

## **This Time, Practice the Main Points**

This time" refers to this lifetime. You have wasted many lives in the past, and in the future you may not have the opportunity to practice. But now, as a human being who has heard the dharma, you do. So without wasting any more time, you should practice the main points.

This teaching is threefold:

- [1] the benefit of others is more important than yourself;
- [2] practicing the teachings of the guru is more important than analytical study;
- [3] practicing Bodhicitta is more important than any other practice.

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

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What that's saying is that for all of us it's a crucial time. We have everything we need to open our hearts, and to work with others in a genuine way. We have a precious human birth; we're not starving in Somalia. We're not living in a country where we grow up being taught to shoot anybody who's on the other side. We have a tremendous amount going for us, so this is the crucial time to practice the main points.

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

## **This Time, Practice the Important Points**

From time without beginning, you have taken existence in innumerable forms, in all of which nothing meaningful has been done. A similar coincidence of the conducive conditions in this life will not come about in the future. Now that you have obtained a human existence and met the pure dharma, you should put the main points into practice in order to realize objectives of permanent significance. So aims for future lives are more important than aims for this life. For the future, freedom is more important than samsara. The welfare of others is more important than your own. Of practicing and teaching the dharma, practicing is the more important. Training in bodhicitta is more important than other practices. Further, intensive meditation on your guru's instructions is more important than analytical meditation based on texts. Sitting on your mat and training are more important than other forms of activity.

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

## **Now Practice What is Most Important**

According to Buddhist understanding, our streams of consciousness have no beginning. We have had previous lives, and lives still previous to those. In many lifetimes we were not even human beings, and many of our human lifetimes were not conducive to spiritual practice. We lacked spiritual teachers, or inclination, or opportunity. We made a living, or we died prematurely, or whatever: we just got by. We could not devote ourselves to eradicating the true sources of suffering and cultivating awakening. Now, in this present lifetime, we have the extremely rare circumstance of a fully endowed human life. It is within our reach to attain full awakening, and whatever we neglect to do in terms of spiritual growth in this lifetime is not because of lack of opportunity but simply because of an inadequacy from our own side.

So now Geshe Chekawa encourages us to practice what is most important. Having encountered something of unutterable value, it would be a staggering loss to shunt it aside and devote our lives to other things as if we had not found such an opportunity. Rather than simply devoting ourselves to mundane happiness that ripens only in this lifetime, let us take into account our well the future lives we are now creating.

The author encourages us to emphasize practice, above all the cultivation of bodhicitta, rather than book learning. As a contemplative himself, he recommends meditation as the most important of all the many ways of cultivating bodhicitta. Finally, rather than relying chiefly on textual information, he encourages us to look to the quintessential guidance of our spiritual mentor.

He makes another point also. Instead of abandoning a certain region as an unsuitable place for practice and going somewhere else, we should apply the antidotes for our own mental distortions wherever we find ourselves. Inner practice is far more important than the outer environment. Having said this in this beautiful region of the eastern Sierras, I would add that where a choice exists, choose the environment that is most conducive to practice.

*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*

## **Exert Yourself, Especially at This Time**

The opportunity to meet a spiritual master and to receive instructions, contact with the Mahayana path, the ability to generate the awakening mind, and in particular, the freedom to practice Dharma are conditions that are extremely difficult to gather together. Even in worldly matters of little importance, no one will ever pass up a unique and fortunate opportunity when it presents itself. Thus, if we have the chance created by these conditions, we should not allow it to slip by without using it wisely.<scr

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## **This Time, do What is Important**

Throughout our many lifetimes in the past, we may have taken many different forms. We have been rich. We have been beaten by our enemies, and lost everything. We have had all the pleasures of the gods. We have been victims of political oppression. We have been lepers or have suffered from other diseases. All those experiences of happiness and suffering have brought us nothing. But now, in the present life, we have entered the path set forth by the Buddha, we have met many learned and accomplished spiritual teachers: this time we must make such circumstances meaningful and do what is important.

Of all our activities, the most important is to sit and practice. We should not move around too much, we should just remain on our seat. We will only stumble if we get up! We should sit properly, not too stiffly, and remember that the best practitioners wear out their meditation cushions, not the soles of their shoes.

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*