



THE  
WORDS  
*of* Patrul Rinpoche  
MY PERFECT  
TEACHER

FOREWORDS BY THE DALAI LAMA AND  
DILGO KHYENTSE RINPOCHE

TRANSLATED BY THE  
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REVISED EDITION

for yourself, the time will have come for you to work directly for the benefit of others, using the four ways of attracting beings. But as a beginner, the way to bring benefit to others is to dedicate to the benefit of all beings all the practice you do while training in undertaking positive actions and avoiding negative ones. All this is to be done applying the three supreme methods.

### 2.3 TRANSCENDENT PATIENCE

Patience includes three aspects: patience when wronged, patience to bear hardships for the Dharma, and patience to face the profound truth without fear.

#### 2.3.1 Patience when wronged

This type of patience should apply whenever you are attacked, robbed or defeated, insulted to your face or slandered behind your back. Instead of getting annoyed and reacting angrily, you should respond positively, with loving kindness and compassion. If you lose patience and give way to anger, a single fit of rage can destroy the effects of the good actions you have accumulated over a thousand kalpas, as is mentioned in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

Good works gathered in a thousand ages,  
Such as deeds of generosity,  
Or offerings to those gone to bliss:  
A single flash of anger shatters them.<sup>154</sup>

And again:

No evil is there similar to hatred,  
Nor austerity to be compared with patience.<sup>155</sup>  
Steep yourself, therefore, in patience—  
In all ways, urgently, with zeal.

Remembering the ills that anger brings, strive to cultivate patience in all circumstances. Padampa Sangye says:

To hate enemies is a delusion caused by karma.  
Transform your vicious thoughts of hatred, people of Tingri!

And Atiśa says:

Do not get angry with those who harm you.  
If you get angry with those who harm you,

When are you going to cultivate patience?

Whenever someone hurts you, insults you or accuses you unjustly, the effect—as long as you do not lose your temper with that person or bear a grudge—will be to exhaust many of your past negative actions and obscurations. By developing patience in such situations you can accumulate abundant merit. Consider all who wrong you, therefore, as your teachers. As it is said,

If there were no-one with whom to get angry, with whom could you cultivate patience?

Nowadays we often hear that someone is a really good lama or monk but has a terrible temper. But there is no worse fault in the world than anger—so how could anyone be so good and at the same time have a terrible temper? Padampa Sangye says:

You don't understand that a moment's action arising from anger is worse than a hundred actions arising from desire.

If you have really assimilated the teachings properly, everything you do, say and think should be as soft as stepping on cotton wool and as mild as *tsampa* soup laced with butter. But it may well be the contrary, and the slightest virtuous practice you do, or vow you keep, makes you feel very pleased with yourself and puffs you up with pride. Or every time anyone says a single word you are extremely sensitive to the way they speak, and boil with anger whenever you think you are being humiliated or criticized. That sort of touchiness is a sign that your mind and the Dharma have gone separate ways and that the Dharma has not changed your mind in the least. Geshe Chengawa says:

If, as we study, reflect and meditate, our ego grows bigger and bigger, our patience becomes more fragile than a baby's skin, and we feel even more irritable than the demon Tsang Tsen, these are sure signs that our study, meditation and reflection have taken the wrong direction.

Always be humble, dress modestly, and treat everyone, whether good, bad or mediocre, with respect. Tame your mind with the Dharma, taking the love and compassion of bodhicitta as your basis. Without any doubt, this is the most essential point of all practices. It is better than a thousand "most sublime" views or "most profound" meditations which do no good to the mind.

### 2.3.2 Patience to bear hardships for the Dharma

For the sake of practising Dharma you should ignore heat, cold and all other difficulties. The tantras say:

Even through flaming infernos or seas of razor-sharp blades,  
Search for the Dharma until you die.

The ancient Kadampas had these four goals:

Base your mind on the Dharma,  
Base your Dharma on a humble life,  
Base your humble life on the thought of death,  
Base your death on an empty, barren hollow.

Nowadays we think we can practise Dharma alongside our worldly activities, without the slightest need for determination\* or for hardship, all the while enjoying comfort, well-being and popularity. "Other people manage to do it," we insist, and say admiringly, "Now, that's a good lama, he knows how to combine Dharma and worldly life."

But how could there be a way to marry Dharma with worldly life? Those who claim to be doing so are likely to be leading a good worldly life, but you may be sure that they are not practising pure Dharma. To claim that you can practise Dharma and worldly life at the same time is like saying that you can sew with a double-pointed needle, put fire and water in the same container or ride two horses in opposite directions. All these things are simply impossible.

