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NGALSO
Path to Enlightenment

Self-Healing 1 & 2 Summer Course - Reading and Reflections part 2

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This text is a lightly edited transcription of a teaching given by Lama Caroline in Albagnano Healing Meditation Centre, Italy on 14 July, 2020.

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[NgalSo preliminary practices]

We were talking these days that in *Self-Healing 1*, Lama Gangchen Rinpoche suggested we need to practice *lojong*. I was speaking briefly about the Eight Verses of Mind Training and now we're looking at the Seven-Point Mind Training.

Before we start some people asked me two questions about what I was saying yesterday. Yesterday, I was talking about accumulating merit and I was saying according to the Tibetan Buddhist idea that to give something to somebody who's more positive is a better investment, you get a better return for your investment than somebody who's not positive. Let's talk a little bit about this. So generally of course it's good to help everybody, for sure. But, for example, let's say you had 10 euros or 100 euros and you gave it to Rinpoche or Mother Teresa and they used it for planting trees or to promote Dharma in the West or something like this, it would be better than if we gave 10 euros or 100 euros to somebody who was a drug addict or alcoholic. We mean in this sense. It's not saying that we shouldn't help people, absolutely we should but it's just the fact that they will use for different purpose. We mean in this sense, however this absolutely doesn't mean we shouldn't help people. For example in Spain, in Malaga, in our Dharma community, when we make the tsog offering what we try and do is we buy baby milk and things like this and then we send to something called *angeles de la noche* which is for poor people living on the street. So we try and give what they need and they need things like baby milk. We decided to do like this. It's absolutely important to help poor and disadvantaged people. In fact it's in our bodhisattva vows actually to do so and it always says the one with more

difficulty we should help first. We have I think 11 bodhisattva vows, secondary bodhisattva vows, detailing exactly how we should help other people. So please don't misinterpret. I mean each Dharma teaching is looking in a slightly different way. So yes as much as we can we should give to the poor and the disadvantaged. Rinpoche himself did continuously throughout his life. He gave loads and loads and loads of money to poor and disadvantaged people, for example through Lama Gangchen Help in Action and also in the Tibetan community, in Mongolia, in India and Nepal and also in the West. So Buddhism is a subtle thing, everything we need to examine. Absolutely Rinpoche didn't think we should only make offerings to people like him or Pabongkha Rinpoche or Mother Teresa, he was himself donating lots of his personal income to the poor and disadvantaged.

Anyway now I'm following the lojong commentary, the seven points. So we need to pass through what it says and then each thing actually we need to consider and also see what Rinpoche and other great beings do in reality. But definitely to give to good causes is a good thing.

The second point somebody was asking me was about how the five forces was actually the best way to do *powa*, the transference of consciousness at the time of death. Actually what it means is if we have a positive life, thinking about others, then of course in the last moment it's no problem because anyway our mind is positive. We have the habit for the positive of the mind to manifest and in the last moment the mind will go in a positive direction. We were saying like that. Then I was commenting that in our tradition, it's true, we have this *powa* practice, the transference of consciousness, and we have various *sadhanas* related to Amitabha, Tara, Vajrayogini, Chakrasamvara, there's many actually. But if we don't know them and we didn't have the initiation and things like that, Rinpoche suggested that we do like from Self-Healing at the end when we do **om**, then we do **ah**, then **hung** and then we go **phe**. We never know what might happen in our lives, we might think: *oh yes I'd like to have a powa initiation*, but before it happens we might have an unfortunate end. We never know. Life's like that no? It's *samsara*. In the case that we meet an unfortunate end before we get a *powa* empowerment and practise it, let's say we're in a car crash or something, it could happen, then what we can do is think about our guru. Either just our guru in the rainbow body or whatever guru buddha or protector we have a special personal connection with, that we feel very close to, the one that's really taking care of us. Honestly best is just to think about our guru, because from the guru comes everything. That's why we make the verse: **kyoni lama: you are the guru, you are the yidam, you are the daka, dakini and Dharma protector; you are everything, in this life, the bardo, in all future lives, please hold me with your hook of compassion.**

So now let's continue with the Seven-Point Mind Training. So one thing is Rinpoche's Self-Healing books, we made them all in English. Rinpoche talked and I wrote them down in English. Then gradually as I learned some Tibetan we started to write down some bits in Tibetan, some mantras and this and that. Then later I studied Tibetan and now I translate things from Tibetan, like things made by other people. So actually you know when we read Rinpoche's books in English it is the oral transmission. In certain cases, like for example now we're talking about this Seven-Point Mind Training, there's a Tibetan text so also maybe it's nice to repeat the Tibetan. We have some kind of tradition, this idea of

transmitting the energy, but honestly I think all our things are already full of energy. But anyway Rinpoche asked me sometimes to do this kind of thing in Tibetan as well. So therefore in this case now, the Seven-Point Mind Training, to respect our holy guru's wishes I will repeat the text in Tibetan. So it's exactly what we were saying these days in English, but it's like the original so I guess it's like tv, or music, the original is always nice. It's nice to see or hear things in the original version. Rinpoche did say that we should always when possible keep the Tibetan and also learn to read it. Why? Because then we can always check the translations and see if they're accurate. Our translation of this is very accurate, there's no need to worry but it's always nice to know. It's true it is Tibetan Buddhism and for sure it's already Italian Buddhism, Dutch Buddhism, Argentinian Buddhism, everybody's Buddhism, but it's also Tibetan Buddhism isn't it. Rinpoche was Tibetan. So I'm going to repeat to you in Tibetan the root text, sorry for the bad pronunciation. I have the same accent in many different languages.

[Reading the text in Tibetan]

So this is the next section of the Seven-Point Mind Training. So what did I just say? Translation of the last verse, which we didn't look at yet. So: *all Dharma is condensed into one purpose, hold the principle of the two witnesses, always rely upon a happy mind alone, the sign of having trained is reversal, the sign of having trained is possessing the five greatneses, one is trained if you're able to do the practice even when you're distracted.*

So this bit's called: how do you know if you're successful in mind training or not? Because we always need to know how we're doing don't we? Because we might think we're really good at mind training but actually we're really rubbish, so we need to know what the sign is of having done it well. So these are the signs.

