



Explanation of the Eight Verses of Mind Training

His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche



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<https://sakyatradition.org>

Email : info@sakyatradition.org

Wechat ID : sakyatradition

Weibo : sakyatradition

IG: the_sakya_tradition

Facebook: TheSakya

Soundcloud: the-sakya-tradition

<https://www.youtube.com/@TheSakyaTradition>

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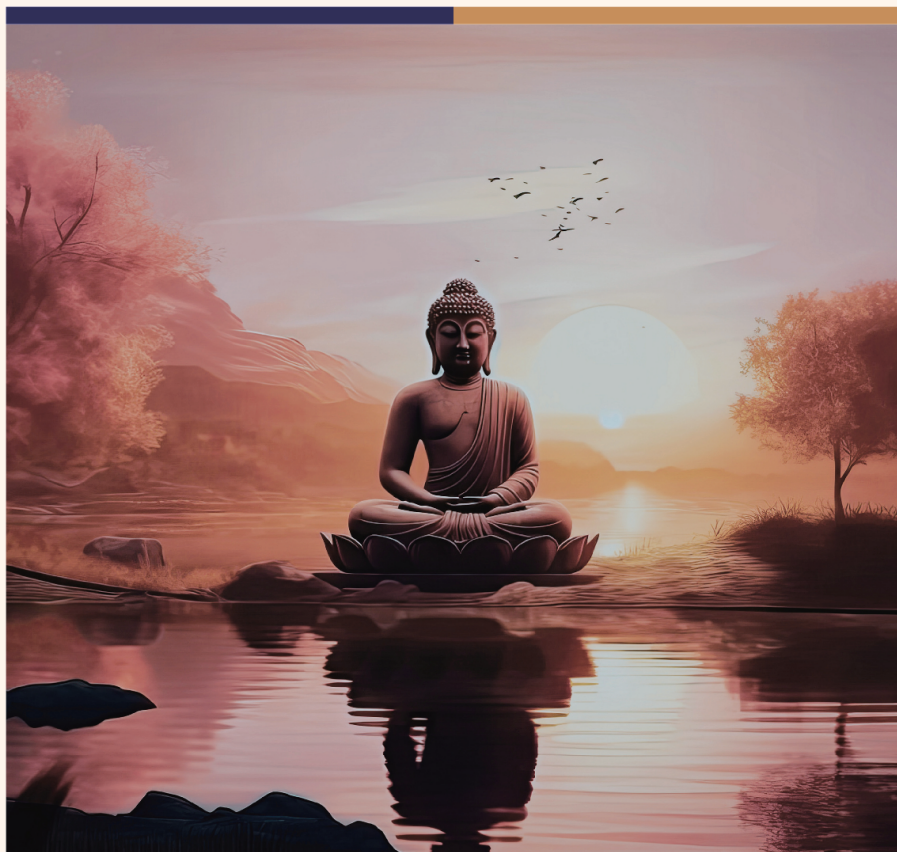
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By the merit of this work, may Their Holiness the Sakya Trichen and Sakya Trizin enjoy perfect health and very long lives, and continue to turn the wheel of Dharma.



Editorial Preface

No matter how much we try to fix the world around us, we are often caught off guard by a sudden flash of anger. These *Eight Verses of Mind Training* by the great master Geshe Langri Tangpa are not meant to soothe our emotions; they are a practical manual for systematically re-programming the way our minds operate.

They challenge us to shed the brittle armor of our ego and cultivate a humility that is a true "core strength"—a resilience that transforms every insult and every obstacle into an essential path toward inner peace.

Consider this: Could those who cause us pain actually be the most important teachers in our lives? And is it possible that true calm never comes from changing our circumstances, but from the wisdom of stilling the storms within?

ལྷོ་སྤྱོད་ཚེག་བརྒྱུད་མ།

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The Eight Verses of Mind Training **by Geshe Langri Thangpa**

1. With a wish to achieve the highest aim, which surpasses even a wish-fulfilling gem, I will train myself to, at all times, cherish even every being as supreme.

2. Whenever I interact with others, I will view myself as inferior to all, and I will train myself to hold others superior from the depth of my heart.

3. During all my activities, I will probe my mind, and as soon as an affliction arises, since it endangers myself and others, I will train myself to confront it directly and avoid it.

4. When I encounter beings of unpleasant character, and those oppressed by intense negative karma and suffering, as though finding a treasure of precious jewels, I will train myself to cherish them, for they are so rarely found.

