

KOPAN COURSE NO. 40  
LAMRIM TEACHINGS FROM KOPAN 2007

BY

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Lightly edited by Gordon McDougall, September 2023

Archive # 1684

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LAMA YESHE WISDOM ARCHIVE

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# Lecture 1

December 6, 2007

## THE CONCEPT OF TRUE EXISTENCE CHEATS US

[The students begin chanting the mandala offering, then Rinpoche interrupts]

The *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha* and the *Heart Sutra*.

First, we are going to do the *Praise to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha*, to the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, and then meditate on the nature of life, the Buddha's instructions, what is Dharma, on how phenomena are impermanent, how nothing lasts, how everything changes, decays. Not only day-by-day, hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute, second-by-second, but even within one second, nothing lasts. We should meditate on causative phenomena, including our own life, our material possessions, surrounding people, and form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects—these sense objects. The Buddha's explanation in his teachings is to think that the very nature of all phenomena is impermanence, that they do not last, they decay, even second-by-second, even within a second. What exists in this present second doesn't last; by the next second it has stopped. These causative phenomena are like that, due to being under the control of the cause and conditions.

We should look at them as, say, like a water bubble, for example, like dew dropping from the wires or from the plants. Dew [is on a plant] but it can drop off at any moment. He gives us many examples to realize how the very nature of all these causative phenomena, including our own life, is impermanence, and how their very nature is emptiness. What they really are, their very nature, is emptiness.

While they are totally empty of existing from their own side, of existing by their nature—truly existent or inherently existent—these phenomena appear to our hallucinated mind as truly existent. Due to our ignorance, due to our unknowing mind, not knowing the very nature of these phenomena, which is their emptiness, [we cannot see] that all these phenomena exist in mere name, merely imputed by the mind. Whatever we do, twenty-four hours a day, day and night, all these phenomena—the doer, (ourselves), our action, the object—everything exists, but while it exists, it exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind.

If we analyze, how things exist is something *extremely* subtle, what all these phenomena really are, including the I and how this I feels—I'm happy, I'm unhappy, I did this, I want to do this, I want this, I want that, I don't want this. It includes all these things.

If we really analyzed it, how things exist is totally something else. This is not the way it has been appearing to our hallucinated mind, not the way we have been apprehending and believing so far. It's not that. That is a totally false view. If we look for it, we can't find it. The way things have been appearing to us, the way we have been believing in them, holding on to them, entrusting them, is the way they have appeared to our hallucinated mind. Because of that, we have been apprehending things, believing in them, holding on to them and entrusting them.

I use the word “entrust” because we entrust as a good friend, somebody who seems to love us and help us, while in reality they are constantly cheating us, deceiving us. We didn’t examine them well but just believed the superficial, external appearances and then held on to that, believing that to be true, whereas in reality, that person has been cheating us constantly, nonstop.

Here, we do the same thing, like that friend who has been cheating us constantly from beginningless time—not only from this morning, not only from the birth, not only from the life before that, but from beginningless rebirths. The way things appear to us, as something kind or nice, and the way we hold on to that, entrusting that, has been cheating us, deceiving us, because it is not true. Because we believe reality is like that, we are totally cheated all the time. This is what causes us problems all the time.

This wrong concept, this hallucination, this appearance—holding on to these things, entrusting them as true—has been causing us problems without even a second’s break, cheating us, deceiving us, twenty-four hours a day, from this morning, from birth, from beginningless rebirths. But if we look, if we really analyze, we can’t find it anywhere; it doesn’t exist anywhere, neither on that base which we label “this” and “that” nor anywhere.

This is what we realize, what we come to discover, when we analyze it. We see its emptiness, the absence of all this true existence. We need to analyze it, like being a meditator scientist, an inner scientist. When we do, we discover these truly existing phenomena are totally nonexistent. Instead of proving that they are really true, we discover the exact opposite, that they are totally nonexistent, totally empty. It is this wrong concept that holds onto things as true. They appear [to our hallucinated mind] as truly existent, as existing from their own side, or by their nature, and we believe it.

In daily life, the word which we use for this is “real.” In daily life, we don’t use terms such as “inherently existent” or “existing from its own side” or “by nature.” We don’t use those expressions the Buddha explained in the philosophical texts, which exactly describe how things appear to our hallucinated mind and how we believe. The common word, in ordinary language, is “real.” Things appear real and we believe them to be real, but actually, if we really analyze what is real, we can’t find that. What appears to be real (and what we believe to be real), is unfindable; it is totally nonexistent *there*.

That does not mean things do not exist. It does not mean our actions don’t exist; objects don’t exist. It does not mean that. It does not mean suffering doesn’t exist; it does not mean happiness doesn’t exist; it does not mean hell doesn’t exist; it does not mean enlightenment doesn’t exist; it does not mean samsara and nirvana don’t exist; it does not mean problems and happiness don’t exist. It doesn’t mean that. They exist. Happiness exists, the cause of happiness exists; suffering exists, the cause of suffering exists, but it’s not the way it appears to our hallucinated mind, how we apprehend it; it’s not the way we believe it to exist, the way we hold onto it. All that part is totally nonexistent, totally empty. That part—the way it appears and the way we hold on to it—is totally nonexistent. But that does not mean samsara and nirvana don’t exist; it does not mean there is no enlightenment or hell.

All these things exist in mere name, merely imputed by the mind. This is what really exists—something else entirely. In our daily life, what really functions is something else; the I that really exists is something else. It does not exist in the way it has appeared to us and we have believed up to

now. The reality of these phenomena, how they exist, what they are, is *totally* something else. How they exist is something unbelievably subtle. What are phenomena, what is the I, what is action, what is suffering, what is happiness, what is enlightenment, what is hell, these things do not exist as they appear to our hallucinated mind. There is not the real hell appearing from there, something that is apprehended, that is really something.

The way all these phenomena exist is something unbelievably subtle—hell, enlightenment, samsara, nirvana, happiness, problems, the four noble truths, what we think in daily life, “I have this problem,” “I have that problem,” “I have this great pleasure,” and so forth, all this is what is merely imputed by the mind and believed by the mind, because there is a valid base.

But even the valid base on which we label “this” and “that” is nothing except what is merely imputed by the mind. Even the base is what is merely imputed by mind, and we believe that. That’s it. There is nothing else.

And, of course, that base also has to have a base, and that label has another base, also merely imputed by mind, nothing else except what is merely imputed by mind and which is believed. So, the whole thing is like that, starting from the I and the aggregates, down to the particles of atoms, according to Prasangika Madhyamaka. There are four Buddhist philosophical schools: Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Cittamatra and Madhyamaka, [which has two subschools,] Svatantrika and Prasangika. According to the second Madhyamaka School, Prasangika, the atoms have particles, and the particles also have particles, and so on like that.

It is similar with the consciousness. Because of the continuity of consciousness, we go from life to life. For example, for however many years the consciousness lives in this body, while the unity of this consciousness and this body abide together, that is life—that many years of the continuity of consciousness; that many months of the continuity of consciousness; that many weeks of the continuity of consciousness; that many days of the continuity of consciousness; that many hours of the continuity of consciousness; that many minutes of continuity of consciousness; that many seconds of continuity of consciousness, and then down to split seconds. So again, according to the Prasangika school’s philosophy, this is similar.

From the I, down to the particles of atoms, and from the consciousness, hour-by-hour consciousness, minute-by-minute, second-by-second, and the particles, even the split seconds, within that continuity, all this exists being merely labeled by the mind. Everything exists in mere name, in mere imputation.

You have already gone through the four noble truths, with true suffering and the true cause of suffering, what is samsara and the evolution of samsara, looking at all the general sufferings of samsara and the particular sufferings of each realm. You have gone through that, how we create the root of samsara, ignorance, the concept that holds on to true existence, the totally false mind, believing in a real I that doesn’t exist. As I mentioned before, using our daily life language, what we normally feel every day, what we believe, that which is explained in texts—inherently existent, truly existent, existing from its own side—that is not there *at all*, even the slightest of atoms.

We create all this. It’s also created by our mind: the root of all the suffering, ignorance, this wrong concept, which is the king of delusions, the king of the superstitious mind, this ignorance holding the I and the aggregates, the base to be labeled “I,” as truly existent, as real. It doesn’t exist from its

own side, even this ignorance, the root of samsara, doesn't exist from its own side. When we think of this ignorance, this root of samsara, the way the ignorance appears to us and how we believe is and hold onto it, is as a *real* ignorance. Then, there is also real anger, real attachment, something that appears as real. Real attachment, real anger, real ignorance, we also believe these are true, but there is no such thing. These are all totally nonexistent.

Even the root of samsara, ignorance, is created by our mind. It's not created by God; it's not created by somebody else, by our enemy or by our parents, not by our friends or our dog or our cat!

## **HUNGRY GHOSTS AND DOGS**

New York was the very first Western place Lama Yeshe and I went to from Kathmandu. We went straight from Kathmandu to New York. I was very impressed by the customs people in New York, how they checked everything and what questions they asked. I thought they were very intelligent!

We stayed in Brooklyn for a week with a student of a Mongolian geshe, Geshe Wangdu, the first lama to go to the United States. Then, we went to many different places, mostly other students' homes, and then to Wisconsin where Geshe Sopa Rinpoche had already been teaching in the university as a professor for many years. He is Lama Yeshe's teacher from Tibet, and after meeting him, he also became my teacher, my guru. Then, we went to Indiana. We spent eight months in the United States in different places.

Recently and at other times, we stayed in a place in New York—I've just come from there, but I've forgotten the name—in Manhattan. We stayed many times at the apartment of a student nun, Yangchen, once for His Holiness's teachings and, in recent times, taking many teachings from Khyongla Rato Rinpoche, who lived in New York for many years and took many lineages of teachings.

Each time I go out of the apartment in the morning to make water charity to the pretas and offer food for the pretas, there are many birds in the garden and they also get food, by the way. But the main purpose is to make water charity for the hungry ghosts, the pretas, in order to liberate them. There's a special mantra you chant when you make the water charity that purifies their negative karma, which not only stops their unbelievably heavy hunger and thirst, which they experience for hundreds and thousands of years. They can't find even a single drop of water, due to their past heavy negative karma, their stinginess, their attachment, through not practicing generosity, not giving. As a result, they must experience the heavy suffering of hunger and thirst. They have many sufferings, but that is a major one and they must experience it for hundreds and thousands of years, unable to find even a spoonful of food.

So, there's a practice where we can help them. There's a special mantra given by Buddha, which has power, causing the food and water to become nectar for them. It not only stops their suffering of hunger and thirst, but it also purifies their negative karma and they get a higher rebirth. If we are able to help them get a higher rebirth, that's our great gift to them.

Although we don't have the clairvoyance to see them, we can't see them with our eyes, in reality they are there, like a forest. The number of human beings is nothing compared with those lower realm beings, those hungry ghosts. They are there in unbelievable numbers, like a forest outside.

There is an incredible practice the Buddha gave to liberate them, with a short mantra that does unbelievable good. Even though what we might offer is very little, to them it appears huge. They receive it like that by the power of the mantra.

Whenever I went out to do that, I would see people walking dogs! There was this road and people would walk their dogs on the other side of the road, all sorts of different dogs: big dogs, small dogs, even very tiny dogs, dogs with lots of hair, dogs without hair! It was near a garden where they took them, and I could see them everywhere.

I was wondering what I would be like if dogs didn't exist, if there were no dogs. People live with their dogs and rely on them for their happiness, for their pleasure. I mean, it's not just for their pleasure; they also take care of the dog—you are there for the dog, not the dog is there for you. For some people with a compassionate mind, who do not have that much self-cherishing thought, they see they are there for the dog's happiness, not the dog being there for their happiness.

Anyway, recently I was thinking probably life would be very lonely for people if they didn't have a dog. What would happen to their life without a dog? I began to think that!

Anyway, I just remembered a story. In Tushita Dharamsala, we had thirteen dogs. Dharamsala, India, is where His Holiness the Dalai Lama lives and we have a retreat center there. I think they had about thirteen dogs at one time, a mixture of Lhasa Apso—the ones with the flat nose. Lama Yeshe used to say, "I love my dogs." When I suggested we give some of the dogs to other people, Lama said, "I love my dogs."

Later, I gave one to a lady who worked for the American embassy in Delhi. Instead of taking money, I gave her the commitment to chant the prayer, *The Foundation of Good Qualities*, the lamrim prayer composed by Lama Tsongkhapa that contains the whole path to enlightenment. I don't know whether you've been reciting it or not, but it's a prayer that has the whole path to enlightenment. She's not a particular student of Buddhism but she loves dogs, so I gave her a dog, and she had to recite *The Foundation of Good Qualities* in the dog's ear every day.

She did that very sincerely every day for a year. But after a year, one day when the gate wasn't closed, the dog went out and she lost the dog. Until now, I have forgotten to give her another one!

Anyway, I then gave one to another student. When I gave it, it was very small, but when it grew up it became long like this—maybe not like that, but anyway, when they are small, they are very cute! I saw it some years later and it was very long like that. I've given dogs to other people but always with a commitment. They can have the dog, but they have to do this practice for the dog.

Anyway, that's not the main story. Sorry!

Lama had a brother who is still there, Geshe Tsering. He was cooking. His style is usually to cook *momos* very quickly. The Tibetan food called momos were half-cooked, they weren't well-cooked because he does everything very quickly. Lama scolded his brother, Geshe Tsering, saying "You're like this! You don't know how to do this." Then Lama said, "My dogs are better than you, because they don't cause me to get angry!"

Then, the next morning, we were attending His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings in the temple. At the teaching, at the beginning of the motivation His Holiness said that in the West people don't get along with other people; they rely on their dogs! It might have been an accident, but it was interesting that Lama had said that the night before, and then it happened the next morning.

Anyway, now I'll go back. I don't want to expand.

### **BELIEVING THE I TO BE TRULY EXISTING**

So, first there are the aggregates. The mind that sees the aggregates makes up the label "I." Because of the mind seeing the aggregates, it then makes up the label "I," merely imputing the I.

In the next second, the I, which is merely imputed by the mind, appears back to us. Now, here is the problem. When the I, which is imputed by the mind, appears back to us, there is the problem, because it should appear back as it is—merely imputed by the mind, because that's what it is—but we are not aware that is so. But that's not the only thing. The main thing is this. The I that appears back the next second is *totally* the opposite to that, as existing from its own side, as not merely labeled by the mind. This is totally wrong, totally contradictory to reality.

Just a second before, our mind merely imputed the I, so [this *not*-merely imputed I] is not true. This is a totally false view. It's a false I, something which is not there. Not even the slightest atom of it exists anywhere.

The minute the I appears back, it appears as *not* merely labeled by the mind, which means it exists from its own side. Just before, our mind merely imputed this I, but we are not aware of that, so we let our mind hold on to that. That's the third thing. We let our mind hold on to that as being a hundred percent true. This is the real I, not merely labeled by the mind, the I that exists from its own side. We completely, a hundred percent, believe in that. That's the third thing. After it appears, we let the mind hold on to that, we entrust that, we completely trust that.

So, *that* is the root of samsara. That wrong concept is the root of all the delusions, of karma, of all the suffering, of the whole entire samsara, with all the general sufferings and the particular sufferings of each realm. It is the root of the oceans of sufferings of the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras. In the god realm there are the form and formless realms, so this is the root of all their sufferings, of the entire suffering of samsara. That concept is the root that we have created. Nobody else created it; we created it. It is just a way of thinking.

Our mind cannot see it. It's formless; it's empty of being a substantial phenomenon. At the same time, of course, that ignorance, that mind, which is formless, is also merely labeled by mind. It also exists as a mere imputation. What is called ignorance is named by the function.

### **THE OBJECT TO BE REFUTED**

Now, what we have to know is *why*. Why do we have to have the hallucination? Why, every time, for example, after the mind merely imputes the I, it appears back totally false. It is merely imputed by the mind, but it appears back *not* merely imputed by mind. This is what the philosophical texts call

*gag cha*, the object to be refuted, the object not merely imputed by mind, existing from its own side. Why do we have this hallucination when it appears back? Why does it appear back as false, not according to reality? Instead of appearing as merely imputed by the mind, as empty of existing from its own side, which is the reality, it appears back in a totally wrong way, as a real I, as existing from its own side.

The minute the mind merely imputes the I, the past ignorance, which has left a negative imprint on the mental continuum, projects this true existence. It is like something recorded on film with a camera which is projected on a movie screen. Similarly, if we view snow mountains, which are white, through a blue glass, they appear blue, or if we look at them through red glass they appear red. However, we can say it is like the film image projected there on the movie screen or the TV screen. Like that, past ignorance leaves a negative imprint on the mental continuum. And right after the mere imputation, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] there is the hallucination of true existence from this negative imprint. It decorates, it projects true existence on that merely imputed I. The past ignorance leaves a negative imprint on the mind, and then, right after the mind merely imputes the I, that negative imprint decorates or projects true existence there.

So, when the I, which is merely imputed, appears back, it seems like something real because of the negative imprint left by ignorance, decorating this hallucination, this true existence, projecting it onto the merely imputed I. So then, when the I appears back, it is made something real.

So, now you get some idea. It's the same when we think about the aggregates. What makes the aggregates appear real to us from out there—these aggregates that are the basis to be labeled I—is exactly the same. After the mere imputation, the negative imprint decorates true existence onto the merely labeled aggregates, again making the aggregates appear real.

Right after the mind has merely imputed “body”, the negative imprint left by the ignorance decorates true existence there onto that mere imputation, making the body appear a real body to us. And the same thing with the mind. Right after our thought imputes “mind” on this phenomenon that is formless, whose nature is clear, this perceiving object that is the base, this merely imputed mind, right after that, the negative imprint left by the ignorance on the mental continuum projects true existence, decorates true existence, making the mind appear a real mind.

This is the same with all the different parts of the aggregates—the head, the leg—everything is made real to us—a real head, a real eye, a real nose, real hair—everything appears real to us, right down to the atoms. They appear real atoms to us, something real. Everything has true existence projected on it, or decorated on it, down to the particles of atoms. Everything, which is merely imputed, immediately has this projected, this hallucination of true existence, making it real.

This is the same with all form. The light, the ceiling, the floor, the pillars, the flowers, the table, everything we see, everything is merely imputed by our mind—this and that, that pillar, ceiling, door, window, flower, carpets, everything—but the moment it is merely imputed, the negative imprint left by ignorance projects true existence, making everything real, so we see everything as real, the real lights and so forth.

As I mentioned before, when we drive a car in the city, there's a green light and a blue light. Is it a blue light? A red light and green light. There's no pink, right? Maybe for some special reason there's a pink light!

Anyway, that is one example of *gag cha*, the object to be refuted. When we drive a car, when we see the red light or the green light, which exists as being merely imputed by our mind, which comes from our mind, that's what exists. But we don't see it that way. The way the red or green light appears—according to our appearance and according to our belief—is existing from *there*. The red light exists from *there*; the green light exists from there. It is a real red light, a real green light. It exists from *there*, from the object's side. But no, it is not like that.

Although it has totally come from our mind, there is not the slightest awareness that is so. Just now the green light and red light were merely imputed by our mind. The red light means to stop; the green light means to go. That is the label we have just put on it, but there is not even the slightest awareness of that. Of course, for those who have realizations, it's different, but generally speaking, we have not even the slightest awareness of that. The real green light, the real red light existing from there is totally the wrong view.

Sometimes I use that as an example of *gag cha*, the object to be refuted. This is an example, showing how to recognize the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted.

That real red light, that light existing from there—real in the sense of from its own side—is exactly here. Right now, we have just merely labeled it, but then the hallucination has decorated, has projected it, as something real. It's not there! In reality, there is no such thing there at all, not even the slightest atom. If we look for it on that, we cannot find it. We cannot find it existing either on that base or anywhere. It is totally nonexistent, empty.

This is good to remember. Because we have to stop the car for a while there, it's a very good opportunity to meditate on emptiness! It doesn't waste time. Even if the red light lasts for some time because it is not working properly, instead of getting angry, getting emotional, we use this red light not working to meditate on emptiness. In that way, we can achieve liberation! We can be totally free from the oceans of samsaric suffering and its cause, karma and delusions, forever. This is the advantage we get by meditating on emptiness, recognizing the *gag cha*.

If we get angry at the red light, that's not the root of samsara, because it's dependent on its causes, the concept of holding that—which appears to us as truly existent—as real. Even though it's not the root of samsara, it's a cause of samsara. On top of that fundamental wrong view, getting angry becomes the cause of samsara, even the cause of unimaginable sufferings of the lower realms. So, it makes a huge difference meditating on the reality of an object, on its nature. The result is total liberation, everlasting happiness. And if that is done with bodhicitta, the result is enlightenment, the cessation of even the subtle defilements.

But with the wrong concept, holding that red light that appears as real to exist from its own side, that is the cause of samsara. And if we do it with a nonvirtuous thought arising, especially anger, that becomes the cause of the lower realms.

## **WE PERCEIVE ALL THE SENSES AS REAL**

What I'm saying is, forms, sounds, smells and so forth—everything is made real. When we go outside and look at the sky, it is real to us, appearing from its own side. The trees are real, the road is

real, the rocks are real. When we walk, we walk on a real road—real from its own side, in the sense of existing from its own side.

When we listen to a sound, when we meditate on it, we see that this is the *gag cha*. The sound is merely imputed by our mind. In the *dura*, in the beginning philosophical subject, debating, we debate on any object of our senses. For instance, with the ear sense, the object that the ear sense hears, the sound, that has to happen first, and *then*, after that, our mind labels the sound as good sound, bad sound. It could be a good sound, like peaceful, cooling music, or a bad sound like irritating music. Anyway, first the ear sense has to hear the object, and then our mind labels it “sound.” The label comes afterwards. The base comes first, then the label comes afterwards. The label “sound” doesn’t come before we hear the object. It also doesn’t happen at the same time because there would be no reason to cause us to label “sound.” For the mind to label “sound,” we have to have a cause, we have to have a reason. And the reason is what we hear first, the object of the ear sense. That is the reason that causes the mind to label “sound.”

Therefore, this is merely imputed by the mind. But, as soon as that’s done, there’s a projection that it is truly existent. Ignorance projects the hallucination and we think there is a real sound existing from its own side. We believe what we have heard is real. When we’re not aware, when we have not discovered emptiness, although it exists in mere name, the sound appears to be real and we hold on to that as real, believing it is true.

And this is the same with real smells, real tangible objects, real taste. When we eat sugar or honey, first the tongue sense apprehends the object and then the mind labels it “taste.” It can be “sweet taste” or “sour taste,” but we have to have something. We have to have a reason. Something has to happen before our mind labels that taste and that difference in taste. Before putting the label, we have to taste something. So, that’s the base, and the label comes *after*, “sweet taste” or “sour taste.” Whatever it is, it comes after.

It was merely imputed by our mind, but the moment after that, true existence is projected from the negative imprint, so we think there is a real sweet taste or a real sour taste. That is totally wrong, totally false. This is an example of forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects.

Like this, we make everything real. When we think of enlightenment, we think of something real, something truly existing, and the same with hell. I mentioned this before, so I don’t need to repeat it.

## **THE PERSON CRITICIZING US IS THE OBJECT OF REFUTATION**

It’s the same when we think about problems. Something happens, some change happens in our life. Maybe somebody’s mind changes toward us. It is just a change of their way of thinking but we interpret that person’s way of behaving to us as a problem. There is some change and our mind labels it a “problem.”

Why? Because it’s not what our attachment likes. Our self-cherishing thought doesn’t like it, and because we follow the self-cherishing, because we are a friend to it, that causes our mind to interpret it, to put a negative label on it. We think that person is bad, that they are behaving badly. Everything is bad. Like that, we make everything negative.

Although it is merely imputed by the mind, we think we have a problem. After the mere imputation, this truly existent hallucination is decorated, projected, there by our negative imprint, which is in the mind. So, the problem is merely imputed by the mind, but our mind has made it real. Instead of being merely imputed by the mind, the ignorance, by leaving a negative imprint on the mind, has projected the hallucination and made the problem real to us. We see it as a real problem and then so many afflictive emotions arise, such as anger. We might even want to commit suicide. We can't sleep, we can't enjoy eating, even if our meal costs a thousand dollars; we can't enjoy staying in five-, six- or seven-star hotels. We might be physically there, but we can't enjoy it at all. We might have a Mercedes car or a very long limousine, but we can't enjoy it. The mind is constantly suffering, with fear, sadness, depression, all that.

This is the effect of believing this is real as it appears—fear, worry, depression. The last thing is we want to kill ourselves, thinking maybe that's better. Maybe there will be more peace! Actually, we think of peace, but it would be totally the opposite. Such a person has no idea what happens after death, no idea *at all*; it is totally dark.

Because the mind is so overwhelmed by problems, even if we are an expert in Buddhist philosophy, if we are not practicing in daily life, when problems come, the mind has no space and then the thought of death arises, the thought to commit suicide. We think maybe that's more peaceful. That is totally ignorant. To die like that would be to die with a nonvirtuous thought, a nonvirtuous action, which would mean a rebirth in the unimaginable suffering of the lower realms. Somebody who commits suicide is totally hallucinated, not knowing karma and reincarnation, not thinking about that.

This has happened in the past. Some students who have studied well, who intellectually knew the subjects and knew how to explain reincarnation well, but due to lack of practice I think, not knowing how to control attachment, not thinking of karma in everyday life, they were totally defeated by attachment, by the self-cherishing thought. Then, when that friend or companion, the wife or husband, left, even though they could read Tibetan scriptures and knew Tibetan, even though they intellectually knew many things, because they didn't really apply meditation to control the mind, to overcome attachment and those negative emotional thoughts, when their friend or companion left, they were unable to meditate and they committed suicide. This has happened.

That is a total hallucination, totally ignorant. When suicidal thoughts arise, we must remember the continuity of the consciousness, reincarnation, and that where we reincarnate depends on karma. If we create negative karma, how can we get reborn in the higher realms? There's no way. There can be no peace.

This is a very good meditation in our busy daily life. This is how to practice emptiness in a busy life.

Since I brought up this issue, I want to emphasize this. While you are having a meeting and there are people who criticize you, who put you down, who argue opposite views that would normally cause you to get angry or upset, try to allow one part of the mind to meditate during that meeting, to spy, to continuously meditate on how all these things that appear as something real, such as the person criticizing you, how all this is *gag cha*, how everything is *gag cha*, how all these are false, hallucinations, how they are totally empty, how there is no such thing in reality.

While you are talking during the meeting, a part of the mind meditates on emptiness, looking at that which is a hallucination as a hallucination. When you do that, what comes in your heart is that they are empty. When the awareness, the mindfulness, is on the *gag cha*, what happens does not affect you. What happens around you, what people say—whether they praise or criticize you—doesn't affect to you; it doesn't make you unstable, making your life up and down. Meditating in this way, these things do not affect you. There's stability; there's peace and calmness in your heart. Whatever happens around you, however people behave, nothing disturbs you.

### **SHOPPING WITH THE THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH**

This is the same when we are shopping. While we are shopping, we ourselves appear as a real I, and then there is a real shop, a real shopkeeper, real money, real goods. When we go to the food section, there are all those real vegetables, those real tomatoes, and in the cheese section there are thirty, forty, sixty, seventy different types of real cheese, like the old smelly cheese with a lot of fungus on it. I think the old smelly cheese is regarded as very healthy cheese!

I didn't see any worms in the cheese! In Solu Khumbu where I was born, there was often very rotten, very smelly, very old cheese that had worms, and there were often worms or maggots in the meat. When people made soup, they put the maggots in the soup. Some people regarded maggots as protein. I think the Chinese eat the worms as protein. Anyway, I remember that when I was a child in Solu Khumbu, some people had this very old cheese. Anyway, it doesn't matter.

In the food section, there are all these different kinds of meat and fish, and everything is real. So, we should go there to meditate, to practice mindfulness, lamrim. I didn't get to mention at the beginning, but the lamrim is the heart of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha gave us the teachings; he left them in this world for us sentient beings to be liberated, to achieve enlightenment. All three baskets of teachings that comprise the entire Buddhadharma come into the lamrim, the graduated path of the three capable beings. And then, all *that* is condensed into the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. So here, from the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, we are meditating on emptiness, the heart of everything.

Here, when we shop, we look at all these things as *gag cha*, objects to be refuted. We look at all these things which are hallucinations as hallucinations. When we do that, that helps stop strong attachment from arising, as well as helping to stop anger when some problem happens.

When we shop with the lamrim, with renunciation, bodhicitta and right view, it becomes the cause of enlightenment. With bodhicitta, our shopping is only for others; all our activities are only for others. Whatever we do in our daily life, when we do it with bodhicitta, it is only for others. So, all this shopping becomes the cause of enlightenment. I'm using this as an example, but all our activities in daily life done with bodhicitta become the cause of enlightenment.

Everything becomes Buddhadharma with renunciation, right view and bodhicitta. And when it is done with the meditation on emptiness, it becomes the antidote to samsara. In that way, our shopping becomes the antidote to samsara. Walking, sightseeing, it's the same—it becomes the antidote to samsara; it doesn't become the cause of samsara.

When we do a sadhana and we visualize the deity, if we do it with the emptiness meditation and an awareness of dependent arising, how because it arises dependently, it exists in mere name, merely imputed by mind, or if we look at it as a hallucination—although it appears as something real, we look at that which is hallucination as a hallucination—if we do that, it becomes the antidote to samsara; it doesn't become the cause of samsara. Otherwise, there is the danger of it becoming the cause of samsara. Here, even doing our tantric practice becomes the antidote to samara.

Any normal activities we do, like eating food—if, while we are eating food, we meditate on how the I, action of eating and the object, the food, exist in mere name, merely imputed by mind, or if we look at everything that appears to us as something real and see it as a hallucination, how the food, ourselves as the eater and the action of eating all appear real while we understand that all these, which are hallucinations, we look at them as hallucinations, that is the antidote to samsara. What comes in the heart is that these are all empty. Even without thinking they are empty but looking at them as hallucinations—which they are—the result is to feel in our heart that these are empty. So, again, eating food becomes pure Dharma; it becomes the antidote to samsara.

Similarly, while we are working. I'll mention this but keep it short. I mentioned being in a meeting as an example, but also, while we are cleaning, cooking, writing, being a secretary, even if it doesn't happen continuously, we should try to remember from time to time with mindfulness of the *gag cha* or of dependent arising, looking at things as empty. Even if we cannot continuously develop that mindfulness, we should try to remember again and again.

All those times that we work like that, even doing secretarial work, that mind of emptiness becomes the antidote to samsara; it becomes the heart of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha, the heart of lamrim.

It becomes the antidote to the root of samsara. Every time we do it, it leaves more and more imprints until we have a realization of emptiness. It is imaginary at first, then later we have the direct perception, which ceases karma and delusions, ceasing first the gross negative imprints of delusions, then the subtle ones. Then, with bodhicitta we create a lot of merits with six paramitas, the deeds of the bodhisattva, and we are able to cease the subtle negative imprints, thus achieving enlightenment.

This is how to integrate the Dharma in our busy life, the entire lamrim practice and the three principal aspects of the path. Here, I'm particularly talking about emptiness at this point.

Then, we will constantly have peace in our heart. Negative emotional thoughts will not arise, such as fear, attachment, depression, all these. We are always calm, peaceful, with an open heart, not a closed one. We have a very healthy mind, a very open heart; we have space to generate loving kindness and compassion for others. When there are minds like anger or attachment, they block the development of compassion, the pure, unconditional loving thought.

So yeah, what was I saying?

So, the next thing ... the minute we let our mind hold onto this I as true, that this real I exists as it appears, the minute we hold onto that as true, entrusting that, that becomes the root of samsara. We are creating the root of samsara.

You have gone through the twelve links, the twelve dependent related limbs, *ten drel yen lag chu nyi*, so you can see how we are constantly creating the root of samsara, and then, due to that, attachment, anger and all those negative emotional thoughts arise. From ignorance, compounding action leaves a karmic imprint on the mental continuum, which throws the future rebirth on the continuity of the consciousness.

Either at the end of that life, near death, or in another lifetime, *craving* and *grasping* arise. Craving arises, and then strong attachment, *grasping*, arises, which nurtures the karmic seed, just as earth and water nurture seeds that grow into a stem. Craving nurtures this seed, this karmic seed that begins the future rebirth, which is called *becoming*.

Then, in the life after that, there is *consciousness* and then *name and form*. After [the consciousness enters] the fertilized egg—the physical part, the “form”—the mental part is “name,” and then there is *feeling* and so forth, compounding the aggregates, those other mental factors, and then cognition, which are called *name*. Then there are the *six sense bases*, the six sense sources, and then there is *contact* and *feeling*. After that is only *aging and death*. Relating to us, while all the other things are happening, old age has been happening. Every day, every hour, every minute, every second, old age is happening.

This is what we are constantly going through from birth [Rinpoche snaps his fingers], nonstop, even for a second—we are constantly going toward death. Like a person who is going to be executed, being taken by police in a car, we are constantly going to the place to be executed. From birth, we are constantly, nonstop—even for a second—going to death. This is one meaning of the Tibetan term *dro wa* [in the refuge prayer]. Because we are constantly aging, there is impermanence, and now what is left is death.

Now here, in one day, we are constantly creating the root of samsara. Even within one hour, out of ignorance, karmic formation comes and so many started twelve links are initiated. Within one hour there are so many that we must go through, experiencing suffering. So many happen within one hour, so no question within one day.

## **THE REAL SOLUTION TO GLOBAL WARMING IS TRANSFORMING OUR MIND**

In the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, in the section on how to generate compassion for other sentient beings, Lama Tsongkhapa says,

Swept away by the current of the four powerful rivers,  
Tied by the tight bonds of karma, so hard to undo,  
Caught in the iron net of self-grasping,  
Completely enveloped by the total darkness of ignorance,

Endlessly reborn in cyclic existence,  
Ceaselessly tormented by the three sufferings—  
Thinking that all mothers are in such a condition,  
Generate the supreme mind of enlightenment.

Just as the limbs can be chained, trapped, we are bound by karmic chains. There are so many chains, even talking about one day, and then there are all the ones from birth, from beginningless rebirths, all the twelve links that we have started and not yet finished. There are so many.

To generate compassion for other sentient beings, Lama Tsongkhapa says it is like our hands are fastened with so many chains. There is no control, no freedom at all. Then, he says sentient beings are trapped in the iron net of self-grasping, the iron net of the ego, of ignorance, without any light, total gloomy. That is how Lama Tsongkhapa describes samsara in the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, showing us how to develop compassion for others by seeing how much they are suffering.

If we use ourselves as an example, after realizing how we ourselves are suffering, we see how others are suffering. Then, we can develop compassion and loving kindness. Then, we can develop bodhicitta. Then, we are inspired to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. We ourselves need to achieve enlightenment; it is the only way we can do perfect work and liberate all the sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment. We can only do this through the lamrim. Therefore, we need to actualize the lamrim if we want to help others. Only through the lamrim can we do perfect work for sentient beings. We need to develop the subjects of the lamrim even for ourselves, in order to complete our potential, actualizing the graduated paths of the lower, middle and higher capable beings.

Here, I'm not going to go on, *blab, blab, blab, blab*. But *this* is the real meaning of life. To attain the most meaningful life is this way.

All problems come from the mind. Global warming comes from the mind. It comes from ignorance, from the self-cherishing thought. This is what we have to deal with. Without changing this mind, without transforming it, without eliminating it, [we must experience] all these dangers. They all come from the mind: global warming, earthquakes, all the diseases, all the famines, torture—these all come from the self-cherishing thought, this ignorance I described just now, this wrong concept, this mistaken way of thinking, of believing. We make the mistake in believing what the I and the aggregates are; we have this wrong belief, and this mistaken way of thinking becomes the root of all the problems, not only relationship problems but also global warming and all these wars, and all these diseases, new and old diseases, like cancer and AIDS. There are many new diseases happening, both curable and incurable. And there are many famines. Everything comes from that [ignorance].

So, the real solution is there in our heart. We have to find the real solution in our heart, in our mind. The real solution is there in the lamrim, transforming our mind, eliminating karma and delusions.

### **COMING TO THE KOPAN COURSE IS THE BEST DECISION**

Therefore, I would say that your coming here at this time to this Kopan course is the best decision in your life. It's the best decision, whether you made it by good luck or not. I think even scientists refer to having good luck. When I watch TV, they sometimes use the term "good luck," but I don't think they really know what good luck is. They don't refer to it as merit or good karma because they don't see that. The term that people normally use when they have some success is "good luck." They don't say "merit" or "good karma." They don't relate it to positive thoughts and positive actions. The term they use is "good luck." But it means the same; it means good karma. They just don't know the term. They're not sure, they can't describe it. It's like God. They can't describe what good

luck is. I think they think good luck is causeless, but we create good luck. It is not that good luck comes from the outside, from the sky or something.

Unless we transform our mind, we do various nonvirtuous actions with these wrong concepts. Of course, there is ignorance, and this creates the cause for droughts, earthquakes, tsunamis. It is the cause of global warming. This all comes from the mind. The root is there. So, if this [our mind] changes, everything changes. With this one change, which is our own mind, everything changes. The solution is Dharma; we change our mind with Dharma and then everything changes for us.

But if our mind—this one person’s mind—does not change, then the problem, the suffering, does not change, no matter how much we try to solve the problem externally. We might alleviate it temporarily, but even if it’s solved, it’s temporary.

The conclusion is this. You have a choice during this time. You have come here to do a lamrim course. It is not just a meditation course but a lamrim course. In the world, there are all kinds of meditation, such as just watching the breath or just watching your stomach moving! You can concentrate on your shoes or if you have a home, you can spend an hour watching that. Anyway, I’m joking! Maybe during that time it helps you to not get angry or to not develop strong attachment if you meditate on something like toilet paper. Anyway, I’m joking! Spending many hours concentrating on an object helps stop emotional minds like strong attachment from arising. It might help, but not much.

We have achieved *shamatha* numberless times. We have been born in the form realm and the formless realm numberless times. By achieving shamatha, through meditation we have been born in the form and formless realms numberless times, but that alone is not sufficient. That is not a special Buddhist practice. It is also a Hindu one. Hinduism even has fully characterized *zhi nä* and I think even *tummo*.

What is very special is the lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path. That is the heart; that is what makes the difference, allowing us to cut the root of samsara and be free from samsara, to achieve liberation, and through renunciation, bodhicitta and emptiness, to achieve enlightenment. Then, we can become the perfect guide, able to do perfect work for sentient beings, liberating numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bringing them to enlightenment.

I’ll stop here. I’m not going to mumble any more.

Actually, my plan was not this subject. It was to talk about the benefits of reciting TADYATHA OM MUNE MUNE MAHAMUNIYE SVAHA, and to give the *lung* of *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha*, which is the heart of the Buddha’s teachings.

Anyway, it doesn’t matter. Another time. Thank you very much. I think that’s all. Good night. Thank you so much.

## DEDICATIONS

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may the bodhicitta be actualized within my heart and in the hearts of all the sentient beings without delay of even a second.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“Due to the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may the bodhicitta be actualized in the hearts of all the leaders of the world, especially, very urgently, in the hearts of all the religious people as well as all the people who have harmful thoughts to harm others. May bodhicitta be generated in their hearts, instead of harmful thoughts.” That’s very urgent.

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

Then we dedicate all the merits for His Holiness, the only object of refuge for all of us sentient beings, and the source of peace and happiness for all of us sentient beings. Every single opportunity that we have to learn Buddhadharma, to hear, to reflect, to meditate on it, to actualize it, every single understanding that we receive is by the kindness of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Next, particularly for Lama Yeshe, who is the founder of this organization, who actualized this place, Kopan, to do courses like this. So, it’s also by the kindness of Lama Yeshe. Every single understanding of the Buddhadharma we have, every single purification we do, the many eons of negative karma we have purified by meditating on bodhicitta, every time we have made ourselves closer to liberation and enlightenment, and to enlighten all sentient beings, this is by the kindness of first, His Holiness, and then second, by the kindness of Lama Yeshe.

Dedicate for His Holiness to have a long life and for all his holy wishes to succeed immediately. After that, dedicate that the holy wishes that Lama had be actualized, and that Lama Ösel Rinpoche have a stable life and become a dynamic teacher, like Lama Tsongkhapa and His Holiness, in this world, for all sentient beings.

This is a prayer for His Holiness’s wishes to succeed.

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness, may the three lower realms be empty forever, may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all this to happen by myself alone.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, just by me thinking [this], may everybody dedicate in this way. Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may it affect all the sentient beings who are connected to me, just by merely being in this universe, this world, this country, this place, this house. May it affect all the sentient beings living in this universe, this world, this country, this place, this house. May their negative karma immediately be purified, and may they never ever get reborn in the lower realms.

May all their mental and physical problems be completely, immediately, instantly healed. Those who are living in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this house where I am, just by my being there, in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this house, simply by my being here, may all those sentient beings benefit. May it become healing for everybody.