So how do we know if we're any good at mind training or not? It's very important to know. So the first one is: **all Dharma is condensed into one purpose**, one meaning. As we know there's all kinds of incredible practices. I mean if we want we can just do **om muni muni mahamuni shakjamuniye soha**, perfectly acceptable. If not we have hundreds and hundreds of different practices, different philosophical texts, different tantric meditations, all kinds of incredible things. So the purpose of doing all this is not to collect fantastic practices like a Pokemon set or football cards or anything like this. The point of all this is to improve ourselves. So the sign that our mind training is working is that we improve. We become nicer, we become more patient, we become more kind. Actually it would be kind of very shameful somehow if we spend many years hanging around Dharma centres, hanging around lamas and rinpoches and reading Dharma books and we're just the same. We have a whole big shelf full of books and we have thangkas and we have a lot of lovely statues, but we didn't change our behaviour. So this we have to be careful. The whole point of this is not to have lovely things and incredible books on our bookshelf and be a kind of interesting person. The point is to improve ourselves. There is no other point to all this. This is especially relevant for us older Dharma students, okay young ones, young in terms of age in Dharma, can make some excuse because they're just starting but definitely us who've been here for 5 or 10 years or 20 years or 30 or 40 years even, we really need to

show some improvement. Obviously this is something just for ourselves. Generally I was saying we don't need to feel guilty, but somehow we should feel ashamed and guilty if after 10 or 20 or 30 or 40 years we behave badly. We're kind of letting down our guru somehow aren't we? Our guru never behaved like this. Of course we're human and we have our habits but we should try our best. The whole point of Dharma is to improve ourselves, there is no other point. Whatever happens, good or bad, our mind should be stable, our mind should be peaceful. If you want to test yourself come to a Dharma centre and you'll have many opportunities to see how your mind training is doing. If you just stay home on your sofa everything is very comfortable, you don't see anybody, so it's very easy to be a great yogi or yogini. Also in normal life at work we have a lot of: *oh you can't do this, you can't do that*, and we have to behave because we're afraid to lose the job but in a Dharma centre we don't have this fear. If you come to a Dharma community you'll have a lot of opportunities to train your mind, so it's very recommended for lojong practitioners. Come to our group therapy sessions called living together. The Sangha has many uses including becoming our personal trainers of mind training. Lama Yeshe, he was the founder of the FPMT, he used to say that if you can live in a Dharma centre you can live anywhere. So that's the first one, to improve ourselves, to become a nicer person. We don't need to look at other people, we should look at our own behaviour: *how am I doing?* Like we were saying yesterday, make this review. You don't need to use black and white stones but at least think: *oh compared to last year am I showing any signs of improvement or did I get worse, how am I doing?* We need to watch our own behaviour.

Second sign of if we're any good at mind training is it says: ***hold the principle of the two witnesses***. What that means is we need to check the outer signs of improvement and also the inner signs of improvement. I mean you can see sometimes people appear to be behaving better, but often they're just actually conforming to what's expected of them. Like in a Dharma tradition, there's this kind of socially accepted behaviour that we think people should do. We have a lot of this don't we? But that doesn't mean that people are actually improving because people do it because they want to be in our group, in our tribe, in our NgälSo tradition. I mean fortunately because our teacher was Lama Gangchen Rinpoche he didn't emphasise so much this traditional stuff. In Tibetan Buddhism there's all kinds of incredible things, behaviour, about how you need to do. For him it was always more important our actual personal change, our inner attitude. Let me give you an example. In the Tibetan tradition we have a lot of different ways of showing respect and generally nowadays we tend to roll them out only when some high lama comes, we start doing all that because it's what's expected. But, for example, for many western people it's uncomfortable making prostrations and this kind of stuff because we don't have this habit, we find it very strange, very weird. Rinpoche always said he wasn't bothered if we made a prostration or not as long as we actually had some real feeling. That was his idea you know. It's true. I remember when I first went to Milan, before I'd been in Manjushri Institute in England and some other Dharma centres, FPMT, Kadampa centres, and then I came to Kunpen and my jaw was down on the floor. Everything I'd been told to do to be a Dharma student they weren't doing. There's this super high lama and there were people sleeping and eating pizza in the gumpa, the feet pointing towards him and all kinds of stuff and my jaw was literally on the floor. But then I got over it and I started to see that actually it didn't matter all those things, it mattered how we genuinely were. I always saw

around Rinpoche that people did have a very genuine and heartfelt respect and trust and devotion, which is actually much more important. People showed their respect in the western way to Rinpoche. Then of course sometimes we followed a little bit, like we prostrated when we come in the gompa, this kind of stuff, those of us who felt and those who didn't they didn't do it. Anyway so there's external signs of our progress but much more important is the internal signs. We're the only ones who can judge that actually. Because many times we think okay I have to be a good person, so I have to act in this way and this way and this way so people think I'm a good person but inside the mind is not really developed. So we need to look more at our own inner signs, at how we're doing. We need to think: *how am I doing with my mind*, which of course nobody else can see, nobody else can judge, but we can see, we can judge. It also means by the way that we shouldn't judge too much others. Of course at certain things we have to look, if people's behaviour is like totally over the top but generally we try not to. We give them let's say the benefit of the doubt. If we want to doubt somebody and analyse and criticise somebody, it's ourselves. That's the idea of mind training. Other people we try and develop love and empathy and compassion for. It's like Rinpoche did, he was like our mother and our father combined wasn't he. He was so kind and he was proud of us when we did something good. We were always seeking his approval and he just loved us unconditionally. We can't be Rinpoche, but we have to be kind and loving and empathetic and approving towards other people. Reserve our judgment and criticism and so on to ourselves. So this is what it's saying. They give this example of a mango. Sometimes a mango looks nice but it's unripe inside. So one time I thought I'll try this, I'll have a look, so in Borobudur they have many mango trees, so I pulled one off to see how it was and in fact it was like this, it was unripe inside. It looked beautiful, looked like very nice. So they say we should not be like unripe mangos. As you know, we buy fruit and it has to ripen. Also it means we need some time to ripen doesn't it, but we're ripening privately. Each one is ripening at their own time. We don't all ripen at the same speed, but anyway we all hope to ripen.

Third sign of being any good at mind training: **always rely on a happy mind alone**. That means whatever's happening, good or bad, we're okay. Generally that's definitely not how we normally feel. When things go wrong everything's terrible, we're depressed and we can't practice the Dharma. When everything's okay, when the sun is shining, when everything's very nice all of a sudden we become great yogis and yoginis. This is the real sign, if all the time no matter what difficulties we face we can have a positive happy mind. Then we can see clearly if we are a lojong practitioner or not. It's easy to see isn't it because we know our own mind.

Next sign if we're any good at mind training is when: **our ordinary attitude is reversed**. Our ordinary attitude is I don't want problems, I don't want anybody to bother me, leave me alone, I want to have a nice life, comfortable, enjoy myself, why shouldn't I? You know this kind of thing - I deserve it. So the sign of being any good at lojong is that when people come up to you with their problems you say: *yes*. Not like go away or I don't know you and start pretending you're talking to somebody on your phone or making some excuse and running away or hiding in your house or whatever. You know what I mean. Lojong is like this, it's like we don't run away from difficulty because the ordinary mind is: *why should I do it, I'm not being paid, what do I care?* But we're doing this because we

want to grow, because other people are more important, we want to become a bodhisattva. This is the way.

