



# urban

Meditation Skills  
HOW TO BE A HAPPY MEDITATOR



FEDOR STRACKE HAPPY MONKS PUBLICATION



# URBAN MEDITATION SKILLS

*How To Be A Happy Meditator*

Venerable Fedor Stracke



*May whoever sees, touches, reads, remembers, or talks or thinks about these books never be reborn in unfortunate circumstances, receive only rebirths in situations conducive to the perfect practice of Dharma, meet only perfectly qualified spiritual guides, quickly develop bodhicitta and immediately attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings.*

Published for Happy Monks Publication  
by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive • Boston  
[www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com)

A non-profit charitable organization for the benefit of all sentient beings and an affiliate  
of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition

[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive  
PO Box 636, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA

Ebook ISBN 978-1-891868-53-5  
UMS-2015-v2

Copyright 2006 Fedor Stracke  
All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or  
mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and  
retrieval system or technologies now know or later developed, without permission in  
writing from Fedor Stracke.

### **The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive**

*Bringing you the teachings of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche*



This book is made possible by kind supporters of the Archive who, like you, appreciate  
how we make these teachings freely available in so many ways, including in our website  
for instant reading, listening or downloading, and as printed and electronic books.

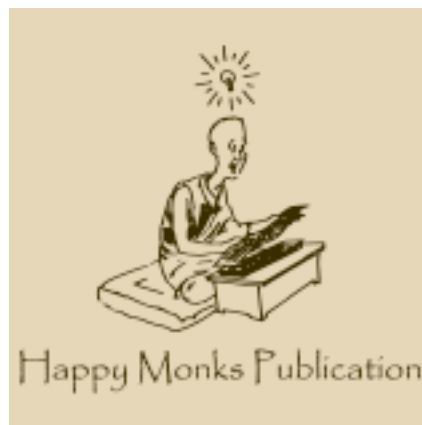
Our website offers immediate access to thousands of pages of teachings and hundreds of audio recordings by some of the greatest lamas of our time. Our photo gallery and our ever-popular books are also freely accessible there.

Please help us increase our efforts to spread the Dharma for the happiness and benefit of all beings. You can find out more about becoming a supporter of the Archive and see all we have to offer by visiting our website at [www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com).

Thank you so much, and please enjoy this e-book.



## About Happy Monks Publication



Happy Monks Publication offers free Buddhist dharma translations, compilations and compositions in the tradition of Nagarjuna, Asanga and Lama Tsong Khapa. We try to make traditional dharma texts and dharma information available to the modern reader.



*“Jampel, if listening to this enumeration of dharma with doubt generates more merit than a bodhisattva lacking skillful means practicing the six perfections for one hundred thousand eons, what need is there to mention the listening without doubt? What need is there to also mention writing, transmitting verbally, explaining and showing it to others in an extensive manner?” -The Sutra Offered by the Precious Youth*

Please visit us at [www.happymonkspublication.org](http://www.happymonkspublication.org)

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **URBAN MEDITATION SKILLS**

About Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive

About Happy Monks Publication

### **The Introduction**

#### **Some Thoughts Regarding Some Things**

-Place

-Posture

-Object

-Mind of Placement

#### **Some Principles to Grow a Meditation Practice**

-Mind Is a Creature of Habit

-Quality over Quantity

-Being Gentle

-The Mind Is Not a Machine

-Secret Instruction

-To Hit the Spot

#### **Notes on Groundwork for Meditation**

-Holistic, Not Selective, Approach

-Purifying Karma

-Building Up One's Positive Potential

-Requests to the Guru Deity

### **Meditations**

-Meditating on Breathing

-Brief Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha

-Meditation on Rejoicing

-Meditation for Boosting Self-Confidence and Creating a Positive Self-Image

-Equanimity

-Mental Spring Cleaning

-Faulty Mindfulness and Falling into the Same Hole Over and Over

### **Urban Dharma**

[-Urban Meditations](#)  
[-Offering to the Buddha in the Morning](#)  
[-How to Deal with Criticism](#)  
[-How to Protect Oneself if There Are Others Who Sap One's Energy](#)  
[-Random Acts of Generosity and Other Kindnesses](#)  
[-Affirmative Patience](#)  
[-Alternative Urban Dharma Vocabulary](#)

[The Dedication](#)

[Notes](#)

[Glossary](#)

[Other Happy Monks publications](#)

[Previously Published by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive](#)

[The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive](#)

[The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Teachings](#)

[What to Do With Dharma Teachings](#)

[Final Dedication](#)

[About Venerable Fedor Stracke](#)

## **The Introduction**

*When you meditate, don't squeeze yourself. Just sit comfortably and let your breath energy flow naturally. Be just as you are. Don't think, "I'm a meditator." Don't think, "I'm humble." Don't think, "I'm an egotist." Don't think anything. Just be.*

*-Lama Yeshe*

Success in meditation is often elusive, even for those of us that have meditated for a long time. It depends a great deal upon the fact that we actually practice meditation, and with a regularity and continuity that cannot be attained through mere discipline alone. We need to have the comfort factor in our practice, and take care that we are a happy meditator. [1]

Here are some ideas about how one can have greater success in one's meditation practice by adapting a few simple principles concerning place, time, posture, object, and mind, and an analysis of some common traps one could fall into.

One's feeling for meditation should be such that one is happy just remembering one's meditation cushion. If one just pushes, following a concept of how one's practice should look like, without experiencing any joy, and without considering what kind of meditation one needs, then eventually one will simply feel nauseous just at the sight of one's meditation cushion.