“May I become wish-fulfilling for all the sentient beings in this universe, this world, this country, this area, even the people living in the same house. May I become wish-fulfilling for everybody, just by being there, just by existing in this universe, this world, this place. May everybody’s mental and physical problems be completely healed, and may everybody find faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and in karma. May they actualize bodhicitta in all their hearts and may they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible. May all their wishes be completely fulfilled, instantly, just by me simply being in this universe, this world, this country, this area, this house. May they achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.

“And not only that, just by me simply being in this universe, this world, this place, this house, may war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses and the dangers of fire, water, air, earthquakes, all these things, wherever they are happening, wherever there is danger, may it be stopped immediately. In Burma and Iraq, wherever all these problems are happening, may it be stopped immediately. And may nobody in this world experience all these undesirable things *forever*, not only now but forever.”

And this is my favorite dedication, my favorite hobby. “Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by all other sentient beings, including bodhisattvas and buddhas, which exist but do not exist from their own side, which are totally empty, may the I, who exists but who does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty, and lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who do not exist from their own side, who are totally empty, to that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty, by myself alone, who exists but who does not exist from its own side, who is totally empty.”

When we meditate on emptiness like this, even though the words themselves are correct, if we analyze, there can sometimes be nihilism. Even though the words are correct, when we meditate, not according to the words, sometimes it can be nihilism. For instance, if we look for the table—not thinking of an inherently existent table, not relating to the real table that appears to us and that we hold onto, just the mere table—but in the end we cannot find even that [mere table]. There is nothing to point to that this is a dependent arising and we don’t come to the conclusion that the table exists. Lama Tsongkhapa said in the *Middle-Length Lamrim* that that kind of analysis is nihilism destroying dependent arising. There’s a danger it might become like that.

It’s not that I have the realization, but it seems to be something very deep, where not the slightest thing exists from its own side. This is something very deep, very profound, that things don’t exist from their own side. It’s not that when we meditate we become spaced out. But even if the words are correct, when our mind meditates but we don’t become exactly like that, spaced out, or the examples I mentioned, still it does not become meditating on emptiness.

When we meditate, we have to really examine our mind to see whether we are really meditating on emptiness or not, even though the words we say might be correct. It’s not easy. But we have to become liberated. We have been suffering in samsara from beginningless rebirths. Our suffering has

had no beginning. Even the Buddha's omniscient mind cannot see its beginning. Therefore, to reincarnate in samsara even once more is utterly unbearable. Because we have already suffered in samsara from beginningless rebirths, to reincarnate again is the most horrible thing; it is utterly unbearable. Even being in samsara for one second more is so unbearable.

This is how our understanding, our realization, of renunciation should come. Even to be in samsara for one second more is unbearable—for one day, one hour, one minute, one second. To reincarnate again is the most unbearable thing, like we are going inside a septic tank or like we are jumping into the midst of a blazing fire. It's even more unbearable than that. Jumping into a fire is nothing. The solution to reincarnating again in samsara is the realization of emptiness. Therefore, we have to study, we have to meditate, we have to realize emptiness, no matter how difficult it is.

How difficult is it? If we don't create good karma, if we don't collect extensive merit by practicing compassion and bodhicitta for sentient beings, by benefiting sentient beings, by collecting extensive merits with the Guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha [it is very difficult]. If we do collect extensive merits, if we leave many imprints by reading, listening and studying the teachings and meditating on them, then realizing emptiness can happen very quickly.

But if we don't create much merit, much good luck, if we don't pay much attention to those practices, and we are unable to leave positive imprints by listening to the teachings on emptiness, studying and meditating on them, it is extremely difficult to realize emptiness. Whether it is difficult or not is up to the individual person's causes and conditions.

"I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha as they realize. I dedicate all the merits in the same way that the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits."

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

"Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may the stainless teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa, the unification of sutra and tantra, be actualized within my own heart and in the hearts of my family members and in the hearts of all of us, of all the students and benefactors, of the many people in different parts of the world who sacrifice their lives to this FPMT organization, and do service for sentient beings and for the teachings of the Buddha. May it be actualized in all their hearts. And all those who rely upon me, who I promised to pray for, whose names are given to me, in all their hearts, and in the hearts of everybody in this world, may Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings flourish forever and spread in all the directions."

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

Thank you so much. Sorry, again it took such a long time!

## Lecture 2

December 7, 2007

## **BUDDHISM IS EVEN FOR NON-BUDDHISTS**

Why do we need to do something extra, something more than what we normally have in our life? Why do we need to do that? Actually, I don't need to say why! You have been experiencing this, discovering this during this one-month Kopan course. I don't need to explain why we need to meditate, why we need to practice the Dharma. I think you have experienced, discovered, realized during these weeks why there is the need to practice Dharma, the need to meditate.

By listening to the teachings and meditating on them gives the experience, the inner discovery, that we normally have no opportunity to see, to realize, even to think of. We are not normally aware of this in our daily life. We are now discovering by hearing, by opening our heart; we are learning new things in life. We are no longer imprisoned. Just having one limited way of thinking, we put ourselves in a prison. Now, we do not have a closed mind; we are not caught in one philosophy, one way of thinking, one way of living our life. We are waking up, opening ourselves, opening our heart, seeing things beyond that.

Now, we are starting to be able to break those concepts that give us trouble all the time, that harm us, that cause problems for others. We can break those fixed ideas and think in better ways that bring more happiness and peace, more success in our life and, of course, bring others more peace and happiness—our family and the other sentient beings in this world. Now we are taking the opportunity to open our heart, giving ourselves freedom, liberating and enlightening ourselves. It is unbelievably fortunate.

Normally I think that even practicing meditation, Dharma, is not only for Buddhists. Meditating, practicing Dharma, is even for nonbelievers, for people who have no religion, no particular faith. Even they need to practice Dharma; even they need meditation, not just Buddhists, people with a spiritual faith. Meditation and Dharma practice are extremely needed even by those who are nonbelievers. They might only believe in one life, not believing in reincarnation and karma, but there is still an incredible need for meditation and Dharma practice in their life. Why? Because they want happiness and they don't want suffering. Happiness must come from the mind; it cannot come from outside. If it were the other way round, if they didn't like happiness but wanted suffering, that would be different. That would be totally different! If that is what they wanted, if they did not want happiness, just suffering, that would be totally different. But that is not the case. That is not what they want. Even for nonbelievers, all they want is happiness. They are all looking for happiness, twenty-four hours a day, day and night. They are looking for happiness and they don't want suffering.

This is an example I often use. Say, we want to have a long-lasting relationship, we want to live harmoniously in the family. For that, we need to practice patience, tolerance. Without practicing tolerance how can we have long-lasting, harmonious relationships in the family, between parents and children, between husband and wife. The person we practice patience with cannot be a saint. If we have no anger, there is no opportunity for others to practice patience with us. While somebody is our friend, without any anger toward us, there is no opportunity to practice patience, to learn patience from them. And strangers, those who are neither friend nor enemy, don't have anger toward us, they don't wish to harm us, so we have no opportunity to practice patience with them, we don't learn patience from them.

## THOSE WHO HAVE OMNISCIENCE

By using Buddhist terms, among the numberless beings, there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas. A buddha, or to use a general term, a fully awakened being, is one who has completed all understanding and gained omniscience. There is no ignorance, nothing more left to learn, nothing left that that being does not understand, that they have not discovered. Among the living beings, there is somebody who achieved this, somebody who has completed this quality of mind.

Even in a family, there is somebody who has more education, more understanding than the others. Even in a city, there is somebody who has greater understanding than the majority of other people, who has a higher education than all the other people in the city. Then, there is somebody with the most understanding, with the most knowledge in the country, and in the world, and in the universe. There is somebody who has completed the understanding, who has omniscience.

Similarly, in regards compassion, there is somebody who has more compassion than others in the same town, in the same city. There is somebody who has more compassion than others in the same country, compassion not only for human beings but also for animals and all the different sentient beings. There is somebody whose compassion covers most living beings. And there is somebody who has compassion for *all* suffering living beings, who has nothing more to develop. This is logical.

From this ordinary example, we can understand that there must be somebody who has compassion for all living beings. First of all, a person may have compassion for a friend or maybe some dogs or cats or some animal that they like, maybe some very limited compassion. But that little compassion can be developed more and more, from one sentient being to include all sentient beings.

And having power or capacity is the same. There is somebody who is fully developed in all this, just in a simple way. Without going through each level of the path, how many defilements each level removes, we can see that with more and greater understanding, as well as developing compassion, we also develop the capacity. The deeper or the higher our realization, the greater and greater capacity we have. As we have more [capacity], we develop more compassion, more knowledge. I'm not just talking about intellectual knowledge. Along with that, we have more and more capacity, so that we can go deeper, having greater and deeper benefit for the sentient beings. The higher the path we achieve, the more realizations we have, the more we develop this power, the more we are able to offer extensive and deep benefit to sentient beings. Everything progresses together, like that, up to those bodhisattvas on the eighth, ninth and tenth *bhumi*.

Of the five Mahayana paths to enlightenment, even the qualities of the meditator who enters the path of merit and the preparatory path, even though they are not yet an exalted being—they are still an ordinary meditator but they have actualized those two paths, the path of merit and the preparatory path—even the qualities they have are unbelievable. And this is without talking about an exalted being.

No matter how much education we have, even the highest university degrees, compared to the knowledge, the experience of those beginners who have attained this first path or second path, any other education is nothing compared to this. Even just having the five types of clairvoyance overwhelms all those other types of education.

When the bodhisattva reaches the eighth or ninth bhumi, for us it's like they are an enlightened

being. They have limitless skies of qualities, beyond what we can imagine. It's hard for us to believe; it's beyond our capacity to conceive. This is leaving aside the skies of qualities that the Buddha has, the extensive benefit he can give sentient beings, how the Buddha guides sentient beings—that is just unimaginable. The way he can guide sentient beings from happiness to happiness, up to enlightenment, is so extensive; there are so many, hundreds, billions and billions of ways he does this. It's just amazing. But for us, those bodhisattvas are like enlightened beings.

I don't remember the numbers, but those eighth and ninth stage bodhisattvas can manifest many billions and trillions and zillions of forms. In each of their pores, whole realms manifest, covering the realm, pervading it. And this is before becoming a buddha. It's just unbelievable what they can do for sentient beings. With all those different manifestations, they are able to reveal many different teachings at the same time to different sentient beings, billions, zillions and trillions of them. They are also able to go to many different pure lands and with all those billions, zillions and trillions of manifestations, prostrating and collecting merit, praising the Buddha's qualities by manifesting in numberless pores. They are able to do different meditations at the same time, many billions, zillions and trillions.

There are eleven different sorts of things the bodhisattvas who have reached those stages can do, all of which increase so many billions, zillions and trillions of times. And they are able to manifest also according to the needs of the sentient beings, let's say, as a bridge or a river or all sorts of things. This is even before becoming a buddha. It is unimaginable how they can benefit sentient beings, how they can manifest and benefit them in such extensive ways. It is explained in the last chapter of the Madhyamaka commentary and in so many other texts as well.

#### **WITH SELF-CHERISHING, THERE IS ONE PROBLEM AFTER ANOTHER**

All of us sentient beings have the same buddha nature as those bodhisattvas, those beings who have changed their mind from self-cherishing to bodhicitta, the mind cherishing others. For these two days you have been hearing about bodhicitta. You have reached that subject: the seven-point technique for developing bodhicitta, how to develop compassion and loving kindness and how to develop bodhicitta. The root of bodhicitta is compassion; it is the cause of actualizing bodhicitta. You have heard all those things about how to develop bodhicitta through the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect and the other one, equalizing and exchanging oneself for others.

With bodhicitta, instead of renouncing others, we cherish others. Instead of cherishing the I, we let go of the I, because renouncing ourselves is the door for all the undesirable things—all the sufferings, all the problems, all the obstacles, all the things we do not like. All these undesirable things are received from the self-cherishing thought. And all the desirable things, all the collections of goodness, come from cherishing others.

In our everyday life, when we cherish the I, it is opening the door for all the problems, all the sufferings, all the obstacles, not only obstacles to achieving enlightenment for sentient beings, but even to achieving liberation from samsara for ourselves, and not only that but also achieving even temporary happiness, the happiness of future lives for ourselves. It becomes an obstacle for that. And not only *that*, the self-cherishing thought, the ego, becomes an obstacle to achieving even the happiness of this life.

That's why the great bodhisattva Shantideva says,

[8:131] If I do not actually exchange my happiness  
For the suffering of others,  
I shall not attain the state of buddhahood  
And even in cyclic existence shall have no joy.

If we think of just one example, such as relationship problems, it is very clear that all problems are rooted in the ego, the self-cherishing thought. Just taking one type of problem in life, relationship problems, if we examine the attitude of a person who is experiencing a relationship problem, there is always the thought that the other person doesn't love them or even like them. They may even feel the other person hates them. The root of that is because they cherish themselves. They do not care for the other's happiness, only for their own happiness. That makes life uncontrolled. Any relationship they try to have with others becomes unbelievably confusing. They create enemies; they create so much unhappiness. Somebody who was a friend becomes an enemy. There is unbelievable confusion in their life.

Because they become unhappy with that person, their friend becomes an enemy, making their life seem like hell. They have not been born in hell yet, but it seems like that. This has all been created by their mind, not by God, but by our own personal god, the self-cherishing thought!

This god, the self-cherishing thought, is the one that we always follow, that we always obey. We obey the self-cherishing thought like a guru, offering service all the time, working for it day and night. We make huge plans to offer service to the self-cherishing thought, to feed the ego. Huge projects, huge plans! As life goes on, we make huge projects for the ego! Life is like that, generally speaking. I'm not saying everybody, but generally speaking, people work to feed the ego; they become slaves to the ego, doing everything for the ego.

We haven't been born in hell yet. This precious human body we have taken is for happiness, but by following the self-cherishing thought, by being a student of the self-cherishing thought, a disciple of the self-cherishing thought, a slave of the self-cherishing thought, we totally misuse this life. Our precious human body is so rare. You have gone through the very beginning meditations of the lamrim: the perfect human body, its usefulness and how it is so rare to achieve and once you have achieved it, how it is incredibly meaningful. We have this precious, extremely rare body just about this once, but then we totally misuse it. We use it only to create problems in the life and to suffer constantly, with one problem after another.

Just as one package of relationship problems finishes, another package starts. Another package is opened! That one is gone but another package is opened! A package means that everything we need is inside, like when we buy a package from a shop there are so many items. That's the same with a package of relationship problems. But no matter what package we have, it is the same story. The problems repeat themselves again and again. It goes on and on like that.

If there is no lamrim in our life, if we don't live our life in the lamrim, we miss the very essence, either renunciation, (or another way of putting it, contentment) or compassion and loving kindness. We do not know what bodhicitta is, how it is caring for others, cherishing others. And we miss out on right view as well. Without the lamrim, without these most healthy, positive thoughts, we miss out on the source of peace and happiness, of all the happiness up to enlightenment. [We miss out

on] the peace and happiness of this moment, from here up to enlightenment.

Without this psychological method that the Buddha explained, without this most peaceful, healthy mind that gives all the peace and happiness to us and stops harming both others and ourselves and brings only peace and happiness and then stops harm to ourselves and other numberless sentient beings, without that, we have all these problems.

The lamrim, the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment, is very vast. You have now gone through many of the subjects and you have some idea what happens in life without the lamrim. Using relationship problems, I'm just giving an example, but there are so many other problems in life, not only that.

What happens without the lamrim, without the mind living in the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment? Life becomes crazy. We have no freedom at all; we are totally possessed by spirits, by demons. We are totally overwhelmed, totally overpowered by the delusions, by ignorance, anger, attachment, by the self-cherishing thought. We are totally overpowered by them, controlled by them. There may be other nice English words, but I don't remember. Anyway, we are totally, say, swamped. [Students help with the pronunciation] Swamped? Anyway, whatever you said! Totally swamped by a quagmire of problems, drowned in an ocean of problems, but it's a quagmire, a sea of mud, a quagmire of problems. We totally sink into it. It is so difficult to get out of.

Generally expressed, without the Dharma this is what happens in our life; what happens to us is totally suffering. Without the Dharma, we are a slave; we are totally controlled. We talk about democracy and human rights, but there are so many sorts of rights, so here maybe it's better to take control, to fight for our right [to be free from being] totally controlled all the time by the ego, by the self-cherishing thought, by the three poisonous minds.

The mind is totally dark with ignorance; there is no light of Dharma, to see what is right, what is beneficial for us, what brings us happiness and brings others happiness, and what harms us and others. There is no light of Dharma at all; the mind is totally dark with ignorance, with the ignorance of karma.

We always want happiness but due to ignorance, what we do to obtain happiness is *totally* wrong; it is the opposite of what we should do, because the motivation is ignorance—either anger or attachment—besides the self-cherishing thought. It is not only that we don't know the root, the ignorance that does not know the meaning of selflessness. As I mentioned last night, there is the selflessness of person and the selflessness of phenomena, which refers to the aggregates. We don't know the ultimate nature, emptiness.

And there is ignorance of karma; we are ignorant in what is right and what is wrong, not knowing what is right, that only brings happiness, and what is wrong, that only brings suffering. We are totally ignorant of this. Then, with the desire to always have happiness, what we do is only the wrong action, creating negative karma, which only results in suffering. Looking for happiness, we are only creating the cause of the suffering. You can see here what happens to our life without the Dharma. We continuously create the cause of suffering and therefore what we experience is only suffering, even though we always wish for happiness. So, you can see the difficulties here. There is so much suffering; there is no freedom.

That of course causes anger, attachment and all the other deluded emotions that obscure the mind, that bring so many problems in our life, making us engage in all the ten nonvirtuous actions, harming other sentient beings, not only this life but from life to life. Unless we change our mind, unless we practice Dharma, it is like this in this life, and then from life to life.

Anyway, I should go back to where I came from! And not go on and on.

### **WE CAN ONLY DEVELOP PATIENCE WITH SOMEBODY WHO HARMS US**

What was I saying before to conclude this blah blah blah? What I was saying was that even as a nonbeliever, we need to practice Dharma, we need to practice meditation. We all need to meditate on patience, and the only one person we can practice patience with is somebody who has anger toward us, who harms us. We need to learn patience with that person. They are the only one.

Not everybody gives us the opportunity to develop our inner qualities, especially this very precious quality, patience, which gives us so much peace and happiness and makes us so harmonious within our family and within our relationships. When we don't get angry, we don't harm our companion, and we bring so much peace and happiness to ourselves and in the heart of the other person and the family.

And not only that, by training the mind in patience we have patience with the rest of the living beings. By training the mind in this, we have patience with anyone who gets angry at us, anyone who harms us. We continuously have so much peace and happiness and we are able to offer peace and happiness to the other person. By not retaliating, we bring peace and happiness to the other person.

That causes the other person to not harm us back, over and over. If we harm somebody, they will harm us back, and then we will retaliate and it goes on and on, continuously making the other person get angry at us and harm us and they continuously create negative karma. We cause the other person to continuously create negative karma and to continuously create the cause of the lower realms. By our anger, we are making that person be born in the lower realms, instead of helping lift them to a higher rebirth, liberation or enlightenment.

The conclusion is that with patience we don't harm other living beings and we bring peace and happiness to all other sentient beings. This incredible peace and happiness that we give numberless living beings comes from not getting angry and harming them, and in the place of that, having patience. This incredible thing we can do with our patience [is our gift] to the world, to the numberless living beings, and this patience only comes by the kindness of this person, the one who is angry at us. They give us the opportunity to learn patience, allowing us to develop our incredible inner qualities and give so much peace and happiness to the numberless living beings. It is by their kindness, the one who is angry with us. Therefore, this person is the most precious, the kindest person in our life. They are a wish-granting jewel, a diamond or gold, something very rare.

The fourth verse of the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation* composed by Kadampa Geshe Langri Tangpa Dorje Senge says,

Whenever I see sentient beings who are wicked in nature  
And overwhelmed by negative actions and heavy suffering,

I hold such rare ones dear,  
As if I had found a precious treasure.

When we see a person whose attitude is very wicked, very mean to us, who is very selfish, possessed by negativity, like a heavy sickness, like the contagious sicknesses such as leprosy or whatever, engaging in very heavy negative karma, not doing any positive actions at all, we should think that we have found a jewel. Having that person is like finding a jewel in our life. We should realize that. That person is something extremely difficult to find, something that is very rare, like a diamond or gold. We should regard that person as so precious.

Even though their motivation is so selfish, so mean, even though they are so angry with us and they do negative actions, harming us and causing us many other problems, we have found this person. It's not as if we have gone out searching for a precious jewel, but here we have just found this person. We should know that they are so precious in our life, like a wish-fulfilling jewel, because from them all our wishes for happiness can be fulfilled.

How? By practicing compassion for that sentient being, we are able to achieve bodhicitta and enter in the Mahayana path. Then, we are able to achieve the five paths, the ten bhumis and enlightenment.

On the basis of bodhicitta, instead of following the Paramitayana path, we can enter the Vajrayana, the tantric path, which means we will be able to achieve enlightenment much more quickly. This means that the numberless sentient beings will not have to suffer for such a long time—those numberless sentient beings who have a karmic connection with us, who can only meet the Dharma when they meet us. Only after they meet us can they have the opportunity to practice Dharma. There are numberless sentient beings who have a karmic connection with us. In order for them to not have to suffer for a long time, for many eons, so they can be liberated quickly from the oceans of samsaric suffering and be brought to enlightenment in the quickest time, we need to attain enlightenment ourselves, and that will only come if we generate compassion for this person.

Then, we are able to achieve all the other realizations of the path to enlightenment and we are able to achieve skies of qualities of the Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind. All these unimaginable, infinite qualities where we can do perfect work for sentient beings come from this person who has a very weak mind, who is bad, mean, who creates very heavy negative karma and so many problems by trying to harm us.

Having this person is not only like having found a jewel treasure, it's more than that. Even if we have mountains of gold, diamonds the size of this earth, even if we own all the wish-granting jewels there are—where whatever material possessions, comfort and enjoyments we pray for are actualized—this treasure is much rarer than that. With a wish-granting jewel, although whatever we pray for is immediately actualized, it is by the power of the good karma we created before. It's like somebody who is a billionaire; that is only because that person created all that good karma in the past, practicing generosity and doing so much charity.

Having collected so much merit in the past, we can have such a precious treasure, this wish-granting jewel, which is the rarest among all material possessions, that gives us any material possession or enjoyment we need just by praying for it. So, we have not just one wish-granting jewel but numberless, filling the whole sky. Instead of a wish-granting jewel, we can think of zillions of euros

or trillions of dollars, whatever we think is precious. It could be some old bone from thousands of years ago or some broken antique, something we think of as so precious. We don't have to stay with a wish-granting jewel. We can think of whatever is most precious such as that example, an old broken antique cup or an antique bone or whatever! Or stones or something! Anyway, the idea is a wish-granting jewel, something that is the rarest among all the rare, precious materials.

Whatever we can think of, something that is most rare among the material possessions, like skies of wish-granting jewels, still doesn't compare with how precious and kind this one sentient being is to us. We can generate compassion for this sentient being who is so mean, with such a wicked nature and possessed by so many problems and sicknesses, who engages in very heavy negative karma, harming us. But we cannot generate compassion [for the material things] for example, these skies filled with wish-granting jewels or these zillions of dollars, even if we have mountains of them. They don't suffer; they don't have bad thoughts for us; they don't harm us. They don't have a wicked nature or become angry with us, so there's no opportunity to generate compassion for these material possessions. But we can generate compassion for *this* sentient being.

So, you can see the huge difference, like the sky and the earth, how this sentient being is so much more precious than all these material things, even wish-granting jewels. Their value is nothing compared to this one sentient being who has a wicked nature and who is possessed by many problems, who engages in very heavy negative karma, harming us. From this person, we can generate compassion, loving kindness and bodhicitta, and then as I mentioned before, we can attain all the realizations of the whole path to enlightenment, the skies of qualities of the Buddha's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

Then we are able to do perfect work; we can liberate the numberless suffering living beings in the hell realm from the oceans of those sufferings; we can liberate the numberless hungry ghost who are experiencing the oceans of the sufferings of their realm; we can liberate the numberless animals who are experiencing the oceans of sufferings of the animal realm; we are able to liberate the numberless human beings who are experiencing the oceans of suffering of the human realm; and the same with every sura and asura, bringing them all to enlightenment. We are able to bring every one of the numberless sentient beings in each realm to enlightenment.

Because of this person who has a wicked mind, who is possessed by so many heavy problems and then engages in heavy negative karma, we are able to bring numberless sentient beings to enlightenment. This all comes from the kindness of this person. This person is the root. We think money is so precious, we cherish money because of what we can do with money. We can buy food; we can buy drugs! I'm joking! Anyway, I'm joking about that one. We can buy food; we can buy a house; we can get all the sense enjoyments. With money, that is very clear, so we have this feeling that money is so precious. We want to have gold or silver. We have that strong feeling because we know what we can do with that. We can get all these things that cost so much; therefore we cherish it. In the same way, we cherish and take care of the field we get our crops from, because all our food comes from there.

We don't have this same feeling with this sentient being because we are not aware of how precious they are. As I mentioned before, even the whole sky filled with wish-granting jewels or millions, billions, zillions of euros or dollars—or antiques—that value is nothing compared to the value of this one sentient being.

The value is more than that of a wish-granting jewel that we have found by good luck! As I mentioned yesterday, when there's some success, when people win a soccer match or win a million dollars in the lottery or something—when something like that happened, the term used is “good luck.” Even nonbelievers use the term “good luck,” saying something is lucky or somebody is a lucky person. Even if they don't believe in reincarnation and karma, when something happens, when there is some success, they say it is lucky and the person is a lucky person. Actually, it means good karma, but they don't know what they are talking about. Not knowing, they say, “I have so much good luck, so much fortune.” These terms are used.

Actually, it means good karma. If we have good luck, we will win. Even for a nonbeliever, if we have good luck we will win the lottery and get all those millions of dollars, but if we don't have good luck, if we have bad luck, we won't win. With bad luck, we won't win the race in our racing car or the soccer match or whatever. It's interesting. Nonbelievers use these terms, “good luck” and “bad luck,” but they don't know what they are saying. I think that shows dependent arising.

Anyway, what it says is that we should cherish this wicked person as something extremely rare to find. With our heart, we should cherish them, and then, with our body, speech and mind, we should benefit that being. That's what the fourth verse says.

This has become a side talk, an extra side talk!

#### **WE NEED PATIENCE AND RENUNCIATION**

What I was saying before is that by training our mind in this way, we are able to develop our inner qualities, especially the most precious quality, patience. When we can do that, we won't get angry with all the other sentient beings. Then they won't receive harm from us and will only receive benefit. The numberless sentient beings will receive peace and happiness from us. We are able to offer this incredible thing to the numberless sentient beings, to the world. And this comes through the kindness of this person who is angry with us.

By training our mind with that person, we are able to bring happiness to our family, to our children, our parents, our companion. With patience, with tolerance, we are able to bring peace and happiness, not only to ourselves but also to whoever we are with, having a harmonious, long-lasting relationship with them. This is Dharma psychology. This meditation is Dharma psychology. Since we wish to have happiness, there is no other means than practicing patience. We have to meditate on patience.

We also have to practice renunciation, even if we are a nonbeliever, with no faith in a particular religion. Since we wish happiness, we need to practice renunciation, contentment. We need to practice contentment. If we don't practice contentment, we will continuously follow attachment, desire. There so many people in the world who do this. You always see on TV, in newspapers, how so many millionaires and billionaires get into trouble. They have wealth to last them many lifetimes. They could reincarnate many times and they would still have enough money to do things. They could live for so many years, then die again and be reborn, over so many lifetimes, and they would still have enough money for so many lifetimes. However, without practicing contentment, which is the same as renunciation, they just continuously follow desire, always expecting to get satisfaction but never ever getting satisfaction. Through following desire, they always want more and better—

more and more. That is the main thing.

They even get involved in breaking rules or illegal. Not breaking illegal! I said “breaking illegal,” but it’s not breaking illegal! In the United States, there’s so much talk on TV about illegal drugs coming from Mexico. It’s driving people crazy. Anyway, by following desire, they always look for satisfaction but they can never find satisfaction. Then, they want more and more and more, more power and more wealth, more of everything. Then, they engage in many illegal things, maybe killing other people or cheating other people. Those people create problems. They get sued and end up in jail. After being so wealthy and having all that power, they end up in jail. What put them in jail is attachment, self-cherishing, making the mistake of following attachment. Attachment cheated them and put them in jail. Actually, their ego put them in jail.

If we practice contentment, if we stop always following attachment, we can stop thinking we always want more. We feel we have enough. Practicing contentment means having renunciation. We renounce always following desire and wanting more and more and more, wanting what is better, what is more, whether it is a relationship—a friend or companion—or whether it is wealth, material things, reputation, whatever. We want more and more reputation, more and more power, whatever it is. We can see on TV there are so many famous people, rich people—billionaires and zillionaires—who go to prison. After being so famous, after all this wealth and power, they go to prison for many years.

So, we need to practice contentment. We need to learn how to practice contentment, renunciation. We need that meditation, that Dharma, to stop following desire. That’s the purest Dharma, the real Dharma.

#### **AFTER MEETING IS SEPARATION; AFTER BIRTH IS DEATH**

One method to do this is by reflecting on the nature of life, how after birth there is death, how at the end of collecting material possessions there is finishing, how after meeting there is separating.

The Buddha said,

The end of all that has been hoarded up is to be spent;  
The end of what has been lifted up is to be cast down;  
The end of meeting is separation;  
The end of life is death.

These are the shortcomings of samsara. Now we are meeting here, but I don’t think it will take a long time before we separate. We meet now and then separate. After meeting, it ends up with separation. A family meets and then separates. The consciousness comes from different realms, and somehow, due to past karma, gathers in this house for some months or some years, clinging to somebody, thinking “my this,” “my that,” “my this,” “my that,” but in a very short while, there is the end of this meeting, the separation. For however many months or years we are together, we cling to it, believing we are always going to be together like this. But at the end of the meeting is the separation. That is the shortcoming of samsara. And again the consciousness has to leave the body. The consciousness has to migrate to all sorts of realms. There’s a family here, but after some time the consciousness leaves to a different realm, after having just spent a short time together. That is

the nature of samsara.

After becoming high in samsara, you see, we end up being lower down. It changes. Even within one life, we change from a high position to a low one.

Anyway, without expanding, after birth there's death. That is the nature of life, that death can happen. There are so many people on this earth, even today, who are dying or already dead. So many people on this earth who are the same age as us, even those born on the same day, are dying today or already dead.

Therefore, death can happen to us any day, even today. Death can happen at any moment. If we think that death can happen at any moment, that many people exactly the same age as us are dying today—the minute we think that death can happen today, at this moment, suddenly there's peace in our heart. We find peace. We suddenly find there is no meaning to all this expectation of getting more power, more wealth, more reputation. When we have a business worth a million dollars, we want a billion, and after a billion we want a trillion—this want that goes on nonstop. Suddenly, all this doesn't make sense; it has no meaning, we find no purpose in it. Then, we suddenly find so much peace in our heart. Immediately we think of death [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] it cuts following desire, the negative emotional mind. Only when we think of the death, how death can happen even today, even this moment, we can immediately [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] cut it; we can stop following desire. Immediately, there is unbelievable freedom. We achieve incredible peace in our heart.

It instantly stops us following desire and we have contentment. Right here and now we achieve contentment. The nature of the life is impermanence and death, and death can happen any day, even today, even this moment. This meditation on the nature of our own life, which is true, is the Buddha's psychology. This meditation is the Dharma that protects us from desire, that frees us from all the confusion, all the problems caused by desire. We are protected. The meaning of Dharma is to hold, and here remembering impermanence and death protects us, it holds us, it cuts desire immediately. It protects us not only from desire but also from the cause of desire and from all the problems that spread out more and more from that. We are protected from all of life's problems and confusion, more and more.

The general meaning of existent, phenomenon, in Tibetan is called *chö*, which means holding its own nature. That is the definition of existent, *chö*, in Tibetan. Now here, this *chö* here, Dharma, means that which protects us. When our mind becomes Dharma, it protects us from all this confusion, all these sufferings such as depression, loneliness, suicidal thoughts. When our problems seem so heavy we can no longer handle them, we become suicidal. It protects us from all this and it protects us from killing and causing so much harm to other sentient beings.

You can chant.

[The group chants the tea blessing]

While we are having tea, we are going to recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* for our own success in developing our heart or mind in the path to enlightenment, as well as for world peace, for the peace and happiness in Burma, for all the monks, for everybody, for all the leaders and everybody to have peace and happiness, to have freedom. And for Iraq and all the many different part of the

world where there is so much violence to have peace. And for the success of all the projects in the organization, making offerings to the Sangha who preserve and spread the Dharma for sentient beings, and for the success of all the projects of the FPMT to collect extensive merits and bring sentient beings to enlightenment, including all the Maitreya statue projects and all the social services done in many different parts of the world. For all the centers to be most beneficial for sentient beings and for the success of whatever project they have, such as the social services, having facilities, receiving a perfect teacher and translator in order to spread the Dharma, and for sentient beings to meet the Dharma and to have attainments of the path to liberation and enlightenment. So, for all that.

[Rinpoche leads chanting of *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* in Tibetan]

“Due to these merits, may I achieve the arya liberator, Mother Tara, and lead all the sentient beings to the Arya Mother Tara’s enlightenment by myself alone.”

## LOOKING FOR THE I

This part is just short, but I also want to mention this. Even if we are a nonbeliever, with no religion, with no particular spiritual faith, if we look for the I that we believe in twenty-four hours a day, day and night, we worry about all the time, always concerned that something is going to happen to this I... No, I am not talking about this eye!

When I first went to Mexico, I gave some teachings in a kind of Japanese temple or something like that. I was talking about the I. The organization selected an old man and lady as translators. I think they thought they were familiar with the Dharma because there was a monk who came from a Gelug monastery who lived with them for a year. So, the organization assumed that they were able to translate. So, I was talking about this I, but they were translating it as “this eye.” There was this one girl who had spent a little bit of time in Dharamsala, so she knew what I was talking about. The old man kept translating this I as “this eye.” When I was talking about the other I, the self, he was talking about this eye. After some time, the lady from the audience corrected them, saying they should not talk about this eye but this I!

So anyway, we have so much expectation, so much concern about this I, worried that something is going to happen to this I, that this I won’t get something. There is so much worry and fear about this I’s reputation and power, wealth and happiness. There is so much we expect this I to get.

Even as a nonbeliever, if we look at whether that I is really there [can we find it?] Is it really there, above the belly, down below the neck, somewhere there, somewhere here? When we are happy, we do like this, “I am so happy.” We don’t do this! [Rinpoche points to the head] If the brain is really the center of the mind; I don’t know if the brain is mind, but I heard somewhere that the wave in the brain is mind. Anyway, even if we think everything is here [in the brain], in daily life we don’t express it as being there. When we say, “I am so happy,” we normally do like that. I’m not sure about “I am so unhappy.” I didn’t see the mudra for unhappiness. I saw the mudra for happiness but I don’t remember seeing the mudra for unhappiness. When we think “I’m so glad,” we don’t hold our stomach, “I’m so glad.”

The day I came here, I met a Japanese person who said that when the normal Japanese people are

told something bad, if somebody is calling them names, they ask, “Is he calling me?” If that happens, they point to their toes!

In our daily life, we express ourselves with our hands. Even though our philosophy talks about here, that the mind is here [in the head], that is not what we feel in our normal life, not what is natural. I wouldn’t use the word “instinct.” In the West, when there is no answer, you use the word “instinct.” When you don’t have any more answers, when you can’t explain it anymore, you call it instinct and leave it at that! No more questions! After answering two or three questions, then it’s instinct. Anyway, it’s not like that. I don’t think it’s instinct.

There is a reason why we put our hand here to express the I. Normally, in daily life we put our fingers here when we express the I. We point here [to the heart]. Why? Anger doesn’t come from here, from the brain. Anger arises from here [from the heart.] And when we feel very strong attachment, strong desire, we don’t feel it coming down from here. Attachment does not drip from the brain; attachment arises strongly from here [from the heart.] Pride doesn’t come from here; we feel it here. That’s the normal experience, whether biologists or scientists say it or not—I’m not sure what you call them. Whether they say it or not, even for them strong emotions arise from the heart. The experiences of daily life and philosophy are contradictory.

However, that is just a side talk, just something to be aware of, because in the tantric teachings within Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, in the Vajrayana teachings, there is the central channel. Actually, you may have gone through this, I’m not sure. Did you do the death bit? [*Ven. Kaye*: The death process.] Huh? [*Ven. Kaye*: The death process. The eight stages of death.] Death enterprise? What did you say? Death enterprise? [*Ven. Kaye*: Death enterprise.] I thought you were talking like it was a company, the death enterprise!

By measuring halfway between the two breasts, at the central channel, there is the heart chakra. In meditation when it talks about something happening at the heart, it is not talking about this physical heart, the one beating here. We do not visualize the deities going down there, to that heart, the guru is not going down at that heart! It’s not that they go down [to the physical heart] and then have to change there!

The heart chakra is where there is the indestructible seed, with the upper part white and lower part red. It is indestructible because [it remains] from birth until the complete death, when the subtle mind of death, the [extremely] subtle consciousness, leaves. It is the size of a bean, like a *dal* seed. During the total death, there are the twenty-five absorptions, with the five aggregates or the four elements, and the base-time five wisdoms gradually absorbing. Then, there is the white appearance, the increasing red and the near-attainment dark path. After that, there is the extremely subtle mind, the subtle mind of death. At that time, the meditators who practiced during their life, who protected their morality well, and especially those who practiced tantra, are able to use that subtle mind to meditate.

## **THE DEATH OF GESHE JAMPA GYATSO**

Just recently, there was the death of Geshe Jampa Gyatso, the resident teacher of our largest center in Italy, Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa. Since it was founded, there have been many branches started in different parts of Italy. His Holiness has already gone to Lama Tzong Khapa five times to give

teachings. In recent years, many people attended, three thousand, five thousand, I'm not sure. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, His Holiness Ling Rinpoche, as well as many other great lamas, have gone there and taught over many, many years.

There is a resident teacher, and the institute offers the seven-year Masters Program, studying Buddhist philosophy, including Lama Tsongkhapa's most elaborate lamrim, tantra, both generation and completion stage, and *Abhidharmakosha* and *Abhisamayalamkara*, Maitreya Buddha's teachings. Those extensive subjects were studied as part of the program. And at the end, there is a one-year retreat on what the students have studied, by integrating it in the lamrim. A whole year was difficult for some, so they did nine months. Many of the students found the course unbelievably beneficial. They thought that the meditations on the lamrim they had to do not only after but during the course were extremely important, because it benefited their hearts so much. That first seven-year program has finished now.

When Geshe Jampa Gyatso was here at Kopan, he was a teacher here for many years. Lama wanted to make such a program, so Geshe-la helped. Lama really wanted to accomplish this, so he did it. Now the second seven-year Masters Program is about to start, although it might be eighty years. I think there are eighty people waiting to do it, not eighty years!

Geshe-la had cancer which got better, but then recently he passed away in a hospital. They still haven't got the religious rites to keep the body according to Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, according to tantra, where you are supposed to keep the body until the meditation is over, things like that. In Tibet, they generally keep the body for three days. However, there are many things that can be done to help, whether it's a meditator or an ordinary person, somebody who is unable to meditate at the time of death.

He didn't change his dress for the last two or three weeks, but suddenly, when they offered him new robes, he decided to meditate. He tried to sit in meditation when the new robe was put on, and then suddenly the breath left. It was his choice, according to his wish. When they put the new robes on him, he wanted to meditate, so he tried to push to sit up and then the breath left. I think he was maybe in the meditation state for a week, I don't remember. The director said that the hospital usually burns the body, which I thought was very strange, because I thought normally the families took care of that. I thought that was part of their business. However, I told the director to fight—I don't mean fight but explain the religious rites. I think Italy is not as hard as the United States or other countries. If you explain, I think they are not hard people; they will understand!

She explained that this was a holy being and they needed to keep the holy body and during meditation there are rituals and so forth. So, she asked and was given permission. This was the first time they permitted this. They were able to bring the holy body to the center. Only recently, the day I left San Francisco, his meditation was over, just a few hours before. The next day, there was the cremation. They invited a high lama from Germany to do the burning offering puja, to guide the whole ceremony. But basically they had all the advice on what to do. They built a stupa for the quick return of the incarnation. According to my experience, you should build the lama's stupa quickly, a small stupa with silver or gold or copper already inside, and then build a bigger stupa outside.

They have many stupas there for the different gurus who have passed away. I asked them to build a few stupas for my gurus and other gurus who have passed away, so there is a whole line of stupas there, outside the center. This helps the incarnation come back quickly. Having seen other gurus

pass away, there are many procedures to do it the correct way, according to the texts.