5. When others out of jealousy treat me wrongly with abuse and slander, I will train to take the defeat upon myself and offer the victory to others.

6. Even if one whom I have helped, or in whom I have placed great hope, gravely mistreats me in hurtful ways, I will train myself to view him as my sublime teacher^[1].

7. In brief, I will train myself to offer benefit and joy to all my mothers, both directly and indirectly, and respectfully take upon myself all the hurts and pains of my mothers.

8. By ensuring that all this remains undefiled from the stains of the eight mundane concerns, and by understanding all things as illusions, I will train myself to be free of the bondage of clinging.

English translation provided by Thupten Jinpa, as published in *Mind Training: The Great Collection*.

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Introduction

I would like to say *tashi delek* to Yangsi Rinpoche, the monks and nuns, and all the Dharma friends who have gathered here this afternoon. I'm very happy to be here at Maitripa College. Today, as I've been asked to do, I will try to give some explanations of the teaching known as the *Eight Verses of Mind Training* written by the great master, Geshe Langri Tangpa.

Why Taming the Mind is So Important

We all have the wish to gain happiness, and we all have the wish to overcome suffering. This is a common goal for everyone. Since this goal is common to all of us, we should not ignore the welfare of others and just focus on our own. To benefit them, we need to develop a sincere wish to help them, a sincere wish to liberate all beings from the suffering of saṃsāra.

Most of us are focused on this life and on worldly actions and intentions. Because of this, we will have difficulties gaining

liberation and the state of enlightenment. What we need to do instead is focus on Dharma practice. Normally, we think that we can achieve happiness by developing the material world or the external world, but it is not like this.

In last few decades, there have been great improvements in the material world. But this doesn't mean that people have become happier. This shows us that material development alone will not give us the real peace, harmony, and happiness we are seeking. To achieve these things, we need to focus on the internal world—on our minds. There is no way to achieve happiness unless we train our minds. There is no other way to cause peace and harmony to prevail in this world and beyond.

Training our minds means subduing our minds, or taming them. If we can tame our wild minds, we can achieve happiness, peace, and harmony. Not only that, we can also attain the ultimate happiness, which is perfect buddhahood for the sake of all beings. This training means we need to think open-mindedly to include others; we need to take care of others.

Taming the mind is the equivalent of taming everything else. As Śāntideva said in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, “It is not possible to cover the whole earth with leather, but if you can cover the

soles of your feet, then wherever you step, you are stepping on leather.” Taming the mind is like this. It is not possible to defeat all our external enemies. It is not possible. But taming our minds and defeating our anger and other negative thoughts is like defeating all our external enemies.

If we train our minds, then even fearsome animals like lions and tigers will not attack us. Before a master, even fearsome animals are calm and will not attack. For example, when Shakyamuni Buddha was doing meditation, there were many maras who tried to disturb his meditation by manifesting destructive objects. They caused a shower of weapons to fall, but all those weapons became a shower of flowers. The Buddha defeated the maras not through violence, not through weapons of his own, not through anger or other negative thoughts, but through tame wisdom, loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta. Taming our minds has great benefits, not only in our present lives, but in our future lives. Eventually, it will help us gain liberation and the enlightenment state. This is why taming our minds is so important.

In a way, we can say that all the teachings of the Buddha are methods for taming our minds, either directly or indirectly; this teaching, in particular, is a powerful method for directly

training the mind. It is a very well-known teaching. Although it is short, it is the essence of the Mahāyāna Dharma. It is very effective and beneficial. If we can realize these teachings in our actions and in our daily lives, then they will have a great impact on our minds.

Commentary on the Core Verses

First Verse

With a wish to achieve the highest aim, which surpasses even a wish-fulfilling gem, I will train myself to, at all times, cherish even every being as supreme.

The “wish to achieve the highest aim” is the wish to attain buddhahood. This is the goal that we wish to achieve, which surpasses even a wish-fulfilling gem. This verse says how important it is to cherish every sentient being as supreme, meaning we should think others are more important than ourselves. We should focus on serving others, thinking that they are more important than oneself alone.

Sentient beings and the wish-fulfilling gem are similar. If the wish-fulfilling gem is buried underground, then it cannot shine. But if we wash it and clean it properly, and if we put it in a proper place and make offerings, then it can fulfill our mundane

wishes. Similarly, sentient beings are buried by negative thoughts and karma. They cannot themselves gain liberation from saṃsāra. For practitioners, it is very important to cherish all sentient beings because, without focusing on all sentient beings, there is no way to practice Mahāyāna refuge, Mahāyāna loving-kindness and compassion, or bodhicitta.