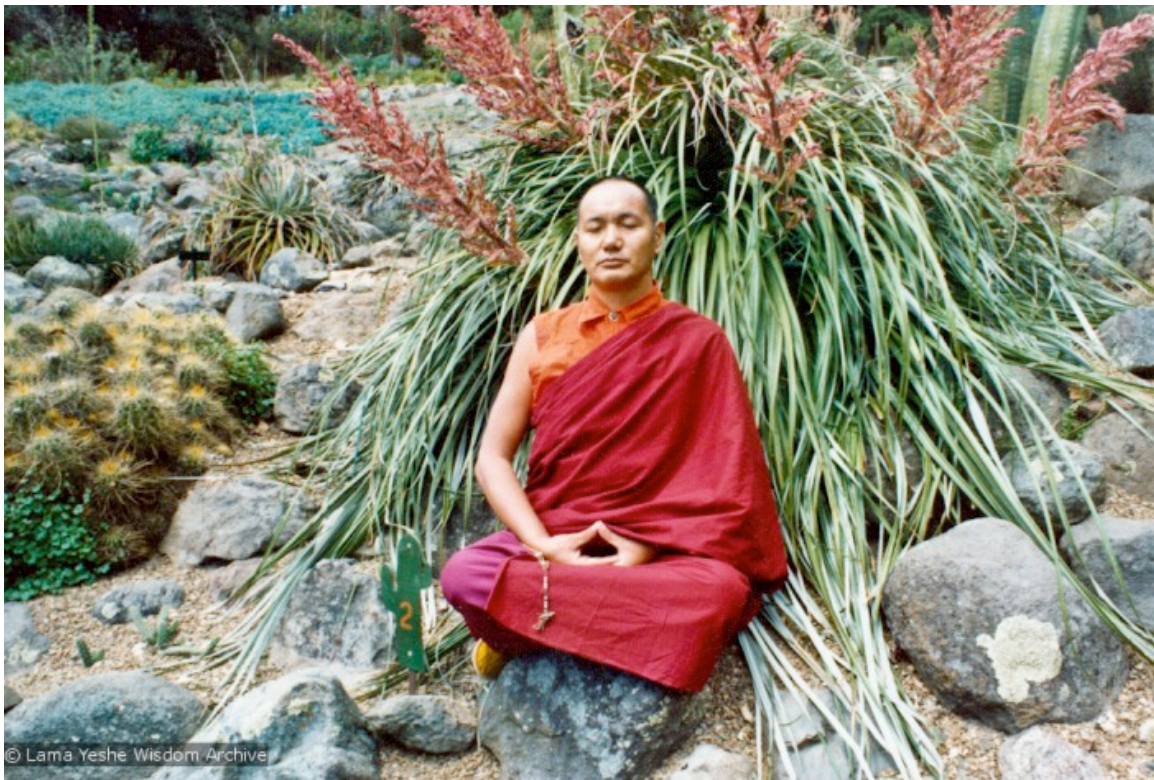
Progress in meditation depends on many factors and cannot be forced. Even high-level bodhisattvas who have already realized emptiness directly and have gone over to the

other side, who have unbelievable qualities, can only progress along the path proportionally to their merits. Why should it be any different for us?

One can only meditate according to one's merits, and to try to go beyond creates inner tension, which then often causes one to break the continuity of one's practice. It is therefore important to be a happy meditator, doing happily what one can, and just let one's meditation practice evolve naturally over time. Grasping becomes counterproductive.

To be a happy meditator, it is important that over time the meditation becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts, because only a lessening of disturbing thoughts can produce the inner happiness that one is looking for. The meditation needs to hit the spot. Otherwise our meditation will drive on one side of the highway, and our delusions happily on the other side of the highway in the opposite direction, leaning out of the windows, waving and jeering at us.

### **Some Thoughts Regarding Some Things**



*Lama Yeshe meditating in the botanical gardens, Berkeley, California, 1974  
Photo donated by Judy Weitzner  
(12530-pr)*



## ***Place***

If possible it is best to have a separate meditation place, exclusively used for that purpose, in one's flat or house. Ideally it is a place where one already feels calmer just by sitting down, and it can be decorated to this end. It is crucial that one's seat is comfortable and that one does not force oneself into an idea of how one should sit: hard or soft cushion, square or round cushion, thick or thin cushion, ground, bed or chair; it does not matter. What matters is that one can sit comfortably upright reasonably well. It is good to experiment with different options and different cushions to find the optimal setup for oneself.

An uncomfortable seat leads to dislike toward meditation, which in turn means one's enlightenment will be greatly postponed, as one will never meditate. Being comfortable is also important so that there are fewer obstacles to the physical wellbeing induced by meditation. It is recommended to have the back of one's seat higher than the front, as this will push one's hips automatically forward and straighten the spine, making it easier to sit straight.

## ***Posture***

1. Sitting with the legs in the full or half vajra position.
2. Hands are placed in one's lap, with one's right hand in the left.
3. Eyes are partially open, neither completely open nor completely closed, gazing at the tip of one's nose.
4. Sitting up straight.
5. Shoulders are level, not one higher than the other.
6. Head is inclined slightly forward, with a straight line between the tip of the nose and one's navel.
7. Mouth is closed comfortably in a natural way, not clenched shut, and the tip of the tongue is placed on the upper palate behind the upper front teeth.

While sitting in the full or half vajra posture is recommended, it is not essential, and one can sit in any cross legged posture one finds comfortable, or even sit on a chair. If one is sitting on a chair it is better not to lean back. The hands can be placed in one's lap regardless of whether one sits in a chair or on the ground. The head is slightly leaned forward to discourage mental excitement, but not too much so as to encourage mental sinking.

The eyes are kept open to let light in and discourage mental sinking, but are directed downward to discourage mental excitement. If, in the beginning, one is more comfortable with the eyes closed, then this is fine, but it is good to work toward having them slightly open.

It is important to be comfortable while sitting in the seven-point posture, because eventually one's meditation is supposed to generate the bliss of physical pliancy, and how could this happen if one is not comfortable?

While the physical posture is important, the actual meditation is done with the mind. The internal posture with which we commence the meditation is much more important. To adopt an attitude of compassion and altruism ensures the meditation is going into the right direction.

### ***Object***

One of the most important conditions for a successful meditation practice is the selection of a proper object, and then to keep the mind on this object with proper mindfulness.

The object should be a virtuous inner object. Even if the example is an outer object, such as the form body of a buddha, the actual meditation object is the reflection of that object in the mind. Just by focusing the mind on an inner object one has an inner focus.

To attain proper calm abiding one needs to let go of the external world for a while and focus the mind on an internal object. This may be very difficult to do for a Westerner who is obsessed with external objects, but even we often wish for a respite and the ability to let go and to withdraw.

The aim of the withdrawal is of course to return refreshed to the external world so we may better help others. In such a way the meditation becomes a holiday from the external world and disturbing thoughts. Once one is able to do this the need to go on external holidays falls away and one can save much money.

### ***Mind of Placement***

The mind needs to be placed on the internal positive object in a complete manner. To achieve the subsiding of disturbing thoughts it is important to have a complete internal focus, not partial - with an underlying part of the mind thinking about work and breakfast - but a 100 percent focus on the internal object.

At the same time it is crucial to achieve this focus in a gentle manner, with the mind in a relaxed space. Forcing the mind is counterproductive and focusing on the object does not equal grasping at the object as if one were squeezing it with pliers. Rather, by keeping the object gently in mind with mindfulness the mind abides single-pointedly on the object.

- View the object as a vessel in which one places one's mind.
- Let the mind become one with the object, without duality.

