the victorious ones and their
heirs.”
Always don the majestic armor of these six intentions.

ARMOR AGAINST MARAS

There are six ways to armor yourself in order to render maras
ineffectual:
Consider the examples of fishermen, butchers, farmers, soldiers,
merchants, and servants; simply to make a living,
they are never idle but work constantly,
enduring heat, cold, hunger, and thirst, even at the risk of their
own dear lives.
If they are capable of doing that, then surely you can devote
yourself conscientiously to attaining enlightenment, so
difficult to do, for the sake of countless beings.

MARAS TO SHUN

There are six kinds of maras that you are advised to shun:
There is the mara of profit and fame, under whose influence you
forsake your motivation for following the path to liberation,
as well as the meditation and practice you undertake for the sake
of others, and instead practice for your own selfish reasons,
including the desire for acclaim.
There is the mara of arrogance, under whose influence your mind
remains ordinary, without evolving at all,
and yet you quibble about what sort of renunciation or
realization pertains to spiritually advanced beings.
There is the mara of laziness, under whose influence you
continually put off developing one-pointed meditative
stability,
yet harbor the hope for some result.
There is the mara of ambition, under whose influence you
altogether avoid dwelling in solitude on mountainsides
and become involved in the profit and loss of business.
There is the mara of delusion, under whose influence you
completely give up listening to and contemplating scriptures,
lines of reasoning, and pith instructions [67b]
and indulge in a fool’s meditation, based on speculation and
self-indulgence.
There is the mara of envy, under whose influence you conceal
your own faults deep within you, yet blame others for theirs,
even though these are only your own projections.
It is critical that your mind not be influenced by these maras.

IMMUTABILITY

There are six ways to be immutable and thus free of faults:
Be like a majestic mountain, and thus remain unaffected by the
attitudes of shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

Be like space, and thus remain unaffected by negative emotions and concepts.
 Be like a spiritually advanced being, and thus remain unaffected by the entanglements of personal gain or honor.
 Be like solid earth, and thus remain unaffected by illness or suffering.
 Be like the ocean, and thus remain unaffected by hunger or thirst, heat or cold.
 Be like an inferno, and thus remain unaffected by hindrances or injuries caused by demons.
 Whoever is like this will stay true to the spirit of the supreme spiritual approach.

CRUCIAL POINTS

It is taught that six points are absolutely crucial:
 It is absolutely crucial to look after your own and others' well-being.
 It is absolutely crucial for those who are in superior positions to look after the welfare of those below them.
 It is absolutely crucial to recall the kindness of beings, who have contributed to your well-being and good fortune.
 It is absolutely crucial to bring about benefit and happiness for those who harm you.
 It is absolutely crucial to benefit beings by honoring the victorious ones.
 It is absolutely crucial to forgo your own happiness in order to relieve the suffering of others.
 These points constitute the great tradition of the supreme spiritual approach.

GREAT KINDNESS

Six reminders concern the great kindness you have received:
 You may have come to the dharma because of injuries inflicted on you,

but because you thus found the path to liberation, those who harmed you did you a great kindness.
 You may have come to the dharma because suffering made you dissatisfied,
 but because you can now find lasting happiness, those who caused that suffering did you a great kindness.
 You may have come to the dharma because nonhuman beings harmed you,
 but because you can now discover fearlessness, those demons did you a great kindness. [68a]
 You may have come to the dharma because humans or other beings were hostile to you,
 but because you thus found benefit and happiness, those hostile to you did you a great kindness.
 You may have come to the dharma because of disastrous conditions, but because you thus found the path to the unchanging state, those responsible for the unfavorable conditions did you a great kindness.
 You may have come to the dharma because others pressured you, but because you thus found what is quintessentially meaningful, those who pressured you did you a great kindness.
 Feel gratitude for all of these beings equally and dedicate the effects of your positive actions to them.

ACCEPTING INJURY

Six logical statements establish conclusively that you should accept problems as part of your spiritual path:
 Problems cause you to seek out gurus, who are sources of refuge in the face of harm.
 They cause you to embrace the dharma because of your fear of suffering.
 They intensify your bodhichitta by encouraging you to develop each of the immeasurable attitudes.

They cause you to exert yourself in spiritual development and purification—the training you undertake for the sake of others.
 Looking at their true nature brings about realization.
 Accepting them causes the enlightened qualities of the spiritual paths and levels to flourish in you.

THE ADVANTAGES OF BENEFITING OTHERS

Accomplishing benefit for others has six advantages:
 It acts as a guide, protecting you against all fear.
 It acts as a protector against negative forces and hindrances.
 It acts as a physician, curing you of illnesses caused by imbalances.
 It acts as a champion, driving out obstructive maras.
 It severs the very root of karma and negative emotions.
 It perfects your twofold development, so that you attain enlightenment.
 These advantages are as immeasurable as the expanse of space.

IN PRAISE OF THE ADVANTAGES OF PRACTICE

Six advantages of spiritual practice are extolled as excellent:
 You will overcome the effects of extremely harmful actions without exception.
 You will be praised by those who emulate buddhas.
 You will leave samsara behind, and bring about benefit and happiness. [68b]
 You will attain the spiritual levels of heirs of the victorious ones and become worthy of honor.
 You will become a guide for countless beings.
 You will accomplish both kinds of benefit in abundance, in the short term and ultimately.

THE WAY OF ABIDING

Six analogies are helpful for coming to a definitive understanding of the way of abiding:⁵⁶
 Like space, the way of abiding is unchanging.
 Like an ocean, it is immutable and unhindered.
 Like a wish-fulfilling gem, it grants all that is wanted without intending to do so.
 Like camphor, its specific properties depend on circumstances.
 Like a mirror, it is clear and empty without distortion.
 Like the oil in a sesame seed, it is all-pervasive and uniformly present.
 It is crucial to understand the way of abiding definitively according to these six analogies.

First, the way of abiding is like space in six respects:
 It is like space in that it is not defined by extremes.
 It is like space in that it is unrestricted.
 It is like space in that it has no fixed dimension.
 It is like space in that it involves no distinction between high and low.
 It is like space in that it has no color or shape.
 It is like space in that it is the source of all samsara and nirvana.

Second, the way of abiding is like an ocean in six respects:
 It is like an ocean in that it is vast in extent.
 It is like an ocean in that it is not solid—it is unobstructed and profoundly deep.
 It is like an ocean in that it is immeasurable, difficult for ordinary consciousness to fathom.
 It is like an ocean in that it is limpid and unsullied by dualistic extremes.

