

Infinite Love: The Ultimate Protection to Eliminate All Obstacles

Transcription which was excerpted from a lecture by Geshe Michael Roach during the Tibetan Heart Yoga Series 3 Teacher Training in September of 2005, in Tucson, Arizona.

The first thing to say is that the four infinite thoughts are very very interesting because they are one of the things that links the most ancient yoga tradition of India to the present yoga tradition of Tibet. So the four infinite thoughts (*tseme shi* in Tibetan) are a link—they are something that ties together these two lineages. They are like footprints that show you that the lineages were once one. This teaching on love, infinite love, has gone strongly and through 2,000 years has remained in both lineages. So the bridge between the two lineages, if you're like a scriptural archeologist, you would look at the text of Keutsang Lama's *Machine of the Body* and there in the core is the four infinite thoughts. And then you open up to page 30, and here's the *Yoga Sutra* and there are the four infinite thoughts. It's the same thing from Master Pantajali in the greatest and oldest yoga text of all time. So you're very tightly tied into a beautiful lineage that has survived for 2,000 years. There are 1,700 years between master Pantanjali and Keutsang Lama and 300 more years up to us. So you're in this beautiful lineage, and what bridges the two lineages, what ties them together, is this teaching on love. It's not *Paschimottanasana* it's love. It's the teaching on love, you see? And this is the prayer of love. We do two prayers during the asana series, right? One is the prayer of what? [Students respond- "Protection"]

Protection. One is the Prayer of Love. So we thought we'd do love first, because that's really the theme—that's really the core. So I'm going to just talk to you about the context in which the Yoga Sutra presents the four infinite thoughts. How does the four infinite thoughts happen in the Yoga Sutra? Why does Master Pantanjali talk about the four infinite thoughts in the Yoga Sutra? And what I did was, we put the whole context, so instead of just giving you the one person's four infinite thoughts, we went backwards a little bit. The context here is the obstacles that will occur in your practice. The Diamond Cutter Sutra is the source of this teaching on obstacles. Whenever you start something important, whenever you have a moment from your lifetime's sleep of eating, working, pooping, vacation and dying. Anytime you stick your head up a little bit out of this cycle of nothing, then the demons aren't happy. "Oh somebody stuck their head up, bang!" They don't care if you just sleep, eat and die, you're just following their program—they'll leave you alone. There won't be any problem. But you stick your head up, or you struggle to do something good, if you struggle to do something high, if you struggle to overcome death itself, and they're like attracted immediately. So these are obstacles, and they will come to you. There's a joke in Tibet, if you don't get any obstacles you're like, "maybe you're not doing something right". You'll have a big fight with your closest friend, or suddenly you don't have any money to get to Tucson, or stuff like that. Things will happen you know? Your boss will say if you leave then you'll get fired, you know? Suddenly, after agreeing for six months. He [Master Patanjali] lists the obstacles: illness; fogginess in the mind; doubts are the worst ... maybe I shouldn't be doing this after-all, maybe I really should be doing bingo, or bowling, maybe this is not so good. Carelessness means not watching your mind during the day, like slipping and yelling at somebody or not keeping aware of

where your mind is headed during the day; and then laziness is “I don’t feel like doing yoga today”. You should do it everyday and you’ll fight with your mind. David Life and Sharon. Sharon once told me after twenty-five years, the hardest thing is still to get up and do your practice, you know, still. After all these years being the most famous yogis in America, and still you’re like, “Maybe I don’t feel so good today” you know what I mean? There’s always some excuse, right? What makes your yoga practice great, what separates you from a normal yogi, is only the times you do it when you don’t feel well, or when the floor is not so good, or the room is very hot or cold, or you really are busy today and you really don’t have time. It’s doing it then that separates you.

Then he lists more obstacles, which are like *prana* obstacles: your hands start shaking; your mind is distracted; you get *lung*—a *vayu* condition, a *prana vayu* condition in your heart, and you start getting tight, tense, irritable, like that. Then he says on page thirty-three, so he’s introduced all these obstacles, then he says, “if you wish to stop these obstacles, there is one and only one crucial practice of doing so”, and then he goes into the four infinite thoughts. So just the practice of love, just the practice of wishing love is enough to stop all of your obstacles. Illness, trouble with your bosses, trouble with your friends, not wanting to do your practice, if you do the four infinite thoughts all of those obstacles go away. It’s the one and only one crucial practice.

Then after that he lists some benefits. He lists more of these, but these are the big three that are on your homework. “It makes your mind bright and clear as pure water.” You feel happy, you just feel clear. Your mind is sharp, clear, awake. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, clear. And he says secondly, “it gives the same effect as *pranayama*, or outer methods of controlling your inner winds”. So you

can control the inner winds by doing an hour and a half of yoga, or you can control them by doing the four infinite thoughts for ten minutes in a meditation. So which should you do? Both. Why? Because sometimes you can't do it in the meditation and sometimes you can't do it in your yoga, and they both work together, it's more pop. So don't get caught in this diamond dealer trap. Do both of them, ok?

Then he says, lastly, "it helps the tendency we have of thoughts arising about outer objects and experiences". This is on two levels. One is like, if you're always thinking about breakfast during your meditation, or a cup of sweet juice, then you're distracted. Then your mind is distracted. You can't concentrate. Your mind pops out of meditation. Secondly, you misunderstand objects of the senses. You misunderstand them, right? "Oh, he put it up here, I'll take it myself." Right? Not realizing that the reason I got the juice is that I gave one to somebody else in the past. That's ignorance about juice. So the natural reaction for intelligent people, what His Holiness calls, maybe he'll talk about it this weekend. What's it called?