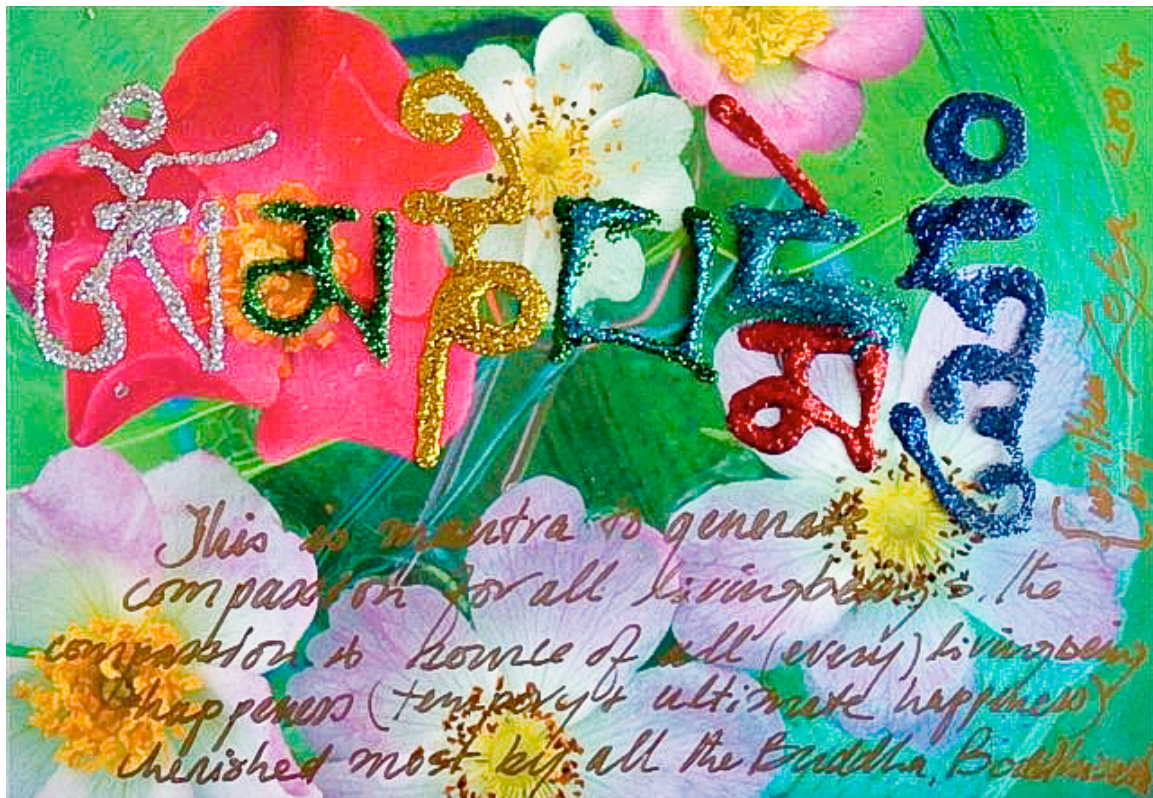
When the mind has been placed on the object it needs to be kept there with mindfulness, because once the mind has wandered off one has lost mindfulness of the object.

*Basically, the human mind is mostly unconscious, ignorant, and gets so preoccupied with new experiences that it forgets the old ones. Review the past month: exactly what happened, precisely what feelings did you have, every day? You can't remember, can*

*you? ... But if you practice this slowly, slowly, continuously checking within your mind, eventually, you'll be able to remember more and more of your previous experiences.*

*-Lama Yeshe*

## **Some Principles to Grow a Meditation Practice**



*Artwork by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
(01300-ud)*

### ***Mind Is a Creature of Habit***

The first principle is that mind is a creature of habit. Therefore, it is important to train it in meditation correctly from the start. The longer one meditates in the wrong way the more difficult it is to recover later and correct the mistakes.

### ***Quality over Quantity***

That is why as a beginner it is important to adopt the second principle of quality over quantity. From the very beginning one should take care that the mind is focused with clarity in a complete yet gentle manner on an internal virtuous object and not worry too much about the length of the session.



As a beginner one cannot keep such a good focus for a long time as the mind becomes tired and wanders off. To then finish the session after a few minutes would be somewhat embarrassing, and the question arises: “If I can meditate in this perfect manner only for a few minutes, what do I do for the rest of the half hour?”

One thing that one can do is take a mental rest after a few minutes, without getting up, and then have another short period of good concentration, then again a rest, and so on. One could also move on to reciting one’s mantras, prayers, etc. These are important because they bring the blessings to one’s mind that one needs to transform one’s mind.

One can also build the few minutes of good singlepointed meditation into one’s sadhana, for instance on emptiness during the dharmakaya meditation. It is important that at least once a day the mind has a rest from disturbing thoughts, which will subside if the mind is focused correctly.

### ***Meditate on Quality, Do Not Meditate for Time***

As a beginner it is generally very difficult to keep the mind focused on one single meditation object beyond a few minutes. The common notion is that if one meditates for half an hour one will spend much of that time bringing the mind back to the object. This, however, is not meditation, as a mind away from its object is not a mind meditating. The body may be sitting there, but the mind is not meditating.

By remembering that quality is more important than quantity, one does not need to be ashamed of meditating even only a few minutes a day, as long as that meditation is done well and on a regular basis. The mind is a creature of habit and sooner or later it will abide on the object for longer periods of time naturally. It is important to meditate regularly as we will not get the results of a meditation that we do not do.

### ***Being Gentle***

Pabongka Rinpoche says that if the mind gets distracted by an external object then one gently returns the mind to the meditation object with introspection. One does not wade in there aggressively and push the mind back to the object, but rather one merely recognizes with introspection that one has lost mindfulness of the object and then gently returns the mind to the object of meditation. This approach differs very much from the grasping attitude with which one often approaches one’s daily life, thinking the more one grasps and pushes, the more successful one will be. Our mind is a very subtle and receptive medium that has to be treated gently, similar to the way a mother treats her baby.

### ***The Mind Is Not a Machine***

We often approach meditation with a materialistic attitude and think of the mind as a kind of machine that one can just switch on and off: “I will press this button and this will happen.” What one forgets is that the mind is a creature of habit, and while neutral in nature, will take on habits, regardless of whether they are good or bad.

One common trap to fall into is thinking along the lines of, “If I meditate it has to be at least a 45-minute session every day,” but then not being able to sustain this on a daily basis and ending up never meditating. Since one will not get the result of a meditation that is never done, no matter how lofty one’s intentions, it is better to meditate daily even just for five or ten minutes. This brief daily meditation will definitely yield a result over time if it is done properly.