You can see clearly with Rinpoche how he was. Imagine. Can you imagine if everybody can come to your house, your bedroom, any time of the day and night forever. *Four o'clock in the morning you can call me and I will be nice to you, even if I'm tired, I'm sick, no problem, deposit all your emotional garbage on me, please welcome!* For free. That's what Rinpoche was doing wasn't it. So you can see he was a really great mind training practitioner, and we are not because after one day we say no way forget it, absolutely not and we'll probably buy a plane ticket and go somewhere else. You know I was looking in Self-Healing 3, the lojong section and actually it's really short, Rinpoche with just his life was showing us how to do. So we can just look at his life and there we see exactly the signs of a lojong practitioner. Easy to see. Like I say it's a pretty high bar to reach but okay we think: *I will try*. Maybe we don't have capacity like Rinpoche, but anyway we'll try and then gradually maybe we will improve a bit. It's like going to the gym isn't it. Nobody expects everybody to be suddenly like Rinpoche, like give it all to me, problems welcome, tell me all your sickness, your suffering, call me at 5 am, why not, the line is always on. In Milano that's what people used to do, incredible. But we try our best. If really you can't, you do your best and then it's okay you did your best. Then next day, next time, you try again. Also if you do too much you might have a very strong emotional reaction like running away or something. Why? Because we're not high bodhisattvas. We want to be bodhisattvas, we're aspiring bodhisattvas, so we can do a little bit can't we. Then as we get more bodhisattva muscle, more empathy muscles, we can do a little bit more and we continue like that. We're all treading our path, so we do our best. The more our ordinary attitude is reversed we know we're improving in the mind training. Like give to me all your problems and I like it.

Next sign of if we're any good at mind training is: **possessing the five greatnesses**. One is being like a bodhisattva, next is being somebody with ethics, somebody is being an ascetic, somebody is one who's trained in positivity, and the fifth one is being a great yogi or yogini. Being a great bodhisattva. So just look at Rinpoche, that's easy to see. He had all those five qualities. So we can be like mini bodhisattvas, a mini holder of ethics, a mini ascetic, a mini trainee in virtue, a mini yogi or yogini and then as we progress we can be a middle one and then when we become a great one we will give you a special prize and certificate as Rinpoche liked to do. We'll give you a big plaque with all the flags of the World Peace Foundation around it and clap. Although by that time you won't care if you get it or not. Anyway like this. Fortunately we also have other great lamas, great masters, we have many positive examples and it's not just like a story in a book. When I first got into Buddhism I was kind of worried that it was all in the middle ages or something but fortunately we still have a living tradition with great yogis, great bodhisattvas. Our tradition until now is completely alive and well. Now it's up to us. Fortunately not just up to us, we have the great masters who also come back again and again to guide us, but it is somewhat in our own hands. We should do our best to improve.

Next sign of if we're any good at mind training is we're: **able to do the practice even when we're distracted**. That means that now us, you and me, we try our best but

sometimes we fall off the wagon and we can't take it anymore and we react. For example, it says do not retaliate when people abuse you, but at a certain point we get annoyed don't we and that's because we haven't finished training. I said this yesterday, it's like somebody for example is a professional skateboarder, at first if you try skateboarding you're always falling off, or a surfer, you always fall off all the time. But when you're a professional skateboarder you can do all kinds of incredible things like very able to balance, you never fall off, you can do all sorts of stuff. Or a professional horse rider or an ice skater or somebody like that. In the case of a professional lojonger, even if somebody criticises us and calls us all kinds of horrible names and is really horrible to us we don't fall off. Now the problem is in the West, in the modern times, this is interpreted as a sign of weakness isn't it? In modern society people often say to us why don't you react, you're really weak. Because this is a cultural thing like: *oh you're really passive, you're really weak, you know the right thing to do would be to fight back, to react*. Okay there are very few cases when that could be appropriate but generally for us as trainees in mind training the better thing to do is try to control our mind. If somebody's horrible to us we have to think okay that's a reflection of my karma, they're weak actually not me because they're reacting badly, they lost it. We have to try and control our minds. So even if we look weak and we're passive we have to do like that. It's difficult because we were not educated like this and definitely if we put on the tv it's not what we see on the tv is it? We see all these action heroes who retaliate and that's our cultural value isn't it? You have to be strong, you have to retaliate, but the lojong idea is the one who doesn't retaliate is strong. Why? Because you're using that for a particular purpose, not because we like suffering or being abused or anything like this but because we're trying to become a better person, a stronger person. We need to reach a stage where our compassion is so strong that we never become angry. If we want to become bodhisattvas that's what we have to aim for in the future. We can see that clearly this is not our case but anyway it's something to aspire to.

I remember one time in Kunpen, in Milano, in the 90s, there came one Tibetan monk. I'm not making a political judgment here, we in our NgalSo school we are not involved in politics. It's our policy. Anyway there came one old Tibetan monk, and in the 1960s and 70s he'd been tortured in prison in Tibet. He had this bag of torture instruments and he was showing us all the horrible things they used on them. It's really *impressionante*. We asked him: *how did you cope with this?* He said how he coped is because he had compassion for the people who were torturing him. He said that what he was mainly concerned with was not to lose his inner peace and compassion. He said mostly he'd managed but one or two times he became angry with them and when he did that they won. So I must say that always made an impression on me because I'm definitely not like that and when I'm in pain I get angry and I lash out at the people around me. It's my fault no? Really there are people like that who are skilled in mind training. So we have to become like these experienced horse riders or skateboarders or ice skaters and whatever happens we don't fall over, we don't lose it. So based on this we can now work out how good we are on mind training or not. It's a personal analysis.

Next part is called the commitments of mind training. Maybe I'll read it afterwards. So now we know how to check if we're any good at mind training, conclusion is not very good! But anyway at least we try. So now there's something very nice, sometimes it's

called the commitments and advices or the commitments and the slogans of mind training. They're nice phrases to help us remember what to do. This is nice to print out or put on our phone to help us remember.

The first of the 18 is **always train in the three general points**. What are they? First one is when we practise mind training do not behave inappropriately. Second is when we do mind training do not break your vows, don't do anything against your pratimoksha or bodhisattva or tantric vows. The third one is do not practise mind training with an uneven mind, don't favour one person more than another. So what's all this about? So the first one is actually really important, it says do not allow your mind training to cause inappropriate behaviour. What that actually means is different from what we think it is. Mind training is about overcoming our self-cherishing and our self-grasping, becoming more bodhisattva-like, putting others first. But we have to be careful with that. We hear all these incredible stories in the Buddhist tradition, for example Buddha Shakyamuni when he was a bodhisattva he was meditating in a forest and there was this tiger and her cubs. I don't know what had happened to her, she was sick or something because she was not able to move and not able to produce milk for her cubs. So the bodhisattva out of compassion decided to offer himself as cat food. So he went off a cliff and he jumped down, near where the tiger cave was, and killed himself dedicating his body as food for the five tigers. But, he was a tenth ground bodhisattva. Unless you're a 10th ground bodhisattva definitely do not try that at home. No really because we hear these stories of all these incredible high yogis and practitioners who did incredible things, but we shouldn't think: *oh I can do like that*. In fact we actually have many vows saying do not try this at home, unless you're sure and you know you're an eighth, ninth or tenth ground bodhisattva. There's many things absolutely we should not do. For example, offer yourself as cat food to tigers, like jump into the tiger cage in the zoo. You shouldn't do things like this it's not suitable. What we actually need is a long and healthy life. So that's one thing we shouldn't do is give up our life, unless we're absolutely sure there's a really huge purpose. Sometimes you hear stories of one person who sacrificed themselves to save thousands of other people like in wars and stuff but if we're not absolutely sure, we shouldn't do it. Also we shouldn't for no reason give up our family.

