

## Don't Misinterpret

There are six things that you may twist or misinterpret in your practice: patience, yearning, excitement, compassion, priorities, and joy.

- It is a misinterpretation of patience to be patient about everything in your life but the practice of dharma
- Misinterpreted yearning is to foster yearning for pleasure and wealth but not to encourage the yearning to practice dharma thoroughly and properly.
- Misinterpreted excitement is to get excited by wealth and entertainment, but not to be excited by the study of dharma.
- It is twisted compassion to be compassionate to those who endure hardships in order to practice dharma but to be unconcerned and uncompassionate to those who do evil.
- Twisted priorities means to work diligently out of self-interest at that which benefits you in the world, but not to practice dharma
- Twisted joy is to be happy when sorrow afflicts your enemies, but not to rejoice in virtue and in the joy of transcending samsara.

You should absolutely and completely stop all six of these misinterpretations.

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

## Don't Misinterpret

Don't impose the wrong notion of what harmony is, what compassion is, what patience is, what generosity is. Don't misinterpret what these things really are. There is compassion and there is idiot compassion; there is patience and there is idiot patience; there is generosity and there is idiot generosity. For example, trying to smooth everything out to avoid confrontation, not to rock the boat, is not what's meant by compassion or patience. It's what is meant by control. Then you are not trying to step into unknown territory, to find yourself more naked with less protection and therefore more in contact with reality. Instead, you use the idiot forms of compassion and so forth just to get ground. When you open the door and invite in all sentient beings as your guests, you have to drop your agenda. Many different people come in. Just when you think you have a little scheme that is going to work, it doesn't work. It was very beneficial to Juan, but when you tried it on Mortimer, he looked at you as if you were crazy, and when you try it on Juanita, she gets insulted.

Coming up with a formula won't work. If you invite all sentient beings as your guests while just wanting harmony, sooner or later you'll find that one of your guests is behaving badly and that just sitting there cheerfully doing your tonglen and trying to cultivate harmony doesn't work.

So you sit there and you say, "Okay, now I'm going to make friends with the fact that I am hurting and afraid, and this is really awful." But you are just trying to avoid conflict here;

you just don't want to make things worse. Then all the guests are misbehaving; you work hard all day and they just sit around, smoking cigarettes, drinking beer, eating your food, and then beating you up. You think you're being a warrior and a Bodhisattva by doing nothing and saying nothing, but what you're being is a coward. You're just afraid of making the situation worse. Finally they kick you out of your house and you're sitting on the sidewalk. Somebody walks by and says, "What are you doing sitting out here?" You answer, "I am practicing patience and compassion." That's missing the point.

Even though you've dropped your agenda, even though you are trying to work WITH situations instead of struggling AGAINST them, nevertheless you may have to say, "You can stay here tonight, but tomorrow you're going, and if you don't get out of here, I am calling the police." You don't really know what's going to benefit somebody, but it doesn't benefit anybody to allow someone to beat you up, eat all your food, and put you out on the street.

So "Don't misinterpret" really gets at the notion of the big squeeze. It's saying that you don't know what's going to help, but you need to speak and act with clarity and decisiveness. Clarity and decisiveness come from the willingness to slow down, to listen to and look at what's happening. They come from opening your heart and not running away. Then the action and the speech are in accord with what needs to be done, for you and for the other person.

We make a lot of mistakes. If you ask people whom you consider to be wise and courageous about their lives, you may find that they have hurt a lot of people and made a lot of mistakes, but that they used those occasions as opportunities to humble themselves and open their hearts. We don't get wise by staying in a room with all the doors and windows closed.

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

## **Don't Make Mistakes**

Avoid six mistakes.

To endure patiently the suffering of subduing enemies, protecting friends, and working to make money and not to endure patiently the difficulties of dharma practice is mistaken patience.

To want wealth, happiness, and comfort in this life and to have no inclination to practice dharma thoroughly is mistaken inclination.

To enjoy the taste of wealth and possessions and not to enjoy the taste of hearing, reflection, and meditation on the dharma is mistaken enjoyment.

To have compassion for a person who puts up with hardship in order to practice dharma and not to have compassion for those who do evil is mistaken compassion.

To engage people who look to you in bettering only their position in this life and not to engage them in dharma is mistaken care.

To take joy in other people's unhappiness and in the sufferings of your enemies and not to take joy in virtue and happiness in nirvana or samsara is mistaken joy.

Avoid these six mistakes completely.

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

## **Do Not Be Contrary**

Sechibuwa gives six examples of different types of contrariness to be avoided.

The first is contrary patience, where we have no patience for any type of discomfort or frustration that comes in the course of our dharma practice, but plenty of grit and forbearance for protecting our friends and putting down enemies.

The second example is contrary aspiration: not aspiring to purify the unwholesome imprints from our mind stream, or to collect merit, or to cultivate wisdom, or to transform the mind and heart, but instead aspiring for the so-called bounties of samsara, totally mundane pleasures that are fleeting and essentially unsatisfactory.

The third is contrary experience, where we seek a wide variety of experiences of a totally mundane nature, but do not seek deeper experience in the spiritual domain.

The fourth is contrary compassion, where we feel no sympathy for those who are dominated by the inner sources of suffering, but instead pity those who encounter hardships in their dharma practice. To put this in context, consider the case of a yogi who has lived in a cave above Dharamsala in northern India for years, practicing very earnestly and with perseverance. When he visited Massachusetts recently, he shared with us some of the experiences he had gone through. He mentioned that for six years in the mountains he had suffered one hardship after another. Hearing this we might be tempted to think, "This poor fellow, living on a bag of rice and beans all year, snowed into a cave for the winter with very poor clothing, and on top of all this, tormented by malignant spirits. If he could only enjoy life like us." But the yogi told us also that after six years he experienced a number of breakthroughs and, as a result, he is now in a continuous state of inexpressible well-being. He had meditated so deeply, he said, that there is virtually no distinction now between his meditation and his post-meditation period.