### ***Secret Instruction***

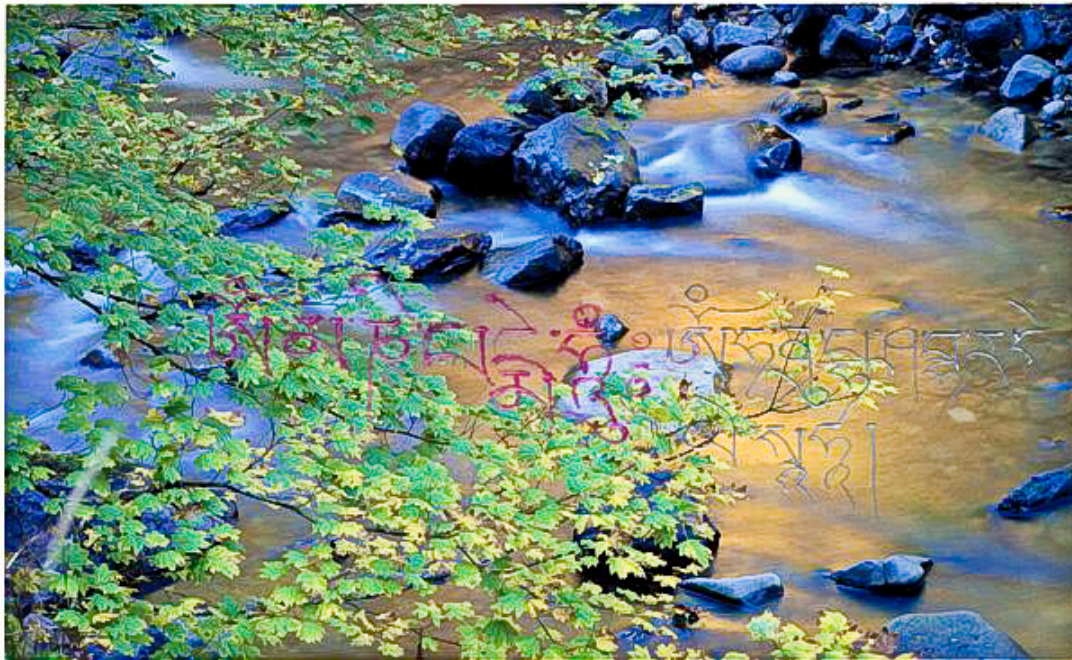
The secret instruction for meditation is to have a welltuned mind that is neither too tight nor too loose. If the mind is too tight it produces inner obstacles and disturbances. If the mind is too loose one falls asleep.

If one focuses with a well-tuned mind completely on an inner object then the disturbing thoughts can subside and from this one can experience inner peace. As long as the mind still engages outer objects it will be distracted and meditation bliss elusive.

### ***To Hit the Spot***

One part of the definition of a good meditation is that it hits the spot, i.e., it becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts. Only a meditation that becomes an antidote against disturbing thoughts will produce inner happiness.

## **Notes on Groundwork for Meditation [2]**



*(Signature)* Art of Nature

*Artwork by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
(01302\_ud)*

### ***Holistic, Not Selective, Approach***

The different meditations need conditions and time to ripen in the mind, so that they are not just intellectual knowledge, but are generated in the mind. In the same way as one cannot just throw some seeds in a field and then expect to reap a perfect crop, we cannot just sit down, do these meditations, and expect them to have an immediate effect. There are various things that need to be done to prepare the mind, so that it becomes a receptive and fertile field in which we can grow the crop of these meditations.

Pabongka Rinpoche explains that in order for this to happen, four factors are needed:

- We need to purify our karma.
- We need to build up our positive potential.
- We need to make requests to the guru deity.
- We need to do the actual meditations.

If we implement these four factors inclusively, then we can achieve massive mental transformation in a short period of time, but if we neglect even one of them then our mental development will at best be impaired.



## ***Purifying Karma***

The essence of purifying karma is to generate the power of thorough repudiation. [3] This is likened to a person who discovers that they have ingested a deadly poison. This person will not feel guilty about having ingested the poison; rather, their foremost emotion will be to ingest the antidote to counteract the poison. Subsequently they will generate a strong sense of awareness to avoid a similar situation in the future.

The essence here is to repudiate the action internally, to mentally turn away from it. Through this one avoids the “guilty action” syndrome, where guilt is used as inner justification to repeat the action anyway. If some measure of guilt is useful to turn away from the action, then it is beneficial guilt, and with some actions it would be a sign of mental sickness such as moral deficiency, if there were no guilt. The essence is to turn away from the action, and not to feel bad. To internally repudiate the action one strongly contemplates the disadvantages of the action, especially the four karmic results of the action.

## ***Building Up One’s Positive Potential [4]***

*Rejoicing is one of the most powerful and at the same time easiest methods to accumulate merits.*

*-Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

One’s positive potential is for the mind what oil and gas are for an engine. One may have a very powerful engine, but without gas it will not run, and even if one has gas, without oil the parts will not work smoothly and easily. The instructions we receive from our teachers are the same instructions that the great yogis such as Naropa and Marpa received from their teachers. Reading the life stories of the great yogis it often seems one has already received many more instructions than them, but, while having a wealth of instructions on the one hand, one experiences a drought of realizations on the other. One major difference lies in the amount of positive potential.

A person with strong merits generates strong insights and realizations from few instructions, while a person devoid of merits will not internalize even one dharma despite a lifetime of instructions.

This is why the practice of rejoicing is so important.

## ***Requests to the Guru Deity***

Requests to the guru deity, or at least to the Buddha, are important because we need blessings to generate new mental states, formerly not present in our mind, which can act as the antidote to our afflictions.

The buddhas cannot wash away our problems like dirt with water, and how they help is primarily through teaching us the path and guiding us along it. While the buddhas cannot wash away our obscurations, what they can definitely do if we ask for it is bless our mental continuum so that realizations can grow there.

A person dangling above an abyss on a single thread of rope puts all their hope into this rope, as it is the single thing standing between them and death. Similarly, our teacher is the single thread that is keeping us from falling into the abyss of unfortunate rebirths.

Making requests with this intensity and faith is very powerful. We visualize our guru as indivisible from our meditational deity, or vice versa, and then make one-pointed requests, remembering that our requests are really heard and that blessing our mind is something the buddhas can do.

## **Meditations [5]**



*Lama Yeshe at Columbia University  
Manhattan, New York, 1974  
(09304\_ng)*

### ***Meditating on Breathing***

Sitting comfortably upright place the mind internally.

Allow your breathing to come and go in a natural manner, without interfering.

Gently place the mind on the breath itself, not the movement of the abdomen or the sensation of air at the nostrils.

Gently let go of all thoughts, and let the mind become one with your breathing, in a state of clarity and calmness.

Calmly count the out-breath from 1 - 7, 1 - 10, or 1 - 21.

Variations:

Identify and concentrate on the reflection of the breath in your mind.

With the in-breath the air fills your whole body from bottom to top, and with the out-breath it spreads in all directions—in and out, in and out.

### **Combining This with The Visualization of Light**

Visualize that you are breathing out the disturbing thoughts, tension, etc. as black light, which dissolves into emptiness at the edge of the universe, and that you are breathing in white light that contains the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and which is slowly filling your whole body.

Guide the light down all the way through your legs to your feet, then let it fill the whole body up to the shoulders, down the arms and also the head, in the process dissolving tension, disturbing thoughts, and obscurations.

Do not worry whether or not it is perfectly done. Just do it as well as you can while being comfortable. This is more important.

One can meditate that the white light contains the different aspects of the enlightened mind, such as the three principals of the path, omniscient consciousness and the like.

