

## Pay Heed That the Three Never Wane

The first thing you should not let wane is devotion to your spiritual friend [kalyanamitra]. Your mental attitude of admiration, dedication, and gratefulness toward the spiritual friend should not diminish. The second thing you should not let wane is a delightful attitude toward lojong, or the taming of the mind. Your appreciation for receiving such teachings as lojong or mind training should not diminish. And the third thing you should not let wane is your conduct - the hinayana and Mahayana vows you have taken.

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

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The three are gratitude to your teacher, gratitude to the teachings and the practices, and a commitment to keep the basic vows that you've taken. Gratitude to the teacher starts with making a commitment never to give up on that one person, who has also made a commitment never to give up on you. When I think of my own teacher I feel enormous gratitude continually, practically every moment of my life. It's gratitude that there was somebody who was brave enough and fierce enough and humorous enough and compassionate enough to get it through my thick skull that there's no place to hide. I feel gratitude to the teachings and the practices because they're good medicine and they help us to uncover that soft spot that's been covered over for a very long time.

Finally, we pay heed that the refuge vow and Bodhisattva vows never wane. The refuge vow is a commitment not to seek islands of safety any longer but to learn how to leap, how to fly, how to leave the nest and go into uncharted territory, no longer hampered by tiny, self-centered views and opinions. The Bodhisattva vow is high-stakes practice because it's about giving up privacy and the comfort orientation altogether as a way of awakening your heart further to yourself and to all sentient beings.

In general, we should pay heed that gratitude and appreciation for everything that happens to us never wane. Whether we consider what happens to us good fortune or ill fortune, appreciation for this life can wake us up and give us the courage we need to stay right there with whatever comes through the door.

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

## Don't Allow Three Things to Weaken

Learn not to let these three things weaken. Faith and respect for your guru must not weaken since all the fine qualities of mahayana dharma depend on him. Enthusiasm for meditation on mind training must not weaken since mind training is the very core of the mahayana. Observation of the precepts of the three ordinations must not weaken either.

*From The Great Path of Awakening*

## Cultivate the Absence of Three Degenerations

This concerns the three elements of spiritual practice that can degenerate, and how to prevent them from doing so. The first is the faith in one's spiritual mentor. Sechibuwa writes

that all virtue on the Mahayana path depends on such faith and reverence. In the Bodhisattva aspect of the practice, this is achieved by looking upon the spiritual mentor as if he or she were a fully awakened Buddha. The purpose of this reverence is a quality of awareness that is extremely fertile for wholesome change, realization, and enthusiasm. Some texts even say that faith is the mother of all realizations.

The second element is not allowing our enthusiasm for the Mind Training to wane. Enthusiasm is indispensable to a fruitful spiritual practice. If the practice simply becomes a grind that we perform out of a sense of responsibility, it is not likely to last long or produce much good fruit.

The third element is not allowing our sense of conscience with respect to these practices to degenerate. Conscience here implies an inwardly directed alertness. If I do something in the privacy of my own room that is incompatible with dharma, I feel it. Insofar as we can maintain this quality of awareness when we engage in inappropriate actions of body, speech, or mind, this inner attentiveness responds quickly, saying, "This is an indulgence I don't want to pursue."

The counterpart to conscience is regard for others. If we demonstrate some crude behavior in the company of others, then our awareness steps in to remind us that this is not how we want to demonstrate our life to the world; this behavior is incompatible with our ideals. Although the awareness is publicly oriented, the bottom line is our own principles. Do not confuse this with getting hung up on what other people think. If I spend time in meditation, will they think I am a flake? If I pick up a caterpillar off the sidewalk and put it in a safe place, will they think I am strange? Such consideration for the opinion of others is misguided because in fact these actions are wholesome.

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

## Have Recourse to Three Essential Factors

The three essential factors on which the accomplishment of the Dharma depends are: to meet with a qualified teacher; by receiving the instructions, to cultivate the correct attitude; and finally, to have the necessary material conditions.

If we do not follow a genuine master, we will never know how to practice the teachings. If the Buddha had not turned the Wheel of Dharma, we should not know what actions we should do and what actions we should refrain from. How can we, who have not had the fortune to meet the Buddha in person, practice the path of liberation if we do not follow a master? How else could we recognize paths which are mistaken and inferior? Moreover, just as we treat stiff leather with oil to make it smooth and supple, so too we should practice the teachings correctly, with a calm and docile attitude, undisturbed by afflictive emotions. Finally, living in the realm of desire, as we do, we find it impossible to practice the Dharma if we lack food to fill our stomachs and clothes to cover us against the wind.

If we have these three essential factors complete we should be happy at the thought that we have all that is necessary to practice the teachings. It is as though we have been equipped with a good horse for an uphill journey – the way will be without difficulty. And we should pray that all beings might be just as fortunate.

If, however, we do not possess all of these essential factors, we should reflect that though we have entered the Buddhadharma and received plenty of teachings and instructions, we still lack the conditions suitable for practice.

As a matter of fact, there are many disciples who are unable to practice properly because of this shortcoming. They have what is known as 'good karma going wrong.' As was explained before, 'Old yogis getting rich; old teachers getting married.' We should feel sorry for such people and pray from our hearts that the cause of their not having such favorable conditions might ripen on us and that, as a result, their situation might be improved.

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*