When we take refuge, we take refuge for the sake of all sentient beings. When we practice loving-kindness and compassion, we think, “May all sentient beings gain happiness and the cause of happiness,” and “May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering.” Because the object of loving-kindness and compassion is limitless sentient beings, these thoughts are called limitless loving-kindness and limitless compassion. Whether we practice limitless loving-kindness and compassion or not depends on what we have as our object: whether it is limitless sentient beings or not.

Unless we focus on all sentient beings, there is no way to develop infinite or limitless loving-kindness and compassion or bodhicitta. Likewise, there is no way to practice generosity, moral conduct, and patience without depending on sentient beings. So, therefore, in the teaching, it is said, “There are two fields, the field of the Buddha and the field of sentient beings.”

To practice Dharma, we need both. If one field is missing, then there is no way to practice proper Dharma, the proper teachings of Lord Buddha.

Sentient beings enable us to practice Dharma, and they are one of the main factors that enable us to gain liberation and attain perfect buddhahood. Therefore, we should cherish every sentient being as supreme. Only through sentient beings can we achieve great goals.

“Every sentient being” doesn’t only mean every human being in this world. In this world, there are more than eight billion people. It means all of these eight billion people plus all the animals that are on the earth and that are in the water, along with all other beings of the six realms, without any exception, without any discrimination. We should cherish all these limitless sentient beings as supreme because they are one of the main factors through which we can gain ultimate happiness and attain perfect buddhahood.

The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* says, “All happiness comes from wishing others to be happy. All suffering comes from wishing oneself to be happy.” This is also a reason we should cherish every being as supreme.

Second Verse

Whenever I interact with others, I will view myself as inferior to all, and I will train myself to hold others superior from the depth of my heart.

Mentally, we should focus on all sentient beings, cherishing them as supreme. Physically, wherever we are and whoever we associate with, we should think of ourselves as inferior to all, and we should hold others as superior from the depths of our hearts. If we think we are higher or that we are better and more powerful than others, then, it will be difficult for us to respect others. It generates pride or arrogance. If we think we are equal, it can lead us to competitive thoughts, and this also makes it difficult to respect others and venerate them.

Competitiveness, pride, arrogance, and other negative thoughts help strengthen selfish thinking. They stabilize selfish thought, which is the root of all the suffering of saṃsāra. We say that suffering is caused by negative karma, and negative karma is caused or motivated by mental afflictions, such as the three poisons. The root of all the mental afflictions is our own selfish thought. Therefore, we can say that selfish thought is the root of all the suffering of saṃsāra.

But if we can view ourselves as inferior to all, then when others criticize us, we can practice tolerance. Whatever others do, we can tolerate it. This helps us to control not only anger, but pride, arrogance, and other negative thoughts. When we see ourselves as inferior, then we won't have jealousy, for example. So, thinking of oneself as inferior to all has great benefits.

In the teaching, it says that even you keep all the precepts—all the precepts of the refuge vow, the bodhicitta vow, monk's vows or nun's vow—but you have arrogance, then that arrogance or pride can transgress your vow, despite keeping all the precepts.^[2] It is important for us to think in this way. It is very important for us to view ourselves as inferior to all. We can have a great advantage if we do this: We can control our negative thoughts and subdue our minds.

Third Verse

During all my activities, I will probe my mind, and as soon as an affliction arises, since it endangers myself and others, I will train myself to confront it directly and avoid it.

This is also very important. We should probe our own minds whenever we do actions. Sometimes, we might think, “I have received so many precious and profound teachings from great

masters, and I have studied and practiced for so many years, and I have done many retreats. So now I am a good Dharma practitioner.” But just receiving precious teachings from great masters and studying and contemplating and meditating on the profound teachings does not make us genuine practitioners. If the intention is not right, then we are not real Dharma practitioners, even if we do all the other things. This is why it is very important to probe one's mind.