It is like an ocean in that it is a spacious expanse, unimpeded and naturally clear.
 It is like an ocean in that the waves of thought are naturally free.
 Third, the way of abiding is like a wish-fulfilling gem in six respects:
 It is like a gem in that, without deliberate intention, it is the source of all that is needed or wanted.
 It is like a gem in that, while being that source, it is without bias or prejudice.
 It is like a gem in that it is pure by nature.
 It is like a gem in that its dynamic quality accounts for the fact that it is experienced as an adornment. [69a]
 It is like a gem in that it is pristinely clear, without any embellishment.
 It is like a gem in that the nature of all its facets is that of a single basic space.
 Fourth, the way of abiding is like camphor in six respects:⁵⁷
 It is like camphor in that, when it is not recognized for what it is, samsara manifests.⁵⁸
 It is like camphor in that it accounts for the fact that beings of the six classes undergo their respective suffering.⁵⁹
 It is like camphor in that, when it is recognized for what it is, there is buddhahood.⁶⁰
 It is like camphor in that it is a state of peace and well-being composed of the three kayas.⁶¹
 It is like camphor in that it accounts for the fact that there is no duality in the ground of being.⁶²
 It is like camphor in that it is perceived in distinct ways according to circumstances.⁶³
 Fifth, the way of abiding is like a mirror in six respects:
 It is like a mirror in that it is fundamentally clear.
 It is like a mirror in that it is free of any obscuring overlay or tarnish.

It is like a mirror in that its display presents itself unhindered.
 It is like a mirror in that it can be characterized as involving no duality.
 It is like a mirror in that it is innately pure, without deliberate intention.
 It is like a mirror in that its natural clarity is timelessly pure.
 Sixth, the way of abiding is like the oil in a sesame seed in six respects:⁶⁴
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that it permeates ordinary beings and buddhas.
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that it is present in all manifestations of cause and effect, birth and death.
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that it constitutes mind itself, manifesting as sense objects.
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that it constitutes mind itself, in which objects and concepts are free.
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that it is experienced as dharmakaya if you have meditated on it.⁶⁵
 It is like the oil in a sesame seed in that the result never reverts to the cause.⁶⁶
 If you realize the foregoing, you have grasped the significance of the way of abiding.

CUTTING THROUGH FIXATIONS

Six analogies are useful for cutting through the fixations of dualistic perception:
 The analogy of the dream state is illustrative in that it introduces you to the perspective that sensory appearances derive from mind.
 When you awaken from a dream, you perceive that its images are empty;

in fact, they are empty by nature, and their innate purity becomes evident once your lack of recognition vanishes. This understanding undermines any fixation on external sense objects as truly existing.

The analogy of an illusion is illustrative in that it introduces you to the power and influence of sensory appearances and mind. You come to understand that whatever you perceive is empty in and of itself, a product of the habit patterns of confusion. [69b]

The analogy of a reflection is illustrative in that it introduces you to the nature of mind itself.

You come to understand that sensory appearances are empty as such, free of mind's dualistic fixation.

The analogy of mist is illustrative in that it introduces you to the perspective that sensory appearances are the display of mind. You come to the realization that the objects you perceive, being empty, naturally vanish.

The analogy of a rainbow is illustrative in that it introduces you to the perspective that sensory appearances are the adornment of mind.

Like a rainbow dissolving in space, these appearances are free as natural manifestations of timeless awareness.

The analogy of a crystal is illustrative in that it introduces you to the perspective that sensory appearances are the natural radiance of mind.

The true nature of mind is naturally radiant, free as nondual timeless awareness.

DIRECT INTRODUCTION

Six points summarize the process of direct introduction:
The true ground of all experience is nondual and free of bias.

The confused perception of that ground is the nature of samsara. Confused perception and fixation on that confusion are magical expressions of your own mind.

Reversing that confusion lies in refining your experience of the dynamic energy of awareness, which has no fixed basis.

Ordinary appearances and mind resolve naturally, free within timeless awareness,

and so you take a firm stance in the primordial state of naturally pristine timeless awareness.

These six points are extremely important general themes in the teachings;

the mere realization of their meaning naturally brings fulfillment.

DIRECT INTRODUCTION TO THE THREE KAYAS

There are six approaches to the consummation of what is profoundly meaningful—direct introduction to the three kayas:

The first approach involves direct introduction to the spontaneous presence of the three kayas.

The distinct features of a crystal sphere, a mirror, and rays of sunlight

represent the three aspects of innately limpid essence, nature, and expression.

Dharmakaya is by nature a state of complete purity, comparable to the inherent purity of a flawless crystal sphere.

Sambhogakaya's mode of presence is by nature a state of utter lucidity,

comparable to a reflection in a polished mirror.

Nirmanakaya's manifest mode is an embodiment that entails no division into outer and inner,

like the rays of the sun or moon shining in the ten directions.

In that the kayas are timelessly and spontaneously present within you,

do not seek them elsewhere, but understand that they are natural attributes. [70a]

The second approach involves direct introduction to the unimpeded qualities of the three kayas, which are like the properties of a gem.

Dharmakaya, the essence of being, is pure by its very nature.

Sambhogakaya, the nature of being, is the unimpeded state of utter lucidity.

Nirmanakaya, the responsiveness of being, is unceasing timeless awareness.

These are natural attributes, like the properties of a magnificent gem.

The third approach involves direct introduction to the naturally evident qualities of the three kayas, like those of the sun.

The orb of the sun shines unobstructedly and without conscious intent;

similarly, your personal experience of timeless awareness is nonconceptual; this is dharmakaya.

Just as the sun is naturally clear when unobscured by clouds, the five senses have a direct and fresh clarity; this is sambhogakaya.

Just as the sun's rays shine everywhere and illuminate everything, the six kinds of sense objects arise ceaselessly in your experience; this is nirmanakaya.

Understand that self-knowing awareness, like the sun rising at daybreak,

is your own true nature and the three kayas are natural attributes.

The fourth approach involves direct introduction through the image of the sun rising in the sky.

Within dharmakaya—the true nature of reality—completely pure like space,

sambhogakaya is naturally occurring and utterly lucid, like the brilliant sun.

Nirmanakaya is the natural state of their nonduality, the unity of awareness and emptiness.

Understand these to be your own true nature, present within you.

The fifth approach involves direct introduction based on three factors—analogy, meaning, and evidence.

The analogy is that dharmakaya is like space, completely pure; it is beyond all restrictions or localization.

The meaning is that sambhogakaya is utterly lucid and naturally pure;

it is not made, but is timelessly and spontaneously present.