People who are new to Buddhism, they hear these stories of many great Buddhist masters and saints who abandoned their family and did this and that, but we definitely should not abandon our family. Our family will be definitely displeased with us if we abandon them. So we should stay with our family it means. Also we should not give up all our possessions. We hear these stories don't we? I was saying yesterday Mahasiddha Migyuma she gave all the money of her family, she gave it all away to a yogi. The result was the family kicked her out and she became a beggar. Okay finally she practised the Dharma and she got many realisations, but we should not do things like this. We should not act in a reckless way. Of course we should be generous but we should not abandon our family, we should not give up or give away everything. People have this idea that Buddhism is a *sramana* tradition, this idea of homeless spiritual wanderers. But these days it's very difficult to live like this. I assure you, we will find it incredibly difficult and we'll give up and then we'll just feel regret about giving away all our possessions and abandoning our family. So don't, unless you have a super good reason for doing so. Many people came to

Rinpoche saying I want to become a monk, I want to become a nun, and Rinpoche said fine be a monk or nun in lay life. Practise the Dharma in your house, doing your job, with your partner, your family and if you want to renounce something renounce anger, renounce violence, renounce your negative emotions, renounce your inner violence. He said this to many people. We're trying to renounce negative emotions. Of course we have many friends who are monks and lamas and nuns and we respect very much their lifestyle choices and support them in their choice - but for most of us we're lay practitioners. Rinpoche said actually this is very good. He said why Hinduism continued in India, in the time of the moguls, is because it was in every house, in every family. The great monasteries were destroyed, the libraries were burnt, but Hinduism was not possible to destroy because every family had their practice, their altar. So Hinduism continued. Of course we hope those who have a special aptitude and the karma will follow the monastic lifestyle, those special few people, but for most of us we will practise the pratimoksha, the bodhisattva and the tantric way as lay people.

We lay people have our own pratimoksha, our own vows of individual liberation. We have five: don't kill, don't steal, don't lie, don't do sexual misconduct and don't take intoxicants. As lay people you can commit yourself to either one, two, three, four or five of them depending on what you can actually keep. There's no point committing to something you cannot do. So if you're a compulsive liar there's no point committing yourself to I will not lie, because you won't be able to keep it. So you have to be honest when you take vows. All these things require self-awareness and self-honesty. I mean generally we have to take one vow which is non-violence, which actually is very difficult to keep because if we analyse our modern lifestyle so much is based on violence isn't it. Even modern food production is based on so many forms of violence, even producing vegetables, even if we're a vegetarian, if we're eating stuff that's sprayed with pesticides it's still violent isn't it and so on and so on and so on. It's a big discussion but anyway we must as buddhists commit ourselves to one commitment which is to be as peaceful as possible. This is what Rinpoche always said. Then the rest slowly we see what we can do. So in lojong we should not do extreme things. So we should not, for example, think I am a lojong practitioner so I will deliberately drop myself into a war zone or into a *favela* if there's no need. We should not deliberately neglect our body and so on, there's no point. We need to have a healthy body, we need to take care, we need to eat well and be healthy as much as we can. Actually Mahayana buddhists unless there's some special reason we should avoid violent and dangerous places. Okay if you're really a bodhisattva, if you're really Mother Teresa or somebody like this, then you can go there. In the Gandavyuha Sutra there was one nun and she was one of the 52 gurus of Sudana and she was in one place called danger, danger city, a very dangerous place. Anyway her commitment was to work there and there are many very admirable people like this who work in these kind of places but you should only do so if you're ready to do so. The advice actually is don't do it if you're not ready. So anyway don't behave inappropriately. I think this advice is aimed particularly to one section of lojong practitioners, who are called chöd practitioners. We have a kind of let's say tantric form of lojong called *choja*, and they have the fame of like, for example, staying where there's epidemics, going to dangerous places, sitting on the edge of cliffs and all this kind of stuff. So this advice is do not do it, unless you're really a bodhisattva. In the lojong there's a lot of advice saying just behave normally. So don't be

reckless as it will be a hindrance to your spiritual development. We should always act in a way that's appropriate to our level of spiritual development. Of course that changes with time doesn't it. But beginning people should act in a way that's appropriate for beginning practitioners, a middle one should act in a way that's appropriate for middle people. Fortunately there are many incredibly compassionate people, not just Tibetan lamas. That would make compassion a very small feature wouldn't it, if it was only Tibetan lamas who manifested compassion. Fortunately there are many people with great qualities of compassion then of course it's okay but you shouldn't do it, you shouldn't act like them if you're not ready. So we do according to our level.

We should also not disregard any vows we have taken like bodhisattva vows. For example we have bodhisattva or tantric vows, and there is a tantric vow: do not neglect your body. For example, one time we went to visit the mother house of Mother Teresa in Calcutta with Rinpoche. A big group of friends went to visit Mother Teresa of Calcutta which I must say was a really incredible experience. Mother Teresa decided she was only going to work for the poorest of the poor, copying the life of Jesus. She also decided she would live like the poorest of the poor and would have their food, but even for her at a certain point it wasn't possible because they had just rice with a little salt. So she found she was becoming very weak and very sick and was unable to help people. So even Mother Teresa of Calcutta had to improve the diet of herself and her nuns, because if you become completely sick and tired you're unable to help people. So it's not just us. I mean if you want to help people you have to have energy, you have to be in good health to be capable of doing so. You have to have the physical basis. So like this, we should try and practise lojong but we don't go beyond the limit of the other practices.

Then the third point is we should not discriminate who we choose to practise mind training towards. So it's very easy to practise mind training towards for example our mother, because we love our mother and it's very easy and easy to give things to our mother, care for our mother, be there for her when she's sick and so on because it's our mother or our child, or our partner. More difficult is to be there for somebody who we really don't like, who's rude to us. Obviously, our mother we give special attention to, naturally, but even the one who's horrible we have to make more effort and not totally ignore them thinking they're really horrible and I can't wait to get away from them. Of course this is a gradual process isn't it? The one that's really annoying we try but it's more difficult, but we keep trying. Like Rinpoche, he was surrounded by so many annoying people. Atisha had one cook who was really annoying, the famous cook of Atisha, who everybody wanted to get rid of because he was so annoying. Atisha said: *no way, he's my bodhisattva maker and I'm keeping him*. Rinpoche didn't have just one annoying cook, he had a whole collection of specimens like that, who were totally annoying, very irritating but with love and compassion he kept them around. It was like olympic level of lojong practice.