Whether we can accumulate great merit or not isn't determined by physical and verbal actions but by mental action, which means motivation and visualization. Sometimes, you might think, “I need to study Buddhadharma because then I can spread the Buddhadharma to every part of the world. I can teach and explain Buddhadharma to others.” This might sound virtuous, but unless one has total renunciation, loving-kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta, then these actions are still considered to be not Dharmic. For example, right now, I am on the throne and I am giving teachings. It might seem that I am accumulating great merit because I am giving teachings, trying to pass the message of the Buddha to you. However, just by giving teachings, I will not accumulate great merit. It depends on my intention and my motivation. If my intention is to increase fame or to have more followers or to have more power,

then I am not accumulating merit, even though I am teaching. I am not really performing virtuous deeds.

Such action is called superficial virtue, or the reflection of virtuous deeds. While the action seems virtuous, it is not in reality because of worldly intentions.

This verse says, “as soon as an affliction arises, since it endangers myself and others...” As soon as affliction arises, it afflicts oneself and it afflicts others. Mental affliction is like a very bad guest in one’s house. It always gives suffering. It always causes harm. As soon as mental affliction arises, it endangers oneself and others. Therefore, we should try to control it.

Once affliction arises, it will increase. One affliction will cause others to arise. When someone gets angry at someone else, it is the person showing anger who will have more suffering in the long term—not the person who is the object of the anger. At that moment, it might seem like the object or victim of someone’s anger is suffering more, or that their suffering is caused by the person showing their anger. But in reality, or in the long term, the person who shows anger will experience more suffering than the victim. That will be the severe consequence of the anger the person has developed.

Thus, we should see the mental afflictions as our main enemy. We should challenge them at all costs and always. Mental afflictions are the cause of all suffering, and they are especially the cause of the suffering of the hell realm and other lower realms. It destroys all our hopes, and it destroys all our wishes. It destroys all our positive goals. Therefore, when a mental affliction arises, we should try our best to confront it directly and avoid it.

As you know, the teachings say there are four maras. The mara of the mental afflictions is within one's own mental continuum. Anger and other negative thoughts are the mara of affliction, one of the four maras that we need to defeat to attain buddhahood. Without defeating the mara of mental afflictions, it will not be possible to achieve even liberation from ordinary sorrow.

This is why we must defeat this mara, but it is not easy to do. From beginningless time, we have been associated with these mental afflictions. Our minds have been controlled by them from beginningless time. But whenever a goal is difficult to achieve, we should make more effort to achieve it. We should not take it lightly, but should exert more effort.

It is possible to defeat or remove all these mental afflictions from our mental continuums because they are not part of the nature of our minds. They are temporary. They are adventitious. For example, if there is dirt on a piece of cloth, you can remove it if you have the right remedy, like soap and water. The dirt is not of the nature of the cloth, and so you can remove it if you have the right remedy. Similarly, anger and other afflictions are not of the nature of the mind. If we have the right remedies, the right methods or antidotes, then we can remove all these mental afflictions in the same way. Thus, with extra effort, we should train ourselves to confront it directly and avoid it.

Fourth Verse

When I encounter beings of unpleasant character, and those oppressed by intense negative karma and suffering, as though finding a treasure of precious jewels, I will train myself to cherish them, for they are so rarely found.

If everyone were always good, always kind and gentle, then we would not have the opportunity to practice tolerance. To practice tolerance, we need to meet people who show anger. This doesn't mean we should show anger to others so that they will have the opportunity to practice patience. In the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, it says that bodhisattvas are like doctors who are always helping others.

There are three kinds of beings mentioned in this verse who we should cherish whenever we encounter them: those with unpleasant characters, those who have committed intense negative karma, and those who are experiencing great suffering.

“Beings of unpleasant character” means people who are short-tempered, who show anger, or who are arrogant. Such characters should be cherished as precious and difficult to find because they give us an opportunity to practice tolerance. They are like our teachers.

“Those oppressed by intensive negative karma” means people who have done heinous crimes, or who have broken the vow, or broken the samayas. In other words, these are people who have committed serious negative deeds.

“Those who are oppressed by great suffering” means people who have serious sicknesses, great pain, or who are suffering from hunger and thirst, etc.

When we meet these people, we should think that we have found treasure. In fact, they are more valuable than material treasure. If we find precious jewels, that can only help us gain our worldly requirements, like food, a house, and so on—not

more than that. Material goods can help us in this life, but they can't help us gain liberation or the enlightenment state, and they can't help us gain higher rebirth. But meeting these three types of beings can help us gain these things, if we practice Dharma when we meet them. Thanks to them, we can fulfill our mundane wishes and reach liberation and enlightenment.