Geshe Jampa Gyatso was a great teacher, very learned, good-hearted, and with very pure morality. He has those three important qualities. In his case, he was able to meditate, which means he had total freedom. There is no question he could go to a pure land. Then, dependent on the level of the mind, some achieve enlightenment, not within the life but maybe after death, in the intermediate stage, like Lama Tsongkhapa, who chose to become enlightened in the intermediate stage. He could have become enlightened within his lifetime, however he especially chose not to do that but to be enlightened in the intermediate stage.

I'm not going to expand on that, with the usual blah, blah, blah! When the period finishes, the subtle mind becomes the cooperative cause of the continuity of the body. Then, the appearances go in reverse. There is the dark near-attainment, then the red appearance and then the white appearance, and the consciousness becomes the intermediate state being's mind, again becoming grosser. Then that becomes the cooperative cause for the body, for the subtle wind, the subtle mind that abides and becomes the main cause of the intermediate state being's body, the gross wind. That becomes the cooperative cause for the mind. Even within the intermediate state being's body, the indestructible seed opens and the consciousness leaves as the intermediate state being comes out of the body.

For those who go to a pure land, the consciousness comes through the crown. If it is a hungry ghost, it comes from the mouth. So, it depends on the rebirth. For somebody who has meditated, there is no question, but for the others, for those who are going to reborn as an animal, the consciousness comes from the sex organ, and if the consciousness leaves from the anus, where the *kaka* is, it will be born as a hell being. So, where the consciousness leaves the intermediate state body is determined by the realm the being will be born into.

Anyway, that is just a side talk.

## **IGNORANCE IS THE KING OF SUPERSTITIONS**

So what I was going to say is that even as a nonbeliever, if we look for the I, we believe it is here. [Rinpoche points to the chest] We always point here. When we see people pointing here, we know they are pointing at the object to refuted, the *gag cha*, the false I, that which is object to be refuted. I already mentioned that yesterday.

If we look for that I, we can't find it. What we believe is here, if we look, we can't find it anywhere, not in the aggregates of form, feeling, cognition, compounding aggregates or consciousness. None of them is this I, this real I that we believe is there; even the whole collection is not this real I that we believe is there. We can't find this real I from the top of our hair down to our toes. If we look, we can't find it anywhere—we can't find it anywhere in the world. That is the proof that it doesn't exist, that it is the false I, not the I that exists. It is not the I that goes to hell or to enlightenment, that experiences samsara and nirvana. It's not that I.

The I that experiences all that, the I that reincarnates, the I that goes to sleep, that is tired now and wants to go to bed, *that* I exists! But not this I. The I that exists is extremely, unbelievably, unbelievably, unbelievably subtle. It exists but it's extremely fine, unbelievably fine. It exists but it's

borderline with not existing. Therefore, many meditators make the mistake and slipped into nihilism or eternalism. The I that exists exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind, *because* there are these aggregates. Because of that, the I exists. But what the I is, is nothing except what is merely imputed.

What I am saying is that even as a nonbeliever, we need to do this research, like a scientist. Scientists do research on how many people have goiters in the world or how many people have long hair or have a long nose! That's just a little bit of an exaggeration, but anyway there are lots of studies done. People spend many years studying one insect. So, it is very worthwhile, even as a nonbeliever, to do research, to do the analysis to check whether the I, the self, is really there. Discovering what it is exactly is such an incredible discovery, an incredible insight. People spend their whole life studying one insect or something, to find all the stories of that insect, but not its past and future lives!

So then suddenly we don't see any reason why we should be angry because there is no such real I there. Why should we be angry? This person harmed *me*, this person doesn't like *me*, doesn't love *me* but this "me" is not there. It is not in this particular location here, this "me," so we can't find any reason to get angry at that person. And it's similar with desire. With all these unbelievable disturbing heavy negative emotional thoughts, suddenly we can't find a reason to have them, like in the example of being angry with that person and having to retaliate—to kill in revenge or to sue or to put them in prison. I mean, this *me* that they have harmed is not there. It becomes a very interesting discovery. It is the most important discovery in our life, the most important realization.

When we have a realization of emptiness, that is the time we find full confidence that we can achieve liberation, because we have realized the root of samsara, the ignorance, the object that we believed in, is not true. We have realized it's totally empty, totally nonexistent. We know we can eliminate that. We have full confidence that by developing this wisdom we can directly cease all karma and delusions and the king of the delusions or the king of the superstitious thought. We see that attachment is superstition, anger is superstition, all these are superstitions because there are no such things existing as we believe them to exist. We apprehend them as such, we believe them as such, but there's no such thing there; it's all superstition.

Ignorance is the king of superstition. We apprehend [a real I] and we believe in it, but there's no such thing there. It's totally false. So, this is the king of superstition. We should not believe this superstitious mind; we should not follow it, because things are totally empty. There is no such thing as what we believe.

This is how we are liberated from all suffering. This is how the Buddha liberates us sentient beings—by revealing the truth, not by washing the negative karma out with water, not by taking it out like thorns from the body. This is the way the Buddha liberates us from suffering. Also not by transplanting his realizations within us, but by revealing the truth. That means teaching on emptiness, showing us what our ignorance believes, that things are not merely labeled by mind, that they exist from their own side, and helping us realize that which is totally nonexistent.

As I mentioned before, this is the way to cease our ignorance, to overcome all the negative karma, all suffering, and become liberated. And that's how we can liberate numberless other sentient beings from the oceans of suffering and its causes.

## THE WAY TO ACT WHEN SEEKING ENLIGHTENMENT

There are just a few things to mention. There are four very important points [in training the mind]. Somebody may have already explained this. If you want to write this down, you can do the practice.

If a person is seeking liberation, the state of the omniscient mind, they need to collect merit and purify the defilements. There are so many different methods. How do [we follow] the methods [to achieve] the omniscient mind? What am I saying! The Omniscient One who is so skillful and so compassionate, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, revealed how to collect extensive merits, unimaginable merits, even in the course of our daily activities. Of course, those who have a realization of bodhicitta, there is no question, but this is for us, we who are undeveloped, the lower intelligent beings. With these activities in our daily life, this is how we can collect extensive merits and purify negative karma by the way.

Here, the Buddha explained these methods in the sutra, *Konchog tseg kyi do*, the *Sutra of the Heap of the Rare Sublime Ones*. I got mixed up with the two names. He said this. In the morning, the minute you wake up, the first thing to think is, “May all sentient beings achieve full enlightenment.” Here, in the text it says the “holy body of the Buddha.”

Then, when you get dressed, think, “May all sentient beings wear the dress of shyness and shame. With shyness, if you kill or steal every day, for example, engaging in these things due to negative karma, it obscures your mind. You can’t attain realizations and you will also get reborn in the lower realms with all the heavy sufferings. Shame refers to others, how you cause others to get angry and create negative karma, and then they suffer. So, the lack of shame becomes an obstacle for them to achieve liberation and enlightenment. So, when you get dressed, think, “May sentient beings wear the dress of shyness and shame.” In that way, their lives become pure and they are able to attain liberation and enlightenment. The benefit is that.

Then, when you put on a belt; I am not saying you need to go out to buy a belt tomorrow so you can do this meditation. I’m not saying that. Anyway, if you are using a belt, as you tie it, think, “May all sentient beings’ minds be bound with three higher trainings: the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom.”

You have to understand the point, that every single activity you do is dedicated for other sentient beings. That’s the psychology here. Whatever you do, everything is for all sentient beings. That is the main thing about this meditation practice during daily life activities. By always keeping the thought to always benefit others with every single activity, which is an unbelievable thought, your life is transformed, from kaka—you know, from poopoo—into gold. You change your attitude from self-cherishing into benefiting others.

Then, when you go to bed, when you go to sleep, think, “May all sentient beings achieve the dharmakaya.” The text mentions, “May all sentient beings achieve the dharmakaya of the Buddha.” It says when you go to sleep you should think that. With that dedication, with that thought, you then fall asleep.

Then, when you get up, think, “May all sentient beings get up from the great oceans of samsaric suffering.” You can also think that each time you get up from the meditation cushion, “I’m going liberate sentient beings, I’m going to enlighten sentient beings.” Each time you get up, thinking like

that is very good. “I’m going to liberate sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering.”

Each time you sit down, think, “I am going to bring sentient beings to enlightenment.” You can think that.

I’m sorry, I said *Konchog tseg kyi do*, but I think I made a mistake. I think the sutra, *The Clouds of the Rare Sublime Ones* is *Konchog trin*.<sup>1</sup>

Each time you open a door, such as when you enter a temple or your meditation room, think, “I am leading all sentient beings to the city of the sorrowless state, to nirvana.” That means the total cessation of all suffering and its cause, karma and delusions, including the seed of delusion. With the total cessation of that, when the mental continuum is separated from all that, that is the ultimate nature of that mind, the sorrowless state.

Then when you open the door to go out, think, “I am leading sentient beings out of the prison of samsara.” Here, the text says you are opening the door of the transcendental wisdom that is beyond the world. I think that means you are opening the door to the realizations, the transcendental wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. You are opening the door for generating this exalted path in the heart of sentient beings.

Then, when you close the door, think, “I am closing the door of the lower realms for sentient beings.” Or you can think you are closing the door of samsara, so sentient beings can be free from the whole of samsara.

While you think you are doing this, it also becomes a prayer and it may happen. For example, when you open the door of a temple or a meditation room or something and you think, “I am leading sentient beings to the city of sorrowless state, to nirvana, to liberation,” you should then think, “May it happen.” First, you think you are doing this, and then you make the prayer, “May this happen”—may all sentient beings be led to the city of liberation. For each one, you think you are doing this, and then you also make prayer at the end. like that.

When you wash yourself in the morning, think, “I am washing the stains of delusions of all sentient beings.” First, you think you are going to wash their stains and then, while you are washing, also try to think as much as you can that you are washing the stains of delusions of sentient beings.

It’s the same thing when you are cleaning your teeth or when you are washing your clothes or washing the pots, for example, when you are cooking or washing the pots, it’s the same. It’s like the meditation you do with the first of the six preparatory practices, cleaning. Before setting up the altar, there’s cleaning the place. It doesn’t depend on whether there’s dust or not; it is part of the practice. It’s cleaning the mind, so as part of practice, it doesn’t depend on whether there is dust. It doesn’t have to be dirty to do the practice of cleaning. There are the six preparatory practices before you do the actual meditation, to collect merit and to purify the defilements and to receive the blessings of

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<sup>1</sup> Rinpoche may be referring to the *Heap of Jewels* (Skt: *Ratnakuta*; Wyl: *dkon mchog brtsegs pa*) and *The Jewel Cloud* (Skt: *Aryaratnameghanaṃamahāyānasūtra*; Wyl: *’phags pa dkon mchog sprin ces bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*). Go to [84000.co](http://84000.co) to find these sutras.

the guru in your heart, and the first of the six preparatory practice is cleaning the place. I think you may have gone through that, when you do cleaning, right? You might have gone through that meditation.

Anyway, it's the same, when you clean your teeth, when you wash the mouth and so forth, imagine you are cleaning all the defilements of all sentient beings. See the toothbrush as bodhicitta, conventional bodhicitta and ultimate bodhicitta, the wisdom realizing emptiness, the whole path to enlightenment of method and wisdom. And what is being cleaned are the defilements of all the sentient beings. And it's the same when you wash a dress or when you wash pots. When you make water bowl offerings and you clean the bowls, think of those pots as the minds of sentient beings, and whatever dirt you are cleaning from the bowls as the defilements. Then, think of the water or the cloth, whatever, as the path of method and wisdom, the whole path to enlightenment. In that way, whatever you do, every action is dedicated for sentient beings.

Or if you are making a fire, think whatever is going to burn is burning the delusions of sentient beings with the transcendental wisdom realizing emptiness. This is the fire that burns the sentient beings' delusions. Even if it's not firewood, just a gas stove, you can meditate in a similar way.

When you light incense, think, "May all sentient beings have pure morality, eliminating all the bad stains of the negative thoughts." All sentient beings eliminate all negativities and have the pure morality of tathagatas. You can also pray like that.

In the same way, when you switch on a light or light a candle, think this is the wisdom realizing emptiness or think it is the dharmakaya, ultimate wisdom, dispelling or eliminating all the darkness of ignorance of sentient beings. You can think it is the dharmakaya, eliminating the five delusions of sentient beings and generating the five wisdoms in the hearts of sentient beings. You can think like that.

Of course, there are other meditations you can do to make offerings, but this is according to the practice the Buddha explained in the sutra of the *Clouds of the Rare Sublime Ones*. There are some that the Buddha explained and some I elaborated from what the Buddha explained. This is a way to practice mindfulness in whatever activity you do, dedicating every activity for sentient beings, thinking of sentient beings.

When you are walking on the road or driving a car, think, "I am leading all sentient beings to the pure land where they wish to be born," either to there or to enlightenment. Remember to think like this at the beginning of the journey and while you are travelling, either walking or going by car. Remember it again and again. Always keep in mind the thought of benefiting others.

As Milarepa said,

Wherever I am going, it becomes a circumambulation.  
Whatever I'm eating, it becomes a *tsog* offering.

Milarepa is saying that everything he does is the Dharma and the cause of enlightenment, and it is the cause of the happiness of all sentient beings. That's what this verse is saying. While he is walking, by seeing it as a circumambulation, it becomes the means of collecting inconceivable merit and doing incredible purification. Each step becomes Dharma and is an unbelievable way of purifying

negative karma and collecting merit. So, while you are walking or driving a car, think that you are circumambulating all the holy objects in the world, imagining them on your right side. This is Milarepa's instruction. Then, walking or driving always becomes Dharma. You are circumambulating for sentient beings, leading the sentient beings in circumambulate. Think like that.

Wherever you are, think that this is a pure land. If you want to be born in Amitabha pure land, think this is Amitabha pure land. If you want to be born in Vajrayogini pure land, think this is Vajrayogini pure land. Wherever you are, think like this again and again. And when you are travelling or walking, always think that you are going to that pure land. That trains the mind and you are making preparations for the day when death comes. Then, you can very easily die without any fear, but with great joy, with great happiness, and go to a pure land.

And in the case of Vajrayogini pure land and Heruka's pure land, you definitely become enlightened there, so that is a quick way to become enlightened. In the case of Amitabha Buddha pure land, you never get reborn in the lower realms. Although many lamas say you don't become enlightened there, according to my root guru, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, you can practice tantra there. There are different views from different lamas.

The main point here is to practice some mindfulness with every action with the thought of benefiting others. It would be good that on one day you practice the mindfulness of renunciation, especially of impermanence and death. And then, the next day, bodhicitta, and then one day on the mindfulness of emptiness, so you cover the three principal aspects of the path. You should not only practice mindfulness in the meditation session but also at break times. So, even though there are not many days left, you can somehow to get the idea. Then, later when you do a retreat or even in daily life, you will know how to practice, in the break time and when you are sitting. That is not break time from the Dharma. There is *no* break time from the Dharma! If you have break time from the Dharma, it is suffering. Without the Dharma, it is suffering. Therefore, there is no break time from the Dharma but break time from sitting meditation.

Even in normal life, without doing a retreat, you can still apply the same methods, one day practicing mindfulness of renunciation, particularly of impermanence and death and things like that, or how samsara is in the nature of suffering. Whatever you see or hear, relate all this to the shortcomings of samsara—all the problems you see on TV or in the newspaper, as well as those you yourself experience. Then on another day, practice the mindfulness of bodhicitta, and then of right view. That is very good.

Sometimes, you can even have a realization in the break time! So many meditators have experiences like that. When you always keep the mind in the Dharma, nothing you do becomes the cause of samsara; it always becomes the antidote to samsara, the cause of liberation, the cause of enlightenment. That means you never waste your life. It becomes highly meaningful.

I think that's it. I'll stop. My blah blah has finished.

## **DEDICATIONS**

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and collected by others, may bodhicitta be actualized within me, within my family members and in the hearts of all the sentient beings without delay even a second. And those in whose hearts bodhicitta is generated, may it be increased.”

Here, we are praying for bodhicitta to be generated by all those in the oceans. When you look from an airplane at the ocean, you see the ocean is vast, but you have remember that in that vast ocean, there is the most unbelievable suffering. There are all these billions of tiny fish. What do you call them? There are billions and billions of them, going around and going round like that. What is their name? [Various suggestions from the group] So many going around. Huh? Anyway, there are so many going around so fast in the huge ocean, it is unbelievable. But then a shark comes and everything gets eaten! I mean, from the airplane it looks kind of very calm, very peaceful, but when you look under the surface, there is such suffering. Sharks eat the small fish. Fish eat each other. One eats another; another eats another, and so on. It’s all like this. That one eats that one; that one eats another one, and so it goes to the tiniest insect. Everything is eaten by some other being. All these beings there in the ocean live in great fear, not only always looking for food but always trying to escape.

We don’t have that fear. It’s unbelievable. You can’t imagine it. We are like in a pure land, we are like in heaven or a pure land. Our life is amazing. What a great life we have. We are unbelievably fortunate not being in constant fear, not having to always try to escape from the enemy wanting to kill us, thinking we can be eaten any time. We don’t have that problem of being eaten at any time. We don’t eat each other! Well, a few might if there is no other food! Anyway, I’m joking.

Anyway, life in the ocean is unbelievable. Penguins, who look like monks wearing coats, are eaten by seals. And then seals get eaten by these things. [*Students*: Killer whales.] Yeah, seals get eaten by whales. What eats whales? [General noise from students]

Before I came here, I saw on TV that a young American singer from Hollywood went to Japan to protest. She was crying so much. There were baby seals being killed or something. She was crying as she came out of the water, and everybody was demonstrating. Demonstrating, no, protesting.

Anyway, when you look from an airplane at the vast ocean, it looks very peaceful, but with all those numberless beings, big and small, everybody eats everybody else and there is constant fear. It is just unimaginable. So now, when we pray to generate bodhicitta, that includes everybody. We are praying to generate bodhicitta for everyone, including all those fish in the ocean—the really tiny ones we can only see through a microscope and the very large ones, even the largest ones. We are praying to generate bodhicitta in everyone’s heart, the numberless shell animals on the beach, on the rocks, on pieces of stone. There are so many shells piled up like sand. There are so many in just one place. So, we are praying to generate bodhicitta in every single one of those being’s hearts, in every single fly, like the tiny flies on cow dung. There are thousands and thousands like this. When we pray to generate bodhicitta, we are praying to generate bodhicitta in everyone’s heart. You have to remember that.

When we go on the road and see birds, dogs, cats, insects, when we pray, when we do a sadhana for sentient beings, a meditation, that includes everybody. All these beings we see on the road, we are doing our practice for them. When we do a sadhana, in Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism the practice always begins with bodhicitta, to benefit all sentient beings without discrimination. So, when we pray like this, it includes all those beings. There are so many animals who are there to be killed tomorrow,

so many animals who are being killed today, who are being killed right now. There are so many human beings who are dying in hospital now or dying at home.

This prayer includes everybody, including our enemy, somebody we hate, somebody who hates us—everybody. All those worms in the ground. When we dig the earth, there are so many worms; when we plant flowers or do things in the garden, this prayer includes everybody, including all those worms, even germs. There are worms in our body, you know, tiny creatures, sentient beings in our body. This prayer includes everybody. We pray to generate bodhicitta in everyone’s heart, and to achieve enlightenment.

With this prayer, *jang chhub sem chhog rin po chbe*, if we think of all sentient beings, that is an unbelievable prayer, so we should not just make the prayer blah, blah, blah. We should think in the heart about all sentient beings and then meditate on the meaning of the prayer by thinking of all sentient beings, not just chanting the prayer. It is incredible, unbelievable! It covers everybody, every suffering being, every nationality, every human being, not only in this world but every human being in all the other numberless universes. We are praying for everybody. This is a really amazing thing to do in life. Even if what we are doing is just praying, that is an amazing thing. It is said in the sutra teachings, whatever prayer we do, the result will happen. There are two more verses, but I don’t remember. Things can happen as we pray for them. We generate a wish more and more, and it creates the power for it to happen.

The next prayer: “May bodhicitta be actualized in the hearts of all the leaders of the world.” That’s so important. “May bodhicitta be actualized and in the hearts of all the leaders who give so many problems to millions of people in their country, and especially may bodhicitta be actualized in the hearts of the leaders of mainland China without delay.” That’s an *extremely* important prayer. And then all the other leaders who give so much harm to their own people, torturing them, like in Burma and many places.

Then the next one: “May bodhicitta be generated in the hearts of all those people who have thoughts to harm the world” That is so important. It is urgent that they generate compassion in their hearts; it’s an emergency. We must pray very strongly for this to happen from the bottom of our heart.

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

Then, the prayer to fulfill His Holiness’s holy wishes.

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

“Due to the three-time merits collected by me and collected by others, may all the father-mother sentient beings have happiness. May the three lower realms be empty forever. May all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all this to happen by myself alone.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may any sentient being who merely sees me, touches me, remembers me, thinks of me, talks about me, hears about me, dreams of me or even sees photos of me, just by that, may it purify all their negative karma, may they never ever be reborn in the lower realms and may it heal all the suffering of body and mind immediately, including sicknesses, spirit harms, everything. May they

receive everything they want. May [their life] become wish-fulfilling. Just by seeing me, touching me, remembering me, thinking of me, praising me, even criticizing, beating me or making fun of me, even just dreaming of me, seeing photos of me or whatever, just by that, may it become wish-fulfilling for them, fulfilling all their wishes for happiness according to the holy Dharma. May they realize emptiness, actualize bodhicitta and achieve enlightenment as quickly as possible.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

Please dedicate all the merits collected by you and by others to actualizing bodhicitta in the hearts of everybody in this world.

“May everybody live their life only benefiting each other, without harm. Whatever they do, may it only become the cause to achieve enlightenment. May this world be filled with perfect peace and happiness. May all the projects in this organization succeed, offering service to others, offering food or money and so forth, offering service to the Sangha who preserve the Dharma, who spread the Dharma and build holy objects in different parts of the world, which is the quickest way to purify sentient beings, to collect extensive merits for them and bring them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Especially, may all the Maitreya statues and all those various social services in different parts of the world be accomplished immediately, by receiving all the funding and whatever they need.

“May all the projects as well as all the centers be most beneficial to all sentient beings. May they become wish-fulfilling for all sentient beings, not only for the happiness of this life and the happiness of future lives, but also for liberation and enlightenment. May they become the cause to generate faith in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and the cause to generate bodhicitta in all their hearts, and particularly to spread Lama Tsongkhapa’s teaching, the unification of sutra and tantra, in the hearts of all sentient beings, bringing them to enlightenment as quickly as possible. Whatever projects the centers have, may they be accomplished immediately, including the monastery and nunnery here—whatever projects there are.”

Now, my hobby dedication.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, which exist but which are a mere imputation of the mind, may the I, who exists but who exists as a mere imputation of the mind, achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which exists in mere imputation, imputed by the mind, lead all the sentient beings, who exist but exist in mere name, merely imputed by mind, to that Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind, by myself alone, who exists but who exists in mere name, merely imputed by the mind.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha as they realized them. I dedicate all the merits in the same way as the three-time buddhas dedicated their merits.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

“May Lama Tsongkhapa’s teaching be actualized in the hearts of all the students and all the benefactors, all those who support the organization and all the projects, and in the hearts of all those

people who sacrifice their life for the organization in so many different parts of the world, doing service for sentient beings, for the teaching of the Buddha.

“May Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings be completely actualized in this very lifetime in the hearts of all those people who rely upon me, whom I promised to pray for, whose names have been given to me, and in the hearts of everybody in this world. In that way, may Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings flourish forever and spread in all directions.”

[Rinpoche and the students chant in Tibetan]

So, good night!

## Lecture 3

December 9, 2007

### DEVELOPING BODHICITTA

Good evening. Maybe just one question. I don't know if there are many geshe here to ask.

*Student:* Can you please explain how we can achieve enlightenment in one lifetime?

*Rinpoche:* In your lifetime? By eating a lot of chocolates! Or maybe buddha grass! I'm joking, anyway. Do you know buddha grass? It doesn't matter; it's not important.

First, the answer is that we need the foundation, the strongest compassion for other sentient beings. Then, because of that, because we feel it is so unbearable that sentient beings are suffering in samsara, with that very strong compassion, we develop strong bodhicitta. That becomes the foundation, like the fuel for a rocket, like fuel for a jet airplane. Without fuel, even if there is a rocket or a jet airplane that can go very fast, it can't move without the fuel. It needs the fuel. Like that, we need very strong compassion and very powerful bodhicitta, the wish to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, taking responsibility to free them from all their suffering and its causes, bringing them to enlightenment. We need that special attitude of taking responsibility.

You have gone through the seven techniques of Mahayana cause and effect, where there is the thought of equilibrium. Equilibrium means cutting attachment. Say, a stranger or somebody helps us and we get attached to them. If we think that person also gave us a lot of harm in the past, in past lives, and that they will give us harm in the future, by thinking like that we can stop attachment.

And when somebody harms us and we are about to get angry, we can think that person also gave us a lot of benefit in the past and that they will also benefit us in the future. That cuts our anger; it equalizes our mind, like that. The definition of this type of equanimity is having cut anger and attachment. When we think of these reasons, how enemy and friend are the same in this respect, we cut attachment and anger.

It is the same with the indifferent mind, where there is neither anger nor attachment. With equanimity, we renounce [partiality], the mind that sees others as either giving harm or helping us. On that basis, we establish the thought of equilibrium for all sentient beings, for friend, enemy and stranger, and we try to stabilize this in our mind.

When we have a stable realization of equanimity, when somebody criticizes or cheats us, we don't get angry. We immediately know that in the past that person benefited us a lot and in the future they will also help us. By thinking of these reasons, because equanimity naturally arises, anger does not arise. Also, in the other way, attachment does not rise. Our mind is stabilized through training.

Then, on that basis, we see how all sentient beings have been our mother. When we have realization of *that*, we naturally want to benefit all others, like when Lama Atisha saw a cow outside tied to a stake with a chain, he felt it was so unbearable. He thought, "Oh, my mother is in trouble; she is

suffering so much.” He couldn’t bear seeing how this cow, his mother, was chained, caught on that stake. He couldn’t stand to see his mother suffering. Lama Atisha called the cow “Jowo,” meaning “lord” or something like that, referring to her as his mother. He felt like that when he saw not only animals but also people.

There are some people who love animals so much but have a bad feeling for people. They love animals—cats and dogs and so forth—but their compassion is very limited. It’s a political mind, liking one side and not liking the other side. This can happen with different countries or different parties. They like the Democrats but hate the Republicans, or they like the Republicans but hate the Democrats.

That’s why before bodhicitta, before meditating on loving kindness and compassion, we need this mind training, this first foundation realizing the thought of equilibrium, otherwise our compassion is only for some; we don’t have compassion for everybody. We might have compassion for animals, but just some animals or just some people. Maybe we have compassion for our friends who love us, who help us, but not for enemies, those we don’t like or who don’t like us, or for strangers. Because we only have compassion for some people—those who help us, who know us, who are kind to us—that compassion is very limited. We cannot really develop our compassion and loving kindness; we cannot expand it to include all the sentient beings. That means we cannot develop bodhicitta.

And we cannot generate the special attitude, *lhag sam*, the thought taking responsibility for each and every single sentient being: each and every single hell being, hungry ghost, animal, human being, sura and asura. There are numberless hell beings and we take responsibility for each and every single one of them, this special attitude, taking responsibility to free them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment. Then, it’s the same thing with the other beings. There are numberless hungry ghosts, so in the same way, we have this special attitude, taking responsibility on ourselves to free them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment. And the same thing with the numberless beings of the animal realm—we have the special attitude, taking the universal responsibility to free them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment. We take that responsibility on ourselves. Then, the same thing with the suras, asuras and intermediate stage beings, so for all sentient beings. There are numberless beings in each realm, and we really take responsibility for each and every single one, really taking the responsibility on ourselves to liberate them from all suffering and bring them to enlightenment by ourselves *alone*. Here, we have that excellent word “alone.”

Here, realizing all sentient beings have been our mother, we see the kindness of the mother sentient beings, and then the thought to repay them arises. The Tibetan word for loving kindness is *yi ong jam pa*. It is sometimes translated as “affectionate loving kindness,” but I don’t think that is correct because you are describing the mind as affectionate, you are not describing the object, you are not expressing the object of the loving kindness. *Yi ong* is not the mind, not the loving kindness itself, it’s the object of our loving kindness. We are expressing how beautiful it is, so I translate it as “the loving kindness of seeing others in beauty.”

For example, a thoughtful, compassionate daughter or son will discover how the mother is so kind. It might seem a little funny, talking about the mother and not the father. Usually not mentioning the father might sound funny, but I think this is because the mother is the one who carried us in her body for nine months, who abandoned all her happiness and comfort, all her freedom, to take care of us for nine months. She is also the one who gave birth to us. She didn’t have an abortion. If she had, we wouldn’t have this precious human body, not only for the happiness [of this life] but

especially giving us the opportunity to practice the Dharma. We wouldn't have this, which gives us this opportunity to practice the Dharma. That's an unbelievable kindness, just by having this human body. But she didn't have an abortion; she protected us for those nine months and then gave birth to us, enduring unbelievable pain. I've seen this on TV many times! There's usually somebody there, like the husband, patting her, trying to speak nicely to her, trying to distract her mind and she is weeping, in so much unbelievable pain. But she bore all that for us.

Even after that, although the father is there also taking care of us—I think it depends on the family—usually the mother is the one who is with the child all the time. Of course, you can hire somebody afterwards when the mother has to work. However, our mother is the one who spends more time with us and takes care of us, day and night. Usually, not all the time, some children are closer to the father than mother, but mostly children feel close to mother. So, I think that is the main reason when we think of somebody as most kind, most precious, we think of the mother. Then remembering all her kindness, we generate the loving kindness seeing others in beauty. We use that as an example and then try to realize how all sentient beings have been our mother and have been so kind.

What I was talking about before was that when we have the realization, realizing how all beings have been our mother, our attitude in daily life changes, like how Lama Atisha felt with everybody, with human beings, with animals, feeling in his heart that everybody was his mother. If there is somebody, like an insect in trouble, we naturally feel strong compassion, feeling how it is so unbearable. We see our mother is having difficulties and immediately feel it is so unbearable. I mean, we are not shocked, but we feel it is unbearable, with the total realization that this is our kind mother who is suffering. In our daily life, we feel that when we see human beings, when we see animals, insects, any being. We feel they are very close in our heart.

What I was trying to say before, the very good human being, the kind, compassionate daughter or son realizes how their mother is so kind, how she gave up her life during those nine months and then for many years afterwards, not only giving birth but also protecting the child from hundreds of danger every day, giving them an education and bearing so many hardships, with no time for even a comfortable sleep.

Many years ago, Lama Ösel Rinpoche, the incarnation of our guru, Lama Yeshe, who is kinder than all the three-time buddhas, went to California for the first time, to Vajrapani meditation center, the first meditation center in the United States. At that time a couple came from Hawaii.

[Noise from microphone] That's to remind us of emptiness! It's a very truly existent sound, existing from its own side, including my cough! That buzz in your ear, maybe breaking your eardrum. My coughing is probably much less now than many years ago.

However, the couple who went to Vajrapani had a son. Wow! I couldn't believe it. They had to watch him, not only every minute but every few seconds. To not watch constantly meant the child could be in danger. He could fall down or eat things that would cause him harm. He could cut himself. This was a very *wild* child! A very wild child. I couldn't believe it. I mean, they had to watch him every second. They could never really talk or relax. They had to watch him every second. I couldn't believe it. I thought, if she has this much patience with this child, she will have patience with all the sentient beings. It was really amazing. I couldn't believe it.

We have been like that. We have been born numberless times to this mother in different lives, always only disturbing her, never giving her peace, twenty-four hours a day, not just for one life but for numberless lifetimes we did that, only disturbing her. We caused her so much worry and fear all the time for so many years.

The first kindness of the mother is that she gave us this precious human body that gives us the opportunity to practice the Dharma, to do whatever we wish. We can practice any Dharma that we wish; we can achieve any happiness we wish for. There are three great meanings, including the question that Peter asked, how to achieve enlightenment in one life.

Anyway, in this life with this perfect human body, we have the opportunity to learn the path, to learn the four noble truths, what is true suffering and what is the true cause of suffering—how there is a cause of those sufferings—to learn that the cause of suffering is not permanent and it can be ceased, and to learn how to achieve that cessation by following the infallible path, the true path that leads to the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. We have met the teachings, the four noble truths that show how to be totally liberated from the oceans of suffering of samsara, the oceans of each realm's sufferings. We have met the teachings that have all the answers, explaining how we can achieve the whole path.

#### **THE CONTINUITY OF THE MIND: THE FIRST PROOF OF REINCARNATION**

We have the opportunity to learn, to reflect and to actualize the path, by meditating on it, achieving the ultimate happiness of liberation, free from every single suffering of samsara. This is something that up to now has never happened to us before. We have had beginningless rebirths because there is the continuity of consciousness.

The body of this second is the continuity of the body of the previous second. The body of this present hour is the continuity of the body of the previous hour. Today's body is the continuity of yesterday's body. And it is similar with consciousness. There is a body and a mind. The mind is formless, without color or shape, but whose nature is clear and functions to perceive an object, whereas the body does not have that quality. The body's nature is not clear and able to perceive an object. The mind is devoid of resistance, devoid of form. Being devoid of substantial phenomena, it is therefore unobstructed by substantial phenomena, therefore its nature is clear. Phenomena can appear to it; it can perceive the phenomena. Like a mirror unobstructed by dust, it has that nature. With its clear nature, it can give a clear reflection of anything that appears to it. Our I, our self, that we possess—there's a body and a mind, two totally different phenomena that have different functions and different characteristics.

So anyway, this second's consciousness is the continuity of the consciousness of the previous second; this minute's consciousness is the continuity of the previous minute's consciousness; this hour's consciousness is the continuity of the previous hour's consciousness; today's consciousness is the continuity of yesterday's consciousness. Similarly, the consciousness when the body has just left the mother's womb is the continuity of the consciousness that was in the mother's womb. And similarly, the body is the continuity of the body that was in the mother's womb before. And similar to that, the consciousness that first joined with the fertilized egg—the first second of consciousness in this life—is the continuity of the consciousness the second before that. So, the mind has its own

separate evolution and the body has its own separate continuity, before the fertilized egg and after the consciousness joined with it.

It is like how a banana has to come from its own kind; it cannot come from corn or a pumpkin or a durian. It cannot come from the continuity of a durian! A banana has to come from its own kind, from a similar type of continuity, and a durian comes from its own similar type of continuity—they are separate. Rice has to come from its own similar type of continuity, from rice; corn has to come from its own similar type of continuity, from corn. And it's the same thing with the body and mind, they come from a similar type of previous continuity. With all these external things, including the body and mind, there is a separate evolution.

All these are causative phenomena; they also have causes and conditions. The body and mind exist due to causes and conditions. Existing by depending on causes and conditions, they are not permanent, which is why they are decaying, changing, not only minute by minute but even second by second, and even within a second they are changing with subtlest impermanence.

Every phenomenon has cooperative causes and a principal cause. The principal cause of the mind has to be the mind. The first consciousness, the consciousness that first took place on the fertilized egg, has to have a principal cause. The consciousness is a causative phenomenon that is always changing, because it has its own principal cause, which is also in the nature of change. Why is the consciousness on the first second of the fertilized egg in the nature of change? Because its cause, which existed before that, is in the nature of change. The [preceding] consciousness is the one just before conception, just before the consciousness joined the fertilized egg.

The body also has its own causes and conditions. The principal cause is physical, so it is a separate principal cause [to the principal cause of the mind.] That which produces that result is totally separate. The other one, the continuity of the consciousness, proves there is reincarnation. The consciousness that joined with the fertilized egg is the continuity of the consciousness that immediately preceded it, the consciousness of the last moment before conception.

Another reason that proves reincarnation is habituation. I don't remember the quotations from the pandits word by word or verse by verse. However, what they are saying is that even mute animals, because of habituation in the past, without needing to be taught how to suck milk, know how to do it themselves. They don't have to go to school to learn how to suck milk. The minute they are born, they immediately go to suck milk. You see many times, as soon as an animal or a child is born, they go to the mother's breast to suck milk. There's no teacher to show them how to suck milk; they naturally do it.

When a baby kangaroo comes out, it looks like a piece of flesh, but moving! Then it goes up like this and goes into the mother's pouch. Nobody teaches it that; it didn't go to school to learn that. The mother kangaroo did not make a school for that. It's natural; the baby knows how to do it. This is due to habituation from the past, from a past imprint. Chandrakirti explained it like that. That also proves that there is reincarnation, that there is the continuation of the consciousness before this life.

Probably in the West people might say it's instinct when it can't be explained why, but in Buddhism it's not instinct; it's habituation from the past, it's past karma ripening. We can see this from all these many examples. We have been born as a kangaroo in the past, numberless times. We can't say we have been a kangaroo a billion times, a zillion times or a trillion times; there's no specific number.

We have all been a kangaroo numberless times and, born as a baby [joey], we went like that, into the mother's pouch.

I don't remember now but there are all kinds of unbelievable things we know how to do. For example, birds making nests is not easy. We can use our hands for so many things but we would still find it incredibly difficult to make a nest like the birds do, all neatly woven and strong, so that even when a strong wind comes it is safe. I wouldn't be able to do that even though I have hands and they just have tiny beaks. Even so, they can do everything. I don't know how they do it; it's unbelievable! They didn't go to school to learn this, like human beings have to go to school to learn how to make things, how to clean, how to cook—we go to school to learn almost everything. We have to be taught how to be a waiter. If we want to be one, we need to go to waiter school! Birds are born in the nest from an egg, but they don't spend long in the nest. When their wings are ready, they fly away to search for food. That's their habituation from the past, from the imprints left from their past karma.

I don't remember where the story came from but in China there was a very, very small girl who was expert in music, singing songs and playing music or something, for four or five years. I'm not sure, she was very small. Sorry, I don't remember the whole story, but it was to do with how she was a very famous singer in her past life. There is a whole story, but sorry, my memory is so bad I don't remember it. It's a very interesting story from China.

#### **STORIES OF REINCARNATED LAMAS: LAMA ÖSEL**

When Lama Ösel, Lama Yeshe's incarnation, came here for his enthronement, he was maybe four, something like that. On the day of the enthronement, we had lunch, not here but upstairs in the old gompa. I was eating a particular Tibetan food called *pak*, which is barley flour mixed with tea and butter and, if you are eating it as a sweet, with sugar and cheese mixed in. For Tibetans, that's high class eating; that's a lavish way of eating. As I was eating it, Lama Ösel, who was sitting next to me on a chair, wanted some so I gave him a little bit. He ate it and then opened his hand again, meaning he wanted more. He liked it very much, whereas when other people try it, after the first mouthful, that's it! They eat the first piece and then they don't want any more.

To me, that clearly proves reincarnation. It shows very clearly that the others were not Tibetan before, but Lama Ösel was. Lama Yeshe quite often ate a lot of *momos*. When we were in the West together and Lama went to give a talk, I made momos. But I was a very bad momo maker; my momos were very dry, with no liquid inside to run out. When you eat, juice is supposed to run out but mine never did that. When other people made them they had a little bit of liquid, although when Lama made them they didn't have liquid, but of course Lama's momos were much more delicious. He made them very quickly; just a few minutes in the kitchen and they were ready—very fast but very tasty.

Once, I went to Australia, to Chenrezig Institute, which is the largest and almost the very first FPMT meditation center. Quite soon after it started, Tara House in Melbourne happened and then many other centers started in different places. There was Geshe Legden, an ex-abbot of Sera Je Monastery, which had quite a few thousand monks—actually, he was abbot at that time, he was teaching. Lama invited him to teach at the Chenrezig Institute when he came to fundraise to build a

new temple. He came to ask Lama for help so then Lama asked him to teach at Chenrezig Institute in Queensland for one year.

At the beginning, the center didn't have a translator for him, so he was there for three or four months without a translator. He didn't speak English and nobody there could speak Tibetan, so he had great difficulty. He missed Sera Monastery in South India so much, he said he almost saw the walls of his Sera house! Anyway, the center found a translator, one boy from McLeod Ganj, Dharamsala, who had dropped out of school and was wandering on the road. They picked him up and took him to Chenrezig Institute, but he could not even translate the word "patience." When he translated Dharma and had to translate *zopa* into English, he was unable to translate even that.

Geshe-la's course was Lama Atisha's *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, the root of all the lamrim teachings, and Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*, his most elaborate lamrim teaching. So, Geshe-la taught the translator, who knew nothing, for four or five hours each day, trying to educate him, so when they went into the class the next day he would be able to translate. Within a few months, the translator got a lot of benefit; he learned so much.