The evidence lies in the fact that nirmanakaya is the natural radiance of being manifesting in and of itself; the natural clarity of this “lamp” inspires conviction.

The sixth approach involves direct introduction to the ultimate unity of basic space and awareness.

From the perspective of the purity of space, dharmakaya is the originally pure basic space of phenomena.⁶⁷

From the perspective of the emptiness of space, sambhogakaya is an utterly lucid mode of presence. [70b]

From the perspective of its freedom from bias, nirmanakaya is the unity of awareness and emptiness.

In that the kayas are timelessly ensured within the embrace of self-knowing awareness, do not seek them elsewhere, for you will have no chance of finding them.

If you fail to understand these points, you will be like someone trying to extract gold from ordinary rock, like a blind person looking for gold, like someone for whom the sun is obscured by clouds,

like a person without legs trying to climb a staircase, or like a blind person entering a temple.
 You may be like someone traveling at night by faint moonlight: you may have a glimmer of what seems to be lucidity, but there is still your latent nonrecognition of awareness.
 Therefore, it is crucial to reach an unerring, thorough decision and so gain a stable experience of the ultimate significance of mind itself.

ANALOGIES THAT ILLUSTRATE ENLIGHTENED INTENT

There are six ways in which you are never separate from enlightened intent, whether in formal meditative equipoise or in postmeditation activity; these can be understood through six analogies:

First, the analogy of a breeze moving through the sky signifies that within the skylike state of pure, lucid timeless awareness, your practice is to experience mental stirring as naturally undefiled in its purity and freedom.
 You experience unobstructed awareness without fixation.
 If you do not understand this point, your one-pointed meditative absorption will not remain steady in any situation, like a flame that flickers in the wind.

Second, the analogy of the sky when the sun first rises signifies that your practice is to experience awareness as inherently limpid, free of the extremes of being clear or obscured.
 You experience timeless awareness, naturally pure and pristinely lucid.

If you do not understand this point, you are like someone stricken with an infectious disease, as mental laxity or dullness, activity or agitation obscures the way mind ultimately abides.

Third, the analogy of a flame undisturbed by wind signifies that your practice is to experience the unwavering unity of mind and what it perceives.
 You experience supreme, uncontrived equalness.
 If you do not understand this point, your practice will be like a spoiled little child; when you need to rely on it between formal sessions, it will be of no help to you. [71a]

Fourth, the analogy of the spacious expanse of the sky signifies that your practice is to experience an infinite evenness, pervasively lucid and unencumbered by extremes.
 You experience enlightened intent as freedom from the fixations of hope and fear.
 If you do not understand this point, you will be like a small bird with broken wings; as you try to fly in the sky, despite your effort you will fall into an abyss.

Fifth, the analogy of waves on the ocean signifies that your practice is to experience all thoughts readily dissolving within the expanse of being.
 You experience origination, cessation, and duration merging within the expanse of the true nature of reality.
 If you do not understand this point, you will perceive the ground of being dualistically, unable to divorce yourself from the dualistic context of naive denial or affirmation.

Sixth, the analogy of streams converging in the ocean signifies that your practice is to experience the subsuming of thought processes within mind itself.
 You experience the unique sphere of being, the single taste underlying things in all their diversity.
 If you do not understand this point, all the various expressions of thought will be like mustard seeds scattered on the ground, and you will be unable to tame them within the heart essence of being.
 Understanding how to focus intently on the key points of such pith instructions is the supreme method of immersing yourself in the ongoing flow of genuine being.
 Without this understanding, like small streams drying up, your view, meditation, and conduct will be unable to withstand circumstances that arise.

YOUR NATURAL STATE

Six key points pertain to remaining true to your natural state by maintaining the view:
 First, in maintaining the view that involves no perceiver and nothing perceived, you remain true to your natural state, that of nondual, self-knowing awareness.
 In that the objects of the six senses are empty, you are free of the extreme of reifying what you perceive and free of the extreme of reifying naturally lucid timeless awareness as the perceiver.
 There is freedom from both extremes in nonduality, with no perceiver and nothing perceived;
 and yet “freedom from extremes” is just a manner of speaking, for there is also freedom from the extreme of “neither.”

In realizing this, you will no longer fixate on anything whatsoever.

Second, there is the pith instruction on remaining true to your natural state by maintaining the view that is free of naive affirmation (that things exist) or nihilistic denial (that things do not exist).
 In that this state is one of naturally occurring timeless awareness, there is freedom from the extreme of nonexistence. [71b]
 In that it is undistorted by thinking, there is also freedom from the extreme of existence.
 In that it entails no object and has no identifying label, there is freedom from both extremes;
 and yet, in that its display manifests dualistically, there is also freedom from the extreme of “neither of the two.”
 Know this to be the supreme state of timeless and total freedom.

Third, remain true to your natural state as a freedom from origination and cessation.
 In that, as with space, no basis for origination can be found, there is freedom from the extreme of origination.
 In that its display is unceasing, there is also freedom from the extreme of cessation.
 Even as things come into being, there is no actual origination, and so there is freedom from both extremes;
 and yet, in that there exists no “thing” to observe them, there is also freedom from the extreme of “neither of the two.”
 Realize the nature of being to be a single, pure basic space.

Fourth, remain true to your natural state as a freedom from manifestation or emptiness.
 In that the nature of being is lucidity, there is freedom from the extreme of emptiness.
 In that it is nonconceptual, there is also freedom from the extreme of manifestation.

In that it entails no differentiation or exclusion, there is freedom from both extremes;
and yet, in that it entails no fixed reference point, there is freedom from the extreme of being “neither of the two.”
Know this to be the naturally free state of supreme equalness.

Fifth, remain true to your natural state as a freedom from naive affirmation and nihilistic denial.

In that anything that arises is in essence empty, there is freedom from naive affirmation.

In that what is empty arises in myriad variety, there is also freedom from nihilistic denial.

In that manifestation and emptiness are not factors that come together and then separate, there is freedom from both extremes;

and yet, in that what observes them is pure in its very essence, there is freedom from the extreme of being “neither of the two.”

Remain true to the state of primordial purity in which everything is timelessly unborn.

Sixth, remain true to your natural state as a freedom from judgment in terms of good and bad.

In that your natural state entails no judgment about what is superior, fixation on “good” as an absolute dissolves.

In that it entails no judgment about what is inferior, fixation on “bad” as something to eliminate also dissolves. [72a]

In that your natural state entails no judgment either way, dualistic consciousness is empty in its own ground,
and in that it entails no judgment of “neither of the two,” there is freedom from all limiting alternatives.