### ***Brief Meditation on Shakyamuni Buddha***

Sit down comfortably in an upright position and let the breathing come and go naturally.

Visualize in the space in front of you, about at the height of the eyebrows and one body length away, a lotus, and on top of that a sun and moon disc, upon which Shakyamuni Buddha sitting.

He has a golden body made out of light, is sitting upright in the full lotus position wearing the three robes of a monk, and he is smiling. His right hand is in the earth touching mudra, and his left is in the mudra of meditative equipoise.



Mentally go through the major details of your visualization three or four times sequentially. Then gently focus on whatever appears to the mind. Just the outlines, or a partial appearance is good enough. Do not get caught up in correcting all the details. Combine the mind as well as possible with the object without straining it. You can view the object as a vessel into which you place your mind. Let the mind merge with the object so that there is no duality of subject and object.

Hold the object gently and single-pointedly for a few minutes. When the mind starts to wander again, reflect on the reasons why the Buddha is the sole refuge and place your whole trust in him as the perfect teacher.

*Letting the elephant mind wander  
Creates harm beyond pain.  
The unsubdued crazy elephant  
Does not do as much damage here.*

*If, through all, with the rope of mindfulness,  
One tightly fastens the elephant of the mind,  
All threats become completely non-existent,  
And all virtues will come into one's hand.*

*-Shantideva*

### ***Meditation on Rejoicing***

#### **Rejoicing in the Qualities of Special Beings to Accumulate Merit**

*All ten direction conquerors and their children,  
Self-liberators, trainees and non-trainees,  
And all migrators, in any of their merits  
I fully rejoice.*

*-King of Prayers*

If possible rejoice in the merits of tens of millions of stream enterers, returners, non-returners, hearer arhats, self-liberator arhats, ordinary bodhisattvas on the paths of accumulation and preparation, transcendental bodhisattvas on the paths of seeing and meditations, and buddhas.

Rejoice in their qualities of method, wisdom and activities. From the *Ornament of Clear Realization*:

*Rejoicing in the roots of virtue  
Of method and non-object.*

How wonderful that stream enterers have the qualities of liberation and realization they possess. How wonderful the returners have the qualities of liberation and realization they possess; ... how wonderful are the qualities of the ordinary bodhisattvas, absolutely incomparable to those of the hearers and self-liberators; how extraordinary are the yet again infinitely greater qualities of bodhisattvas on the paths of seeing and meditation, which diminish the qualities of the lower bodhisattvas; how wonderful are the infinite qualities of a buddha. I wish I had those qualities.

### **Rejoicing in the Qualities of Others to Counteract Jealousy**

“How wonderful that person has this job, this partner, health, car, etc.”

“How wonderful this person can do retreat, can do study programs, can meditate often, etc.”

### ***Rejoicing in One’s Own Qualities: Meditation for Boosting Self-Confidence and Creating a Positive Self-Image [6]***

Sit down comfortably in an upright position.

Pick a time span such as today, last week, last year, etc.

Remember consciously with a clear and relaxed mind, without judging, all the actions of body, speech, and mind carried out in that period from the start up to the present moment.

Rejoice in all the positive actions. It is most likely one finds more to rejoice in than one initially thinks.

Now focus inward and identify your qualities; finding at least one.

Rejoice in your qualities, ideally until the thought “I am good” is generated.

Repeat this method until the thought “I am good” is generated naturally.

To counteract self-absorption, rejoice regularly in the fortune of others.

### ***Equanimity [7]***

Usually others start out as strangers, and then, if we find them attractive and beneficial, we view them as friends and with attachment; if we find them unattractive and harmful, then we view them as enemies and with anger. These appearances can change very frequently, and in this way the mind is never at rest and always switching between attachment and anger.

Visualize a friend, a stranger, and an enemy.

Spend a few minutes investigating why you view these three people in this way.

**Despite appearing very concrete, the situation of friend, enemy, and stranger is very fluid**

Reflect on how friend and enemy started out as strangers.

Reflect with examples from experience on how quickly a friend can become an enemy, and how quickly an enemy can become a friend.

Reflect on how everybody - friend, enemy and stranger - are the same in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering.

### ***Mental Spring Cleaning***

Most of us carry around a multitude of resentments and old attachments, like so many dusty objects in the attic. These are a great burden for the mind, and cleaning them out is true spiritual practice, regardless of what else one does.

Applying the method of patience in retrospect, also called forgiveness

Meditate a little while on the mental consciousness, observing it, and then identify one of your resentments and its object.

Look at and analyze the nature of the resentment. Look at how it views its object. It sees the object as dark, being at fault and having harmed us volitionally.

Contemplate which harm is bigger by now, the original harm given by the other person, or the harm given to us by our resentment.

Resolve that it is now time to give up the resentment, for the sake of your own wellbeing, and to now meditate on love and compassion for the other person.

Although it seems as if the other person acted volitionally, in reality they were under the control of their mental afflictions.

Their mental afflictions arise through cause and effect, and not under their own volition, and the person under their control also does not act volitionally.

Looking at the other person in this way makes them an object of compassion, and we think, "What can I do to help this sentient being?"

Focus your love and good will on the other person for some time. [8]

**Applying methods against attachment**

Identify an old attachment.

Reflect on the uselessness of holding onto the object.

Let go of the object.

Breathe out deeply (which may come as a natural reaction of relief), and enjoy the resulting peace of mind.

### ***Faulty Mindfulness and Falling into the Same Hole Over and Over***

I am aware of how the object triggers the mental pattern.

I am aware of how the mental affliction gains strength.

I am aware of how the mental affliction takes over my mind.

I am aware of how I am again acting in the same destructive manner.

After the action I resolve to not repeat the action, like some many hundreds and thousands of times before.

The truth is, I do not have the means to stop my afflictions.

This is the situation where one is only aware of one's destructive actions, but does not practice mindfulness on the antidote. In such a case one is unable to change or stop one's actions. The reason is that one's meditation did not hit the spot, i.e., it did not become an antidote to the harmful mental patterns.

As a human being we always come with a body and a mind. It is a set, and once the mind is taken over by the mental afflictions, then our actions of body and speech are controlled by these afflictions.

The afflictions arise as part of a cause-effect chain reaction, and do not have from their side the thought "I shall arise" or "I shall not arise." They also do not wonder, "Shall I arise or shall I not arise?" Once the three conditions of misleading thought, proximity of the object, and the seed of the affliction in the mind come together, it is definite that the affliction will arise. It is simple cause and effect.

In a mind that is devoid of any antidote, or counterforce, it is inevitable that the affliction will then take over the control of one's mind, and as it is our mind that controls our actions, i.e., our actions come about relative to what is present in our mind, our actions will inevitably be controlled by the affliction.



Once it has reached this stage, and lacking strong self-control, where one can first implement the practice of being immovable like a tree, and then, on the basis of this, mentally apply an antidote, one will eventually be compelled to act upon the affliction. The affliction will induce and force one to act, like a dominant willful person controlling the actions of a weaker submissive person.