Anyway, why I was saying this is that the translator used to make food for Geshe Legden, the ex-abbot, I mean, the abbot. He made some of the food quickly and after putting it on the table for Geshe-la to eat, he went down to the kitchen to eat with the other people. So anyway, when I went there, I thought to make *momos*. I think momos come from China; they are not a particularly Tibetan food, but still I think there are Chinese momos and Tibetan momos. There's a big difference, huge, like the difference between the sky and the earth!

Anyway, I was in the kitchen making momos with a Western nun, Thubten Yeshe—she is not a nun now, but she was helping me at that time, traveling as an attendant. The abbot was sitting on the other side of the kitchen in what was sort of the sitting room—they were kind of the same room—watching how I was doing. As I was putting a little bit of salt in the meat, he called out from the other side of the room, "Oh, no, no, no, not like that!" He corrected me. He told me you put a little bit of warm water in the glass, then you put the salt and stir it. Then, you sprinkle that on, and you will have the liquid running! So, I learned how to make momos from him, but that still doesn't mean I succeed every time. Once, I made momos for everybody at Nalanda, our Western monastery in France, but they were very dry.

Anyway, that's just side talk, just blah, blah, blah!

But going back to Lama. When Lama gave a talk in the city, lunch was often made by the students, so I would try to make Tibetan food. I mostly made momos because Lama liked momos. So, in his previous life Lama likes momos and now Lama Ösel likes momos. He also likes *thukpa* and other Tibetan food, whereas the other children don't like it at all, even though they were born at the same time.

When Lama Yeshe ate an orange, he would suck the juice and then spit out all the stuff on the plate. This is how Lama used to do it and Lama Ösel does exactly the same! Exactly the same. And those round white things, the nuts, the cashew nuts, huh? [*Students*: Cashew nuts.] Cashew nuts. Lama used to like them very much. He used to have cashew nuts around his bed. Lama Ösel likes cashew nuts very much. It's exactly the same; he likes cashew nuts very much.

In so many ways, he behaves exactly the same as Lama Yeshe. We didn't educate him in this; we didn't say, "Lama Yeshe likes this so you should eat this." Nobody educated him.

I was talking about all those animals but there are also us human beings. I mentioned Lama Ösel. There are so many things like that. He treated different students differently. How Lama would treat certain students in his past life, in this life Lama Ösel treats them in the same way. This has happened many times. When he went to Italy and saw the room Lama Yeshe had slept in, the bed he used, Lama Ösel immediately ran into the room and lay down on the bed, playing sleep like that. It happened in quite a few places, not just one.

Even from just that one example, Tibetan food. Anybody who likes *tsampa* very much was definitely—no question—a Tibetan in the last life. Anybody who hates Tibetan food, who can't even stand *tsampa*, that is different. I have no idea where they came from.

So, tea.

[The group chants the tea offering.]

#### **STORIES OF REINCARNATED LAMAS: RINPOCHE'S MOTHER**

While you're having tea, I'll continue.

The example of Lama Ösel that I mentioned is also the habituation from the past, from the life before this, which was different from his other brothers and sisters. This proves that there is a continuity of consciousness, that this consciousness is the continuity of the previous life's consciousness.

Even relating to my mother, there is very clear proof of reincarnation. After my mother passed away, the child was born quite close to the cave I go to sometimes, that some high lamas talk about as the place where the lama lived who was my past life's incarnation. He was also called Lama Yeshe. It's where I built a monastery this time. It's said that there was the intention to do this in the past, but it didn't get built. Anyway, my mother lived there at Lawudo after she became a nun. She moved there from Thangme, which was her home and where I was born.

My mother's reincarnation was born quite close, in another hermitage called Genukpa, where we get spring water from in the winter. The reincarnation's family took care of that hermitage. I don't know, but I think that at two or three the boy was always talking about Lawudo, about the things that were there. My sister, who is a nun, heard the stories. Anyway, I think maybe the mother was sick or something and my sister went to take them food or something. When she met the child, the incarnation, she offered a scarf and the child kept the scarf on his neck for seven days, even sleeping with it. He liked my sister so much. He put the scarf on his neck for seven days, even night.

Anyway, to make it short, when my brother, who lived near Boudhanath, was invited to Lawudo to meet the incarnation and to make a celebration, the boy behaved exactly like my mother used to. When he went into the gompa, he paid respect to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's throne. It's a carved table and he paid respect to it. Then, there was a small seat where I used to sit during pujas, and he went there to pay respect, and he went to the altar to pay respect. He did exactly like my

mother used to do. Then, he circumambulated outside a few times. I think my mother used to circumambulate seven times or something like that, so he circumambulated the gompa a few times.

There was prayer wheel that was made for my mother. It was near the bed so that she could turn it while reciting OM MANI PADME HUM. The incarnation liked my mother's prayer wheel very much. Each time he went there he grabbed the prayer wheel and offered a *khatag*, a scarf.

It is a tradition to offer a scarf to somebody as a welcome. People would do that to the incarnation and then he would give the scarf back, but there were only two people he didn't give the scarf back to. One was a monk who lived at Lawudo called Tsultrim Norbu and one was his own father. He didn't give the khatag back to those two people but he did to everybody else. I think the reason he didn't give the scarf back to his father was because during my mother's time, when we tried to bring water from the stream at that hermitage, the incarnation's father tried to block the pipe to stop the water, and my mother got very upset about that. When there were a lot of people at Lawudo, wanting to wash, making hot water and things like that, being able to bring water from there through a pipe to this side of mountain made it easy. But he tried to block it, so my mother got very upset. And because of that imprint left from the past life, even though in this life this man was his own father, the incarnation didn't give the scarf back.

I think maybe the other one was because he had disturbed my mother's mind or something, I'm not sure. What I'm saying is that because of this imprint from the past life, when the mind was hurt, in this life there is dislike for that same person.

My mother has a friend in Kathmandu she liked very much called Ang Puwa. When my brother and Ang Puwa went to the incarnation's house to meet the incarnation, even though the incarnation didn't know he was coming, as his mother was serving wine or tea, whatever it was, the little child immediately mentioned his name, saying "Ang Puwa, please have some." The incarnation, the small child, was able to remember his name. Ang Puwa grabbed the child and cried so much; he couldn't bear that the child could remember his name.

When my mother had [finished with a shirt], she took off all the plastic buttons and kept them in a jar as something very precious, like in the old times in Solu Khumbu, where things like needles and spoons were considered very precious. People hung spoons around their necks. You can't find this in [other parts of the country]. In the past, plastic buttons were regarded very precious, and my mother was still carrying on the same kind of thought, so she kept them in a jar. When my sister made a shirt for the incarnation, she used the buttons that my mother had collected in the jar on that new shirt, and when he came to Lawudo and my sister put the shirt on the boy, the incarnation said, "Oh, these are my buttons!"

He was able to recognize all the family members. My mother loved the animals, the *dzo*. I don't know whether it's a yak or not, but a dzo is the female who gives milk. Actually, a yak doesn't give butter, that's wrong. Yak butter doesn't exist! The dzo is the one, the *dri*. It's similar to a yak but female, dri. My mother loved the animals so much, taking care of them, keeping them warm by collecting leaves from high in the forest. (In that area it's either up or down and it is mostly rocky. It's a very difficult life.) She laid them out so the animals could sleep warmly in the house at night. Anyway, she was very, very compassionate and the incarnation was also very compassionate with the animals. He didn't want to hear about some cows who had been alive in my mother's life but who had since died. So, their behavior was similar, a similar way of thinking.

Lamas such as His Holiness Kyabje Trulshik Rinpoche, who is also His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guru, in an observation said this was my mother's incarnation. Besides that, there is so much proof from his own side. There is no debate, no dispute. It was totally proved from his own side.

I thought if he was in the good hands of some lama, it would be incredible. I thought to educate him here at Kopan Monastery, and then later he could go to whatever tradition he wanted to benefit others. However, the parents did not agree with what I thought. They sent him to another monastery. Then, after fifteen days, when he was playing outside, a strong wind or a hailstorm or something came, and when he tried to run inside, he fell on the steps outside and banged his head on the corner of the cement step. He broke his skull. They took him to a small hospital and then later he went to a hospital here in Nepal. No doctors wanted to accept to operate, but then one doctor who my brother's wife knew kindly operated. He saw there were still broken pieces of bones in the skull. Anyway, the incarnation got a little bit better for one or two days and then he passed away. Somebody said that before he wasn't sure whether to reincarnate or not. I think somebody said he was in the Chenrezig pure land, Compassion Buddha's pure land.

I think he had such a clear memory because in his past life [as my mother] he used to recite OM MANI PADME HUM. That was her main practice. The last time she came down here to Kopan from the mountain, she told me that she used to recite fifty thousand OM MANI PADME HUM every day, but now she couldn't do that many anymore. This last time she came here to Kopan, she then went from here to India to attend the Kalachakra initiation from His Holiness in Varanasi. At that time, she passed away. She went to see His Holiness in the afternoon and then later, after midnight or in the early morning, she passed away.

I think this is because she recited OM MANI PADME HUM. Reciting OM MANI PADME HUM has skies of benefits. This clear memory, where you can remember so much, is just one part of it, like an atom or a tiny part of the table. Reciting OM MANI PADME HUM with a very clear mind, you can remember past lives like that.

Here what I was talking about before was how habituation proves reincarnation.

### **STORIES OF REINCARNATED LAMAS: GESHE LAMA KONCHOG**

Pari Rinpoche, who was a very high lama in his past life, a disciple of the great enlightened being, Pabongka, didn't have to learn the alphabet; nobody taught him the thirty syllables of the Tibetan alphabet. When he saw the alphabet, he was able to read it by himself without anybody having to teach him. He just said, "Oh, I can read this." He was able to remember it because in his past life he had been a very high lama and this was the continuation of knowledge from the past, because of the clear mind with less obscurations. There are many stories like that, about the continuity of the understanding from past realizations.

Similarly, Geshe Lama Konchog was a great yogi. When he came here in the early days, I remember we were in the old gompa upstairs, in Lama Yeshe's room, when he told me that he had completed *Guru Puja* and Vajrayogini, these two things. I didn't know what that meant, whether it meant having recited a certain number of recitations or having completed the path, which means you are enlightened. If he had completed the practice of Vajrayogini and *Guru Puja*, that meant he was

enlightened in this one lifetime. To become enlightened in one lifetime means you didn't have tantra realizations from a past life; it started in this life. You could have realizations of bodhicitta, right view and those things from a past life, but you begin the tantric realizations in this life and then you complete the path to enlightenment. What it means is achieving enlightenment within one lifetime. Geshe Lama Konchog repeated this to me twice. I was a little confused which way he meant it, so I didn't bother to ask. But it's clear it means he was already enlightened. There's a story of Nagarjuna, who after becoming enlightened assumed an ordinary form to do activities for sentient beings.

Last year or at the beginning of this one, I was supposed to go to Tsum to consecrate the gompa of the nunnery that had been completed. That was the idea. But then a very kind lady who was the benefactor of the center there and of many, many things in Malaysia, said she had to go there to see with her own eyes all these projects she had helped. So, she rented a Russian helicopter that could take fifteen people, and suddenly it happened that we went to Tsum. It was only then I saw the cave that Geshe Lama Konchog had lived in for six or seven years. It's above the Milarepa cave. There's no particular road, only bush on the hill, so besides my two legs I had to use both hands to crawl up there. It's on the edge of the mountain, quite steep.

Geshe Lama Konchog completely cut himself off from the people. He didn't eat food [but practiced *chu len*], which was taking the essence of things like flowers, stones and water. There are different substances, but what I heard was that [his practice] was with wind. I haven't seen the text. He didn't eat food at all. And he completely cut himself off from people, otherwise they would have become an obstacle to his practice, to meditating on the path. He completely cut the eight worldly dharmas, the eight worldly concerns, the attachment clinging to this life, looking for power, reputation and all these things. He really practiced the purest Dharma in his life. Completely cutting his connection with people, he had no disturbances from people. He lived an austere life, like the Buddha did for six years to achieve enlightenment. Similarly, Geshe Lama Konchog did that.

He wore very ragged clothes. Nobody in that valley has seen anybody like him. Some people thought somebody wearing very ragged clothes and looking so poor was very inauspicious, but Geshe Lama Konchog especially chose detachment, living the most austere life in the Kadampa tradition.

When he was walking on the road, people even took dust from under the bed where a husband and wife slept and threw it over Geshe-la. They thought it was very inauspicious to see such a person. Not only that. One day, some people discovered him while they were looking after their animals or something. They went up there and saw a person with very long hair, meditating. They were terrified and they didn't know what to do, so they threw rocks. Then, the next day or soon after, a group of strong people went to chase him away. Then, he left that cave, and went back to a huge rock way on top of the mountain, to another cave that was also Milarepa's cave, and he lived there. So, for two years he practiced without a house, without any walls, without any shelter. Tenzin Zopa, who was Geshe Lama Konchog's disciple and who took care of him, came from that area. His family had a very strong connection to Geshe Lama Konchog, so Geshe Lama Konchog took care of the whole family, guiding them.

When I was in the Russian airplane [helicopter?], I was facing the wrong way and was unable to see the tree Geshe Lama Konchog had meditated under. Tenzin Zopa was facing me and could see it, but even though he tried to show me and I turned around, I couldn't see it. Geshe Lama Konchog had taken him there and told him the story.

Such a sacrifice in order to practice Dharma! If we had renounced our life, of course, we would have definitely attained the path. Bearing such a sacrifice, bearing hardships like that, dedicating our life, there is no question.

He never told us. Even though he lived there for six years in retreat, living a life of austerity, without eating food—just taking the essence of the wind or something like that—he never mentioned any of that to us, just some stories of how he benefited many people who were crazy, how he was able to help them to heal, things like that.

There was one person, although many other lamas gave them very glorious protection [substances], because they were possessed by spirits, they still became crazy. No lamas were able to help, so in the end they went to Geshe Lama Konchog, who gave that sick person one tiny, blessed thread. Then, they became better. There were some stories like that. And it was generally known that he was a great practitioner with the experience of bodhicitta and some understanding of emptiness but the way he spoke of his life, it seemed he did not have any very high tantric realizations. It was totally unknown. So, I was very surprised, after being in Tsum and seeing this and hearing the story.

And then, with his relics, five different colors happened, which are connected with the five buddha types. A high lama, one of the top Nyingma lamas, Penor Rinpoche, when he was giving a teaching at Boudha to his disciples, mentioned in public that after cremation, when these different colored relics are produced, that is because the meditator had achieved the path of wisdom, meaning the enlightened five wisdom buddhas. I met a high Nyingma lama who told me that there's a text that actually describes that.

And again, his incarnation as a little child did and said many things that [Geshe Lama Konchog] did in his previous life. That shows the habituation that proves that there is reincarnation, that there is the continuity of consciousness.

In Punjab in India, quite a number of years ago, there was a girl who could remember her past life's parents and the town she lived in. She could remember everything. She took her parents of this life to the village. She guided them to the previous life's family. There was a photo taken of her with this life's parents and her past life's parents, all together. She was in the center carrying a little doll. Of course, this life's parents were younger and the past life's parents were older. His Holiness sent somebody with a gift to especially check. I had the photo, which I kept for quite a number of years but then I lost it. I don't know where it's gone, maybe back to India. Somehow, I got that photo.

#### **PAST NEGATIVITIES ARISING EASILY PROVES REINCARNATION**

Without talking too much, there are many stories that demonstrate habituation from past lives, doing things due to past imprints, past habits.

As I was saying, sometimes in the same family, there can be one child with a very compassionate nature who cries when they see insects being killed or another child being beaten. They can't stand it. But although they have a very compassionate nature, the other children in that family are not like that. They are very selfish, very impatient, very angry. Not all the children of that one family have the same compassion. That is due to habituation of the previous life, from having developed the

mind so much in compassion in the previous life. The habituation leaves a positive imprint on the mind. This is continuity of that mind training in compassion.

And this is why generally for us sentient beings, attachment, the self-cherishing thought, anger, attachment and these things arise uncontrollably even though we know the techniques [to overcome them]. First of all, we don't remember the technique when we encounter problems in our daily life. Even though we might know the techniques well, it is not easy to overcome these minds. They arise so powerfully, like a waterfall. On the other hand, it is very difficult to develop positive thoughts like compassion, loving kindness, patience and so forth. We have to put in a lot of effort, but it is still difficult. It still remains superficial; we don't really have the experience.

Why it is so difficult for positive thoughts to arise and so easy for negative thoughts to arise so powerfully, without effort, is because of habituation from past lives. From beginningless rebirths, we have been habituated to minds like anger, attachment, ignorance and there have been very few imprints of positive minds, little training in compassion, wisdom, tolerance, those things. That proves that there is reincarnation, the continuity of consciousness.

#### **REINCARNATION PROVED BY EXPERIENCE**

The fourth one is that reincarnation can be proved by experience. Due to past imprints, past prayers, past practice, in this life, when you are born, people with clairvoyance can remember the past and future. They can see their own and other people's past and future. Some intermediate stage beings have ordinary clairvoyance due to karma.

Before they die, due to karma, the gods hear a voice from the sky saying they are going to die after seven days. This is not through meditation. They can see that they are going to be reborn in the lower realm or as a human being, whatever it is. They have been experiencing pleasure hundreds of thousands, millions of times greater than the most developed human country, and when they see that they are going to be reborn in those places, they have unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable mental suffering. It is said to be greater than a hell being's mental suffering.

One of my gurus, Kyabje Chöden Rinpoche, compared this to the mental suffering rich people can have. Beggars, who live by begging for food on the street and who just have enough to survive day-to-day, don't have that much to worry about. But those with extremely great wealth can have so much depression or so much unhappiness, so much misery. We can see this a lot in the world. We can't see this from the external appearance, but when we meet the person and listen to what they say, after a few minutes, after ten or fifteen minutes, as we listen more and more, we start to hear all the problems, all the disasters, all the worry and fear. Their inner life is one of unbearable mental suffering. This is like the gods, who see when they are about to die that they will be reborn in unbelievable, unbelievable suffering due to karma.

We can develop the five types of clairvoyance through meditation, by achieving shamatha, calm abiding, the concentration that is the unification of shamatha and great insight, wisdom realizing emptiness. From that we are able to derive mental and physical rapturous ecstasy, the extremely refined rapturous ecstasy in the body and the mind. We can derive that by meditating on emptiness. By achieving great insight, we develop the five types of clairvoyance of the arya beings.

As I mentioned last night, of the ten bhumis, the bodhisattva who has achieved the first bhumi can see a hundred past lifetimes and a hundred future lifetimes. With the second bhumi, it becomes a thousand past and future lifetimes, and then the bodhisattva is able to see their own and other's past and future more and more. This is through the experience of meditation. So, reincarnation is also proved by experience. Even if we can't see our past and future lives, others who have omniscience or clairvoyance, who have those insights, can see our past and future lives.

In conclusion, there is not one being with a valid mind—not a perverted one—who has realized that there is only one life. There has never been even one living being who has discovered only one life. There have been numberless beings who with the valid mind have discovered that there is reincarnation and karma.

### **THE KINDNESS OF THE MOTHER**

Anyway, what I was saying, that's just a side talk after talking about the kindness of the mother.

In different realms there are many different types of birth that depend on the mother. Therefore, this life's mother has been our mother in all those different bodies and has given birth to us numberless times. All sentient beings have been our human mother numberless times and then our mother in all those other forms, such as the different animals or hungry ghosts whose birth is from the womb of a mother. Every sentient being has been our mother and has given us those bodies numberless times, especially the perfect human body which gives us all the opportunities to practice Dharma.

And then every sentient being, as our mother, has protected our life from hundreds of dangers each day. They have done that kindness numberless times from beginningless rebirths. They have given us an education and led us on the path of the world; they have done that kindness numberless times from beginningless rebirths.

And each sentient being has borne so many hardships, they have suffered so much for us when they were our mother; they have done that kindness numberless times from beginningless rebirths. And they have created so much negative karma for us. They have borne so many mental and physical hardships, so much worry. They have suffered so much and not only that, they have created so much negative karma for our wellbeing, for our happiness, killing other beings, cheating other beings, harming other beings, creating so much negative karma for our happiness, for our wellbeing. Because of that, they have been born in the lower realms numberless times and there is still so much they will have to suffer due to the negative karma they created for our wellbeing.

### **REPAYING THE KINDNESS**

The conclusion is here that we must do something worthwhile in our life to repay their kindness. We must make our life worthwhile to replay the kindness of this life's mother and the kindness of all sentient beings have been our mother in our countless rebirths. They have done all the kindness that is put together in these four ways numberless times. They have suffered so much for us. It's unimaginable. They have created so much negative karma for us; they have been reborn in the lower realms and suffered numberless times, and there is still so much left to do.

We can't just waste this life without doing something beneficial for them, to repay their kindness. What they want is happiness and what they don't want is suffering. What they need, what they want is happiness, but they are ignorant of the cause of happiness. What they don't want is suffering, but they always create the cause of suffering. They don't know [anything else]. We need to show them, to teach them, to educate them on what is right and what is wrong—the right that brings happiness and the wrong that brings suffering. We need to educate them in Dharma. This is the best. What they need is to be liberated from the oceans of samsaric suffering, not only the liberation from samsara, but to bring them to full enlightenment, the peerless happiness, the state that completes all the qualities of realization and all the qualities of cessation. We need to bring them to that peerless happiness. This is what they need.

Even though they don't know that they can achieve such a thing, that they have buddha nature, this is what they need. I mean, there are many reasons why people don't know this, but this is what they need to know for their happiness. There are many examples. Therefore, we need to educate them, and the most important education is enlightenment. That is the best way to repay their kindness.

It's good to give them medicine, shelter, food; it is good to help them in all these material ways, but that alone does not solve their problems. It doesn't liberate them from the suffering of samsara. Just giving medicine, money, shelter and so forth is good, but that alone is not sufficient. It doesn't liberate them from the true cause of suffering, karma and delusions. How can they be liberated from the suffering? They will have the same problems again and again: famines, earthquakes, tsunamis, wars, global warming, and so forth. As long as they don't change their mind, the world problems will be the same, on and on again and again.

They have never ever experienced that all this comes from the mind, from them changing their minds, by ceasing karma and delusions, by ceasing ignorance, the root of samsara. The cause of delusions, the negative imprints, need to be removed. [This cannot be done] by giving them chemical medicines or by doing operations in the hospitals with scissors and taking out the bad bits. By revealing the truth, the complete teachings to achieve liberation and enlightenment, the Buddha has revealed the complete path, with nothing missing. That needs to be studied. By listening and reflecting and by actualizing in meditation, they especially need to realize the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. That is the only thing that can directly cease ignorance. Even if there is the realization of compassion, of loving kindness, of bodhicitta, no matter what other realization there is, that *cannot* directly cease the delusions and the cause of delusions, the negative imprints. Only the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness can do that.

## **LOVE AND COMPASSION ALONE ARE NOT ENOUGH**

What I want to say is this. Since I came to this point, we can't just be satisfied with some meditation in life, like breathing or something, just spending our whole life on one or two meditations. That's not enough. We need to learn the whole path. If we don't want suffering, we need to learn the whole path to liberation. There are five paths: the path of merit, the path of preparation, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning. With these, we progress until we cease the different levels of defilements, delusions, obscurations. We need to learn the whole thing and then practice correctly and then it can happen. Then we can achieve liberation or enlightenment.

If we want to practice correctly as the Buddha explained, we need to learn the whole thing. To think we want to learn meditation and just spend our whole life repeating one or two meditation techniques will not lead us anywhere. We will never get free from samsara; we will never remove the whole of karma and delusion, the negative imprints.

Therefore, always talking about love and compassion, love and compassion, love and compassion, love and compassion—that's not sufficient! Even with love and compassion, there's a whole stage to develop. As you heard today or yesterday, we especially need to develop renunciation. Renunciation of samsara is the foundation, seeing how the whole samsara is only in the nature of suffering, how it is unbearable. We need to realize that. And stronger than that, we need to have strong compassion for others, seeing how they are suffering.

Anyway, what I'm saying is that love and compassion is good. To have a good heart, helping this and that, is good. I think it's very important but it's not sufficient in life if we don't want to suffer, if we don't like dying. Put it this way, if we don't like to die, that's not sufficient. It is so important to have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, to achieve enlightenment. Then of course, with that we need to develop great loving kindness and compassion.

The bodhisattva needs to engage in the practice of the six perfections, creating so much merit. And then there is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that is able to cease the subtle defilements. When we achieve the third Mahayana path as a bodhisattva, the right-seeing path, at that time we don't have suffering. This is a long time before enlightenment, but the bodhisattvas who have achieved the right-seeing path, who have the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, have abandoned rebirth, old age, sicknesses, death. They have a spiritual body, not this suffering body. There's no suffering. This is not only because of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, but also because of bodhicitta, which creates so much merit. Because of the support of all that merit, those arya beings, those bodhisattvas, are able to achieve this spiritual body which has no suffering.

Therefore, just love and compassion is not enough; we need wisdom. If we never brought up the ultimate wisdom realizing emptiness, the real weapon is missing. The real weapon that cuts all the delusions, the liberates us from suffering is totally missed out. Love and compassion can help but cannot directly cease the delusions and the cause of the delusions, the imprints.

## **GREAT LOVING KINDNESS AND GREAT COMPASSION**

[In the seven-point cause and effect technique for developing bodhicitta] after repaying the kindness, the next one is loving kindness, *yi ong jam pa*, sometimes translated as “affectionate loving kindness,” but that's not the correct translation, because “affection” means we are describing the thought of loving kindness itself, affection for others, whereas here *yi ong* refers to the object. I started and then I got carried away. What it's saying here is a kind, generous daughter or son sees the mother or the father in beauty. That has nothing to do with the body, how the nose is beautiful or how the hair is beautiful—it has nothing to do with that. It's seeing how they are so kind to us, so precious to us, then we see their beauty. That beauty has nothing to do with the particular shape of the body. It is similar to how the mother sees her beloved child, her daughter or son. Even if they are physically deformed or physically ugly, the mother sees her beloved child in beauty. The good human being, the kind, generous son or daughter sees the parents in beauty, as warm. By seeing their kindness, we see a kind of beauty.

So here, *yi ong jam pa* means loving kindness in beauty. I want to add one more word, “beauty” or “dear one” to loving kindness, Then, it completes the translation. If we add “dear one” or “beauty” then the meaning of *yi ong jam pa* is complete.

Kadampa Geshe Potowa explained that loving kindness is like a mother, whose heart totally goes out to her child and how the mother sees the child in beauty, seeing them as beautiful. That is the feeling we should generate for all sentient beings, the feeling the mother has for her beloved child who she sees as beautiful, who she loves so much, thinking they are so precious. This has nothing to do with their physical shape. That is the feeling of loving kindness [seeing sentient beings in] beauty that we should generate for all sentient beings.

That’s the outline of what *yi ong jam pa* means. So, I want to add that one extra word, “loving kindness in beauty,” or “dear one.” It is the beauty of the object, the dear one. We feel that that person is the dear one, is something so precious, just as the mother feels for her child. It is something that mother feels is so precious, something most dear she doesn’t want to lose. I’m not sure. Anyway, it might be like that.

Then, after that there’s compassion. In this way, by meditating on the kindness of the mother, both loving kindness in beauty, the dear one, and compassion come. We don’t need a separate meditation. That one is the cause, the process, to have that realization. There’s no separate meditation for that. As you meditate on the kindness, they both come as a result.

There are great loving kindness and great compassion. It is said that they do not necessarily come in that order with great loving kindness first or with great compassion first. Either can come first. Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche mentioned that.

With great loving kindness and great compassion, “great” is because we take responsibility on ourselves to bring [all sentient beings] to happiness, to liberate them, to bring them to enlightenment. We resolve to do that by ourselves. We take the responsibility on ourselves, which is why it is called “great.”

It is said that the difference between the thought of repaying the kindness and great compassion and great loving kindness is that first we make the preparation, such as preparing to go shopping, for example, which is the thought of repaying the kindness, and great loving kindness and great compassion are like actually going shopping! It’s like that. First, we think like that and then we actually engage.

## **SPECIAL ATTITUDE**

The next one is special attitude or *lbag sam*. I want to add one more word to make it clear. The translation of *lbag sam* is special attitude, but to express it more clearly, it means taking universal responsibility, taking responsibility for every sentient being, where nobody is left out. There are numberless beings and the special attitude taking universal responsibility, *lbag sam*, is to free them suffering and to bring them to liberation and enlightenment.

After the special attitude comes bodhicitta. For that to succeed, we need the thought to achieve enlightenment to arise, with the thought of seeking to work for others, which means seeking enlightenment. We seek to work for others and then we have the thought seeking enlightenment, which is a similar and special mind, a special principal consciousness that is bodhicitta. But I think in the actual philosophical subject there are more details.

What I was saying is that with the special attitude taking universal responsibility, there is the thought that “I’m going to do it by myself *alone*.” Before that we had the thought we were going to do it, but now we have the thought we will do it *alone*. Even though there are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas working for sentient beings, we are going to do it by ourselves alone. Then, bodhicitta arises.

Sorry, I went to many places! What Peter mentioned yesterday when I started, the strength of the great compassion we generate gives us the possibility to achieve enlightenment in one life. I want to explain that. That was the root this started from.

The proof of this is the story of Maitreya Buddha and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha. Maitreya generated bodhicitta much earlier and Shakyamuni much later, but Guru Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened much earlier than Maitreya Buddha. Why? Because Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s compassion was much stronger than Maitreya Buddha’s. Even though they were the same, both bodhisattvas, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s compassion was much stronger than Maitreya Buddha’s compassion.

In the story, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha gave his holy body to the tiger family here at Namobuddha, on that side of this mountain. A tiger family of five was dying of starvation. Both the bodhisattva brothers, Maitreya and Shakyamuni—at one time they were in the same family—saw them dying of starvation. They both started to return home but the bodhisattva who would become the Buddha went back alone and gave his whole body to the family of five tigers. The bodhisattva who would become Maitreya Buddha didn’t do that. So, there’s a difference like that. Because of having such courage, such a brave heart, such compassion, he collected extensive merits in such a short time, the cause of the dharmakaya and rupakaya, and so much purification was done—so many defilements were purified—due to the strong compassion. So, even though Shakyamuni Buddha generated bodhicitta much later, he become enlightened much earlier.

Also, when the great Indian yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa was going to Oddi, where he was going to do his last tantric practice before achieving enlightenment, at a riverside he saw a woman. Her body was totally filled with leprosy, with pus and blood coming out and looking very ugly. She asked the great yogi Ngagpa Chöpawa to take her to the other side of river but he didn’t help her. He went straight to the place to do his last tantric practice.

Later, his disciple Getsul Tsembulwa came and she asked the same thing, for him to take her across the river. When Getsul Tsembulwa saw this woman, he felt unbearable compassion. Even though he was a monk and couldn’t touch women, and even though her leprosy was so bad, he felt unbearable compassion and he immediately picked the woman up and carried her on his back, without any hesitation [or concern] of catching the leprosy. Before they got across, when he reached the middle of the river, he saw the lady was the enlightened being, Dorje Phagmo. Because his mind had not been purified before, he had seen her as very ordinary, full of leprosy, very filthy and smelly. But because of his unbelievable compassion arising, because he totally sacrificed his life to take her on

his back, even just there in the middle of the river, without crossing to the other side, all that negative karma that obscured him from seeing she was an enlightened being was purified. So, just middle of the middle river, he saw the deity Dorje Phagmo, the enlightened being.

Then, this enlightened being, Dorje Phagmo, took him in his present body, without the need to die, to the pure land, where he would definitely become enlightened. If his guru Ngagpa Chöpawa had done that, then he would have gone to a pure land earlier and become enlightened, but that didn't happen because he had not generated compassion and helped her. That's also another example of how compassion makes us achieve enlightenment more quickly. Strong compassion for sentient beings is the most important thing for the quickest enlightenment.

### **WE NEED HIGHEST YOGA TANTRA TO BECOME ENLIGHTENED QUICKLY**

The other way [to achieve enlightenment quickly] is to practice tantra and guru devotion. To achieve enlightenment within one lifetime has two meanings. If we practice lower tantra, we first achieve immortality, living for a thousand years, and then we achieve enlightenment. It is still within one lifetime, but I think Peter is probably talking about something even quicker than that. To achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerated times means within a very short life, like within our life as it is now, within a hundred years or seventy years. I don't remember how many years [an average lifespan is]. To do that, to achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerated times, we need to practice Highest Yoga Tantra.

I want to mention the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra, Maha-anuttara Yoga Tantra. We don't practice Highest Yoga Tantra for our own happiness. If that is what we want, we can relax. We just have to hang around and do nothing! It's not like that. The main reason we practice Highest Yoga Tantra is because we feel it is so unbearable that sentient beings are suffering. To see them suffering for even an hour or a minute is like they are suffering for eons. We feel so unbearable. From our side, we can be born and suffer in hell for eons. How many eons? Equaling the number of drops of the oceans or the sand grains of the earth. From our side, we can be born there and suffer for sentient beings. To achieve the path, to achieve enlightenment, we can do that. But when we think about sentient beings' suffering, we can't stand to see them suffer for a long time in samsara.

From our side we can suffer, even if that means being born in the hell realm and suffering for so many eons in order to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings. But from the side of sentient beings, we can't stand knowing they have to suffer in samsara for so many eons. Therefore, we need to achieve enlightenment quickly. Therefore, we need to practice tantra, and not only that, we need to achieve enlightenment in a brief lifetime of degenerated times. We can do this if we practice Highest Yoga Tantra. Without receiving an initiation of the deity we are not a receptacle to practice tantra, to listen to tantra and to meditate on it; we are not allowed.

In Highest Yoga Tantra, there are two stages: the generation stage, which ripens the mind, and the completion stage with five stages, which liberates the mind from the dualistic views and the gross and subtle defilements. There is the base, path and result. The base time is the ordinary death, intermediate state and rebirth, which are the base time three kayas. Then, with the path, there is the path time dharmakaya, the path time sambhogakaya and the path time nirmanakaya. We need to actualize that. Then, by receiving the initiations—the vase initiation, the secret initiation, the wisdom initiation and the word initiation, we are allowed to actualize this path. With that, we are permitted

to receive the teachings and to meditate on and actualize the path and we do achieve the actual result time dharmakaya, sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.

In tantra, we need very strong, very special guru devotion to achieve all these realizations. That is always emphasized by His Holiness in the teachings. Besides what the Buddha said in the teachings, His Holiness always emphasizes that we need to receive the blessings of the guru to do all this.

The dharmakaya we achieve is not a gross mind. The gross mind doesn't go to enlightenment. The lower tantras do not have the method to cease the gross mind. Only Highest Yoga Tantra has the method to cease the gross mind. What goes to enlightenment is only the subtle mind. So, that is the reason we need to practice tantra. It is the fastest escape, like a rocket; it is the supreme escape to remove the dualistic view and to cease the gross and subtle defilements, to achieve enlightenment.

For that we need two things: strong compassion and strong guru devotion, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. They are the root, and that root is incredibly important. If we have this, we can achieve shamatha, calm abiding, *zhi nä*, even in twenty days. If we have strong guru devotion, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, without create much negative karma with the guru, without breaking their advice or disturbed their holy mind, if that is done well, even within twenty days we can achieve shamatha.

It has recently happened that some meditators have achieved shamatha with perfect meditations, free from the attachment-scattering thought, *gopa*, and, sinking thought, *jingwa*. Some meditators—those who have excellent guru devotion, without mistakes—have achieved fully characterized calm abiding, *zhi nä*, in recent times. To have success in realizations, so much depends on how much we pay attention to that. That is the foundation. If the mind becomes like a yo-yo, always up and down, not much will happen. There will be many obstacles to attaining the path and even to ordinary success.

There are four continents: east, west, north and south. Where we are is the southern continent and this southern continent is the one that gives us the opportunity to achieve enlightenment in one life. No other human beings have this opportunity. This is the only one that gives us the opportunity to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime. Now, with this life, we are born in this time on this continent, so we have this opportunity, therefore we need to continue to learn Dharma and practice the whole path to enlightenment correctly.

I think maybe I'll stop here, otherwise we might not survive to the next day. Tomorrow, maybe we will not have survived and there will be many bodies that have to be taken out!

## DEDICATIONS

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

Please dedicate the merits.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merit collected by others, may bodhicitta be actualized in my heart and in the hearts of my family, in the hearts of all the students and all the benefactors, in the hearts of all the many people in the different parts of the world who

sacrifice their life for the organization, doing service for sentient beings, for the teachings of Buddha. May bodhicitta be actualized in all the hearts of all those who rely upon me, those I promised to pray for, those whose name have been given to me. In those who have generated bodhicitta, may it be increased.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“May bodhicitta be especially generated in the hearts of all the leaders of the world, so that millions of people in each country will have so much perfect peace and happiness and be led on the correct path to peace.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

Then this is very urgent. “May bodhicitta be generated in all the hearts of all the people—the believers and nonbelievers, who have thoughts to harm the world. May bodhicitta to be taken place instead of harmful thoughts.” That prayer is the most urgent.

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

Then, please dedicate the merits. “Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and by others, may the only one object of refuge, the Compassion Buddha, Chenrezig, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who is the source of peace and happiness for all of us sentient beings, have a stable life and may all his holy wishes succeed immediately.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

The next prayer, fulfilling all the holy wishes of His Holiness, spontaneously came out when the head of the Nyingma, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, was requested to give some prayer to recite every day for His Holiness, to fulfill his wishes. When he was about to leave His Holiness, this prayer spontaneously came out. I have a card with His Holiness’s picture and these different prayers for the success of the Tibetan cause that His Holiness wrote, asking for Chenrezig to help this happen. This was made in New York but it didn’t really happen here, just a few prayers and motivation, with His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s explanation of motivation when we wake up in the morning what to think, to give ourselves courage. That’s a very nice package for daily advice. Maybe, before the course ends, I can ask for it to be sent. This prayer is there.

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may all the father and mother sentient beings have happiness.” That doesn’t mean temporary happiness, the pleasure that normal people think of as happiness, not that. It means liberation from samsara and enlightenment. You should think that. When you pray for happiness, you should not only think of the happiness that normal people in the world see as happiness, not only temporary samsaric pleasure, which is only suffering. You shouldn’t think that. You must think of real happiness: liberation from samsara and enlightenment. Even when you do the four immeasurable thoughts, which says “May all beings have happiness,” you shouldn’t think this is just ordinary happiness; you must remember liberation and especially enlightenment for sentient beings.

“May the three lower realms be empty forever. May all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all this to happen by myself *alone*.”

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others...” Today, there is a different dedication, a very important one. As I mentioned about the guru devotion practice, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend, I didn’t clarify before how, by looking at the guru as a buddha from the disciple’s side, having that pure mind, you become very stable, not just for a few hours or a few days. Then, you receive the blessings and achieve all the realizations.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may I and all sentient beings be able to find only the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru in all our lifetimes; and from my side and the side of each sentient being, may we be able to see the guru as only an enlightened being in all our lifetimes. From our side, may we only do actions most pleasing to the holy mind of the virtuous friend in all the lifetimes. May I and all sentient beings be able to fulfill the holy wishes of the virtuous friend in all the lifetimes.”

This prayer is extremely important to do every day. If this happens, everything happens without obstacles, including enlightenment, doing perfect work for sentient beings, everything.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may all the projects in this organization that have already been initiated, and the ones that haven’t been initiated, be actualized as quickly as possible by receiving everything needed for that. And may they be most beneficial for all sentient beings.”

To make it short, I elaborated a little bit on the other days. There’s also the prison project helping so many; I think the project is helping may be less than two hundred prisoners. There are prisoners who have done three hundred thousand prostrations or mantras, Vajrasattva, and many other practices have been done in prison. It’s such an incredible benefit. It kind of means that being in prison is like a long retreat. Then, it is no longer prison; it is a retreat, a retreat of many years! That is of unbelievable benefit, taking the eight Mahayana precepts and retreating on the lamrim, so unbelievable. There’s one prisoner who did many mantras and many practices. He didn’t have a mala, so he used breakfast cereal, you know the tiny round cereal bits with the holes. He took them out and used them as a mala. I don’t know where he got the fine thread from, but he made a mala. He didn’t have a mala so he made one like that. There is unbelievable benefit for those people who are in prison. So fantastic! Yum, yum!

There is also universal education, called Essential Wisdom.<sup>2</sup> There are already a few schools that give a special education to bring up children to be good human beings, so everyone can become a source of peace and happiness for the world. Instead of being harmful, they only become beneficial, kind human beings, only giving peace and happiness. They grow up with many basic human values. The organization is making books on that. There are already a lot of good results with young children in India and America. They do not harm others; they do not kill insects and so forth. There are many things.

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<sup>2</sup> Now known as the Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom, this is a global charity offering secular training, resources and programs across many sectors of society.