If you do not thus understand the great fortress of the view, your practice won’t stand on its own, error and obscuration will arise,

and you will not progress beyond the most basic results of practice.

Therefore, these pith instructions on key points for remaining true to your natural state are crucial.

CONCEPTS AS ALLIES

There are six ways to embrace concepts as allies:

Maintain an ongoing awareness of conceptual consciousness as if it were a gentle breeze, dying down in and of itself;
you will experience naturally occurring timeless awareness arising from within.

Train in experiencing the stirring of the mind as if it were lightning in the sky, pure in and of itself;
you will experience anything that stirs in the mind arising as naturally lucid timeless awareness.

Maintain an ongoing awareness of consciousness as if it were a ripple on water, diminishing in and of itself;
you will experience all consciousness arising as the naturally occurring and majestic state of enlightened intent.

Maintain an ongoing awareness of any concepts as allies, arising as expressions of the true nature of reality;
you will experience enlightened intent arising from deep within, involving no acceptance or rejection.

Maintain an ongoing awareness of your fixated perceptions as allies, resolving naturally with no object remaining;
you will experience timeless awareness arising within you, without fixed basis, and will perceive things as evanescent.

Maintain an ongoing awareness of the natural radiance of awareness, lucid and pure, as an ally—the lucid expanse of being;

you will experience timeless awareness arising from deep within, vivid yet leaving no trace.

You who practice thus, immersing yourselves in genuine being,

will experience timeless awareness arising from thoughts themselves.
It is absolutely essential that you experience all things manifesting as your allies,
just as stacks of dry wood fuel a great fire.

ABIDING IN THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY

Six key points have to do with abiding in the true nature of reality:
The key point for ensuring that the subtle channels and energies serve their natural functions
is to adopt the six-point physical posture of meditative stability.
The key point for freeing yourself from ordinary habitual perception, which is based on confusion,
is to understand that the universe is the mandala of victorious ones.⁶⁸
The key point for allowing supreme bliss to intensify in a natural progression
is to control the “lower gateway” and concentrate the subtle energies of the upper body.⁶⁹
The key point for abiding in the nonconceptual state of the true nature of reality [72b]
is to curl the tongue back and keep the upper and lower teeth apart.⁷⁰
The key point for experiencing purity within the space of naturally lucid timeless awareness
is to focus both eyes on the space a foot or so in front of you.
The key point for experiencing the spontaneous presence of genuine timeless awareness
is to rest in a limpid, pristine state, relaxing without contrivance in mind itself.
By such means, abide in the true nature of reality.
All of you fortunate ones, focus intently on these key points with diligence!

RESTING IN THE TRUE NATURE OF REALITY

Six means of resting in the true nature of reality
can be understood according to six pith instructions:

First, the pith instruction of “the inseparability of the three times”
dispels the conceptual limitations of dualistic consciousness.
Do not analyze what traces are left in the wake of past thoughts
or anticipate what will occur in the future,
but rest completely in the present moment, without fixation.

The pith instruction of “a dove returning to its nest”
dispels the conceptual limitations of both hope and fear.
Given that in the present moment there is no occurrence of, or
engaging in, thought within the mind,
rest with ease in the state of equalness, without distraction.

The pith instruction of “a person who has given up all plans”
dispels the conceptual limitations of holding to some fixed reference point.
In mind itself, the uncontrived equalness that is the way of abiding,
let go within a supreme freedom from fixation and rest in complete evenness.

The pith instruction of “a great garuda soaring in the sky”
dispels the conceptual limitations of doubt and dualistic fixation.
In the naturally occurring state of genuine being, in which
ordinary consciousness has finally been put aside,
let go within supreme spaciousness and rest in complete evenness.

The pith instruction of “the pristine rising of the sun at daybreak”
dispels limiting concepts about the myriad objects you perceive.
Without shutting down your senses or suppressing the stirring of your mind,
rest with ease, relaxing the six avenues of consciousness. [73a]

The pith instruction of “one’s perceptions of the ordinary characteristics of things vanishing in their own ground” dispels the conceptual limitations of myriad thoughts. Without either accepting or rejecting the objects you perceive, rest in uncontrived freshness, just as it is.

Because these ways of resting amount to abiding in nonduality, they will certainly lead to an experience of enlightened intent arising as a spacious expanse free of limitations.

ERRORS IN MEDITATION

It is taught that there are six general errors in meditation:

If you fail to discern the pristine lucidity of awareness, you will lapse into a stagnant, nonconceptual state.

If you make a deliberate attempt to cultivate clarity, your experience of timeless awareness will be fragmented.

If you try to suppress the proliferation of thoughts, your mind will become too tightly focused.

If you fail to realize the profound lucidity of awareness, you will become lost in a vague, unfocused state.

If you don’t have a decisive experience of that profundity, you will be swayed by doubt and influenced by circumstances.

If you use your body, speech, and mind in a contrived way, your confusion will be compounded by your concepts.

Any of these six errors constitutes obscuration; those who seek authenticity must eliminate them from their meditation.

WAYS OF GOING ASTRAY

It is taught that there are six ways of going astray: engaging in subtly conceptual meditation that leads to one of the four states of the formless realm;

holding a nihilistic view that does not acknowledge the principle of cause and effect on the relative level; holding an enormously incorrect view of naive realism, assuming that dualistic consciousness is the unchanging reality; coming to regard the objects you perceive as enemies or afflictions; subsuming everything within mind and meditating on some “naturally lucid reflexive consciousness”; and trying to transform thought patterns into your meditation deity, which is far short of ultimate reality. It is vital not to go astray in these six ways and not to deviate from supreme equalness, the vast expanse of being, free of bias, that is the true nature of reality.

RECTIFYING THESE ERRORS

Six analogies show how to rectify the foregoing errors, should they arise, by skillful means:

Rectifying such errors can be compared to clouds dissipating in the sky.

Regardless of how the magical display of mind arises in all its variety, rectification takes place when it automatically dissipates in the sky of its true nature. [73b]

Rectifying such errors can be compared to a thief entering an empty house.

Thoughts, in essence, have no independent nature; so although they may manifest, they have no origin and there is nothing to identify as such.

Rectification takes place when you simply relax, in that there is nothing to be removed.

Rectifying such errors can be compared to a wildfire spreading through a dry winter forest.
 Regardless of what occurs, whether perceptions or thoughts, you should examine what they are in essence.
 Rectification takes place when they burn brightly as supports for your experience of the true nature of reality.

Rectifying such errors can be compared to using a mantra to neutralize a poison.
 Rectification takes place when thoughts are eradicated within their unborn nature.