This is why, when we meet all these people, we shouldn't think negatively about them. They are an opportunity to practice Dharma. Practicing Dharma doesn't mean only studying books or doing meditation. It means putting the teachings into action.

Fifth Verse

When others out of jealousy treat me wrongly with abuse and slander, I will train to take the defeat upon myself and offer the victory to others.

“Abuse and slander” means someone criticizes you both directly and indirectly, or in your face and behind your back. Even though these things are not right, sometimes people do them out of jealousy. Sometimes, they even do them when you haven't done anything wrong.

At that time, we should train to take the defeat upon ourselves and offer victory to others. You might think that if you are

slandered and you have not done anything wrong, it isn't proper to practice patience in the situation because the claims are false. Your patience would be supporting that falsehood and not supporting the truth.

In response to this, there are three ways to do positive or negative actions: Doing the deed yourself, asking others to do it, and rejoicing or not in others' actions. I think it is important to differentiate in this way: You should not tolerate the abusive action, but you should tolerate the person who is abusing or harming you. We can tolerate the person without condoning the action. In the teachings, the Buddha says to see wrong action or negative thoughts as the enemy; the Buddha does not say to see the person as enemy.

When we say that we "offer the victory to others," it means we are offering the victory to the person rather than to their harmful action. To offer victory to their negative thoughts would not be right; we would be supporting the mental afflictions, such as anger and negative actions, which wouldn't be right. So, when we offer victory to the person, it means we don't hate them; we tolerate the person who has jealousy and anger and who abuses us.

Sixth Verse

Even if one whom I have helped, or in whom I have placed great hope, gravely mistreats me in hurtful ways, I will train myself to view him as my sublime teacher.

Even if enemies treat us badly, they cannot hurt our minds. When two armies are fighting in the battlefield and a soldier is injured, he will be happy to return to the battle. He won't feel great pain about hurting his legs or hands, but will return to battle. Having minor injuries is not a big concern. The harm that the soldier suffers from his enemies won't harm his mind. This is because it is the nature of opponents to shoot and attack. Similarly, if some stranger harms us, it won't necessarily hurt our minds, because they are nobody to us.

On the other hand, now we are talking about being harmed by people we have helped, people in whom we have great hope, belief, and trust. If such a person harms us, or mistreats us, then it can really hurt our minds. However, even at that time, even in such situations, we should see the person as our sublime teacher. Even though it is unthinkable that such a trusted person would attack us, we should practice Dharma and treat that person as our sublime teacher. If we can see even this situation as an opportunity to practice Dharma, it means our

minds are strong, stable, and well-trained. Our minds are not disturbed by negative thoughts but are calm and stable.

This verse also shows that we should not help others with any strings attached. We should help others and love them without any conditions or expectations. It is important to learn to benefit others unconditionally. If we can do this, our virtues will be stronger. Our merits will be greater. Whatever virtuous actions we do, including helping others, should be done without expecting anything in return. We should do virtues from the depths of our own hearts to help others without any condition.

Seventh Verse

In brief, I will train myself to offer benefit and joy to all my mothers, both directly and indirectly, and respectfully take upon myself all the hurts and pains of my mothers.

“All my mothers” means all sentient beings. Because we have had countless lives until now in saṃsāra, countless other beings have been our mothers. This is why we say that all beings are our mothers.

“Directly and indirectly.” We need to offer benefit and joy to others directly, meaning helping them physically, and so on, and also indirectly, which means mentally.

Mentally, we should give all our benefit and joy to others, and we should take their hurt and pain to ourselves. This is the practice of self-exchange, one of the main practices of bodhisattvas. It is the cause of attaining perfect buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

Eighth Verse

By ensuring that all this remains undefiled from the stains of the eight mundane concerns, and by understanding all things as illusions, I will train myself to be free of the bondage of clinging.

The concluding verse is actually the dedication: dedication through relative and ultimate bodhicitta. “By ensuring that all this remains undefiled from the stains of the eight mundane concerns” refers to relative bodhicitta. The eight mundane concerns are gain and loss, good reputation and bad reputation, praise and blames, and pleasure and pain. Mundane concerns mean wishing to gain things for oneself and for one’s family and friends; and it means wishing loss for our opponents. It means wishing to have a good reputation for oneself, and wishing a bad reputation for the other side, or for one’s opponents. It means wishing to receive praise for oneself and blame for the other side. And it means wishing to have pleasure for one’s own side, and pain for the other. Whatever practice we do, we should

do it without these eight worldly concerns. Committing to practice this way for the sake of all beings is relative bodhicitta.