When the children go back home, they teach the parents what they study. They explain it to the parents, so the parents also refrain from killing insects because the children don't want to kill insects. (Maybe they kill them when the children are not there but at least not in front of them.) Anyway, there are a lot of benefits for the parents. It has become an education for the parents through their children, changing their minds, making them better human beings. It has been of great benefit already, and it is still developing. This is another way, because everybody cannot become Buddhist, cannot become Christian, even cannot become Muslim or Hindu, so there should be some way to become a better human being through education.

Then there is publishing Dharma books and spreading them in every corner of the world to awaken the mind, to liberate people from ignorance, to bring them to liberation and enlightenment. Printing Dharma books is going all over the world. There are many services like that, helping the sentient beings of the world. By reading the Dharma books, even if they don't practice, it leaves a positive imprint in their hearts. Then later, either in this life or in future lives, they can meet the Dharma again and they will be able to understand and practice, and be able to achieve enlightenment.

Another project is Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth, helping the young. That too is progressing. All these are most beneficial for all sentient beings. That includes all the centers.

Now, my hobby. "Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by myself, the three-time merits collected by others, which appeared to our hallucinated mind as something real, as existing from its own side, but which in the view of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, is totally empty, totally nonexistent in the view of wisdom, the directly perceiving emptiness, in equipoise meditation."

Think like that. First how things appear to you and that you believe in that, which is totally wrong, which in the view of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, equipoise meditation, sees all these as totally nonexistent, as empty. Try to see what that wisdom sees, how everything is totally empty. This is the beginning meditation on the verse, *kar ma rab rib mar me dang*, "A star, a defective view, a butter lamp flame..." That is the Buddha's teaching, how causative phenomena are like a star. To your hallucinated mind, everything is false. All these real ones existing from their own side are mental fabrications, projections of ignorance.

The three-time merits collected by you, the three-time merit collected by others, in the view of the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, in equipoise meditation, see all these as totally nonexistent. In the view of wisdom, meditate on that, on you, yourself, the meditator, the action of meditating, the meditation, on everything.

Now, "May the I, who appears as the real one and is believed like that, that is the projection of ignorance, but in the view of wisdom is total nonexistent—there's no such thing—achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment..." Again, here how it appears to you and is believed as something real existing from its own side, that is a total hallucination, a projection of ignorance. In the view of wisdom directly perceiving emptiness, the equipoise meditation, that is total empty, nonexistent. "Lead all sentient beings..." Again here, to your mind it seems something real in the sense of existing from its own side, which is the projection of ignorance, but this is total nonexistent, completely nonexistent, empty in the view of wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. "To the Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment..." Again the same thing, how it appear to us and we believe the total projection of the ignorance, the hallucination, as something real, but it is

totally nonexistent, totally empty in the view of the valid mind, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. “By myself alone.” Again it seems something real is existing from its own side, which is a total projection, a hallucination, projected by ignorance. In reality it is totally nonexistent, totally empty in the view of wisdom directly perceiving emptiness.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha, as they realize. I dedicate all the merits in the same way that the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits.

“May the general teaching of the Buddha, and particularly Lama Tsongkhapa’s teachings, spread in all directions. May they flourish in this world forever by being completely actualized in my heart, in the hearts of my family, in the hearts of all the students and all the benefactors, and in the hearts of all those who sacrifice their life to this organization, doing service for other sentient beings and for the teachings of Buddha through the organization, and in the hearts of everybody in this world.

[Rinpoche and the students recite in Tibetan]

So, I hope it’s not already a good morning! Thank you very much.

## Lecture 4

December 10, 2007

### BUDDHA NATURE

[Rinpoche chants *Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha* in Tibetan]

Do not commit any unwholesome actions.  
Engage in perfect, wholesome actions.  
Subdue one's own mind.  
This is the teaching of the Buddha.

This stanza shows the four noble truths, the very fundamental teaching of the Buddha. What it's saying is that the root of all the karma and delusions and of all the sufferings of samsara is the ignorance not knowing the meaning of selflessness, the very nature of the ultimate reality of the I and the ultimate reality of the aggregates, the meaning of the selflessness of the person and the meaning of the selflessness of the aggregates. It is the mind unknowing of that.

As I mentioned at other times, the mind perceives that the aggregates exist by seeing the function they do. Then, that mind merely imputes the "I," simply makes up the label "I," the "self," and believes in that. The mind makes up the label. The mind we can't see, which is formless but which exists, which because its nature is clear does the function of perceiving objects, that mind, which is also empty.

What is the mind? It is nothing except what is imputed by the thought because there is the base, this phenomenon whose nature is clear and which perceives an object. Because it is formless and exists and because it has this function, it is the valid base. So, the thought merely imputes "mind." Therefore, because of this valid base, which is formless and whose nature is clear and whose function is to perceive an object, the label "mind" exists, which is merely imputed by thought. It is just a mere imputation.

Therefore, mind does not exist from its own side. Therefore, mind is empty of the real mind, the mind the way it appears to us—the way our hallucinated mind apprehends it and we believe it to exist. It is empty of that. The mind is empty of that hallucination, it's empty of the way it appears to us, to our hallucinated mind, and the way our hallucinated mind believes it to exist. We believe a hundred percent there's a real mind existing from its own side, but it is totally empty. The mind is totally empty of that real mind, that truly existing mind, what we normally believe all the time.

That is the ultimate nature of the mind, what is called clear light. The nature of the mind is clear light, in Tibetan it's *ösel*. The meaning of "clear light" is the emptiness of the mind. The term *clear light* refers to this, to the emptiness of the mind. That is the potential to become a buddha. In some other traditions it's called the "dharmakaya" itself, the buddha. The way of labeling it in some traditions is "buddha" or "dharmakaya." In the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, as explained by the Buddha or Nagarjuna, this is the *potential* to become a buddha. Sometimes you may see in the teachings it's called "buddha," but it means the potential to become a buddha. It's either labeled as

the result time, labeled as the result of what we are going to achieve, or it's labeled as the present, indicating the potential. So, the teachings might seem contradictory like that but that is the reason. However, it's the potential to become a buddha.

The clear light means that there is the potential to become a buddha. That means everybody can achieve enlightenment. In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* Shantideva said,

[7:18] If they develop the strength of their exertion,  
Even those who are flies, mosquitoes, bees and insects  
Will win the unsurpassable Awakening  
Which is so hard to find.

Even cockroaches, mice, crocodiles, bugs, spiders, lice! No matter how tiny they are, those we can see only through a microscope, even they have buddha nature; even they can achieve enlightenment. That doesn't mean they can do it at that time or with that body. It's not saying that, but generally speaking, because of that they can achieve enlightenment.

## **BELIEVING THE LABEL**

This ignorance is the king of delusions, the greatest superstitious thought. We think that [inherently existing mind] is true, that that is the valid mind. We cannot differentiate between what is false and what is the truth of the I, of the self. In our life we do not know these two things, we can't differentiate what is false and what is the truth of the I and of every phenomenon. I don't need to repeat it again, talking about it over and over again.

There is the truth of the I and there is falsity of the I. The I that is merely imputed by mind and that is empty of the real I in the sense of being something real existing from its own side, being empty of *that*, that is the truth. The false I is how it appears to us right after we ascertain this mere imputation. Because of the base, the aggregates, the association of body and mind or the collection of the five aggregates of form, feeling, discrimination, compounding aggregates, which is often translated as "volition." I'm not sure what it's talking about. From the fifty-one mental factors, if we take out feeling and cognition, then the rest are called "compounding aggregates" because they compound the result, so I'm not sure what "volition" means, although I have seen it many times translated in that way. Then after that, there's consciousness.

With the aggregate of cognition, by seeing the base of the table we recognize the table. We discriminate or recognize this is a table. By seeing the base of the mug, that thing that does the function of holding liquid to be drunk, to put tea or liquid in to be used for drinking then—by seeing that base, the mind imputes, discriminates "mug." We recognize the mug. The aggregate of cognition. How do others translate it? [*Student*: Compositional factors.] No, no, not that one, the one before, which I called the aggregate of cognition? [*Student*: Discrimination or recognition.] What is the difference between cognition and recognition? [Inaudible responses] Cognition is the first time or recognition, uh? [Inaudible response] I think cognition is the brain and recognition on the nose! It's a function of the nose. I'm joking, anyway.

*Student*: Recognition is like remembering, Rinpoche.

*Rinpoche:* Ah lay. Remembering? Recognition. And cognition?

*Student:* Cognition is like the mental process.

*Rinpoche:* Ah lay.

Because I think when you learn language you are learning labels. When you are learning any language, you are learning labels. Whatever you are learning, you are learning labels! You are introduced to somebody by description. They say so-and-so is like this: he has this kind of beard and eyebrows like this, or he has a bald head. Anyway, this person is described and then they say his name is Wang Wang or something! Anyway, I'm just joking! He's called Peter or called Mr. Wong or something like that. We are taught about that person in that way. Then, by seeing the base, we put the label on that person. It is the label we have been taught, so maybe that is the recognition, because we have already been taught, then, when we remember that, we put the label that has been introduced by somebody. Of course, that doesn't necessarily cover everything. Many times we create our own names too. Anyway, by seeing the base, our mind gives it the label "this" and "that."

So, the collection of these five aggregates is the valid base for the mind that sees this to merely impute the I, the self, as I mentioned before. Then right after that, the hallucination of true existence is decorated on that by the past ignorance that leaves a negative imprint on the mental continuum, making the I [appear] real. So, then we have the I appearing as something real. Due to ignorance, the I that is merely imputed is made real to us, as truly existent.

*That* is the false I. After the mere imputation, this real I appears to the hallucinated mind and we believe it. We are not aware that this is due to ignorance, that this is a false view projected by the ignorance, by the hallucinated mind. We have not discovered this; we have not realized this. And we are not aware that our mind just imputed the I on the aggregates a second before.

We then let our mind hold on to that as a hundred percent true. This idea that it is true is fixed, harder than the Rocky Mountains, harder than Mount Everest! We have had this fixed idea, this fixed wrong concept, from beginningless time, from beginningless rebirths. It's not just from this morning, not just from birth, not just from the time in our mother's womb, but from beginningless rebirths. We were born with this concept; we had this concept when our consciousness entered our mother's womb and joined with the fertilized egg. When we were born, we already had this real I there. That means there was the continuity of that concept just the second before the consciousness took place on the fertilized egg. The continuity of that ego, the continuity of that ignorance comes from before.

### **THE CAUSE OF THE FIRST MOMENT IN THE WOMB PROVES REINCARNATION**

That's also one reason that shows there is past life, reincarnation. Otherwise, there would be no cause for the ignorance, then the ignorance would be truly existent, arising without cause. If it was independent, there would be no way to eliminate it. If there was no cause before that, if it just happened—which means it is independent—that means we couldn't eliminate ignorance. Without being subject to other causes and conditions, we couldn't change it; we couldn't eliminate it. There would be nothing we could do. That would mean that attachment, anger and all these things would

be independent. All the delusions would be independent. They couldn't be changed by cause and conditions. But that's not true.

Even without meditation, we can see that with the object of the attachment, we sometimes have attachment, maybe at the beginning, but after some time we no longer have attachment for it. Even without meditation, it changes. Some new thing comes and then we have attachment for that and we are no longer attached to the old one—we can throw it away. In the West, people put things on the roadside, maybe not old cars, but TVs or furniture. People put a lot of furniture outside in the road, then somebody who is unable to buy new ones, which are very expensive, can take them away.

We can see that even without meditation we are sometimes angry but that changes. Even without meditation, with one object, we are not always attached, not always angry; it changes. That shows that it changes due to other causes and conditions arising.

Anyway, just to expand. When the consciousness takes place on the fertilized egg, in the teachings it is described that usually there is the feeling of suffering like being drowned in hot water. This is what many beings experience, although not everybody, not the holy beings, those who have achieved a high level of the path. But generally for ordinary beings, when the consciousness takes place on the fertilized egg, there's a suffering feeling, like being in hot water. However, in the mother's womb, even in that first moment, whether it is pleasure or suffering, whatever we experience, if that hadn't had a cause that existed before, it could not have existed. Cause and result together is not possible, by nature it's not possible.

Cause and result do not exist together. Relating to one specific cause and its result, they don't exist together. Therefore, whatever experience we have in the first moment of our mother's womb, either happiness or suffering, without a cause, that would be permanent. Whatever we experienced at the beginning, if it was suffering, that suffering would exist all the time, permanent. If that first thing was independent, that would mean that we couldn't change it. Whatever we experienced at the very beginning, if it was suffering, it would be suffering all the time, and if it was happiness, it would be happiness all the time, without ever changing. Here, I'm talking about temporary pleasure. We can cease that and achieve ultimate happiness. If it was permanent, we wouldn't be able to do that. It would be independent, without a cause. All these mistakes would arise.

All this is not true; that is not our experience. They can be changed by other causes and conditions arising. Those sufferings can be ceased because they are causative phenomena. The happiness or suffering we experienced at the very first moment of being in our mother's womb is a causative phenomenon, which means that it depends on causes and conditions. That means the cause of that happiness or suffering must have existed *before*, before the consciousness took place on the fertilized egg. That means there is a continuity of consciousness before, which proves that there are past lives.

#### **IF THE I IS ONE WITH THE AGGREGATES MANY MISTAKES ARISE**

I forgot where I was going, where I was traveling to. I forgot. I lost my journey!

Anyway, I was talking about how it's so important to realize what is false and truth in our life. I was using that as an example of what is the truth of the I, what is the falseness of the I. The I is merely

imputed on the aggregates, then, on that base, ignorance projects this, decorates this truly existent I, this real I in the sense of existing from its own side.

If that were true, if the I that appears as existing from its own side, that real I, if that I existed as it appears, as something not labeled, something not merely imputed by the mind, as existing from its own side, the real one—if that were true, there would be no need for the mind to label the I all the time. Because it existed before our mind labeled it, it doesn't depend on the mind merely imputing it. If it existed from its own side, which means not merely labeled by the mind, if it didn't depend on the mind labeling it, there would be no need to label it. That wouldn't make any sense.

From that, many mistakes arise. After the mind imputes the I, again on that I we would have to impute the I again, and on that I *again* we have to impute the I, and it becomes endless. That's one mistake that would arise.

Also, there is the mistake of the possessor and possession. The I is the possessor, the aggregates are the possession. But if the I were truly existent, the I—the possessor—and the aggregates—the possession—would be one. That mistake would arise. We couldn't differentiate. There would be no difference between possessor and possession. The I is the possessor, the owner, and the aggregates are what is owned. They become one. But that's not the experience.

And also in the Madhyamaka text, it's mentioned that the I is the receiver and the aggregates are what are received. So, similarly, the I, the receiver, and the aggregates, what are received, become one. All these mistakes would arise.

The other thing is that if anything exists it would have to exist either with the aggregates or exist separately from them. Anything that exists should be either oneness with the aggregates or it should exist separately. This is one of the common meditations explained in the lamrim, the meditation on emptiness called the four-point analysis, where we analyze whether this object to be refuted—the real I in the sense of not merely labeled by mind, of existing from its own side—is true or not, whether it is the object of ignorance. We first recognize that, and then we do analysis on whether this real I exists as oneness with the aggregates or as separate from them, as not merely labeled by the mind.

If the real I existed as oneness with the aggregates, because there are five aggregates, there would have to be five Is, five selves. Not only that, the aggregate of form would consist of five limbs: head and legs and arms and the main body. Anyway, there would be five or six for the form aggregate. And the form aggregate has many atoms, so there would have to be as many Is equaling the number of atoms. There would be that many Is, that many selves, if the I was oneness with the aggregates. Even just looking at the form aggregate, how many atoms it has, there would be that number of Is. Each atom would be an I. When we went to the hairdressers, they would have to cut all those Is. So many thousands of Is, so many thousands of selves, would be cut off. When we have our hair cut, we would be cutting the I. The hairdresser would be killing all those Is, all those living beings. They would be creating so much negative karma when they cut our hair! Anyway, all these problems would arise.

When we had to buy an air ticket, how many would we have to buy if the I were the same as the aggregates? I'm sure besides the size of the body this one ticket would need to be for billions and billions and zillions of people, if every atom was an I, a self. When we bought an air ticket, which is

for one person, would we need zillions of tickets for these billions of people? This many mistakes would arise.

When we get married, we would need billions and zillions of wives, or billions and zillions of husbands, because all these Is would be getting married if every atom were an I, a self, a person. And our child would have billions and zillions of fathers, billions and zillions of mothers, and then billions and zillions of brothers and sisters. Many mistakes would arise.

If the I is only one and the I is oneness with the aggregates then all the aggregates would have to be one. That mistake would arise. Because there is only one self, one I, not many, if it were oneness with the aggregates, all the aggregates would be one and the same. Then, there wouldn't all these parts of the body and all these numbers of atoms. There wouldn't be that; it would just be one. Also there wouldn't be the continuity of the consciousness because there couldn't be many parts of consciousness; it couldn't continue from life to life, from year to year, month to month, or for days, hour, minutes, seconds. So, it's the same. If all the aggregates are the same as the I and the I is one, all these mistakes arise. Because the I is one, all these would have to be one.

#### **IF THE I IS SEPARATE FROM THE AGGREGATES MANY MISTAKES ARISE**

The next thing is if the I exists separately from the aggregates. Normally I say we then wouldn't need an air ticket, because we wouldn't have a body. Because the I exists separately from the aggregates, that means the I doesn't depend on having a body, and since we don't need a body, we don't need a seat on an airplane, so we don't need an air ticket. We can just go! Our consciousness just enters the airplane and we don't need a ticket because we don't need a seat, because we don't have a body.

Because we don't have a body, only a mind, we don't have to get married and there's no way to make children. We can't make children because we have no body. I'm not saying we are nobody. I'm saying that we don't have a body, so how can we make children? We can't make children!

In that case, we don't have happiness and we don't have suffering, these two, because normally suffering and happiness are related to the aggregates: physical comfort, mental happiness, physical discomfort and suffering, mental suffering, like depression, unhappiness. It's through the mind, you see, but because the I exists separately the aggregates, we don't have a mind. Because we don't possess a mind, we don't have all the mental problems, all the suffering, but also we don't have liberation and enlightenment and all the other happiness. Our I, our self, doesn't depend on the mind and it doesn't depend on the body. It exists separately from the mind and body, without depending on the aggregates. If there were no mind, there would be no karma; the I wouldn't create karma. All these mistakes would arise.

Then the I would be a permanent independent, uncausative phenomenon, without depending on causes and condition, without depending on the mind merely imputing it. That mistake would arise.

#### **THE I DEPENDS ON THE AGGREGATES**

All these are *totally* wrong. When the mind is happy, say when we have met a friend we wanted to meet or something, whatever the reason that makes us happy. Sometimes we just feel happy; there's

no particular reason but we just feel happy. When the mind is feeling happy, we think, “Oh, today I’m happy.” Because the mind is happy, our mind makes the label, “I’m happy.” We relate the label “I” to the mind. We relate it to the aggregates and among the aggregates to the mind, and among the different experiences of the mind to the feeling of happiness in the mind. The mind feels happy, so we label “*I am happy.*”

And then the next day or in the evening, when the mind is depressed, we think, “I am unhappy.” Again, we relate the sense of I to the aggregates, particularly to the mind, then label “I” and then “unhappy.” That’s the reality of how the I exists, by depending on the aggregates. The I existing and the functions of the I—what the I experiences—depends on the aggregates.

When the body does an action, such as the action of sitting, the mind labels the I as “sitting.” If somebody asks us “What you are doing?” we naturally reply, “I am sitting.” Our mind sees our body sitting, the aggregates sitting, and we label it “I.” Because the body does the function of sitting, the mind labels that as the function of the I “sitting,” which is merely imputed on the bodily action, but then we believe it is the real I that is sitting. Then, when the body stands up, the mind merely imputes the I because of the aggregates, particularly the body doing the action of standing, and then we label the action of the I “standing,” and we believe that. And when the body is walking, the mind sees the aggregates and particularly the body doing the action of walking, and merely imputes the I on the action of walking.

It’s like that twenty-four hours a day. Our mind makes up the I. It is constantly imputing the I but relating to the aggregates. The action of the I, the experience of the I is always related to the aggregates, to what the body and mind do. The body does the action of talking and the mind, seeing the aggregates performing that particular function of speaking, labels “I am talking.” And we believe in that. Twenty-four hours a day it’s like that. From birth until death it’s like that. The mind merely imputes the I, the I, the I, because of the aggregates, and then, depending on what function it does, what experiences it has, the mind then labels it an experience of the I, a merely imputed I and merely imputed experience of the I or merely imputed action of the I.

It has been like that from beginningless rebirths. From beginningless rebirths up to enlightenment, it’s all like that, because there’s always the continuity of the aggregates. Even in the formless realm where there is no body, only consciousness, it’s still the same. There are still the aggregates of the consciousness. The I is labeled on that aggregate of the consciousness, even though there’s no body at that time. There’s always the continuity of the consciousness. Even after we achieve enlightenment, there will always be the continuity of the aggregates. There’s always continuity of the subtle wind and mind.

Therefore, the label “I” always exists. The label I is always imputed because of the aggregates, the continuity of the aggregates. There’s always the label imputed by the mind; it’s always there: the I merely imputed by the mind, the action merely imputed by the mind and the experience merely imputed by the mind.

Now here is the conclusion. From beginningless rebirths up to enlightenment and even after that, all this exists in mere name. All those Is from beginningless rebirth up to enlightenment and even after that are all empty. All are empty. While all these are empty, they exist in mere name. All the actions of the I, all the experiences of I, from beginningless rebirths up to enlightenment and even after

that, all are merely imputed by mind, therefore all the actions and all the experiences of the I are empty of existing from their own side. And while they are empty, they exist in mere name.

Pabongka Dechen Nyimpö, the great enlightened being, said,

Even though there are activities, they are nonexistent; they are empty. How wonderful it is.

Even though there are activities happening, they don't exist, meaning they are empty. That means that there are activities but there are no real activities existing from their own side. "It doesn't exist" means it doesn't exist in that extra way projected by ignorance, the way that ignorance has decorated on to what does exist. After the mere imputation of the activity, ignorance then projects this real one, decorates it on to that. "It doesn't exist" means that extra [inherently existent] thing doesn't exist. This is what "the activities are nonexistent" means. It is like "form is empty, emptiness is form," in the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*. It's similar. When he says, "the activities are nonexistent" he means the "real" activities are nonexistent, meaning existing from their own side. How wonderful it is that even though the activities don't exist, there are still activities. The real activities, those not merely labeled by the mind, don't exist, but the merely imputed ones happen.

He then says that even though they appear, they are empty. All these things—the I, the experiences of the I, the actions of the I—the examples I'm using here to meditate on emptiness, but it means all of phenomena, are merely imputed by the mind then made real by being projected by ignorance. All that is not there; it is false.

All these things—the I, the experiences of the I, the actions of the I— appear truly existent to the hallucinated minds of us sentient beings, but they are totally empty. Even though they are totally empty in reality, they appear as truly existing.

Which one came first and which one came later? I think I got a little bit confused in the verses. I think probably what I said first must be later and then what I said later was the first! There are some other verses, but I don't remember them. The verse says,

Even though it appears, it doesn't exist. How wonderful your experience of how you see things. E ma ho.

Even though it doesn't exist, it appears. How wonderful it is. E ma ho.

"E ma ho" is a term used when you feel joy. By realizing this, by experiencing this, that's what *e ma ho* means. Then he said,

The kindness of the beams of Lama Tsongkhapa's holy speech on emptiness eliminates darkness in my heart.

The darkness here means eternalism and nihilism, where we think either nothing exists—there is no I, no action, no karma—or we believe things exist [inherently] and we fall into the other extreme, eternalism, exaggeration. We are not in the Middle Way. We have the darkness of these wrong concepts, of eternalism and nihilism, in our heart. But the beams of Lama Tsongkhapa's holy speech eliminate the darkness of these wrong notions of extremes. This is not only for the I but for all the rest of the phenomena.

So, the last thing is that the I does not exist separately from the aggregates. That's the conclusion. That means it exists by depending them; it exists because there are the aggregates, the base that can receive the label "I," on which the I can be imputed. There's a base; the aggregates exist. And the I is what is merely imputed by the mind. What is that I which exists? It's nothing else except what is merely imputed by mind.

At that time, because we started the analysis of the four vital points, the first vital point is recognizing, discovering, the *gag cha*, the object to be refuted, the I that appears to us as not merely labeled by the mind and that we believed in and hold on to or entrust to. That is the object of ignorance. By doing the analysis, we check whether it exists or not. So here is the conclusion. It doesn't exist separately. It exists by relating to the aggregates, by mere imputation.

### **WE DO EVERYTHING FOR THIS I THAT IS NOT THERE**

This analysis is like a bomb and our target is the object of ignorance, the truly existent I. With this analysis we destroy it. What do you call it? We eliminate it. We can't see it. What we have been believing, what we have been entrusting, holding on to, not only from this morning, not only from birth, but from beginningless rebirths, from time without beginning, we now discover that this is totally nonexistent. So far, we have been holding on to this I as the most important, the most precious thing. All the time, we had all this concern for the present and future happiness and suffering of this I—what is going to happen to this I? Will it get sick and die and go to the lower realms? All those things.

This I is going to suffer with all these relationship problems, and before the relationship, there are all the worries and fears of not finding somebody, not finding a companion for this I. We try to do all sorts of things for this I, to find a friend, a companion. We spend a million dollars, a billion dollars. We go to Thailand to see some monks. We try to find a friend to teach us what to do. I'm joking, anyway. I think what I'm saying is more familiar to the Chinese than to Western people.

After we have found somebody, there is all this worry and fear that we are going to separate. The person is going to leave this I! After all that time, after finally meeting somebody and getting together, there is the fear that this I cannot stay with them. We think if we can meet somebody, all our problems will be solved; we will be in bliss, like liberation. It will be like the sun always shining in our life. We will be so happy, never having problems again. We have this dream for this I that is not there.

Anyway, after we meet, after we finally get together, we live together, and one day goes by, two days, three days. Of course, there's ego, there's the self-cherishing thought, there's anger, jealousy and all this mental garbage. All these things start coming out. Jealousness and anger and all the things come out due to the self-cherishing thought. As the days go by we see more and more mistakes, mistakes of the mind like that person's nature, and we see more and more shortcomings of the body. They become more and more boring. One of the students told me that seeing their partner doing kaka in the toilet, they kind of lost their attraction. Sorry I mentioned that. It just slipped out.

Anyway, we see the shortcomings of the body and as time goes on we lose interest; the other person seems more and more boring. This is because we are following desire for this I, to get satisfaction

for this I. Then we start looking for another one, for something more, somebody we believe is more beautiful, younger, something like that. And so another type of confusion starts. We were confused before but another type of confusion starts in our life. Mentally, we become more and more distant from our first friend. At the beginning we were inseparable, praying, going to church or a temple.

We had been so worried we would never meet anybody for this I, to give this I happiness. Then, after meeting somebody, it was so difficult to separate from them. We were so worried they might leave us, but in the end what happens is that they become an object of hatred. We get depressed and pray to be free from them. We look forward to the time we can get rid of them, like waiting out our time in prison. We can't wait for it, especially so we can start another relationship!

It is all for this I, looking for satisfaction for this I, which is not there. We create the ten nonvirtues when this I doesn't get what it wants, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct or telling lies. There are so many negative karmas involved in trying to find satisfaction for this I.

When we have children, we completely focus on the child, leaving our other partner out. With the child, there are physical changes and we no longer have time because we are so busy with the child that our partner feels left out. We feel disgusted [with them] and we want to leave or get a divorce.

All these worries and fears, all these unmet expectations are because of this I, trying to find satisfaction for this I, *which is not there*. For the happiness of this I, people sue other people, spending millions of dollars in court. People kill other people. All for the happiness of this I, but it's not there. All these things—power, reputation, and so forth—for this I. We are busy working for the happiness of this life, for this I, *which is not there*.

## **GOING BEYOND THE REAL I**

Anyway, as was I saying, through analysis we can see that the I doesn't exist separately from the aggregates. This I that we have believed in, that we have trusted from beginningless lifetimes, exists by depending on the aggregates, being merely imputed by mind.

We discover this on this day, at this hour, this minute, due to the blessings of the guru entering our heart. With our single-pointed request to the guru, seeing the guru as a buddha from our side, by depending on sentient beings, we make continual, intensive purification and collect extensive merits, generating compassion and bodhicitta. We [rely on] the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, but especially the guru, the most powerful one. By following their advice and offering them service, fulfilling the guru's wishes, pleasing the holy mind of the virtuous friend—the most powerful object—we collect the most extensive merit and make the most powerful purification, purifying our negative karma.

There are many ways of purifying, such as those powerful practices like practicing Vajrasattva, prostrating and reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, offering mandala and so forth. There are many other means of collecting merits, like making *tsa tsas* or holy objects.

Then, because of imprints from past lives or from this past time, having heard teachings on emptiness, having done all the study and meditated on it, like that, all these causes and conditions can come together, and then in just a second [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] it clicks to the mind and

we discover what the object to be refuted is. In that day, in that hour, in that minute, [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] we discover what the object to be refuted is, what the false I is.

With that analysis it just takes a moment to realize emptiness, to make the greatest discovery in our life, which is when we discover the object of ignorance, the root of samsara—the object we believed to exist inherently—to be totally nonexistent, empty. That is our great discovery. It's kind of like a start to our liberation. With that, we can be totally liberated from the oceans of samsaric suffering, we can be totally free from all the death. There will be no more death, no more old age, no more sickness, no more relationship problems, no more depression, no more of all the four hundred and four sicknesses, including cancer and AIDS. It gives us full confidence that here is the start because this wisdom is the only one that can directly cease the defilements, the delusions and the cause of delusion, the negative imprints. This is the only one that can directly cease all these.

Therefore, what is more joyful in the life, what greatest happiness is there in the life other than this, realizing emptiness, seeing how this is the start of our liberation. *And* with this total experience, with attaining the path to liberation, with the direct perception of emptiness, we can liberate numberless other beings. We can liberate numberless hell beings from the oceans of suffering of the hell realm and the general suffering of samsara; we can liberate numberless hungry ghosts from the oceans of suffering of the hungry ghost realm and the general suffering of samsara; we can liberate numberless animals from the oceans of suffering of the animal realm and the general suffering of samsara; we can liberate numberless human beings from the oceans of suffering of the human realm and the general suffering of samsara.

#### **THE FORM AND FORMLESS REALMS STILL HAVE SUFFERING**

We can also liberate numberless gods and demigods (suras and asuras), which the abbot, Lama Lhundrup talked about yesterday, explaining how even the form and formless realms are not free from suffering, how their aggregates are in nature of suffering.

Both the form realm and the desire realm have the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, which means temporary samsaric pleasures. Experiencing sense pleasure with the five sense objects is suffering—the suffering of change—because it not only doesn't continue, but also it doesn't increase. What am I saying? It *should* be that samsaric pleasure, desire realm pleasure, not only doesn't increase, bringing more and more happiness, but it also doesn't continue. Why? Because that samsaric pleasure is just what is labeled on the base. It is a feeling where another suffering, the previous suffering, has stopped because we stopped the previous action which compounded it, and then another suffering begins with the next action, which compounds the new suffering. At first, this new suffering is so small that it's unnoticeable. Because this second suffering that has started is smaller and unnoticeable, it's called pleasure.

The previous suffering has stopped, for instance the hunger of not eating. When we don't eat, that compounds our hunger and thirst. Then, the minute we eat and drink, the previous suffering stops. By eating and drinking, we have stopped the action of not eating and not drinking. That compounds the feeling, which is suffering, but this feeling of suffering is unnoticeable because at the beginning it is small. The more we continue [to eat and drink] the discomfort increases and becomes more and more noticeable. When the discomfort of continued eating becomes noticeable, at that time it becomes the suffering of pain, and as we continue to eat, the suffering of pain increases. Before,

when it was unnoticeable, it was called “pleasure,” it was labeled “pleasure,” but in reality the feeling we label as pleasure is only suffering.

This is one example, but all samsaric pleasures are like that. Since the feeling, the base on which we label “pleasure,” is only suffering, samsaric pleasure can’t increase and can’t continue. That is the reason.

The desire realm has the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering, which refers to the aggregates that are under the control of karma and delusions and the contaminated seed of delusion. It pervades the aggregates and it compounds, meaning it compounds suffering in this life and future lives.

There is the form realm and formless realm. The peace and happiness of the form realm is derived from meditation and has nothing to do with the external form, with sound, smell, taste, external objects, with attachment. The form realm beings have totally renounced the pleasures of the desire realm, which they see as disgusting, as only suffering. Their peace and happiness is derived from meditation, from shamatha. According to Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, beings in the form realm don’t have the suffering of pain but there is still the suffering of change and pervasive compounding suffering. Their aggregates are in the nature of suffering.

Now, the beings of the formless realm have total renunciation, total aversion not only for the desire realm but even for the peace and happiness of the form realm. They see it only in the nature of suffering. Not only the formless realm beings who have achieved the tip of the samsara, the fourth and highest realm of the formless realm, but even the beings in the first realm, infinite sky. Then, there is infinite consciousness and nothingness. The beings of these three lower formless realms have total aversion for the form and desire realm happiness, seeing it only in the nature of suffering. There’s not the slightest attraction to those.

Because there’s no higher realm in samsara than the tip of the samsara, there’s nothing to compare. There’s nothing that helps the beings there to also realize that the tip of samsara is only in the nature of suffering and to have aversion for it, to develop renunciation, detachment. There’s no higher realm to compare it to, like all the others. They have been analyzing all the levels of the desire and form realms and the three lower realms of the formless realm and seen that they are all only in the nature of suffering. They see how each level is better than the one before, with more peace and happiness, with a longer life and all that. Through the six comprehensions, through analysis, they see how the lower level has a shorter life and a more suffering nature and the higher one has more peace, so they get renunciation for the form realm and are born in the formless realm. And again with the six comprehensions, they progress through infinite sky to the infinite consciousness, and from there to nothingness until they reach the tip of samsara, the last level.

When they reach the tip of samsara, they have reached the highest state in samsara and so they have no way of seeing how this is comparatively suffering. Therefore, they are unable to renounce this highest level, the tip of samsara. There is nothing that helps them realize how this too is only in the nature of suffering. But they can see that all other samsaric realms—the desire realm, the form realm [and the three lower formless realms states] are totally in the nature of suffering, which is true.

What am I saying? I lost what I was talking about!

Anyway, that is why those worldly gods, the formless realm beings who are in the tip of samsara, are unable to enter the path to liberation. What blocks them is their attachment to the tip of samsara, which they can't see is in the nature of suffering because they have no higher realm to compare it to. Even though they have renunciation for the whole of the desire realm and the form realm and for the rest of the formless realm, they cannot enter the path. Until they have total renunciation for even the tip of samsara, discovering that it too is only in the nature of suffering, they can't enter the path to liberation. The door of the path to liberation is renunciation of samsara. They also lack the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that directly ceases the cause of the delusions, the negative imprints. That means when their karma to be in the tip of samsara finishes, they will again have to be reborn in the lower realms, the same as before.

So, even the formless realm beings, although they don't have the suffering of pain and the suffering of change, they are not free from pervasive compounding suffering. Their aggregates are under the control of karma and delusions, the nature which is suffering, and the contaminated seed of delusion that also compounds the suffering of future lives, of future rebirth and future suffering.

### **THE I ON THE AGGREGATES**

What was I saying? Anyway, it doesn't matter. I don't remember where the source came from, but anyway, all the suffering of the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm comes from the root, ignorance. The root of all karma and delusions is ignorance, holding there's a real I while there's no such thing. There's no real I in the sense of existing from its own side in this body. We can't find it anywhere. While there's no such real I in the sense of existing from its own side, from above the aggregates, not merely labeled by mind on these aggregates, when we say the word "I" there is the sense of existing from its own side. Once we mention that word, we don't need to say, "from above the aggregates." The I that appears from above the aggregates is the truly existent I. There is no I from above the aggregates, from the side of the aggregates, but there's an I *on* the aggregates. There's a saying like that. The I that is on the aggregates is the merely imputed I. There's one explanation like that.

However, the experience is like this. We don't see the I from the side of the aggregates but there is an I there very strongly. That I seems to exist uncontrollably *on* the aggregates, without choice. There is the I existing on the aggregates, under the control of name. There is an experience like that, not from the side of aggregates but on the aggregates, very powerfully, very strongly, without choice, under the control of name.

According to His Holiness, that is the correct understanding, maybe the Prasangika Middle Way school's view. But Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche thinks that this is not the view of the Prasangika school but the Svatantrika school. That is their way of realizing emptiness. It's still Madhyamaka but it's the Svatantrika way of realizing emptiness. So, there are different ways of explaining it depending on different lamas.

Perhaps it's like this. When we see the I as very strongly under the control of the name, without choice, there's still something there. The I is on the aggregates, not from the side of the aggregates, but still there's a little bit of feeling of a real I there. Therefore, this maybe fits more as the Svatantrika school view of understanding emptiness.

It is on the aggregates under the control of the name, very powerfully, very strongly, but still there's a real I, kind of a little bit real one. I think *that* we have to change. To become the Prasangika School view, the Middle Way, even that little bit of a real one, the I on the aggregates, where there is still something a little bit real one, I think even *that* should be realized as totally empty. But that doesn't mean this is nihilism. It's the same as I mentioned before.

The realization that should happen is the merely imputed I—that there's nothing real there, not in the slightest. It is mere imputation, merely imputed, existing in mere name. It's not completely nonexistent but the way it exists is something extremely subtle, something unbelievably subtle. It exists but it's something extremely, unbelievably subtle. It's like it doesn't exist. It's not nonexistent but it's like it's nonexistent. There's a big difference when you put the word "like." "Like an illusion" doesn't mean it's an illusion but like an illusion. There's a big difference. A dream and like a dream—there's a big difference. A dream doesn't exist, but "like a dream" tells us it exists but it doesn't exist from its own side; it doesn't truly exist. Nothing that appears in a dream exists. In a dream, we see things as truly existent, as existing from their side, but that's not true. Nothing we see in a dream exists, even without talking about truly existent. Here, it's like that. Relating to a dream, a truly existent phenomenon is "like a dream"—it doesn't exist.

## **TAKING REFUGE**

So now, the purpose of taking refuge is all these reasons you have talked about, I think from beginning of this course, all the topics you went through, such as the perfect human rebirth, how precious this human rebirth is, how difficult it is to find and if it's found how it has great meaning, how it is difficult to find again and that it doesn't last long, how it can be stopped at any time because of impermanence and death. That is the nature of life; it can be stopped at any time. And, at the time of death nothing helps. All the possessions, the friends, family, everything has to be left. Even this body that we cherish most has to be left. Only the consciousness goes to the next life like having taken hair from butter. When you take a hair from butter, only hair comes out; the butter doesn't come with the hair. Everything has to be left; nothing goes with us to the next life. The only thing that helps at that time is the Dharma, nothing else. At that time and in future lives, what benefits us is only the Dharma; if we have practiced the Dharma in this life, that's the only thing.

There are all these reasons [to take refuge]. If we didn't create good karma, if we die without practicing Dharma, if we only create negative karma, after death our consciousness migrates to either the lower realms or the higher realms, there's no third alternative. That's according to karma. With good karma, it's the higher realms; with negative karma, it's the lower realms.

So, all this becomes the reason for taking refuge, for relying on the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. From the beginning, the subjects of the course, especially impermanence and death and especially the sufferings of the lower realms, if you think of all that, the results of negative karma, the immediate thing to stop that is taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. The Buddha instructed we should protect our karma. When we are sick, we go to see a doctor and the doctor checks us and prescribes medicine according to what we need. We have to follow the prescription, otherwise the doctor can't help us; we won't recover.

By relying upon the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, by following the refuge vows, we protect our karma. We abandon negative karma, the cause of suffering, and practice virtue, good karma, which brings the result of happiness, of a good rebirth in our future lives.

There's the refuge vow and the refuge precepts, where there is the advice on the three things to abandon and the three things to practice. By doing that, we collect so much merit in our daily life, the cause of happiness.

There's respecting holy objects, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. And before eating, we should make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Just by this way in our daily life, while we are eating or drinking, doing activities, by following the advice to do these things, we collect so much good karma in our daily life. We collect unimaginable skies of merit with these activities, whereas disrespecting the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha obscures the mind, which means besides falling to the lower realms, we can't have attainments; we can't have the awakened mind. It blocks, obscures, pollutes the mind.

The other thing is, even for lay people, you can take vows to protect morality, the five lay vows: abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct, abstaining from telling lies, abstaining from taking intoxicants. Taking intoxicants causes you to lose control, having no shyness or shame, then it is very easy to engage in killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and all the things. Without shyness and shame, you are totally uncontrolled and it is very easy to engage in these things.

It's like the story of the monk who met a woman carrying a pot of *chang*, wine, and leading a goat. She told the monk he could either have sex with her, drink the wine or kill the goat. She gave him those choices. The monk thought that maybe drinking the wine was the easiest choice so he drank the wine. But then after that, he killed the goat for dinner and had sex with the woman! The monk thought the simple thing was to drink the wine. If he did that, he wouldn't have to kill the goat or have sex, but actually after drinking the wine it didn't become simple.