Rectifying such errors can be compared to subjects meeting with their ruler.
 When any of the five emotional poisons arises, you should identify it and relax in a natural way.
 Rectification takes place when the true nature of the emotion meets the ultimate nature of reality.

Rectifying such errors can be compared to keeping a pet crow on a ship at sea.
 Regardless of what mental agitation or turmoil arises, rectification takes place in that it returns to its true nature, having nowhere else to go.

These six key points are critical for experiencing freedom in the immediacy, purity, and transience of any mental stirring or recollection that arises.

SIGNS OF INDWELLING CONFIDENCE

There are six signs of the indwelling confidence of authentic realization:
 You do not feel overwhelmed or inflated by any personal failing or virtue whatsoever.

Your mind merges with dharmakaya even while you have a physical body.
 You are not attached to samsara or daunted by the task of benefiting others.
 Free of the biases of error and obscuration, you experience the perfection of the unique sphere of being.
 You perceive the true nature of maras and face obstacles without trepidation.
 You experience pleasure and pain as the expanse of space, never reacting with acceptance or rejection based on hope or fear.
 You who have such realization fully experience the way things actually are.

MEASURES OF STABILITY

There are six measures of the stability you gain upon experiencing what is authentic:
 The phenomena of the world of appearances and possibilities constitute a naturally manifest pure realm that is like a magical illusion;
 evidence that they have no independent nature arises continually in your experience. [74a]
 Because negative emotions are, in essence, timelessly and originally pure,
 you are not disturbed by the five emotional poisons, but experience them as expressions of naturally lucid timeless awareness.
 Because you always experience virtues and failings arising as expressions of supreme timeless awareness,
 your reactions of naive acceptance or rejection naturally vanish.
 Because you realize the significance of the heart essence of being—that it does not involve the perception of anything “other”—

you experience the lucidity of thought processes from the perspective of their true nature.
 Because you have discovered the gem of mind itself within, you do not dread death or the transition to another life, but are free of such fear.
 Because you have seen that your own mind's true nature is ultimately the state of buddhahood, you experience being free of the bondage caused by hope and fear.
 Someone thus immersed in genuine being is a manifest buddha.

THE EXPANSE OF ENLIGHTENED INTENT

The indwelling confidence that you gain upon experiencing the expanse of enlightened intent has six aspects:
 realization of the "middle way," in which phenomena are free of extremes;
 realization of primordial unity as the supreme state of utter lucidity;
 realization of equalness as the state of supreme bliss;
 realization of nonduality as the unique sphere of being;
 realization of spontaneous presence as a supreme freedom from bias;
 and consummate realization of original purity as the state of genuine being.
 There is no "one" who has such realization, so the realization itself does not lead to self-aggrandizement; thus, the yogin of illusion is beyond compare.

FREEDOM THROUGH REALIZATION FOR THOSE OF THE HIGHEST ACUMEN

There are six ways in which freedom results from such realization:
 Even as external objects manifest in your perception, there is freedom in the immediacy of that perception, like ice melting into water.

Even as you become aware of internal mental events, there is freedom in the immediacy of that awareness, like bubbles dissolving in water.

Even as your mind vacillates between two thoughts, there is freedom in the immediacy of its stirring, like lightning flashing in the sky. [74b]

Even as the words with which things are labeled become audible, there is freedom in the immediacy of those words, like the sound of an echo.

Even as you hold to the philosophy you believe in, there is freedom in the immediacy of that belief, like the vanishing of a rainbow in the sky.

There is freedom in the immediacy of the attainment of the fruition that is attained, just as the most majestic of gems provides all that is wanted or needed.
 Your nature is that of freedom in and of itself, in which antidotes vanish in their own ground;
 it is spontaneously present as enlightened intent, without words and free of any object.
 Thus, those of the highest acumen gain freedom in the intermediate state between birth and death.

FREEDOM IN THE AFTER-DEATH STATE FOR THOSE OF AVERAGE ACUMEN

Those of average acumen gain freedom in the after-death state in which the true nature of reality is encountered;
 an examination of two sections, with six points each, will lead to an understanding of this.

Physical Death

The process of casting off the shell of the physical body at death involves six steps:

At the point that what you perceive outwardly and inwardly resolves within mind, your mind is free of the perception of things as objects.

When mind then resolves within timeless awareness, that awareness is by nature free of the perception of ordinary mind as a subject.

When your personal experience of timeless awareness resolves even while the network of your habit patterns is still functioning, the subtle energy of earth dissolves into that of water, so your body can no longer support itself.

At this point, the transference of consciousness can be performed; you are incontinent and your body gives off the foul odor of feces and urine.

With the dissolution of the subtle energy of water into that of fire, your limbs convulse, sweat breaks out on your face, and saliva and mucus drain from your mouth and nose.

When the subtle energy of fire dissolves into that of air, the warmth of your body dissipates, and your mouth and nostrils cave in on themselves.

At this point, if your bodily warmth becomes concentrated in the soles of your feet, you will be reborn as a hell being; if in the genitals, you will become a preta;

if in the navel region, an animal; in the heart region, a human; in the throat, a demigod; and in the eyes, a god.

But if the warmth dissipates through the crown of your head, you will attain the unsurpassable fruition.

When the subtle energy of air dissolves into consciousness, you gasp for breath, unable to fully inhale. [75a]

The lamp of your eyes' natural radiance dims, and outward indications of respiration cease.

Consciousness then dissolves into the state of utter lucidity, respiration ceases inwardly, and the mind separates from the body.

The body is left where it lies, while timeless awareness is experienced as arising within basic space.

The foregoing are the initial stages of dissolution, that of the elements.

Levels of Acumen

The second section, also consisting of six points, concerns the way in which your level of acumen determines how you attain freedom:

Of the six levels, let us consider the first.

Those with a greater degree of the highest acumen do not experience the after-death state; immediately upon separation of the mind from the shell of the body, the true nature of reality becomes naturally evident to the mind in a supreme state of profound insight, and the mind abides free of any limitation imposed by conceptual elaboration.

Second, those with a lesser degree of the highest acumen attain freedom in the "third instant."

In the first instant, when the mind separates from the body, they experience the natural lucidity of mind that is dharmakaya, a supreme state free of thought.

In the second instant, they experience the arising of the radiant expression of mind that is sambhogakaya.

In the third instant, they attain the complete freedom of utter lucidity, abiding within dharmakaya, equalness comparable to space.

Third, those with a greater degree of average acumen remain in an unconscious state, without thought, for one to three days.⁷¹

Once they awaken, they experience timeless awareness arising as light.

