

# Margha Program 2020 Monthly Practice and Reading Guide July-November

## *Bodhicitta Series*



**Listening to the Teaching Sessions:** All audio recordings are taken from the **Summer Margha Retreat** held July 6-11, 2020. If you attended or livestreamed the retreat, you do not need to listen again to any or all of the full teaching sessions, unless you wish to review, refresh and re-immense in the teachings. If you did *not* attend or livestream the retreat, you are strongly encouraged to listen to *all* the sessions for each month. (We recommend listening to them sequentially over the course of the month. *Just take your time.* You do not need to take notes or worry about missing anything as you listen—the themes are revisited and rewoven by the teachers. Consider this not as an academic study, but rather as an intensive immersion.)

**Practicing with the Meditation Audios:** All required meditations for the month are indicated below. You need not listen to an audio every time you meditate, of course. Once you are familiar with the meditation, you can engage it on your own at your own pace, if you wish, or you can continue to use the audios occasionally or regularly.

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## July—Summer Retreat

### Main Practices:

#### 1) The Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path

*(Step One: Lean In)\**

#### 2) Ultimate Bodhicitta / Resting in the Natural State or Sky Gazing\*

\*Alternate these practices every other day.

\*Each meditation session begins with *Benefactor Practice*, which serves as groundwork or preliminary for our session.

Printed copies of meditations are posted on our Margha Resources page and available for download.

#### 3) Each week choose a lojong slogan. Carry the slogan with you, perhaps out into nature—enliven your inquiry by making it personal.

In our **Practice of Natural Compassion** this month, we will practice Step One: Lean In. In this find your own discernment by leaning in to whatever challenge is ripe for you, beginning with smaller difficulties and irritations. (This practice is not only an on-the-cushion practice. Coming alive to the immediacy of our own personal experience is a profound expression of self-care no matter where we find ourselves. To lean in does not mean to invite difficulty, but to take what naturally comes your way into practice.)

### **Readings:**

Great Path of Awakening: A Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod, pgs. 1-54 (Continue to revisit and delve into this text throughout the autumn.)

The Way of the Bodhisattva, by Shantideva (also translated as: A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life): Chapter 7: Heroic Perseverance

*The Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path* (handout)

*Mahayana Heart Cultivation*, translated by Lama Willa Miller (handout) \*\*

*Lama John Makransky's Instructions for Sky Gazing and Open Awareness* (handout)

*Barriers and Corresponding Assistants to Compassion* (handout)

*Six Key Facets of Heart Cultivation {lojong} Practice* (handout)

*Nine Key Points of Heart Cultivation* (handout)

\*\*Numerous translations and commentaries on Geshe Chekowa's root verses of *Lojong: Attitude Transformation in Seven Parts* are available. Lama Willa Miller's own translation of the *Lojong* (Heart Cultivation) verses has been posted.

In addition to Jamgon Kongtrul's text, *Great Path of Awakening*, there are other striking commentaries on lojong available to choose from, including Khyentse Rinpoche's *Enlightened Courage*, as well as texts by Chogyam Trungpa, Pema Chodron, and B. Alan Wallace.

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## **August—The Practice of Natural Compassion**

### **Main Practices:**

1) **The Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path (Step One: Lean In and Step Two: Commune with Others)\***

2) **Ultimate Bodhicitta / Resting in the Natural State or Sky Gazing\***

\*Alternate these practices every other day.

\*Each meditation session begins with *Benefactor Practice*, which serves as groundwork or preliminary for our session.

3) **Each week choose a lojong slogan. Carry the slogan with you, perhaps out into nature—enliven your inquiry by making it personal.**

In our **Practice of Natural Compassion** this month, we will practice Step One: Lean In and Step Two: Commune with Others. Step Two comprises *Commune* and *Develop Compassion*, and through these facets of **The Practice of Natural Compassion** we learn to commune by

deeply feeling and bearing witness to our suffering *as* the suffering of these many others who experience this same suffering. In this practice, we learn to experience gratitude for what we feel as it allows us to experience what so many others are going through. Compassion for other becomes compassion for self. After some time, release the visualization of the infinite, open, luminous blue sky in your heart center as gently guided in the handout, and simply rest.

Step Two offers us profound preparation for the practice of tonglen, which we will explore in October.

### ***Readings:***

*Great Path of Awakening: A Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion*, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod, pgs. 1-54 (Continue to revisit and delve into this text throughout the autumn.)

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, by Shantideva (also translated as: *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*). (Continue to revisit and delve into chapters 1-7 throughout the autumn.)

You are warmly invited to explore the handout of *Suggested Reading for the 2020 Margha Program* and read what draws your heart.