As long as there are so many beings in the world who are suffering and who, as Shantideva says, are chasing the sources of suffering while destroying the sources of their own happiness, then our compassion is misplaced when we pity a meditator who encounters difficulties while striving to rend the fabric of samsara. Rather let the compassion go to those beings who are not devoting themselves to effective means to fulfill their own aspirations.

The fifth example of contrariness is contrary concern: concerning ourselves not with dharma practice, but simply with the acquisition of wealth, the protection of loved ones, overcoming our enemies-the affairs of this life that are significant for a day or a year, but have utterly no significance beyond the context of this lifetime.

The final example of contrariness is contrary rejoicing. Instead of rejoicing in the wholesome deeds of other sentient beings, and the virtue of fully enlightened beings, we rejoice in the misfortune that comes to our enemies.

*Excerpted from: The Seven-Point Mind Training(first published as A Passage from Solitude : Training the Mind in a Life Embracing the World), by B. Alan Wallace.*

## **Do Not Follow Inverted Deeds.**

- To show great patience for the difficulties of mundane affairs and not for the practice of cultivating the mind-essence is inverted patience.
- To have great determination to be involved in meaningless worldly diversions but no strong inclination to practice Dharma is inverted will.
- To revel in the enjoyment of pleasures that result from desire, hatred, and other mental negativities but not to savor the flavor that comes from meditation experience is to enjoy the inverted flavor.
- On the one hand, not to feel any pity for a worldly person who externally appears to lack nothing but who does not develop in a spiritual way and yet on the other to feel compassion for those who are materially poor but who sincerely practice Dharma is to have inverted compassion.
- To lure others, especially our family and friends, into mundane involvements that only bind them more securely to the cycle of birth and suffering instead of trying to guide them toward Dharma principles is to have inverted loyalty.
- And to rejoice in the misfortunes that arise for those we dislike yet be indifferent to the actions of those who benefit their fellow beings by their Dharma practice is to rejoice for inverted and wrong reasons.
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The practitioner who applies these points to his or her own life does not have to be someone who wears the robes of a monk or nun or who lives in retreat in the mountains; the person whose actions are beneficial for himself or herself and others is one who is truly putting effort in the Dharma.

## Don't Make Mistakes

There are six errors or misconceptions which we should guard against.

*Mistaken patience or endurance.* Religious people, who bravely put up with hardships and persevere in the practice even though they have nothing in the way of food and clothing, suffering from cold and so on, may well be a sorry sight. They may in fact lack material possessions, but they do not need us to feel sorry for them. After all, their discomforts are short lived and are the means through which they will finally come to liberation. Quite different from that sort of courage is the mistaken bravery of ordinary heroes who, in order to destroy their opponents and protect their own side, undergo unbearable hardships in the fight against their enemies, or suffer the cruel discipline and fury of their leaders.

*Misplaced interest.* It is also a mistake to be intent on the accumulation of wealth, power and comfort for this life at the expense of Dharma practice.

*If you wish to practice properly,  
Sustain yourself with Dharma,  
Your Dharma with a humble life,  
Your humble life with the thought of death,  
Your thought of death with a lonely cave.*

Our intention should be to help all sentient beings, who have been our mothers, and to bring them to the state of Buddhahood. We should never be self-satisfied and rest on our laurels, thinking that we have meditated well, that we have done retreat and are familiar with the rituals, or that we can chant and know all there is to know about the practice. This is an obstacle to the path.

*Taking delight in worldly pleasures instead of in the Dharma.* This is also a mistake. 'Learning comes from listening to the teachings; evil is reversed through listening to the teachings; futile ways are shunned by listening to the teachings.' Bear this in mind. We should try to understand whether the teachings are expressed in the relative or the absolute sense, and we should make an effort to grasp the ultimate meaning beyond the words. Then we should practice it with an undivided heart. That is how to make sure progress. However, having experienced a taste of Dharma, most 'experts,' armed with their intellectual knowledge, allow themselves to be sidetracked into arguments and disputes with opponents, all for worldly satisfaction. Their taste of Dharma has played them false.

*Misplaced compassion.* It is a mistake to feel sorry for practitioners who endure a lot of difficulties for the sake of the Dharma, staying in lonely mountain hermitages without much food or warm clothing. It is incorrect to worry and think, 'Those poor practitioners! They are going to die of starvation!' By contrast, the ones we should feel really sorry for are those

who commit evil actions, such as army leaders and military heroes who kill hundreds and thousands of people, and whose hatred will drag them down into the realms of hell. We should show compassion to those who need it.

*Being helpful in the wrong way.* It is a mistake, too, to introduce our dependents and relations to worldly happiness and success instead of bringing them into contact with the Dharma. If we really care for them, we should help them to meet religious teachers and instruct them in the practice. Day by day, we should show them how to tread the path of liberation. Good people are like medicinal trees: whoever frequents them becomes good also. But if, by contrast, we teach people how to do business, how to trick others and stand up to their enemies, they will become as vicious as we are.

*Rejoicing inappropriately.* It is wrong to rejoice at the sufferings of enemies instead of at whatever is joyful and virtuous. By contrast, when people engage in work for any kind of good cause, or when Dharma practitioners undertake innumerable nyungne fasts, when they do a lot of work, building temples, constructing stupas and images or pr

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*