For five days, they perceive the natural radiance of enlightened forms, the natural sounds of enlightened speech, and the brilliant rays of enlightened mind.⁷²

During that period, they attain freedom by recognizing their own true nature as that of enlightened form, speech, and mind.

Fourth, those with a lesser degree of average acumen remain in an unconscious state for three to five days.

Once they awaken, they experience the utterly lucid radiance of the five aspects of timeless awareness shining forth;⁷³ they feel no terror, but fearlessly attain freedom by perceiving this to be the natural manifestation of awareness.

Fifth, those with a greater degree of inferior acumen remain in an unconscious state for three days.

Once they awaken, they too experience the utter lucidity of the five aspects of timeless awareness. [75b]

After five days have passed, these visions of timeless awareness subside.

Then they perceive lights producing environments, sounds producing rays of light, and light rays producing thoughts.

At that point, memories of environments, possessions, and people from their former lifetime fade.

Remembering their spiritual practice in that life,

they recall the antidotes to be used and attain freedom by experiencing what they perceive in the after-death state arising naturally as timeless awareness, naturally lucid without fixation.

They become fully enlightened within the basic space of phenomena.

Sixth, those with a lesser degree of inferior acumen remain in an unconscious state for one day.

Once they awaken, they experience the visions of timeless awareness arising for a single day.

With the subsiding of these visions, they have the sense that the body they inhabit is the same one they had in their former lifetime,

with all its sense faculties intact, able to move unhindered and at will.

Their consciousness actually has no physical basis, and so seeks an environment and the security of being located somewhere.

According to their karma, they are conceived in specific wombs and take rebirth as human beings endowed with seven qualities.

They encounter the profound dharma and gain freedom in that lifetime.

There are others, however, who have caused a great deal of harm; as soon as their minds separate from their bodies, rather than experiencing any of the visions of the after-death state,

they perceive themselves in a hell realm, for in their confusion they fail to construe whatever arises to be a natural manifestation of awareness.

Those who have caused a moderate amount of harm remain in the after-death state for a short time;

they then suffer in one of the other two lower realms.

For those who commit both positive and harmful acts in equal measure, the after-death state lasts for a longer time;

they may remain in that state for forty-nine days,
 after which they take rebirth in a physical body according to
 their karma.
 In this regard, following the after-death state in which the true
 nature of reality is encountered,
 those of the latter two types experience the process of taking
 rebirth.
 It is therefore crucial to avoid committing any harmful actions in
 your present lifetime
 and to engage in positive actions so as to gain a continual
 experience of mind itself.
 The foregoing instructions are very useful—keep them in mind!

THE FRUITION

It is taught that once the consummate fruition has become fully
 evident,
 that state of manifest enlightenment has six aspects:

Dharmakaya

Once your mind is free of all habit patterns of dualistic confusion,
 confused perception and fixation on that confusion subside
 within basic space, [76a]
 and the purity is like the sun shining in a cloudless sky.
 At that point, the first aspect of the fruition is dharmakaya,
 endowed with twofold purity.
 Lucid timeless awareness arises within basic space, the true
 nature of reality;
 this state of utter lucidity, free of elaboration, is supremely and
 infinitely pervasive.
 The spontaneous presence of being is free in the context of
 original purity.

Sambhogakaya

The second aspect of the fruition is pure sambhogakaya.
 To bodhisattvas on the tenth level of realization, it manifests like
 a rainbow within the state of suchness itself
 as the five families of Gangchenso,⁷⁴ resplendent with all the
 major and minor marks of perfection.

Nirmanakaya

The third aspect of the fruition is nirmanakaya, which by its very
 nature is like the reflection of the moon
 appearing on any surface of water—that is, wherever there are
 those to be guided.
 There are emanations in the form of master artists, emanations
 in the form of beings who consciously take rebirth, sublime
 emanations, and so forth.
 In whatever way is necessary to guide beings under any
 circumstances, emanations manifest in just these ways,
 so that for as long as conditioned existence continues,
 enlightened activity takes place on an inconceivable scale
 to ensure the welfare of beings of the six classes.

Timeless awareness, supported by the kayas, has six aspects:
 Timeless awareness as the basic space of phenomena is the true
 nature of reality, without transition or change.
 Mirrorlike timeless awareness is the natural lucidity that is the
 ground for the manifestation of everything.
 Timeless awareness as equalness is the one taste in which there is
 no differentiation.
 All-discerning timeless awareness perceives all that there is, just
 as it is.
 Timeless awareness as spontaneous fulfillment ensures
 enlightened actions on an inconceivable scale.

Timeless awareness as spontaneous presence is the
unconditioned nature of being;
although beyond compare, it is the epitome of all the timeless
awareness of the victorious ones,
the source of all that is needed or wanted without deliberation,
like a wish-fulfilling gem.

The Awakening of Innate Compassion

The fourth aspect of the fruition concerns the way in which
innate compassion is awakened in beings.
It is awakened through the cultivation of bodhichitta, through
aspiration and twofold development,
and through the force of timeless awareness in the context of
spontaneous presence.

The Arousal of Innate Compassion

The fifth aspect of the fruition relates to the way in which innate
compassion is aroused.
It can be aroused on the basis of its inherent strength,
by coming into contact with a potential recipient of compassion,
or through invocation and prayer. [76b]

Benefiting Beings

The sixth aspect of the fruition pertains to the ways in which
enlightened actions take place for the sake of beings.
These take place in three ways—with support, without support,
and by virtue of the very essence of being;
however, those who tend toward further analysis ascertain a
fourth.⁷⁵
Dharmakaya provides an open avenue for enlightened actions to
bring about benefit without requiring any tangible support.

It also ensures that the rupakayas manifest
once beings' obscurations have been refined away by the power of
their aspirations and the development of bodhichitta.
Sambhogakaya is the natural manifestation of the innate
compassion of timeless awareness,
which provides a tangible support for enlightened actions that
benefit beings, refining away the obscurations of those on the
ten bodhisattva levels.
Enlightened actions also take place by virtue of the very essence of
being;
within the kaya of basic space—the context in which
misinterpretations of what is or is not subside—
manifestation takes place in whatever way is desired by those to be
guided,
so that myriad nirmanakaya manifestations carry out enlightened
actions to ensure every kind of benefit.