*The Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path* (handout)

*Mahayana Heart Cultivation*, translated by Lama Willa Miller (handout)

*Lama John Makransky's Instructions for Sky Gazing and Open Awareness* (handout)

*Barriers and Corresponding Assistants to Compassion* (handout)

*Six Key Facets of Heart Cultivation {lojong} Practice* (handout)

*Nine Key Points of Heart Cultivation* (handout)

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## September—The Practice of Natural Compassion

### Main Practices:

1) *The Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path (Engage the full Practice: Step One, Step Two, and Step Three)*\*

2) *Ultimate Bodhichitta/Resting in the Natural State or Sky Gazing*\*

\*Alternate these practices every other day.

\*Each meditation session begins with *Benefactor Practice*.

3) *Each week choose a lojong slogan. Carry the slogan with you, perhaps out into nature—enliven your inquiry by making it personal.*

### **Readings:**

*Great Path of Awakening: A Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion*, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod  
(Continue to revisit and delve into this text throughout the autumn.)

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, by Shantideva (also translated as: *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*). (Continue to revisit and delve into chapters 1-7 throughout the autumn.)

You are warmly invited to explore the handout of *Suggested Reading for the 2020 Margha Program* and read what draws your heart.

*Practice of Natural Compassion: Taking Difficulties onto the Path* (handout)

*Mahayana Heart Cultivation*, translated by Lama Willa Miller (handout)

*Barriers and Corresponding Assistants to Compassion* (handout)

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## October—Tonglen

### Main Practices:

1) *Tonglen: The Practice of Taking and Sending\**

2) *Ultimate Bodhichitta/Resting in the Natural State or Sky Gazing\**

\*Alternate these practices every other day.

\*Each meditation session begins with *Benefactor Practice*.

3) *Each week choose a lojong slogan. Carry the slogan with you, perhaps out into nature—enliven your inquiry by making it personal.*

Emphasis this month is on *Tonglen: The Practice of Taking and Sending*. In this practice, the seeming other becomes an inspiration for us. We envisage a relationship through which our body-mind becomes a crucible for awakening. This way of working with suffering is empowering; it gives us space. It is not a matter of fixing the other, but of upholding them in their essential dignity; we allow them space to discover their own answers for themselves. In this practice we create a dynamic with the other of fearless compassion, and we practice it until it becomes our default, and there is no more practice to be done. As we discover, the sky in our heart can take anything.

There are two main applications for tonglen: as a meditation practice for those who are sick or troubled, and as a meditation practiced for oneself when one is sick or troubled. But the basic idea is the same in both. We make use of what is actually happening. With tonglen we can use our own difficulties as a means of genuine benefit—for others, through compassion and pure intention, and for ourselves, as we reduce our self-cherishing attitude. Just as the sky can never be harmed, likewise the pure nature of mind can never be harmed no matter how much suffering we inhale. The nature of mind is always totally luminous and clear, cognizant. This is our buddha nature, which is always present.

*Tonglen: The Practice of Taking and Sending:*

*~Begin with Benefactor Practice.*

*~In your mind's eye envisage someone (or it could be an animal or place or entire ecosystem) before you who is suffering, either physically or mentally. Feel their presence before you. Now, with the in-breath, inhale that suffering into the sky of your heart. Take in that suffering along with the breath. As it reaches the sky of your heart, it dissolves.*

*~From this sky of your heart radiates on your out-breath everything that is positive and good. This all-healing energy of wisdom and compassion washes over and dissolves into the person or animal or place you have imagined before you. You witness their easing. Continue inhaling and exhaling in this way from the sky of your heart.*

*~After some time, release the visualization and rest in the natural state.*

### ***Readings:***

*Great Path of Awakening: A Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod (Continue to revisit and delve into this text throughout the autumn.)*

*The Way of the Bodhisattva, by Shantideva (also translated as: A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life). (Continue to revisit and delve into chapters 1-7 throughout the autumn.)*

You are warmly invited to explore the handout of *Suggested Reading for the 2020 Margha Program* and read what draws your heart.

*Mahayana Heart Cultivation*, translated by Lama Willa Miller (handout)

*Barriers and Corresponding Assistants to Compassion* (handout)

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## November—Offering Practice

### Main Practices:

1) *Offering, Receiving Blessing, and Reunifying with the Natural State*\*

2) *Ultimate Bodhichitta/Resting in the Natural State or Sky Gazing*\*

\*Alternate these practices every other day.

\*Each meditation session begins with *Benefactor Practice*.

3) *Each week choose a lojong slogan. Carry the slogan with you, perhaps out into nature—enliven your inquiry by making it personal.*

### **Readings:**

*Great Path of Awakening: A Classic Guide to Lojong, a Tibetan Buddhist Practice for Cultivating the Heart of Compassion*, by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod  
(Continue to revisit and delve into this text throughout the autumn.)

*The Way of the Bodhisattva*, by Shantideva (also translated as: *A Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*): Chapter 10, “Dedication” (*Please note!*)

*Offering, Receiving, Blessing, and Reunifying with the Natural State* (handout)

*Mahayana Heart Cultivation*, translated by Lama Willa Miller (handout)

*Barriers and Corresponding Assistants to Compassion* (handout)