Rinpoche said we should link this practice together with receiving the blessings of Chenrezig. Chenrezig was one of Rinpoche's very important practices, many forms of Chenrezig, especially Open-eye Chenrezig. Chenrezig means loving eyes. At least what we can do is say the mantra of Chenrezig. If we don't like people, people know because it comes out in our eyes doesn't it? So we need to develop loving eyes, gentle eyes, the eyes

of compassion. It's true no? We're not stupid we can see immediately when somebody's looking at us... because then they little bit try and hide but Chenrezig has gentle eyes, loving eyes. Let's sing the mantra of Chenrezig together. We imagine, if we have the initiation, we are Chenrezig and the energy of Guru Chenrezig is in our heart, radiating out towards all beings. If we didn't receive the initiation Guru Buddha Chenrezig is in the space in front of us and is sending the energy of limitless compassion to us and all living beings.

[Recitation: **om mani peme hung**]

Every time you meet somebody who's annoying, which is often, you can do **om mani peme hung**. You don't need to sing it to their face, but you can think it.

So next point of the so-called vows of mind training, this is a good one, it says: **remain natural while changing your aspiration**. When we get into Buddhism, we go to the Tibetan Dharma centre then of course we're fascinated by Tibetan Buddhism but also there's the Tibetan culture isn't there. So then we buy the *chuba* dress, we buy this, we buy that, we buy the shoes, we buy the hat, we buy all kinds of stuff, we buy the interior decor. I mean if you like of course why not. Nowadays it's a fusion world isn't it and everybody can do and wear and decorate their house however they like. But, actually, what it says here is just be yourself. If you're Italian, just be Italian and change your mind inside. If you're German, be a German. You don't need to change into Tibetan clothes and adopt Tibetan customs and drink Tibetan tea and stuff like that. You follow your own food, your dress and your culture, but change inside. Rinpoche, Lama Gangchen, this was a very big point of his. He was encouraging us to be ourselves, as we are, but to change inside. So no need to put any special sign or haircut or anything like that to show you're a bodhisattva. Whatever hairstyle you like please go ahead, please whatever you like, it's a free world. There's no need to do something so much on the outside, whatever it is you like please continue as you were - just change inside. In our Tibetan tradition, when people enter, when they become *rabjung* they go forth from their normal life and they change their name and their clothes. They may or may not cut off their hair. But then after that, once they changed their name to a spiritual name and they got a whole wardrobe full of red clothes, there's not supposed to change so much outside anymore, the point is to change inside. Rinpoche never said to us we need to wear, except me, red clothes. I have a whole wardrobe full of lovely red clothes, anything you like as long as it's red. Generally he never said to people you need to wear red or you need to wear orange or you need to wear robes or you need to cut off your hair and he never said you need to ordain as a monk or nun. He did say please improve yourself. So this is very good advice, very suitable, that we should remember. I always say to people jokingly when I become a buddha, which I hope one day I will be, then everybody has to drink english breakfast tea and eat fish and chips and read the Guardian newspaper and do everything like me because if that was the cause of becoming a buddha and because I'm English it would be like that... but it's not is it. You can see immediately that that's true, because when we put it in our own context we laugh don't we. If you become a Dutch buddha everybody has to eat Amsterdam cheese and wear clogs, you know this is the stereotype isn't it. Obviously it's not going to make you into a buddha. Anyway we got the point now.

Next one: **do not speak about degenerated limbs**. So what this means is we should not focus or talk about other people's mental or physical defects. I mean fortunately these days it's not considered okay to speak negatively about people who are disabled is it. It's considered a form of discrimination fortunately nowadays. So that one is already okay. But, we do have this compulsion to talk about other people's faults. We kind of enjoy a little bit of gossiping about other people's weaknesses and negativity with our friends don't we. Saying: *oh they said they were going to do this and then they didn't...* We somehow take a sort of pleasure in pointing out the faults of others. This we have to try and avoid, because it's not the right thing to do. We're all human, we have weaknesses, but there's no need to speak about other people's weaknesses unless specifically in the context of how we can help them, how we can help them improve. We have many bodhisattva vows like this. For example, if somebody's an addict or something, then obviously we need to talk about how we can help them. If not we just have to let them be, they're in their process. What to do? If we want to list anybody's faults we should list our own. Of which there are plenty. Also, by the way, if we do this our marriage will last a lot longer, because when marriages go bad we start to focus on the faults of our partner and just become obsessed and go on about it all the time. Instead it's better to try and acknowledge their qualities and focus on our own faults. Of course we have our ego mind, sometimes it's very difficult but we have to try to change this habit. This is a commitment of mind training and also will help us to have a long and happy relationship. So it's very good advice.

Next one is kind of similar actually: **never think about other people's faults**. Because anyway what good will it do us? All it will do is bring our mind down, bring us into a state of criticism mind. Rinpoche always tried to bring out the good side in people. Very few times in 30 years, did I see him really criticise anybody directly. Only then it was in extreme cases and then he also did in a very soft way. This thing of directly it doesn't really work anymore. If you directly criticise somebody all they will do is either swear at you or do the opposite, it's not helpful. So it's more skilful to try and help people develop their good qualities and then if you relate to people's inner positivity they will change by themselves. That's what I saw Rinpoche do. It's true isn't it? We all saw him like this and to each and every one of us he related like that. All kinds of people used to come to Rinpoche, sometimes really terrible people but anyway they were attracted to Rinpoche so they came for healing and Rinpoche would just look at them like he was a mother hen towards its chicks. We thought how could he be like that with that horrible person. But he was. Then that person would feel it, maybe nobody ever looked at them like that before in their lives, with genuine empathy, and they started to change. Everybody came to Rinpoche: the good, the bad, the ugly, everybody. Their inner light would start to manifest and they would change. It was fascinating to see. So as much as possible don't think about others faults. Once we get into that cycle of like you're horrible, you have faults, and we get obsessed by it, there's kind of no solution and then it just becomes bigger, bigger, bigger and then it just gets worse. We've all tried that haven't we? The only way to go is to encourage others in their positivity, like Rinpoche did.