Generally speaking, sexual misconduct is having sex without someone belonging to somebody else, like somebody's husband or wife. The texts say owned by another but that sounds a bit strange these days. Anyway, basically that becomes sexual misconduct.

Even if you can't take all the five lay vows, you can take four, and if not, then three or two or one. If it's one from the five, I normally emphasize refraining from killing. Maybe for some people being lied to is more harmful than being killed or for some people sex is more harmful than being killed. I'm not sure; it depends on the person, but normally I emphasize not killing, because nobody wants to be killed. People or animals, it's the same. Nobody wants to be killed. That includes mosquitoes. They don't want to be killed. They have the same mind as us, wanting happiness and not wanting suffering. It's also the same. We cherish ourselves. Among all sentient beings, we cherish ourselves the most, and that is true even of insects. They cherish themselves the most. So that's why I normally emphasize that.

But if it's very difficult to stop telling lies or to abstain from sexual misconduct or stealing or drinking wine, then only take one, whichever is easiest for you. You can do that.

## THE RESULTS OF NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE KARMA

I think you have already gone through karma, how a complete negative karma has four suffering results. That is a very important subject for everyone on this course, so I'm just going to mention a few points.

The complete negative karma of one act of sexual misconduct—there may be many, but I'll just talk about one act, the complete negative karma of one instance of sexual misconduct, which produces four suffering results. The ripening result is rebirth in the lower realms, as a hell being, a hungry ghost or an animal, depending on how heavy it is. For a heavy one it's the hell realm.

The other three results are experienced in the human realm. When due to another good karma we get born in the human realm, we experience these three suffering results of that complete act of sexual misconduct. The possessed result is that we are born in the place that is very unhygienic, full of poopoo, excrement. It's a very smelly, dirty, unhealthy place. The place where we have to live is a very dirty place.

Even during our life, when sometimes we have to drive or walk through a very dirty, smelly place, that did not happen without cause. There was a reason we had to experience it, even for a short time, even for an hour or a few minutes. It had a cause. Why did we experience it? We had created the cause before. It was the result of sexual misconduct, even just having to experience a few minutes of that terrible smell and all this junk and filth. There are some people who live their whole life like that. Anyway, that's the possessed result.

Then, experiencing the result similar to the cause—we have to understand this one. We can't trust our partner—our husband or wife. They go against our wishes. The way they think is the opposite of what we wish and so we can't trust them. And they cheat us. That is the result. We have to understand what is the cause, why we experience things like that. It was caused by something we created before. There's a reason for what is happening to us. That is experiencing the result similar to the cause of past sexual misconduct.

In the same way, our family members or the people in our office all go against our wishes. We have so many problems with others. They don't like us; their wishes are the opposite of ours, so things never become successful. What we wish for is never accomplished. Whenever we are experiencing things like that in our life, we have to immediately know it's the result of that. There's no reason at all to blame the others; it's the result of our past karma. We created the karma and this is the result of that karma. It has come from our mind. In reality, there's nobody to blame except ourselves, except our own self-cherishing thought, except the root of suffering: our ignorance, our delusions, our attachment, those things. There's nobody outside to blame.

Then, creating the result similar to the cause, again in that life we do the same thing; we commit sexual misconduct. Like that, it becomes a complete negative karma of sexual misconduct, which then produces another four suffering results, and one of them is creating the result similar to the cause, which *again* produces another four suffering results—one of which is creating the result similar to the cause. Like that, this one negative karma of sexual misconduct becomes endless, producing endless suffering. Unless we purify that negative karma, if we don't do anything, from that one negative karma we must experience endless suffering, it goes on and on, without end. This is what we have to understand.

When we take the vow of abstaining from sexual misconduct, that means we don't experience all these ongoing, endless sufferings. They are completely stopped. By taking this vow of abstaining from this one negative karma of sexual misconduct, the result is not only that we don't have to experience all those endless sufferings, but also that we have happiness from life to life. Rather than the four suffering results, we always experience the four happy results by living in the morality of abstaining from sexual misconduct.

The ripening result is rebirth in a higher realm as a deva or a human being. The possessed result is that we live in a clean, beautiful place. The place where we live in this life is very clean, with a beautiful garden. There is no poopoo all over, no smell. We should know that this is the result of our past positive karma. It has come from our mind.

It has come from our good karma, which is our mind, from the mental factor, *sempa*, intention, from that mental factor. Even if we sometimes see a beautiful flower in the garden, that has come from our mind. We should know that. We should realize how it is due to our good karma in *this* way. Seeing all those beautiful, clean things and realizing how they have all come from our mind, we should rejoice. We should realize that this has come from abstaining from sexual misconduct in the past. Then, when we rejoice we collect more merit. It's so worthwhile to rejoice in the Dharma practice we did in the past, in the morality we practiced in the past, and how because of that we will be able to practice it again in the future.

Then, the other results of abstaining from sexual misconduct. Experiencing the result similar to the cause, our wife or husband or other people live in harmony with us. Their wishes are *exactly* according to our wishes all the time. We are harmonious, we have a lot of success, and all the people in the family, in the office, everywhere, have the same wishes as we do. Because they think the same way, we get a lot of support. We succeed in whatever we wish for. We must realize that. When something like this happens, we should realize this is from our past good karma, from living in the morality of abstaining from sexual misconduct, which means it has also come from our mind. Then, we should rejoice.

The next one is creating the result similar to the cause, which means that again in our future lives, because of this imprint, from this positive habituation, we are able to live in the morality of abstaining from sexual misconduct.

Then, from that, there will be the four happy results, and again the same thing will happen. The happy results will continue like that, up to liberation and enlightenment.

## **THE SECRET OF THE MIND**

Now you can see how important it is, how this gives us unbelievable protection. It is the unbelievable source of happiness, not only in this life. It cuts all our relationship problems and brings us so much peace and happiness. We have so much freedom and all this peace and happiness not only in this life but also from life to life—peace and happiness, and then liberation, and of course, with bodhicitta, enlightenment.

Therefore, I want to remind you to rejoice during this course, not only when we meditate, sitting like this with the eyes closed. Or open! I'm not sure which way. Many people do it like that. Many people sit like this or sit like that or like that or any way! But here, the most important thing is the first lamrim, the heart of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha. Meditating on the heart of the lamrim is the essence. Maybe we haven't done tantra yet, but sutra is the foundation of tantra. What Peter asked the other night, how to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime; here we are creating the foundation. During this course, we are creating the foundation to achieve enlightenment in one lifetime, the basis for tantra.

Many people meditate and do retreats and all that, but taking the eight Mahayana precepts and making meditation effective is not easy. Meditation is not easy. I think I should tell you that. Many people do meditation, but you have to know that meditation can easily become negative karma, nonvirtue. Why? Because it depends on how meditation is done. If it's not done correctly, it can be negative karma; it can waste our whole life.

In *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Shantideva says... My memory got stuck! Anyway, the essence is if you don't realize the secret of the mind you will wander meaninglessly in samsara. If you don't know the secret of the mind, you will wander meaninglessly in samsara and experience all the sufferings, without purpose, without meaning. That's what it says.<sup>3</sup>

## **DOING CALM ABIDING WITH THE FOUR MOTIVATIONS**

What I want to tell you here is what makes you waste your life, why something becomes negative karma. By now, everybody should know, because I think motivation is already explained. I'm sure most people know, but it's still good to hear it once more. Let's take a person doing a breathing meditation or a person who is meditating on this tissue paper.

Actually, I'll tell my story. For eight years I lived at Buxa Duar, which was a concentration camp when India was under the control of British. It's where Mahatma Gandhi-ji was imprisoned. That part became the nunnery. And where Nehru was imprisoned became Sera Monastery. In Tibet Sera Monastery had maybe seven thousand monks, something like that. Some of the monks escaped and there were maybe sixty or seventy living in the hall, a very long building. All the beds were lined up along both walls; it was not much wider than this. Outside was a very short verandah, and then a ditch and the wall of the house, and then there was all this barbed wire, because it was a prison. So, all the monks' beds were lined up like this. My teacher, Geshe Rabten Rinpoche, who was a great scholar, a great yogi, lived a bit higher up. The beds were made from bamboo cut from the forest, then crushed. You placed the crushed bamboo on four planks and that was the bed. Then you put a simple cloth on that. It was very hard, not like the beds in the West, the spring beds where you press and it pops back, like that.

When you went out to go to the toilet the leeches came, and when you went back, besides the have leeches, there were mosquitos and red bugs around the bed. The red bugs lived in the corners of your mosquito net, and when the lights went off they came down. While the lights were on, they stayed in the corners. There were so many inside the net and their bites became very swollen.

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<sup>3</sup> Even those who wish to find happiness and overcome misery / Will wander with no aim or meaning / If they do not comprehend the secret of the mind / The paramount significance of Dharma. – *Bodhicaryavatara*, Ch. 5, v. 17.

It was unbelievably hot. So many monks died of the heat and of tuberculosis and bad food. The place was unbelievably unhealthy, surrounded by mountains with very thick forest, where there were tigers. You would sometimes see a tiger on the road, but I never saw an elephant. Anyway, with all those conditions, it didn't matter.

What was I going to say? That's right. I heard a little bit about *zhi nā*, calm abiding. Geshe Rabten used to talk about achieving calm abiding. So, at night, after I put up the mosquito net, I tried to sit. There was a wooden cup with silver on it or something, I'm not sure, with a white lid, so I put that on the pillow and I tried to meditate on that. I tried to focus on that. That was my way of achieving *zhi nā*, my way of doing a meditation on *zhi nā*. I put this wooden cup with the white cover on the pillow under the mosquito net and tried to sit. Anyway, while I was concentrating on this, sometimes the cup fell down! I think I tried to meditate with my eyes open. I didn't meditate by closing my eyes because it was supposed to be an object of the mind, not the eye. I was so inspired by what Geshe Rabten explained. Anyway, I thought to tell you that.

Anyway, I'm going to say this. Even if it's a meditation of the mind watching the mind, which is supposed to be very profound, even that [depends on the motivation]. Of course, if it is done with the thought to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, then it becomes the cause to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, it becomes the cause of happiness of all sentient beings. But if it's done with the thought to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves, then it becomes the cause of that—not the cause of enlightenment but the cause to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves, ultimate happiness, just that.

Now, the next level of motivation, if it's done with the motivation to achieve the happiness of future lives, just that, it still becomes Dharma. The meditation still becomes Dharma, but it doesn't become the cause of enlightenment or the cause to achieve liberation from samsara for ourselves. Why is it still Dharma? Because our motivation is being unattached to this life. We are seeking happiness of our future lives so maybe we are attached to the happiness of future lives, but we are not attached to this life. Because it's done with the motivation detached to this life, it's virtue. Because the motivation is virtuous, our action of meditation becomes Dharma, the cause of happiness of future lives.

The fourth level of motivation is just for the happiness of this life, just to be healthy, to get some power, to get a reputation—we wish to be called a great meditator by other people, a yogi or something. So, the motivation is solely for the happiness of this life, for reputation, power, a long life, health, wealth, all this, not even for the happiness of future lives, nothing. When the motivation is attachment to this life, it is nonvirtue.

So, there are differences depending on the motivation. When we do the meditation seeking the happiness of future lives, which is still attachment but detached to this life, there's peace in our heart, there's inner peace. But if we do meditation with attachment to this life, there's no peace in our heart. If we check what the effect is on our mental continuum from that attachment, that clinging, that grasping, seeking the happiness of this life, we will see it's not peace. That mind brings disturbances, ups and downs. If we check, we'll find the effect is totally different. One motivation gives inner peace, satisfaction, and the other one gives the opposite, continual dissatisfaction. Because we are following desire, that's what we get—no peace.

That's the experience. The action of our meditation becomes nonvirtuous, even if the meditation is the mind watching to the mind. Not only that, even our tantric practice becomes nonvirtuous, even meditating on the completion stage, on *dzogchen*, on the graduated completion stage, *dzogrim*, or on *tummo* meditation, meditating on inner fire, which Hindus also have. Even all these exciting things from tantra don't become Dharma, because they are all nonvirtuous if they are done with that motivation. If the motivation is worldly dharma, the action of meditation becomes worldly dharma; it doesn't become holy Dharma. Holy Dharma is that which brings happiness, which protects us from the lower realm sufferings. It doesn't become that. Worldly dharma, which is nonvirtue, causes rebirth in the lower realms, and even in this life there's no peace. Because we are following desire, we can't find satisfaction, we can't find peace.

We might think, "I've been meditating for forty years," but because we haven't met the heart of Buddhadharma, the lamrim teachings—the graduated paths of the lower, middle and higher capable beings—we are ignorant about the need for a pure motivation. Because we haven't met these teachings, we are totally ignorant of how to have a happy life.

We don't know that happiness and suffering come from the mind, not only day to day but also moment to moment. Peace and happiness come from our mind, from our way of thinking, from our motivation, as well as the lower realms' suffering, future lives' suffering and liberation from samsara and enlightenment. This all comes from our mind. Samsara and nirvana, hell and enlightenment, all these come from our mind, from the different ways of thinking, from positive thinking and negative thinking. If we didn't get that education, we have no idea. We think that just meditating like this is enough. We might even have pride that we have been meditating for forty years, but it is all done with that attachment, clinging to this life, so everything becomes negative karma. Nothing becomes Dharma, not even one single meditation.

## RINPOCHE'S EARLY LIFE

Before you take refuge I want to tell you one thing. Refuge is coming soon! It's coming very soon, very, very soon, but I just want to tell you one thing.

I was born in Solu Khumbu. When I was young, I memorized Nyingma prayers. As the morning became light, I memorized the texts. Much of the time in Solu Khumbu I read texts as well as wrote them. Then I went to Tibet and lived for three years at Pagri. I became a monk in Domo Geshe's monastery, who in his past life was a great yogi. Have you read Lama Govinda's book, *The Way of the White Clouds*? What's the other one called? Huh? There's one book, *The Way of the White Clouds*, and there's another one, something to do with tantra and science, mixing tantra and science, something like that, I'm not sure.<sup>4</sup> Maybe the people in the early days, those who were called hippies or something, many years ago, maybe they were more familiar with this but now maybe not.

This was the beginning, when LSD came out. I mentioned buddha grass but I think I didn't mention LSD and those things that came out at that time. Anyway, that was also when these Dharma books came out. I think that one may have come out a bit earlier, but at that time there were very few Dharma books, maybe only three or four. Then later, after some time, His Holiness produced a

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<sup>4</sup> The other popular book by Lama Govinda was *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, first published in 1960 and now out of print.

small pamphlet, just a few pages, which was an introduction to Buddhism. Now there are many, of course, but at that time there were only three or four books. One was Milarepa's life story, one was Lama Govinda's book, and I think one was the book on the Wheel of Life, something like that. There was one book, what is it? What was her name? Not Madame Blavatsky, the other one? Huh? [*Ven. Kaye: Alexandra David-Néel.*] Alexandra David-Néel. There was one small book.<sup>5</sup>

Anyway, what I was talking about? Many people read those books, but that was such a long time ago. I don't know why I brought this up. Ah lay! I was talking about Domo Geshe, the great yogi, I think Lama Govinda went to Tibet and met this great yogi. He reincarnated and studied in a monastery in Tibet when it was independent and then he was put in prison after Tibet was overtaken by mainland China. Then he escaped and went to India, then he lived in America, where he passed away. He has now reincarnated again now and is studying in Sera Monastery.

When he was conceived, rainbows appeared over the family house. The *khangtsen* I belong to at Sera Je—"khangtsen" means "section" and there are many at Sera Je—went to offer robes after His Holiness recognized the reincarnation, as a welcome or a celebration. On that day a rainbow also came over the house. So, that definitely shows he is a very special, holy being. That's normal to have that sign.

So anyway, I lived for three years in Pagri in Tibet near Domo. Every day I went to do puja. We had to do pujas for this family. Mostly it's all fixed. In one year, there were one or two days free when we didn't have pujas to do. Those days were very long, very strange, because we didn't have pujas. I lived there for three years like that, memorizing texts in the morning and evening. You went to the monastery to offer examination among the public and it became a puja, with all the monks and offerings to the *umdze*. It was a little bit of puja. You sat down and recited, and the leader of the puja asked, "Please recite now for me." It seemed like it was the *umdze* saying he had done a good job!

At that time, I was called *chömdnze*,<sup>6</sup> which is kind of like the one who makes a big offering to the monastery. You then get a special title and you don't have to do the work for the Sangha, you don't have to stand and offer tea to the Sangha, you're kind of free from that. By that time, Tibet was already overtaken by mainland China.

Anyway, I was the last person in the line. There was another *chömdze* sitting next to me. He was maybe a little bit jealous because he told me he had done a better recitation than me.

## OPENING THE DOOR OF DHARMA

I then lived eight years at Buxa, memorizing texts and doing a little bit of debate. My debating was just playing. Then I returned to Nepal because Lama thought to establish a monastery here. Lama built this one and then at the same time I went up to build the monastery in Solu Khumbu. It happened that way.

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<sup>5</sup> *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, Dover Publications, 1971.

<sup>6</sup> Wylie: *chos mdzad*. The title given to a monk, usually a tulku, who has made a substantial offering to the monastery and is therefore exempt from work obligations.

While I was building the monastery up there, I was supposed to watch the workers outside, but actually I was in the cave reading the texts. There was one text of a collection of the Kadampa teachings that covered the four traditions: Sakya, Kagyü, Nyingma and Gelug. Most of the texts were Nyingma because the past life Lawudo Lama, who was called Lama Yeshe, was supposed to be Nyingma but also Sakya. Somehow the high lamas mentioned that he was my past life. Although most of the texts were Nyingma or Sakya, there was this text that all four traditions could practice. That text is called *Opening the Door to Dharma: Mind Training at the Very Beginning*.

I spent much time reading that book and when I looked back on my life—Tibet, Buxa, Solu Khumbu—I didn't find anything that had become Dharma. With all that memorization and doing puja, I could not find any action that had become Dharma. That's what I discovered. I'll just give an example.

Whether something is Dharma, spiritual, is not just what appears externally. Whether it's spiritual, whether it's Dharma, is only judged by the motivation. There are three things with meditation. One is the subject of the meditation and another is the motivation. The motivation is highly emphasized. Whether we waste our time or not depends on the motivation, not the subject itself. So, there's a danger that we will waste our whole life if we don't know how to practice Dharma. We believe we are meditating but we are actually wasting our whole life. That's very dangerous. Therefore, we are extremely fortunate that we have met lamrim teachings in this life, that we have met them *now*. It's not too late.

I have to go back. I don't know where I was. What did I say? Where does it start? Anyway, I forgot. I don't know. I've forgotten, anyway.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING THE VOWS**

Anyway, I hope you understood the point I'm making. Therefore, I was saying that, as a lay person, as regards to protecting our karma, we have to do what we can do according to our capacity. Then I explained the reasons why it's so important. I talked about the shortcomings of the four suffering results of one complete negative karma and the four happy results of one complete positive karma, such as living in the morality abstaining from sexual misconduct, how we can enjoy the happiness from life to life, to liberation and—with bodhicitta—enlightenment.

Somebody who always gets sicknesses, one after another, that is the result of the past negative karma of killing, experiencing the result similar to the cause. One negative karma of killing can have that result. Even though we are born a human being, we always get sick, with one illness after another. Some people lead their lives like that.

For example, gossiping. You have already gone through that, but of the negative karma of gossiping, with experiencing the result similar to the cause, even if we ask for help or give a talk to people, our speech has no power. People don't listen to us; they don't keep our words in their mind. And they won't do what we ask for, whether we are giving a teaching or we are asking for help. I'm not going to say everything, just this one here.

With the result of negative karma of telling lies, when we are born a human being, experiencing the result similar to the cause means we are criticized, we are blamed by other people. And others cheat

us. That's experiencing the result similar to the cause of the negative karma of telling lies to other sentient beings. It doesn't have to only be in a future life, we can also experience it in this life if the karma is powerful. Others blame us for something we have not done; they cheat us. When something like that happens to us, we must immediately know it comes from that negative karma, it comes from our mind. That's enough.

Each of these complete negative karmas has four suffering results, so it goes on and on like that. Now you can see how this is so important. Living in these vows, abstaining from these negative karmas, living in morality, is the source of happiness through our whole life.

The negative karmas we have done in the past need to be purified. That's why we need to do a deity practice. There are powerful deities for purifying negative karma. The Buddha or the absolute guru manifests as a powerful deity like Vajrasattva to purify the negative karma of us sentient beings.

To do the recitation-meditation depends on receiving the initiation or the *jenang*, the permission to practice, the blessing of the deity, which allows us to purify the negative karma we've collected in the past, from beginningless rebirths until today.

Purification alone is not enough. If we purify our past negative karma but then we commit the action again and again, our purification will have no end. Therefore, the solution is to not commit the action again. Along with the purification, we do not commit it again. That's how important taking the vows that are coming are.

That still means you take the number of vows according to whatever you can. If you can't take all the five, if all you can take is the refuge vow, that can be done. Because the Buddha has so much compassion for us, he gave us so much choice, according to our capacity. If it is only the refuge vow, that involves abandoning four things to be abandoned and practicing four things to be practiced. Sorry! Three things to be abandoned and three things to be practiced! Then there's the general advice.

So now think that the purpose of taking refuge is to be totally liberated forever from the oceans of the hell beings' suffering, the hungry ghosts' suffering, the animals' suffering, the human beings' suffering and the sufferings you are going through of the suras and asuras of the desire, form and formless realms, and to be totally free from the cause of those sufferings, karma and delusions, including the seed of delusion, by actualizing the true path and true cessation of suffering. Not only to be free from samsara, but also to cease the subtle defilements by actualizing the Mahayana path with bodhicitta and the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. With that, we achieve the great cessation, the cessation of even the subtle defilements, which is full enlightenment. Then we can do perfect work for sentient beings, freeing them from all their suffering and the causes and bringing them to enlightenment.

## **THE REFUGE CEREMONY**

So, the motivation for refuge is vast. It's not just for your happiness but for the happiness of all sentient beings, for all sentient beings to be free from the suffering of samsara and to achieve enlightenment. It's *very* vast, like limitless sky. That's the purpose of taking refuge in the Buddha as the founder of the actual refuge, the Dharma as the actual refuge and the Sangha as helpers to

actualize the actual refuge within your own heart. By relying on them, you attain every success, every benefit, as I mentioned before, not only freeing yourself from samsara but also achieving enlightenment for sentient beings. To do that, you are going to take the refuge vow, relying upon the Buddha as the founder, the Dharma as the actual refuge and the Sangha as helpers to actualize the actual refuge in your own heart.

Those who are taking refuge, please do three prostrations to the Buddha, seeing the statue behind me as the actual living Buddha. Then after that, do three prostrations to the lama who gives you refuge.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

At the end of the third repetition, have the strong determination in your heart that you have received the vow, otherwise if you don't think that, you won't have received it. From that time, I become your *lobpön*, the guru or master who leads the disciples on the path to liberation. How? By granting the vows that cause the disciple to live in those vows. The *lobpön* is the leader of the disciples. I become your *lobpön*, like that.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

Those who have a higher ordination shouldn't take the lower vows, the *upasika* [or *upasaka*] vows. If you have taken the higher vows, like the higher pratimoksha thirty-six vows of the *getsul* or the 253 vows of the *gelong*, you should not think "I have received the lower vows," because that destroys the higher vows. The eight Mahayana precepts are exceptional. You can take them.

Some geshees say you can't take the eight Mahayana precepts because you can't take a lower vow, but that is because it is not common to take eight Mahayana precepts in the large monasteries. It doesn't happen that the whole community takes the eight Mahayana precepts, so they regard them as similar to the lower pratimoksha vows, which also have eight precepts. In *that* case, you can't take the pratimoksha vows if you are living in the higher vows. But the eight Mahayana precepts are the exception, because they are taken with bodhicitta, they are taken with all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. There are a few special things with that. This is commonly done in Dharamsala by His Holiness, who has given them many times in public, but they are not common in the large monasteries, where the whole community takes them, so they are not well known, and sometimes at a center there are some teachers who say you can't take them [if you have higher vows].

Not only this, there are other practices not normally done in the monasteries in public. Individual monks might do them, but not the whole monastery. Like the *Jorchö* practices. A whole monastery doing the *Jorchö* practice is not common. I always chant the *Offering Cloud* mantra in the *Lama Chöpa*, *Guru Puja*, combined with *Jorchö*. One of our resident teachers told me because it was Kriya Tantra I couldn't recite it in the *Lama Chöpa* offering section. I said that I had seen this in Pabongka's text, it says it there, but he didn't say anything. Actually, it comes at the beginning of the *Lama Chöpa Jorchö* when you visualize the merit field is the Guhyasamaja body mandala visualized on the guru's holy body. That's Highest Yoga Tantra not lower tantra.

It comes at the beginning. The *Offering Cloud* mantra is very commonly done in the Gelug tradition, but it's not common to do the *Jorchö* puja in the big monasteries. Therefore, they didn't know and thought putting it in a Kriya Tantra text was corrupting it, but in the *Lama Chöpa Jorchö*, when you

visualize the merit field, it is according to Highest Yoga Tantra. If you check the commentary, if it's lower tantra, the Guhyasamaja body mandala shouldn't be there. I didn't get to explain that; I just said I saw it in Pabongka's text, and then he didn't say anything.

It has a special function here, increasing the offerings. So, it's not only a blessing, it also increases the offerings. There are numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas, and if you do this mantra each one receives skies of offering, the offerings you have set up. Each one of the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas receives skies of light offerings, of water offerings, of flower offerings. Even if you only set up a few offerings, if you do this mantra, numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas each receive skies of each of the offerings. There are nine benefits in the Kangyur, which is why I recite it all the time.

So anyway, there's clear proof that I'm not corrupting the *Jorcbö* practice from Pabongka. I just thought to mention that. Anyway, I think the geshe was very concerned that the FPMT prayers and practices should be first class. They should be neat, with no mistakes. That was his only concern, that there shouldn't be any mistakes there, that they should be good quality. So, it was very good. I just wanted to mention this because it might help in case there is some discussion about it.

What did I do? Sorry! The next one. I hope you have very strong determination that you have received the vow. OK?

Those who have taken all five precepts, the complete upasika vows, and those who have taken one, two, three or four upasika vows but are unable to take the other vows, or those who haven't taken any of the vows, only refuge, everybody be clear [about what you've taken].

I also want to mention this. Since you have taken the vow, even one vow, such as abstaining from killing, whatever it is, you have to understand this. While you are sleeping, while you are eating, while you are walking, while you are talking—whatever you are doing—since you took this one vow, you *always* collect merit, always, day and night—all the time until death. Because you collect merit all the time, you are making your life meaningful all the time. And the more vows you have taken, you collect that much merit all the time. And then, whatever virtuous activity you do in your daily life, it increases hundreds and thousands of times, and the more vows you have taken, the more the merit increases from those virtuous activities. That's one thing.

The opposite is somebody who becomes a soldier, which means killing human beings, killing sentient beings. When they make the vow of being a soldier, they collect negative karma every day, all the time, by living in that vow. The examples usually used are wine sellers or soldiers, people who harm others [with their profession]. They are living in the vows [of that profession], which means they collect negative karma all the time, no matter what they are doing. But here, it's the opposite. You always collect merit, and the more vows, the more merit. That makes life so meaningful, even while sleeping eight hours—even if you sleep twenty-four hours each day—or while eating or drinking or whatever.

So now you can understand, whatever number of vows you have taken, this is your best contribution for world peace. This is not just world peace from the mouth but your *real* contribution for world peace, whether you take one vow, two vows, three vows or all, abstaining from those harms, abstaining from creating that negative karma that harms you and harms others. You have to understand this. It is not just world peace from the mouth but real, practical peace you are offering,

protecting yourself and others, not harming yourself and not harming the world, bringing peace and happiness to others.

In the past, the arhats changed their attitude from engaging in these negative karmas. Think, “Just as they abandoned negative karma, today I am also going to change my attitude and change my actions. I am going to abstain from those negative karmas.” Then take whatever number of vows you have decided to take.

[Rinpoche continues the refuge ceremony]

### **THREE THINGS TO BE ABANDONED AND THREE TO BE PRACTICED**

I’m not going to mention that, so please study the refuge book, where it talks about the three things to be abandoned and the three things to be practiced. I won’t explain now because it’s too late, but this is very important, so please study it. It is there.

And then there’s some general advice on the refuge card. At the end, I have also added Saint Francis’ prayer, his advice. He lived in Assisi, near where Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa is, our large Italian center. Assisi is where his holy body is, as well as the body of his chief disciple, a nun who had three hundred nun disciples. You can still see her body there. I mean, that was quite a number of years ago. I went with Lama Yeshe, but her body is still very well preserved. I don’t know what happened to his holy body. You can’t see it. It’s wrapped up and it has walls around it. Lama Yeshe sat down and meditated there.

No, you don’t have to kneel down; you can sit.

The first of the general advices is relying on holy beings, correctly devoting to the virtuous friend. Then, there is listening to Dharma as much as you can, and keeping in the mind the Dharma you have listened to. As well as listening to the Dharma as much as possible, reflecting and meditating on it as much as you can, whatever listening, reflecting and meditating that harmonizes with liberation.

As I explained when talking about the levels of motivation, listening, reflecting and meditating in the correct way becomes the cause of achieving liberation. It might have that meaning. It could also mean not following subjects that go against liberation, that hinder your progress, putting you on the wrong path. I guess it could mean that. Instead of achieving liberation, it becomes an obstacle for that. But here you should listen, reflect and meditate on that which harmonizes with liberation, the sorrowless state, and doesn’t become an obstacle.

There are four other things like that. The next one is not letting yourself be ruled by your senses. You should control your senses as much as possible. Of course, you can’t change instantly like that in one minute! [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] But the advice here is to not let your senses go to objects of the three poisonous minds, not allowing the objects of the three poisonous minds to take over your senses. If you practice thought transformation, if you keep your mind in renunciation, bodhicitta or right view, in guru devotion, when you do thought transformation, even if the object is there, it doesn’t become the cause of developing the three poisonous minds. You need to do this as much as possible.

Taking the higher vows, such as the eight Mahayana precepts you have been taking for the last two weeks, makes your life so meaningful. Taking the Mahayana precepts for the last two weeks has been going on during the November course at Kopan for many years. I think that is incredible. It makes your life so profitable, so meaningful. Even if you take the eight Mahayana precepts for just one day in your life, it's just unbelievable. I've already explained the benefits of living in morality, of abstaining from the eight negative karmas, so even doing it once in your life, just for one day, is amazing, unimaginable. If it's done with bodhicitta, you collect skies of merit. It becomes the cause of enlightenment. Everything becomes the cause of enlightenment if it's done with bodhicitta, so here we're talking about taking higher precepts for lay people and things like that. This advice doesn't mean everybody must become a monk or nun. It's not saying that! It's not threatening, not demanding that everybody becomes a monk or nun.

The next advice is having compassion for sentient beings, which means abandoning harming others and as much as possible bringing them to virtue. That means bringing to virtue those sentient beings that have a connection to you or who are around you, bringing them as much as possible into the path to happiness.

Next, the fourth one is relying on holy beings, listening to the Dharma as much as you can, keeping it in your mind—listening, reflecting and meditating as much as you can, harmonizing your mind with nirvana, with liberation.

Then, there is not allowing the senses to follow the objects of the three poisonous minds as much as possible. As much as possible not allowing sense objects to cause the three poisonous minds to arise. I think the second one may be similar, something like not indulging in the senses, and then there is taking the higher vows as much as possible.

That would mean the third one is having compassion for sentient beings, giving up harming them as much as possible. Then, the fourth would be bringing them to virtue. I think it has to be put together in that way.

The next one is attempting to make offerings to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha before you eat and drink. You can recite OM AH HUM to bless the food or drink, offering it to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, or you can do it like this, offering to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You can even offer to the guru, thinking that the guru is all the buddhas, all the Dharma, all the Sangha. In that way, you make offerings to the highest, most powerful object, and you collect the *most* extensive merit.

By making offerings to all the buddhas, you create numberless causes of enlightenment; by thinking of all the Dharma, you create numberless causes of enlightenment; and by thinking of the numberless Sangha, you create numberless causes of enlightenment. That means numberless causes of liberation from samsara, numberless causes of happiness of future lives. Saying it three or four times while thinking of the guru, who encompasses all the Three Rare Sublime Ones, you create the highest merit. That way is much simpler. Or you can offer to Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, thinking Guru Shakyamuni Buddha is all the gurus, all the numberless buddhas, the numberless Dharma and the numberless Sangha, everything. You can also offer like that. In that way, in just one second you collect unimaginable, unimaginable merit, like skies of merits.

There may be a small booklet or whatever showing the meditation on how to make offerings. If you want to understand more, you can look at that. But first, at the beginning generate a motivation of bodhicitta. Think, “The purpose of my life is to free all sentient beings from all the suffering and its causes, to bring them to enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment; therefore, I’m going to make this offering.” Then, you make the offering. Your practice of offering will be vast; you will collect the most merit, even if it’s just offering a candy, a piece of fruit or a piece of biscuit—even half a biscuit! With this meditation, from this one small candy or spoonful of food, you collect unbelievable, unbelievable, unbelievable merit. You should understand that.

You can also visualize yourself as Guru Shakyamuni Buddha and make the offering. It’s the same as I explained before. With every bite, with every spoonful of food, with every sip of drink, you collect the most extensive merit. With every tiny bit of food and drink, you become closer to enlightenment and closer to enlightening all sentient beings. That’s amazing. Or you can visualize Guru Shakyamuni in your heart and with every bite and drink you make the offering. Whichever way suits you. Then, while you are eating and drinking, with each spoonful of food or sip of drink, you collect the most extensive merit. Unbelievable.

Otherwise, what happens? The food you are eating now is the result of your past good karma. Just enjoying it [without collecting merit] means that your past good karma has finished. It’s like you have money from having worked in the past, but now you are just spending it, so your money is running out. The karma you created in the past, you’re just making it finish. It makes you run out of the little past good karma you have. That’s one thing.

The other thing is what happens if you don’t do this food offering practice. Eating and drinking become the cause of samsara, the cause to be reborn again in samsara, and because you are eating with the attachment in the lower realms.

There’s another danger, which is the pollution, *kor*,<sup>7</sup> that can happen. [If you have taken vows] but you are not living in them purely, there’s heavy pollution. Therefore, there is more danger if you make offering [of your food], visualizing yourself as a deity when you haven’t received any initiation. Kyabje Denma Lochö Rinpoche said you might be able to visualize Guru Shakyamuni Buddha because he is the present founder of the Buddhadharma. Rinpoche said visualizing Guru Shakyamuni Buddha might be OK, even though you haven’t received a great initiation. In that case, you can do that.

Visualizing the food transformed into nectar, you then visualize yourself as the deity Shakyamuni Buddha. In that way, it doesn’t make you run out of the little merit, the good karma, you have collected in the past that you are living on now. That doesn’t run out, and instead of that, you collect unbelievable merit. The other thing is that your eating and drinking doesn’t become the cause of samsara, to reincarnate again, particularly in the lower realms. It becomes protection from receiving pollution to the mind, which is an obstacle for realizations. There are many benefits like that.

The next advice is to never give up the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, even if it causes danger to your life. Don’t give up protecting the advice. Then, with these practices, please the Three Rare Sublime Ones.

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<sup>7</sup> Wylie: *dkor*. A multi-layered term that can mean wealth or material offerings given to the Sangha and the Three Jewels, and can also have a negative connotation of misusing offerings.

The last one is that in everyday life you should rely on no other refuge than the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, thinking in your heart you have no other hope. [Rinpoche sneezes a couple of times] Sorry, disaster happened! *I* have no other hope in my heart. Anyway, always go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and have no other refuge.

Go for refuge three times in the day and three times at night. When you get up, do three prostrations to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and before going to bed do three prostrations. It doesn't mean you shouldn't do more! But at least prostrate three times in the morning and three times at night. I mean, if you do prostrations while reciting the Thirty-five Buddhas, that's amazing. You can do that in the morning, and then in the evening you can do Vajrasattva with prostrations, reciting the mantra twenty-one times. Whichever practice you do has the refuge prayer, so the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are there. It comes in the prayer, so the commitment to go for refuge three times in the day and three times at night is done when you recite those prayers.

This is the general advice from the Buddha on how to make our life most meaningful, most productive, because this life, this general human life, and especially this perfect human life, is most rare. First, a human life is most rare. The number of sentient beings who reincarnate in the hell realm is like the number of atoms of this earth, the dust of this earth. The number of sentient beings who reincarnate as hungry ghosts is the number of sand grains of the ocean. Unbelievable. The number of sentient beings who reincarnate as animals is like the number of blades of grass on all the mountains and hills in this world—uncountable.

Every day, every hour, every minute, every second, how many sentient beings reincarnate in those realms? The number of sentient beings who reincarnate in the upper realms, the human or deva realms, is very small. It's so rare; the number is so small. The Buddha used this example. If you scratch the earth, the dirt you collect between your nails is like the number of human beings compared with all the animals in the world. If the number of human beings is very small, the number who attain a perfect human body is much rarer.

And this life lasts a very short time, like last night's dream or a flash of lightning. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] It happens and then, the next minute it's gone. It's like that. Thinking we will live like this for many years is a totally wrong concept. This concept of permanence is a wrong concept. It always cheats us, not allowing us to achieve enlightenment, to achieve liberation from samsara, or even to achieve the happiness of future lives. We have this life for just a very short time. Therefore, we need to do our best during that short time. Whatever the best is in this life, we must do it, not only for ourselves but also for the benefit of all sentient beings. So, please rejoice in all this.

## DEDICATIONS

Yeah, now we dedicate. No, I mean three prostrations to the lama, OK!

*Now*, we dedicate. Rejoice greatly in having this opportunity to take refuge and especially to take these vows to achieve liberation and enlightenment and for the peace and happiness of all sentient beings, particularly the peace and happiness in this world. Rejoice that you are able to do something, you are able to offer something that is most practical.

Now we dedicate.

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may bodhicitta be actualized within my heart and in the hearts of my family members, and in the hearts of all the sentient beings, without delay of even a second. And in those whose hearts bodhicitta has been generated, may it increase.

“For the leaders of the world and all the people who have thoughts to harm to the world, to harm people, to harm others, may bodhicitta be generated in their hearts.” Dedicate the merits collected by you and by all others.

[Rinpoche and the students recite prayers in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and collected by others, may the paramita of morality be completed by keeping it without any mistake and without pride and keeping it pure. May this happen for myself and for all sentient beings.”

[Rinpoche and the students recite prayers in Tibetan]

Then, please dedicate the merits. “Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and collected by others, in all our lifetimes, may I and all sentient beings, including my family members, have Lama Tsongkhapa as our direct guru. And may we never separate from the pure path that pleases all the buddhas. May the complete path to enlightenment be actualized within my own heart, just as revealed by Lama Tsongkhapa, Nagarjuna and Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and just as Marpa, Milarepa and Padmasambhava have actualized.” So, think like that.

[Rinpoche and the students recite prayers in Tibetan]

“Due to all the three-time merits collected by me and collected by others, may I be able to offer limitless skies of benefit to sentient beings and to the teachings of the Buddha by having the same qualities within me as Lama Tsongkhapa has. From now on, in every second, may it be like that.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, may all the father, mother sentient beings have happiness; may the three lower realm beings be empty forever; may all the bodhisattvas’ prayers succeed immediately. May I be able to cause all of this to happen by myself alone.

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, by having actualized bodhicitta in the hearts of all sentient beings in this world, may war, famine, disease, torture, poverty, sicknesses, dangers of fire, water, air, earthquakes, tsunamis, all these things, be stopped immediately wherever it’s happening. May nobody in this world experience these things forever.”

We dedicate however many merits we have collected during this course and today by having taken refuge and so forth in this way. “May this world be filled with perfect peace and happiness, particularly in Burma and Iraq and all those many countries where there’s so much killing, where there are so many problems.” Dedicate your merits especially for the people of all those countries to have peace and happiness.

“Due to all the past, present and future...” Now, this is my hobby!

“Due to all the past, present and future merits collected by me, the three-time merits collected by others, which exist but do not exist from their own side, which are totally empty; may the I, which exists but does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty; achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which does not exist from its own side, which is totally empty.”

If you can try to feel that, something very deep, there is nothing to discriminate this and that. In emptiness there are not all these things, this and that, just one thing. There’s no “my merits” and “others’ merits.” There’s no I, there’s no Buddha’s enlightenment, no this and that.

“And lead all the sentient beings, who exist but who do not exist from their own side, who are totally empty, to achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha’s enlightenment, which exists but which is empty, by myself alone, who exists but who is empty from its own side.

“I dedicate all the merits to be able to follow the holy extensive deeds of the bodhisattvas Samantabhadra and Manjugosha as they realize. I dedicate all the merits in the same way that the three-time buddhas dedicate their merits.”

