



A Gift of Liberation
Course Six—Preparing for Our Teacher
Homework Master, Class Six:
Our Life as a Meditation

Name _____

Date _____

1) When we have finished our request to the Lamas of the Lineage to help us in our practice, the custom is to withdraw the vision of them into our single Heart Lama. As we do so, Pabongka Rinpoche says, we are to “look back at the five, and get a clear picture.” What are these five, what is the picture, and what else does it imply, especially in the secret teachings?

[The “five” here are the five clusters of lamas in the Virtue Garden: (1) those of the Emptiness Lineage; (2) those of the Compassion Lineage; (3) those of the Blessing Lineage (secret teachings); (4) those lamas who have taught us in this life; and (5) our Heart Lama.

We are to picture ourselves as someone who has enough good karma to have met Buddhas and bodhisattvas directly, since as we pictured them they were *real*.

The wording here is “I **AM** someone who has enough good karma to meet these Holy Beings directly,” and is exactly the same as in special secret practices where we equate ourselves to high forms of emptiness, and Angels. There are even Sanskrit mantras for this wording, which go *atmako’hang!*

This picture of ourselves as someone special has its own name in Tibetan, which is *selnang* (*gsal-s nang*), and that is the word which Pabongka Rinpoche uses here in his lam-rim. In the secret teachings, this special view of things is often partnered with another one called *nga-gyel* (*nga-rgyal*). This refers to a special belief in the divinity within us, and we can easily see how it applies here, to someone who has attained enough good karma to “hang out” with Enlightened Beings.]

A Gift of Liberation
Course Six: Preparing for Our Teacher
Homework Master, Class Six

2) The Rinpoche says that—as we are withdrawing our vision of the Lamas of the Lineage—it is a bad omen for the future of our personal practice if we melt our “daily” Lama into light, as we do the others. What does he suggest that we do with this Lama, and how can we apply this to our Lama whenever we visualize them in our daily meditations?

[Pabongka Rinpoche says that—whether our Root Lama is still alive or not (and we can add whether we have met them yet or not)—we should *not* melt them into light, but rather melt them into the heart of the lovely divine Angel who usually stays within the heart of Je Tsongkapa. He says “it’s like pushing a piece of grain into a lump of butter.”

All of us enjoy doing different meditations where we are sitting with our own Lama—such as when we do the Golden Room Meditation. As we wrap up meditation sessions like this one, it’s not very auspicious just to leave our Lama “hanging there” as we get up and leave to start our day.

Instead, before we get up from our meditation seat we can ask the Lama to come and stay inside our heart all day long, to guide and comfort us. The traditional way of “escorting” them to our heart is that they rise up into the air, getting smaller as they go. By the time they reach the level of our head they are say 4 inches high; they then turn to face the same way as us, and descend gently onto the top of our head. From there we bring them slowly down our central channel, into our heart.

They remain here throughout the day, available for “consultations” whenever we feel, for example, sad or upset or confused.]

3) What does Pabongka Rinpoche mean when he says that we should do “Dagger Supplication”?

[There is a custom in ancient Buddhism that the land upon which a sacred building such as a stupa or temple will be constructed can be consecrated with a special ritual called *rab-ney* [*rab-gnas*]. The ritual can often include a dramatic moment in which the ground is struck with a ritual dagger called a *purpa* [*phur-pa*].

A Gift of Liberation
Course Six: Preparing for Our Teacher
Homework Master, Class Six

Pabongka Rinpoche encourages us to do our supplication in the same way. Rather than spreading out our final request for help, we can focus solely upon our own Heart Lama, and direct our supplication with the same intensity as a person striking a ritual dagger into the ground.

The dagger only has one point, and so by definition it can only strike in one place. Our request for help should be the same, focusing only upon the One Lama. Pabongka Rinpoche explicitly discourages us from a “grass is greener on the other side” attitude with the lamas from whom we seek help; and from trying to ask many Holy Beings for help at the same time.]