Just being mindful of this process is usually not enough to stop it, even if there is a strong wish not to carry out the action.

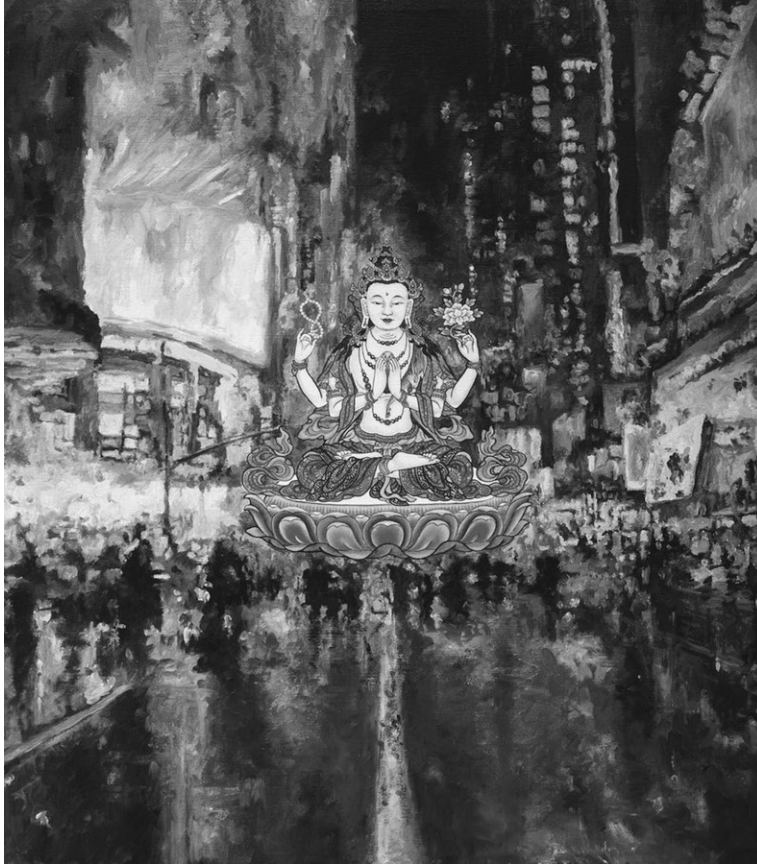
If the will not to act upon the affliction is strong and sincere enough, it is enough to simply be mindful of the strong intent and to distance oneself from it, being aware that the self is not the actions of body, speech, and mind. But often or perhaps most of the time one lacks this strong wish and sincerity. This is something one needs to confirm and investigate through one's own experience. If one finds that one is repeating the same destructive pattern over and over again, then simple mindfulness of the process alone is not enough.

In fact, simple mindfulness of the process alone will mostly never be enough. To be able to see the affliction as just a mental state, and to then simply let it go, or to engage in other similar practices, one would need the presence of strong positive antidotal mental states, and a strong mindfulness on them.

One interesting aspect here is that although at the start one may not want the affliction and its action, once the afflictions take over the mind, a change occurs in the mind, and it is as if one now does want the action.

Here one can see how the wants and not-wants of the self are conditioned by the accompanying mental state, and do not exist from their own side.

## **Urban Dharma**



*Urban Avalo*  
Artwork by Karma Phuntsok  
[www.karmaart.com/](http://www.karmaart.com/)

### ***Urban Meditations***

#### **On the Train**

While riding on the train, sitting in a cafe or restaurant, talking with employees in shops or simply while walking in the streets, one can meditate like this:

By seeing me, talking to me, observing me smile:

- May their tiredness be relieved.
- May their energies be recharged
- May positive thoughts be generated in their mind.
- May their sicknesses and ailments be cured.

Combine this with the quiet recitation of a mantra.

Send out white light which alleviates the suffering of the other person and fills them with pure happiness.

**In the Restaurant**

When giving a tip in a restaurant, give a little extra than required. It does not cost much, but the karmic benefits are incalculable.

“By establishing this karmic relationship with the other person may I be able to teach them the dharma in future lives, when I myself am enlightened, or even before. May I be able to pass on to them all the teachings, and may they become my main disciples.”

When going out for coffee and such, where it is easily affordable, get away from the “split the bill exactly down the middle” mentality and treat the other person.

**Coffee Nectar Offering**

Transform the coffee with 3x OM AH HUM.

Mentally offer the nectar to the Buddha.

Meditate that the offering generates bliss in the Buddha’s consciousness.

Light rays go out from the Buddha into you, purifying and blessing you.

While drinking the coffee:

Offer it to the Buddha residing in your heart.

Offer it to the millions of sentient beings in your body.

***Offering to the Buddha in the Morning***

Before going to work make a small offering, such as a piece of fruit, a cup of tea or coffee, light or incense offering to the Buddha.

Visualize the image as the actual Buddha.

Contemplate briefly the qualities of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Bless the offering with OM AH HUM 3x.

Bow before the Buddha and make the offering.

Visualize the offering multiplied to equal the extent of space.

Meditate that the offering has been received and that the contact generated bliss in the Buddha’s mind.

Through the condition of bliss, white light emanates forth, enters into you, and completely purifies you of all obstacles, disturbing thoughts, etc., and your whole body is completely filled with light.

Now you are ready to go to work.

### ***How to Deal with Criticism***

Reflect on how the words of the other person are just sound waves, traveling from their mouth to one's ears, before the meaning is then recognized in one's mind.

Do this meditation during the criticism, or after the dust has settled a little bit. Check whether any qualities that one possesses are missing, or whether the words have given one new faults.

Once the dust has settled one will find that no qualities are missing and that one also did not acquire new faults. After all, the criticism is only words, which cannot take away qualities or add faults.

Since there is no damage there is also no reason for anger. Of course the ego could be damaged, but this then is not a reasonable reason for anger according to the Dharma, and one needs to work it out oneself. Through this meditation one will become more aware of one's qualities and faults, and generate confidence in one's qualities.

### ***How To Protect Oneself If There Are Others Who Sap One's Energy***

#### **Mental Independence**

*Your consciousness is your own.*

*-Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

There are few things in life we can control, and the minds and actions of others certainly do not belong in this category, but we can learn to control our own mind. It is our spiritual practice to regain control of the mind from the mental afflictions and attain mental happiness in the process. This will be mental happiness developed in the mind through the power of the mind, and will not depend on the presence of external pleasant objects. In the process of "retaking control of the mind" one often realizes that one had one's own reasons to let the other person into one's own mind, and that this mental dependence is not desirable, unless it produces virtue.

The best internal advisor is dharma wisdom, derived through listening, contemplating and meditating.

#### **Loving Compassion**



Loving compassion is essential at the start, in the middle, and at the end of the spiritual path. We need it to get started on the path, to continue on the path in the middle, and to work for others once enlightenment is achieved.

