



# Chapter Eleven

## *Words of Advice*

By Chatral Rinpoche

*Namo gurubhyah\**

Precious master of unrepayable kindness, Pema Ledrel Tsal,<sup>89</sup>  
I pray that you remain as the crown ornament  
On the top of my head.  
Grant your blessings so that we may find freedom here and now  
From all the sufferings of samsara and its lower realms!

Listen well, my dear disciples who are gathered here.  
For all those whose hearts have not been spoiled, consider this:  
The chances of finding a human existence are one in a hundred.  
Now that you have found one,  
If you fail to practice the sublime Dharma,  
How could you possibly expect  
To find such an opportunity again?  
This is why it is crucial  
That you take advantage of your situation.  
Conceiving of your body as a servant  
Or a thing to ferry you about,  
Don't allow it to rest in idleness for even a single moment.  
Use it well,

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\* "Homage to the Spiritual Master."

Spurring on your entire body, speech and mind to virtue.

You might spend your whole life  
In pursuit of only food and clothing,  
With great effort  
And without regard for suffering or harmful deeds,  
But when you die you can't take even a single thing with you—  
Consider this well.

The clothing and alms needed to keep you alive are all you need.  
You might dine on the finest meal of delicious meat and alcohol,  
But it all turns into something impure the very next morning,  
And there is nothing more to it than that.  
So be content with life-sustaining provisions and simple clothes,  
And be a loser when it comes to food, clothing and conversation.

If you don't reflect on death and impermanence,  
There will be no way to practice Dharma purely,  
Practice will remain an aspiration,  
One that is constantly postponed,  
And you may feel regret the day that death comes,  
But by then it will be too late!

There's no real happiness among any of the six classes of beings.  
If we consider the sufferings of the three lower realms,  
When you feel upset just by hearing about them,  
How will you possibly cope when you experience them directly?  
Even the happiness and pleasures of the three upper realms  
Are just like fine food that's been laced with poison—  
Enjoyable at first, but in the long run a cause of ruin.

What's more, all these experiences of pleasure and pain,  
Are not brought about by anyone but yourself.  
They are produced by your own actions, good and bad.  
Once you know this, it is crucial that you act accordingly,  
Without confusing what should be adopted and abandoned.\*  
It's far better to eliminate your doubts and misconceptions,  
By relying on the instructions of your own qualified teacher,

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\* Virtuous actions should be adopted; negative actions should be abandoned.

Than to receive many different teachings and never take them  
any further.

You might remain in a solitary place,  
Physically isolated from the world,  
Yet fail to let go of ordinary concerns,  
And with attachment and aversion,  
Seek to bring defeat upon your enemies  
While furthering the interests of your friends,  
And involve yourself  
In all kinds of projects and financial dealings.  
There could hardly be anything worse than that.

If you lack the true wealth of contentment of mind,  
You'll think you need all kinds of useless things,  
And end up even worse than an ordinary person,  
Because you won't manage even a single session of practice.  
So set your mind on freedom from wanting anything at all.  
Wealth, success and status  
Are simply ways of attracting enemies and demons.  
Pleasure-seeking practitioners  
Who fail to turn their minds from this life's concerns  
Sever their connection to the authentic Dharma.

Take care to avoid  
Becoming stubbornly impervious to the teachings.  
Limit yourself to just a few activities  
And undertake them all with diligence.  
Not allowing your mind to become fidgety and restless,  
Make yourself comfortable on your seat in a retreat cabin,  
This is the surest way to gain the riches of a Dharma practitioner.

You might remain sealed in strict retreat  
For months or even years,  
But if you fail to make any progress in the state of your mind,  
Later, when you tell everyone  
About all that you did over such a long time,  
Aren't you just bragging  
About all your hardships and destitution?  
All their praise and acknowledgements  
Will only make you proud.

To bear mistreatment from our enemies  
Is the best form of austerity,  
But those who hate criticism and are attached to compliments,  
Who take great pains to discover all the faults of others,  
While failing to keep proper guard over their own mindstream,  
And who are always irritable and short-tempered,  
Are certain to bring breaches of *samaya* upon all their associates,  
So rely constantly  
On mindfulness, vigilance and conscientiousness.

No matter where you stay,  
Be it a busy place or a solitary retreat,  
The only things that you need to conquer  
Are mind's five poisons\*  
And your own true enemies, the eight worldly concerns.  
Nothing else.  
Whether it is by avoiding them, transforming them,  
Taking them as the path or looking into their very essence,  
Whichever method is best suited to your own capacity.

There's no better sign of accomplishment  
Than a disciplined mind.  
This is true victory for the warrior who carries no weapons.

When you practice the teachings of the sutras and tantras,  
The altruistic *bodhicitta* of aspiration and application is crucial,  
Because it lies at the very root of the Mahayana.  
Just to have this is enough,  
But without it, all is lost.

*These words of advice were spoken in the hidden grove of  
Padma, in the place called Kunzang Chöling, in the upper  
hermitage in a forest clearing, by the old beggar Sangye Dorje.*

*May it be virtuous!*

*Translated by Adam Pearcey, [www.lotsawahouse.org](http://www.lotsawahouse.org).*

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\* The five poisons are anger, desire, ignorance, pride and envy.