4) The whole purpose of preparing for good meditation sessions—which has been the subject of our course now for quite a while!—is to be able to meditate upon the steps of the path (the *lam-rim*) when we get to them shortly. That is, we might take a subject like our own impermanence and try to internalize it through meditating upon it; the end result being that we actually get up every morning with the feeling that we might die today, and so spend our day very meaningfully. What does Pabongka Rinpoche suggest that we do if we’re trying to perform one of these lam-rim meditations, and we’re not able to get very deep into it?

[The Rinpoche suggests that we go back through the process of making a heartfelt mandala offering to our Lama, and the meditation preliminary of asking them for their help. The mandala of course should include a vision of what will happen to the whole world if we ourselves become a happy and well-integrated person: this will spread to others around us, and like a virus it will cause an entire world of happy and well-integrated people.]

5) As we approach the actual steps of the lam-rim, Pabongka Rinpoche takes the opportunity to give an impromptu definition of meditation, involving three different elements. Please describe these three.

[The Rinpoche at this juncture in the text says that the word “meditation” can be defined first of all as (1) focusing on a single object, such as feelings of trust and devotion for our spiritual teacher. We repeat this single-pointed focusing of our mind every day until (2) our mind gets very comfortable and *used* to this object (which is actually the meaning of *gom* (*bsgom*), the

A Gift of Liberation
Course Six: Preparing for Our Teacher
Homework Master, Class Six

Tibetan word for “meditation”). And then we will find that (3) our mind throughout the day tends to go automatically into this good feeling about our teacher.

This is just an example of the first of the traditional steps of the path, and applies to all the other steps that we will be learning: the idea is to internalize the concepts that we are learning until they become part of who we are.]

6) Pabongka Rinpoche gives a surprising example of analytical meditation in showing us how meditation relates to repeating an object of focus until we internalize it. Please describe.

[The Rinpoche tells us how we are doing analytical meditations all the time, but often upon a negative object. He gives an example where, at first, we are in a neutral state of mind, not thinking about someone we’re having a problem with. Then suddenly we do think of them, and we recall something that they did to hurt us: “Oh, last year they said that mean thing to me, and then later on they repeated it again.” And then we even get down to the details of, “And then he looked at me in a certain way!”

We recall details of what this person has done to harm us over and over again, until although we are just sitting alone, we actually start to tremble and get a red face. The Rinpoche notes that—if the person were to step in front of us at that very moment—there is a very real danger that we would strike them with our fist.

This describes a “perfect” analytical meditation, because we have gone from constantly reviewing something until it has become part of us and actually altered our immediate behavior—which is the whole point of meditation upon the steps of the path.]

7) How does Pabongka Rinpoche describe the process of selecting our daily meditation subject, and finding “fuel” for it?

[The Rinpoche says that—once we reach the point where we are meditating upon the steps of the path—then we should very consciously choose the

A Gift of Liberation
Course Six: Preparing for Our Teacher
Homework Master, Class Six

first of these steps and then work our way in a very methodical way through to the last of them, sticking to one step of the path until we get pretty good at it and then going on the next one presented in the text, in a logical and progressive order.

As for “fuel,” he says that we should familiarize ourselves first with scriptural descriptions of a step like becoming aware of our own impermanence. Then we should use logic, such as comparing the blooming and dying of our life to a tree, and then examples such as people we’ve seen who were surprised by death.

In the end, we should learn to take all the sensory and mental input of our day and apply it to the subject we are meditating upon at any given time. In the context just mentioned, we might listen for references to death in the conversations and radio and television and internet news going on around us. We especially make efforts at bringing to mind the instructions that our own Lama has given us regarding this particular topic. The point, of course, is that we reach a place where we are meditating upon our chosen topic all day long—bits and pieces of this subject are floating in and out of our conscious thoughts even as we go through our normal external life.]

Coffee shop assignment: Please meet with at least one other person—or better, a group of people—whom you didn’t know well before this teaching; do your homework together and discuss together any questions you have. Please write here where, when, and with whom you did your homework:

Meditation assignment: Once again, please repeat our little “Physics Meditation” from the previous homework—Think about how the tiny good seeds which we plant every day have the power to create entire universes in our days to come. Please do 15 minutes of meditation in the morning reviewing small good deeds that you are doing, and trying to imagine their effects, magnified to galactic dimensions—as they will surely be. Repeat in the evening.

Please write here the two times that you started these meditations.