[Rinpoche speaks to someone in Tibetan]

Where are the books? Maybe we’ll do it now or tomorrow? Maybe tomorrow, OK?

[Rinpoche and the students recite prayers in Tibetan]

So, good morning. Today, it really is “good morning!

## **VISITING THE HOLY PLACES**

One thing that is very good, which maybe we have to do, is to go to Boudha to circumambulate the stupa and also to go to Swayambhunath. It has never happened in past courses. I mean, individually people have gone, but we never did it as a group, taking the opportunity to circumambulate the Boudhanath and Swayambhunath stupas. If we don’t see two, at least see one. You came from very far away, from the West. You have all spent a lot of money to come here and yet you don’t get the chance to even circumambulate this enlightenment stupa, this most holy object, built by holy beings, or the crystal stupa inside the Swayambhunath mountain that is a manifestation of Buddha’s holy mind, the dharmakaya.

When Kathmandu [emerged from] the lake, a crystal stupa naturally appeared. It was not made by hand but was a manifestation of Buddha’s dharmakaya. It is covered by earth inside the mountain. It’s also regarded as Heruka’s palace, in the mountain. The top stupa was built by Padmasambhava, when Padmasambhava returned after purifying the country of Tibet and spreading the Dharma in Tibet. It is said he returned and built that stupa. I thought the main one is on top but actually it’s inside the mountain. There’s a whole story. That’s why most people circumambulate down below.

We have never done this before as a group. I think, maybe one time we went there to do puja, in the past, many, many years ago. I feel this is a great loss, to come all the way with a lot of expenses and with no certainty you will have the opportunity to come back again [and not go to these holy places]. Therefore, it is very important to take even one circumambulation and prayer. If you don't know how to pray, you can just read the lamrim prayer to achieve all the path, then you can do the *King of Prayers*, with those extensive bodhisattva prayers, thinking "Whatever prayers the buddhas and bodhisattvas make, if I make the same prayer, it will happen to me."

Anyway, you can recite a lamrim prayer; that's a requesting prayer. Then, at the end, if you can, you can do the bodhisattva's extensive prayer, the *King of Prayers* and Lama Tsongkhapa's very special *Prayer for the Beginning, Middle and End of Practice*. That's a very important prayer. When Lama Yeshe dedicated his merits, he especially recited this one. Every stanza is very important.

I feel it's a pity to come all the way for this course without seeing the stupas. They are just there. Soon, you will have to go back and then it's not sure when it will happen again. It's not sure whether you will have the opportunity to come back or not. These stupas were built by holy beings to benefit us sentient beings and many holy beings, not only the ones who had the idea to build them and who built them, but the numberless buddhas and bodhisattvas abiding in them in that form, benefiting and liberating us sentient beings. There are so many holy beings in these holy places that we can make prayers to. They are there to benefit us sentient beings.

Being in a holy place where somebody has achieved realizations and become enlightened, we ordinary beings receive blessings. And if we do practice there, it moves our mind. It is easy to transform our mind, easy to have attainments, because those great enlightened beings, those great bodhisattvas, blessed the place. Sometimes the merit we create is much more. It is said that if we practice at Bodhgaya, the merit increases eight times. It's so easy to transform the mind in those places because they have been blessed by many enlightened beings, by bodhisattvas. It's also to develop devotion and from that we receive blessings. We ordinary beings go there to receive blessings. That is the purpose of pilgrimage. That's why pilgrimage is important; it is to transform our mind into the Dharma, to purify the mind, to collect merit, to have realizations. That's the purpose of pilgrimage.

Probably it's best to go in the middle of the night, when there are less people, although maybe there are more dogs at that time. At certain times, there are a lot of people and it's difficult. Maybe we have to think of the times when there are less people so that you can circumambulate. Even one circumambulation, even making one prayer, that will make a difference to your life. It depends also on how long before you have to leave.

So that's it. I thought just to express that. So, thank you very much.

## Lecture 5

December 11, 2007

### MEDITATION ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

[Rinpoche and students chant prayers]

So, good afternoon.

Think, “The purpose of my life is to benefit sentient beings equaling the limitless sky. Therefore, I must achieve full enlightenment; therefore, I need to actualize the path. For that I need to purify the defilements, therefore I’m going to take the oral transmission of the *Confession of a Bodhisattva’s Downfalls to the Thirty-Five Buddhas*.”

We’ll do the oral transmission of that and maybe also talk about some of the benefits of circumambulation, how these practices are an important support to the mind, helping the mind become transformed so we can achieve ultimate happiness, liberation from samsara and full enlightenment, and then be able to liberate the numberless sentient beings in the hell realm, the hungry ghost realm, the animal realm, the human realm, and the sura and asura realms, including the form and formless realms. There are numberless of them, so the main purpose or goal of our life, why we are living, is to free each sentient being in each realm from suffering and its causes, and bring them to enlightenment. That is why we spend so much money on shelter, to have a house, to protect this body, and why we spend so much money on food and drinks and clothes, so much money on medicine when we are sick, and on many things. The reason we keep so busy in life, the whole purpose is to benefit others. Otherwise, our life has no meaning.

The only meaning is to benefit other sentient beings; we are living this life to benefit other sentient beings. Therefore, all the money we spend staying alive, all the time we spend working, that is all for other sentient beings. When the goal is for others, when that is our attitude in life, when our life is for others, then our whole life is made meaningful. The thought of bodhicitta, of benefiting other sentient beings, living our everyday life with that thought, gives meaning to everything. Otherwise, with the self-cherishing thought, all those other things are utterly meaningless. No matter how hard we work, no matter how many hardships we bear to study and work, it has no meaning. The motivation we have, whether we live our life with the self-cherishing thought or the thought of benefiting others, makes a huge difference; it’s like the difference between the earth and the sky, or between poopoo and gold!

Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri what the quick way was to achieve enlightenment. He explained it was to practice purification and collect extensive merit—purifying the obstacles for attaining the path to enlightenment and collecting extensive merits—and making request to the guru with one-pointed devotion. Devotion means looking at the guru as a buddha, as explained in the sutra teachings of the Buddha when he was in the nirmanakaya aspect. He explained how to devote to the virtuous friend in that aspect and also in the deity aspect, as Vajradhara. First, we look at [the guru as a] buddha, using quotations and reasonings, and then, seeing them as a buddha, with that devotion we make a one-pointed request to be granted blessings to have attainments.

Then, the other thing is the actual body of the teachings, the mind training, meditating on the stages of the path to enlightenment, the lamrim. That's the actual body.

I was going to talk about using this quotation. So many people who like meditation are not sure what subject to meditate on. The subject of meditation is one question, as I mentioned last night. I think I made it clear that how to meditate is a huge question. If we make a mistake from the beginning, we totally waste our life. If our motivation is not correct from the beginning, if our motivation is not Dharma, we totally waste our life, and it also becomes negative karma. We meditate our whole life—we believe we are meditating—but we are just creating negative karma. While we are creating many other negative karmas in our daily life, meditating becomes another extra negative karma. As I mentioned yesterday, the subject of the meditation itself is another question, determining whether it makes life meaningful or not, useful or not.

Therefore, we need to be as intelligent as possible, learning as extensively as possible the heart of Buddhist philosophy, the lamrim, the heart of Buddhadharma, the heart of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha, which are divided into the three baskets of teachings. The heart of all that is the lamrim, the graduated path of the three capable beings. It can also be called the three scopes. That translation has been around for a long time and it's OK, but it's not an exact translation from the Tibetan. It's better to call it the graduated path of the three capable beings. *Capable beings* has a much more exact meaning than just the three scopes. Anyway, I'm not going to expand on that.

Hopefully, we can also do the oral transmission of *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, the basis of the lamrim. Hopefully, but I'm not sure. Anyway, I'll leave that until later, otherwise you won't reach the stupa! Maybe you'll go a little bit down to Kathmandu!

Anyway, there are so many people who meditate but not necessarily according to the path that the Buddha has revealed. The yogis, the pandits, who followed him analyzed, they checked, they experimented, just as scientists experiment, and they actualized the path as revealed by Omniscient One, who has himself actualized the whole path. So, this is not a path that nobody has practiced, that nobody has used to achieve liberation. It's not that the Buddha said this is the path to liberation, but nobody has done that, so there is no proof.

What we practice must lead us somewhere, like a main road. These pandits checked up on what was revealed by the Buddha and put it into practice, and through that, they actualized the path. Up to now—and even in this present time—so many meditators have had attainments by correctly following what the Buddha explained. Lama Tsongkhapa and those pandits and yogis explained it is like that.

Even now, there are many meditators having realizations of the path, such as guru devotion, the three principal aspects of the path and the two stages of tantra. Even these days, there are many meditators who can prove that the path works, that it is true. There are so many pandits and yogis in the past, like stars in the nighttime, who have achieved enlightenment—and not only in the past. There are so many stories you can read about how they practiced and achieved enlightenment. We usually refer to the great yogis of the past, of ancient times, many hundreds of years ago, like Milarepa and Lama Tsongkhapa, but even at present there are many great masters, many great meditators, who are totally renounced, who practice exactly as explained in the texts. So, even nowadays there's proof.

That means there is no hindrances if we practice correctly. Of course, if from our side we made mistakes, if we don't practice correctly, realizations won't happen. Even in the works of this life, if things are not done properly, we won't succeed. If we don't do it properly, even just trying to achieve the happiness of this life, it won't happen. So it's very simple. There's no question about achieving liberation and enlightenment. We have to do it correctly as it has been explained. There's no cheating from the side of Dharma. If we do it correctly, we can definitely attain realizations.

As I was saying, there are many people who like to meditate but, because they don't know how to meditate, everything becomes negative karma. We can spend our whole life and nothing happens. Even if we have to spend our whole life having to bear so many hardships, still nothing happens. There is even the danger that our mind just becomes duller and duller. We lose our sharpness; we lose our wisdom. Unless we choose a wise subject, unless we know how to meditate, we can become dull and forgetful. So many difficulties will arise in our life.

We can also get *lung*, wind disease. Maybe those of you who are doing the course for the first time have never heard of *lung*, but *lung* is very famous. Maybe you haven't come to know it yet! With lung, instead of progressing in the meditation, we get so much pain in the heart and we can't concentrate. Life becomes very difficult. That is due to lack of knowledge and not practicing correctly. Many people are like that, actually wasting their time while believing they are meditating. They think they are doing something very positive, some worthwhile meditation, but it's not like that in reality.

The conclusion is that now you are here doing the Kopan course, it's not just a meditation course, it's a lamrim course. You are unbelievably fortunate to have this opportunity to practice the heart of the 84,000 teachings of the Buddha. Leaving aside actually meditating on it, practicing it, just to have the opportunity to listen to the correct teachings of the path to the happiness of future lives and to liberation and enlightenment, that in itself is something amazing. It's a miracle.

In the world, [very few people are Buddhists] and even among the Buddhists, not every Buddhist has the opportunity to hear the lamrim teachings. Even though Buddhists may have heard of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, that doesn't mean they have this opportunity to hear the lamrim teachings. So you see, this is most amazing. Even though you might not realize it now, the more you learn and meditate, the more you will realize just how fortunate you are. You will realize later, as you continue to practice and discover, that you have got on the right track. It means some good karma created in the past has ripened, maybe created in Tibet or maybe in Africa, or somewhere!

Many people think that to meditate you just [sit on a cushion]. That's enough. You don't need to collect merits, you don't need to do prostrations, you don't need to do circumambulations. You don't need to do all these various practices to purify the mind and to collect merit. But you need all that, especially the seven-limb practice, that creates the cause of enlightenment. The seven-limb practice has the limb of prostration, then the limb of offering, the limb of confession, the limb of rejoicing, the limb of persuading the holy mind to remain, the limb of requesting them to turn the Wheel of Dharma, and the limb of dedication. Doing this practice is the heart, the essence, to purify the defilements, the negative karmas, the obstacles for attainment, and to collect necessary conditions, the merit. And with rejoicing and dedicating, that makes the merits increase.

This is a kind of preliminary practice, a preparation, before meditating on the lamrim, the actual body of the practice. Then, after the actual body of the practice, at the end there is the dedication,

the completion. So, a proper meditation practice has these three aspects: the preparation or preliminaries, the actual body and the completion. Any Dharma practice, any virtuous practice, should have these three.

For example, for a seed to grow, we need the right soil, water, warmth, and so forth—all these conditions. Then, the seed can produce a stem. Without all these conditions, the seed cannot produce a stem. In the same way, we can't have realizations without creating the cause, without having the necessary conditions. Collecting extensive merit is like the fuel. Without fuel, vehicles like cars and airplanes cannot function. We also need purification practices to pacify the obstacles, the defilements, the negative karmas.

By looking at the guru as a buddha, by seeing a buddha, then by one-pointedly requesting the guru with devotion, that is the cause to receive the blessings of the guru, the cause to attain the realizations of the whole path of enlightenment. That is like putting water on the seed. Then, because we have buddha nature, the realizations come from within.

I have already explained the importance of circumambulations, but why do we need to do this and many other practices, such as prostrations and offering mandala? Why? Here, I'm giving a brief introduction. This is what Lama Tsongkhapa asked Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom, the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom. Lama Tsongkhapa received almost all of his teachings on sutra and tantra from Manjushri. He received them like guru and disciple having communication, not from a meditative experience or a vision, not like that, but with actual direct contact, with the actual senses.

Many people think that meditation alone is enough, just sitting on a cushion is enough, but that alone won't do anything, unless we have done a lot of purification. If we have purified in our past lives and collected a lot of merit, that's different, of course. In this life, the minute we hear a teaching [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] we get a realization, or the minute we read a Dharma text we get a realization. That's because in the past we have already done so much purification and collected so much merit. Then, even if it's not done in this life, it has already been done in our past lives. It still depends on collecting extensive merits and making purification.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF GURU DEVOTION**

The most important thing is this. What brings all the success is following the guru's advice and correctly devoting to the guru with thought and action. Devoting with thought means looking at the guru as a buddha, seeing the guru as a buddha, and continuously having guru devotion. Correctly devoting with action, the main practice is obeying the guru's advice, whatever advice is given, without disregarding even the smallest piece of advice. Trying to perfectly do whatever the guru advises seems to be the most important thing. Correctly devoting to the virtuous friend with thought and action, the main one is action.

The other thing is this. Because the guru is the most powerful holy object, we collect the most merit and purify the most defilements, not only each day, each hour, each minute, even each second, by following his advice or offering service. By doing that, many millions and billions of lifetimes, many eons of negative karma get purified—even just by offering service, because the guru is the most powerful object. Offering service is the most powerful purification. Each moment in our daily life so

many eons of negative karma get purified. By pleasing the holy mind of the virtuous friend, that's the quickest, most powerful way to purify all the defilements and have attainments; it is the quickest way to achieve enlightenment.

Sorry, I got carried away again!

There's a story of a Drepung geshe—sorry I don't know his name—who was a very close friend of His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama, or the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Sorry, my memory is not so good. He asked His Holiness where he would be reborn in his next life. His Holiness replied that straight after he died, he would be born as a cow with beautiful horns. The geshe thought that was impossible because first you have to go through the intermediate stage, then you go into the womb of the cow and only then, when you come out, will you be reborn like that, so being immediately born as a cow with blue horns was impossible. Hearing that, His Holiness laughed and laughed and laughed. I think the geshe may have asked again, and His Holiness said that now he would be born a human being. The geshe said, "Just now you said I would be born as a cow, so how is it possible that I will now be born as human being?" His Holiness replied that it is because he was a holy being and the geshe had made him happy.

The geshe had spoken directly to His Holiness, challenging him, saying it was impossible! First you have to go through the intermediate stage and then it takes nine months in the womb, so to be born *immediately* as a cow with blue horns is impossible. Being so forthright had made His Holiness laugh so much. And because he was a special holy being, the geshe making him happy purified all that negative karma, so that he could now be born a human being. I'm just giving this as an example, just to get the idea.

With a powerful holy object, we can change some heavy negative karma immediately, in that second. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] You get the idea here? That is due to the power of the guru or due to the kindness of the guru.

Even by offering service for a minute or a second is unbelievably powerful purification. So many eons of negative karma get purified. Then, we become closer to attaining the realizations of the path to liberation and closer to enlightenment.

The third point is [making offerings]. If we don't have any materials for the offerings in order to collect merit, that's not the main point, it's not important. If we have them, we can make offerings in order to collect merit, but the main thing is following the guru's advice.

It's important to practice guru devotion by looking at the guru as a buddha, seeing the guru as a buddha, because when we have that realization, when we have that stable mind in guru devotion, when we have that strong devotion, we have no problems. We have no difficulties following their advice, no matter what advice they give, and that brings incredible joy. Because we see all the benefits, because we have a pure mind of devotion, we see the advice as coming from a buddha, and we have total reliance on that. That brings incredible joy, bliss, instead of finding difficulties because of our self-cherishing thought, our ego, causing us to find it difficult to obey the advice. With a realization of stable devotion, it is an incredible joy to follow the guru's advice, whatever is given. Then, it becomes so smooth to attain all the realizations without obstacles all the way up to enlightenment.

That was just one example of pleasing the guru. The geshe didn't offer any big service; he just made the guru happy, and just by that, it totally changed his rebirth.

## **BOUDHANATH STUPA**

So now, the Boudhanath Stupa. Generally, any Buddha statue or stupa is a manifestation of the holy body and holy mind. A stupa is the manifestation of the holy mind, the dharmakaya. Any text is an embodiment of the holy speech. I think sometimes we need some explanation of a Dharma point or something—this doesn't only have to be me; it may also happen to you—and the same day or after a few days, we suddenly find that explanation in a text. That happens many times. I think this is the Buddha, manifesting in the text to guide us, to show us what we need to learn. I think there's definitely something there like that. It is mentioned in the *Arya Sanghata Sutra* that the holy text is a manifestation of the Buddha. There's a quotation. We have some difficulties in life and then we see the exact advice there, in a text we are reading. It comes at that time. [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] I think this is the Buddha manifesting in the form of a Dharma text, guiding us.

I've remembered one more story, because I mentioned that story with His Holiness. Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was the teacher who first taught the philosophical teaching to me at Buxa. When Geshe Rabten Rinpoche was in Dharamsala, whenever he heard some story that makes you laugh or something interesting, he would go down to offer it to His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, his root guru. It's quite a long walk down to lower Dharamsala from upper Dharamsala, but he would walk down, then offer a story to His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche to make him laugh, to make the holy mind happy.

Anyway, Boudhanath Stupa was built by a woman called Jadzima, who was looking after chickens. I think maybe one of her four sons looked after pigs or something, I don't remember. She had this wish to build this stupa. She had this intention, so she requested the king of Nepal and he agreed. Normally, he would have denied her request because she was very poor, but somehow "Yes" just slipped out of the king's mouth! All the ministers were surprised. That's why the stupa is called *Ja rung kha shor*. *Kha shor* means "slipped out," and *ja rung* means "it can be done." I heard this story from my brother, Sangye, who said that whatever the Nepalese king said had to be done. If he said "Kill" then even if the person ran away his bodyguards would have to kill them, or if it was an animal they would have to shoot it.

Anyway, she wouldn't normally have gotten permission, but this happened. She built the stupa up to the vase, and then she passed away. Then, her four sons completed the rest of the stupa. After they completed it, they all stood in front of it and each made a vow. The oldest one prayed for all the buddhas and bodhisattvas to descend and absorb into the stupa during that time. Therefore, the name of the stupa is All-Encompassing Wish-fulfilling Stupa. Anybody who prays to the stupa will get all their wishes fulfilled, whatever prayer they make.

As the four brothers were standing there, they each made a prayer. The oldest brother prayed, "May I be a Dharma king in Tibet, the Snow Land." The next one prayed, "May I become the minister to help that brother spread the Dharma in Tibet." Then, the next brother prayed, "May I become an abbot to preserve and spread the lineage of the vows." And the fourth brother prayed, "When the others have become king and helped spread the Dharma, may I be a powerful yogi to pacify any obstacles."

There are more stories, but the main one is about these four brothers. There's a story about a cow which carried the stone, but the four brothers never prayed for the cow and it made the wrong prayer, "In Tibet, when they spread Dharma, I will destroy it." At that time, there was a bird who knew the cow had made this wrong prayer, who then made the prayer to kill the irreligious king who destroyed Buddhadharmā in Tibet. The bird made that prayer.

Anyway, the main thing is the four brothers who made the prayers. The oldest brother who made the prayer to be a Dharma king in Tibet and spread Dharma, was born as Trisong Detsen, the Dharma king in Tibet, in his next life. The next one became a minister to support the king to spread the Dharma. I don't remember his name. The third one became the abbot who spread the lineage of the vows in Tibet, Khenpo Bodhisattva [Shantarakshita]. They built the first monastery in central Tibet, which is called now Samye. However, whatever the people built during the day, the spirits would tear down at night. It happened like this for so many days, again and again.

The son who was the minister mentioned to the king that there was a powerful yogi in India called Padmasambhava, and they should invite him. When Padmasambhava arrived from India, he arose as a powerful deity—I don't remember the name clearly—and hooked all those spirits. Three ran away, according to the karma of Tibetans, but he was able to subdue the other twelve. He made them take the commitment to become Dharma protectors. They are situated in Tibet around the Himalayan ridge mountains to protect the Dharma.

Apart from a small group of Tibetan Muslims, other religions have never spread in Tibet. An old missionary lady tried to spread Christianity in Tibet. She tried to go to the upper part of Tibet but was blocked, so she went all the way back to China and then returned to Tibet to spread Christianity, but she was still unable to do so. These protectors guard the Himalayan ridge mountains.

Padmasambhava purified the whole of Tibet and spread the Dharma. Because of that, Buddhism was able to be preserved in Tibet and last for a long time. In Tibet the whole thing, the whole interest was just the Dharma. There were no companies built by outside countries; there was no material development, nothing. Everybody's whole purpose, everybody's main interest was the Dharma—meditating in the caves or in a monastery or nunnery, studying—the Dharma was the only thing. There were very few distractions in life; besides the Dharma, nothing happened. So, Buddhism stayed very strong and many people, like stars at nighttime, attained the path and became bodhisattvas and buddhas, attaining enlightenment. So many mountains have caves like ants' nests. Unbelievable. Now, so much has been destroyed, but there are still some caves left, like many holes in the mountains.

When the mainland Chinese army took over Tibet and destroyed so much, quite a number of top learned ones were able to escape. Not all the monks, but some were able to escape Tibet. Then, due to His Holiness's kindness, they were able to establish monasteries and continue the education here, which was passed on to young ones. And they became senior teachers and then too passed it on.

Now, Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism has spread all over the world, even to the West, where it has been dark, without the light of Dharma for thousands of years but has now been brought the light of Dharma. Every year, tens of thousands of people everywhere are able to meet the Buddhadharmā and follow the path to enlightenment. They are able to make their life meaningful, finding answers

in their life from the Buddhadharma, answers they could not find answer from Western culture or education. They are able to find much peace and happiness in life.

All these opportunities that so many people have, including us here at Kopan, is due to Buddhism having been preserved in Tibet for so many hundreds and hundreds of years, with so many beings actualizing [the path]. And all that is because of the mother who built the stupa and the four brothers who completed it and made prayers to it to spread the Dharma in Tibet. Because of the flourishing of Buddhadharma in Tibet, it has spread all over the world and so many people are now able to meet the Buddhadharma, including us. It's all due to that stupa down there, the Boudhanath Stupa. That's why I say that before leaving, before going back to the West, you must at least do even one circumambulation and make one prayer. We get unbelievable benefit from that stupa.

It's especially said that when you first come to Nepal and see the stupa, either from the airplane or anywhere, whatever prayer you make at that time will be successful. I met one nun from Brazil who knew this story and she made a strong prayer when she first saw the stupa to be able to build a nunnery in Brazil. Right after she left Nepal, everything came together and she was able to build a nunnery in Brazil. I don't know whether it was in Rio de Janeiro or not, maybe Rio de Janeiro, where there's this huge Christ on a cross. [The students try to correct Rinpoche's pronunciation.] Anyway, because she knew the story before she came, she made a very strong prayer and then it happened. She told me this when she invited me to stay at her parents' house. She was building the nunnery or maybe it was finished or something. Anyway, even normally, whenever you see the stupa, it's very important to make a prayer.

#### **MORE BENEFITS OF OFFERING AND CIRCUMABULATING**

Another benefit of making offerings is developing clairvoyance, remembering past lives, both ours and those of others, seeing other sentient beings' past life connections, past life behaviors and so forth. Because we can see their past life behavior, all the behavior that was done in the past, with clairvoyance by knowing that, we can explain to them the Dharma that exactly fits their mind, that suits their element, what they like, what they wish. In that way, we are able to exactly teach the Dharma so that it helps. This benefit is knowing other's mind through clairvoyance, being able to read others' minds.

There are six kinds of clairvoyance. The other five are mundane forms of clairvoyance, but the sixth is having purified all the defilements, having ceased all the defilements. That is a quality that only the Buddha, the Omniscient One, has. Except this one, the other five forms of clairvoyance are common. They are not especially Buddhist; they happen in Hinduism as well.

Lama Atisha said that in order to help others, in order to work for other sentient beings, we must have clairvoyance. He was talking about *shamatha*, saying that by achieving shamatha we can achieve clairvoyance. If we have clairvoyance, we can reveal the Dharma, helping in a way that exactly fits the needs of the being. Otherwise, it hurts them if we say something contradictory to their wishes or their level of mind, or they don't have the karma to benefit from the advice. There are many mistakes we can make without clairvoyance.

The specific advice here is to make as many light offerings as possible to the merit field, to the guru, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. This is the specific benefit of offering light, but of course, the end

result of any offering to the Buddha is liberation from samsara and enlightenment. That's the same with any offering we make to the Buddha, to a statue, stupa or scripture of the Buddha.

The last two benefits refer to any type of offering, such as circumambulations and prostrations, but there are also specific benefits, for example, by offering incense we develop pure morality in this and future lives. The specific benefit of offering light is clairvoyance to develop Dharma wisdom. So, it's very important among the offerings to attempt to make light offerings as much as possible, in order to have clairvoyance to develop Dharma wisdom. There are eight benefits in general and every offering has ten benefits. Many of these ten benefits are explained in sutra teachings by the Buddha.

By circumambulating a stupa, we will become a tathagata in the world, adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications. We will have a golden-colored holy body. It's mentioned in the Chenrezig sutra that anyone who circumambulates the stupa of the Savior of the World—meaning the Buddha—in all the lifetimes when they engage in the activities of enlightenment, following the path to enlightenment, they will have memory, remembrance, wisdom, merit, and they will have no fear. By having circumambulated the stupa, in all our lifetimes we will receive offerings from devas, nagas, harm-givers and cannibals. Even those harmful beings will make offerings to us and worship us. We will abandon the eight freedoms... Sorry! Not eight freedoms, we will abandon the eight states that allow us no freedom to practice the Dharma, so it's the same as before.

Then, it pleases the Light of the World—again meaning the Buddha. And we are able to offer service again and again to the Buddha. We will hear teachings on emptiness, on selflessness, and we won't be ignorant in the Dharma. We will quickly achieve devotion. We will be learned in exactly understanding the meaning of the Dharma, of the path. Anyone who circumambulates the holy stupa of the Savior of the World, even if we expressed the benefits for ten million eons, it wouldn't be finished. I think there are so many other benefits, but I think that's enough for now.

## **THE BENEFITS OF PROSTRATING**

Putting our palms together in prostration has eight benefits, although different texts explain ten benefits. However, this is just to get some idea of the benefits of prostrations. As you may have heard, we collect unimaginable merit. For each atom of the ground that our body covers, we create the cause to be born as a wheel-turning king a thousand lifetimes. There cannot be two wheel-turning kings in this world, only one. The Buddha who showed the twelve deeds can only be one, not two at the same time in the same world, and there cannot be two wheel-turning kings at the same time. A wheel-turning king is incomparable with other kings.

When a wheel-turning king comes into this world, they have power and influence, allowing everybody in this world, every human, to abide in virtue. The wheel-turning king influences everybody to live in the ten virtues and abstain from ten nonvirtues. We know that is not easy! So, that power is one benefit.

To be born as a wheel-turning king we need to collect inconceivable merits. Therefore, if there's one atom of our body that covers the ground when we do prostrations to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we create the karma to be born as a wheel-turning king for a thousand lifetimes. Because Kōpan mountain is higher, when we prostrate from here, on this floor in the gompa, because the

atoms go to the center of the earth, it makes a huge difference. There is a huge difference between prostrating down below the mountain and prostrating here, an unbelievable huge difference.

However many atoms our body covers by prostrating, we create the karma to be born as a wheel-turning king for the thousands of lifetimes equaling the number of atoms our body covers. Even our small toes—not our legs, I’m talking about toes, big toes and small toes—when we do a prostration, even just the small toes, the atoms covered from here down to the center of the world is unconceivable. If we have long nails, of course, from here down to the bottom of the earth! An unbelievable number of atoms are covered. And no question if we have long hair and long fingernails. This is a benefit of having long hair while prostrating! The atoms covered by that long hair means so many more thousands of lifetimes as a wheel-turning king. Of course, at other times long hair gives us a lot of work. A lot of time goes into shaping the hair. But if we prostrate, the longer our hair, the more merit we create because of what it covers. Can you imagine the uncountable number of atoms from here to the center of the world that it covers, and we have created the cause to be born a wheel-turning king for the thousands of lifetimes equaling that many atoms our hair covers. It’s just amazing.

I think this is something you must understand well because this is an incredible advantage. It gives us inspiration to do prostrations. To be born as one wheel-turning king we have to collect inconceivable merit. We have to think of that. But that doesn’t mean we have to be born as a wheel-turning king! The Buddha is giving us an idea how much merit we collect, but it depends on where we dedicate the merit. The minute we prostrate to the Buddha, that immediately [Rinpoche snaps his fingers] becomes the cause of enlightenment, the cause of liberation and the happiness of future lives, all that.

Lama Tsongkhapa explained a special technique to make one prostration create the most extensive merit. When you do a prostration, even though you have only one body in reality, you visualize your body numberless times lying down from the four directions, the four corners, as you prostrate to the holy object, the statue, stupa, scripture, or whatever. As Lama Tsongkhapa explained, if you visualize another body and prostrate, you collect the same merit as two actual bodies prostrating. Therefore, I normally advise, maybe if you visualize Thousand-Arm Chenrezig, it’s very easy to cover the whole ground from the four directions, the corners. You can do that visualization right after you put your forehead on the ground. However many bodies you are able to visualize, you create unbelievable, unbelievable merit. That’s Lama Tsongkhapa’s technique.

That can be done as soon as your forehead touches the ground or when you put your two palms together on your forehead. When you do many prostrations quickly, maybe it is difficult but at the beginning, when you go slowly, you can think you are prostrating to all the ten-direction Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, who are the guru.

I’ve already explained the eight benefits but there are also ten benefits the minute you put two palms together, which are different from the ones I explained. For example, the eight benefits that I explained are actually numberless—three times numberless—because you prostrate toward the numberless Buddha, Dharma and Sangha of ten directions, who are in essence the guru. Because there are numberless of the three, the eight benefits are numberless. Prostrating to all the ten-direction statues, stupas and scriptures, which are in the essence of the guru, you receive the eight benefits numberless times. When you put your hands here, at the crown, at the throat and at the

heart, it's the same. You have already collected countless benefits even before doing the actual prostrations.

Circumambulations are also the cause of liberation and enlightenment. Then, when you lie down, think that you are prostrating to all the ten-directions' Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, statues, stupas and scriptures, who are in essence the guru. At the beginning, when you have time, when you do that again you create the numberless causes to achieve every samsaric happiness, liberation from samsara and enlightenment. In fact, numberless times three, because there are numberless Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, as well as numberless statues, stupas and scriptures, which are in essence the guru. When you think of the guru, each merit becomes the most extensive, the highest.

If you visualize Chenrezig, visualize [bodies] lying down in all the four directions after you put your forehead on the floor. You can do that meditation while you're standing. As I mentioned, doing even one prostration with all these meditations brings the most unimaginable merit.

I'll mention this and then we'll stop. Then, we'll have to run down!

The general benefit of prostrations is that you achieve a perfect body, one that is very attractive with a very enchanting voice, like the singers who draw many millions of people in the world. If you have these qualities, you can draw in all those people and bring them all into the Dharma, into the path to liberation and enlightenment. Everybody listens to your speech. Everybody praises you. You not only have so much power, controlling power, you have so much happiness, so much enjoyment. That just naturally comes. Whatever you wish for just comes. You will be reborn in a higher realm, the deva or human realm. And you are able to quickly achieve the sorrowless state.

These benefits come from a great lama, Buton Rinpoche. This is from his teaching, but there are different explanations in other texts. It doesn't mean you only achieve liberation; it means full enlightenment, but that means there is also liberation. The last benefit is enlightenment.

### **WHEN YOU GO TO THE BOUDHANATH STUPA**

It seems there's still time to go down. So, before you go, generate a motivation of bodhicitta from here, not there, just from here before you go. Think, "The purpose of my life is to benefit sentient beings and to free them from all the suffering and its causes, bringing them to enlightenment. Therefore, I must achieve enlightenment; therefore, I need to actualize the path; therefore, I need to purify defilements. Therefore, I'm going to circumambulate and do prostrations."

You can think of [your own] happiness, but in the very end, you must come back to sentient beings. You must think of the happiness of all sentient beings. You need to purify all the defilements, all the negative karma, and you must collect extensive merits for the happiness of the numberless hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate stage beings. In the end, you must think of sentient beings, otherwise you can't have a realization of bodhicitta. When you talk about suffering and karma, you can become more concerned for your own welfare, to protect yourself from the hell realm. Sometimes the motivation becomes just that.

Therefore, it is very important that even if you think about impermanence and the suffering of the lower realms, in the end you must do this to bring happiness to all the numberless hell beings,

hungry ghosts, animals, human beings, suras, asuras and intermediate state beings. Then, your motivation is directed to others; it's connected to others. Otherwise, it becomes selfish, just to protect yourself from the lower realms. It becomes like that; you stop there.

When you go around, you first chant the mantras for multiplying merit. If somebody can quickly copy them, somebody who has a copy can lead and everybody else can recite.

The holy name mantra is,

CHOM DÄN DÄ DE ZHIN SHEG PA DRA CHOM PA YANG DAG PAR DZOG PÄI SANG GYÄ RIN  
CHHEN GYÄL TSHÄN LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO

Recite that seven times. Do you have it? No?

Then there's this mantra.

OM NAMO BHAGAVATE RATNA KETU RAJAYA / TATHAGATAYA / ARHATE SAMYAK  
SAMBUDDHAYA / TADYATHA / OM RATNE RATNE MAHA RATNE RATNA VIJAYE SVAHA

You also repeat this seven times.

Somebody might have that. You don't? [Inaudible reply from Ven. Kaye] It's on the door? That's good. So, when you go down, you can copy it. We didn't get to print it. Sorry, that was my mistake.

If you recite this mantra seven times when you start to circumambulate, each circumambulation becomes ten million times. It's a way to increase the merit. Because the Buddha is so compassionate to us sentient beings, because the Buddha has achieved the ten powers—the power of prayer and so forth—with those qualities of the Buddha, this mantra has the power to increase our merit ten million times. So, one prostration becomes ten million times.

After that, you can chant the Vajrasattva mantra. Don't just go around the stupa with a closed mouth or talking and gossiping. You must use your speech to collect merit. Your body is circumambulating so it is collecting merit, while the speech circumambulation is reciting the homage to the Buddha. You can recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, if you know them by heart. Or if somebody knows them, they can lead and you can recite together. I think you can do the same with the Vajrasattva mantra. Or you can recite OMMANI PADME HUM, but don't go round with a closed mouth. You'll waste so much of your life. Even though the body is collecting merit, you are wasting your speech. You can do such unbelievable purification with your speech by reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas. Just reciting one name, many eons of negative karma get purified.

For example, if you recite DE ZHIN SHEG PA ME TOG PÄL LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO (I prostrate to the Glorious Flower) once, it purifies one hundred thousand eons. Not minutes, not years, but *eons*, one hundred thousand eons of negative karma get purified.

I want to tell you this. Cancer, AIDS, relationship problems, depression, loneliness—all these diseases that have no cure, all these things come from negative karma. If you have cancer and a doctor or healer comes and heals your cancer, how would you feel? You would feel so happy. You would have got this extra life; you can live now. You would feel so happy and you would think that

the doctor or healer was so precious, so kind. But that is just cancer; that is just one sickness; that is just this life. It's not talking about never getting cancer in a future life. The healer hasn't healed cancer forever, just in this life, but that makes you so happy.

Now here, when you purify negative karma, you purify not just the karma to get cancer. Cancer is just a small part of samsaric suffering. There are so many other sufferings that come from negative karma, so if you purify negative karma, it helps all other sufferings. There will be no need to experience any of those sicknesses or any of the many other problems. You won't have to experience them in this life and you won't have to experience them in future lives. Because suffering comes from negative karma, you will no longer have to experience it because its cause, negative karma, is purified.

What unbelievable joy it is that, by purifying negative karma you don't have to experience all those sufferings now or in future lives. Because their cause is purified, you don't experience the result. What unbelievable joy that is. If somebody cured your AIDS or cancer, it would make you so happy, but what about this? By chanting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas, so many eons of negative karma are purified. For some names it's six thousand eons, or four or five thousand eons—maybe the shortest one is two thousand eons—that much negative karma gets purified, which is the cause of so many various sufferings, not only sicknesses. What a great joy that is. It's only because we don't have karma or don't have faith, which comes from karma, that we don't have so much feeling for this practice; that we don't appreciate it so much.

Actually, Vajrasattva or the Thirty-five Buddhas are like wish-fulfilling jewels, fulfilling all our happiness, purifying all the undesirable sufferings and granting all the realizations. So, these practices are really the most precious thing in our life. If you use an example like this, you can get some idea of how this is so unbelievably precious. You'll think not doing them is a total waste of your life. You will not be able to stand not doing these practices; you'll want to do them every second. You have this incredible opportunity to purify every second; it is the easiest way. You won't be able to stand not reciting the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas or the Vajrasattva mantra.

Therefore, don't circumambulate with a closed mouth! You must chant one of these mantras. It's quite easy to close your mouth as you go around, but you lose so much merit.

There is the body circumambulation and the speech circumambulation and the other one is the mind circumambulation, which is keeping the mind in faith, by understanding the benefits I explained of circumambulating the stupa with devotion to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You can recite the names of the Thirty-five Buddhas with faith in them; you can recite Vajrasattva with faith in the power of mantra. That's mental circumambulation.

So, even if you are only doing one circumambulation, that is for all the six realms' sentient beings. The stupa is all the gurus, Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha; it's all the ten-directions' Buddhas, Dharma and Sangha, all the ten-directions' stupa, statues and scriptures—everything. Remember this when you go around at the beginning, but it's also good to remember it from time to time. In this way, when you circumambulate the stupa, you circumambulate every single holy object—every single tsa tsa, statue or painting of the Buddha everywhere, in the shops, holy places, even in Tibet, anywhere. Anywhere there are holy objects—in any shop, in any individual person's house, in any monastery—you have circumambulated every single holy object that exists. Because there are numberless statues, stupas and scriptures, like before, circumambulating each one means there are

numberless causes of enlightenment, numberless causes of liberation, numberless causes of the happiness of future lives. It's numberless like this, times three. And by also thinking of the guru, you create the highest merit.

With this meditation, as you circumambulate, visualize beams emitting from the stupa, purifying you and all the six realms' sentient beings. If you are circumambulating six or seven times, you can meditate in this way. With the first circumambulation, do it for all the hell beings, and at the end give all your merits to all sentient beings, and especially the hell beings, thinking that they all achieve the whole path and become enlightened. Then, do the next one for the hungry ghosts and for all sentient beings. At the end, give away all your merits up to enlightenment to all sentient beings and especially the hungry ghosts, thinking that they all become enlightened. Then, do a round particularly for the animals, and at the end give away all your merits up to enlightenment, all the result happiness, to sentient beings and especially the animals. Then, like that, you can do the same for human beings, suras, asuras and finally intermediate stage beings.

After that you can do circumambulations for the long life of the gurus, offering the merits. Then, after that you can do it for the teachings of the Buddha to exist a long time in this world, offering the merits for that. You can also do it for the benefactors who serve the Sangha, for the holy beings to spread and preserve the Dharma. They also need benefactors, so you can do one circumambulation for them. If you have more time, you can do it like that.

You can do three circumambulations or more, whatever time you have. Then, do the lamrim prayer, making strong prayers to have all those realizations. Here, I'm just giving you an idea. It doesn't mean you have to do everything today, but at the end you should recite the *King of Prayers*, then what Lama Yeshe always recited, the very powerful Lama Tsongkhapa prayer. Every stanza is so important. It's very, very good to pray down there for this to happen. Then, dedicating the merits, of course, by sealing with emptiness, to achieve enlightenment for all sentient beings. And then the long-life prayer for His Holiness.