There is nothing more healing for the mind than the sincere wish for another to be happy and to be free from suffering. Out of this love and compassion one can then decide what course of action is best for the other person.

### **Inner Joy and a Strong Personality**

It is essential to explore the concept of mental happiness, to identify it and to develop it. A person with strong inner happiness feels much less negatively influenced by others. The development of a healthy, strong personality based on compassion and combined with the wisdom realizing emptiness is also essential.

### ***Random Acts of Generosity and Other Kindnesses***

Random means out of the ordinary, and not necessarily unplanned. One can first decide within one's mind that one will engage into at least one random act of generosity per week.

Examples of what this generosity could be, are:

- An extra big tip at the restaurant.
- Do not insist on splitting the bill down to the penny, and perhaps even offer to pay for both if the expense is manageable.
- An out-of-the-ordinary present for one's spouse.
- Giving something to a beggar.
- Making a donation to a charitable cause.
- Cultivating a mental state of wanting to be beneficial to others and then being spontaneously helpful to others if one perceives they need help.

A requirement is that it is an action for others. Extra large presents to oneself, while occasionally not a bad idea, do not count as generosity. We already are very self-focused, and the limit for expenses for ourselves is usually the limit on the credit card, while the generosity for others is often not even 1% of this.

### ***Affirmative Patience***

Patience, being defined as a well-balanced mind undisturbed in the face of adversity, is a purely mental state free from ill will, despite receiving harm, or imagining one is receiving harm.

View the other person to be under the control of their afflictions. In this way they become an object of your compassion rather than anger.

Remember that anger always clouds your judgment.

Remember that our anger harms us more than the harm of the other person ever could.

A flaring temper is often just compensating a feeling of weakness or inadequacy. Practicing patience does not mean that one cannot stand up for oneself, or convey one's feelings to the other person, but means to learn to do so in a calm and sincere manner, without anger. This is a necessary skill in relationships and many other daily life situations, and requires a greater strength than the strength anger seems to give.

### ***Alternative Urban Dharma Vocabulary***

#### **Being cool:**

Being without eight worldly dharmas;  
Being without anger;  
Being without attachment.

#### **We are cool:**

I hold no resentment in my mind

#### **To chill out:**

Having a rest day and trying to be virtuous.  
To spend time at the Dharma center.  
To calm down, to relax.

#### **Dial down:**

Reducing harmful actions of body, speech, or mind.

#### **To relax:**

To relax one's self-cherishing. Stop being so tense and tightly wound up in your self-concerns, and relax by expanding your heart and mind towards others.

Relax by letting go of your self-importance, which is like a black hole sucking up the happiness from the air around and inside you.

#### **Multitasking**

This can be engaging in dharma practice while doing worldly actions, e.g., verbally reciting mantras or mentally meditating on impermanence while physically washing dishes. It can also mean to combine different dharma practices, such as verbally reciting a mantra, while mentally meditating on some dharma topic.

### **The Dedication**

May any merit attained from the book become the cause for the attainment of the omniscient state.

Sarva Mangalam!

## Notes

- [1.](#) If we are not a happy meditator, then we should at least be happy.
- [2.](#) These points have been explained exhaustively in Lama Zopa Rinpoche's collective works, and in the Stages of the Path teachings.
- [3.](#) Generally known as the power of regret.
- [4.](#) Building up merits.
- [5.](#) These are only some sample meditations, and do not represent a comprehensive training in the path. For a comprehensive training in the path, please consult Graduated Stages of the Path instructions.
- [6.](#) See meditation for boosting self-confidence and generating a positive self-image.
- [7.](#) The purpose of this meditation is to reduce attachment for friends and anger for enemies. In this way the mind is less torn between attachment and anger, and becomes more balanced.
- [8.](#) For more elaborate meditations on patience, refer to the Graduated Stages of the Path or the Introduction to the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.

## Glossary

Please visit the extensive online glossary at [LamaYeshe.com](http://LamaYeshe.com) for definitions and explanations of terms.

## Other Happy Monks Publications

Please visit [www.happymonkspublication.org](http://www.happymonkspublication.org)

### *Collected Topics*

*A Drop from the Ocean of Consciousness*

*A Drop from the Ocean of Aggregates*

*A Drop from the Ocean of Mind and Mental Factors*

*Emptiness*

*A Debate Between Wisdom and Ignorance*

*The Sun Illuminating the Profound Meaning of Emptiness*

*(Heart Sutra commentary)*

*Biography*

*Chandrakirti - The One clarifying Nagarjuna's Superior*

*Point of View*

*Meditations*

*Om Ah Hum Meditation by Lama Yeshe*

*A Commentary on the Praise to the Twenty-one Taras*

*A Commentary on the Praise to Manjushri*

*A Commentary on the Refuge-Bodhicitta Prayer*

## **Previously published by Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive**

*Becoming Your Own Therapist*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Virtue and Reality*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Make Your Mind an Ocean*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Teachings from the Vajrasattva Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Daily Purification: A Short Vajrasattva Practice*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Peaceful Stillness of the Silent Mind*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Teachings from the Mani Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Direct and Unmistaken Method*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Yoga of Offering Food*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Making Life Meaningful*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Teachings from Tibet*, by various great lamas  
*The Joy of Compassion*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Kindness of Others*, by Geshe Jampa Tegchok  
*Ego, Attachment and Liberation*, by Lama Yeshe  
*How Things Exist*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Universal Love*, by Lama Yeshe  
*The Heart of the Path*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*The Teachings from Medicine Buddha Retreat*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Freedom Through Understanding*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Kadampa Teachings*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Life, Death and After Death*, by Lama Yeshe  
*Bodhisattva Attitude*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*How to Practice Dharma*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Perfect Human Rebirth*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Practicing the Unmistaken Path*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*Creating the Causes of Happiness*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
For initiates only  
*A Teaching on Heruka*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
*A Teaching on Yamantaka*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche  
In association with TDL Archive  
*Mirror of Wisdom*, by Geshe Tsultim Gyeltsen  
*Illuminating the Path to Enlightenment*, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
In association with Amitabha Buddhist Centre  
*How to Generate Bodhicitta*, by Venerable Lama Ribur Rinpoche  
*A Commentary on Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*, by Lama Lhundrup Rigsel  
*Daily Reflections*, by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Thubten Chonyi  
Lama Yeshe DVDs  
*The Three Principal Aspects of the Path*  
*Introduction to Tantra*  
*Offering Tsok to Heruka Vajrasattva*  
*Anxiety in the Nuclear Age*  
*Bringing Dharma to the West*  
*Lama Yeshe at Disneyland*  
*Freedom Through Understanding*



## **The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive**

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive (LYWA) is the collected works of Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. Lama Zopa Rinpoche, its spiritual director, founded the Archive in 1996.

Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began teaching at Kopan Monastery, Nepal, in 1970. Since then, their teachings have been recorded and transcribed. At present we have well over 12,000 hours of digital audio and some 90,000 pages of raw transcript. Many recordings, mostly teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, remain to be transcribed, and as Rinpoche continues to teach, the number of recordings in the Archive increases accordingly. Most of our transcripts have been neither checked nor edited.

Here at the LYWA we are making every effort to organize the transcription of that which has not yet been transcribed, edit that which has not yet been edited, and generally do the many other tasks detailed below.

The work of the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive falls into two categories: *archiving* and *dissemination*.

*Archiving* requires managing the recordings of teachings by Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche that have already been collected, collecting recordings of teachings given but not yet sent to the Archive, and collecting recordings of Lama Zopa's on-going teachings, talks, advice and so forth as he travels the world for the benefit of all. Incoming media are then catalogued and stored safely while being kept accessible for further work.

We organize the transcription of audio, add the transcripts to the already existent database of teachings, manage this database, have transcripts checked, and make transcripts available to editors or others doing research on or practicing these teachings.

Other archiving activities include working with video and photographs of the Lamas and digitizing Archive materials.

*Dissemination* involves making the Lamas' teachings available through various avenues including books for free distribution and sale, eBooks on a wide range of readers, lightly edited transcripts, a monthly e-letter (see below), DVDs and online video, articles in Mandala and other magazines and on our website. Irrespective of the medium we choose, the teachings require a significant amount of work to prepare them for distribution.

This is just a summary of what we do. The Archive was established with virtually no seed funding and has developed solely through the kindness of many people, some of whom we have mentioned at the front of this book and most of the others on our website. We sincerely thank them all.

Our further development similarly depends upon the generosity of those who see the benefit and necessity of this work, and we would be extremely grateful for your help. Thus we hereby appeal to you for your kind support. If you would like to make a contribution to help us with any of the above tasks or to sponsor books for free distribution, please contact us:

Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive  
PO Box 636, Lincoln, MA 01773, USA  
Telephone (781) 259-4466  
[info@LamaYeshe.com](mailto:info@LamaYeshe.com)  
[www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com)

The Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive is a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible, non-profit corporation dedicated to the welfare of all sentient beings and totally dependent upon your donations for its continued existence. Thank you so much for your support. You may contribute by mailing a check, bank draft or money order to our Lincoln address; by making a donation on our secure website; by mailing us your credit card number or phoning it in; or by transferring funds directly to our bank— ask us for details.

#### *Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive Membership*

In order to raise the money we need to employ editors to make available the thousands of hours of teachings mentioned above, we have established a membership plan.

Membership costs US\$1,000 and its main benefit is that you will be helping make the Lamas' incredible teachings available to a worldwide audience. More direct and tangible benefits to you personally include free Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche books from the Archive and Wisdom Publications, a year's subscription to Mandala, a year of monthly pujas by the monks and nuns at Kopan Monastery with your personal dedication, and access to an exclusive members-only section of our website containing the entire LYWA library of publications in electronic format. Please see [www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com) for more information.

#### *Monthly e-letter*

Each month we send out a free e-letter containing our latest news and a previously unpublished teaching by Lama Yeshe or Lama Zopa Rinpoche. To see more than 140 back-issues or to subscribe with your email address, please go to our website.

### **The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition**

The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT) is an international organization of Buddhist meditation study and retreat centers, both urban and rural, monasteries, publishing houses, healing centers and other related activities founded in 1975 by Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche. At present, there are more than 160 FPMT centers, projects and services in over forty countries worldwide.

The FPMT has been established to facilitate the study and practice of Mahayana Buddhism in general and the Tibetan Gelug tradition, founded in the fifteenth century by the great scholar, yogi and saint, Lama Je Tsongkhapa, in particular.

The Foundation publishes a wonderful news journal, Mandala, from its International Office in the United States of America. To subscribe or view back issues, please go to the Mandala website, <http://www.mandalamagazine.org>, or contact:

FPMT  
1632 SE 11th Avenue,  
Portland, OR 97214  
Telephone (503) 808-1588;  
Fax (503) 808-1589  
[info@fpmt.org](mailto:info@fpmt.org)  
[www.fpmt.org](http://www.fpmt.org)

The FPMT website also offers teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other highly respected teachers in the tradition, details about the FPMT's educational programs, an online learning center, a complete listing of FPMT centers all over the world and in your area, a link to the excellent FPMT Store, and links to FPMT centers—where you will find details of their programs—and other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan pages.

#### *FPMT Online Learning Center*

In 2009, FPMT Education Services launched the FPMT Online Learning Center to make FPMT education programs and materials more accessible to students worldwide. While continuing to expand, the Online Learning Center currently offers the following courses:

- Meditation 101
- Buddhism in a Nutshell
- Heart Advice for Death and Dying
- Discovering Buddhism
- Basic Program
- Living in the Path
- Special Commentaries

*Living in the Path* is particularly unique in that it takes teachings by Lama Zopa Rinpoche and presents them in theme-related modules that include teaching transcripts, video extracts, meditations, mindfulness practices, karma yoga, and questions to assist students in integrating the material. Current modules include: *Motivation for Life*, *Taking the Essence*, *What Buddhists Believe*, *Guru is Buddha*, *Introduction to Atisha's text*, *The Happiness of Dharma*, *Bringing Emptiness to Life*, *The Secret of the Mind*, *Diamond Cutter Meditation*, *Refuge & Bodhichitta* and *Seven-Limb Prayer*.

All of our online programs provide audio and/or video teachings of the subjects, guided meditations, readings, and other support materials. Online forums for each program

provide students the opportunity to discuss the subject matter and to ask questions of forum elders. Additionally, many retreats led by Lama Zopa Rinpoche are available in full via audio and/or video format.

Education Services is committed to creating a dynamic virtual learning environment and adding more FPMT programming and materials for you to enjoy via the Online Learning Center.

Visit us at: [onlinelearning.fpmt.org](http://onlinelearning.fpmt.org)

## **What to do with Dharma teachings**

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect. To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly chairs or tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone, and as they burn, recite the mantra om ah hum. As the smoke rises, visualize that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering, and bringing them all happiness, up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition. Thank you very much.

## **Dedication**

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma live long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space, and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained, and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings, and only benefit and never harm each other.

## About Venerable Fedor Stracke

Ven. Tenzin Fedor was born in 1967 in Germany and has been a Buddhist monk since 1988. He has spent more than ten years in Sera Je Monastic University studying for the esteemed Geshe degree, which he is now close to attaining. He was one of the founders and the first director of Sera Je IMI house, a complex especially built for the Western monks studying at the monastery. During his time in India he also attended many of the public teachings given by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on a variety of subjects in both Dharamsala and south India. Ven Fedor has been teaching in FPMT centers since 1988 and from 1996 has also served as Tibetan interpreter for various FPMT and non-FPMT geshe.