Enlightened self-interest. The best way to get more juice is to give this one away to someone, right? Pass it around. Like spread it among a bunch of yogis, then you're putting stuff in the bank and the interest will keep coming. So if you do the infinite four thoughts, you start to see the world this way and you act in an enlightened way—you're constantly giving stuff away. Every time you get something you're like hot potato—give it away, get it away. And then more stuff comes to you. This is enlightened. This is the benefit of the four infinite thoughts.

So all of these [The Four Infinite Thoughts] are meant to develop a love for other people, which is really the guts of the echo effect, also. If you want good things to happen to you, you have to be good to other people. That's the thing, right? Echoes back to you. And you know there's people in this group I've known for ten years now, maybe almost fifteen years, and I watch people. We just got back from four months travel and the people who have consistently watched out for other people's needs, they're not so focused on themselves, they are constantly thinking about what other people need. Those people just keep inching higher and higher. Every time I see them after four months, they're like a little bit happier, things are happening in their life. Things are going well. They're just constantly inching up in their level of happiness, because they're focused on other people. And then the people who seem to be focused on themselves a lot, they seem to have hard times and worse times and a little bit grumpier each time we meet. This is the key, it all comes back to you. You have to take care of other people, then what you want will come, automatically, it's no problem. There's a saying in Tibet that you get weeds if you plant corn. You don't have to plant the weeds, they'll come. What you want will come. Just concentrate on other people.

So there are four steps within each of the four infinite thoughts. My lineage, the Gelupa lineage, you'll meet the future head on Friday, we like lists and outlines. So we've got sixteen permutations here. We could debate that for a week, you know? But I'll simplify it. It's like a mantra in the monastery. You start it when you're five years old. It means like this. The first level of each of the four is, "I wish it could happen. How cool it would be if everybody was happy. How nice it would be? "That would be, wow! Wouldn't that be nice? Everybody on the planet." You know you're the sun. And you're looking down on this

planet, just a blue speck in a black sky, and you're like, "Everybody on that planet should be happy." "Everybody, that would be so nice!" Ok got it? That's number one. We call it the Wish.

Then, *yorwa* means, "it's gotta be". So that turns more into action. "We've gotta get it done!" Resolution, right? First is wish. Second is resolution, "it's gotta be. No choice. It's gotta be". [Repeats Tibetan]

Then third, "I'll get it done myself!" *Hlaksam namdak*, what we call ultimate responsibility. "Nobody helps me? Fine." "People criticize me? Fine." "I'm broke all the time? Fine." Like, "I'm gonna god-dammit get it done, even if no one else cares about it." Its like John Brady's Input Project. Why do you bother with all those old books? He's like "We're getting it done. I'm doing it. I don't care if nobody helps me." You know what I mean? He's like out there in Siberia, trying to find old books. And he's like "I'm getting it done". So now, we have we got? "I wish. It's gotta be. I'll get it done!"

Then the last one is like, "Man, but we need some help here." "We need some heavy duty help here." [Repeats the Tibetan] means, "I ask my teacher, my spiritual teacher, my angel, give us some help here." "We're gonna do it." "I'm going do it myself, but it would be really cool if you could like help me out." So that last one is really beautiful. It's like, if you follow Guru-ji, if you follow any Guru, whoever you follow, it doesn't really matter, David and Sharon. Like you know, you're opening up a yoga studio and there's this pile of bills thrust under the door and all the teachers are quitting, and the floors have got a big hole in it. and you just sit down and you say, "Ok David, ok Sharon, help me out here". You know? And you pray to them. It's not like they come on the next plane, they might, but you pray and you say, "give me some spiritual help here".

And then it comes. The more you believe it the more it comes. So whoever you follow, whoever your teacher is, you ask them. "Help me out." And that's it.

So, you can do that with each of the four, so now you have the sixteen, right? So like, "everybody should be happy. It would be really nice. Let's do it. I'll do it. help me." Ok? "How nice it would be if nobody had any pain. Let's get it done. I'll take care of it myself. Give me some help." Like that. Ok?

Number three. "How nice it would be if everyone didn't have to die." Ultimate happiness. "Let's get it done. I'll do it myself if I have to, but let's help me out here." That's number three. Then number four is, "how nice it would be if, in their attempt to be good to people, weren't prejudiced". You see? People come up to me and say, "Oh this lady's so nice." "Why?" "You should see how nice she takes care of her kids." "That's great." "How does she take care of the kids next door?" "No, she doesn't she's busy." But I say, "that's not love, that's prejudice." You see?

It's one world. It's just one world. And the more you learn about languages, the more they're all the same. They're really all the same. They all come from the same place. And people, slight differences in color, slight differences in height, or stomach, but that's about all. It's one world. It's ridiculous nowadays to pretend there are different countries. With the internet, with the web, and everything, it's ridiculous. You know? You could be online with somebody in New Orleans while their house is being crushed. I was online with a girl who was in the Israeli Army while the gas missiles were coming down on her. I was in Mysore, India, her mom was in the penthouse in New York, and she was having missiles coming down. We were on a conference call.

The world, you can't pretend that it's not your problem anymore. It's one world. You have to take care of everybody. There's no difference anymore, see? So you're going to do this meditation and you're like the sun. The sun doesn't say, "I'm only gonna shine on Tucson today." You know? Or "I'm not gonna worry about Africa today." The sun has to shine on the whole planet. So, this kind of love, and our activities, have to be global. Everywhere. What we do, if it's yoga or whatever we're trying to teach people, is forget the countries. Forget age, or money, it's just all one planet now and you have to take responsibility to help everybody. And this is a really effective way to help people. So you have to be walking around like John Brady or Kimberly, they don't really have a home. It's one planet to them and they're just serving the planet. Later you'll get to more planets. That's why these are infinite thoughts. Ok? Many planets. Once you get into the mode of taking care of one planet, then you can take care of more than one planet.