ADVICE TO LHAWANG TASHI BY JAMGÖN KONGTRUL LODRO TAYÉ

1. To Guru Padma I go for refuge. May the Kagyu masters inspire and help me To turn to the teachings, my mind filled with faith, And to follow the path to irreversible freedom.

2. Atisha, Lord of Tibet, offered this advice: “When in a crowd, watch your speech. When you are alone, watch your mind.” Thus he expressed two essential points. Since the mind is the source of faults And the mouth is the gateway of faults, Always guard both your mind and mouth.

3. All of existence and liberation is one’s own mind. Not a single particle exists that is other than that. Pain and pleasure, good and bad, high and low, All are simply concepts arising in your mind. If your mind has been purified, you are a Buddha, And wherever you are is a realm of purity. Whatever you do is done in the state of reality. Whatever appears is the display of pristine awareness.

4. But if your mind has not been purified Even a Buddha is seen to have faults. Even your parents cause you vexation. Most appearances seem to be hostile. Hope, fear, attraction, aversion arise endlessly. Fruitless years pass and your human life ends. You form friendships but have disagreements. No matter where you live, you find no happiness. However much you own, you feel dissatisfied. Once you have one thing, you must have another. You are swept away by the distractions of this life. Although you might intend to practice the teachings, Your life ends just as you’re thinking, “Now I’ll begin.”

5. When you first experience the urge to seek freedom, You feel as if you could relinquish everything, But being so rigid, you begrudge even a needle. When you first experience respect and devotion, You think of nothing but your teacher, But after a while you find you have doubts. When you first experience faith and confidence, To every act of virtue you immediately add another, But as you grow older, the whole effort dissipates. When you find a new friend who seems compatible, You care for his health and life more than your own, But once the novelty’s gone, you regard him as hostile.

6. The root of all of these problems you face Is failure to harness the potential of your mind. Once you are able to make your mind serve you, You won’t need to go to a place of seclusion; A mind free from thoughts is seclusion in itself. You won’t need to go looking for a teacher. Mind itself is your teacher; it is the Buddha. You won’t need to fear advanced practices; Mind undistracted is the essence of practice. You won’t need to try to avoid distractions; With mindfulness stable, they’re spontaneously freed. You won’t need to fear the rise of emotion; Once you know its nature, it is pristine awareness.

7. The cycle of existence and the state of liberation Are not other than this very mind of the instant, So keep a constant watch over your mind. If you’re unable to control the mind within, You’ll find no end of enemies without. But if you can conquer the anger within, You’ll appease all enemies on the face of the earth. If you never know satisfaction or contentment, Despite all your riches, you’ll be like a beggar. One who is content and free from craving Is always a rich man, though he owns not a thing.

8. You feel joy in the fulfillment of noble worldly deeds, Spiritual practices, and actions that are virtuous. The imprint of that joy leads to birth in the higher realms. But life there is impermanent, still within cyclic existence. Look at the essence of the joy; see its empty nature. This insight will place you on the path to freedom.

9. When you pursue worldly interests and spiritual practices That are tainted and the cause of suffering and pain, When you chase after thoughts and afflictive emotions, Such as anger, aversion, desire and attachment, All this leads to your birth in the three lower realms Where existence is replete with unimaginable suffering. Whatever you experience—suffering or afflictive emotion, Look directly at its nature: it vanishes into emptiness. Pristine awareness is none other than this. It is crucial to guard your own mind at all times By being ever joined to this mind of awareness. All practices are contained in the guarding of mind. The bodhisattva Shantideva taught the way to do this: “Those who wish to guard their minds are instructed To apply all aspects of mindfulness and attention. Placing my hands in the prayer position, I beseech you to guard your mind in that way.” Thus it is important for you to practice accordingly.

10. All objects perceived by the six consciousnesses Are but the magical manifestations of mind itself. One who tries to reject or engage them is befuddled. It is best to take the path that equalizes all as one taste, But if you are a novice practitioner you are advised To hold the highest view while acting impeccably, Appreciate the opportunities and rarity of human life, Think constantly about death and impermanence, And become certain of the law of cause and effect.

11. When you see or hear of someone’s death, Know that as a sign of your own eventual fate. When you see the transition from summer to winter, Remember that all things eventually change. When you see bees and their stores of honey, Be aware that wealth and possessions are useless. When you see a house in ruin or a deserted town, Understand that your own home will one day be empty. When you see someone separated from his beloved, Think about parting from your own family and friends. When you see someone who has met sudden misfortune, Remember that this could befall you as well.

12. You and all others are exactly like dreams. Not even a particle exists in truth. When you remain present in your intrinsic nature, Your mind unmodified by effort or contrivance, You realize the emptiness of everything, outer and inner. Like space, it is the union of clarity and emptiness. This is the ultimate mind of awakening. Towards all who are unaware of this nature of things, Who wander in cyclic existence through grasping and fixation And endure immeasurable suffering and pain, You spontaneously give rise to genuine compassion. This is the relative mind of awakening. Do not cling to compassion; understand it is empty. Compassion arises as the natural energy of emptiness. Apply yourself to this innermost practice, The essence of the union of sutra and mantra.

13. Here is the way for you to realize these teachings: Cultivate goodness and awareness as much as you can. Pray to the Three Jewels and ask for their help. Let devotion towards your teacher penetrate your being. Shun wrongful deeds and urge others to do likewise. Encourage them to act as virtuously as possible. Generate the resolve to follow the Great Way. Never fail to selflessly dedicate all virtue to others.

14. At the request of the virtuous practitioner Dévendra Whose qualities are as splendid as the waxing moon This was written by the monk known as Lodrö Tayé, Who is an old man with only three interests in life.

May longevity practices and Dharma practices be perfected And may the two objectives be spontaneously attained.

Sarva siddhirastu mangalam

Translated from Tibetan by Ingrid McLeod, 2008.