Next one: **purify your greatest illusion first**. So first we need to identify what is our greatest illusion. For some people it's easy, other people it's not so obvious. But this again,

we need to watch ourselves. We need to think: *do I principally get angry, do I get jealous, is my problem pride, maybe I'm a very proud person and I can't ever say I'm wrong, it's so difficult to apologise, I can never do that, am I cuckoo number one, am I ignorant?* What's my poison, what's my vice? So we have a large menu of defects to choose from. If it's too difficult for us to choose then we make that analysis when we do an initiation - dropping the flower. If we got the white flower that means we are full of ignorance. We think: *oh I'm Vairochana family*, but it actually means right now we are completely ignorant. The yellow sector means I am completely proud and I can never apologise, but I need to change that and become more humble and more generous like Ratnasambava. If the flower goes on the red side it means I'm full of insatiable desire, I always want more, more, more but it's never enough. I need to change this into unlimited discrimination and become really a member of Amitabha family. If the flower drops on the green side, it means I'm full of fear and full of jealousy, I'm always unhappy when I see other people with something better than me, a job or a partner or a car or money or whatever, so this I need to change into rejoicing is the best investment like Rinpoche used to say. I need to become like Amoghasiddhi, able to do many things at the same time. If it drops on the blue actually right now it means I'm full of anger, a very unstable and nervous person but in the future I need to become completely stable and a member of the Akshobya family. I heard many people say that they think when you drop the flower that blue is the best, really I don't know why because they're all equally the same. Anyway we actually need all the qualities, but sure we need stable and we need a good relationship with the guru that's for sure. Anyway whatever is our vice, whatever is our poison we need to work on it. I've been to so many initiations I have all the faults, I got all the flowers. If you have all the flowers like me what to do? Well first do Tantric Self-Healing, dealing with all the problems. Or look at the last one you got. You can think it's a bit like a weather report and now at this moment in our life we need to work on that particular delusion. So we can do like this. If not we can just ask our partner and they will be delighted to tell us in no uncertain terms what is our main delusion, our main fault. If in doubt, if you don't have a flower and an initiation available, ask your partner and they will be quite happy to write you a list of what you need to change in your delusions. Then we have to say: *yes thank you*, and not I don't agree with you.

Next one: **abandon any hope for results**. So we're doing the mind training practice, practising Mahayana Buddhism actually. So when we say: *may I become a buddha for the benefit of all* we have to mean it. I'm not doing this because I need a house, because I need a job, because I need money, because I need people to like me and this kind of thing. We have this idea of reciprocal giving don't we? I give you a birthday present but I want one at least the same value back otherwise we're not friends. This is our society - no? In the lojong teaching it says you should just give without wanting anything back. It's difficult for us at first, we don't have this habit. But we should think: *okay I dedicate all the merits of all my practice, my positive actions, my life, to others*. We should do things not thinking of what we'll get out of it ourselves, which is completely opposite of our ordinary mind isn't it. That's why it says the sign of practice is reversal. So just practice. Abandon the hope for a result for ourselves. Because when we dedicate we give away our merit to all beings, so even though we have this idea of the karmic bank balance, we shouldn't think like *kerching* every time we do something good. Even though we are filling up our karmic

bank balance we should not focus on that aspect. If we do think about focusing on filling up our karmic bank balance actually we're not filling it up, it's weird isn't it but that's how it works. We can only truly fill up our karmic bank balance with merit when we're no longer bothered about filling it up. We just do things because it's the right thing to do. When we don't think about what we get back it's like our actions become less contaminated, they become purer. We are always making this calculation - what's it worth? We have to think: *okay I'm accumulating incredible merit, I'm doing a fantastic thing, it's enough*. Exactly the precise details we don't know, it's enough. Trust in the Dharma, trust in the lineage, trust in the practice, and then gradually positive results will come out naturally. We don't need to worry so much about it. I never really saw anybody who had such poor condition that they weren't able to practise the Dharma. So no need to worry about these kind of things. The gurus and the historical Buddha Shakyamuni they dedicated their merit so that we would be able to practise the Dharma. Rinpoche himself, always said when he passed away he was leaving his legacy, his merit, to all of us. Each one of us we have part of Rinpoche's light, part of Rinpoche, he told me this many times. I was like: *oh Rinpoche what am I going to do, in the future what will we do without you?* He said: *don't worry because I'm leaving my merit to everybody*. It's true you know, that somehow everybody is getting what they need for their spiritual development. So we need to trust, trust in what Rinpoche left to us. For sure each and every one of us he left what was energetically necessary for us to continue, but then we need to appreciate and use it. Because you know Rinpoche would respond to people exactly according to what they wanted. Personally I always thought people needed to be a bit careful, not like misuse this chance. Everybody had so much time, so much energy of Rinpoche. For example, if you said Rinpoche please pray for me because I want a new house or I want a boyfriend or whatever, he would say yes and it would happen or whatever. But not many people came to Rinpoche and said: *Rinpoche what I really want is spiritual development please help me*. That's what we should have done but of course people didn't know. People came because they were suffering, they were unhappy, and for him it was the same, whatever people needed on whatever level he would try to pray that it happened. Many people came to Rinpoche for him to resolve their family situation and their problems and this and that and their health, which of course is okay.

The historical Buddha said any kind of suffering we need to find a solution. What I'm trying to say is Rinpoche has left to everybody some positive energy, but don't waste it. Don't waste your *punya*, your merit, on having like a fabulous holiday in the Caribbean. When we have a good time we're spending it aren't we? That's what they say. So all our merit can ripen, we can have a super nice, lovely time but one day it finishes. Finish. Then our bank balance is empty. I'm sure Rinpoche left to each one of us some possibility for something nice to happen in our life. He promised to each one, he said to each one of you something. So if you really need something because you'll be happier and can practise the Dharma it's okay, if not use it to practise the Dharma. When we pray, when we dedicate, many people when they start Buddhism it's like: *oh please Guru Buddha Tara, protectors, I want this, I want that*. It's like a big list: *I need this, I need that, please if do this and I'm good can I have a job, money, partner, long life....* all this stuff, like a shopping list. I don't know about you but I always observe that if I try and do it for myself it doesn't work, that the Dharma protectors and the buddhas are totally uninterested in fulfilling my wishes

directed to myself. They only work if you pray for others. I don't know maybe it's just me, but I saw like this. Seems to me that the more we dedicate for others the more success our prayers have. When we're contaminated by our own personal wishes it's not working so well our prayers. So this is abandon any hope for results. I know this is difficult, but we have to also trust that everything will be okay and so far actually everything's been okay. For example when Rinpoche came to the West, he come with nothing. I arrived in 1990 in Milan, at that time Rinpoche had very little and we around him mostly had absolutely nothing, no money, nowhere to live, no things, nothing, absolutely nothing, we lived like refugees. Basically we squatted in the gumpa. Why we did it is because we absolutely wanted to be with Rinpoche and practise the Dharma. His first disciples now actually are a little old. Rinpoche at that time said I have absolutely no money, I cannot support anybody, everybody said fine but we want to be with you. So we lived like this. Each one of us we had only a suitcase full of stuff, that was it. But we trusted Rinpoche and now look, we have all this. We have Albagnano, we have Campos, we have Mani Bhadra, we have all these places, so many things, so many centres, so much of everything. Why? Because we trusted. We had to give up any hope because at that time there was no possibility, the only thing that was available as a reward was the Dharma which was very nice and really wonderful. We just need to trust. If we practise the Dharma everything will be all right for us you know. No problem. So let's abandon any hope for personal results, think about the others. Let's continue to work altruistically, communally, empathetically, and for sure everything will be all right. Rinpoche showed us how to do didn't he. So we just need to try as much as we can in that direction. Try it but no need to get stressed, it'll be all right.