Traditional schools of Buddhist thought hold that enlightened
actions can ensure benefit while requiring a tangible support,
but also posit that the ultimate level of perfect buddhahood,
comprising the kayas and timeless awareness, acts to benefit beings.
Thus, they assert that this principle is valid even when there is no
tangible support, and so such actions never cease.
At the same time, they posit that these actions manifest only by the
power of beings' aspirations,
just as beings' prayers are answered when directed toward an
object of reverence, such as the Seer.
The very essence of being is such that the two kinds of benefit are
accomplished,
but despite the seeming duality of these two, there is freedom from
misconstruing them as either existing or not existing.
Although svabhavikakaya is not something that can be
differentiated,

these schools of thought nonetheless use appropriate systems of classification to postulate how benefit is ensured.
However, these three ways in which actions take place must ultimately prove to be one,
so you should master the points just presented.
This will free you from the trap of having biased views of what is or is not so.

Thus, the attainment of unsurpassable enlightenment begins with excellent intent while you are an ordinary being,
followed by reliance on any of three paths—common, special, or sublime⁷⁶—
and gradual progress through effort. [77a]
Although enlightened qualities are spontaneously ensured,
fulfilling all wishes,
it is nevertheless crucial that you exert yourself quite naturally in following the path to liberation.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When I think about the present evil times, I feel intensely discouraged.
Our lives provide us with no real leisure, for we waste them on the path of distraction.
There is no possibility of fathoming all that is to be known, and no end to conceptual elaboration.
Therefore, day and night, pursue spiritual practice that focuses on the heart essence of being.
You will die before completing all you wish to do in this life; one thing leads to another, like the waves of the ocean.
Come to thoroughly appreciate that nothing you undertake will be useful when you die.

From today on, practice to attain enlightenment, which brings liberation.

Where will you end up? What will happen? What can you know?

Who can help you? How can you develop the confidence to be content and fearless in this life?

Therefore, while you have some self-determination, it is time to strive for the lasting state of liberation.

Remember that your body, wealth, family, friends, and experiences in this life will all be left behind as you go forth alone with no one to accompany you.

It is time to seek a refuge and protector to be with you then.

Things will not always remain as they are now;

when the Lord of Death comes for you, throwing heaven and earth into turmoil, what will you do?

At that moment, in whom or what will you place your hopes?

Therefore, put the sacred dharma into practice now.

Whether or not you rely on the wise and powerful, whether or not you yourself are learned,

the hour of your death approaches; rouse the forces of virtue.

Meditate on what is genuinely meaningful—mind itself, the heart essence of being.

Then the happiness and joy of higher realms will be ensured.

You will be welcomed by victorious ones to the precious palace of noble liberation.

You will experience the ultimate state of supreme bliss, forever unchanging,

and the absolutely infinite wealth of enlightenment, sublime, self-knowing timeless awareness.

I, a beggar lacking any spiritual qualities, exhort you with these words.

This is my heart advice for your benefit; keep it in mind! [77b]

DEDICATION AND ASPIRATION

Thus, these spiritual instructions are a precious treasury that will
reveal your enlightened qualities.

Each group of six, moreover, conveys something of quintessential
import.

This distilled advice, a wish-fulfilling gem,
was set down for the sake of those who practice with faith in
order to attain liberation.

Through this virtue, may I and all beings without exception
strive to realize our buddha nature,
developing the qualities born of renunciation and realization in
abundance;
and becoming authentic rulers of the dharma, may we ensure
that the two kinds of benefit are spontaneously accomplished.

Moreover, in all lifetimes hence,
may I not be disheartened by conditioned existence, but ensure
the welfare of beings.

May I receive a treasury of teachings from holy masters
and delight the victorious ones by putting them into practice as is
intended.

Though I attain enlightenment, may I not forsake beings,
and though I remain in samsara, may I not be tainted by its
defects.

By guiding those who see, hear, think of, or come in contact with
me on the path to liberation,
may I utterly delight the victorious ones and their heirs.

May I teach the profound dharma to those with good fortune,
plant the seeds of the dharma in those who lack such fortune,
immerse myself in spiritual practice, bring that practice to
consummation, [78a]
and so delight my holy gurus, my glorious protectors!

COLOPHON

This completes the text entitled *The Precious Treasury of Pith
Instructions*, which was composed by me, Longchen Rabjam, a
yogin of the most sublime spiritual approach, one enriched by
having studied the Sugata's sublime teachings in great detail and
by having thoroughly trained in the wisdom that derives from lis-
tening to, contemplating, and meditating on profound and exten-
sive teachings.

Good fortune! Good fortune! Good fortune!

Notes

1. The higher trainings in ethical discipline, meditation, and wisdom.
2. For example, by blaming spiritual teachings or teachers for not saving you from your negative karma.
3. Twofold development involves both purifying oneself of obscurations and the effects of negative actions, and cultivating one's positive qualities by gaining merit (from the relative perspective) and deepening one's experience of timeless awareness (from the ultimate perspective).
4. Human existence.
5. Copying out sacred texts, making offerings, being generous, listening to spiritual teachings, memorizing teachings, reading scriptures, explaining the teachings to others, chanting prayers and liturgies, contemplating the meaning of the teachings, and meditating.
6. The Buddha Shakyamuni.
7. That is, the ways of the world do not always conform to our expectations of what is fair.
8. This may be a reference to the ability of a bodhisattva to take rebirth in a lower realm in order to benefit beings in that realm.
9. That is, if others' lack of gratitude or failure to heed your advice causes you to become discouraged or disillusioned.
10. In a spiritual context, laziness is not simply indolence, but also a

lack of enthusiasm for what is positive. To be distracted by trivial or counterproductive activities is thus a form of laziness.

11. A war machine; a traditional metaphor for a relentless and unstoppable force.
12. A reference to rebirth in a physical body.
13. That is, familiarity with spiritual practice and the meditative experience it engenders.
14. Just as the sweet taste of the sugar cannot be separated from the cane itself, phenomena cannot be separated from their true nature.
15. When a toothless, old dog gnaws on a bone, his gums bleed, and he mistakenly assumes that the blood comes from the bone, which makes him gnaw all the harder.
16. That is, adopt the uncontrived conduct worthy of practitioners of high caliber.
17. “Good family” can refer both to a family environment that fosters one’s positive qualities and to one’s own spiritual potential—the “buddha family” one belongs to as a result of one’s merit.
18. The Sutras, Vinaya, and Abhidharma.
19. A reference to the lower realms of samsara.
20. “Spiritually advanced beings” have attained the level known as the “path of seeing.”
21. According to an ancient Indian legend, the god Kamadeva strikes people every day with flowered arrows, inciting lust and envy in them.
22. Some misguided practitioners invoke these guardians (powerful but unenlightened beings controlled by oaths of allegiance) out of vengeance or rancor, and unleash their power in ways that harm others.
23. The Buddha Shakyamuni.
24. As parents grow old, their children often pay less and less attention to them.
25. Another way of saying that familiarity breeds contempt.
26. That is, you follow a gradual spiritual approach based on ordinary mind, rather than the Dzogchen teachings, which take your already perfect essence as the starting point of the path.