Could any ordinary person ever surpass Buddha Śākyamuni? Yet even he found no way of practising the Dharma and worldly life side by side. Instead, he left his kingdom behind like spit in the dust, and went to live on the banks of the River Nairāñjanā, where he practised asceticism for six years, nourishing himself on only a single drop of water and a single grain of barley every year.

What about Jetsun Milarepa? While he was doing his practice, he had neither food nor clothing. He ate nothing but nettles, and his whole body became like a skeleton covered in greenish hair. Those who saw him had no idea whether he was a man or a demon. The fact that he practised Dharma to that point, so tenaciously and accepting hardship so willingly, surely proves that it is impossible to follow the Dharma and worldly life

\* *snying rus*, lit. "a bone in the heart," means a bold determination and courage which never gives up.

at the same time. Could Milarepa really have been too hopeless to know how to combine the two?

The great siddha Melong Dorje attained accomplishment after practising for nine years, eating nothing but the bark of the *lakhe* tree. Longchen Rabjam, the Omniscient Sovereign of the Dharma, lived only on twenty-one pills of mercury\* for many months. When it snowed, he used to get into a rough sack that served him as both bed and clothing.

All the siddhas of the past attained accomplishment only by practising with determination, willingly accepting all hardships, having cast aside every worldly activity. Not one of them attained realization by practising alongside the usual activities of everyday life, enjoying comfort, well-being and fame. Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa says:

By the time you have set yourself up with a comfortable place to stay, plenty of food, warm clothes and a generous benefactor, you have completely cultivated the demon before even starting to cultivate the Dharma.

Geshe Shawopa says:

To practise Dharma with sincerity your ambition in life should be poverty. At the end of a life of poverty, you should be able to deal with your death. If you have this attitude, you can be sure that no god, demon or human being will ever be able to make difficulties for you.

Jetsun Mila sang:

No-one to ask me if I'm sick,  
No-one to mourn me when I die:  
To die here alone in this hermitage  
Is everything a yogī could wish for.

No trace of feet outside my door,  
No trace of blood within:\*\*  
To die here alone in this hermitage  
Is everything a yogī could wish for.

\* Mercury is used in the practice of *bcud len* (extracting the essence). Its toxicity is neutralized and pills are made from it on which meditators live without having to eat ordinary food.

\*\* This may mean that there is no doctor to practise bloodletting or simply that there is no meat in Milarepa's frugal fare.

No-one to wonder where I've gone,  
 No particular place to go.  
 To die here alone in this hermitage  
 Is everything a yogī could wish for.

My corpse can rot and be eaten by worms,  
 My gristle and bone be sucked dry by flies;  
 To die here alone in this hermitage  
 Is everything a yogī could wish for.

It is therefore of fundamental importance to cast to the winds all the cravings of ordinary life and to practise without caring about heat, cold or any other difficulties.

### 2.3.3 Patience to face the profound truth without fear

Should you receive teachings on the natural state of profound emptiness or, more particularly, on the key points of the Natural Great Perfection beyond all activity and effort, or on the *Twelve Vajra Laughs* beyond the effects of good and bad actions, or on the *Eight Great Marvellous Verses*, try to grasp their true meaning without giving rise to negative views.

To have wrong views about these teachings or to criticize them is what is called “the harmful act of rejecting the Dharma.” It can cast one into the depths of hell for innumerable kalpas. As one confession text says:

I confess all the times I have committed an act even more  
 pernicious  
 Than the five acts with immediate retribution: that of rejecting  
 the Dharma.

One day, two Indian monks who had the twelve qualities of full training presented themselves before Atīśa. When Atīśa explained to them that the ego has no intrinsic existence, they were pleased.

But when he explained that phenomena have no intrinsic existence either,<sup>156</sup> they exclaimed, “That’s terrifying! Don’t say such things!” and when he read the Heart Sūtra, they blocked their ears.

Atīśa, sick at heart, told them, “Unless you train yourselves in the love and compassion of bodhicitta and then develop confidence in the profound teachings, your pure vows alone will lead you nowhere.”<sup>157</sup>

There were said to be many grossly arrogant monks at the time of the Buddha who, when they heard him teach on profound emptiness, vomited blood and died, and were reborn in the hells. A number of other stories recount similar happenings.