Next commitment of mind training: **abandon poisonous food**. Now this is not talking about what we eat. We're all obsessed with what we eat aren't we? What diet we should have, gluten and biological, and this and that, but it's not this. What do we mean by positive and negative in Buddhism? Negative means it's harmful to ourselves and to others and the environment. Positive means it's beneficial to ourselves and others and the environment. This is Buddhist ethics. It's simple. It's not like in the western tradition, ethics is little different. If it helps it's positive, if it harms it's negative. That's easy actually isn't it? So we want to do something positive, we want to do something that's beneficial but we have to be careful not to involve the minds of 'me' and 'me first'. What we call our self-grasping and self-cherishing. It's not so easy of course because that's a very deeply ingrained habit in our lives. It's not like we can say: *okay today I'm not going to have any self-cherishing and self-grasping*, because it's so strong even if we want to switch it off it doesn't switch off so easily. Gradually we can try. Vajrayogini she has a knife, a *katari*, actually it's a kitchen knife, a butcher's knife, from ancient India. It's like this idea when you're in the kitchen you chop up everything. Gradually Vajrayogini with her knife she's cutting away all our delusions. So many of the tantric buddhas have these kataris, these curved knives, and this shows that we need to gradually cut away our delusions. I mean if you can you can cut it off in one stroke but this is extremely unlikely. More likely we need to keep cutting like chop, chop, chop, chop, chop, and bit by bit remove our delusions. Anyway so we try to be positive. Like Rinpoche said every day one less negative action, every day one more positive action is self-healing. When we do good things, positive things, what we call virtuous things, things that create happiness and well-being we should

try and take ourselves out of the equation. The more successful we are at taking ourselves out of the equation the better the action is.

They have what's called the three circles of doing things in Buddhism. The best way to do something is to think, let's say for example I see an old lady, you know 95 years old, and she has some difficulty with the shopping and I'd like to help her carry her shopping home. So I do that to help her. If I think she is empty of inherent existence, I'm empty of inherent existence, me carrying her shopping home is empty of inherent existence, it means I don't want anything back. I'm not wanting people to say I'm a good person or for her to like me, I just do it because it's the right thing to do then actually that's perfect. If I start to help thinking: *oh maybe people will think I'm a good person or she will like me or maybe she'll give me some of her shopping*, this kind of mind - me and me and you, me, me - it's not really a positive action. It's contaminated by my selfishness and my self-grasping, my feeling of me, me first. So many people in the West they're called do-gooders. Anyway we shouldn't just be like that. We should do things because it's the right thing to do, not because we want to gain status by being seen as a good person or something like that. We have to be careful with all these things because of course it's easy for us to like people thinking we're a good person. Of course we like this. Everybody thinks we're nice, we're wonderful, everybody likes me, but that's not helpful. Our spiritual practice should not be about that, so we have to be careful with these things. So don't allow the delicious food of the Dharma to be contaminated by selfishness or wanting people to think we're a good person or a spiritual person, that we're saintly in some way. Actually in the lojong they have something called the kadampa tradition, the holy words of the Buddha. We're Gelugpa, the successors of the early kadampas. In the kadampa tradition they have this thing that definitely you should not go around pretending to be a good person, like blowing yourself up as a holy person, a saint. In fact, you should do the opposite and tell everybody that you're really rubbish. That was their idea. So all your defects you should tell others and all your qualities you should hide, that was their idea to counteract this kind of mind. That can also be an ego trap, we have to be careful with all these things, to be skilful. So try not to do something wishing for reward or because you want people to think you're a good person or things like that.

Next commitment of mind training: **do not follow delusions**. This also is not so easy because we have strong habits of following delusions. We watched 25000 films showing us how to follow delusions, teaching us such things. Almost every film with a few exceptions are showing us how to follow delusions: how to be angry, how to be jealous, how to be attached, and this is what we like to watch isn't it? So we have this extremely strong habit and cultural viewpoint that it's okay for example to have a fight with people, to be deluded. Despite what's in our culture now we have to think: *I took refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma, in the Sangha, I want to grow and become a better person*. So even though in society people think if you don't answer back you're a loser, if you don't put yourself first you're a loser - regardless of this, I'm not a loser. Shakyamuni Buddha was not a loser was he? He was definitely not a loser, he was a prince, he was rich, he was good looking, he was a sports star, he was really intelligent, he knew everything, he had loads of girlfriends, so definitely not a loser. He told us we have to do like this. He was a man who had everything, so this is not a path for losers, this is a path for winners. So to be

a winner we need to do what Buddha said, what he showed us. Regardless of what people say in society it doesn't matter, they're the losers not us. Although we should not express such a thought in public, just think it privately to ourselves. Okay so we have to do like this. Even though it's difficult not to follow our delusions, it's extremely much more easy to follow them, we should make an effort not to do so. Why? Because we want to grow.

Next one: when somebody is horrible to you, speaks nasty words and abuses you verbally you should thank them so much and **do not retaliate**. We all have this experience, we have all created this karma that sometimes people speak very nastily to us or are sarcastic to us or angry or just basically horrible. We've all had that experience in our life. Rather than telling them to *get lost* or whatever, replying to them, retaliating, we should swallow it and think: *that's fine I am purifying my karma*. They however are increasing their negative karma. This is not so easy but we should try. I mean again people think if we don't reply back we're weak, but anyway it doesn't matter. *I'm not a loser, I'm doing this because I'm in my personal gym, my lojong gym, this is my personal trainer, I don't even have to pay them I got a free one, how lucky am I that this person is abusing me, criticising me, being spiteful to me, giving me a hard time - how could I have created such a fortunate karma to get a free one, how lucky am I, now I can become a real bodhisattva, how did I create this lucky condition for my spiritual growth*. We have to think like this. Sometimes we cannot, we totally lose it but never mind tomorrow is another day and we try again, we try our best. Sometimes there is a very good reason why we should answer back to somebody, but unless there is a very good reason we should not. We have to, as they say in the Eight Verses of Mind Training: offer them the victory, say: *yes you are right*, even if we don't agree but basically we have to do like this. This is why it was called the secret teaching because it's not so easy all this stuff.

Next one: **do not wait in ambush**. That means somebody has annoyed us, has harmed us in some way and we think: *I will get back at you, it doesn't matter how long it takes but one day I will get my revenge on you*. Some people are like this, they wait for years and years and years and finally they strike back don't they. Some people have this kind of mentality and then they take great pleasure in saying: *10 years ago you did this to me and now revenge is a plate best served cold and finally I got my revenge on you*. We have a lot of this actually. If you watch a latin *tele-novella*, it's full of this kind of stuff isn't it. It's true. If you watch the soap operas, they are full of this kind of behaviour. But, we should not do like this it's not becoming of a Buddhist. Also when people are vulnerable emotionally we should not provoke their weakness, because then sometimes we feel like: *oh now I'm more powerful than you*, and it's not nice to do like this. We shouldn't do it, especially with our partners, our friends. We know their weak points so we should avoid sticking in the knife emotionally to them. It's not bodhisattva-like, it's the opposite of what we're trying to achieve. Is that clear?