“Understanding all things as illusion” means ultimate bodhicitta. All the phenomena and all appearances are illusions. When we sleep, in our dreams, we see many different places, and we can meet many different people. But in reality, they are not there—we are sleeping in our rooms. This vision of the dream is a projection of our minds, and the visions are not inherently existent. They are illusions. Similarly, all our daytime visions are illusions, just like our dreams. However, at the moment, although we see the vision of dreams as false, we see the vision of the daytime as true. This is because the propensities of our daytime vision are more stable and stronger. That’s the only reason we feel that daytime visions are true, and only the visions of our dreams are false. In reality, they are the same. All are caused by causes and conditions, and all arise from dependent origination. When the causes and conditions are gathered, then we have these visions, which are illusions, even our daytime visions.

There are some situations when even mundane beings acknowledge that daytime visions are illusions, such as when someone has jaundice and sees white things as yellow. The

color changes. Snow is white in color, but because of this sickness, people will see it as yellow. Similarly, all daytime visions are illusions, but we think of them as truly existent because of the sickness of our mental afflictions.

We should understand all things or all phenomena as illusions resulting from mental afflictions and train to be free from the bondage of clinging. We should not cling to these phenomena as truly existent.

Conclusion

With this, I conclude my short teaching on these eight verses of my training. I myself received this oral transmission from my root guru, the forty-first Vajradhara Gongma Trichen Rinpoche.

His Holiness the forty-first Gongma Trichen Rinpoche received this teaching directly from His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. This is how it has been passed down.

At the end, we should dedicate the merit we have accumulated, along with all our merits, to attaining buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Especially, we should dedicate all our merits for our root gurus, the great Fourteenth Dalai Lama and our Gongma Trichen Rinpoche, as well as for all the masters—for their good health, long life, and that they always turn the wheel of Dharma.

Notes:

[1] In this verse, the phrase "sublime teacher" translates the Tibetan term *bshes gnyen dam pa*. While this is traditionally rendered as "holy spiritual friend," the choice of "teacher" is intentional and profound.

In the tradition of Mind Training (*Lojong*), the person who harms us—especially after we have helped them—is seen as a unique kind of mentor. While a kind friend can offer us comfort, only a person who challenges us can provide the "difficult" material needed to master true patience and resilience. By viewing an antagonist as a "sublime teacher," we shift from a state of resentment to a state of learning, transforming a painful betrayal into a powerful opportunity for personal growth.

[2] This teaching is rooted in several canonical sources within the Kangyur and Tengyur:

- **Scriptural Sources:** The *Brahmajāla Sūtra* and *Upāsakaśīla Sūtra* both specify that maintaining discipline while harboring a sense of superiority over those who have failed constitutes a transgression. This "pride of purity" is seen as a failure of mindfulness that renders the discipline "impure."
- **The Verse of the Eight Thousand lines:** As noted in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra (The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines)*, to think "I am maintaining the precepts" while others are "breaking the precepts" is a conceptual fixation that constitutes a fundamental violation of the *Perfection of Wisdom*.
- **Philosophical Source:** Sakya Paṇḍita provides the systemic logic in *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes (sDom gsum rab dbye)*.

He argues that if one holds the *Pratimokṣa* (*Individual Liberation*) vows but is stained by the pride of being "pure," one has effectively transgressed the Mahāyāna path, as pride is diametrically opposed to the bodhisattva's commitment to the equality of all beings.



- His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin, Ratna Vajra Rinpoche, is the eldest son of His Holiness the Sakya Trichen (the 41st Sakya Trizin). Renowned for his erudition and the clarity of his teachings, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin is regarded as one of the most highly qualified lineage holders in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He belongs to the noble Khön family, whose successive generations have provided an unbroken lineage of outstanding Buddhist masters.

Since his youth, His Holiness the 42nd Sakya Trizin has received an ocean of sutra and tantra teachings, empowerments, transmissions, and pith instructions from His Holiness the Sakya Trichen, as well as many other learned and accomplished masters. After years of rigorous philosophy studies at Sakya College in India, he was awarded the kachupa degree. And starting from the age of twelve, he has completed numerous meditation retreats, including the Hevajra retreat. With utmost humility, he travels extensively to bestow teachings and empowerments at the request of students across the globe.



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