

## **Observe These Two, Even at the Risk of Your Life**

You should maintain the disciplines you have committed yourself to: in particular, [1] the refuge vow and [2] the Bodhisattva vow. You should maintain the general attitude of being a decent Buddhist and, beyond that, the special discipline of lojong, or mind training.

*From Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness by Chogyam Trungpa*

## **Observe These Two, Even at the Risk of Your Life**

Now it's time for us to continue our journey and "walk it like we talk it." One of the final slogans is "Observe these two, even at the risk of your life." It refers once again to the refuge and bodhisattva vows. It has a sense of urgency -"even at the risk of your life" - that's telling us not to be afraid to leave the nest. Don't be afraid of losing ground or of things falling apart or of not having it all together.

The meaning of observing the essence of the refuge vow even at the risk of your life is "no escape, no problem." To observe the Bodhisattva vow is to exchange ourselves for others and develop compassion for ourselves and others. So even at the risk of our own lives, if it's painful, breathe it in and think about all of the other people who are experiencing pain. If it's delightful, give it away and wish for all people to have that delight. That's the essence of this slogan; it's a revolutionary idea.

Here is one last story about exchanging self for others. I met a young man who had been on a spiritual journey most of his life. He was awake but smug. He suffered from what's called spiritual pride. He was complaining about his girlfriend, who was having a hard time giving up smoking; the anxiety was triggering an old eating disorder. The young man said he just kept telling her to be strong, not to be so fearful, to be disciplined. And she would tell him, "I'm trying. I'm really trying. I'm doing the best I can." He was angry because it didn't seem to him that she was trying. He said, "I know I shouldn't be getting so angry about this. I know I should be more compassionate. But I just can't help it. It gets under my skin. I want to be more understanding, but she's so stuck." Then he heard himself say, "I'm trying. I'm really trying. I'm doing the best I can." When he heard himself saying her words, he got the message. He understood what she was up against, and it humbled him.

I think that all of us are like eagles who have forgotten that we know how to fly. The teachings are reminding us who we are and what we can do. They help us notice that we're in a nest with a lot of old food and old diaries, excrement and stale air. From when we were very young we've had this longing to see those mountains in the distance and experience that big sky and the vast ocean, but somehow we got trapped in that nest, just because we forgot that we knew how to fly. We are like eagles, but we have on underwear and pants and shirt and socks and shoes and a hat and coat and boots and mittens and a Walkman and dark glasses, and it occurs to us that we could experience that vast sky, but we'd better start taking off some of this stuff. So we take off the coat and the hat and it's cold, but we know that we have to do it, and we teeter on the edge of the nest and we take off. Then we find out for ourselves that everything has to go. You just can't fly when you are wearing socks and shoes and coats and pants and underwear. Everything has to go.

*From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron,*

## **Observe These Two, Even at the Risk of Your Life**

Since all present and future happiness comes from carefully observing the general precepts of dharmā contained in the three ordinations and the particular precepts of mind training with their corresponding commitments, observe both these sets of precepts even at the risk of your life. Moreover, whatever you do, observe them not from a concern and consideration for your own welfare but only with the intention of being help

*The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People* by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod.

## **Guard the Two at the Cost of Your Life**

The "two" referred to here are, first, any precepts we have taken on ourselves in general in our dharmā practice, and second, the specific pledges, precepts, and practices of this Mind Training. Guard these, Geshe Chekawa says, even at the cost of our life. This is a demanding statement, and very earnestly meant. There are some things more precious than one's life. Several lamas have commented to me that there is no value in a long life if it is dominated by unwholesome actions of body, speech, and mind. Obviously, in such a life one is simply polluting one's stream of consciousness, sowing seeds year after year for the repercussions of further suffering and misery. What is it that brings value and benefit to the very core of a life? It is our dharmā practice. Rather than sacrifice our spiritual practice, it is better to sacrifice a life.

*Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training by B. Alan Wallace.*

## **Guard Both Points More Preciously Than Your Life.**

The first point is the general advice of Dharma practice to refrain from committing the ten unwholesome deeds. The second point refers to the specific commitments regarding thought transformation and generating the awakening mind. In order to abandon this self-cherishing attitude completely, we should constantly keep the vow of cherishing others. When we follow the Mahayana path, we must hold both these points more carefully than we would our own life. In a situation where we have to choose, we should be willing to sacrifice our life before abandoning the Dharma. It is true that in this way our brief life will be lost, but the consequences of relinquishing the awakening mind are far worse. Although we might gain some temporary benefit, we shall not be able to escape the more extensive misery of the three unfortunate realms in the future. *Copyright Brian Beresford, 1977, 1996. from Advice from a Spiritual Friend,*

## **Even if it Costs Your Life, Defend the Two**

This refers in general to the vows of the Shrivakayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana and particularly to the special vows of Mind Training. The vows of the Mind Training are: to give victory and benefit to others and to take all loss and failure, especially that of our enemies, upon ourselves. If we act accordingly, the Mind Training will take effect. On the other hand, if we fail to practice these two vows, we will achieve neither the short-term benefit of happiness in this life and rebirth in the realms of human beings or of gods, nor the long-term benefit of rebirth in a pure field. We should therefore observe these vows at all costs, just as we guard our eyes from thorns when we are walking through the woods.

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*