Next: **do not offend others**. We should try and avoid speaking or offending humans and other types of beings. Many times we offend people out of ignorance don't we because we don't know, but definitely we should not offend them because we have a harmful intention, in order to spite them or provoke them. For example, just pointing out people's mistakes or refusing to follow them. Okay if there's a good reason, but not otherwise. Not just because

we feel like it. I mean, for example, there may be somebody whose point of view we completely don't agree with and I'll give you an example from my own lovely life. When I was young, I was a punk rocker and I was totally against all religious people. It's funny isn't it, how life turns out but anyway that was the case at that time. So my punk friends and me, we used to take great delight in going to evangelical Christian meetings, big ones with thousands of people, and disrupting them because we thought this is totally a waste of time, it's harmful to people. We were young, we were teenagers. We used to go in these American evangelical Christian meetings, in the stadiums with thousands of people - praise the lord - and all this sort of thing. So we used to go, sneak in, and then run on the pitch and disrupt the meetings, definitely offending them. At the time I felt entirely justified that it was completely the right thing to do, but now looking back perhaps that wasn't the right thing to do. As you get older you get wiser. So it's like this. Even if there's somebody whose religious view or political view is completely opposite, still we should not offend them. Rinpoche did not do things like that did he? Rinpoche had people coming from all religions and all political views. People who were very anti-religious also came to see him. People of all different political views came, we can list them all: left wing, communist, fascist, middle view, Lega North, Five Star, and Rinpoche was equally nice to everybody. He was never taking anybody's side. Rinpoche said we always need to respect all religious views and he said we should not give favouritism to any political view. Why? Because we're Dharma practitioners. Of course each one of us has our own political view, however it's not suitable for us to mix Dharma with politics. Of course I have my own view but my spiritual friends they have all kinds of views. I often think about some of my friends that it would be impossible for us to be friends if it wasn't for the Dharma, but actually we're really good friends. If we start to discuss politics maybe we'll kill each other, but these things we put aside. Why? Because we have a higher purpose. It has to be like this doesn't it. Some people in the world we can say are wrong, definitely their behaviour is not good and their views are wrong. However from the point of view of Dharma, it is for everybody - we need to be nice to everybody. Do you see the difference? Otherwise there's no way to be close to people is there? If you're not close to people how is there any way for them to have any positive input? So we as Dharma practitioners, regardless of our own personal opinions we should avoid speaking or acting in a way that causes offence to others. Anyway when I did those things I was not a Dharma practitioner so I can excuse myself. When I was a punk rock I was not a Dharma practitioner, I had not heard of the Dharma at that point. Now I am and I have to act in a different way. I cannot publicly go and protest other people's views because it's not suitable.

There's not just human beings there's also other beings, there's spirit people, there's different kinds of entities, so we should also avoid offending them. For example, we should try not to do things that pollute the environment and also there's some wrathful practices, with wrathful mantras and things, that we should also avoid doing unless there's a very good reason. We should always try and resolve problems with people and also with non-human beings with empathy and not by wrathful means. Of course in our tradition there's always many stories. For example, there's one story of a haunted house and there was a spirit there and it was causing lots of problems. Many monks and lamas went there, trying to exorcise this spirit but to no avail. Finally one monk went there and he just sat and he put his zen over his head and he just sat there and meditated on compassion and

empathy towards the spirit. Finally the spirit was so impressed it actually manifested and started to talk to him. He said: *nobody's ever been nice to me before, people just come here and are horrible to me and try and harm me, to kill me, to hurt me, so of course I get upset.* So like this in our tradition there's many stories that actually lojong and empathy is the way to pacify not only spirits but people too. Rinpoche never did so much wrathful things, very few times did I ever see him do any kind of wrathful puja. Maybe I saw two times in 30 years doing a wrathful puja. Always he tried to pacify by being kind, by having an open heart and 99.99% of the time it worked. So this we need to remember. Also for us, who are trainees, who are aspiring bodhisattvas, who want to be bodhisattvas, it's not allowed for us to do wrathful actions. We're actually allowed to do peaceful and increasing actions. When you achieve the signs of bodhichitta then, if you like, we can talk about if you want to do some wrathful action, but definitely not at the moment. Actually one thing I must say about our Gelugpa tradition, I can tell you honestly because I have all, not all, but I have hundreds of books and practices of our Gelugpa tradition so I know what they are, and honestly in our tradition we have very few things that are not about positivity. Let's say if somebody attacks us psychically what we have in our tradition is how to defend ourselves, we don't have many practices on how to harm. In our Gelugpa school it's all about maximum self-defence. I can tell you honestly we're like the Jedi, not the bad Jedi, the white ones. Truly I can tell you like this. The idea of Lama Tsongkhapa and our Gelugpa tradition is to do everything based on love and compassion, meditate on emptiness, and even in our tantric practices it's like this. So do not offend others, do not say wrathful mantras and stuff unless it's absolutely a thousand percent necessary.

Last one for today: **do not transfer your own faults or problems onto others.** This means, for example, you have to do a job and it's boring and you don't like it and then you go to somebody and say do you know if you wash the dishes for me you would accumulate lots of merit. Or if you don't feel like doing your job, and you're a good talker, you convince somebody else to do your job. Even though maybe we can do this, because we're a good talker, we shouldn't. Even if we have the social possibility, where we can get people to do it, we should try not to. It's not nice. If somebody gives us a job or a responsibility we should do it ourselves. However, we should also not do everything ourselves. For example, here in our NgalSo world it's also good to delegate when possible, if you can find some friends that you can work together with, that's even nicer isn't it. This is not putting your load on somebody else, it means that you work together as a team. This is the ideal situation. Like Rinpoche said, Chenrezig Buddha has 1000 hands and he needed many hands and we needed to become his hands, his workers.

Now we need even more hands than before, because Rinpoche is in dakini land at the moment, until he comes back as future Rinpoche. Now even more we need people to be the hands of Rinpoche, the hands of NgalSo. So please let's all work together and be peace workers, peace messengers and work together as a team. Chenrezig's thousand hands are all connected, they're not all like disembodied hands, we're all working together for the same idea, the same purpose, then we become super powerful. If all our efforts are together we can do incredible things can't we? Both here and all over the world. Let's put our forces together, our good wishes, our time, our energy. Definitely let's not give up our responsibility and trick other people into doing our work for us, but let's all work together

as the hands of Buddha Chenrezig, as the hands of Rinpoche. That's the right way to go. I think that's enough today. That's a nice image isn't it? All be Rinpoche's hands, Chenrezig Buddha hands. Thank you all very much, see you all tomorrow.

[NgalSo dedication prayers]