27. In Vajrayana Buddhism, authentic wrathful activity is carried out under very specific conditions, employing antidotes to ensure that one is not simply acting out of prejudice or aggression.
28. Devotion motivates one to pursue spiritual practice, which in turn develops one’s enlightened qualities.
29. It is traditional to speak idiomatically of one’s view as “upward” or “above” (that is, lofty and overarching), but of one’s conduct as “downward” or “below” (that is, concerned with practical, everyday matters). “In between” refers to the process by which one’s inner realization is expressed in perception and action.
30. A reference to rituals in which an effigy is carried outside and placed in a specific location.
31. Rituals in which a spike is driven into the ground or into an effigy, symbolizing the suppression of negative forces.
32. “Warmth” refers to the stage that precedes one’s first authentic experience of timeless awareness in meditation; it is analogous to the warmth produced by rubbing two sticks together, just before they burst into flames.
33. This refers to the integration of, for example, skillful means and sublime knowing or of the gathering of merit and deepening of awareness in one’s twofold development.
34. That is, prepare for death.
35. This is what the Dalai Lama has termed “enlightened self-interest”—spiritual development that is in one’s own best interest and is undertaken to develop one’s ability to benefit others.
36. Strictly speaking, “appearances” refers to the inanimate universe, “possibilities” to the infinite life forms therein.
37. More formally, this verse refers to the repetition of mantras and other spiritual practices, and the taking and renewing of ordinations.
38. Phases in the development stage of the Mahayoga approach.
39. The three levels of ordination are those of the foundational discipline of individual liberation, the Mahayana discipline of the bodhisattva, and Vajrayana samaya.
40. Faith, discipline, receiving teachings, generosity, self-respect, modesty, and wisdom.

41. The mandala of enlightened form (the unity of forms and emptiness), speech (the unity of sounds and emptiness), and mind (the unity of awareness and emptiness).
42. The next three lines invoke the metaphor of damming a river, finding its source, and then channeling the water into canals to irrigate fields.
43. In this context, “the dynamic expression of awareness” is a reference to conduct.
44. A metaphorical reference to awareness as the true nature of mind.
45. Samsara is often termed “the ocean of suffering,” and the state of liberation is referred to as the dry land on its far shore.
46. Traditional emblems of majesty.
47. That is, awareness is like the sun, and the display of phenomena is like its rays.
48. A reference to an ancient Indian story in which someone trying to describe ultimate reality is compared to a group of blind men trying to describe an elephant, each one touching only a part of the animal’s body.
49. A reference to a folktale: Two storks were flying through the air, a stick held between them, while a tortoise clung to the stick with its jaws so that it could see the world from a great height. When children on the ground marveled at the sight, the proud tortoise opened its jaws to claim credit for the idea and fell to its death.
50. According to Indian lore, a swan is capable of drinking milk mixed with water and separating the milk out with its bill. Thus, a swan’s bill is often a metaphor for a spiritual adept who knows how to live in the world without being sullied by it.
51. A lion’s might, dignity, and ferocity overwhelm other animals and cause them to flee.
52. A noble family, physical beauty, long life, freedom from illness, good fortune, wealth, and great wisdom.
53. Subject or agent, object or recipient, and their interaction.
54. The Buddha Shakyamuni.

55. Being generous, speaking pleasantly, seeking to benefit others, and acting in harmony with the conduct of those to be guided.
56. Concerning the use of analogies and metaphors, Longchenpa states the following: “A metaphor illustrates in only a partial way; it is not suitable for illustrating everything. Were it so suited, it would be the underlying meaning and not a metaphor” (*The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, trans. Richard Barron [Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 1998], p. 253). “Using metaphors provides only partial illustration—in no way does it provide a total comparison. People with scant wisdom take this language at face value, thinking, ‘These are in every way comparable,’ or else they interpret the metaphors incorrectly. For example, they might miss the point that, in being like a gem, awareness has spontaneously present enlightened qualities, and instead take ‘gem’ as a metaphor for something unaware and inanimate. . . . the metaphor ‘gem’ just illustrates that enlightened qualities are spontaneously present within the essence of awareness, so do not think of awareness as if it were something inanimate” (*A Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission*, trans. Richard Barron [Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 2001], p. 367).
57. Camphor has numerous medicinal properties that are useful in the treatment of various diseases; its specific action depends on how it is prescribed and the disease being treated.
58. When the medicinal properties of camphor are not recognized at all, illnesses go untreated.
59. When camphor is not administered properly, it can cause pain or worsen an illness.
60. When the properties of camphor are recognized, it is of enormous value.
61. When camphor is administered properly, it effects a cure.
62. The usefulness of camphor as a medicine is dependent on its recognition as such, but camphor does not undergo any change whether it is or is not recognized for what it is.
63. Depending on the circumstances, camphor can be used to treat a

wide range of illnesses and in the process may cause comfortable or uncomfortable feelings in the patient.

64. The first four analogies are based on the fact that the sesame oil permeates the entire seed.
65. Just as effort is required to express the oil from the seed, meditation is necessary to experience the way of abiding as dharmakaya.
66. Once pressed from the seed, the sesame oil can never function as part of the seed; by analogy, once one has realized the way of abiding, one can never fall back into the state of nonrecognition.
67. In this verse and the following, the compound term *mkha'dbyings* is analyzed; *mkha'* refers to "the purity of space," *dbyings* to the "emptiness of space."
68. A reference to the underlying principles of the mahayoga approach.
69. A reference to the practices of the anuyoga approach.
70. The remaining verses refer to the practices of the atiyoga approach.
71. "Day" in this context is defined as the period of time that the deceased was able to rest undistracted in meditation while still alive.
72. A reference to the visions of the peaceful and wrathful deities that appear to the mind of the deceased.
73. A reference to another of the visions experienced in the after-death state.
74. A form of the buddha Vairochana.
75. A reference to an alternative classification that includes a fourth kaya, svabhavikakaya. Such classifications are valid interpretations from the perspective of an ordinary being; ultimately, however, such differentiations do not apply.
76. "The common path" refers to the Hinayana and Mahayana; "the special path," to the Vajrayana; and "the sublime path," to the Dzogchen approach.