That's about it. My BBC channel is finished! OK, thank you so much.

[Rinpoche recites prayers in Tibetan]

## Lecture 6

December 11, 2007

### THE GREAT YOGIS SEE COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY

Except from an individual's side, going down to the stupa to do circumambulation and make prayers has never been part of the program, but I think in the future it's very good for it to be part of the program—to go down to the stupa and do practice and circumambulations and to sit down to do those important prayers and then make offerings.

It's also good to go to Swayambhunath, to do circumambulation of the mountain. As I mentioned the other day, the Buddha put his holy feet on that very high mountain and predicted that in the future in Nepal—that must have been the time when all of the Kathmandu valley was a lake—that there would be a crystal stupa, the embodiment of the Buddha's holy mind, that would not be made by hand, which would later appear from that lake. The Buddha had predicted that. That crystal stupa, the manifestation of the Buddha's holy mind, the dharmakaya, is inside that mountain, covered by earth. It's supposed to be there, so it's kind of quite mystical.

You can go on top, where there are long steps, from the back. There's a temple through a door there that contains the Prajnaparamita scriptures brought from naga country. I think that maybe they are brought out every year on the day of this celebration and people [receive] blessings. I'm not sure, but inside it's very precious. There's supposed to be an unbelievable tunnel that goes from there through the mountain. There are many stories of how only holy beings can go through, otherwise there are obstacles. You encounter many animals or something like that, which stop ordinary people from going through. Only great holy beings can go through.

Once when I went there, there was only an old Nepalese man sitting outside. He looked like a very nice person, very kind, very shiny; he looked quite special. He was the only person who had gone halfway through to the temple. He has now [been able to go] completely through. That's what was said, anyway.

The place is quite mystical. Of course, it's a holy place but how we see it is according to our karmic view. Seeing a place as holy depends on how much our mind is purified. How much our mind is purified, we see it as that much pure; how much our mind is obscured, we see it as that much impure. We see things according to our mind.

The great yogis who have pure minds see things like holy places totally differently. When the Seventh or Thirteenth Dalai Lama went to [Massed Vulture's Mountain] in Rajgir in India, where the Buddha gave the teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom, the second turning of the Dharma wheel, he saw the whole mountain was covered with piles of Dharma texts. He was unable to climb the mountain because he saw a whole pile of Dharma texts. When we go, we just see a very ordinary place, a very tiny place, with old rocks, like something that is worn out, but in reality it is not like that.

Kyabje Khunu Lama Rinpoche, who passed away quite a number of years ago, was a great bodhisattva, a great pandit. He was exactly like those ancient great pandits, Chandrakirti, Nagarjuna or Aryadeva. He was exactly like those great pandits of the past, how his face looked, a great scholar and bodhisattva, whose holy mind was enriched with the entire sutra and tantra teachings, all those hundreds of volumes of the Tengyur and hundreds of volumes of the Kangyur. He could quote from all those many hundreds of volumes. Rinpoche said that what we see as a very small place, where only a small number of people could fit is in reality a place where the Buddha is still Buddha teaching to many tens of thousands of bodhisattvas. The Buddha is still giving teachings there in that same place where we go. This is another view. Khunu Lama Rinpoche said that. How those bodhisattvas view things is totally different from how we common people see them.

A young lady, a dakini, came from Tibet to serve and protect His Holiness. That's the main reason she came from Tibet. Whenever he travels in the West or anywhere, wherever she is, she protects him. Sometimes she travels with His Holiness, but her body is still in Dharamsala. Wherever she's sleeping, maybe her body is there but her subtle body is with His Holiness, traveling in the airplane, like that. Once she was sleeping but there was some kind of quite intensive appearance. People wondered why, so she told them she was asked by Kurukulla—Kurukulla is a deity—to travel with His Holiness in the airplane for protection or something. That's what she said. There are beings like this who are very advanced, totally free.

In her case, when she goes to holy places, there are stories of what the Buddha did there. [To us] there are just thorn bushes and rocks but what she sees is totally different, something totally different, amazing, mind-blowing, mind-blowing! Not nose blowing, mind-blowing! Nose blowing is not good, mind-blowing!

### **HOW WE PERCEIVE THINGS DEPENDS ON THE LEVEL OF OUR MIND**

How things appear to us, how we see things, is a production of our level of mind, our quality of mind. It depends on how obscured or how pure our mind is. When we look at a person or a place, a house, and when a hundred people look at it—it doesn't have to be a hundred; it could be ten people—when we look at that house or that person, some people find it kind of interesting, nice, beautiful, but for some people it is not beautiful at all. For some people it is ugly, whether it's a person's body or a house. So, even ordinary objects appear differently to ordinary people. So, there's no question about the view of a pure dakini with a pure mind.

This is besides talking about the ultimate view, how things that appear truly existent to us don't exist in that way at all. Before we believe in something we must analyze it, not only in the case of emptiness, but even in many other things. First we must analyze before we believe in something, otherwise we get cheated, we get deceived.

In his Stanford University talk in San Francisco, His Holiness said we should not immediately cling to anything like a dog without examining it first. That's very powerful advice. Whether true existence is there or not, before believing in it we must examine it. That's the ultimate one, but there are many other things in our daily life that we must examine before we believe in them, otherwise we will get completely cheated. There are many things we need to examine such as before we start a relationship, and there are many other cases, many other conventional things that we must examine before we believe them, otherwise we can get totally cheated, we can get into trouble and suffer. So,

His Holiness said we should not immediately cling to something without analyzing it, not like a dog with meat or bones, without first examining them. Anyway, this is just side talk.

This is our present view but when our mind becomes purer and purer, our view changes and we have a different view of the same object. Pretas don't see this monastery, this temple, like we do. They see it as a very depressed place, a totally depressed place, a very unhappy place. There is no way they can see the holy objects. This is our world, this view, but for the pretas, the hungry ghosts, although they see the same place it is totally something else.

Those who have a pure mind, of course, see this place as totally the mandala of the deity. Even the worldly gods have a better view than us; they see it as much more beautiful than we do. Of course, the purest mind is the Buddha's holy mind where whatever appears is only pure, even poopoo! For us the smell is disgusting, but for the Buddha it's a totally different phenomena; it's nectar, totally. Even the great yogis, those who have achieved the clear light of meaning, who have achieved the path of unification of no more learning, even those not yet enlightened, can transform it into nectar. They don't see it as disgusting, as impure.

So, you can see that everything is to do with the mind; everything comes from the mind. We have to remember that in our daily life different sentient beings have different views of the same object. At this time, we are born as a human being, so this is the view we have. It's all according to our karma. Anything we see as beautiful or nice is the result of our good karma, the result of the positive thought, the positive mind. Anything that is ugly, anything filthy or dirty or ugly, anything undesirable, is the result of past negative karma, of the negative thought, the negative mind.

I think in the future we can make part of the program to circumambulate that mountain. People can get up at three or four o'clock in the morning to do circumambulation and prayers. Then, by breakfast time they can be back home and do their business or whatever. Many lay people can go back in the daytime, in the morning, and do their commitments while they are circumambulating for many hours. Some very old mothers circumambulate maybe twenty times in one day. They are unbelievably fortunate, even though they don't have any Dharma education; they have never learned how to meditate. Not everybody, but many do not have the opportunity. However, they have so much faith and devotion, and the object they rely on is unmistakable. Even though they don't have an understanding, the object they rely on, they hold on to, is the correct one. That makes a lot of difference in their life. There's always a result because of that. They have guidance; they are assured of a good rebirth in their next life. and all the things. They are purifying their minds and collecting extensive merits to achieve enlightenment quickly.

We're going to begin with some protector prayers tonight, for your own success in your Dharma practice, for your development. And then to fulfill His Holiness's holy wishes and also for Lama Ösel Rinpoche to become a dynamic teacher in this world, to become like Lama Tsongkhapa and His Holiness the Dalai Lama and be able to benefit sentient beings and have a long life. And for all the projects. I'm not going to repeat them, but for all the projects to be successful, without any obstacles. And as well as that, for the monastery and nunnery here, for whatever projects there are to be successful and for the success of all the Sangha's studies.

Then, for His Holiness's holy wishes [to succeed], that the top leaders of mainland China are able to discover that His Holiness is the embodiment of all the buddhas' compassion and to generate strong devotion and do exactly what His Holiness wishes. And that they invite His Holiness to China for all

the billions of people to be able to see him and hear His Holiness's teachings, His Holiness's words. That they are able to see his face and everybody can enjoy the sun of the happiness of Dharma shining in China, giving them all freedom, as well as in Tibet. And also that His Holiness continuously leads them, guides them, and there is total freedom.

And then, that there will be many bodhisattvas and buddhas in Tibet, more than before. That means that the Buddhadharma will be able to spread and stay a long time in this world through that, and will be able to spread in the ten directions.

And for you, that everybody who came here this time, that you have not just come for this course and then you stop, after you leave here it's finished—not like that—but that you are able to continue to practice and, on the basis of that, you are able to develop your mind toward enlightenment.

[Rinpoche and group chant the protector prayers in Tibetan]

### **ATISHA IS INVITED TO TIBET**

I was waiting to do the *lung* of the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* by Lama Atisha. This is a complete lamrim; it is the root of all the lamrim. After the Buddhadharma spread in Tibet, after some time a lot of misunderstanding happened. People regarded sutra and tantra as contradictory, like hot and cold. If you practiced sutra you could not practice tantra; if you practiced tantra you could not practice sutra. There was a lot of misunderstandings about tantra, a lot of corruption, degeneration.

So, the king, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, sent a gold offering to Lama Atisha in India to invite him to Tibet. He was so worried about all this confusion. Then, a minister told him about Lama Atisha at Nalanda University in India. Nalanda was the Buddhist university with three hundred great scholars who were highly attained, like Shantideva. The minister informed the king about Lama Atisha and suggested he invite him. As soon as the king heard Lama Atisha's name, he got incredible devotion; tears poured from his eyes and his hair stood up on his skin. He put his palms together like this when he heard Lama Atisha's name.

He sent a great amount of gold and a translator, maybe Nagtso Lotsawa, but he wasn't able to invite Lama Atisha. At that time, there were no car roads, so it took many months to travel to India. It took a long, long time, with so many hardships, so he didn't get to invite Lama Atisha. Maybe he didn't even meet Lama Atisha, I'm not sure.

Anyway, the king went again to look for gold to make offering to Lama Atisha to invite him to Tibet, to make the Buddhism there pure. Maybe somewhere near Nepal, I'm not sure where exactly, there was an irreligious king who captured Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, the Dharma king of Tibet, and put him into prison. His nephew, Jangchub Ö, went to offer the gold to the irreligious king to liberate the king from prison but the irreligious king told him he would only release him if the gold equaled the body of the king and when they measured by piling up the gold, the size of the head was still missing.

When the Dharma king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, went to prison and informed the king, the king said, "Don't even give a handful of gold to the irreligious king. Take all the gold to India to offer to Lama

Atisha to invite him to Tibet. It doesn't matter; I will give up my life in prison for the sentient beings in Tibet, in order to spread the Dharma, to make Buddhism pure again." He sent a message to Lama Atisha, "I may meet you in my next life."

Then, I think it must have been Nagtso Lotsawa or another translator who carried all the gold to India. Sometimes, when he didn't know which road to take, Chenrezig manifested, sometimes as a child, sometimes as an old man, and guided him. As an old man, he said, "You Tibetan people talk a lot! Be quiet, otherwise if other people know of your mission it might become an obstacle to inviting Lama Atisha to Tibet."

He finally reached the Buddhist university, Nalanda, where there were many hundreds of pandits, highly attained beings. When he met Lama Atisha, he explained everything, all the problems that had happened in Tibet and how the king had given up his life in prison to spread the Dharma in Tibet. After Lama Atisha had listened to everything, he said he would check with Tara, the female enlightened being who is the manifestation of all the buddhas' activities. Tara is very quick to grant help for sentient beings. Whatever activity Lama Atisha did, whatever decision he had to make, he first asked Tara.

When he questioned Tara about whether his life would be beneficial if he went to Tibet, Tara said, "Your life will be highly beneficial in Tibet, but your life will be shortened by seven years." Lama Atisha replied that he didn't care, that even if his life was shortened, he didn't care if his life was going to be beneficial in Tibet, that he would go to Tibet to spread the Dharma.

If all the other Sangha, the Indian people, knew that Lama Atisha was going to Tibet, they wouldn't let him because he was also needed very much in India. So, using skillful means, Lama Atisha gave the aspect of going on pilgrimage to Nepal, and from there he went to Tibet.

When he was received by the king's nephew, Jangchub Ö, and all the entourage, Jangchub Ö requested Lama Atisha to teach, explaining, "We Tibetans are very ignorant, so please give us very basic teaching, just refuge and karma." Lama Atisha was very pleased because he didn't ask for very high teachings or emptiness or the initiations or things like that. That pleased Lama Atisha very much.

After hearing all the problems that happened in Tibet, all the misunderstandings, all the contradictory arguments about sutra and tantra, Lama Atisha wrote this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. After that, all the wrong concepts were completely cut, such as how one person cannot practice both sutra and tantra, how they are contradictory and so forth. He eliminated those wrong views and made Buddhism totally pure in Tibet by composing the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*.

## **THE ORAL TRANSMISSION OF THE LAMP FOR THE PATH**

The Buddha has revealed three levels of teaching: the Lesser Vehicle or Hinayana teachings, the Mahayana Paramitayana sutra teachings and the Mahayana tantra teachings, the Vajrayana. Lama Atisha integrated all the 84,000 teachings of Buddha, all the three levels of teachings, into the graduated path for one person to practice, integrating the Lesser Vehicle, the Mahayana Paramitayana and the Mahayana Vajrayana teachings for one person's graduated practice to achieve

enlightenment, with nothing contradictory. Lama Atisha made it very clear how to go to enlightenment. It's like dinner has already been served on the table, ready for us to eat. We just need to sit down and eat it! Lama Atisha wrote this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, which makes it very easy. By studying it, we know how to go to enlightenment without any confusion; we are able to integrate all the teachings with this one person's graduated practice to achieve enlightenment.

The title "lamrim" didn't exist before. The subject is so vast, but the particular title "lamrim" didn't exist before Lama Atisha wrote the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*. The title happened after this. Lama Tsongkhapa composed the most extensive commentaries on this. There are two, a long version and a middle version. There is also a short version called *A Hymn of Experience*. Whose experience? Lama Tsongkhapa's. It's a short lamrim but it's very profound. It's sometimes very good to read, to do a direct meditation on it.

There are many other lamas who wrote lamrim teachings. The Fifth Dalai Lama, with *Sacred Words of Manjushri* or something, then the incarnations of the Panchen Lama, Gyalwa Ensapa, Panchen Palden Yeshe<sup>8</sup> and Panchen Losang Chögyan,<sup>9</sup> who came after Gyalwa Ensapa. Those incarnations, those great enlightened beings, wrote commentaries of the lamrim, the *Swift Path* and the *Happy Path*. There are many lamrim teachings like this, written by highly enlightened beings like Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, who wrote *Liberation in the Palm in Your Hand*.

It's very good to hear the root text because it leaves a positive imprint on the mind of the whole path to enlightenment. As I mentioned before, the advantage of receiving a *lung* is that you receive the blessing. From Lama Atisha there is a continual blessing, which is what you receive. I have received the lineage, so then you receive the lineage of this teaching, which has continued unbroken from Lama Atisha. I have received it from Holiness the Dalai Lama and from many lamas, from many gurus, such as His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche. I have received the transmission; it's just that the practice is missing.

When you meditate on the lamrim, when you study it, when you teach others, with this *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* there's more benefit. It has a more positive effect. It is more beneficial when you teach this to other sentient beings. And also, after you have received the oral transmission of not only the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* but any teaching, when you read it once, you get the benefit of having read it a hundred times. That's what Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche said. After having received the *lung*, if you read it once, you get the same benefit as having read it a hundred times.

It's the same with any of the Prajnaparamita teachings. So, it's unbelievably powerful. One thing is that it leaves a positive imprint on the mind. Even for animals, not only human beings, to hear it leaves a positive imprint that sooner or later will ripen. Even for animals, first you get a higher rebirth in your next life, and then you are able to meet the Buddhadharma again. And when you do, you are able to understand it unbelievably easily. You are able to understand the words and meanings, and then, through practice, you are able to attain the realizations and cease the defilements and so reach enlightenment.

So, listening to each word of a teaching, a commentary or an oral transmission brings you to enlightenment. I'm talking here about an oral transmission. Every sentient being who hears it, even

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<sup>8</sup> The sixth Panchen Lama (1738–1780).

<sup>9</sup> The fourth Panchen Lama, also known as Losang Chökyi Gyältsen (1570–1662).

dogs and cats, each word brings them to enlightenment. You must know that. Even if it is so difficult to understand the philosophical teachings, just to listen has that great benefit. You will attain a good rebirth in the next life and the next lives, and it will be unbelievably easy to understand the words and meanings, and then be able to practice and have realizations.

Anyway, I thought that before we left we should do this oral transmission because it is the root of all the other lamrim teachings. I've been waiting for all those days but it didn't happen!

This is how to go about enlightenment. Lama Atisha explained it in three categories: the graduated path of the lower capable being, the middle capable being and the higher capable being. The graduated path of the lower capable being is the person who has renounced the attachment clinging to this life's happiness, only seeking the happiness of this life. They have left this behind. The goal is mainly the happiness of future lives. The method to achieve this is by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and protecting their karma. So, the graduated path of the lower capable being is renouncing the attachment to this life's happiness by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and living in the morality of abandoning the ten nonvirtues and living in the ten virtues.

The graduated path of the middle capable being is renouncing the whole of samsara, realizing how the whole of samsara, from the hell realm up to the formless realm, is only in nature of suffering, like being in the very center of a fire, or like being inside a septic tank with all the kaka, with all those smells. Or it's like being in a nest of poisonous snakes. It is totally disgusting. You can't find even one single attraction in samsara. Like that, you renounce the whole of samsara and seek liberation. To achieve that, the method is practicing higher trainings: the higher training of morality, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of wisdom.

Then, the graduated path of the higher capable being means you leave behind seeking happiness only for yourself, the self-cherishing thought. You renounce that. You seek enlightenment for sentient beings, and for that you practice the six paramitas.

These are the three capable beings. An ordinary capable being is somebody who doesn't have the aim to achieve even a higher rebirth, let alone liberation from samsara or enlightenment, not even rebirth as a deva or another human rebirth, not even the happiness of future lives. Not at all. They only seek the happiness of this life alone. That is an ordinary capable being. That is not a real capable being because even ants are so good at seeking happiness for this life. They are so smart; they have so much politics. They are so good at finding food. They can even climb many stories to get into high-rise buildings to get into the kitchen for the honey! And tigers living in Africa are so quiet, living in the dust, but they are perfectly focused. When they pounce, it's amazing. Depending on the type of animal, they attack some from the side, some from behind, taking their legs so they fall over. Then when they are taken, the other tigers and the cubs come to eat. They have their own politics! They are very smart in achieving the happiness of this life. I sometimes think what ants can do is maybe not easy even for human beings to do.

Recently I saw on TV, there's an insect who, after eating some leaves, is able to produce honey from the bottom of their body, like a bubble. Because the ants eat the honey from the bottom of the tiny insect, that insect is very important for the ants. The mother of this insect who lays many babies carries them on the head, like something very precious. And I think the ants bring the insect leaves to eat, so they get honey. It's amazing.

These are just ordinary capable beings, not real capable beings. No matter how smart they are, no matter how much education they have, no matter what degree they have, their attitude is just seeking the happiness of this life, only their own and not others. That's an ordinary capable being. It's not special, even though they might have a high education and many things that common people consider to be special.

So, please pay attention. Think you are listening to this teaching only for the benefit of all sentient beings, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all your kind mother sentient beings.

[Rinpoche gives the oral transmission of *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* in Tibetan]

So, the oral transmission is done.

So, now the Vajrasattva *jenang*, the permission to practice.

## Lecture 7

December 17, 2007

### HAPPINESS COMES FROM A VIRTUOUS MIND

[The recording of this discourse is incomplete. It appears to be a talk given to a group of people after the completion of the Kopan course.]

Hello all my brothers and sisters, all of you who are gathered here. First, I want to say thank very much.

In this life, people do many things to try to find happiness. Whatever different lifestyle people have, from the president or the beggar begging in the street, from people involved in a circus or making movies, actors, singers, farmers working in the field, people having eating competitions, seeing how much food they can eat in a short time, soccer players, mountain climbers, people jumping off cliffs with wings—or even people without that! Even without wings, they jump from cliffs! People jumping from airplanes with a parachute. Everybody jumps together and holds hands in a circle as they fall. People trekking in the mountains but taking the very difficult ways that others can't do. People who whip their bodies like in Africa or in the West, or they are whipped by somebody else from another town, leaving lots of marks, cuts and wounds on their body, which means they are regarded as brave if they are able to do that. Also in the West, there are people who put a ring through the body and hang from it without their legs touching the ground. There are all sorts of things that people do, but all this is trying for happiness. The goal of all these things is to achieve happiness. Whatever each individual person thinks of as happiness, they try to do that.

People in the world try just anything for happiness. Even the insects—the ants and the flies—keep so busy, and it's for happiness. The ants keep so busy, running over the trees and the ground looking for food; the birds flying in the sky, the worms crawling on the ground, the people flying in airplanes—they are all doing the same thing, looking for happiness. Those wealthy people living in five-star, six-star, seven-star, ten-star hotels or very luxurious houses, with all the sense pleasures, with everything that they can get in the world, it is all just to achieve happiness.

To not experience suffering and to experience happiness, that's the basic thing; that's the foundation. Everything starts from there.

Just like the external example, planting a poisonous seed means a poisonous tree will grow, with the trunk, the leaves, the flowers and the poisonous fruit. Planting a medicinal seed means a medicinal tree will grow, with the trunk, the branches and flowers and medicinal fruit. The medicinal fruit and the poisonous fruit have a totally separate evolution. The poisonous fruit doesn't come from a medicinal seed, and the medicinal fruit doesn't come from a poisonous seed. That's impossible.

It's similar here. The evolution of happiness and suffering are *totally* separate. Happiness doesn't come from nonvirtuous actions, negative action. It doesn't come from negative thoughts, from impure thoughts, from the mistaken way of thinking, which transforms our actions into nonvirtue and results only in suffering, only in problems. The evolution of suffering is that. The evolution of

happiness is that it comes from positive actions, virtuous actions, which come from positive thoughts, pure thoughts, virtuous thoughts, which is Dharma.

There is the story of two people who went to beg food from a monastery. One person came when the Sangha were having a meal. Arriving at the right time, he got plenty of food and he was so happy that he generated a positive thought toward the Sangha, wishing them to have happiness, to always to have plenty of means of living, food and so forth. The other person went at the wrong time, when the Sangha was not eating, so he didn't get any food. He got so upset that he generated the very negative thought of wishing the monks' heads would be cut off.

What happened was that, sooner or later, the first person—the one who went at the right time and got plenty of food and generated a positive thought for all the good things to happen to the Sangha—was sleeping in the park under the shade of a tree one day. Due to the powerful merits he collected by generating positive thoughts for the Sangha, even though the sun moved around, the shade he was sleeping under always stayed over him. When people saw the shadow was not moving away, they thought he was a very special person, one with a lot of merit, so they all asked him to be the king in their country. So he became the king, by them seeing that he was a special being.

The other person who generated negative thoughts by getting angry through not getting any food, sooner or later he fell on the road and a horse carriage, a chariot, came and the wheel went over his neck and cut off his head.

The Sangha is an extremely powerful object, so if you offer a little service or make a little offering, the karma is so powerful that you experience great success in that very life, like the first man. And if you do some little negative thing, like generating a negative thought, the negative karma is so heavy that you start to experience the suffering in that life. So, sooner or later, this is what happened to the other man. His head was cut off because that's what he wished would happen to the Sangha.

The point here is that generally suffering and happiness come from the mind; they do not come from outside. They come from each individual being's mind. Somebody who experiences happiness or who experiences suffering, it comes from their own mind. The suffering comes from the negative thought; the happiness comes from the positive thought.

There are numberless stories like this, but this is just to understand how suffering and happiness come from the individual being's mind, from totally different thoughts; one is from the virtuous, positive thoughts, which is Dharma, the other one is negative thoughts, wrong concepts, superstitious thought. Suffering comes from a mistaken way of thinking, which harms you and which harms others. This is true of not only the suffering and happiness from life to life, but even *this* life's suffering and happiness, how it too comes from the mind.

I remember once there was an earthquake. Generally, so many people suffer. Their houses collapse, huge buildings collapses. Once, in Taiwan, when a huge earthquake happened, even large, very strong-looking buildings and large monasteries collapsed, but there was a very simple, old house squeezed between other buildings where a family lived. The parents and the children were our students—the daughter was a nun—and they were all extremely devoted. The father is a very good-hearted person, always helping other people, very devoted. When this huge earthquake happened, so many people died. They were downstairs and they had a shrine room upstairs where there were water offerings. They thought all the water bowls would have fallen over and all the water in the

bowls would have spilled, but when they went upstairs, not a drop of water had spilled from the bowls. It was a complete surprise. I mean, this old house could have easily collapsed. Intellectually you might think that is what would have happened, but in reality it didn't.

Of course, it's a question of karma. I think one thing was that they had strong refuge, strong faith. But the main thing was that they not only hadn't created the karma to die at that time but also they hadn't created the karma to be affected by the earthquake at that time, so nothing happened. That happiness is the result of past good karma, living in the morality of abstaining from killing and maybe also abstaining from ill will, from harming others.

Even in the monasteries, many of the huge buildings collapsed. Of course, many people blamed the builders, the construction company—"If they hadn't built it this way..." "They didn't build it according to earthquake regulations..." Things like that. But I think that when you have created the negative karma to be affected by an earthquake, the karma will be experienced—the house will collapse, you will die. When that negative karma, the cause is actualized, no matter how strong your house was made, when the earthquake happens, the building will break and people will die.

This has happened many times. You can think that buildings should be built to stand very strong earthquakes, but when one happens, there are often very surprising things, very shocking things. During the minutes of an earthquake, it really clarifies how karma works. There are those who have created the negative karma to die at that time, who have created the karma to have their house collapse, and there are those who haven't created the karma to die at that time, whose house remains stable. Within those minutes, it shows so clearly how it is completely according to individual karma.

When the tsunami happened, so many people died. Even many big hotels completely collapsed. I saw on TV how while so many people were carried away by the water, there was one very small child in the middle of the water, holding on to a tree. In the middle of all that water he survived; he didn't die. Hundreds of thousands died, but this child didn't. He wasn't carried away by the water and for many hours he was able to hold on to the tree. It all comes from the child's mind, from his own positive thoughts and positive actions, from the morality he practiced in the past, as I mentioned before. That result, that good karma, which is Dharma, was experienced at that time.

And when the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed by the two airplanes, thousands of people died inside or when they jumped from the windows. But there was a blind person who was led by his dog down from the thirtieth story. Thirty stories and he was able to get out. That's amazing! There's no other way to explain it. There's no other way to scientifically explain why so many people with eyes, complete organs, limbs and eyes, died, but this person who was blind was able to escape.

That he could survive and have a long life comes from the morality of abstaining from killing, that positive thought and that positive action, making a vow, making the determination to not kill other living beings. That's amazing. All those others who died, whether jumping from a window or being burned inside, that comes from their past negative karma, having harmed others. The result of that negative karma was collected on that day, it became very powerful and manifested in that way. That is what happened.

A lot of fires happen in the United States and in other countries, but even though so many houses get burned, there is usually one particular house that the fire comes to but then jumps. That house doesn't burn but the houses on either side are burned. How do you explain it? The real scientific

explanation, the complete, clearest, deepest scientific explanation is related to the mind of the person who experiences that suffering or happiness, how that experience has come from their own mind. Whatever you say, the external situation is just a condition. For those who didn't experience the danger of fire, that came from their good karma. Those whose house didn't get burned down, that is because they were living in morality, abstaining from ill will and things like that.

Once, a fire happened at one of our centers, O Sel Ling in Spain. Our guru, Lama Yeshe, who is kinder than all the three-time buddhas, reincarnated in Bubi6n, the village near there. O Sel Ling is a retreat center. When the fire happened, the bushes and trees were burning and the buildings of the center were in great danger. Although they were built with stones, the roofs, the doors and the window frames were wooden and they would be burned [and cause the whole center to burn]. In the main building there is the kitchen and a gumpa, which is where the geshe who lived there was staying. Everybody ran into the mountain to be safe. They called out to the geshe to run away but he preferred to stay. The fire arrived but it jumped the buildings and the house didn't burn.

In the same way, in Madison, Wisconsin, in the United States, where my and Lama Yeshe's teacher, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche, lived, there was once very bad weather. It was announced on TV that a tornado or a cyclone—I'm not sure which—was approaching. Geshe Sopa Rinpoche was at the university teaching. He thought that maybe the house and the center would be destroyed, but what happened was that all the property around Geshe-la's center was destroyed—all the houses and many of the trees—but the wind went around the center; it didn't affect Geshe-la's house. Nothing happened, but there was a lot of damage around. When some danger happens like that, it completely shows the karma of each family and person in the area.

Whatever happiness we experience in our daily life comes from our positive thought, the root, the non-anger, non-ignorance, non-attachment, from that pure, healthy mind, from that correct way of thinking. The action motivated by that thought is a positive, virtuous action, a Dharma action. Because the motivation is Dharma, the action is Dharma. Only happiness can come from this, the happiness we experience now in our day-to-day life, at the time of death and after death, and all the happiness in our future lives, including the ultimate happiness, total liberation from the oceans of samsaric suffering and its causes, karma and delusions, and the great liberation, the non-abiding sorrowless state, full enlightenment. All this comes from our mind, from the pure, virtuous thought, which is Dharma.

All the suffering we experience in our day-to-day life, every moment of whatever problem we experience, comes from our mind. Even when we feel hot and a cool breeze passes through and brings some comfort, even that comfort—even some little comfort in a dream—even the smallest thing like that, every pleasure, everything comes from our mind, from a positive thought.

## **THE PURPOSE OF KOPAN**

What is the purpose of establishing Kopan Monastery? Now we have three hundred and sixty monks as well as a nunnery of three hundred and eighty nuns. The abbot of the monastery, Lama Lhundrup, will explain the details, about the monks who look after the education and the discipline of both the monastery and the nunnery, and about all the external conditions that are needed. Lama Lhundrup will explain the details, the subjects and daily programs and all the things the monks and nuns learn, so hopefully you will appreciate how important their education is. We have a normal

Dharma education, but they also learn science, English, Nepali, and all those other subjects that are taught in normal schools.

However, the most important thing here is the very foundation of Buddhadharma, karma, action and result, the very secret point, how everything comes from the mind. Living here means learning about this and protecting the mind. The main practice, the main thing it means when living in the monastery or nunnery, is protecting the mind from harmful thoughts, always watching the mind and keeping it virtuous, healthy, positive, in Dharma, that which only brings happiness. It means transforming your actions so that whatever you do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, doing your job, meditation, study—whatever you do is transformed into Dharma, becoming the cause of happiness.

And here, especially, it is not just the cause of the happiness of this life, but with the bodhicitta motivation, with that purest thought, and with letting go of the I and cherishing other sentient beings instead, to free them from all the suffering and its causes and bring them to enlightenment. To do that, we need to be fully qualified; we need to be a fully enlightened being, having completed all the qualities, with compassion for all sentient beings, having completely attained omniscience, all the understanding and the qualities, with perfect power to benefit others. We need to achieve that; we need the thought seeking that. With that wish, whatever activity we do—eating, walking, sitting, sleeping, working, studying, meditating, doing prayers, pujas—everything becomes the cause of enlightenment, to achieve enlightenment and to liberate the numberless sentient beings from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring them to enlightenment.

That should be there as the main heart practice, to live life with that attitude and thought of benefiting all sentient beings, without leaving even one out, including the thought of benefitting the enemy, the person who hates us, who criticizes us. The altruistic thoughts should include everybody, not only friends but also strangers and even enemies—everybody, all sentient beings.

When we do that, whatever we do in the monastery, when we study, everything becomes the cause to not only achieve enlightenment but by the way it become the cause to achieve liberation from samsara, the total cessation of all the suffering of samsara, including the cause, karma and delusions. And then, by the way, it becomes the cause of a good rebirth in the next life and all the happiness of future lives. *Then*, by the way, from that we receive a long, healthy life and even the happiness of this life. Even though we don't seek it with attachment, even though we let go of the attachment to this life, all the happiness this life comes naturally from Dharma practice, from this action done especially with the motivation of bodhicitta.

Even if we can't have that pure attitude, in case even that is not happening, at least we should try to have detachment to samsara, to the whole of samsara. By knowing it is in the nature of suffering, then whatever we do is with that pure mind. In this way, whatever you do becomes the cause to achieve liberation from samsara, the ultimate happiness for ourselves. Then, by the way, we also achieve a good rebirth and all the happiness of future lives as well as the happiness of this life, which also comes by the way, without looking for it. As a result of Dharma practice, by letting go, without looking for it, even the happiness of this life comes, the success of this life comes. This is how Dharma works.

The last thing is having detachment to this life, seeking the happiness of future lives, just that. We do all the study, the activities, the meditation, the prayers, all with this minimum motivation. This is

the least motivation we should have in the monastery. And not only in a monastery but of course, anybody in daily life who wants happiness, who doesn't want suffering, this is the way to change our attitude, making our mind become Dharma. Happiness has to come from our own mind, suffering has to be stopped from our own mind, letting go of the anger, freeing our mind from anger, from the attachment clinging to this life. Then, whatever we do in daily life becomes the Dharma, only the cause of happiness.

What I explained before is the foundation; that understanding is the purpose of a monastery, the very basic thing. Now, the next one. The Buddha said that the truth of suffering is what should be known and the truth of the cause of suffering is what should be abandoned, the [truth of the] cessation of the suffering is what is to be actualized and the truth of the path is what we should rely on. That shows how in a monastery a person should learn how to practice Dharma, how important it is for the Sangha, the monks and nuns, to live in ordination, in morality.

Generally, because suffering is a dependent arising, not independent, not permanent, it can be eliminated. It happens due to cause and conditions, not independently; it exists by depending on cause and conditions. Similarly, with our daily life problems there are causes and conditions happening. Due to that, the result of suffering has happened. So, when we change the cause and the conditions that produced the suffering, we also change the suffering result. The suffering stops. When we change the cause and conditions and we create the cause and conditions for happiness instead, we get totally the opposite. Suffering is a dependent arising; suffering is a causative phenomenon, which means it can be eliminated. We have freedom, especially because we have buddha nature. That gives us great hope that we can be free from suffering forever.

The way to be liberated from suffering forever, so it is impossible to experience it ever again, is by ceasing the cause, karma and delusions—ignorance, anger, attachment. Among those superstitious thoughts, the very root, the king of the superstitious thoughts is ignorance, the unknowing mind—not knowing the ultimate nature, the emptiness of the self and the aggregates.

The king of delusions is not knowing the meaning of the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of the aggregates, of phenomena. These two ignorances are the root, the whole root of the oceans of suffering of samsara: the oceans of suffering of the hell realm, the oceans of suffering of hungry ghosts, the oceans of suffering of the animals, the oceans of suffering of the human beings, the oceans of suffering of the devas, the suras and asuras, including the desire realm devas, the form realm devas and the formless realm devas. All these sufferings caused by the root, this ignorance, are all causative phenomena; they are all dependent arisings, so they can all be eliminated by other causes and conditions. Every suffering, including the seed of the delusion, the seed of ignorance, the negative imprint, can be completely ceased. Then, there is the total cessation of suffering, something we can achieve.

## **TO ACHIEVE THE PATH THE FOUNDATION IS MORALITY**

How can we achieve that? There's a path that exists, the truth of the path, revealed by the Buddha. How do we go about generating all the details that the Buddha has explained as the truth of the path? There are five paths to achieve liberation: the path of merit, the preparatory path, the right-seeing path, the path of meditation and the path of no more learning. The main one that directly ceases the defilements, the negative imprints, the cause of delusions, is the wisdom directly

perceiving emptiness. By achieving the third path, the right-seeing path, the 112 obscurations are removed and then, by actualizing the path of meditation, the twelve defilements are removed. Sorry! I got confused. Actualizing the right-seeing path removes the 112 obscurations and actualizing the path of meditation removes the sixteen defilements. Then, we achieve total liberation, the sorrowless state, with the mental continuum separated from those defilements, the disturbing-thought obscurations, the mind that blocks the ultimate nature of that mind.

To achieve this exalted path that directly removes the disturbing-thought obscurations, we need the foundation, great insight. When we achieve the preparatory path, at that time we achieve the realization of great insight, which is the foundation for the exalted path. So, achieving that depends on the foundation. That great insight is the higher training of wisdom.

Now, to achieve *that* depends on the higher training of concentration, perfect meditation, mental quiescence, shamatha. Perfect meditation comes through having cut attachment-scattering thoughts and sinking thoughts. Then, we are able to concentrate for how many months and years we want. We achieve the fully characterized shamatha after having experienced extremely refined rapturous ecstasy of the body and mind, after we achieve the ninth level of shamatha.

Now, to achieve that perfect meditation, shamatha, the higher training of concentration, that depends on the foundation, the higher training of morality. That shows how important it is to live in morality, how that is the foundation. This first foundation is *so* important. All the rest of the development, all the realizations, the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness that ceases the disturbing-thought obscuration, and then achieving the sorrowless state—all that is based on having the foundation, the higher training of morality.

This is talking about the Lesser Vehicle path. In the Great Vehicle path, there are also the same five paths: the Mahayana path of merit, and the Mahayana preparatory path, the Mahayana right-seeing path, the Mahayana path of meditation and the Mahayana path of no more learning. So again, that involves the higher training of wisdom, the higher training of concentration and the higher training of morality. These are also in the Mahayana five paths. In the Mahayana path, when we achieve the exalted paths, the right-seeing path and the path of meditation, as far as the disturbing-thought obscurations, it's the same, how much each path removes. But now the subtle defilements, called *shedrib*, the obstruction to the fully knowing mind, the 116 are removed by actualizing the Mahayana right-seeing path, then there are also 116 subtle defilements removed by actualizing the Mahayana path of meditation. So again, there it's the same.

If we enter the Mahayana path straight away, we have to remove the two types of defilement, but if we have achieved the five Lesser Vehicle paths and the sorrowless state, then after some time, when the Buddha inspires us with the four stanzas, which inspires us to enter Mahayana path, to achieve enlightenment for sentient beings, we only have to remove the subtle defilements.

Here again, the foundation is morality. Not only in the Lesser Vehicle, the Hinayana path, but even for the Great Vehicle, the Mahayana, we need the higher training of morality. The main reason we need a monastery or a nunnery is for that, for that practice. That is how important it is. Now you can see how that foundation is so important. The whole development of the mind up to enlightenment is based on ceasing all those gross and subtle defilements.

To attain this, we not only need intellectual knowledge of Buddhadharma, which explains all the details, all the philosophy. Lama Lhundrup will explain those—the five extensive sutra texts and the teachings the Buddha taught. Then the great pandits, Nagarjuna, Asanga, and then Chandrakirti, Vasubandhu and so forth, wrote those scriptures based on the Buddha's teachings, those many volumes of sutras, the root texts and commentaries. Then, on top of that, there are the texts by Tibetan lamas like Lama Tsongkhapa and the many great enlightened beings who wrote commentaries on that.

It is not only learning the words but attaining this path. This is preserving the Buddhadharma, the Buddha's teachings. He sacrificed his life for three countless great eons—not three hundred years, not three eons, but three countless great eons. He gave his body to sentient beings, making charity of his eyes, his limbs, his whole life. For three countless great eons he sacrificed himself to other sentient beings, practicing charity, then practicing morality for that many eons, and patience for three countless great eons, and perseverance, and concentration, and wisdom and so forth, in order to complete the merit of wisdom and the merit of virtue and to achieve the two kayas, the Buddha's holy body and holy mind.

The main reason was so that the Buddha could reveal to us the unmistakable path, the teachings that explain the path. That is the main goal, to liberate us from the oceans of samsaric suffering and bring us to enlightenment. That is why the Buddha sacrificed his life, bearing so much hardship for three countless great eons.

Now you can see how this is unbelievably important to the world. What is done, what is studied, what is practiced in the monastery and nunnery here is so important, unbelievably important to the world. As I mentioned at the beginning, all sentient beings want happiness and do not want suffering. What they like is happiness and what they do not like is suffering. Therefore, how to achieve this is so important to the world and to all sentient beings. It's crucial. It is the most urgent thing, more urgent than anything else in the world. This is the most important thing for world peace.

This is why we built this monastery and why the monks and nuns study here.

**[Note:** The transcript of this discourse is incomplete.]