

Session 1 Handout

Overview of Seven Points

Attributed to the eleventh century great Indian Buddhist teacher Atisha who brought the teachings to Tibet.

The story of *Atisha's Tea Boy* goes something like this....

"There was a great Buddhist meditation teacher named Atisha who was traveling to Tibet to meet with the people there. He had heard that, in general, the people of Tibet were all very good-natured, open-minded, and flexible. He chose to bring with him a mean-tempered tea boy to keep himself "on his toes" and to stay aware. Tea ceremonies are generally intended to be peaceful, methodical, and slow-paced rituals which serve as a contemplative experience for those involved. This Tea Boy's ceremonies were different. He broke dishes, threw plates, spilled the tea, shouted, and was quite annoying to all involved. His tea ceremonies were a chaotic mess. Nonetheless, the meditation teacher chose to continue to bring his Tea Boy with him wherever he went. When asked why he continued to employ this terrible tea boy, Atisha stated "I want him with me because he is my greatest teacher. He reminds me to be patient. He reminds me to be compassionate. And, he gives me many opportunities to practice tolerance."

Atisha's Lojong teachings were compiled in twelfth century into the Tibetan Buddhist root text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje. A set of Lojong slogans. Lojong mean mind training. So a set of 59 pithy mind training slogans, which together with the practice of tonglen, provide a practical way for awakening bodhicitta. A way of reversing our ego-clinging and cultivating compassion using formal meditation and then in post meditation using the events of everyday life as a means of awakening. The post meditation practice is based on the spontaneous recall of appropriate Lojong slogans in daily life.

Taught in the West by Chogyam Tungpa Rinpoche and his student Pema Chodron.

The Seven Points of Mind Training

Point One: The Preliminaries, which are a basis for dharma (Buddha's teaching or teaching on truth/nature of reality) practice – the foundations of meditation practice and the four thoughts that turn the mind to the dharma. The four thoughts are: precious human life, death and impermanence, law of karma, suffering of samsara.

Point Two: The Main Practice, which is training in Bodhicitta (Absolute and Relative) – teachings on recognising absolute Bodhicitta (emptiness and Buddha nature) and cultivating relative Bodhicitta (compassion and skilful means) by tonglen meditation and use of Lojong slogans in post meditation.

Point Three: Transformation of bad circumstances into the path of awakening – teachings on making the obstacles the path, whatever happens in your life is part of your journey of mind training, your curriculum for the day.

Point Four: Showing the utilisation (practical and effective) of practice in one's whole life – applying the practice in daily life using the five strengths (strong determination, familiarisation, positive seed, reproach and aspiration). Continuing step by step along the path of mind training,

despite the inevitable resistance. The five strengths are instructions on how to lead your life and how to die.

Point Five: Evaluation of mind training – Chogyam Trungpa links to the paramita of meditation, which will protect us from obstacles on the path and give us the faculties of mindfulness and awareness to work for the awakening of ourselves for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Point Six: Disciplines of mind training – Chogyam Trungpa links to the paramita of insight and wisdom, these slogans sharpen our intelligence so that we can work with ourselves. The sword of prajna (intelligence/insight and wisdom/understanding of the true nature of reality) cuts the bondage of ego-clinging, cuts through habitual or potential neurosis. These slogans advise how to cultivate prajna and point out these neuroses so we can recognise them in ourselves.

Some examples of slogans in this point are: Don't ponder others; Work with the greatest defilements first; Abandon any hope of fruition; Don't be so predictable; Don't malign others; Don't wait in ambush; Don't try to be the fastest; Don't act with a twist; Don't seek others' pain as the limbs of your own happiness.

Point Seven: Guidelines of mind training – CT links this with post meditation or how to proceed further in our daily life, in relationships and in post meditation.

Some examples of slogans in this point are: Train without bias in all areas. It is crucial always to do this pervasively and wholeheartedly; Always meditate on whatever provokes resentment; Don't be swayed by external circumstances; Train wholeheartedly; Don't wallow in self-pity; Don't be jealous; Don't be frivolous; Don't expect applause.

Deemed perfect for our times, which are considered a dark age, concluding verse includes the phrase:

When the five dark ages occur,
This is the way to transform them into the path of bodhi (awakening).